

Generally speaking, Canada has pursued an active immigration program for resettling refugees since the Second World War. More than 300,000 have been admitted, including many who had no special skills, were in poor health and were socially handicapped. At first, Canada's refugee policies were primarily aimed at helping solve the homeless and stateless plight of individuals and families displaced after the Second World War or those who were forced to flee from Communist-dominated countries. Later, however, refugee policy became broader in scope. Canada acceded in 1969 to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees sponsored by the United Nations. Although the terms of the convention were originally proposed and accepted by most countries in 1951, Canada was reluctant to accede during the early stages because the stipulation regarding the protection of refugees against expulsion was incompatible with the deportation provisions of Canada's Immigration Act. It should be noted, however, that Canadian refugee policy, even before accession to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, did comply in practice with both the letter and the spirit of the agreement.

Specifically, no refugee was deported if a threat of persecution existed for an individual upon return to his homeland. Also, all refugees admitted to Canada had immediate access to social, medical and other benefits that generally exceeded the stipulations of the convention.

The mechanics for implementing the terms of the 1951 convention attest to the importance for Canada's external relations of an enlightened refugee status in its territory. Canadian practice, for instance, affords each applicant desiring refugee status an opportunity to have his claim examined in a fair manner with legal guarantees, including the right of appeal. To this end, an interdepartmental committee composed of representatives of the Department of External Affairs and the Immigration Division of the Department of Manpower and Immigration examines applications for refugee status by persons in Canada and subsequently advises the minister in question on whether the persons concerned conform to the convention definition.

Present refugee-selection policy is based on a Government decision made in 1970 that provides for the selection of refugees on the basis of the norms of

*Importance
of enlightened
approach
to refugees*



If for the very young immigration is just one of a "number of things", it is something more than that to the adult immigrant. The trunks tell much of the story. The regular immigrant arrives with all the possessions with which he will start a new life packed in a very few containers. He is one of the lucky ones — the refugee immigrant often arrives with nothing but the clothes he is wearing.