

BRUNSWICKAN

SPECIAL COMMUNITY ISSUE

Problems at the new Parkhill Apartments

When one hears about landlord-tenant problems, one usually pictures poor tenants living in decrepid houses with dangerous wiring, poor heating, rats, etc. However, this is not always the case as often tenants living in relatively new apartments are subject to landlord exploitation, harassment and indifference.

This latter type of landlord-tenant hassle is exemplified very well at the new apartment complex at Dunn Road. The complex is known as the Parkhill Apartments and was financed by the Federal Government's Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is owned, however, by a private absentee landlord who resides in Westmount, a fashionable suburb of Montreal. A former army officer was hired to manage the apartment project who according to tenants' comments attempts to run the place like an army barracks.

As the apartment project neared completion, one page of advertisements were placed in the Gleaner enticing Frederictonians to move in. It was advertised as being soundproof, as having cable TV, good parking facilities, thermostats in each apartment and a children's playground. Upon further inquiring prospective tenants were told that they could move in by September first and were shown a copy of the lease which they were expected to sign.

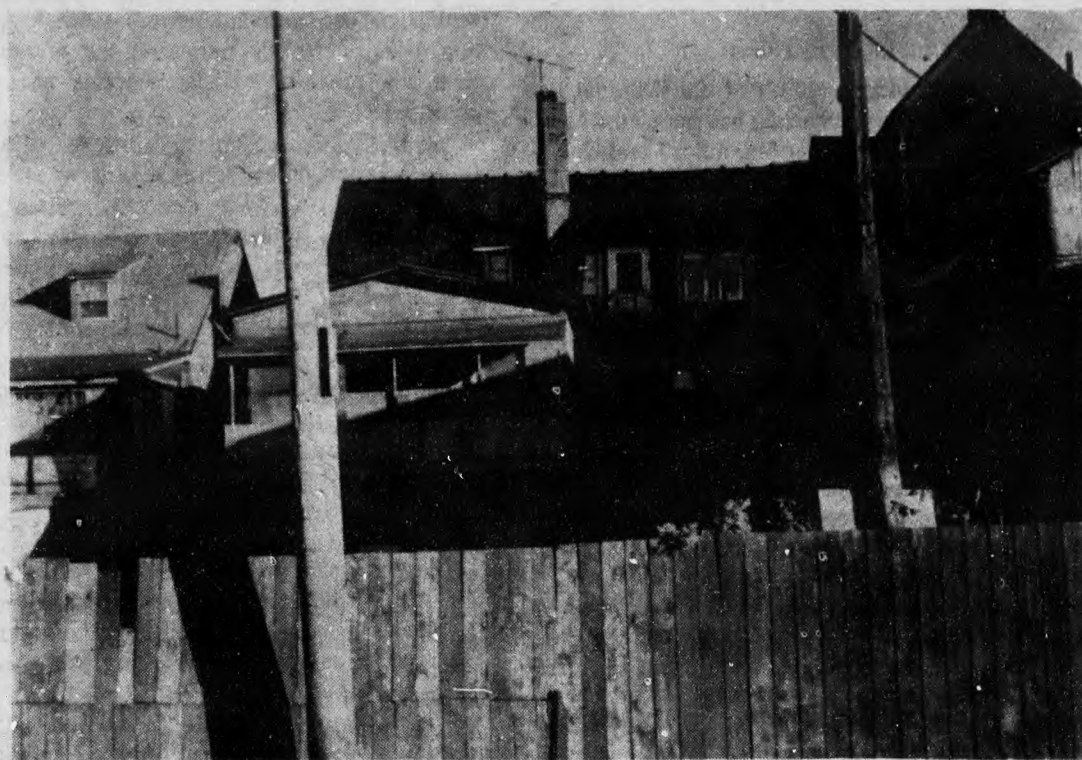
On September 1st tenants started to move in to their

apartment only to find that the carpeting hadn't been laid yet, numerous walls were unpainted, the thermostats didn't work, the windows leaked severely, the parking lot was a sea of mud, the stairwells didn't have any handrailings, construction dirt and debris littered both the grounds and their apartments. Workmen and inspectors would run into one's apartment without notice to complete deficiencies.

After moving in, they also discovered that the building was virtually a sound box due to the lack of insulation in the floor, metal stairways and cheap building construction. They had to pay for cable TV and were directed to sign a lease which was far different from the one they were shown when they originally inquired.

