

Jobs and Xenophobia

Foreign students have never been eligible for federal or provincial student loans, the banks will not lend them money for obvious reasons and Canadian scholarships and bursaries are almost entirely restricted to Canadians. Without the ability to take a job, a student who cannot make ends meet, often for reasons totally beyond his control, will have lost the only financial flexibility that remained to him. That a sizeable number will pay their fees and struggle to live in any way they can seems quite likely to me. It doesn't, however, make for a very appealing situation in a relatively wealthy country.

Accurate statistics on the extent of the potential hardship amongst the University of Alberta foreign students are very hard to obtain but some limits can be roughly denied. As of December 1st, 1972, the Registrar's Office reported 1,188 students on student visas. Of these 274 are in Graduate Studies. Because financial assistance is more readily available to graduate students and because there is a specific exemption permitting them to take work which is closely related to their studies, most (but not all)

graduate students should be able to survive.

There are also 88 undergraduate students on Canadian International Development Agency awards who are also exempt under certain conditions and who have living allowances. In addition, an estimated 20% will probably be graduating this year.

What these estimates suggest is that 3/5 of the students currently here on student visas or about 700 students are without scholarship or university support. How many of these are dependent upon summer or part-time earnings?

Preliminary results of a survey already underway suggest that approximately 50% of the foreign students who are being supported privately will find it impossible to continue without summer employment and that 85% will be affected to the extent of having to change or curtail their programmes. The tentative answer seems to be, then, that some 350 foreign students at the University of Alberta will find themselves in severe financial difficulties towards the end of next winter and that another 250 will have difficulty in varying degrees.

The argument has been raised several times in the last few weeks that, (to quote the Minister of Immigration in a letter to the AUCC), "Canada has been very generous to foreign students."

The basis of that generosity has been twofold. First, foreign students do not, by and large, pay any more in fees than Canadian students. This represents a substantial contribution by provincial taxpayers. Considering that provincial government per capita operating grants to Alberta universities are close to \$3,000, the amount involved is quite considerable.

Second, despite the requirement that students on student visas possess financial resources adequate for their needs while in Canada, the Immigration Department has followed a policy in the past of allowing foreign students at the university level to work. Rightly or wrongly, the second of these two elements has been removed suddenly and arbitrarily to the severe detriment of a large proportion of the foreign students who arrived before January 1st, 1973.

There are two aspects to my opposition to this change. First, Canada has some obligation to educate foreign students which she has met in the past and should, in my opinion, meet in the future. Four fifths of the students on student visas at the University of Alberta come from the underdeveloped world. Most of those students bring substantial amounts of scarce hard currency into Canada in order to pay for a good part of the cost of their education.

Most but not all of the rest is paid by provincial governments. It seems a bit futile to circumvent this already substantial investment in development aid by both parties by refusing these students the ability to pay for the rest by working. I know of no mechanism of direct payment which would not effectively eliminate the private student and force all to go through government scholarship plans.

The Minister of Immigration has said that students on student visas who depend upon jobs in Canada for financial support are doing so "contrary to immigration law." That many have depended upon work is abundantly obvious.

What is not so obvious is that Immigration policies in the past have permitted this situation to arise, first, by allowing foreign students into the country with inadequate resources and, second, by permitting them to work to make up the difference. I, personally, do not think that, given the numbers of foreign students, this was a serious situation for Canada in terms of summer or part-time employment.

Nevertheless, having let the situation arise, it is manifestly unfair and inhumane for the Minister to try and rectify the situation by Departmental edict which changes the rules and applies them retroactively to people who came here under substantially different conditions.

At the very least, the Minister of Immigration and the Federal Cabinet should apply the new rules to people who arrived after January 1st, 1973, making sure at the same time they actually can meet all the expenses of studying in Canada, the hidden as well as the obvious ones.

French draft plagues student

Canada has known draft-dodgers for some time, but its newest refugees from military service may well come from quite an unexpected country: France.

Student riots there last week pointed to a growing resistance to the country's compulsory one-year military service. At issue was a recent government decision to change the deferment status of students.

"Everybody I know is trying to get away from it," comments Michel Ricciardi, a first year student here on a student visa. In addition to the employment restrictions facing other foreign students on campus, Ricciardi faces the prospect of the draft if and when he returns to France.

An issue in the recent French elections, abolishing the draft and replacing it with six months of compulsory civilian service was proposed by the left-wing coalition which threatened but did not defeat the ruling Gaullist party.

"I'd have voted left-wing just because they wanted to cancel military service," Ricciardi says, adding, "and because I know what Pompidou did and I wanted to change that."

His voice takes on a sarcastic tone when he talks of voting, however, because until he reaches 21 he is considered a minor under French law.

"Until you're 21, you need permission of your parents to work, to get married or anything—except to go into the army," he notes. To volunteer for the army without parental permission, one must be only 15. "Making such a 'wise' decision proves to the government how 'mature' you are," he laughs.

A number of his friends have qualified as "objecteurs de conscience" allowing them to substitute two years of civilian service for the year of military training. "But even that is kind of hard to get," he comments.

What happens if you refuse to report for military training? "They usually put you in jail until you say you want to go," he replies.

