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Population and birthrates spark fertile discussion at Stong

By DEBBIE PEKILIS

Five French academic civil servants, funded by Air France, have been in Canada since last Monday as part of a world tour that includes Poland, US, and Mexico, discussing problems with population and fertility with various government and university officials. Last Tuesday, they spoke with several York professors on population and fertility problems in Canada in a round-table discussion in Stong College.

The discussion was hosted by Liberal Science professor Samuel Madras, who is also a member of the board of directors of the Population Research Institute at the University of Toronto.

Professor Madras said there is a "maldistribution of the population in Canada. Although Canada is the second largest land mass in the world, there are many areas, such as the arctic, sub-arctic, the British Columbia slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and the Maritimes which cannot support a substantial growth in population."

He said the only areas of the

country which can really support a large population are Victoria and Vancouver in British Columbia, and parts of Southern Ontario and Southern Quebec, including Toronto, which contain the best agricultural land in the country, and form the "golden horseshoe, where the majority of the Canadian population lives."

Sociology professor Anthony Richmond, said York has been involved in a national research project that studies fertility problems in large cities. He said, "Canada has a substantial decline in birthrates, and despite this, the age structure of the population is young, as compared to countries like France and Germany, which have an ageing population and low birthrates."

"The project also studies problems of immigration and ethnic absorption into Canadian society," he said.

"The problems of immigration have been vastly politicized and exaggerated," said Richmond. "Population statistics dealing with immigrants are misleading

because they tend to be inaccurate."

"Canada doesn't count people who emigrate," he said. "One-half of the US immigrants to Canada return within five years of their arrival. One in every 3 foreign born Canadians return to their own country."

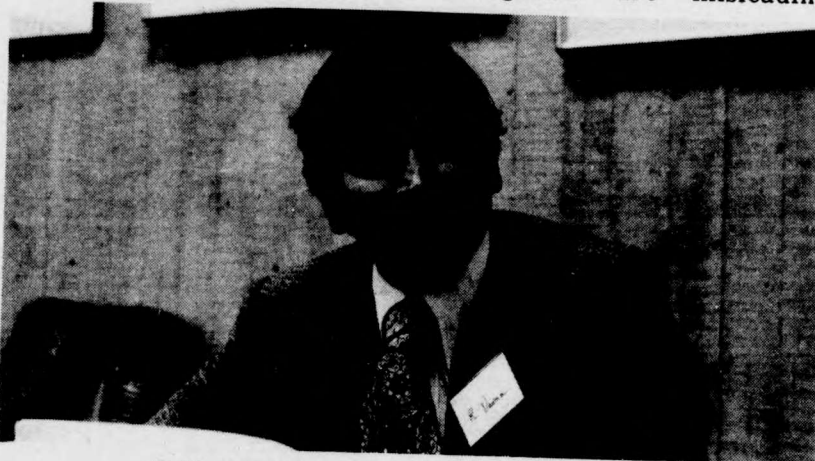
"Emigration statistics of Canadians who leave or move from one city to another are "bound to be inaccurate or too low," according to Richmond.

Much of the present controversy over immigration is over immigrants from the third world. "There is a tendency," he said, "for people who oppose immigration from the third world to associate themselves with environmental concerns and with Zero Population Growth, thus rationalizing their prejudice."

"Canada will be faced with severe labour shortages within a decade if immigration stops," he said.

Professor Lamphier of Sociology, currently in a Behavioural Sciences research project at York studying fertility, said a survey is being conducted with women in households involved in "some sort of conjugal relationship." Among the data to be collected include types of contraceptives, the number of children planned in total, the length of time between date of marriage and the birth of the first child, and the extent to which abortion is replacing contraceptives.

"Among the data we already know," he said, "is that women do not intend to remain childless. A new norm of one to three children is being set."



R. Vernon talks about population decreases.



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