

Dal student in Sweden

Stephen Syms, a Masters student in Public Administration, has returned to Dalhousie after spending a year at the international Graduate School in Stockholm, Sweden.

Syms was one of five Canadian students invited to attend the school for the 1975-1976 academic year. He was able to secure a leave of absence from Dalhousie to do so.

The **Dalhousie International** talked to him about his impressions and experiences.

Q. What prompted you to leave for Sweden?

A. I first became interested in the country during my undergraduate years in Winnipeg. We have a bit of a socialist

tradition there, as you know, and Sweden has always been heralded as a model of social and economic reform. I started planning a trip to Sweden about five years ago, although I wasn't sure how I was going to get there. Then I heard about the International Graduate School. It became a launching pad for experiencing the Swedish way of life and learning about the country.

Q. Were you satisfied with the programme at Stockholm University?

A. Ja! Seminars were conducted in English and covered a broad range of topics particular to Sweden. I appreciated the fact that most of the seminar leaders maintained this Swedish orientation. The seminars were really

designed for independent study, which led to criticism for those accustomed to the tradition of "spoon-fed" education.

Q. Any difficulty with the language?

A. Not really. Sweden is virtually a bilingual country and there is always someone around to help you out. There was an introductory Swedish course at the International Graduate School, and you could take this for the whole year if you wished. This certainly helped those who took jobs for the summer. I only completed the introduction, but that did not stop me from getting work or meeting people. I was surprised by the number of people who could speak several languages. It made me think how unrealistic and perhaps petty we Canadians are regarding the French language is our country.

Q. What about jobs and money?

A. I was pretty fortunate in this respect. The Dean of the Programme provided me a contact which led to a six-week job teaching conversational English to fifteen-year-olds in a school. I also played the drums with a Stockholm trio for several months, which was great! Then I got a job as a bartender on a passenger cruise boat. The pay was

around five dollars an hour and no tax deductions. I worked on the boat for six weeks, which gave me enough for the flight home, as well as some memorable evenings with some very close Swedish friends. Toppen!

Q. Sounds like you could have stayed?

A. I almost did. Sweden is certainly an achievement. Unemployment was 1.5 percent when I left. Sure there are gripes, but that is necessary and allowable in any democratic society. For me, it was a living and learning experience. It wasn't all roses, I assure you; there were difficult times but I think that's what made it worthwhile. No doubt I did not get as much out of it as I might have done. But realizing that is part of the value of the exercise. Anyway, Canadians are well received in Europe, so perhaps I had a slight advantage there.

Q. Steve, I am sure there are some Dalhousie students who might like to find out more about the International Graduate School? Whom should they contact?

A. I sure hope people will follow up on this. It is a tuition-free institution, which might be a further inducement to some! They should write to the secretary, Karen Westerdahl at the following address:

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Stockholm University
Stockholm 104-05, Sweden



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formation in Guyana, have now been impressed by Burnham's new state responses. What is your reaction to the regime's new policies? Are these moves towards a dynamic socialist transformation of Guyana?

WR: First of all, I'm not so sure of how impressed the PPP are, and I don't want to speak for them. But I would say that however the PPP evaluates what is going on, their strategy at this stage is for a loose alliance with, and critical support for, the state and the party in power, for three reasons. One is to prevent the possibility of the government backsliding; two, to deepen the socialist content of transformation, and three, to avoid or weaken the possibility of counter-revolution from the right. I have grave doubts about the likely effectiveness of that. My own feeling is that it is a mistake to see the right wing outside the PNC as a particularly important social force for reaction. This is partly for reasons outlined earlier (the lack of the development of the petit bourgeoisie) and also because that section of the petit bourgeoisie which did develop more powerfully here is the Indian sector in commerce and industry, and they have been effectively displaced by the PNC, the policy of statization and the power of the bureaucracy.

The petit bourgeoisie don't represent the same kind of social threat as in a lot of Third World countries. As for preventing the PNC and the government from backsliding and helping to deepen the revolutionary transformation, one has to consider two factors. First, is it not true that the government's apparent move to the left, as is always the case with left opportunism, is a reflection of the strength, organization, mobilization

and consciousness of left forces, rather than a genuine change of heart? So that I don't see support as necessary to deepen the socialist content of any left move.

Further, talk of support and an external right-wing threat tends to obscure the fact that so many elements within the hierarchy of the party are reactionary. I'm not talking about the membership, which is drawn from the same social classes that comprise the whole of Guyana's society — workers, peasants, housewives — but about the leadership. No different from that of any other Caribbean party, it is dominated by the petit bourgeoisie and a few elements recruited from the peasantry or the working class which has become bourgeoisified in the process. The PNC really does incorporate, to my mind, a large proportion of the most reactionary and right-wing elements in the country — groups that used to be in the United Force, groups that used to oppose even the nationalist struggle back in the 1950's. That is not to say that any given individual is incapable of transformation. But we are talking not just of one individual, but of a large number who are clearly representatives of a class which has given no indication, public or private, of any transformation in their world view, their life style or their social objectives.

They are encrusted within the party and the government, they represent the party at the highest level inside and outside the country. Overnight they have been given new slogans to shout and it does amaze me how these slogans don't stick in their throats.

Under such circumstances the threat of counter-revolution lies within the very social force that appears to propound socialism at the moment. They are tied up with a

leadership which is more far sighted in so far as it says to the class, 'our future really lies in making serious readjustments to reality and accepting the socialist position as far as jargon goes, accepting statization and moving towards working alliances with communist countries'. For many members of that class, however, this is a very uncomfortable position because it's historically new, it's fraught with the danger of being trapped in its own rhetoric.

But, speaking as a member of the Working People's Alliance (the WPA came into existence a year and a half ago as an alliance of four left-wing factions or groups), our contention is that, first, what is going on can only be interpreted as one stage in the development of the nationalist revolution, and this must be completely separated from the idea of a socialist revolution. Secondly, the transformation towards socialism must come through the deepening of working-class power and the defence of this class against all others who seek to continue its exploitation either overtly or covertly, and who seek to deprive that class of political hegemony. So that our policy is that of critical exposure rather than support.

We see the necessity to continue to expose the present social formation which dominates the working class and to seek to evolve over the long run some new strategy for self-emancipation on the part of the working masses.

Economic victimization

CP: Can I turn now to what has happened to you in Guyana, and what your situation now is.

WR: I will try to keep that to just a few sentences because I don't think it's worthwhile posing it as my personal predicament. I applied for a position at the University of Guyana in the usual way. I was granted the position as far as the academic machinery of the University was concerned, but this decision was reversed by the Board of Governors, which is largely government controlled, on the initiative of the government itself or prominent ministers. Since then I have been kept out of the University of Guyana in spite of certain protest locally and abroad. I intend to remain in Guyana as an independent researcher.

Partly I wish to remain as a member of personal preference, to be here with my family and friends, and partly because my situation is not unique. It is part of a very widespread economic victimization which has developed in Guyana. The government consciously uses its control over jobs to discipline and intimidate people. This control is important, firstly, because we are a small, underdeveloped economy with a large unemployed sector — to retain one's job is a matter of life or death. Second, the government, through nationalization with its extension of economic administration has now become the dominant employer. So there is no room for manoeuvre as between one employer and another. Economic victimization is a very real threat in Guyana today to workers at all levels and a real barrier to political mobilization and expression.

This is the aspect I want to emphasize, that today in Guyana the norm of political life is that one must conform to the government in power or run the risk, almost a certainty, of not being given the opportunity to earn. This is important.