

Refugee Update

A Project of the Jesuit Refugee Service/Canada and the Canadian Council For Refugees

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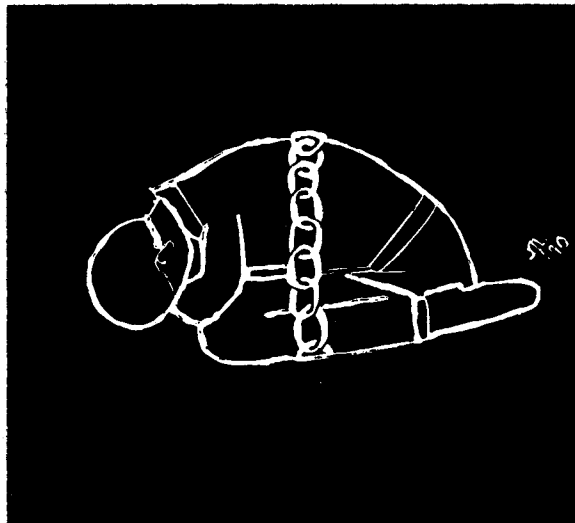
CCR Meets On Backlog
Nov. 23, 1990
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The Backlog: Cruel And Inhuman Treatment

A tumultuous summer in Canadian history is ending with a much needed review of Canada's human rights record before the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva. So, the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees (ICCR) is taking this opportunity to present an assessment of the physical, mental and social toll of the Backlog experience on refugees.

Their report to the U.N., entitled Civil Rights and the Refugee Claimant Backlog, authored by George Cram, is based on the results of a survey by ICCR using the diagnostic criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. People suffering from this disorder exhibit such symptoms as depression and anxiety, headaches and inability to concentrate. This disorder is a response to tremendously stressful events such as natural disasters, torture and rape. Sufferers often reexperience traumatic events and have displaced fears.

The report reveals that fear, ^{distress} anguish and insecurity rule the lives of the more than two hundred people surveyed. Even more startling is that the experience of refugees in the Backlog is very similar to that of victims of torture which Amnesty International has documented. "The impact of torture on the



— individual is fear, ^{tremendous} extreme degrees of stress, depression and psychological disorder."

What is most tragic of all is that 58% of those surveyed reported that their symptoms had become worse since coming to Canada. Among the symptoms was one called "suicidal feelings or thoughts". When correlated against the year the claim was made, the following percentages of people experienced this symptom:

- 1988 - 19% (2 years in Canada)
- 1987 - 23% (3 years in Canada)
- 1986 - 30% (4 years in Canada)
- 1985 - 63% (5 years and over)

The report concludes:

Given the fact that the present backlog process does not allow for virtually anyone to be reunited with their family in less than 4 years, unless a remedy is found quickly we have a time bomb waiting to explode on our hands.

One of the report's claims is that the experience of refugees in the Backlog system violates the provisions of a number of articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Canada is a signatory.

Article 7 of the International Covenant states,

Civil Rights And The Refugee Claimant Backlog
is available for \$3 through:

ICCR
40 St. Clair St. E.
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1M9
(416) 921-4152

You can help! Communicate your support for the report to: U.N. Press Officer; Human Rights Committee; U.N. Centre For Human Rights; Palais des Nations; CH - 1211; Geneva 10; Switzerland. Tel: 41-22-734-6011; Fax 41-22-733-9879.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment." Yet on January 1st, 1989 the Backlog system catapulted people who had come seeking Canada's protection into more years of distress and insecurity. While their refugee claims remain inconclusive they live a life of fear. They are afraid of carrying on a normal social life because some simple twist of fate might 'get them into trouble' which would prejudice their case. Afraid of speaking out or making any demands upon the system. Feeling frustratingly dependent on the goodwill of government or refugee support workers. Refugees in the Backlog thus suffer in silence, convinced they have no right to dignity.

Article 23 of the International Covenant holds that "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of a society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Tragically, though, people in the Backlog are denied this right since they cannot begin the process of bringing their family to Canada until their case is decided. Many have been separated for years from their family and even now the government is talking about restricting not only the numbers but the conditions to qualify for the family reunification programme.

The International Covenant also guarantees that all people be equal before the law. However, the climate of animosity within which the Backlog system was legislated set the stage for the mistreatment of Backlog refugees within legal procedures. The Backlog process has systematically abused the legal rights of refugees. Backlog refugees have been systematically denied equal access and treatment before the law. Virtually all of the experienced Immigration officers have been routed out of the Backlog screenings. Officials working in the Backlog are inexperienced, underqualified and lesser

paid. As well, unlike people in the regular refugee stream, Backlog refugees are not provided with counsellors to help prepare for their credible basis test. The responsibility and cost of proper legal representation and documentation must be absorbed by the refugee. The right to undue procedural delay has also been violated because of the nature of the Backlog which is unnecessarily long and by the lack of respect for the 'first in, first out principle'.

