

Can Foreign Students say of Canada

"That was a dear land?"

by ALROY CHOW

I paused at the top of the ramp, turned slowly and looked at the uneasy crowd gathered at the airport to bid me farewell, but I saw only a disorganized mass of human shapes for my eyes were filled with tears. After I entered the big jet airliner that was to take me from my loved family and friends, I sat down near a window, brushed aside my tears, and strained to get a last glimpse of those who had come to see me off to Canada, to Halifax, to Dalhousie! What jumbled thoughts raced through my mind I cannot now recall, I only know that it was with a mixed feeling of sadness and anxiety that I settled comfortably into my seat. Before I knew it I was above the downy clouds, well on my pneumatic journey with my beautiful homeland, petite Trinidad now only an emerald green jewel set solitarily in a sea of warm blue.

I had always heard of fast-developing Canada. I had studied her geography, had followed her progress and was incensed with a desire to meet her people and study in one of her top universities. After much deliberation, I had decided to go to Dalhousie by the sea.

I readjusted by seat, leaned back, closed my eyes and saw in my mind's eye my future home—Halifax. I saw a fairly large fishing town with well paved streets and beautiful buildings. The Dalhousie campus was green and beautiful. Lo! two happy couples strolled lazily under the balding trees. A small elderly professor with nosed-up spectacles smiled quickly as he passed me by. Then I saw myself sitting attentively in the lecture rooms, frowning askance in the laboratory, running freely on the soccer field, dancing happily in the gymnasium, and laughing gaily with newly made friends. Here I slipped unconsciously into unconsciousness, with I suppose, a faint smile on my lips.

I was soon in Halifax, having stopped off on my way, at New York and Montreal. Luckily I had met a West Indian who had already spent a year at Dalhousie, and who was able to help me secure accommodation for a night.

The following morning I eagerly and hopefully wended my way to the Studley campus and found with some difficulty the Business Office. I had gone to see Mr. Bergil to get a room in the Men's Residence, having already sent him the required deposit to insure acquisition of some type of lodging. I learned to my great dismay that there was not a vacant room in the residence and so I was unceremoniously refunded my ten dollars. Then, armed with several addresses of vacant rooms I set out hopefully in search of a room which would be conveniently situated near the Studley Campus.

Presumption gradually metamorphosed into despair as I pounded the pavements for one hour, two hours, three hours, knocking here and phoning there, without any success. The answer was the same

everywhere, varying only in the phrasing "I am very sorry, the room was taken only five minutes ago". Depressed and hungry I went to the Men's Residence to get something to eat and to chew over my sorry plight. Flash! A bright idea occurred to me—I would irritate less my then sore feet by phoning prospective landlords and landladies before going to inspect the rooms. I spent about a dollar making phone calls before getting a favourable answer. However, I thought that the money spent was worthwhile. Oh, how let down I was when I discovered that it took me an hour to find Cunard Street, and that it easily required half an hour of brisk walking to reach from there to Dalhousie. I returned to the Residence and was discussing the events of my very discouraging day with some of the already orientated West Indians when one of them suggested a place where I could obtain a suitable room at a moderate rate as if rate mattered then. I was greatly relieved when I capitalized on that friend's advice. I got a room at 45 LeMarchant Street, with which I was quite pleased. I cannot help but thinking now how much embarrassment and disillusionment many foreigners suffer in their quest for accommodation. Oh that the administration of this, our illustrious university, would help us here!

Having settled in what was to be my home for about seven months I felt the urge to meet other students so I headed for the university campus canteen. Naturally, being a thorough stranger in Dalhousie I was shy and rather hesitant on approaching anyone. I bought a cup of coffee and sat at a table hoping that someone would come and share my table. I might have waited for an eternity. Puzzled and pensive I returned to my room. I sat down and penned a long letter to my parents giving an account of up-to-date events, informing them of the well-being and describing my first impressions of my new environment. I then lay down to sleep but even though tired and weary I did not sleep. My thoughts travelling from Halifax to Trinidad and back again, emphasized the big difference in what I was accustomed to and what I was then experiencing. But was I not unfair to make comparisons so early? After all, I had only arrived in Halifax one day before. Yet things seemed so different.

