

□ FOREIGN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA □

The University of Ottawa is like a miniature United Nations. Last year it welcomed 840 foreign students from more than 100 countries. About 140 of them held scholarships from Canada or another country, while the rest were here at their own expense.

With 173 students, Hong Kong's was the largest contingent, followed by Malaysia with 64, France with 45, England with 37, Tunisia, 34, China, 22 and India, 21.

Tuition fees were one of the greatest problems among foreign students. First-year programs were \$4 832 and \$7 934 in engineering, compared with \$1 428 and \$1 536 for Canadian students. Master's and doctoral studies were \$8 436, compared with \$1 608 for Canadians.

With fees like these we are seeing fewer and fewer students from developing countries — they now constitute only 2 per cent of the foreign student body. A select group of students from high income countries is gradually being formed. Fortunately, the Canadian government offers a few CIDA and Commonwealth scholarships to students from developing countries.

The second kind of problems faced by foreign students are of a cultural and linguistic nature. The vocabulary is different, the common expressions are not the same, the accent is different, and non-verbal communication does not follow the same patterns.

In addition to the language problems, the pace of living and the values are different. Speed, efficiency, punctuality, nuclear families, living space, male-female relationships, religion and the attitude toward authority are some of the areas where differences exist.

When they arrive, the foreign students must also cope with the shortage



of reasonably-priced housing in a new and unfamiliar society. Having been used to life with their parents, they now have to find on their own something near the University, fearing the winter cold that many have heard about but not felt. And even when they find something, they are often told that it is already rented, when really it is not.

Nor is the educational system without its problems. Not only must they make the transition between two systems that do not always mesh together, but they must operate in a system where research is placed above memorization, personal contact with the professors above respect for their position, active participation in discussions over respectful silence, and so on.

It also should be borne in mind that many of them have an idealistic view of Canada, are prejudiced in some way, or, more often, lack adequate information about our country.

Last but not least are the challenges that exist on the personal and social levels. Should there be eye contact with

professors, students, members of the opposite sex, and passers-by? What about male-female relationships? How does one go about meeting Canadians and making friends with them? What does one do when alone and far from family and friends?

In spite of these handicaps, most foreign students leave Canada with their horizons broadened. Their awareness expands through contact with our culture, and they can better see the strengths and weaknesses of their own. We would like to see this international awareness increase, not only through visits by Canadians abroad, but also through contact with these student ambassadors to Canada □

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