

"Social Disaster" Getting Worse

OTTAWA (CUP) -- Students must realize that "the housing crisis" is not a short-term problem exclusive to students. It is a complex, long-term "social disaster" which is getting worse, and which governments at all levels have failed to grapple with.

And students should devote their energy and add their numbers to the ranks of Canadians now demanding and pressuring for decent housing "so that as students they have a better chance of getting adequate housing, and so that after they leave the educational system, they will not have to struggle with a disastrous housing problem."

This was the substance of a statement released 26 August by the National Union of Students (NUS) in Ottawa.

It comes at a time when half a million post-secondary students across Canada intending to return to school are finding that there just isn't enough housing to go around.

With a federally imposed freeze on student housing funds since 1973, despite increasing enrollment, with building starts down 28 per cent over last year, which was a 20 per cent drop from the previous year, and with an average vacancy rate across the country of 1.2 per cent, the NUS release concludes

that "only a general improvement of the housing situation will mean an improvement in student's housing."

The NUS position bitterly attacks all levels of government for "inaction" in the face of increased household formations and a deteriorating housing supply, rapidly advancing rents and housing prices, and landlord resistance to protective legislation for tenants.

Municipalities and provincial governments are criticized for not legislating or enforcing adequate repairs to low-quality housing or reasonable rental rates.

The federal government is condemned for failing to create housing, and adopting a "basically stand-still position since 1973", citing the federal cut backs in CMHC funding for co-operative and low and middle income housing, as an example.

Faced with a worsening situation and what NUS sees as government inaction, the national union calls on students "to join with others who are working to reverse the present decline."

The statement points out that "a considerable number of student governments have already contacted active community housing groups and tenants unions in their community" and urges that others

do likewise.

According to NUS, students have "a unique role to play" in community housing action. Students, as a low income group during their term of studies, compete with other low-income groups for housing. However, they are in a unique position because of their existing organizational structures through which collective resources and action may be utilized.

Also, students move more frequently than other groups, and hence have a chance to "feel the housing crunch" more often. And, students who live in institutional accommodation can participate more freely in pro-tenant activity "because they have less reason to fear landlord reprisals," the statement reads.

But the fact that students have a better chance of affording adequate accommodation after they graduate is viewed as a mixed blessing from the perspective of students as pro-housing activists.

On the one hand, the statement says, they are "less liable to discouragement", but on the other they are "more liable to lose interest" in the issues of improved housing for all.

Improvement in housing, according to NUS, includes the preserva-

tion of neighbourhoods, increased protection for tenants, and government action to increase the stock of housing available.

With particular reference to students, NUS calls for "an end to discrimination by occupation" whereby landlords can refuse to rent to students because they are students.

And the national student union also calls for resumed government funding of student residences "where there is a proven need." Because students compete with other low-income groups for housing, the provision of student residences would reduce the pressure on that type of accommodation, the statement says.

It concludes by urging students to realize that the "housing crisis" isn't just something that happens for three weeks each year in the Fall and to students, and asks students and student organizations to become more involved in ongoing community housing action programmes.

"Throughout the year, not just for a few weeks in the fall, students should be one of the groups asking that decent housing be made available to all Canadians," it concludes.

Students Still Left Out

REGINA (Cup) --- The Council of Minister's of Education (CME) announced following its closed meetings here on September 9-10 they are requesting "immediate amendments" to the Canada Student Loans Act.

At the Regina meetings, the CME received what was intended to be the final report of the secret Federal-Provincial Task Force on Student Aid. According to a CME document however, the work of the Task Force will continue in the upcoming year, and will result in a more detailed report "in order for the Council to have a clearer understanding of the financial and social implications" of new student aid policies.

Student aid consideration will also form part of the discussion this November when CME and federal ministers meet, again in closed session.

Although CME refuses to detail what the proposes student aid amendments entail, they did state that aid for part-time students and students taking "short courses" forms a part of the proposal.

It is also believed the recommendations deal with tying in

student aid to other income maintenance programs such as welfare and manpower retraining schemes.

As well, sources say the report deals with the possible creation of a National Loans Commission to oversee student aid programs in Canada.

The most vocal supporter of closed decision-making, the new CME chairperson Eileen Dailly, said student participation was not discussed by the Council, despite repeated requests from NUS last year that students be included on the Task Force.

She argued that students should not complain about being excluded because other groups, such as teachers and trustees, were also excluded from the Task Force, which consists entirely of senior student aid officials.

"They are excluded so as to expediate our national goals far better", she explained.

As far as CME is concerned "it's far better for each provincial deputy minister to get feedback from their students which can then be passed on collectively to the Council of Ministers", she said.

Dailly was not able to speak for

the whole CME on the possibility that the Task Force hold public hearings in preparing its report to the CME.

Responding to a student question on this, Bert Cohol of Alberta said that although he did not favour "active student participation" on the Task Force, he called public

hearings where "interest groups like NUS" could state their views, "an excellent idea".

Gordon MacMurphy of Saskatchewan said he was "open to the idea", but Dailly claimed that public hearings would be "too much", adding that public hearings were not the business of the Task Force.

Answer to Dreams

by Lynne Garland

Dalhousie Arts Students may have found an answer to their dreams if they are looking for a society just for them. There is currently a movement on campus to revive the Dalhousie Arts Society, which has been defunct for about two years. The old Arts Society was basically a grants-giving organization, but since the Grants Committee of the Students Union fulfills that capacity there wasn't much need for the Arts Society and it disbanded.

The movement to re-organize the Arts Society, with a whole new outlook and purpose, is headed by Arts Representatives, Lynn Fitzgerald and Glen Robertson. There is considerable interest among Arts Students to create a

club that would serve both the cultural and social desires of the Arts Students, and also to generate an added voice for this faculty in the political and administrative affairs of the Student Union and/or Dalhousie University. The Arts Society, which is already a registered organization at Dalhousie and has a working constitution, seems to fit the requirements of a club for Arts Students. There is a need for an executive committee, which will be formed this month. A general meeting is also planned for September. Any interested students enrolled in the faculty of Arts should see their Arts Representatives, or come to the Student Union offices in the S.U.B.

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