

Legal Aid helps us

by Trish Aikens

If you are having legal difficulties, chances are Dalhousie Legal Aid can help. The counsellors there will deal with problems pertaining to almost anything—housing, social assistance and welfare, possession charges, juvenile cases, consumer rip-offs (in which case the consumer may want to sue the company involved), charges of theft under \$200.00, and family disputes. They do not handle indictable offences; trafficking charges, theft over \$200.00, assault with bodily harm or murder (i.e. - those offenses for which the accused will be imprisoned).

Dalhousie Legal Aid's clientele consists of those people primarily in the lower income bracket, who cannot afford legal fees. Their student clientele is actually quite small. Clients are accepted in accordance with a financial eligibility test. The income of the family unit is examined to see if it falls below certain set figures. If it does the applicant for legal aid is automatically eligible. If it does not then a more detailed examination of a person's (or family's) income, assets, and expenses is undertaken to determine eligibility. All services are free. The only expenses which may arise are when D.L.A.S. must pay expenses on behalf of a client. These might entail payment for the filing of legal documents if the case goes to the Supreme or County Court. Also, it may be necessary for the counsellor to make a long distance call concerning the case, for which the client would have to pay.

The staff in the offices of D.L.A.S. is fairly large, but there are only 10 paid staff members. The rest are all third year law students. The ten main staff workers include three lawyers—Richard Evans, the director of Dal Legal Aid and also a Dalhousie Law Professor; Paul Thomas, who is also a professor teaching Family Law at Dal.; and lawyer Sarah MacKenzie; three Para-Legals (they are not professional people but have more than adequate knowledge of certain areas of the law). These three do not go to court with the clients although they do look after legalities such as: statutory declarations, U.I.C. problems and debt



Dalhousie legal aid, serving the community, and you too.

Dal Photo/Walsh

counselling. There are three office staff performing the necessary typing and clerical duties in the busy office, and also a community worker. Among those doing voluntary work with D.L.A.S. is Judge J.V. Pottier, a retired Supreme Court Judge who has been with D.L.A.S. since 1971 and who supervises and counsels the students.

However, the driving force behind Dal. Legal Aid is the student counsellor. During the year, third year Law students have the option of enrolling in the clinical law course. They receive 9 of 15 credits for one term's work. The students are an enthusiastic group and make up in hard work what they lack in experience. This is obvious in their courtroom struggles. The student acts in the capacity of lawyer for the charged person, when the case is presented in Family Court. However, if the client has been charged with an offense which must be heard in the Supreme or County Court, then one of the three D.L.A.S. lawyers must represent the accused in court. Still, it is usually the student who will prepare the lawyer's case. The lawyers act much of the time as supervisors; there to teach, advise and direct the student.

The Dalhousie Legal Aid office is located at 2157 Gottingen street. Appointments must be made (al-

though in the case of an emergency no appointment is necessary) and the number to call is 423-7197. The Halifax office is open Monday to Friday from 8:30-5:00, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings from

6:30-8:30. Appointments are also available with the Community Service Office at 337 Herring Cove Road in Spryfield and at the Social Services Office at 54 Aldernay Drive in Dartmouth.

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Day of awareness

by Eric Wood

Have you ever thought of how you could possibly contribute to solving the problem of world inequality? Have you ever wondered just how those various volunteer and aid giving agencies operate? And lastly; have you ever said to yourself: "Hey... I'd like to do something like that someday—help others less fortunate than I, at home and overseas." But you're still at square one, right? Don't know who to approach?

If you have answered yes to some of the above questions, then you will probably be interested to hear about a special day for you to answer these questions for yourself. On November 3 from 11am to 10pm there will be a DAY OF AWARENESS at the International Education Centre in the BURKE Building at Saint Mary's University. Hosted by a committee on volunteer services the purpose of the day is "twofold". First, the film "Five Minutes to Midnight" will be shown at 11am, 2pm and 8pm. This film dramatically and poignantly

illustrates the enormous inequality and great poverty that exists in the world as well as the efforts being made to combat these evils. The film is scheduled for a repeat showing on November 4th at 2pm. The second purpose of the Day of Awareness, is to make it possible for people who would like to volunteer a period of their lives to their fellow man and to discover the many agencies through which a person may serve. Since poverty, inequality and alienation are not confined exclusively to developing countries but are found also in Canada, the volunteer agencies will include those that operate in Canada. These should be attractive to people who would prefer to offer their services in Canada rather than abroad.

Whatever your preference, I am sure the representatives on hand from the various volunteer agencies such as CUSO, CESO, Canada World Youth, Frontier College and Canadian Crossroads International (to name a few) will be happy to entertain your questions.

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