

Arabic lecture called discriminatory

by Cathy McDonald

With charges of discrimination with respect to language rights, 30 people walked out of a lecture given in Arabic in the McInnes Room last Sunday night. The Iraqiian Ambassador to Canada spoke on the Iran-Iraq war. Faud Touckley, representing the Arab Association at Dalhousie, organizers of the talk, said it had been made clear on notices that the talk would be given in Arabic, and saw no reason to change this.

Touckley accused the protestors, mostly members of the Islamic Association of the Maritimes, of attending with the intention of ruining the lecture. Touckley said the lecture was directed at Iraqiian people, including Halifax residents, who could not speak English, giving the Iraq government's point of view on the war.

The protestors sat in the second floor lobby of the Student Union Building until the end of the lecture when

they followed the ambassador out of the SUB chanting "God is great" in Persian.

When a member of the audience stood up requesting that the lecturer speak in English, he was asked to wait until the end when he could ask questions.

"We came here for information," said one woman who had walked out. She was upset with what she perceived as anti-Muslim feelings at the lecture.

The woman objected to the

use of chits of paper for the purposes of asking questions, instead of an open question and answer period.

Touckley was incensed that some Arabs in the audience who could understand the talk had chosen not to remain and challenge the speaker at the end of the lecture, instead of walking out like "children". He said the chits were used to prevent a verbal confrontation.

Touckley said the anti-Muslim accusation was unfounded, both Iran and Iraq

being Muslim countries.

"The Iraqi people are very religious like anybody else." Four Halifax policemen were called in.

Murdoch Ryan, Programming Director, said there is a fee for public lectures not organized by the Community Affairs department. However, no fixed policy exists on what language can be used. A mistake had been made in not billing the Arab Society for the use of the McInnes Room.

Eradicating torture is painstaking work

by Gretchen Pohlkamp

New methods of torture which are difficult to detect will continue to make its control and eradication a painstaking process, despite the draft convention on torture which is presently before the U.N., said Dr. John Humphrey of McGill Faculty of Law. Humphrey was speaking to a symposium of the John Read International Law Society, a session which focused on torture and Amnesty International's efforts to alleviate it.

Humphrey spoke of the problems involved in policing any convention passed by the U.N. He said countries which use torture as a standard procedure will be reluctant to ratify the covenant. Torture as defined by the U.N. is the intentional infliction of severe mental or physical suffering by an official of the state of government, for reasons of extracting information. Humphrey said it would be naive to put too much hope in the effectiveness of the convention since the very people who would be agreeing to

arrest officials for using torture are the authorities who have encouraged its use in the first place.

He said too, that torture is not carried out in prisons where U.N. observers and inspectors would look for it, rather it occurs in "safe houses" prior to a prisoner's incarceration.

Jennifer Wade of the Halifax chapter of Amnesty International said the local organization usually has three prisoners under its wing. The prisoners' cases are first studied carefully by a group of researchers in London to ensure that they have been imprisoned for their beliefs and not for actions against the government. Then they are adopted by a group in a country other than their own, which group makes demands and representations, and works on the release of the prisoner. Postcards, letters and public opinion are considered Amnesty's strongest weapons and most effective tools. In fact, two of the three adopted prisoners of the Halifax group were recently

released from prisons in Chile and Rumania, said Wade.

Dr. Paul Rosenberg, a general practitioner in Toronto, works with a medical group of Amnesty International. The group aids refugees in Canada and goes on missions to change conditions of prisoners in other countries.

Rosenberg said that to claim refugee status in Canada, a person would have to prove that he was persecuted and in fear of repression in his own country. He said medical reports make this task less onerous, but he would like to see a torture syndrome established so that doctors would not need to rely on external signs of physical suffering.

He said as with the child abuse syndrome, where a child's mental as well as physical state is considered, so the refugees psychological state could be a clear indication that he had been a victim of torture.

Humphrey stressed that education is essential if torture is to be wiped out. He said education of police officials is of vital concern. "But," he

said, "all people must be educated, not just policemen, because it (torture) is a problem of society." He said in his lifetime there have already been tremendous increases in the awareness of people and in changing public opinion.

Wade said the organization

started out with an idealistic belief which has turned into a successful effort to reduce the incidents of torture in the world today. But Humphrey warned that too much success might lead to a takeover by a political group which might use the organization for its own ends.

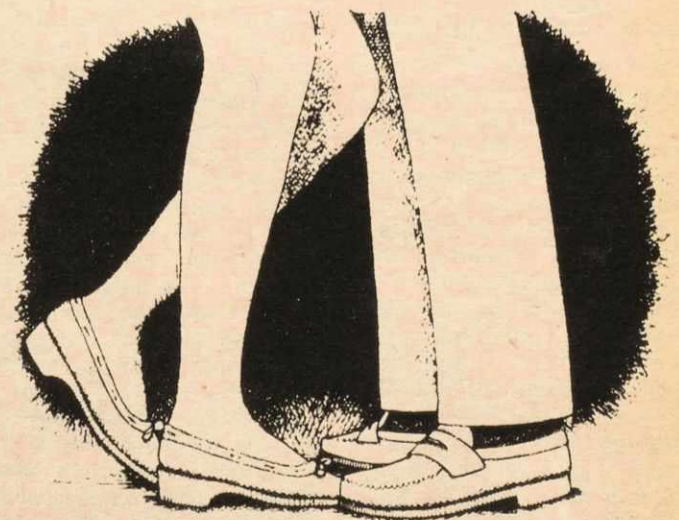
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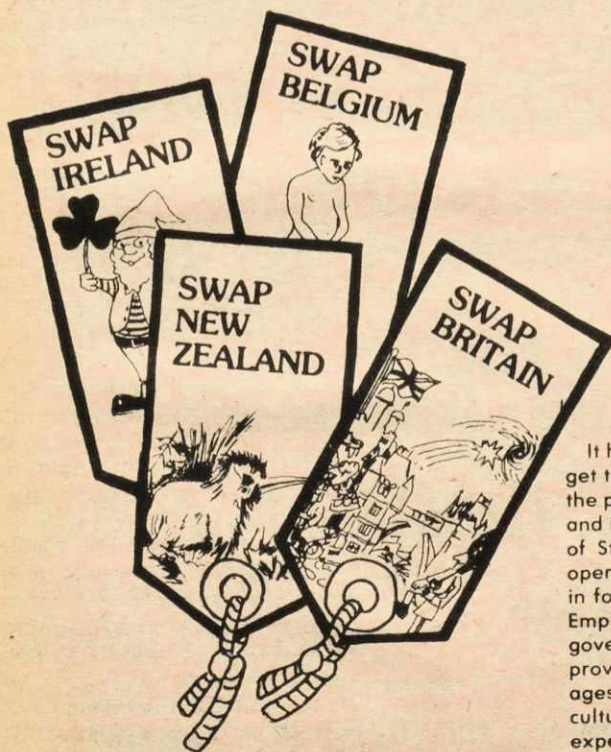
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