

OH GIVE ME A HOME

Everyone knows that obtaining decent housing is the main problem facing people coming out of hospital. Everyone, that is, but the provincial government, which should be providing money for mortgages for additional housing.

Present government policy is to reduce the population of Riverview Hospital. Riverview had 2,069 in-patients in Dec. 1972; 1,569 in Dec. 1974, a drop of 490. All very well for those who got out--if they found a decent place to live.

In these times of an acute shortage of housing for everyone in Vancouver, where can ex-patients locate?

Some go to government-supported psychiatric boarding homes in the city, (9 licenced homes and 7 unlicenced, presently housing 183 people). Of these placements a substantial number could live independently if they could be placed in subsidized housing situations. And a certain percentage are extremely difficult to place because they need 24 hour

care and supervision which boarding homes cannot provide on a continuing basis. There is presently a waiting list for boarding home placement.

"Vista" and "Venture" serve as halfway houses for Riverview; now we hear that they are being taken over by the Greater Vancouver Mental Health Service as short-stay hostels.

Loma Society has 1 long-stay (6month) 24 hour staffed hostel with 11 beds. Mental Patients Association has 5 houses with an average of 9 beds apiece. Coast Foundation has a 25 suite apartment block to accommodate about 30 adults, and a long waiting list. Vancouver Emotional Emergency Centre has a 5 bed short-stay hostel.

At least several more apartment blocks for semi-independent living are needed to serve the clientele of the community mental health teams throughout the city. And at least 2 more MPA halfway houses could be fil-

led if we had them.

Intensifying this bleak picture is the new policy of CMHC. Through CMHC we have been able to buy 4 of our properties. But now this federal government funding source may be drying up. Reacting to the grim state of the national economy and depressed state of the constructing industry, CMHC no longer promises to underwrite loans for existing housing, for non-profit organizations such as MPA. CMHC's new policy is to put up money for new construction.

We have concentrated on acquiring large centrally located, older homes as the best and cheapest type of accommodation for people on social assistance. However, our most recent application for a mortgage was met with a lot of opposition, and may be our last.

If the federal government will no longer help to alleviate the crucial ex-patient housing situation, we are going to have to look to the provincial government for

necessary funding, for, after all, they created the problem by reducing the hospital population. We suggest that the Departments of Health, Human Resources, and Housing get together to look into the present dilemma. MPA is willing to undertake the job of finding and filling additional houses, but we need 100% mortgaging at 8% to accomplish this. We also need 2 residence coordinator salaries per house.

On a more optimistic note is MPA's involvement with the Ad Hoc Committee on Community Resources for Persons with Psychiatric Difficulties. This committee, chaired by Health Sciences social worker Ralph Buckley, represents practically every group, both government and private, involved in housing ex-patients in the city, and is putting together a comprehensive plan in terms of immediate needs. This is the first time such a large representative group has come together over the crucial housing issue. Their plan will be forwarded shortly to the provincial government.

Fran's note: The proposal to the Vancouver Resource Board for funding for a Crisis House and Transition House is floundering. Against its the old business of who is going to pay for it. At the January 16th meeting of the Vancouver Resource Board it was felt that crisis housing must have funding that is shared between various government departments. This will take nothing but time and there is always the possibility of losing the principle that housing should be controlled by community-controlled models rather than by the medical model.

There is some hope for the Transition House in that the VRR Budget Committee has recommended asking for additional funds from the department for an initial house.

Friends who freaked out on this issue: Delores, Jacky, Eve Dennis, Barry, John Kurtz and Anita and Dorothy Phillips... Patty, Jane and Barb.....

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I would like this to be put into the nutshell. I would like to tell you a little about my life before I became a member of MPA. What I can remember about my childhood wasn't very pleasant, I started withdrawing just after my grandmother died. I was 7 years old then and she was my example in life and suddenly she was gone, then from that time on I was very withdrawn. I also had to be put into a foster home as my mother had to go work and she had nobody to take care of me as my mother and father were divorced when I was 9 months old. I stayed with these people from 7 until I was 13 years of age. For six years I only saw my mother on the weekend and sometimes not even then. I never hit it off with my foster parents, as to them I was just extra money. They used to beat me. I tried telling my mother but she wouldn't listen. I went through 6 years of this

My young life was spent in jail. I had two children- Shawn and Todd. Shawn I had to put up for adoption as I wasn't capable of looking after him. It hit me hard but I did it for his own good. Then about 2 years later Todd came along and I decided I wanted to keep Todd. He was a very sick baby when he was born. He took seizures, then one night after his first birthday I decided I had to get out of the house so I went to Bingo. That's when my baby died. He had a seizure in his sleep. Oh God. I found him next morning dead in his bed. Oh how I blamed myself for years after until a very good friend of mine introduced me to MPA. I was into the razor blade kick at the time I needed desperately to talk to someone but I was scared. I can look back on this now, and I thank God MPA was around when I needed it. My

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ple I wouldn't have my daughter on my husband and