In a sense, ICCR's report only confirms what refugees and refugee support workers have always known, namely the Backlog system is cruel and unjust. The report is ground breaking however, since it takes the fight for refugee rights to a new forum - the international human rights arena. If the government will not listen to the demands of refugee rights advocates within Canada, maybe some international pressure will help.

Testimony From The Backlog

After almost four years, finally most of the interviews and hearings were over, and my husband and I were waiting for the landing package to come in the mail. Every night I prayed for the documents to arrive soon, because our two daughters - six and seven years old - were back in El Salvador, and recent photos showed me they were getting thinner.

To our surprise, and four months after our last hearing, a new notice of hearing came in the mail instead of the awaited landing papers. This time they wanted to interview me alone. This was very confusing to us, because we had thought that our case had been conceded as a family.

I went through the week prior to that date as if I were waiting for my death sentence. I thought that, for sure, immigration had changed its mind, and they wanted to let me know.

The day of the hearing I was devastated. I had pinching pains in my back and sides, my stomach was upset, and my knees shook uncontrollably.

My name was called. My husband and I sat before the smiling officer. She said "Do you know why you are here today?" We both shook our heads. Then, she said "Disregard the last notice of hearing. That was only a computer error. What is going to happen today, is that you will be granted landed immigrant status." I broke into tears, and cried until I was exhausted.

The Backlog Programme Is A Mess!

Barbara McDougall promised people in the Backlog that their cases would be resolved within two years. But so far only about 10% have received a final decision (3,244 accepted at Front "H and C" and 9,868 panel hearings completed).

Originally McDougall insisted that cases be dealt with "in the order in which the claims were made." In fact, she has used this pretext to deny requests that family reunification cases take precedence. On August 15th, 1990 she wrote to the Inter-Church Committee For Refugees and stated:

...we have at times been criticized for not maintaining the ordering principle of processing cases (oldest cases first): if we gave preference to cases of every claimant with family abroad who claimed to be in danger, there could be no ordering principle.

But suddenly, because Immigration deems it expedient, the "first-in / first-out" principle is gone and here is a new plan: "English In / English Out".

Immigration calls them MUCs

English-speaking cases are being immediately dealt with regardless of when they arrived. The rationale is that these cases are less expensive and faster to process because no translation is required. As well, Immigration officials describe them as MUCs, manifestly unfounded claims, because most of them are from Caribbean countries.

"They're being herded through as though they're cattle," said immigration lawyer Barbara Jackman yesterday at a news conference organized by a coalition of Toronto black groups, immigration consultants and lawyers.

This new process is a slap in the face, not only to the people from the Caribbean but also to those who have been separated from their families for so many years - not through any fault of their own, but because Canada's refugee policy fell apart.

Promises, promises...

At the same time, immigration officials are promising to speed up other than English-speaking cases. A new "paper screening" process is supposed to be implemented. Backlog claimants (initially those from Group 2) will be asked to send in a Personal Information Form with a description of their case which will be

Backlog Statistics (August 31st, 1990)

Total Backlog		113,063
Voluntary Departures		2,527
Front "H and C"		34,210
<i>Accepted</i>	3,244	
<i>Rejected</i>	30,966	
Cases Not Yet Begun		76,326
Panel Hearings		9,868
<i>Accepted</i>	9,066	
<i>Rejected</i>	802	
Back "H and C"		167
<i>Accepted</i>	17	
<i>Rejected</i>	150	
Landings		768
Removals		125

(Source: Compiled by Refugee Update from Canada Immigration Statistics)

reviewed.

This seems to be complemented by an increase in Front "H and C" interview acceptances. In the month of August, the acceptance rate was 17%, almost double the acceptance rate until then. It seems that the "H and C" is now being used to accept more cases that would otherwise have succeeded at credible basis hearing.

A growing consensus

A consensus is emerging within the Backlog, among refugee support groups, among Canadian Churches and across the country that the Backlog Clearance Programme is a mess that cannot be cleaned up. The delays already constitute a violation of these peoples' human rights. More changes in the programme are only serving to exacerbate the problem.

Action

The Toronto Backlog Action Group is holding a Vigil every Saturday, 6:00 to 6:30 P.M. at the Peace Garden, Toronto City Hall. Please attend.

Analysis: Stop The Deportations Now!

The Backlog is a festering sore on the conscience of this country. Barbara McDougall's Backlog Clearance Programme constitutes a direct violation of human rights. People in the Backlog made refugee claims while Canada's old refugee law was in a state of collapse. Now they, and not the government, are

The question facing refugee rights activists now, is what to do about the Backlog. When we look to the Minister, Barbara McDougall, we see a cold stone wall. She refuses to even consider an amnesty of any kind. When we look to the media we find little interest: no one is interested in yesterday's news. And the general public has not even heard of the Backlog.

