

Mr. Nader's Neighbourhood

by Steve Mills

A visit by consumer advocate Ralph Nader during the 1986/87 school year inspired some students at Dalhousie to form a Nova Scotia chapter of PIRG on the Dalhousie campus. Public Interest Research Groups exist across the States, in Australia, and on campuses in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia.

The concept of the public interest research revolves around a dedication to addressing social justice and environmental issues that otherwise may not find a substantial voice. Public interest research is goal-directed; it implies action in the attempts to make changes in both practice and mentality.

Nova Scotia PIRG at Dal has been steadily organizing its internal structure during the past two years. What PIRG needs now is you: people, bodies, time, effort, motivation, ideas.

Some projects presently on the go include United Nations Discrimination Obliteration (UNDO) which is

devoted to updating the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights; Waste Management Alternatives is working towards environmentally friendly methods of dealing with wasteful human habits; the Homelessness Action Research Team (HART) is working with Phoenix House to address the problem of homelessness in Metro.

Another feature of PIRG is that it is open to starting new projects. If you have an idea that addresses important campus or community issues, PIRG can help you get established as a working group or support a specific project idea. Some recent projects have resulted in publication of such goodies as "The Definitive Guide to Waste Management in Halifax", "The Single Mother's Survival Guide", "500 Years of Resistance", in *perspective* magazine and the "Directory of Resource Centres and Contacts in Halifax". All are available at the PIRG office and are loaded with valuable information.

In addition, a file was compiled this summer of numerous research

topics in areas of child care, health, law, and others for potential term papers. These topics were generated by community organizations in the Metro area. What this means is that if you are at that crucial point in your life when a research paper looms overhead but you don't have a topic, one may already exist and is waiting to be tackled. By undertaking a community-based topic, students can merge academic and community life, plus gain practical experience from theoretical concepts.

This exemplifies the philosophy of Nova Scotia PIRG-Dal, which aims at tapping student energy to help our community at large. This year PIRG needs YOU. PIRG's first General Interest Meeting will be held Tuesday, September 22 at the SUB. Talk with PIRG-friendly folks or visit the PIRG office in room 310 of the SUB. For more information on events, projects or just general PIRG knowledge contact 494-6662. Put your ideas into action.

PIRG ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS OF THE WEEK

- For all you first-year students who are soon-to-be coffee drinkers, reusable mugs are available in the SUB cafeteria, from the Campus Environmental Action Group (CEAG), and from King's Student Union. In this day and age, anyone who doesn't use one of these should be severely reprimanded (that goes for faculty too). Buy one, use it, love it, live it.

- If you are one in the habit of buying fast food regularly, save your plastic utensils and reuse them, or carry your own flatware from home. A quick lick or wipe is all you really need to clean them if you are the only one using them. And you can conveniently carry them in your knapsack pouches or pencil cases for easy access. This way, if you buy one muffin everyday during the school year, you will have used just one knife to butter them, not 160.

Each week, this space will provide simple ideas and methods on how individuals can alter practices and habits so as to help the environment, gain peace of mind, and maybe even save some money. Any contributions to this column are welcome and should be submitted to the Gazette in room 312 of the SUB.

Henderson hazing continued

involved in the selection process; often they are not living in the House where they will be RA's at that.

Most Frosh Squad Leaders are students returning to the same House. They must submit a written application.

The off-campus Leaders were required to fill out an application. Approximately 80 people applied for 50 positions.

"Many of them wrote things like 'I want to be a Squad Leader because I like to party and I want to teach the Frosh how to party at Dal', and unfortunately we were forced to accept several questionable people," said Victor Bigio, chairperson of the fall orientation. "It sounds corny, but we were looking for people to write, 'I would like to help new students adjust to their surroundings', or something like that."

All the Orientation Squad Leaders signed contracts with the DSU, promising that they would not "haze", or subject first-year students to degrading initiation rites.

"I don't agree with what's going on," he said. "The Student Union has spent thousands of dollars to put together a fun-filled orientation week, and we expected a higher degree of professionalism from the residences. It's obvious that the actions are inexcusable, and measures must be taken to ensure that it never happens again."

The VP of Student Affairs, Eric McKee, is investigating the allegations. "If this is true," he said, "it is certainly appalling and totally unacceptable. It flies in the face of every purpose of orientation, which is to make people feel welcome and comfortable in a new setting."

"The administration is establish-

ing themselves as the judge, jury, and executioner. If this continues, they system; we can only hope that people will feel comfortable coming to the Residence Assistants or the Residence Council."

