

# Strict rules threaten refugees

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The new law would give senior immigration officers the power to decide whether someone seeking asylum in Canada should even be allowed to make a refugee claim. Immigration officials say that refugees have nothing to fear because these decisions would rest on basic regulations establishing their need for protection. "No one will be sent back to a situation where they face danger," said Gerry Maffre, Acting Director, Immigration, Public Affairs in a recent interview.

But refugee advocates say it is easy to imagine a situation where a refugee is sent back into extreme danger due to mistakes — or deliberate discrimination — on the part of immigration officers. "There is too much discretionary power [given] to immigration officers," says Larry Lam, an associate director of York's Centre for Refugee Studies.

Canadians were shocked this year to learn of the ignorant and insensitive behaviour of some mem-

bers of the Immigration and Refugee Board, which judges the validity of refugee claims. The Toronto Star reported an incident of board members mocking a man from Iran as he described the torture he had undergone.

Many people are worried that

foreign policy considerations may influence which countries are considered "safe" by Canada. Claimants will be turned back if they have travelled through a country which is considered safe en route to Canada — or if they are fleeing from a country which has already accepted them as refugees, but which has itself become dangerous.

"The refugee community is afraid that the government's intention is to send people back, not giving a damn if they are protected or not, to countries where they do have a well-founded fear of persecution," James Hathaway, another associate director of the Centre for Refugee Studies, told a recent forum.

## Leg shackles

Nancy Pocock, a staff member at the Quaker Committee for Refu-

*It amounts, in effect, to Canada withdrawing its welcome mat — even though the number of refugee claims is falling by 7,000 per year anyway.*

gees, tells of a man denied refugee status and put on a plane in Toronto by force, sobbing and in leg irons. (Until 1991, Canada regularly drugged refugees before deporting them. After this received media attention, the drugs were replaced with handcuffs and leg irons.)

Pocock knows of rejected refugees, even those being sent only to the United States, going underground, rather than being returned to a country from which they have fled. She says she is concerned that the government appears to be spending more effort tracking down people living illegally in Canada than helping admit refugees. In fact, the 1991 annual report issued by the refugee determination board refers to a "recent commitment to strengthen the enforcement and deportation activities of Immigration Canada."

Airlines are already penalized for carrying people without proper documentation to Canada. The new legislation would increase penalties, which could result in airlines taking it upon themselves to refuse passage to people who are fleeing persecution.

The new act would force asylum seekers to spend up to 30 days in detention centres if they have not been able to get a lawyer in the first 48 hours (often an impossibility). The current limit is 7 days. Anyone who has been in one of the detention centres, which are closed-off sections of hotels along the airport strip, will tell you that they are places of despair — cramped, humiliating places where movement is severely limited.

The new act would open refugee hearings to the public. Amnesty International believes that this would cause humiliation to victims of torture forced to describe their experience publicly. It could also place political activists, or their families and friends, in danger, as it would be possible for agents of the country they are fleeing to attend hear-

ings and gather notes on opposition activities.

## No reason for cut

Refugee lawyers told the *Globe and Mail* recently that they believe the government plans to use C-86 to limit the appeal rights of rejected refugee claimants — and therefore to severely increase the proportion of refugees sent back.

It amounts, in effect, to Canada withdrawing its welcome mat — even though the number of refugee claims has fallen by 7,000 per year from peak numbers. Canada receives far fewer refugees than other countries, especially those bordering refugee-producing states. In fact, according to immigration lawyer Chris Kurata, 98 per cent of refugees end up in developing countries.

One ray of hope for refugees opened up recently. On October 30, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that claimants denied refugee status can appeal directly to the Ontario superior courts, instead of having to wait through the time-consuming process of a federal appeal.

And the minister of immigration has recently indicated a willingness to support limited changes to the bill, such as destroying fingerprint records after refugees have been granted Canadian citizenship.

But even without Bill C-86, Canada is becoming increasingly unwelcoming to refugees. *Saturday Night* magazine reports that figures until 1991 have shown a declining rate of successful applications to the refugee determination board.

"The overall effect [of this legislation] is to deny access to refugee status in Canada," says Larry Lam. "This is contrary to a philosophy of fairness and international responsibility."

