

Tent city Toronto

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"HOUSING!"

"WHEN D'YA WANT IT?"

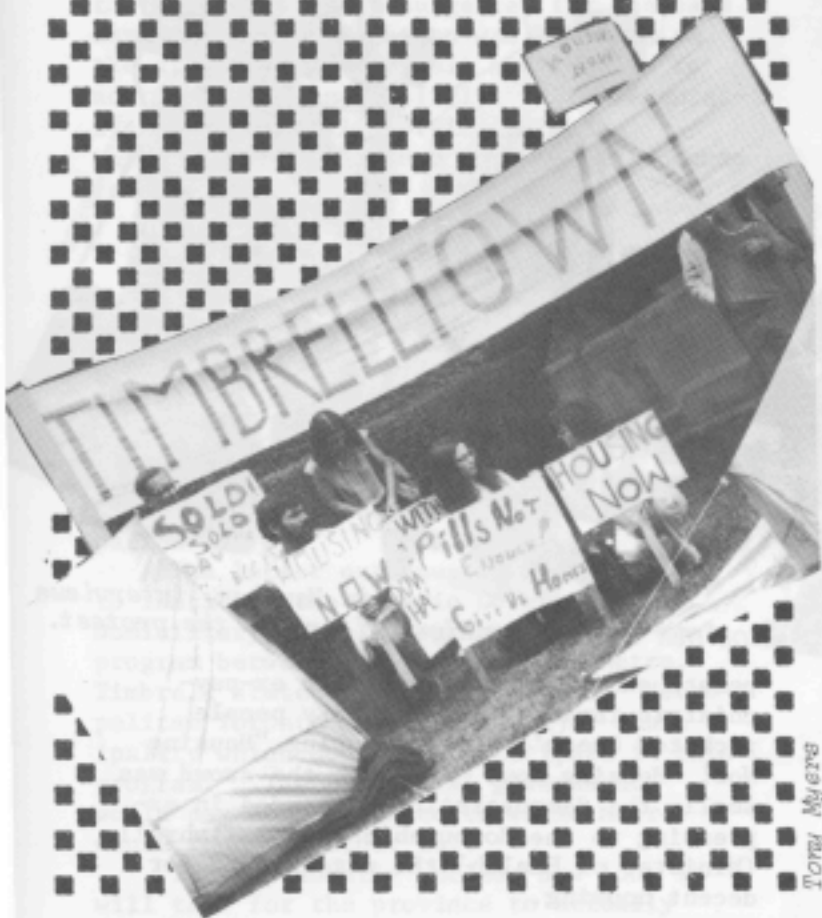
"NOW!"

The Queen's Park Demonstration

"HOUSING FOR FORMER PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS BECOMES MORE CRITICAL" "PARKDALE FIRE, CLOSING OF ROOMING HOUSES LEAVES 60 EX-MENTAL PATIENTS HOMELESS".

Toronto's establishment press, as reflected by these headlines in June, is finally waking up to the fact that there's a critical and chronic housing crisis for former psychiatric inmates. It's not really news. During the past five years, the housing shortage has steadily escalated, forcing ON OUR OWN and others to take increasing action to press for change.

Two recent reports from the Metropolitan Toronto Subcommittee on boarding Homes and Lodging Houses (1979, 1980), two position papers from CRC (Community Resources Consultants) (1978, 1979), and



Tony Myers

one produced jointly by CRC and the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry this year (see news section) have clearly documented facts such as these:

- There are only forty to fifty commercial boarding houses in Toronto, containing 730 to 750 beds for recently released inmates.
- At least half of these boarding houses are substandard, grossly inadequate, and riddled with health, building and fire violations.
- Boarding houses are predominantly owned by private operators, who typically exploit and patronize the residents.
- Roughly three-quarters of the city's boarding houses are located in the South Parkdale area in Toronto's West End.
- There are very few other types of housing for ex-psychiatric inmates except for HouseLink, which has about twelve co-ops, all resident-controlled, with sixty to sixty-five beds.
- The vast majority of residents in boarding and lodging houses and other subsidized housing are poor and receiving welfare or Family Benefits disability allowances or pensions.



Colin Vaughan, interviews ON OUR OWN member Glen Walters at the protest.

operate shortage of housing for ex-psychiatric inmates. About forty people picketed Queen's Park, shouting "Housing Now! Housing Now! Although the crowd was small, the demonstration succeeded in expressing to the Honourable Dennis Timbrell (Minister of Health) the urgent need for decent housing.

Government does nothing

- Governments on all levels have done virtually nothing to relieve or solve the housing crisis. A scandalous lack of planning, co-ordination and funding has blocked effective action.
 - Psychiatric institutional staff generally do not refer and follow up inmates with serious housing needs or problems.
 - Lack of decent and affordable housing, together with unemployment is forcing many people back into psychiatric institutions--a waste of lives and money.
- The housing crisis became even more critical and visible in June when two fires in two Parkdale boarding houses and the abrupt closing of a third resulted in over sixty ex-psychiatric inmates suddenly finding themselves homeless. Direct and quick action was needed.