Since the appointment of Michel Debre as minister of armed forces, France seems more militaristic than before; although he admits that it "depends on the age of the people you talk to," with older people more militaristic than young people.



With the French draft looming in his future, first year student Michel Ricciardi spends spare time in photodirectorate.

There are three military bases in his home in Aix-en-Provence, a city of 100,000. Although some troops are stationed in Germany and the Pacific, Ricciardi estimated that nearly 90 percent stay in France.

What does France do with such a large military establishment? "They called them out in 1968," he says in reference to the massive student protests that year in France.

Ricciardi, who came to Canada in 1971, qualified for Alberta grade twelve and began university this year. He has been active in photodirectorate and was recently appointed as photo director.

Whether he'll be able to keep the position next year will depend on the success of his confreres in France in convincing the government to allow longer student deferments, or perhaps to scrap the draft altogether. tj

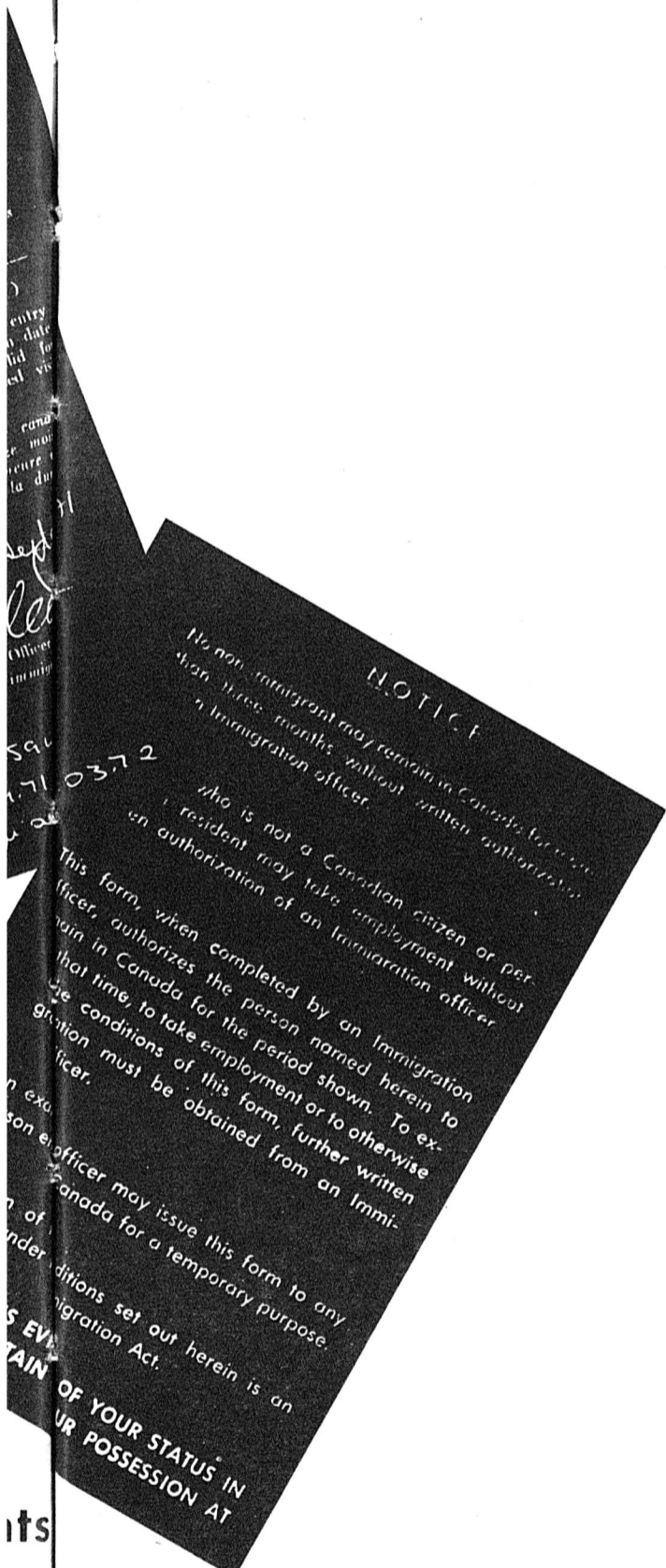
The U of A Committee for Student-Visa holders was formed on March 21, 1973, specifically to deal with this issue. Please write to this Committee, c/o U of A Students' Union for your support and suggestions.

exec. supports foreign students

Students' council will be asked to support "the principle that Foreign students already in Canada be granted the opportunity to seek summer employment."

At a meeting last Friday, the SU executive decided that "although regulations regarding the employment of Foreign students were clearly outlined...the government's past complacency in enforcing the restrictions was sufficient cause to lead Foreign students to believe that they would be able to seek summer employment."

The motion will be presented at the new council's first meeting next Monday night.



onto the labour markets out over the year."

At present there are "no ways of preventing some students from being unemployed."

But it won't necessarily be the foreign students who can't find work.

O'Malley predicts that enforcement of the Immigration regulations will simply "force foreign students to take the bottom-of-the-heap jobs. The economy is regularly throwing up work but not necessarily the kind of things that people want to do."

But Manpower won't refuse foreign students work just because there is someone else on the files who could take the job, but refuses to. "They would find it difficult if they did that. Employers would stop listing with them."