For all the inconveniences of living in an uncompleted building (despite being told that it would be completed), the landlord has offered nothing but indifference. He has so far refused to lower the rent to compensate tenants for their inconveniences. Tenants are being forced to pay full rent for muddy parking lots, incomplete apartments and little privacy!

The Landlord-Tenant Act is a provincial act defining the rights and obligations of landlords and their tenants. It is generally considered to be the most antiquated such act, biased in favour of the landlord, in Canada. However, a lease signed



Poor and inadequate housing like the above has plagued students and local residents alike in past years as they have attempted to live on meagre budgets. Because of this, and the obvious need for a tenants' association to deal with the problem, the BRUNSWICKAN presents this special section. If you have anything to add, please feel free to visit us in the SUB.

PHOTO BY SHEDD

between a landlord and tenant is legally binding and takes precedence over this Act.

The lease being forced down the throats of the Parkhill Apartment tenants is a classic in terms of the rights which it gives to the landlord. Among other things, the tenant agrees to 1) accept the apartment in its incomplete condition, with no mention that it will be completed ever; 2) that the landlord may enter the apartment at any time without

notice; 3) that the landlord may evict a tenant and seize his furniture without notice if his rent is five days overdue; 4) that the landlord is not responsible for any damage which might occur if his radiators or pipes leak. The lease is for a minimum of one year after which time the tenant must give at least two months notice if he wishes to leave.

However, future events might take a turn for the

better as a small number of Parkhill Apartment Tenants are determined to improve their lot. Despite some repression and the fear of being evicted for speaking out, several met publically last Monday where it was agreed that they would try and arrange a meeting with the owner to try and iron out their differences and that they would meet again in two weeks to try and form the basis of a Tenant's Association for Fredericton.

Housing situation desperate in Fredericton

The basic economic maxim which ordains that the consumer invariably suffers when the demand far exceeds the supply for a particular product is crucial to the unfortunate landlord-tenant situation in present day Fredericton. With the scarcity of available accommodations in Fredericton virtually every property holder is attempting to profit from the situation by charging exorbitant rents to underprivileged students. In this period of rampant unemployment most students are forced to live lives of basic subsistence depending exclusively on meagre student loans to sustain them throughout the academic year. Yet they are forced to pay unreasonably high rents to landlords who are able to pick and choose according to their per-

sonal biases the lucky ones who will be granted the privilege of utilizing their precious facilities.

Aside from over exploitation the students' plight is further aggravated by the fact that they are expected to conform to the artificial mores set down by their landlords. Most students who are interviewed for apartments must adopt the guise of the anemic scholar where only outside interests are reading, playing bridge and/or watching TV. They are threatened with severe reprisals if their behavior does not conform to the habits of a social recluse. It is strictly "verboten" to indulge in alcoholic beverages, to make "unnecessarily" loud noise, to hold parties along with numerous other petty restrictions on the tenant's

social life. To make matters worse most students are unaware of even their most basic rights under the promordial Landlord-Tenant's Act which hasn't been substantially modified since 1952. I personally was informed by an outraged landlord that I had to pay an extra month's rent because I had submitted my month's notice after paying my rent instead of before. All of us know of personal incidences of misabuse of the law by landlords, i.e. the entering of apartments without due notice, the eviction of tenants on flimsy pretences, etc. . . . The typical Fredericton landlord suffers from an apparently widespread regional disease diagnosed as "mild megalomania." Although they would prefer to rent to married couples

(without children) they are forced by necessity to condescendingly admit students.

The time is certainly ripe for the formation of a Fredericton Tenant's Association dedicated

to informing all tenants of their rights, to the eradication of the feudalistic code which is the basis of the present system to help eliminate the precariousness of the tenant's position.

Joe Owens to speak to Association

Mr. Joe Owens of the Saint John South End Tenants Association will speak to the inaugural meeting of the Fredericton Tenants Association Monday night at the Monseigneur Boyd Family Centre at 7:30.

Mr. Owens was one of the initial organizers of the Saint John group that has been in existence since May of 1970.

The general aims of the Saint John group has been collective bargaining for the lease, rent and the conditions of the buildings rented by the tenants.

The local meeting is being called at the request of many tenants in the Greater Fredericton Area who have expressed interest in such an organization.