

WUSC a valuable experience

By TROY WAGNER

"MOST PEOPLE THINK OF refugees as masses of starving people, when in fact, most can support themselves economically and are political refugees," says Sylvia Sokoyi, a student refugee, at Dalhousie. Canada is considered by many political refugees to be a great place to come to for asylum. Sokoyi and her husband Mlungi Bushwana, who is also a student refugee, are both from South Africa. They are studying here through the student sponsorship programme of World University of Canada (WUSC).

They chose the WUSC program for Canada over American refugees programmes because of this country's support of South African sanctions. "WUSC had an advantage over the other refugee programmes because we could come to Canada. The Canadian people understand the situation in South Africa, the Americans are not so understanding. We applied for the WUSC programme because the Canadians showed that their sympathy is for the South African people," says Sokoyi.

Dalhousie has been involved with WUSC's sponsorship programme since 1982, and has sponsored eight refugees. The university which normally sponsors two refugees, is sponsoring a third this year because the

accepted refugee was unable to obtain a visa to leave his country, last year. He is Meenaradchagan Vishnu, from Sri Lanka.

The refugees do not pick the university they are sent to. Once they have filled out an application for the WUSC programme the local WUSC committee of each university decides whether or not to accept the refugees. The main qualifications for acceptance by WUSC is need for transfer out of their local country and academic ability.

When the student refugees arrive in Canada they receive landed immigrant status, and therefore may stay in Canada after they have completed their education. The funding which they receive lasts for one year, after which they are financially on their own.

The first year that Dalhousie sponsored a student, the university footed the bill for all the student's expenses. By the second year Professor Edward Marriot, dean of Student Services and Tim Hill, former student union president, worked out a co-operative cost sharing programme between the university, the faculty, and the student union. Under this agreement the university pays the refugees tuition fees, the faculty takes responsibility for the accommodations, and Beaver Foods provides a meal ticket. The students, through their student

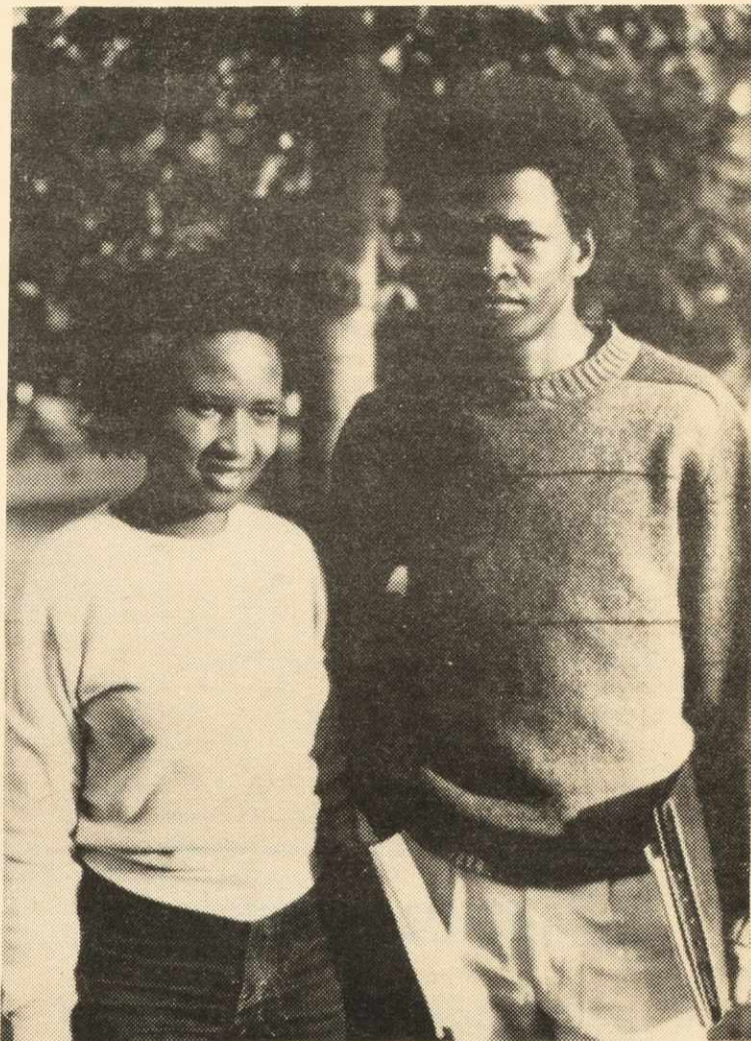
union fees, provide money for books, clothing, and pocket money.

Four of the eight students sponsored are still in undergraduate work and two are in post-graduate work in economics at other universities. The first Dal sponsored student, who was from Lesotho, has received his Master of Library Science degree, and is now working for the University of Botswana.

This year the student refugees are taking a broad range of courses. Mlungi Bushwana, who has already taken two years of law in South Africa, is planning to take African studies, and Sylvia Sokoyi is majoring in biology. Meenaradchagan Vishnu is in the engineering programme, and plans to go on to TUNS. All are enjoying their courses and appreciate the lively campus life.

"WUSC is a unique programme in the world for refugees. It really gives us a chance to improve our lives," says Vishnu.

The sponsorship programme creates a rare chance for the university, its staff, and students to work together for a common goal. Susan McIntyre, chairperson of the local WUSC committee, says "One of the wonderful things about the programme is how it enhances the education of Canadian by giving them the chance to interact with students from other parts of the world."



Students Sylvia Sokoyi and Mlungi Bushwana appreciate Canadian sympathy — photo by Scot Campbell

DAGS Desires Autonomy

By TOBY SANGER

DALHOUSIE ASSOCIATION of Graduate Students will be pushing this year for direct graduate student representation of the Senate and the Board of Governors, says Majid Addo, president of the organization.

Describing it as "vital" that graduate students be on the board and senate, Addo says the seats will have to come from increased student representation or from use of seats now occupied by the student union.

"We want to ensure that each year there will be a graduate student on each of these bodies," says Addo.

DAGS is being supported in its quest for better representation by the DSU, says Jamie MacMullin, president of the Student Union. "We all agreed graduate students should have effective representation especially on the Board of Governors and the Senate."

Addo says negotiations with the DSU about autonomy are going well this year. "A spirit of cooperation has developed between the DSU and DAGS." "We want... financial independence, yes," says Addo, "but we don't want to become another DSU. Complete autonomy would not be helpful for anyone."

Addo says he thinks the DSU is starting to recognize that gradu-

ate students have certain concerns that should not be handled by the DSU.

"They should be glad someone is willing to take on the headaches and concerns of graduate students," he says.

Gaining separate graduate student seats on the Senate and

Board of Governors are part of the quest of DAGS to gain a greater degree of autonomy from the DSU. Last year, talks between the DSU and DAGS broke down over the issue of financial autonomy, with the then treasurer of the DSU, Neil Ferguson, claiming that DAGS was acting "irresponsibly".

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