

CROSSCANADA

GOV'T TAX RETURNS TO PAY OFF LOANS

TORONTO(CUP)-If you have a Canada Student Loan make sure you pay all of it off. Under regulations announced in February's federal budget, the federal government can now seize the income tax refunds of students whose loan payments are in arrears. It's happening.

"We received a lot of calls from students and former students who were depending on their refund cheques to finance their education," says Van Buchanan, a constituency assistant for British Columbia NDP MP Lynn Hunter.

So far, about \$21 million has been collected by withholding the refunds of students whose loans are in default, said Claudine Renaud, press secretary for Secretary of State Robert de Cotret. About 27,000 people have had their refunds confiscated because of defaulted student loans since April.

Kelly Lamrock, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, said the federal government "wants Canadians to believe that we're a bunch of irresponsible spoiled brats," he said. "But in reality the government's own figures show that the repayment rate for students loans is 91 per cent and there is usually a good explanation for those loans that are not paid."

VOTE TWICE IN OCT.26 REFERENDUM

OTTAWA (CUP)- Students and other nomadic Canadians could vote twice in the upcoming referenda. Because there is one referendum in Quebec and another in the rest of Canada, students could be enumerated to vote in both.

Students from Quebec studying in another province can be enumerated to vote in the riding in which their school is located. But they may also vote in Quebec if they registered with Registry of Electors Outside Quebec before Sept. 28.

Denise McCulloch, community relations and youth liaison officer for Elections Canada said it's not really voting twice because the results from the two referenda will be tabulated separately. "It's as if there was a federal and provincial election at the same time," she said.

It's fraud to vote twice in the federal referendum-for instance, in B.C. and Ontario. If you're caught, you'll be charged by the RCMP and face a \$1000 fine. McCulloch said Elections Canada has no way of checking to see if people are registered to vote in more than one province. Being enumerated twice isn't illegal but voting twice is.

According to McCulloch, normally 45 per cent of 18-24 year old Canadians participate in voting, compared with 75 per cent of the rest of the population.

SINGLE PARENTS SHAFTED BY WELFARE

MONTREAL (CUP)-Lynn Chalifoux paid her babysitter with the grocery money last week because she didn't have enough money for child care expenses. Chalifoux, 32, lives on welfare and studies full time at McGill University.

Chalifoux went back to school as part of a special provincial welfare program. The provincial government pays for four semesters of post-secondary education for single parents on welfare, and covers child care expenses.

But Chalifoux didn't receive her cheque for child care expenses in September. Some welfare recipients were told their cheques would not be sent out until the welfare office had officially confirmed they were registered as students. Chalifoux should have received child care benefits this month whether or not she was in school, said Robert Reynolds, a spokesperson for the welfare department in Montreal.

UPEI ADMIN SLOW TO RESPOND

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP)- About 500 faculty, staff and students attended a rally on Oct. 1 to denounce administrators at the University of P.E.I. for waiting six days before calling police to investigate an alleged rape and beating at a campus residence.

The university only announced that an allegation had been made after the alleged victim's mother went public with the story.

Campus security was called to the residence on Sept. 23, the day of the incident. Five days later, the victim's mother went public. A day after that, the university released a statement. City police didn't take over the case until Sept. 29, when the woman filed a formal complaint of sexual assault, said Const. Richard Collins, community relations officer for the city police.

Students are saying campus security should have turned the case over right away, instead of waiting until a complaint was filed. "People are angry that they didn't know something happened," said Tracey Arsenault, the student council president.

The student involved in the incident has not returned to school.

news

The strength of her words

by Jennifer Stephenson

"I love your place. I am from India. If I were to start a restaurant, it would be like this."

The man behind the counter breaks his rhythm and studies the small woman in front of him. His face cracks into a smile. A real smile, not a customer smile. At that moment, she can ask him anything.

It is the same with the bell girl at the hotel.

"You are the first female bell person I have had," she stops to say, though she is in a hurry. The girl's mask falls, the connection is established.