Within the following week I registered as a Pre-Medical student, "participated" in frosh activities and began to find my footing a little. I made a few friends, most of them West Indians. I felt as though I was beginning to become part of Dalhousie. However, there seemed to be a general lack of cordiality. I used to go to dances in the gymnasium stag, but I soon realized the folly of this and curtailed the practice. Besides, my pride was hurt ever so often when certain girls "politely" refused to dance with me on the grounds that they were tired, but one second after, would be dancing with someone else. Gosh, I felt so humiliated sometimes that I left for home immediately. This was not general though as I found quite a few girls more than just friendly. Of these girls I cherish a very fond memory.

The first term passed quietly. Christmas was here. It is a time of family union or reunion and it is a time when one misses one's family more than ever. Through the instrumentality of F.R.O.S. I met a certain local family with

whom I spent Christmas Day and with whom I have always been in close contact. They shall always be my friends.

Came January with its snow. It was the first time that I had seen snow and I must confess that I was absolutely delighted with it at first. Soon I began to suffer from the cold and the other discomforts which accrue from the solid precipitation. All in all though I rather enjoyed the winter.

The second term, like the first, was as far as I was concerned, uneventful. Apart from studying very hard and attending a few dances, I hardly did anything. The Munro Day celebrations were very enjoyable; I even took part in them. I noted with some amusement "the last drive in the homestretch" for the final exams after Munro Day.

By the end of April I was on summer holidays. I migrated to Montreal in search of a job, but remained idle for the first half of my vacation. I spent a good summer, even though I did undergo many hardships. I had done well in my exams and had won a scholarship so I had at least the comfort of some success in my main purpose of being in Canada.

I returned to Halifax last fall and determined to take a more active part in extra-curricular activities. I played on the soccer team and am active in WUSC, NFCUS, Sodales, FROS, WASWI Society, Foreign Students Association, the Munro Day Committee and the Gazette. In the very near future I will be starting a steel band. It is hoped that this will afford West Indians to take a greater part in campus life and to get in closer contact with the local students here.

It is interesting to note that most foreigners have to adapt themselves to Canadian food. For example, where I come from rice is the staple food. At first I could hardly eat Canadian food but I have got around to relishing most of the local dishes. Most of us also have to adjust our style of dancing, that is, at parties or dances, other than our own, where jiving is predominant. We also have to get adjusted to wearing cumbersome coats and overshoes.

Before I summarize some of the problems that face foreign students, I would like to mention that we speak only English in the West Indies.

Summary of the problems:

1. Housing—it is very difficult for colored students to obtain a suitable room.
2. Language—many foreign students can't speak or understand English.
3. Food—to foreigners it is very strange at first.
4. Climate—many of us experience our first winter here.
5. Friendships—we want your friendship.
6. Employment (summer) — many of us have to work our way through college.

These then are some of the main problems which face foreign students who come to Dalhousie. Towards helping these students fit into their new environment as easily and quickly as possible, FROS is at present investigating their problems, consulting with the administration of the university and doing everything in their power. It is hoped that so many of the local students who are ignorant of the needs of foreign students will appreciate their plight and try to accommodate them as best they can.

We do enjoy many facets of Canadian life. We like your rugged football and the exciting hockey,



Did arise rejoicing, this day being Valentine's Day. Alas, even such a joyful day as this could not stir the feeble spirits of the inmates of the College-by-the-Sea. Many did look pale. Did attribute this to the weather, but was informed that the preceding evening was that of the revels of the Mechanics, those unfortunates whose minds are filled with space. At the revels was the golden-haired Begonia Myth gloriously crowned Queen.

To business industriously, but novelty soon began to pall. Hence to the Coffee House. Nobody there but the scurrilous vermin, Panning, Mc-Purse and Knowell, busy penning vile rhymes. Much it grieved my heart to think that man is but an insect.

Feb. 19:

Despite foul weather the rabble flock in droves to hear the sessions of the Commons. The rabble growing agitated, Egregious Hurry endeavoured to calm the blaze, but sparked new dispute. Much fiery oratory upon both sides, and many got heated. Spruce Billis and Archangel Peeves disputed across the floor. The Establishment concerned, but the more Conservative element did prevail.