So, tens of thousands of human beings who have heard nothing on their cases wait and suffer alone; wondering what they did to deserve such treatment;



being made to pay, and to pay dearly.

They have been publicly slandered as "abusers" and worse; they have been held up as liars and cheats. Their claims have been neglected by the immigration department; concern for their lives, and families and futures has been discarded by a Minister more interested in appearing tough. Most have been enduring this treatment for three, four, and even five years, and there is no end in sight.

waiting for an answer; from a system that seems to have no rules; missing their children, family and loved ones; unable to plan a future; hoping and dreading each day to find a letter from Canada Immigration in the mailbox.

There is a new urgency

There is always tension when the subject of calling for an amnesty comes up. Some argue that calling for an amnesty would turn the public against refugees since there are some in the Backlog who do not

have serious refugee claims. Others argue that the word "amnesty" implies that people have done something wrong. The people in the Backlog did nothing wrong and do not need to be pardoned.

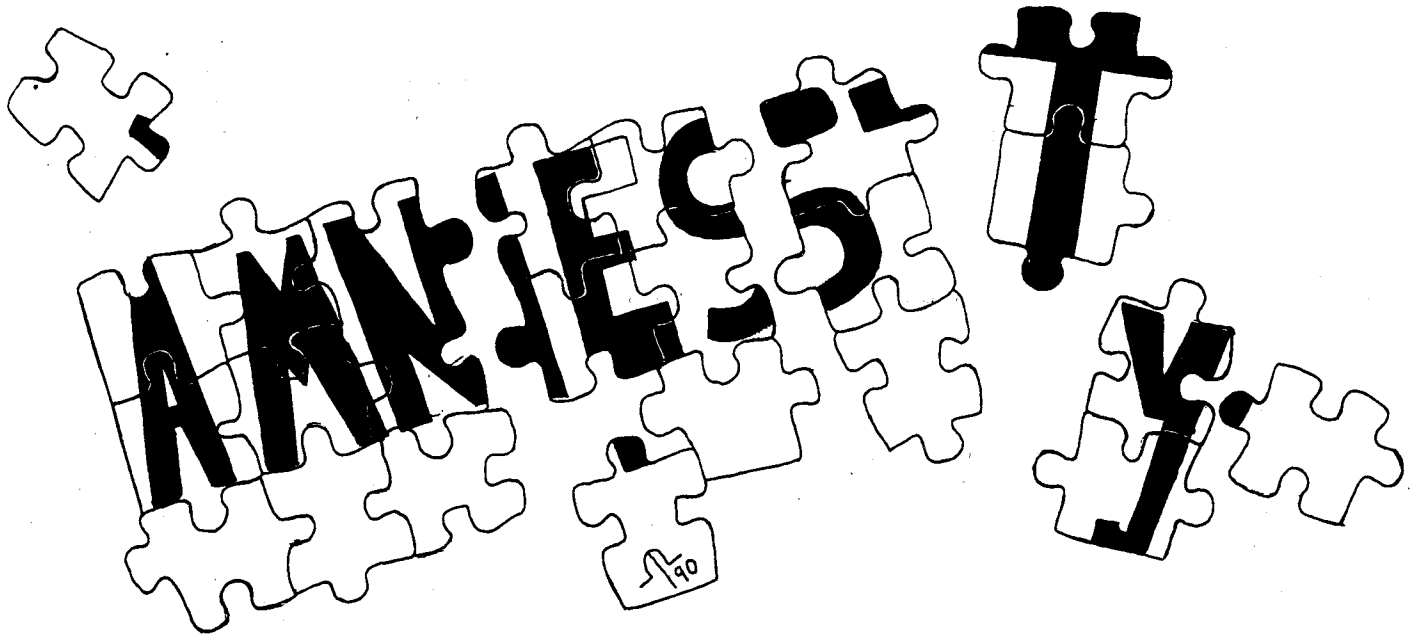
These discussions about strategy are important. But they cannot be allowed to get in the way of action.

And there is a new urgency about taking action now that was not there before. The immigration department is talking about large scale deportations and their current campaign against Caribbean claimants suggests they mean business.

It is easy to see why they are targeting Caribbeans if the objective is to deport large numbers in the Backlog. No one will argue that they are refugees, no one will argue that their lives are threatened if they return home. We can't let them get away with this.

Irrespective of any refugee protection issues, what about the years these people have invested in Canada? If we believe that the Backlog was unfair to claimants from day one, if we believe the government and not the claimants were responsible for the Backlog, and if we believe that everyone in the Backlog suffered the years of indecision regardless of their origin, then we can not buy into a government strategy aimed at sacrificing some communities and saving others.

Taking action on the Backlog will include defending people's right to stay for reasons other than those related to protection. This is new terrain for many refugee rights activists but then the Backlog is no longer solely a refugee issue: it has become a Canadian human rights issue.



