

# Media needs help

by Valerie Mansour

"You're Roy Bonisteel, aren't you? You taught me Sunday School twelve years ago. What are you doing now?"

Unlike that woman greeting Bonisteel on a recent plane trip, when bumping into him we would not have to ask what he's been up to lately. The host from CBC's *Man Alive* is a familiar face in most Canadian homes. In fact, Bonisteel considers it a shame that he is more common to some people than their own next door neighbour.

That alienation from people around us has become one of the main effects of television on today's society.

Bonisteel was in Halifax on Friday speaking at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He began his talk with a unique report on the history of radio, by playing excerpts from notable events in history. These included one of the first radio broadcasts, that of the 1922 presidential election, as reported from Pittsburgh. He also had a tape of Babe Ruth hitting a home run, radio reports of Lindberg crossing the Atlantic, and various

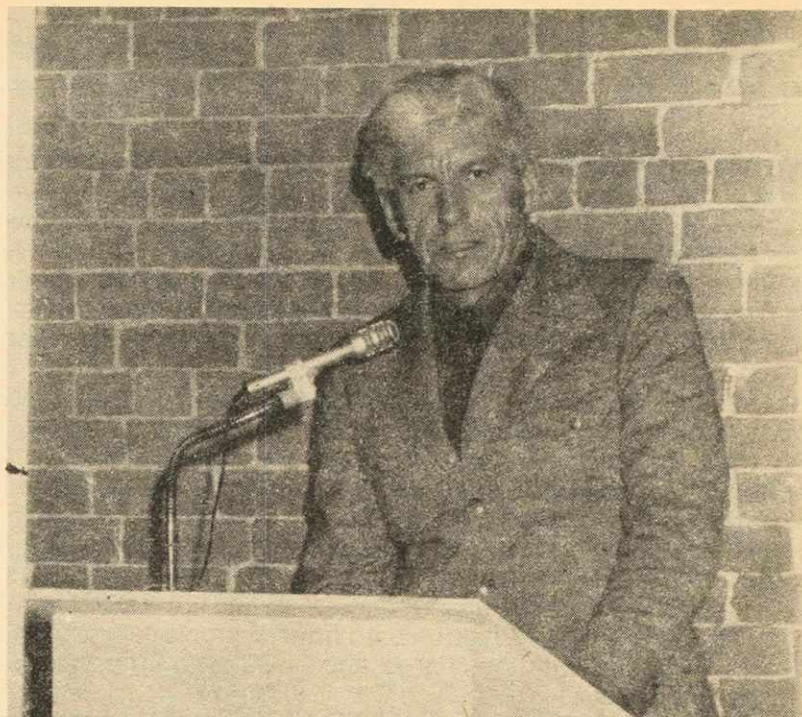
advertisements. He remembers radio as being more exciting than television, since you had to use your own imagination to fill in missing information.

Children today spend more time watching TV than anything else but sleeping. The complete effects on children are still unknown, but by working with them in schools in the Toronto area, Bonisteel has a good idea of just how they're thinking.

Children are under the impression that thirty minutes is the ideal length it takes for a problem to be solved, or as in commercials, only a mere sixty seconds. From the advertisements they discover how bad we really are, but yet still realizing a solution is available for everything.

Why do kids love TV? It is a means of communication. Unlike mothers, TV's can be shut off when not appreciated. Bonisteel suggests encouraging the children to talk to their sets and to realize what is happening in their minds as they receive all that information being thrown at them.

Bonisteel thinks the term mass media is a contradiction in itself. The media is directed towards the



Dal Photo/Walsh

middle upper class and not the masses. Minority opinions do not matter, as those people do not have the money to buy the advertised products.

Bonisteel made many general comments on television in reply to the audience's questions. He finds that Canadians prefer to watch American productions rather than shows created in Canada. As for advertisements, he considers a vast

majority of them as insulting to women.

Bonisteel mentioned that his own show, *Man Alive*, will be subtly changing so that it can become a catalyst and really involve people.

Society is providing the message for today's media. Through the education system, Roy Bonisteel hopes that we can improve upon the present situation.

"Our work is cut out for us."

## Co-operative housing worth consideration

by Fred Promoli

A small group of interested university and community persons attended the second of a two-part series of discussions on co-operative housing Tuesday evening in the SUB. They heard the background of a co-op actually in operation in Halifax, from one of its members and guiding lights, Johanna Oosterveld.