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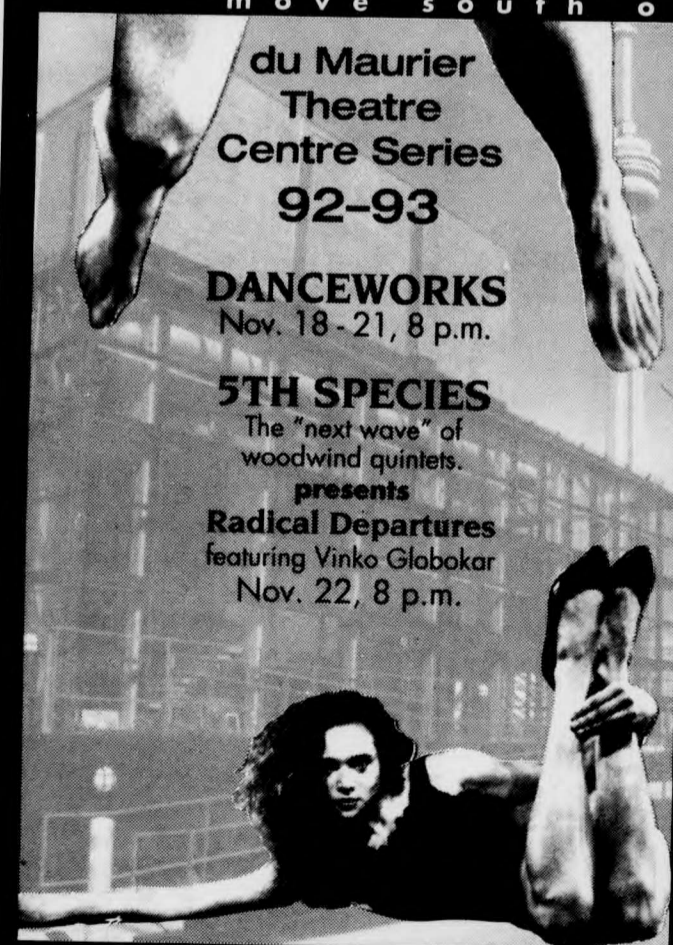
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## Changes to the Fall 1992 Undergraduate Examination Schedule Published October 14, 1992

### ADDITIONS:

CMYR 2400.06A, B	THU DEC 10	12NOON-2:00PM	VARI C
CMYR 2400.06A, B	MON DEC 14	3:30PM-5:30PM	CLH-G
CMYR 2400.06A, B	THU DEC 17	12NOON-2:00PM	VARI C
HIST 1050.06A	FRI DEC 11	12NOON-2:00PM	SLH-B, E, F
HIST 3930B.03	THU DEC 10	12NOON-3:00PM	CLH-J
POLS 3550.06A	WED DEC 16	8:30AM-11:30AM	CLH-J
SOSC 2990H.06	FRI DEC 18	8:30AM-11:30AM	CLH-C

### CANCELLATIONS:

SOSC 2700.06A	THU DEC 17	12NOON-3:00PM	MAIN GYM
SOCI 2070.06B	MON DEC 21	8:30AM-11:30AM	CLH-D

### CHANGES:

The new information is underlined.

ANTH 1110.06A	FRI DEC 11	12NOON-2:30PM	VARI B, C
BIOL 1010.06	MON DEC 21	8:30AM-11:30AM	MAIN GYM, TAIT 401
BIOL 2020.04	THU DEC 17	3:30PM-6:30PM	VARI B, C
CHEM 1010.06A (LAB)	THU DEC 10	12NOON-1:00PM	UPPER GYM, TAIT 316, 401
CHEM 1010.06B (LAB)	THU DEC 10	12NOON-1:00PM	AND CLH-I, L
CHEM 4020.03	THU DEC 17	8:30AM-11:30AM	CLH-110
EATS 2050.04	FRI DEC 11	6:00PM-7:30PM	PS 133
ECON 1010.03J	MON DEC 21	12NOON-2:30PM	VANIER DINING HALL
ECON 2500.03C	FRI DEC 11	12NOON-3:00PM	SLH-D
GEOG 2500.03A	FRI DEC 18	8:30AM-10:30AM	CLH-B
PHED 2030.03A, B	MON DEC 21	12NOON-2:00PM	UPPER GYM
PHED 2030.04A, B	MON DEC 21	12NOON-2:00PM	UPPER GYM