Protection and integration arguments

Firstly, there are real questions about the legality of what they are trying to do. Almost two years have passed since the Minister promised the Backlog would be cleared up. Now they are expected to appear before a panel and remember the details of their refugee claim. any contradictions will be used to show they are not credible.

Already, the process is being challenged in Court. Expert witnesses on memory loss are being called to show that people cannot be expected to recall this kind of detailed information from 2, 3 and more years ago.

And then there's the other side of the coin.

Start with the deportations

This critical situation calls for a serious response. People in the Backlog deserve an immediate end to the fear and insecurity cause by the unfairness of the Backlog. At present there is nothing to suggest that unfairness will end. On the contrary the real prospect of increased deportations will only heighten the unfairness and exacerbate the fear and insecurity. Therefore, an immediate end to the deportations of persons in the Backlog would seem to be an acceptable minimum demand which would alleviate immediate suffering and would accurately target the government as the responsible party behind this mess.

Let's call for it...now!

The New Law: 1990 Update

High acceptance...but there's more to the story

Table 1 shows that a high percentage of refugee claims are still being accepted under the new law. The overall rate has dropped from around 80% last September to the current 71.5%. But, as Table 2 reveals, this is primarily due to significant decreases in the acceptance rates for China and Poland.

The fact that Canada is accepting a high rate of claims is important. Most come from countries with poor human rights records. Canada has a crucial role to play in protecting these refugees.

But while the statistics are good, they can be used to mask a deeper analysis of the situation. For instance, they can serve to cover up the injustices inherent in the system - injustices which are affecting more and more people.

Delays

The government argued that the new refugee law was needed to streamline the refugee process. It said that the delays in the old system attracted "bogus" refugees and created the backlog. The government also promised that it would not sacrifice fairness for expediency and maintained that a "screening" process could deliver both. Unfortunately, it is delivering neither.

The new law appears to be anything but streamlined, and a new backlog, known as the "frontlog", is now building. Preliminary figures indicate that this year 27,046 people have claimed refugee status in Canada as of September 30th, 1990. Some 16,133 of these claimants have not even had an inquiry yet. Another 4,238 are waiting for decisions from the inquiry. Thousands of others are stranded in other parts of the process.

And the delays are getting worse. The current average delay for an inquiry is 7.4 months. The delay for a decision on the inquiry is another 3 months. Then there are the delays before the Refugee Board itself.

At Fort Erie, where many refugees enter Canada from Buffalo, New York, Canadian immigration officials created a new delay by turning refugee claimants back to the U.S. without even an interview. They had to wait up to two weeks to return for the initial interview after which they risk being turned back again to wait for their inquiry. The effects of the new delays have put a tremendous strain on the resources of church groups sheltering the claimants in Buffalo.

At the current rate of 3,000 per month, approximately 36,000 claims will be made in 1990

Table 1

Refugee Hearing Statistics

(Jan.1, 1990 to June 30, 1990)

Refugee Claims Heard	10,982
Withdrawn	216
Pending	4,549
<i>Rejected Inquiry</i>	428
<i>Rejected Board</i>	1,190
<i>Accepted</i>	4,599 (71.5%)

(Compiled by Refugee Update from Canada Immigration Statistics)

compared with 20,783 for 1989. The government maintains that it is attempting to meet the increased demand by expediting the process and adding new resources. A pilot project called "SIP" (Simplified Immigration Process) will soon be widely implemented. It allows the panel at the first inquiry to accept cases on the basis of written recommendations from immigration officials. This avoids a full inquiry in cases which would normally be conceded.

At the Refugee Board level, the so-called "Fasttrack" program accomplishes the same objective as

Table 2

Top Sources - Refugee Claims

(Jan. 1, 1990 to June 30th, 1990)

Country	Claims	Accept % (current)
1. Sri Lanka	2034	89%
2. Somalia	1430	94%
3. China	1271	60%
4. El Salvador	1003	76%
5. Lebanon	932	71%
6. Iran	808	91%
7. Bulgaria	470	20%
8. Poland	267	13%
9. Pakistan	262	88%
10. Guatemala	232	76%

(Compiled by Refugee Update from Canada Immigration statistics)

the SIP for the second hearing stage.

The government also recently appointed 46 new members to the Refugee Board and increased its budget from \$62 million to \$80 million. This move is designed to allow the Board to deal with the increasing numbers of claims.

But refugee rights advocates are increasingly concerned that the refugee determination system is about to collapse. A real question is whether the temptation to implement the safe third country provisions will be too great, especially since about half of all refugee claimants enter from a single country, the United States (eg. of the 14,601 port of entry refugee claims for 1990, 7,537 entered from the U.S.).