Crisis forces people to hostels

The Housing Crisis Committee, a coalition of ON OUR OWN and PARC, organized a successful public demonstration at Queen's Park on June 30 to protest the provincial government's lack of action on the des-

"Timbrelltown"

A group of tents pitched on the lawn in front of the Legislature had much visual impact, with a banner designating the site as "Timbrelltown" clearly illustrated that ex-psychiatric inmates forced to wander the streets and live temporarily in overnight hostels require immediate emergency accommodation.

Mel Starkman, ON OUR OWN member of the Housing Crisis Committee, introduced several notable speakers including David Reville (Alderman for Ward Two), Dr. Tyrone Turner, Tony Ruprecht (MPP for Parkdale), and Robin White, who came out to show their support, as well as addressing the audience. Pat Cappon also delivered a moving speech.

Timbrell doesn't show ...

The Housing Crisis Committee invited Dennis Timbrell to address the crowd. However, Timbrell refused to appear at the demonstration. Instead he offered to meet privately with three representatives from the committee. Although the Housing Crisis

Committee was open to meeting with Timbrell, the private meeting suggested for the same day as the demonstration was rejected on the grounds that Timbrell had refused to address the issue publicly. A representative from Timbrell's office told the committee that they had missed their chance for a meeting.

Replies in letter

Despite Timbrell's unwillingness to address the demonstration in person, his response to the crisis appeared in a letter to the editor of the Globe & Mail on July 7. In this letter Timbrell attempted to "correct for your readers [sic] an impression which may have resulted from your report on housing for ex-psychiatric patients."

The letter outlines Timbrell's plans to institute the Ontario Government Domiciliary Hostel program, a shared-cost program between the province and Metro. Timbrell stated in his letter that "Metropolitan Toronto is the only major municipality which does not participate in this program." The provincial government would pay 80% of the costs while Metro would fund the other 20%.

It is presently unclear how long it will take for the province to actually implement the program, and whether or not it will offer any long-term solutions. According to Mary Stern, the hostel program does not solve "the literal question of short-term survival. ...We are still waiting for some emergency plans."

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Patients' Housing Crisis Committee, contact Mel Starkman at 362-3193.

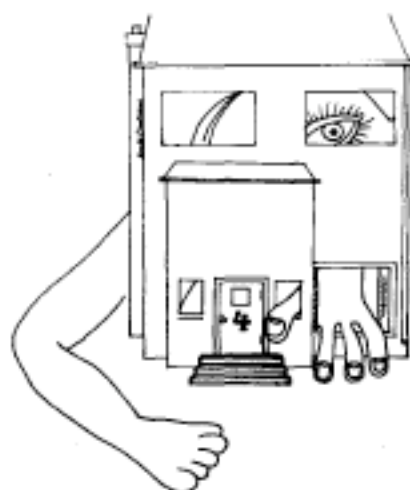
Full Time Job Treading Water

That couldn't be a rat, nah
- it's just a pregnant mouse.
The cockroaches are multiplying
with ardent fervor.

Last pack of tobacco, stolen by moonlight.
Stomach mumbling and grumbling,
No one has money in the house.
Maybe panhandle for a coffee,
Not too much to sing over.

Call me names, treat me as strange.
Even if life isn't too sweet,
It is always too short.
Push me into the ground,
But a promise is a promise.

I'll keep popping up,
Along the evergreen line. *by Frank Farkas*



Domiciliary Hostels

In response to the Patients' Housing Crisis Committee demonstration of June 30, 1981 the Hon. Dennis Timbrell, Minister of Health in the Tory government, has offered Metro the Domiciliary Housing Program.

The proposed move by the Ontario government towards domiciliary hostels in Toronto will be taking this province even further away from really coming to grips with the housing problem.

The Domiciliary Hostel Program already in operation in Windsor, Hamilton and Ottawa is bringing "Back Wards to Back Streets" to Ontario, lobbied for and run by the Rest and Lodging Home Association. It is a private entrepreneurial thrust with an eye to profits, not people. Already Windsor has an over-200 bed facility where the staff wear white uniforms. This is a return to *institutionalization*. But unlike Ontario's Homes for Special Care, which are usually found in rural and urban peripheral areas, Domiciliary Hostels will likely be located in urban centres where they will act as dumping grounds for lower income ex-inmates.

At least one very concerned Supportive Housing Coalition (SHC) participant has indicated that we cannot allow the hospital superintendents to get away with defusing the crisis by dumping inmates, many of them in the "at risk" category, into new boarding houses under the name of domiciliary hostels.

Paul Godfrey, Metro Toronto Chairman, is resisting the pressure from Timbrell to put the domiciliary hostels in place. Metro will not come up with its 20% share. Concerned workers hope that this is not just penny-pinching, but a clear message to the provincial government that better programs must be worked out if Metro is to participate.