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March 26, 1975

Ecology Action Centre
Forrest Building, Dalhousie University
Halifax, N. S.
422-4311

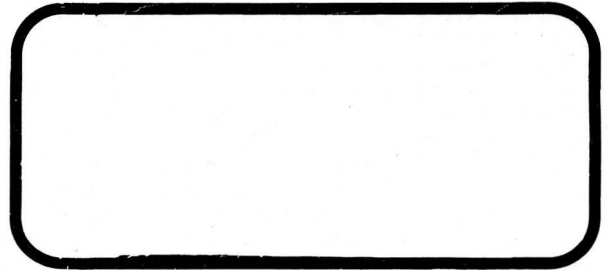


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ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE CONTINUES

Volunteers essential

Volunteers are now the life-blood of the Ecology Action Centre. Having weathered a financial and organizational crisis last fall, a revitalized EAC is now taking shape. Until Sept., our relatively large staff was the driving force behind the Centre with the frequent aid of volunteers on an individual basis. The Recycling Committee was the exception. Now the situation is reversed: several committees and individual volunteers are doing the work and providing direction with the support of one staff person.

At present, three committees are working on recycling, transit (and other municipal development questions) and municipal recreation land acquisition. Individuals are working on energy development questions, education booklets, and other projects. Volunteers man the office part-time and have begun to handle mail, membership processing, and bill-paying. An editor for Fine Print has brought it back to life.

**Ecology Action Centre
needs a
CO-ORDINATOR**

DUTIES TO INCLUDE: Initiating new directions and programs for the Centre; co-ordination of the Centre's volunteer committees; administrative functions; and fund raising.

SALARY: \$7,800 per annum

If you are interested, phone 422-4311, and leave message, and/or apply in writing, stating organizational, environmental, writing, educational, political, and fund-raising abilities to: Hiring Committee, Ecology Action Centre, RM 20-A, Forrest Building, University Ave., Halifax

Funds are needed

Since January 10, the Centre has had no full-time staff; but we are now in a position to hire a co-ordinator. In a series of meetings about the EAC's future, held in September, most of the 35 people involved felt that it was important to keep the organization going, but only if full-time staff could be secured to ensure a fairly high degree of activity. Since then, while building up our volunteer organization, we mapped out a fund-raising strategy and began to put it into effect. In contrast to last year's ambitious \$100,000 budget to fund several projects and administrative staff, we decided a smaller budget for "core staff" must be our first priority. Aiming for \$26,000 for a coordinator, a research assistant and expenses, we have raised \$5,000 to date from private firms and feel assured of a minimum of \$6,000 more. Sources will be (a) businesses and governments; (b) a 2nd membership and donation drive (like last spring's); and (c) fund-raising projects like second-hand book sales.

The Centre is not yet in a comfortable position. It probably never will be. It appears as if we will have only one staff person this year, instead of the two we believed necessary - and that only with a good deal more work. Our volunteer committees all need more people with ideas, organizational skills, research skills, or clerical skills, and time and energy.

But we are slowly building a reliable financial base and a solid volunteer organization. And there is certainly no lack of environmental issues in Nova Scotia which demand vigorous and well-informed presentation of the environmental view - and a widening involvement of citizens.

If you wish to help, contact the EAC office - our effectiveness depends on people like yourselves.

RECYCLE!

E.A.C.'s LONGEST FIGHT CONTINUES

On February 19, the E.A.C. Recycling Committee argued before Halifax City Council's Committee of the Whole that two steps toward large-scale recycling should be supported. During the following month, similar ideas are being presented to Dartmouth City Council in a joint presentation with the Dartmouth Y Ecology Group.

Meanwhile, the three year old Recycling Depot opened for the last time on February 8th. These apparently contradictory actions are part of a shifting strategy aimed at the same primary goal the Recycling Committee has had since it began: increased recycling on an efficient and large scale basis.

E.A.C. DEPOT CLOSES

The closing of the Depot on February 8th has perplexed some people. Are we giving up? As indicated above, the answer is no. Why then is the Depot closed? There are two reasons.

First, we showed what we set out to show, namely that long term, reliable public participation in recycling can be counted on in Halifax-Dartmouth.