The RA's act as intermediaries between the Residence Council and the Administration. A pamphlet is sent to new residence students in mid-summer with pictures of the RA's, introducing them and outlining their job descriptions. Every RA is on duty each night for the first two weeks. Because classes haven't started, they are "always available" during the day, said James Dann, second-year student, and RA at Henderson House. "We are not allowed to drink when on duty." After the first two weeks have passed, one RA is on duty in each House every night. Their class schedules are posted on their doors; when they are around, the RA's are technically on duty. "We are here for the students; our job is to be approachable."

There are three RAs in Henderson House, one on each floor. They reported being approached by people who were homesick, and experiencing minor difficulties, but it was, "nothing beyond the expected," according to Pete Lily, fourth-year student and RA. "Everything said to us is confidential. I think that if the same incidents occurred later on in the year, people would know us and come to us without fear."

On Wed. Sept. 9 the Administration learned about some of the goings-on at Henderson. Terry will have the liberty of taking any issue as far as they want," said Jeff Rappell, president of Howe Hall. He feels that the Administration's reac-

tion was extreme because the complaints did not go through the proper channels. "That's why we have a Gallivan, Associate Director of Housing and Conferences, Director Heather Sutherland, and Mr. McKee met with all the Henderson Frosh Squad Leaders, Jeff Rappell, president of Howe Hall, and VP Chris Thistle. They were asked if they would prefer to be punished individually or as a group, and chose to be punished collectively.

Twelve leaders, including 5 Henderson House Council Members, 3 Floor Representatives, and 4 in-House Leaders are currently under

"I want to be a squad leader because I like to party"

24-hour zero-tolerance probation for one year and have been fined \$100. 2 off-campus Leaders have been barred from all residence activities for at least one semester. The Residence Assistants were not punished. The House Council in turn met with all Henderson Frosh on Wed., and again on Thurs. to announce their punishment.

Many people are unhappy with the penalties. "Regretfully, there were some unacceptable incidents that occurred, but the overwhelming majority of people seem to have enjoyed themselves. The Administra-

tion reacted poorly to the situation by disbanding the group of Squad Leaders, and effectively ending Frosh week; it hurt the students," said Greg French, treasurer of Howe Hall, and former Henderson Frosh Squad Leader.

"Last year there were some reported incidences of sexual assault in Henderson House. The Administration reacted slowly and they were made to look bad in the Gazette. I can't help but think that the reason the administration reacted so quickly and extremely this year is because they didn't want to look bad again," said an anonymous Council member of Howe Hall.

It has come to light that Lale Kesebi, president of the Student Union, and VP Dennis MacNeil issued apologies to the offending Frosh Leaders. It is not known whether they were acting on their own behalf, or if they were authorized by the Student Union.

The Henderson Frosh started a petition to re-instate their Leaders. As of Sunday, they had 82 signatures. The three people whom I spoke to at the beginning of this article reported that they were able to relax, and enjoyed the latter half of their week.

Ben Clark is president of Henderson House; he was also one of the Frosh Squad Leaders. "I'm extremely proud of my guys," he said. "I think we've had a hell of a week and we seem to have come together as a unit. If some people are offended I hope that they will come forward and talk to me, because we have an open door policy here at Henderson, and I've made that clear since the beginning, in quite a few meetings."

"The Frosh got ripped off this year. It's a sin. They didn't even get half of their week; it's gotten a bit dull," said a second-year student at Henderson. "Now we're promoting our new image. We have limited funds, but we've already pledged the proceeds from the return of our beer bottles, which last year was almost \$1000, to Shinerama." All of Howe Hall has pledged to support Cystic Fibrosis, a decision that was made over two weeks ago. "And we're planning a dance in which the residents of Henderson House will serve their guests."

"At the Chair-Off cheering competition on Saturday, we showed our class by singing a tame censored version of our song with a lot of spirit. The other House's cheers were worse than ours; I think we had only two cusswords in a song that was over a page long. Last year we placed last, and to the best of my knowledge Henderson has never done well in the competition, but this year we came second. I think that the controversy has really brought the guys together."

He says that he loves Henderson so much, "I lined up for sixteen hours-I slept in line to get in. Last year, Frosh week was the most memorable week of the year; this year it was a lot tamer. And it was nothing compared to other universities, and even some of the departments at Dal. In engineering, for example, they make you roll around in fish guts. It only takes a few people to abuse their power, and they can ruin it for the many," he said. "It's human nature to look at the negative aspects. If you aren't a part of it, it may seem outrageous, but it's not."