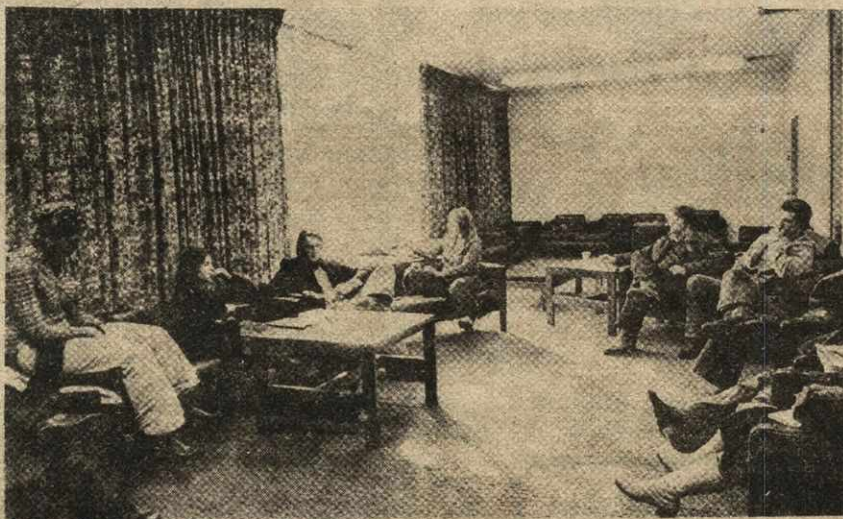
Representing the federal government and the university were, respectively, Bernie Hughes, of the local CMHC office, and Dalhousie Director of Housing, John Graham. Housing Secretary Barbara Beach chaired the meeting.

Ms. Oosterveld described the recent metamorphosis of the OVO co-operative here in Halifax. It is a fairly small project of twenty families who have rehabilitated groups of existing houses (and are continuing to do so) in various locations within the city where land prices were found to be reasonable.

The members ensure that their rents will be below market price (not much, Johanna admits, but still below). Maintenance is cheap because it is all done by co-op members.

The project is organized and administered as a collective; it has an unpaid executive, and the membership as a whole decides upon policy. No individual or small group wields power through position. For this reason, it may be concluded that the small co-operative displays stronger cohesion than would a larger one.

In selecting its members, the co-op wishes to avoid being exclusive, yet neither does it want hangers-on. A prime criterion of course is financial need; but not all members have low incomes, for some higher incomes are necessary to help subsidize the membership of low incomes. For them, the rent is slightly higher than the payments to CMHC call for. If a householder's income is less than \$9,000 he is subsidized. Those whose incomes



Dal Photo/Dayal

are higher, up to \$17,000, pay a graduated partial surcharge on their rent, and above that income the maximum surcharge (\$15.00 per month for some units) is levied. Without this system it is felt the project could not operate.

Another requirement for membership in the OVO co-operative is attendance at all meetings. If new members who have not yet acquired a unit miss two meetings they are asked to resign. Those who have been assigned units must help to rehabilitate them. A trial period of two months must also be completed satisfactorily.

When OVO acquires buildings, it gives the occupants the option of becoming members of the co-op and staying in their place, except in rare cases where a co-op member has urgent need of the place himself. Many of the tenants in buildings bought by OVO have been students, all of whom have chosen not to remain and become co-op members.

Other co-operatives currently in progress include one on Bauer St. through Interfaith Housing Corporation, one in the Westmount area which received a great deal of publicity early this year when the city threatened expropriation and

redevelopment there, and a senior citizens apartment project in Wolfville which is now in the building stage after two years of planning.

The Interfaith Housing Corporation is a non-profit organization sponsored by seven denominations in the Halifax-Dartmouth area for the primary purpose of researching, and responding to, the housing needs of low to moderate income families. It is involved with the purchase, construction, and rehabilitation of housing and promotes the formation of non-profit housing solutions, especially co-operative housing societies. Interfaith functions primarily as a resource group, providing technical and professional services (legal, architectural, organizational, etc.) to individuals and community sponsored housing groups. Interfaith can, for example, help groups get organized, arrange for financing, buy property, have construction work carried out, etc.

Mention was made also of the recent change in the Assisted Home Ownership Programme, which is being blamed in part for the drop in new housing starts over the past year. As it now stands, people making less than \$12,000 per year would never be able to pay off a loan taken out under AHOP. The pro-

gramme would be attractive for those who do not need subsidies, but the maximum allowable floor space is less than many of these people will accept.

The problem is reinforced by government philosophy, which considers that people still want single family dwellings and will settle for nothing else. It makes a popular election platform, but no newly elected governments have yet been able to deliver. The great majority of households in Halifax-Dartmouth consist of tenants; people's attitudes toward owning and toward single family dwellings are changing.

Why is the university at the bottom of the priority list for CMHC and for the government in general? No satisfactory answer was forthcoming, but John Graham quoted, with tongue in cheek, the former federal minister Bernie Danson as having said that "students are competing with people from the lower income groups, and this is benefiting both."

How much interest is being shown in this concept? Johanna Oosterveld replied that there is a fair amount, but it takes a solid core group to spearhead any project. Its members must first get a good general idea of what is available to them, then go away and think about it for awhile, returning when they have identified the possibilities for them as a group and their own particular needs.

Are the CMHC requirements too stringent with respect to meeting building standards? John Graham felt that they were not (with the possible exception of fire regulations); therefore it is not too difficult to find buildings that are in suitable condition for use in rehabilitation projects.

For more information, it is recommended that you see Barbara Beach in the Operations Office, second floor of the SUB, who will ensure that you are directed to the most relevant sources if further action is contemplated.