The Depot was a small, relatively inaccessible operation; yet over 300 families went out of their way to separate their paper and transport it to the Depot over a three year period. Our random telephone survey in the spring of 1973 confirmed public support, when 89% of local residents said they were already separating their paper on collection days, or would if asked. Meanwhile, collections in over 70 cities in the U.S., plus London, Ottawa, Toronto, Kanata and other Ontario cities on a regular weekly basis have demonstrated the practicality of large-scale participation, if it is kept simple.

Second, the large-scale and efficient recycling system the E.A.C. has always aimed at, looks to us as if it is at least one year away and probably much longer. Under these circumstances, the Recycling Committee felt it could not ask its volunteers and supporters to continue operating the Depot indefinitely.

RECYCLING NOW - BOY SCOUTS & DELANEY

There are alternatives for the many Depot supporters who will want to continue to recycle their own wastes because the thought of returning to the one way habit is too repulsive. In Halifax, Delaney's Paper Salvage (455-4176) on Kempt Road, beside the Datsun Centre, will serve as a drop-off Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 4:00, and Saturdays from 10:00 to 12:00.

An exciting alternative has evolved in Dartmouth over the last few months: The Dartmouth Boy Scouts are now collecting house to house on a nine week rotation basis. They have the "bugs" just about worked out of the system, and they are bringing in five to ten tons per week, which is sold to Minas Basin Pulp and Power, the only Nova Scotia market through Delaneys. For details, call 469-2610, 466-7150, or 434-8575, after six.

The E.A.C. Recycling Committee welcomes and fully supports the Dartmouth Scouts' set-up. However, in the past, we have resisted expansion of the depot system, or initiation of systems similar to the Scout one. This is because we believe that the energy and costs of running such systems, usually dependant on automobiles, outweigh both the environmental and economic benefits, as well as netting less paper than more efficient methods would. For instance, an E.A.C. proposal three years ago to establish a paper collection run simultaneously with the regular trash collection we predicted would result in twenty-five to forty tons of paper per week in Halifax, while requiring only a few hours extra time on the part of trash collectors. This idea was rejected because the volume would have been too much for Minas Basin to handle.

COMPOSITION STUDY OVERDUE

Separate collections like the ones discussed above are one level of increased recycling activity. The other level the E.A.C. has aimed for is the construction of a reclamation plant which would take all our mixed up trash and unmix some of it for recycling.

Remember Anglo-Canadian Pulp Co.? In the summer of 1973, as a result of E.A.C. research and suggestions given to DREE, it was discovered that Anglo was interested in looking at Halifax-Dartmouth as a site for a "modular" reclamation plant to separate 40 - 90% of our trash for recycling. A large Quebec firm, it had many of its own markets. But it needed a study of the composition of our trash first, to enable an economic analysis of the potential for a plant locally.

That composition study, a pre-requisite for any reclamation plant scheme, has been approved twice by the civil servant level of MAPC - once in the summer of 1973 and again in the summer of 1974. But it has not yet been funded or done!

The Recycling Committee and the Dartmouth Y Ecology Group are going to the two city councils to request that both councils, through their MACP representatives, make sure the waste composition study is funded and done this spring. If it is not funded by April, it will have to wait another six months until the fall. It is a basic study most other big cities have already done, which has been needlessly delayed for a year and a half, thwarting full consideration of local recycling opportunities.

FOOD FROM WASTE

Support from the two city councils is also being requested for an application for funds from the federal Urban Demonstration Program, to test a Nova Scotia Research Foundation proposal to convert the cellulose content of trash, up to 75%, to single-cell protein for animal feed, or to alcohol. The Research Foundation applied for an \$800,000 grant for this two year study in September. No decision has been made and support from our municipal leaders could only improve chances for this exciting pilot project.

The E.A.C. Recycling Committee is reviewing possibilities for further action, and would welcome new blood. If you're interested and have time, call 422-4311 or 433-0680, and ask for Kay Lister

The Committee on Rent Control and Housing

There is a group of people in this city which has been upset for quite some time about rising rents and dilapidated housing. Beginning last May, this group, calling itself the "Ad-Hoc Committee Studying Rent Control", met every week to study tenants' rights, housing conditions, and remedies to the problems facing 55% of this city's population. By October, the Committee had finished its research and put it together into a brief containing recommendations for the city of Halifax.

