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**The Housing Question: Ideology, Access or Action?  
An Examination of Housing Provision  
in New Zealand.**

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in  
Geography  
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Scott Salmon  
1987

For Yvonne, in Appreciation

**When one voice rules the nation  
Just because they're top of the pile  
Doesn't mean their vision is the clearest  
The voices of the people  
Are falling on deaf ears...**

**Billy Bragg 1987, Ideology**

**The disenfranchised must be heard through the kind of geography we make, no matter how unpopular that voice within the corridors of power or with those that control our purse strings.**

**There is more to geography than the production of knowledge and personnel to be sold as commodities to the highest bidder.**

**The kind of geography we make must be a peoples geography.**

**(Harvey 1984, 7)**

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## PREFACE

The inspiration for investigating this topic, and the material for the case examples, grew out of a period between 1981 and 1986 during which time I became heavily involved in dealing with the consequences of various aspects of Palmerston North's housing shortage. I was, at that time employed as Co-ordinator of Community Volunteers (P.N.) Inc., a small non-profit urban based community work agency. In the course of my work I was involved with the problem on several fronts; dealing with those directly affected by the shortage; the homeless, secondly: trying to raise awareness of the problem amongst those who held power and controlled resources in the city, attempting to persuade them to take some positive action to increase the housing stock.

While much of my work at Community Volunteers was, of necessity, related to dealing with the immediate issues it was this experience that made me aware of the complex and interconnected nature of the city's problems. Taking time out to complete this thesis has allowed me the luxury of standing back from the exigencies of my previous position to investigate the deeper ongoing processes and to gain an overview of the urban scene. I felt strongly that it was important not just to indulge in "moral masturbation" by compiling some 'huge dossier on the daily injustices to the populace' (Harvey 1973:145) but to identify and explain the processes that have led to and perpetuate the particular housing problems that Palmerston North is experiencing in such a way that the knowledge gained can be applied to the task of bringing about a humanizing social change.