Detention

Upon arrival, some refugee claimants are subject to detention because they come from "non-refugee producing" countries. They may be denied release in the absence of a financial bond, often in the range of \$3,000 to \$5,000. If a group or individual puts up the bond and the refugee claimant defaults for some reason (eg. the refugee claim is rejected and he/she goes underground rather than face deportation) the full amount of the bond may be demanded. The result is that some refugee claimants are detained for long periods.

Concerns about detention have been recently exacerbated by a new government report recommending the building of large scale detention facilities to facilitate deportation of unsuccessful refugee claimants (Toronto Star, Oct. 11th, 1990).

Poor Translation

Once a claimant enters the system, the question of adequate translation is critical. However, interpreters are often unqualified and are given little or no training. Moreover, there is abuse.

Toronto immigration lawyer, Christine Kurata, says one of her clients recorded a conversation with an interpreter who, while not directly asking for a bribe, said he had the power to help or delay the granting of refugee status. She also said two of her clients had to bribe an interpreter at the Fort Erie border post last December and early January. (Now Magazine, September 27, 1990).

Hearings

Equally important is the right to legal counsel. Unfortunately, some lawyers and consultants are not qualified for, interested in, or prepared to work for their clients.

As for the Refugee Board itself, there are many

complaints about the quality of decision-making by its members. Refugee rights supporters continue to raise questions about the competence of some Board members in light of an appointment process that smacks of patronage. The newest appointments included two former Ontario Progressive cabinet ministers as well as an assistant to three former Conservative cabinet ministers and an advertising executive who worked for two Diefenbaker-era cabinet ministers (Toronto Star, August 18, 1990).

There is a growing feeling that Board members have to be selected through a more open process that allows for individuals and groups working with refugees to play a genuine role in the nomination and selection process.

Cuts To Documentation Service

Then there are the recent cuts in services by the Refugee Board Documentation Service. On August 7th, 1990 the Director of the Refugee Board's Documentation Centre sent a letter to non-governmental organizations working with refugees advising that the Centre's Information Request Service would no longer be available to refugee claimants or their counsel. In future, the service is only available to IRB members and Refugee Hearing Officers.

The Refugee Board justifies the decision on the basis that it is "faced with a seemingly limitless demand for information and only finite resources." But the Canadian Council For Refugees, in a recent press statement, criticized the move at a time when the immigration department is setting up its own documentation centre.

Conclusion

The good news is that the acceptance rate under the new law is still high. The bad news is that there are real problems in the process. These problems mean people have to wait longer and longer to have their cases resolved. They also mean that people are sometimes rejected because of poor translation, inadequate counsel or improper decision making.

It appears the government will attempt to fix the system from within. But if it fails, will it look to the safe third country option?

It is unfortunate that the government still refuses to admit that the screening process is flawed and that getting rid of it would go a long way to clearing up the delays.

The government should also act to correct the other injustices in the system. It is no excuse to argue that no system will ever be perfect. Especially when the current one does not even allow for an appeal!

Concern Over CSIS Interviews Grows

Refugee rights advocates are becoming increasingly concerned about interviews of refugees by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). One advocate, Sister Betty Dilio of the Catholic Immigration Bureau, has reported to Refugee Update that a number of her clients have recently undergone interviews by CSIS.

One of those clients was a young Salvadorean refugee. Here is an excerpt from his testimony:

When I went to the interview I expected Sister Betty to be with me. She had always been there before but this time she was not allowed in and that's when I began to worry.

He asked questions from my past interview and then he asked whether I had contact with people from the Soviet Union when I lived in El Salvador.

I know the official doubted my story but how could they think that a person like me who can not even read or write would be allowed to have contact with people from the Soviet Union. In our country things don't work like that. It would never be permitted.

They also tried to get me to say I had been involved in politics. I had only said in my first interview that I didn't want my son to go to the barracks and be trained because all they teach them is how to kill and torture.

They wanted to know what organisations I was involved with here. But they don't understand I have no time left for those things I work.

When I first came to Canada I had nightmares about the war: planes overhead, bombing, bodies in the streets. I went regularly to a phycologist and I took tranquilizers. But then I was feeling better. Now I am going back to the phycologist and my job is in jeopardy. I am always worried about that interview. I can't sleep nights. I am never hungry. I even told my wife I felt like taking my life.

Now I just feel like crying and crying. I went to the interview with great hope. I thought it was to finalize my landed residence, and then I would be able to bring

my children. But now everything has been left inconclusive. Its better if they stop tricking us...

Sister Betty had in fact been granted permission to be at the interview but was denied entry by the CSIS official present on the day of the interview. The official said there was no need for her to be there and that as long as she told her client to tell the truth (implying that refugees are told to lie) everything would turn out all right.