The group took its recommendations to every mayorality and aldermanic candidate. Members questioned the candidates at public meetings. The media questioned them in print and on the air. Finally, some of them admitted that there was a housing crisis, and Edmond Morris promised an immediate rent freeze. That was in October. In November the committee went back to Mayor Morris and asked him about the rent freeze. That's when he struck the Task Force on Housing. Now, a Task Force is not a rent freeze, but it could be one way of getting one. It could also do a lot more to help tenants, like introduce rent control measures and tighten up the Building inspector's Department.

Today the group is called "The Committee on Rent Control and Housing". It has expanded to include more tenants, because the more tenants it has, the stronger it is. This larger committee has reviewed the recommendations put forth by the Ad-Hoc Committee and endorsed them in total. It's representatives to the Task Force have been mandated by this body to demand recognition of the three basic problems facing tenants in Halifax today:

1. RENT CONTROL; Rents in this city are outrageous. In a seller's market it is incumbent upon the city government to provide some manner of protection against landlord gouging. To provide this protection the city must establish a Rental Authority as it is empowered to do under the Act Respecting Rentals (SNS 1959)

2. MINIMUM STANDARDS; The city must embark upon an aggressive programme to enforce Minimum Standards Ordinance #157. This is a good and thorough ordinance requiring few revisions. If it were fully enforced there would be no sub-standard housing in Halifax. We demand that minimum standards of housing be enforced for all residents of Halifax.

3. PROVISION OF HOUSING; A vacancy rate of 0.5% is proof in itself of the inability of private enterprise to meet the housing needs of Halifax. In light of this failure, initiative and commitment are needed from the city to find ways of providing housing.

A TYPIST IS NEEDED

The Centre needs someone who can type and is willing to volunteer a few hours of his or her time, more or less regularly, to help with typing for the newsletter, and other office work.

Public Hearings on Housing Conditions

Through the month of February, the Task Force held open hearings to find out what citizens had to say about housing conditions. The Committee on Rent Control and Housing endorsed these open hearings. To fully understand the magnitude of the housing crisis, the Task Force must hear first hadn the real problems tenants are facing.

In order to stimulate this type of response, The Committee on Rent Control and Housing initiated a leaflet and door knocking campaign in high tenancy neighbourhoods, with the intention of meeting tenants in their homes before the public hearings, to help identify areas of local concern. Realizing that many tenants feared retaliation by landlords if they complained publicly, the Committee provided full protection under the law by qualified legal representatives.

If you have any housing problems which you would like to discuss, call 423-7590

Views By-Law Appeal

The bylaw which protects the view from Citadel Hill is being appealed to the Provincial Planning Appeal Board by Centennial Properties, the Urban Development Institute, and Connor Real Estate Ltd. The Ecology Action Centre will be supporting the city in defending the bylaw. The Urban Development Institute is also deciding whether or not to challenge the bylaw in the courts.

The views bylaw was passed unanimously by Halifax City Council on January 31, 1974 after more than two years of public debate. Six other companies had filed notice of appeal but have since withdrawn.

Check the local newspaper for the date of the appeal hearing, which is open to the public.

SACKVILLE FOOTNOTE

The site MAPC (the Metro Area Planning Committee has chosen to landfill all the trash generated in the Halifax-Dartmouth region has run into considerable controversy. The E.A.C. supported the site, in Beaverbank, in the Sackville area of Halifax County, when it was first made public in September and October, 1974. Brian Gifford had been an observer for the E.A.C. on the MAPC staff committee which had planned the site, for several months. He felt that the site was carefully selected, particularly as far as pollution control is concerned.

However, the E.A.C. refused to support the site at the appeal before the Nova Scotia Planning Appeal Board, in February, because residents had not been given enough opportunity to explore the proposal, and even less to influence the location. In the end, the E.A.C. did not appear at the hearing at all.



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