

# Halifax housing situation economic forecast

by Helen Marshall

"Landlords continue to evict people for retaliatory reasons despite supposed tenant protection under the Residential Tenancies Act," says Joanne Cook, vice-president of the Metro Area Tenants' Union (MATU).

Cook spoke at a Housing Crisis meeting at the North End Library on Tuesday night, before a group of 25 enthusiastic citizens. This was the first in a series of meetings being presented by the Housing for People Coalition.

Cook says tenants who appeal to the Rent Review Board and the Residential Tenancies Board often discover they suffer the consequences.

"Tenants are being kicked out of their homes in Halifax every day for no better reason than complaining about there being no hot water," she says.

Cook would like to see a security of tenure system established. Under such a system, "as long as you pay your rent, don't annoy your neighbours and don't have a still in your basement, you can't be evicted," says Cook. "A tenant should have the right to perpetuate his home," she concluded.

Other speakers at the meeting included Prof. Alan Moscovitch, an economist at Carleton University with a long history of involvement in tenant movements, Halifax consulting economist Michael

Gardner and founding MATU president Keith Cossey.

Moscovitch provided economic background for the present housing crisis.

In 1945, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation dominated the funding of housing in Canada, but the government thought there should be a shift to the private sector and opened the financing of mortgages to the banks for the first time that year. Since then, CMHC has cut back their programs by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Bank of Canada interest rates have soared, a direct result of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank hiking their rates, says Moscovitch. The result is that we have gone from 20 year mortgages to variable term mortgages, where the interest rate and payment is calculated on a month to month basis, he explained. The number of new households created in Canada in 1981 was approximately 225 thousand. When compared with the number of housing units created - about 175 thousand, and there will be even fewer this year - "more people will share accommodations

with others instead of having their own nuclear home," says Moscovitch.

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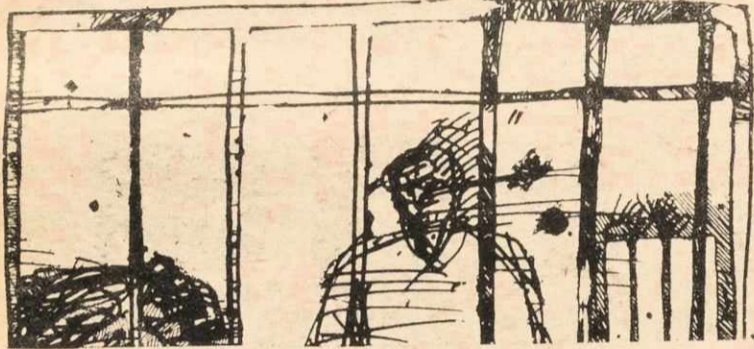
Keith Cossey stressed the need for people to organize, so that they have an effective voice to counter-lobby the Investment Property Owners Association "which would like to do away with things like rent review". As a result of organized action, "they are backing away from that one," says Cossey.

A hot-line manned by trained volunteers is in operation. People can get expert advice and counselling on tenant problems on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-9 p.m. The number is 454-6556. Messages can be left anytime with the answering service.

Dennis Theman, chairperson of the meeting and the Housing for People Coalition, says the object is to "create more public awareness of the housing crisis". He hopes the government will start to do something about the situation, although so far Theman says "their action has been to abandon the select committee on housing without it ever meeting".

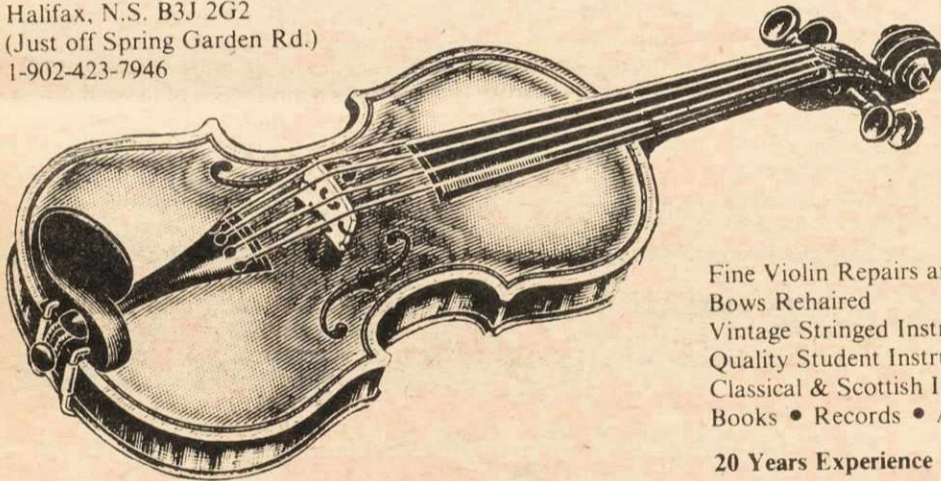
The Housing for People Coalition was formed in the spring of '82 as an umbrella organization of non-profit community groups in the metro area interested and active in the housing field. It provides a vehicle to exchange information and ideas and a means of support for one another. The Coalition is in search of short and long term solutions to the problems, says Theman.

There are three workshops yet to be held, which are all open to the public. On October 21, the topic is **The Rental Situation**, with Dalhousie Legal Aid Service and MATU participating. October 26 features the topic of **Housing Alternatives**, and October 28 is **Future Proposals**. M.P. Gerald Regan and M.L.A. Michael Laffin have been invited, but as yet their participation is unconfirmed. All meetings will be held at the North End Library on Gottingen Street at 8:00 p.m.



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