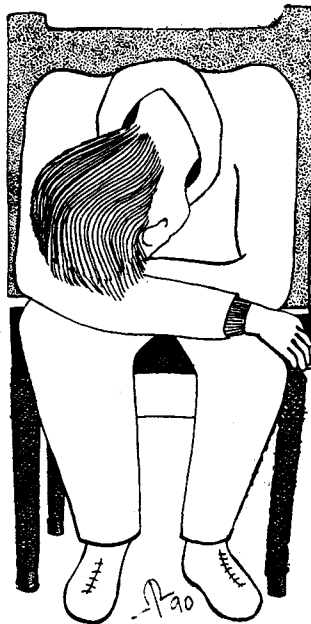
Here is what Sister Betty told Refugee Update about the interview:

The main reason I wanted to go in was because on two occasions my clients had been left very shaken by the duration and the intensity of the CSIS interview.

Refugees whose credible basis claim has already been established are being called for gruelling interviews. Usually the CSIS official has with him the persons examination under oath which he uses to ask questions which have already been answered in interviews held years before. They also ask questions which are out of context or illegitimate. In both cases they are looking to trap and harass them.

When Juan came out he was totally shaken up and wiped out. He was just sitting in tears saying that if Canada didn't want him he would go to Australia.

The interview had lasted two hours during which they had asked him things he just couldn't believe.



On Sept. 24th. a unanimous all-party Parliamentary Committee report containing 117 recommendations on the nature and tactics of CSIS activities was tabled in the House of Commons. The report strongly urges a curtailment of CSIS power and autonomy. At a most fundamental level what is being challenged is CSIS' broad and ambiguous notion of a 'national security threat'. For CSIS the sanctity of national security as defined by their logic justifies anything. The result is that refugees who fall prey to this logic will continue to be victimized. Any new beginning which they attempt to build in this country will always be subject to scrutiny. There will be no security for them as long as CSIS can so arbitrarily classify them as a national security threat.

Drugging

Drugging practice halted

Canadians reacted with outrage when it was revealed that immigration authorities used drugs and the threat of drugging to implement deportation orders. Canadians were equally shocked to hear the Minister of Immigration, Barbara McDougall insist that she saw nothing wrong with the practice.

Well, Southam news reports that immigration officials say they have stopped forcibly drugging people who resist deportation:

The practice was halted shortly after a refugee advocacy group revealed it last May, said Gordon Barnett, director general of enforcement.

"We have cleaned up our act," Barnett said in an interview yesterday.

"That half-a-dozen people at the outside that we might sedate each year because they went nuts when they got to the airport, now what we'll do is...we'll turn them over to the RCMP."

Instead of sedating violent deportees against their will, Barnett said, the Mounties will use "chains, handcuffs, stufflike that" to safely remove them. (Toronto Star, August 9th, 1990)

Not surprisingly, Barbara MacDougall has not herself made any statement on this new development!

Said released on \$5000 bail

The drugging scandal became public when immigration officials threatened to deport a rejected refugee claimant from Kenya. In the last issue of Refugee Update we reported that the claimant, Mohamed Ahmet Said, remained in detention.

We are pleased to report that he was recently released following the signing of a \$5,000 bond backed by a number of individuals and groups in the community. He is now in the process of appealing his deportation order.

Urgent Action...Urgent Action...Urgent Action...

Rejections from Mozambique

The Committee To Aid Refugees (CAR) in Montreal is asking supporters of the Vigil Network to contact Barbara McDougall about the cases of two refugee claimants from Mozambique, L.M. and R.G.

CAR has been involved in the cases of these two cousins since they came to Canada to claim refugee status in April 1989. Since the beginning, there have been problems and irregularities with the handling of the cases - to the point where CAR feels a political decision has been made to send them back to Mozambique.

One of the main problems in the cases is that the same adjudicator heard both claims and found no credible basis in each. He refused to desist from the second case even after rejecting the first.

In fact, both men lost their families in a massacre perpetrated by RENAMO forces in 1986. There is evidence to support the fact that the killings took place. As well, at the inquiry an expert witness testified on the current situation in Mozambique.

September's French issue of UNHCR's Refugees magazine is dedicated in part to those millions of refugees from Mozambique. The National Film Board has produced a documentary on the political situation in Mozambique. If any country should be seen as refugee producing, it is Mozambique.

Deportations imminent

R.G. has been asked to report for "travel preparations" on October 24th and we fear his cousin will soon be called in.

This is urgent. We need to let the Minister know that this is unacceptable. We need to ensure that these refugee claimants are treated justly.

Please send telegrams, make phone calls, and let the Minister know that we are still here.

Thanks

Thanks to all who responded to the urgent action request for Mahmood Hassan Randeree. The Minister has intervened in the case.

