

## National PEI Representative needed

THE POSITION of the National Executive Representative to PEI for the Canadian Federation of Students is now open for all interested parties.

The person that assumes this position will have the following responsibilities:

1. He or she will serve as a permanent liason between the UPEI Student Union and the Canadian Federation of Students.

2. He or she will be responsible for expressing the

province's views regarding post-secondary education to the CFS National Executive.

3. He or she will be responsible to see that all services offered by CFS run smoothly. ie. SWAP, Student Saver, and Travel Cuts.

4. Requires travel with no remuneration.

For further information, please contact the UPEI Student Union before March 30 1988 at 566-0530.



## Educated Ethiopians live free with help of Canadians

By  
McAlister(CUP)



Abraham YaYa-Ele, a soft spoken Ethiopian, is hesitant to talk about the "political problems" which made him flee his native country in 1981. Instead he talks of the poor social and economic living conditions that refugees face in a foreign land.

"Nobody provides you with assistance. You can't find jobs because young people who leave their home country are generally unskilled and the country of asylum wants to employ their own people," he said.

The people living in Ethiopia today want to be educated, but the few who manage to flee political oppression often find the situation in the countries where they seek asylum as bad as the situation they left.

YaYa-Ele is one of the lucky ones who is accepted from the hundreds of refugees who apply yearly for sponsorship in the refugee program of the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). But luck is not all that got him into graduate studies at the University of British Columbia.

"These students are not given special consideration. They still have to meet the entrance requirement. But

these are above average students and many of them tend to be on the dean's honor role," says Chris Freisan, a student refugee coordinator at the WUSC committee at UBC.

The refugee's education and living expenses are covered by a fee levy established by a UBC student referendum for refugees in 1983.

"If students were told about the refugee program and where their money was going, I'm sure they would be paying double (for the fee levy) than they pay now," says YaYa-Ele.

"The money goes towards the individual's total living expenses for a period of twelve months. This includes help with tuition, books, room and board, a clothing allowance, and monthly spendongallowance," says Friesen.

The budget must allow for the fact that most refugees arrive with very few personal belongings.

But a student refugee who tries to make it into Canada is only one of many people waiting for a chance to lead a full life, free from political oppression.

Worku Abebe is a docturnal student who left Ethiopia in September 1984 and spent a year in Sudan before coming to UBC through WUSC.

"By chance I happened to come here, but there are so many people like me wasting their time there. It's not just a question of get-

ting an education, it's saving lives. Even if a student fails while he is here it's better than leaving them in countries of asylum," says Abebe. "The situation is miserable over there."

Abebe received a master's degree in England, then returned to Ethiopia to work as a lecturer at Addis Ababa University.

Other faculty members he encountered at the school, mostly East Germans, resented his foreign education, which they claimed was capitalist and at cross-purposes to their so-called socialism.

"The East Germans (faculty members) didn't like my presence there. For example, if something was missing from the department, they would blame me," says Abebe.

After having his life threatened and being thrown in jail, Abebe fled Ethiopia in 1984. Abebe looks at YaYa-Ele and they exchange a bitter laugh when they speak of why Abebe was imprisoned.

"There are hundreds of excuses," Abebe says. "The whole aspect lies in the difference of political opinion. The Ethiopian government listen to what the East Germans say. I can't say anything. In my country, I was treated as a second class citizen."

Abebe is not afraid to be blunt.

"Since 1984, in Ethiopia, we have had a military government supported by Russians. This government,

from what I've experienced, is one of the most cruel governments that has ever existed. Even more cruel than the South African government."

YaYa-Ele and Abebe are both critical of Canadian ignorance of Ethiopian, and other Third World, issues.

"Canadians all know Ethiopia because of the famine," says YaYa-Ele, as he explains that the problem still exists there.

"People generally think that the famine happened because of unproductive land or because the people are weak. The main cause is human."

"If they really wanted to help, Canadians should become aware, not just give grain," says Abebe.

Compared to the situation he came from, Abebe is content with the life he has in Canada now, but he says that he really feels just like another student.

"Nothing is really good or bad. I'm just living as expected. I saved myself, I can live, I can survive, and I have an education."

WUSC is the only Canadian organization that has a program for refugee students. Since the program began in 1978, 168 students have been sponsored by 90 local campus committees. Most of the sponsored students come from mainland Africa, Uganda, Southern Africa and Ethiopia.

"We're working on spreading our contacts

into Central America," says Friesen.

But one obvious problem with the program is the lack of sponsored women students.

"Women applicants are few and far between. About 95 percent of applicants are men, which is really bad. WUSC is slowly getting more applications from women," says Friesen.

"In many of the refugee camps, the situation is much worse for women than for men. They don't have the same educational opportunities, or they may have many children to care for," he says.

While both Abebe and YaYa-Ele are grateful to WUSC for the assistance they've received, Abebe continues to focus on the urgency of changing the desperate situation of the refugees. He speaks of the economic hardship and hopelessness of their situation.

"At this time, Ethiopians are one of the largest proportion of refugees to focus on the urgency of changing the desperate situation of the refugees in the world. There are more than 500,000 Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan alone. The situation is very bad," he says.

"The best thing we can do is increase the sponsorship. If the WUSC local committees can be increased to other universities and colleges and even high schools, we'll be making a strong move in helping more people," says Abebe.