

STU welcomes refugee student

His life for the past three years can only be described as a nightmare -- three months in a political prison in Addis Ababa - a daring escape from his captors - a seven month trek across Ethiopia to neighbouring Djibouti and there - twenty six months of refugee life, complete with its daily horrors, frustrations and uncertainties.

Abdella Abdulkadir Abdou is now auditing five courses at St. Thomas University. He arrived in Fredericton on January 31, through the cooperative efforts of a group of STU faculty and students, World University Services of Canada (WUSC) and the St. Thomas University administration.

Dr. Thom Parkhill of STU's Religious Studies Department explains the long process which eventually brought Abdella to the University community. "It all began in September 1979, when the Canadian Association of University Teachers asked its member association to consider sponsoring a refugee family," said Parkhill. "I raised the matter at the first faculty meeting that year and shortly thereafter a group of faculty and students was formed to work on the project. We went by the name STU Lifeline."

One of the group's first decisions was to drop the idea of supporting a family. Said Parkhill, "Given the fact that we all lived and worked

in an academic community, we felt that it would be more appropriate to work towards bringing a student to Canada, preferably one who would join us at St. Thomas."

The group approached individual members of the STU faculty and staff for financial support. Fund raising activities were conducted and the university administration pledged a four-year scholarship for half the costs of room, board, and tuition.

In the spring 1980, the group had raised a sum which it felt would be sufficient for sponsorship. Authorities at WUSC were contacted to help locate a suitable refugee student and assist with the immigration arrangements. Then it was simply a matter of waiting for the bureaucratic machine to process the document. It was a long wait.

Abdella's 35 month ordeal began in February 1978 when he was arrested while walking down a street in Addis Ababa. His only crime was that of being a university student. Thousands of students were imprisoned without trial in a Red Terror campaign conducted by paramilitary groups associated with Ethiopia's left-wing military dictatorship.

In April 1978, Abdella managed to escape from the prison in which he and about one thousand other students were being held. He fled across Ethiopia disguised as a Muslim priest and in

November 1978 arrived in Djibouti. Conditions there were deplorable. Abdella was just one of some 20,000 refugees, most of whom lived on the street in temperatures that reached up to 50 C.

"Most refugees had only one meal a day," said Abdella. "We had to buy our water. It cost 10 cents a bottle and was very scarce."

So was money. The unemployment rate in Djibouti runs at 50 per cent.

It was months before Abdella was able to obtain official refugee status from United Nations and Djibouti authorities. Then came months of waiting for a sponsor.

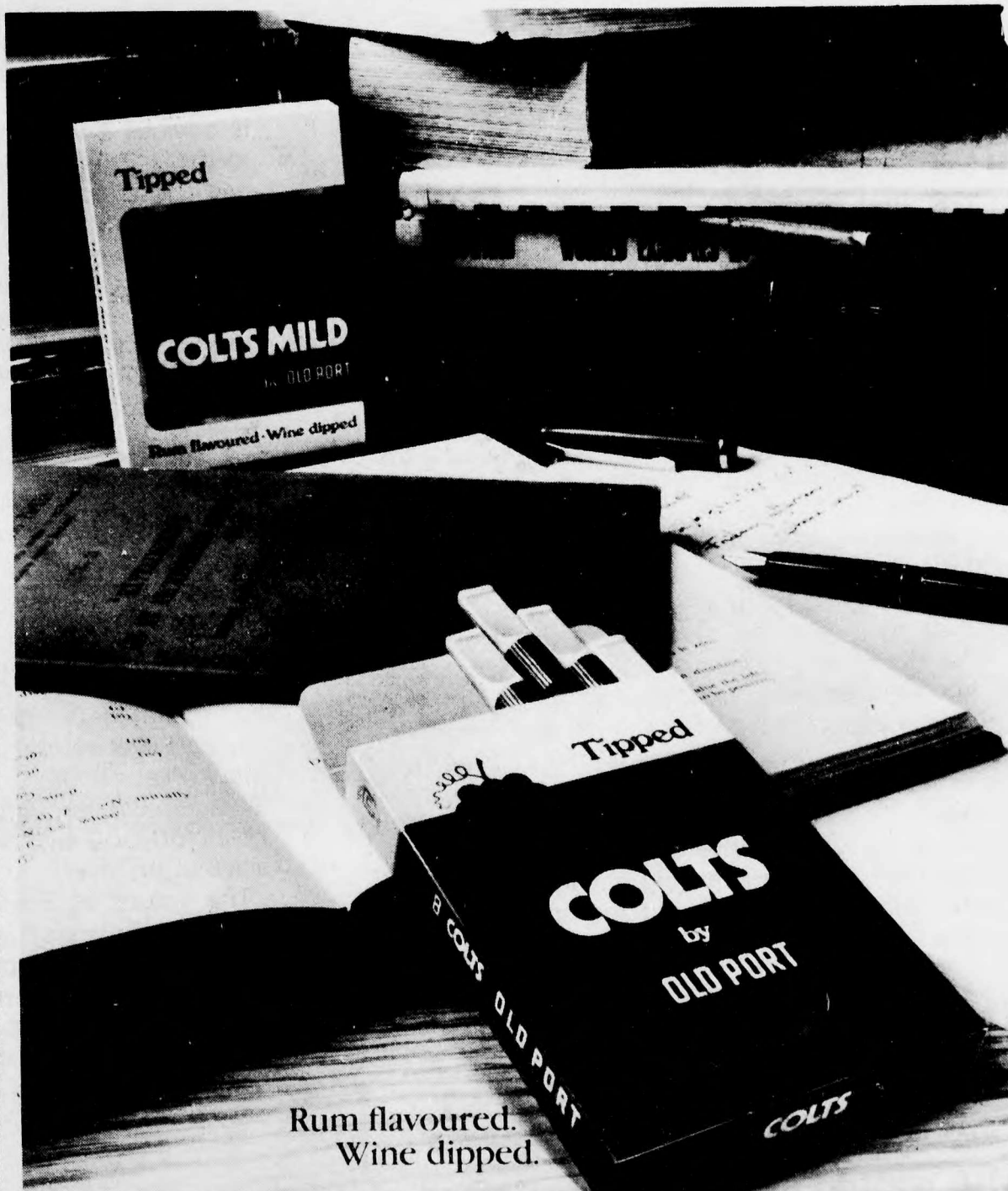
What are Abdella's thoughts on his new home? "Everything is new to me, the weather, the language,



STU President Father George Martin greets Abdella Abdou.

the culture. There are many things here which I don't understand -- technological advances which I had never heard of when I was in Ethiopia," he said.

Recounting a recent trip to a local food market, Abdella said, "When I saw the shopping carts, I remembered the donkeys carrying food in my country."



Rum flavoured.
Wine dipped.

Crack a pack of Colts along with the books.

S.R.C. SPRING ELECTION

The following seats are open in the upcoming S.R.C. Spring Election:

Arts	1 full term seat
Business	1 full term seat
Computer Science	1 half term seat
Education	2 seats - 1 full term and 1 half term
Engineering	1 full term seat
School of Graduate Studies	1 full term seat
Law	1 full term seat
Nursing	1 half term seat
Physical Education	1 full term seat
Science	1 full term
Representatives-at-large	2 full term seats

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