

## OFY project helped ex-inmates find jobs

By JOAN CURLL

This past summer thirteen university students were engaged in an Opportunities for Youth Project known as AID, Agency for ex-Inmate Development. AID was initially proposed late last winter by several members of this project. The idea was founded through Action Corps, a voluntary student organization, on the UNB campus, that works in the penal institutions in the Fredericton area.

The reason this activity was chosen was because of the massive social problem that is invisible to most citizens. What I mean here is that people are apathetic and socially unconscious of the inmates and ex-inmates total problems. AID has tried to expose these problems to the public, to develop a societal awareness, and in

many ways AID has achieved its goals.

The basic purpose was to assist in the rehabilitation of the ex-offender returning to the community. It was felt that this goal could best be achieved by working towards specific objectives.

1. Assist ex-inmates in obtaining suitable employment.

-By visiting all companies, firms and other possible employers to promote the employment of ex-inmates, to find out if there are any positions available, to discuss with them their hiring policies and as to what are the qualifications for the job.

-By interviewing ex-inmates and inmates who only have a couple of weeks left to finish in their sentences prior to their release. The purpose of these interviews was to determine

the interest of the ex-offenders and their qualifications.

-By street work, which meant getting in contact with ex-inmates, particularly, and other young people on the street.

2. To assist in providing suitable accommodations to ex-offenders.

-By drawing up a list of all suitable accommodations available every week and by personally visiting them to insure their suitability.

Another purpose of this project was public education, to inform the people of the new approach and philosophy taken by the Department of Justice in penal corrections in New Brunswick. By making the public aware of this fact, the inmates and ex-inmate's societal stigma might be alleviated. It should be realized that the rate of success cannot be readily measured because this type of education is a gradual process. The project members are convinced that some immediate success has been achieved. The Public Education Program included the use of radio, television, newspaper reports and interviews, a public forum, questionnaires to both the public and law enforcement agencies and just simple conversing with people.

The project members were discouraged many times throughout the program but these were put aside by further encouragements. They found that their path to success was not completely open to them but was often hindered by closed ears. Sometimes those who did not want to listen were employers and other times the ex-inmates themselves. The staff discovered that finding jobs for ex-offenders can be difficult under the best of conditions. There seem to be three main hinderance areas: 1) lack of education or skills, 2) the

impossibility of being bonded greatly limits the choice of jobs, and 3) the never to be forgotten stigma of the criminal record. But after dealing with approximately sixty ex-offenders this summer the members of AID are very pleased with their degree of success in all areas of the project.

Who benefitted? It is without a doubt that the people of New Brunswick have, in varying measures, benefitted from the project's efforts. Employers have given gainfully employment to ex-inmates and have realized in most cases, that such people can be rehabilitated if given the chance. Others have finally realized the fact that rehabilitation occurs outside and not inside the institution.

The project members also feel that they have made a favorable impression upon the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments. They have realized that the members tackled an often neglected social problem and that their efforts were not in vain.

The practical experience gained by those individuals involved in the project is really unmeasurable. This project was not only studying ex-inmates but also a study in human behavior, societal reaction and problems. Due to all members

of the project being either a psychology, sociology or criminology major, each has benefitted in knowledge in his own chosen field of study.

It is felt that an agency as AID should definitely be continued and the need of this service cannot be overemphasized in the light of the following facts.

1. Ex-inmates do not know who to turn to upon release from a penal institution. It should be noted that their success was largely achieved because of their informality and their not representing any authority.

2. They found that once contact was established with employers they had relatively no real problems in finding suitable employment. It was much more feasible to find employment through the members own efforts, rather than send ex-inmates to Manpower and other employment agencies.

During the course of the academic year, Action Corps, a voluntary student group will be doing relatively the same work as they did this past summer, though on a smaller scale. Hopefully next spring Action Corps will re-apply for an O.F.Y. grant to resume the work that was successfully carried out this summer.



### Mugwump

By EDISON STEWART

### Journal

I suppose I should start out the year by checking the predictions I made in our last issue in March. So here goes...

The prediction: "Beginning in early fall, the administration will slowly begin to do something about the health centre."

I was right. A student committee examined the health centre and all its problems during the summer, and, while they've prepared a report on the matter, apparently they aren't releasing it until the powers that be have had a good look-see. Word is that the report recommends a full time Doctor for the centre. We won't get one right away, apparently, because the university is still dickering with the province over who should pay the shot. So we'll have to go with two sessions a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. I'm afraid that's the best we'll see for a long time.

The prediction: "SRC President Roy Neale and the BRUNSWICKAN will become involved in a feud next year - Roy told Bruns editor Peter Collum and myself that 'a quarrel is good for both of us - it creates publicity'."

Time will tell, and I hope I'm wrong, but Neale seems bent on having a fight one way or the other. That's too bad, especially in light of the fact that Neale is doing great in other areas of his administration.

The prediction: "Dean Kidd will do little or nothing about the residence report until she's pressed to do so..."

I was right...partly. Open rooms in the women's residences are the same so far, but a residence questionnaire was circulated this summer, so something might come of the report yet.

I don't have enough room to go over my other predictions, but most of them are right. Watch this space next week for them...

Getting back to this year's activities, the SRC will soon be presented with a plan to restructure itself. The plan will come from an SRC member...

The Council will soon get a bill for some summer expenditures that nobody foresaw. President Roy Neale will be after some well-deserved money, and New Brunswick's newspapers will want to be paid for the ads that the Union of Students ran. Comptroller Chris Fisher is also contemplating applying for some of the green stuff...

The NBUS and the province will likely continue their talks for quite a while. Preliminary discussions are under way for the representation of students on Department of Youth appeal boards. There are a lot of mechanical things still to be worked out though.

Frosh week organizer Steve Mulholland appears to be doing a good job. Maybe the man's in line for the Vice-President's position, which comes up for grabs this fall.

### Students to figure in vote

For the first time in years, New Brunswick students will be taking an active role in a provincial election.

Between now and September 18, students in Gloucester county will be making sure the voters there know which party supports them in their efforts to change the student aid system. When the by-election comes, the students hope that the parents will go to the polls with that in mind.

According to New Brunswick Union of Students secretary Roy Neale, the county will be the subject of the student campaign in favour of the Liberal candidate. Student loans in the northern area of the province are a much more pressing problem than here, he said. "A higher percentage of the students there take loans. We're making sure that the politicians put the student aid changes in their platform."

# MONEY!...

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AND WOULDN'T MIND DRIVING A VAN, LET US KNOW.

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ON A REGULAR BASIS.

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