

# The Pres. speaks out on housing (safely)

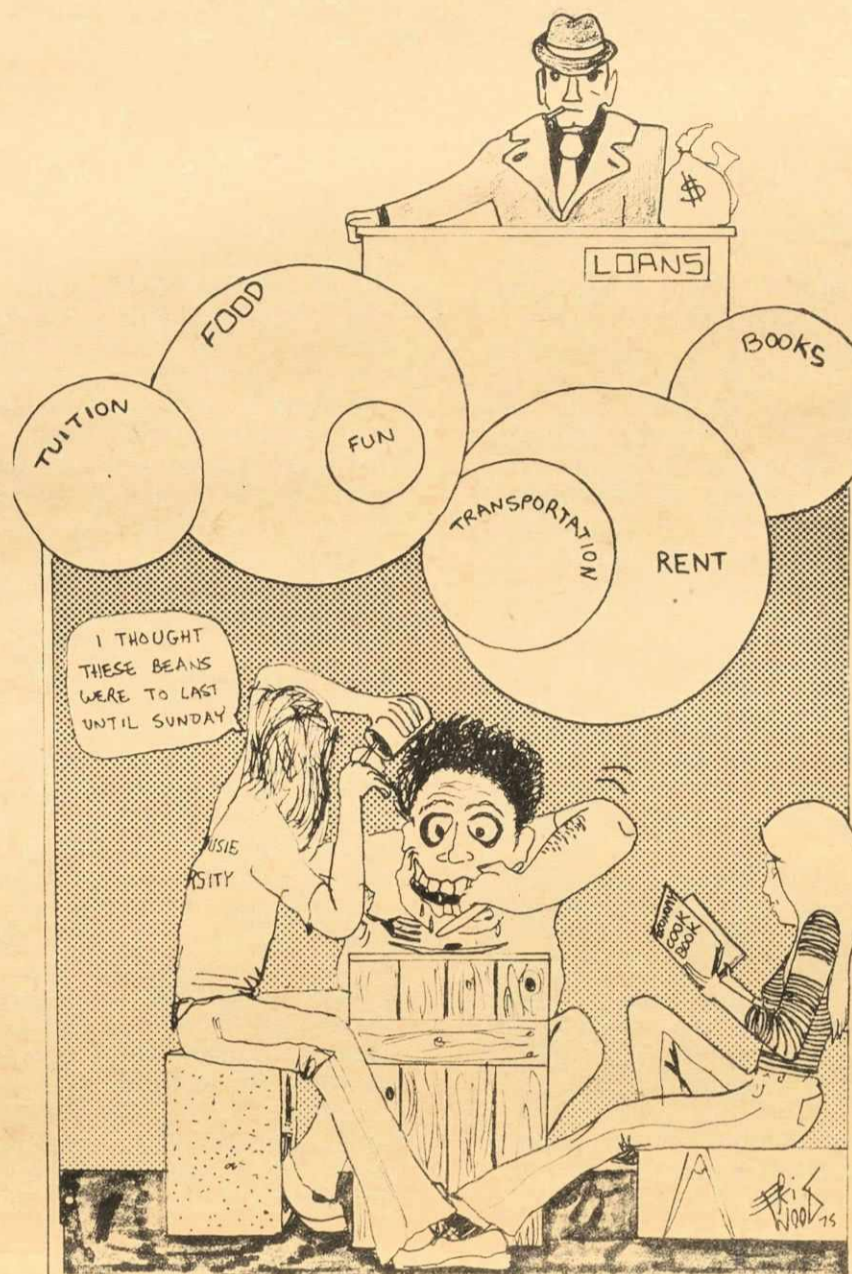
by Bruce Russell

It is September; the academic year is beginning, students are registering, leaves are turning; and at Dalhousie the facilities for student housing again appear inadequate. As in recent past years at this time, some number of Dalhousie students are finding themselves in the situation of simply not having a place to live, while it can be left to idle conjecture just how many potential Dalhousie students have registered elsewhere due to the insufficiency of student accommodation in Halifax.

To be fair, the perennial problem of Dalhousie student housing is a complex one with the University, by no means, wholly at fault. Dalhousie is located in a city with very nearly the lowest vacancy rate in Canada. The far-reaching ramifications of this characteristic are currently the interest of Halifax's Housing Task Force, to report to City Council later this year. Yet while Dalhousie is certainly not the only post-secondary institution in the metro area, it does seem to be the only one with any degree of housing shortage. It seems inaccurate to attribute this observation to the sheer relative size of the Dalhousie student body for the financial capabilities of the University are accordingly significant, relative to the other local institutions.

Briefly, however, what housing facilities does this University help provide to its students? Latest figures indicate that the traditional residences, C.D. Howe and Shirreff, accommodate five hundred fifteen and four hundred thirty-two students respectively. Both of these figures are above the designed capacities of the buildings in the case of Howe Hall in particular where this summer eighty-five additional spaces have been found by doubling and tripling in rooms that were previously singles and doubles. This arrangement in particular is extreme to the point where it is conceded by some university officials that students cannot be expected to study in such cramped accommodation, and that this piggybacking of beds would not have been attempted had the academic facilities of the Killam Library not been "only twenty-five feet away". It can be left to readers to evaluate how far the proximity of this Library (which of course opens and closes at specific hours) can be considered a substitute to home, private study and relaxation.

Moving along, I should mention that the University has made a timely purchase in the acquisition of Studley Apartments, fifty-two male capacity low-rise construction in the east shadow of Howe Hall. Women are also housed in institutions apart from, but administered by the main residence, Shirreff Hall. Sixty women will find accommodation in Ardmore Hall, on North and Oxford Streets and thirty-three will be



housing in two large houses, closer to the campus.

