

# Sydney Storm Scandal

by Richard Whitby

Allegations were made last week to the effect that the MacDonald housing project, in Sydney, Cape Breton, was improperly constructed.

This government-subsidized duplex-style development has been the subject of debate since the freak storm of October 20 which destroyed the roofs on all but one of the eighteen buildings.

Bernard Reppa, the Chief Building Inspector and Development Officer for Sydney, expressed anger due to the fact that the project was

unable to withstand the high winds of the storm, while other houses in Sydney suffered only minor damage mainly due to fallen trees. He stated that since the houses were prefabricated, there was little his department could do to make sure they were safe to live in. According to Mr. Reppa, inspection was the responsibility of the Federal and Provincial governments who sponsored the project; and obviously the kind of rigorous inspection that his department made on new

buildings was not made on the MacDonald homes.

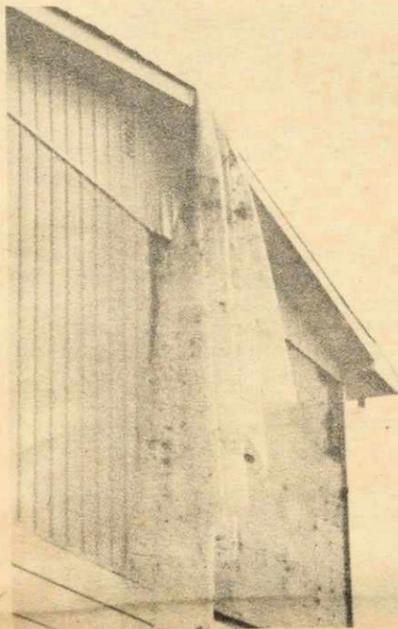
When asked about the future of prefab style homes in Sydney, he said he would recommend that they be banned. In addition to the structural deficiencies, he mentioned that the houses completely flouted local fire ordinances.

A call last week to the Cape Breton Regional Housing authority revealed that temporary repairs had been made and the residents had returned to their homes, although the town had in no way approved this move. Temporary repairs were being made by a crew of forty men brought in by the St. Johns-based manufacturer. It was not clear however, who would pay for the repairs. A representative of the housing authority did say that the builder had expected to be paid for repairs to the units; but it was subsequently learned that the Federal and Provincial governments are contemplating legal action if suitable compensation is not made.

Inspection of the Sydney site showed that the "temporary" repairs consist of two sheets of plywood covered with plastic sheets. Mr. Reppa cited this in condemning the move to return the residents to the project as this was simply not acceptable conditions for



Storm damage within Sydney



Plastic covering fails to remain on units roof

habitation, particularly in the event of a storm remotely approaching the seventy-five to eighty-five miles per hour winds of two Sunday's ago. He added that the town must issue a certificate of occupancy and no such certificate had been issued for the MacDonald Heights project.

The situation has raised questions concerning who has jurisdiction in approving such developments and how such approval is granted, as well as whose standards are conformed to. The answer at the moment appears to be that that contracting agency

sets the standards itself at the factory while building materials are being assembled.

Concern has arisen over the manner in which contracts are awarded. In the case of the MacDonald project, the rock bottom bid was accepted -- about \$30,000 per unit. Finally the wisdom of using prefabricated structures has come under fire. On the whole it is feared that without more strenuous methods of inspection, such a situation is likely to reoccur.

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### Referendum Results

When the referendum results were announced GAZETTE asked Student Union President Dan O'Connor for a few preliminary comments.

Mr. O'Connor stated that he was fairly pleased with the turnout, since it provided a representative determination of the students' wishes.

Continuing, he said "If it is at all possible we must make sure that this is not the start of a vicious circle in which the Union is so weak that students become alienated to the extent that they simply will never agree to strengthen the Union."

The referendum results are on the agenda for the next Students' Council meeting, which will be at 7:00 pm, Sunday November 3 in the Council Chambers, second floor, SUB.

The REFERENDUM results are as follows:

	1st round	2nd round	3rd round
Proposal "A"	536	542	
Proposal "B"	474	639	797
Proposal "C"	314		
Proposal "D"	676	679	809
Total	2000	1860	1606

Since no

proposal received a simple majority of votes cast, and no proposal received very strong support the Students' Council must decide what the votes mean and what action is appropriate. The GAZETTE will publish a breakdown of the final vote tally by polls next week. The information was not available in time for this issue.