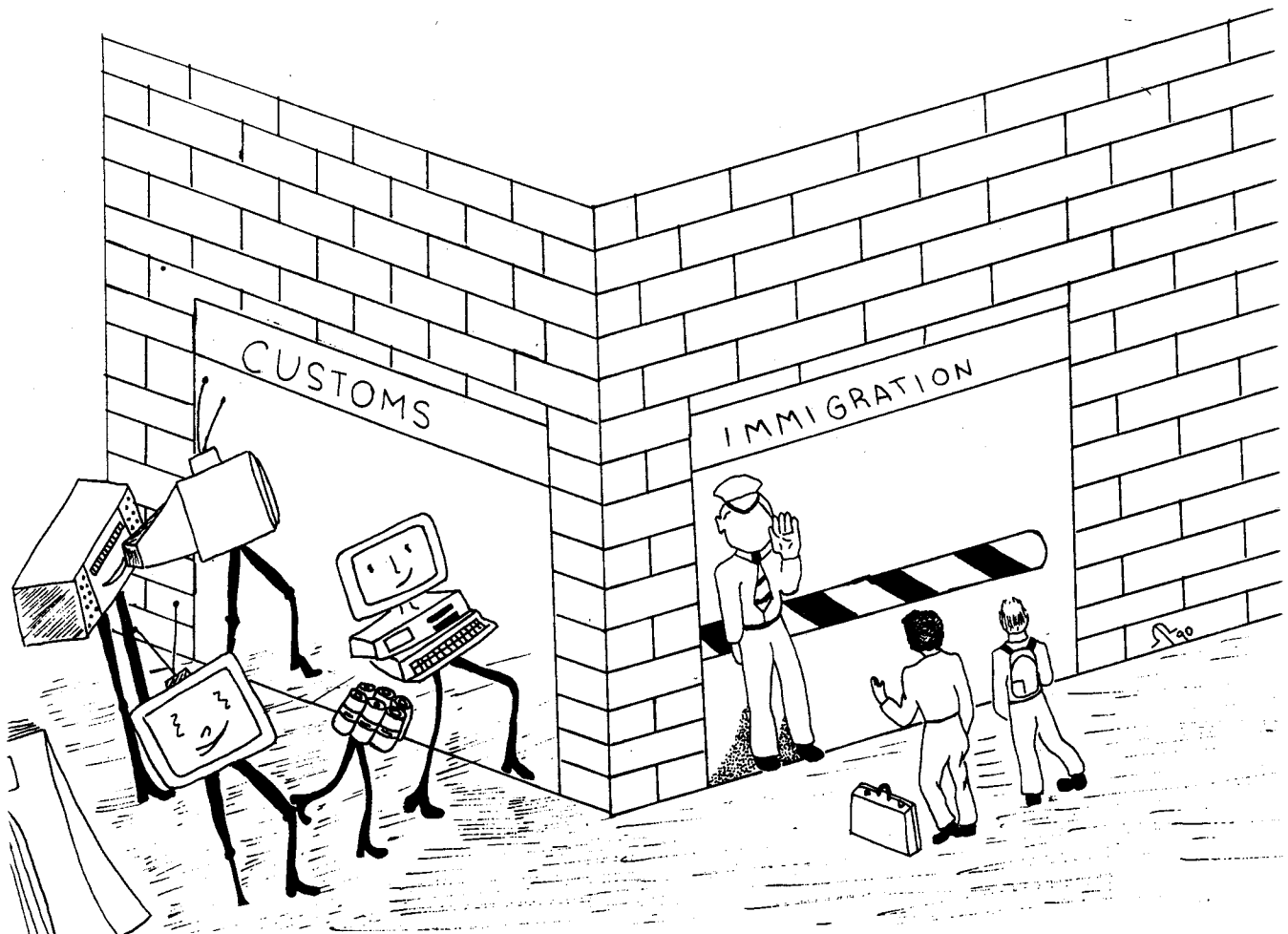
Fortress North America

The Centre on Migration Information and Education (CIEM) based in Tiquana, Mexico gives a sobering picture of recent events in Mexico aimed at complying with US efforts to stem migration flows from Central and South America:

- * the number of check points at the Guatemalan border has increased from 18 to 55; security checks at the Mexico city airport have increased

- * under new Mexican legislation, the estimated 300,000 illegals in Mexico have three years to either become Mexicans or return to their countries;
- * on the US side, marines, the National Guard, county police, helicopters, and 7 blimps (\$18 million US each) are being deployed in stepped-up efforts to step the flow.

The result, says CIEM founding Director, Jose Luis Canchola, has been more violence, more



- * at Tiquana alone, over 100 Central Americans are caught each day; in Matamorros the numbers are higher; persons caught have no access to legal counsel; deportees are bused to the Guatemala border; (Salvadorans are bused to the Salvador border where Salvadoran authorities transfer the deportees to jail.)
- * Pressure has increased on Mexican officials not to take bribes; (hence people are having to pay more!)

desperation, and higher payments to "coyotes". In 1989, 24 people were killed in areas within five miles of the US/Mexican border and another 85 persons were killed right on highways.

Canadians must ask what impact the emerging integration of Canada, the United States and Mexico into a single trade block may have on this situation.

Free trade with Mexico may mean that its goods will travel here more easily. But it will likely have the reverse affect on those people trying to make their way north.