In addition to these arrangements, the University also administers Fenwick Place which provides housing for up to six hundred ninety-two students. The operation of this facility is quite satisfactory. Peter Greene Hall on Wellington Street is a married students facility with one-hundred twelve apartments. The waiting list for this accommodation is, without seasonal exception, lengthy. The structure, owned by Dalhousie, is leased to the Halifax Student Housing Society which administers the building's day-to-day affairs. To date, this is Halifax students' closest attempt at founding a large-scale student co-operative housing unit.

Finally, there are also a limited number of University owned houses available for student accommodation. Numbering approximately thirty, these houses also command a lengthy waiting list. Usually let to one who is responsible for finding additional residents, the present policy regarding purchasing is to maintain the housing inventory and increase it where possible. As one will well appreciate, however, in

peninsular Halifax, housing of this type is a relatively uneconomical short-run solution to the housing shortage, and indeed is considered by the University as primarily for the purpose of acquisition.

The above mentioned housing facilities appear to accommodate approximately twenty-one hundred fifty students. Obviously, even if one allows for some reasonable percentage of students living at home, the gap between housing accommodation and student population is still appreciable. To help bridge this shortfall, the Student Union has initiated, with costs now being shared with the University, an office to seek out, register and refer off-campus housing for Dalhousie students, faculty and staff. Now in its third year of operation the office has become increasingly helpful and effective and this year for the first time, will be open through the full academic year. One large problem that this office has encountered, however, and this should be no surprise to anyone, is the high cost of rented or leased accommodation in Halifax. These rates, very high for established residents in Halifax, make much housing virtually inaccessible for

students.

What then, briefly, is the upshoot of all this? First of all, Dalhousie definitely suffers from a student housing shortage. It is difficult to cite a conclusive quantitative description of this shortage due to the variance of available off-campus housing. One aspect of this shortage, however, is definitely present and that is the aforementioned piggyback arrangement of eighty-five extra beds in C.D. Howe Hall. As long as this situation exists with all its undesirable academic and social ramifications, Dalhousie will have a housing problem.

The effect of a shortage of housing at Dalhousie on potential registrants should not be minimized. In an extensive survey conducted by the Student Union two years ago it was found that of students who were accepted but did not register at Dalhousie in 1973, eight point six percent explicitly cited housing as their reason. Such attitudes reflect no small financial loss to the University. Further, twenty-four percent of respondents to this survey considered the availability of accommodations to be "essential". Another twenty-four percent considered it to be "important".

A further ramification of this housing shortage is also beginning to loom. Various estimates over the last several years indicate that a decreasing proportion of students from outside the Halifax-Dartmouth area are registering at Dalhousie, to the point that the proportion of out-of-town students attending Dalhousie is now well below fifty percent. More and more, Dalhousie is becoming a local institution rather than, at the least, a provincial one. Based on random selection, one is much more likely to encounter an out-of-town student at, for example, St. Mary's University, than at Dalhousie. I do not believe that this is the image that Dalhousie, of present international renown, would care to perpetuate. The most obvious reason again for this ever increasing localization, is our relative shortage of student housing. Solutions? There are several and let us face it; they all will cost money. The point is, with C.M.H.C. funding available to accommodate in most cases, more than ninety percent of construction or renovation cost, the short-term financial burden to the University should be accepted. Whether, as the Student Union is seeking, additional low-rise apartments similar to Studley Apartments be procured, or the much talked about addition to C.D. Howe Hall is begun, the long-run benefits, both tangible and intangible, to the University's present position, would certainly justify the expense. Let us hope that some September soon, the leaves will turn over Dalhousie students that are all adequately housed.

## Cohn preview for fall season

The irrespressible talent of VICTOR BERGE is guaranteed to make the audience howl with laughter on Thursday, October 30. The coast-to-coast hit "TEN LOST YEARS", called "powerful, moving ..... triumphant piece" by Time magazine, will be staged in the Cohn Auditorium on Friday, October 31, at 8:30 p.m. and matinee and evening performances on Saturday, November 1 and Sunday, November 2. Whether you're a Scot or nae, you'll be delighted to know Scotland's

ambassadors of good fun THE ROYAL CLANSMEN with A BREATH OF SCOTLAND are coming back to town on Monday, November 3, followed by the incomparable TOKYO STRING QUARTET, on Wednesday, November 5. A truly unique theatrical experience is the stage presentation of LADJI CAMARA AFRICAN MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE on Saturday, November 8. Theatre New Brunswick's production of FRANKENSTEIN has had a tremendous impact on every audience.

Look for FRANKENSTEIN, starring David Brown as "the creature" at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, November 10, 11, 13 and 14. Canada's most unlikely ambassador, STOMPIN' TOM is coming East again with two performances on Wednesday and Thursday, November 26 and 27. JOHN BROWNING, the pianist who is recognized as a true virtuoso in every music capital of the world, will appear on Saturday, November 15, The Canadian Opera Company's

new production of Puccini's LA BOHEME (conceived and directed by Jan Rubes) comes to Halifax with three performances on Friday, November 28 at 8:30 p.m. and a matinee and evening performance on Saturday, November 29. The unforgettable OSCAR PETERSON will weave his jazz magic spell on Friday, December 5. The fall season will close with theatre for the whole family by MERMAID THEATRE from Wolfvillw on Thursday, and Friday, December 18 and 19 at 2:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, December 20 and 21, at 7:30 p.m.