The plebs interest themselves mightily in things politick. Many gather daily in the square before the Abbey to hear orators, mere members of the populace, incite the people. The most sacred institutions attacked — the Coffee House, nay even the fair sex, not spared. If these be gone, then what is left us? Rooms and Boyle, Burley and Toll, Steps and Sidewalk, all emerged victorious in these verbal activities.

Feb. 20:

'Twould appear that our quiet city has become a scene of hectic frays and disputes. The coming conflict over the leader of the Sealed Privy is already disturbing our days. Keats Rushes and old Folly Veer-cow oppose Brick Lawson and Vim Bracelet.

A few stragglers visible in the Coffee House, resting from their labours in putting together a most monstrous Wagon. Many are now on the Wagon, though some have jumped off, and 'tis rumoured that the Church has turned his back on the whole affair.

Little room these tired days for levity. A few determined members of Hemlock Valley have held revels, and did crown a beauteous maid Queen, Gemmia Gong. Also the Dye Felts are snatching a few hours of merriment from the dull round of toil and grind.

Sept. 21:

Arose late. Many did likewise, the previous evening having been given over to the revels of the hard working ones, the loyal supporters of Starts and Defiance. Helena Purr, a lovely dark-haired lass, crowned Queen, to the great satisfaction of all. Less Care in particular watched with approval.

Did take my midday meal for a change at Marmalade Hovel, a custom better honoured in the breach than in'th'observance. Did discover to my horror that the rabid speakers had invaded even these sacred confines, even the members of the fair sex joining in the war of words, a most shameful sight. Miss Curve-hair, Miss Mossbush, Miss Irish and Miss Trowell excelled in speaking, under the critical eyes of Rambling and Sickboy, not to mention the great Alasandalack himself.

F.R.O.S. Plans Old and New

by BONNIE MURRAY

F.R.O.S. here at Dalhousie was started about three years ago by a group of energetic students. Last year a central council was formed with representatives from the various universities as well as members of the faculties presiding. It was found, however, that such a council was not effective as each university had to deal with its various problems in their own way.

This year F.R.O.S. really began to get underway on the Dalhousie campus. Having had a rather late start, the first project was a Christian banquet, sponsored by the Student Council. Many of the foreign students were invited to homes during the Christmas holidays, through the efforts of the I.O.D.E.

As it was decided that we needed a financial foundation if we were going to do anything in the future, F.R.O.S. sponsored a very successful dance in the gymnasium, after the second Dal-Tech hockey game.

At the last meeting in February a committee was set up to look into the difficult problem of housing for foreign students, chaired by Eddie Johnson. Heather Williams was appointed as chairman of a group to plan for the welcoming of new foreign students at Dalhousie next year.

The final meeting of F.R.O.S. will be held on Friday, February 27, at

your friendly professors and your studying facilities, but oh, that we could meet more of your people and make friends with them. After all, we foreigners would like to return to our countries with happy memories of Canada, the country in which we are spending some of the most important years of our lives—we want to be able to say "That was a dear land".

Editor's Note: Brotherhood Week being last week, this is a very suitable time to make known the problems of the foreign student to other students of Dalhousie. We hope you will seriously consider the problems involved.

1:30 in the West Common Room. This meeting has been called in order to reorganize our F.R.O.S. organization, and to try and make it more effective for the 1959-60 term.

At this meeting . . .

1. A new slate of officers will be elected.
2. A report will be received from Eddie Johnson on the housing problem here. He and his committee are planning to meet with the university administration to discuss this serious matter.
3. A report from the welcoming committee will be received from Heather Williams. Some ideas already received are: To give the new students a tour of the city and to have a tea at a student's home where the students might informally meet the heads of various departments and discuss their courses.
4. Views of all present concerning F.R.O.S. and how it can be more effective will be heard. Bring all your problems and ideas—we want to hear them!

The aim of F.R.O.S. is to make the foreign student feel more at home here, and to enable him to make many new friends among the Canadian students. This cannot be done by a group of enthusiastic students alone, nor can it be done by a group of foreign students alone. We at Dalhousie must all work together if this is to be successful. It is the reputation of Dalhousie that leaves with the foreign students when they return to their homeland. We want them to be proud of Dalhousie. Many of them ARE NOT SO! This state MUST be remedied.



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