Visa For Kenyans

New rule closes door for Kenyan refugees

Kenyan refugees who flee the bullets and prisons of the repressive Kenya regime will be forced to apply for visas from the Canadian Embassy in Nairobi if they intend to seek refuge in Canada. Unfortunately, such visas are rarely, if ever, issued.

This recent announcement by the Canadian government has cast yet another long shadow on the commitment of the Canadian government to international conventions on human rights and refugee protection.

Immigration officials claim that in the first six months of 1989 only 4 people officially claimed from Kenya, whereas in the first six months of 1990, 128 Kenyans sought refuge in Canada.

Statistics don't tell all

These statistics do not tell us that in the same six months of 1990, more than 50 Kenyans were gunned down by government troops in the ongoing campaign against one party rule and human rights violations. They do not say anything about the 1,500 people currently facing political charges in Kenyan courts. Neither do they mention the undeclared state of emergency in Northern Kenya where government troops are committing atrocities and massacres.

Is it therefore a surprise that the number of Kenyans fleeing the country for political reasons has gone up? Certainly not. What is surprising is the fact that at a time when Kenyans' Western allies are pressing for democratic changes in Kenya, the Mulroney government seems to be moving even closer to the ruthless Moi regime.

The imposition of visas on Kenyans has been a big victory for the Kenya government. It is a shameful act by the Canadian government which claims to be democratic.

(Signed) Kenya Human Rights Organization

Canadian Council for Refugees: News Notes

Conference

The CCR's Fall Consultation will be held November 23-25, 1990 at the University of Montreal. Topics to be discussed include: the Backlog, the new law, sponsorship models, refugee women, survivor's centre, and government-NGO relations. This is an excellent opportunity to learn and participate in shaping refugee rights work in Canada. To register, call the office: (514) 939-2752.

EXCOM

CCR President, Margaret Third-Tsushima, attended the meeting of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commission for Refugees (EXCOM). Also at the meeting was Council Executive member, Rob Shropshire. Items discussed at the meeting included the financial crisis at the UNHCR and the prospect of more migration due to changes in Eastern Europe. Margaret and Rob will be reporting on the meeting at the upcoming CCR consultation in Montreal

Office News

Office Coordinator, Nancy Worsfold, has been busy planning and implementing a fundraising strategy for the organization. Nice work Nancy! And three cheers to the volunteer committees in Montreal and in Victoria who have been work on this coming and the next consultation.

Hero's Welcome

Hat's off to CCR folks in Victoria who, on July 19th, organized a Hero's Welcome for the captain and crew of the HMS Provider on its return from rescuing 90 Vietnamese refugees adrift on the South China sea. The CCR action used the ship's return to draw more attention to a truly great example of Canadian compassion to refugees. Media coverage of the event included an interview with the ship's captain on CBC's The Journal as well as extensive coverage on the west coast.

Ingratitude?

*I know what animals feel like
that have freely roamed the forest.
Food may have been scarce -
forest fire, flood and drought
may have daily threatened their lives,
but, they breathed the air of freedom.*

*The animal lovers redeemed us,
from uncertainties and,
the violence of the forest.*

But now -

*We pace within 6' x 10' rooms,
wait for our regulated feed times,
and time-tabled fresh air quotas.*

*These humans are so organized
that every flap of wings or wag of tail
is computerized.*

*Instead of instinct, now machines dictate
their every minute action.*

Sudha Coomarasamy

March 1986

London, England

(Frustrated by the long delay in the sponsorship process)



Please feel free to translate, copy, duplicate and distribute any or all of the Refugee Update on a non-profit basis.

Coming Events

Backlog Vigils

Every Saturday, 6:00 to 6:30 P.M. at Toronto City Hall, Peace Garden. Organized by Toronto Backlog Action Group. For info: 469-1123

CCR Conference

November 23rd to 25th, 1990 in Montreal. Focus on the Backlog. Other topics include: the new law, sponsorship models, refugee women, survivor's centre, and government-NGO relations. For info: (514) 939-2752

International Symposium

Responding To The Nutritional Crisis Of Refugees: The Need For New Approaches, 17th - 20th March, 1991. For info: The Symposium Coordinator; Refugee Studies Programme; Queen Elizabeth House; University of Oxford; 21, St. Giles, Oxford; OX1 3LA; U.K.



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947 Queen Street East
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Canada M4M 1J9
Tel: (416) 469-1123
Fax: (416) 469-3579

Editorial Board: Steve Foster, Ted Hyland S.J., Patricia Landholt, Colin MacAdam, Sylvia Petrasek, Francisco Rico, Loli Rico, Ana-Maria Robert.

Analysis Group: Steve Foster, Ted Hyland S.J., Patricia Landholt, Colin MacAdam, Kathleen Ptolemy, Francisco Rico, Rob Shropshire.

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