Everywhere we go this woman speaks to people. Not like me. I say please, and thank you, how are you and have a nice day. I speak to people's outsiders. She speaks to people's insides.

That's what makes this woman different. That's what differentiates her from fifty million other women in India. Prize-winning journalist, author of two books, published in *The Globe and Mail*, *The New York Times* and this month in *Ms.* magazine, Anees Jung picked me up on the street Saturday morning and changed my life.

"Come on," she says, gently taking my arm, "Let's walk."

She is in Nova Scotia doing a series of lectures on women and development in India. She has spoken already at Dalhousie, in St. John's and Ottawa and is on her way to Montreal this afternoon. The woman acting as her escort, she says, is bossy and has controlled every minute since she arrived. She has escaped for a few short hours to walk on her own and to get a feel for the city.

We walk and talk for the next three hours. The words come out of her mouth peacefully, with a little smile that belies their intensity.

"Writing has to be a gift. It is not just a craft. Those who learn to write become basically reporters. To write, one has to have that inner urge, the perception of things, how you distill those perceptions and put them in words.

"I know how to get a story," she confides. "That's my gift from God."

She gets stories, she says, because she is curious about people.

"I am not afraid of people. I keep asking questions. The moment you stop asking questions, the interview is over."

She tells me how she got a story from a fisherman in Newfoundland about the ban on fishing. "I stood behind him with my hand on his shoulder for two hours," she says.

She doesn't write about famous people or cover major events. She finds that boring.

"I write about people," she says. "I can find things in everyday life that most people don't notice, but everyone relates to. I can write as easily



PHOTO: JENNIFER STEPHENSON

Anees Jung, prize-winning journalist from India

about Nova Scotians as about Indians."

"Tell me about women in India," I say.

"That is a terrible question," she says kindly. "There are fifty million women in India. Where do I start? Ask me about me, how I grew up. Out of that, generalities will come."

And then she starts to tell me stories. Stories of women in India, women who have banded together to fight fear, to fight the feeling of being useless, to fight as a group to get a bus to stop at the side of the road because buses do not always stop for women alone. They don't matter.

"The movement of empowering women is beginning at the grass-roots level," she says, "and not being

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imposed by city people who study feminism abroad and come back and plant models. Women must first become aware of their own needs, and find solutions to these needs themselves. And that is what is happening in Indian villages where these women have been given some kind of jobs and education. The moment you give them the tools, they know what their strengths are."

To Anees, the greatest thing that women can achieve is to lose their fear, and she helps them to do that.

"I like discovering the energies

and strengths of individual women and writing about them," she explains.

India's movement is still very basic. In North America, she says, it is on a more intellectual plane.

"It's not strident. It's not obvious. It has mellowed. Women know much more about themselves than they did before. They don't depend as much on men to define them."

This woman does not depend on any man to define her. In the coffee shop she tells me about her romances.

"Romance," she says slowly, girlishly. "It's like a fragrance. You can't quite grasp it."

She tells me stories of the powerful men she is attracted to and I think yes, nothing else would do. She tells me of ones who think they know her because they have read her books. She tells me of her companion, her other half, who keeps tabs on her wherever she is in the world.

"I never needed to get married," she says clinically.

Suddenly it's time to go. We rush back to the hotel where I take a couple of rushed photos. I want to go with her. I put my arms around her. She is so small, so frail. I feel a strange need to take care of her. She is a wisp, and she is gone.

As I pull away from the hotel, I am tingling with energy. I am so alive, so strong, there is nothing I cannot do. All day, I am pumped up. People look different to me.

"These are marvellous pastries," I say to the woman behind the counter. "Where are you from?" And we enter into a discussion about Czechoslovakia.

"You say you do clocks?" I ask the artist on the street, and I end up touring his studio.

As the day draws to a close, I think of the gift she has given me. The gift of my own power. I wonder about the thousands of people she has given this to. And I marvel at the fact that she doesn't need this gift at all.

"I am very proud to be a woman," she had said. "I know what my power is."