

Abroad Thoughts From Home

by Kaberi Dasgupta

Kaberi continues her series, remembering Calcutta summers...

On 25 December, after having removed the stuffing from the turkey and sent it en route to our stomachs, my sisters and I settled down to watch NBC's Thursday night lineup. A novel way to spend Christmas, wasn't it? Unfortunately, however, we had to resort to playing Monopoly as we were repeatedly interrupted by five-second power cuts. Of course it could have been worse...

Though the prospect of forty-degree-Celsius summer days seems enticing right now, Calcuttan summers tend to change perspectives. Those were the days when our bed sheets occupied an inconspicuous corner of the refrigerator, when not spied by maternal eyes. Surely we had fans, you say. We did. We also had a phenomenon known as loadshedding.

In Calcutta, the words "to effect a power cut" have been replaced by a succinct verb, "to loadshed". Such economy of words is necessary as the business of power cuts is a topic of conversation that precedes even the weather. From this subject scientists can proceed to discussions of energy, politicians to the other causative factors of power cuts (it is an effective way to increase dissatisfaction with the incumbent), anthropologists and psychologists to inquiries into the effects of loadshedding on human behaviour, and cooks to lamentations on spoiled food.

Though we appreciated the value of loadshedding as a conversation piece, we had difficulty in tolerating it from any other viewpoint. Imagine this, for instance, You are lying in bed, having, after two hours of tortuous squirming, managed to position yourself such that you feel cool air emanating from some merciful part of the fan. Just as sleep begins to comfortingly envelope you, you hear it: the movement of the fan is becoming almost imperceptively slower. No, it can't be happening....Slower...slower... the whirr of the fan fades away.

Given these conditions, initially we felt victimized and delightfully sorry for ourselves. But as the days wore on, and it became apparent that there truly would be no respite, we decided that we would not be vanquished. This torture, we reasoned, was an attempt to test our powers of ingenuity. (The heat can craze one.)

Because our apartment faced the north, the summer winds that entered were hot while winter winds were cool. (Needless to say we spent a great deal of time across the hall in a southside apartment, much to the consternation of its owners.) As the wind that was coming in through our balcony doors was hot, we decided that it had to be cooled. (Brilliant, weren't we?) What if we were to soak sheets in cold water and hang them over the balcony doorway? (All right, it wasn't our own idea.)

Buckets of water and sheets in hand, my mother and I began our task with alacrity. The end was near! We soaked and wrung the sheets. I then stood on a chair and began fixing the sheets in place with clothes pins. Having put five pins in place, I bent down to get some more. N.B. Wet sheets are heavier than dry ones.

Through trial and error, we discovered a method of hanging wet sheets on metal protrusions, despite the laws of

physics that sought to plague us.

"See, Mom. I told you that it would work."

"What do you mean YOU told ME? It was my idea."

"YOUR idea!"

"Yes, MY idea. YOU wanted to pour water all over the floor."

"Just the balcony floor. It would have cooled the rest of the

floor."

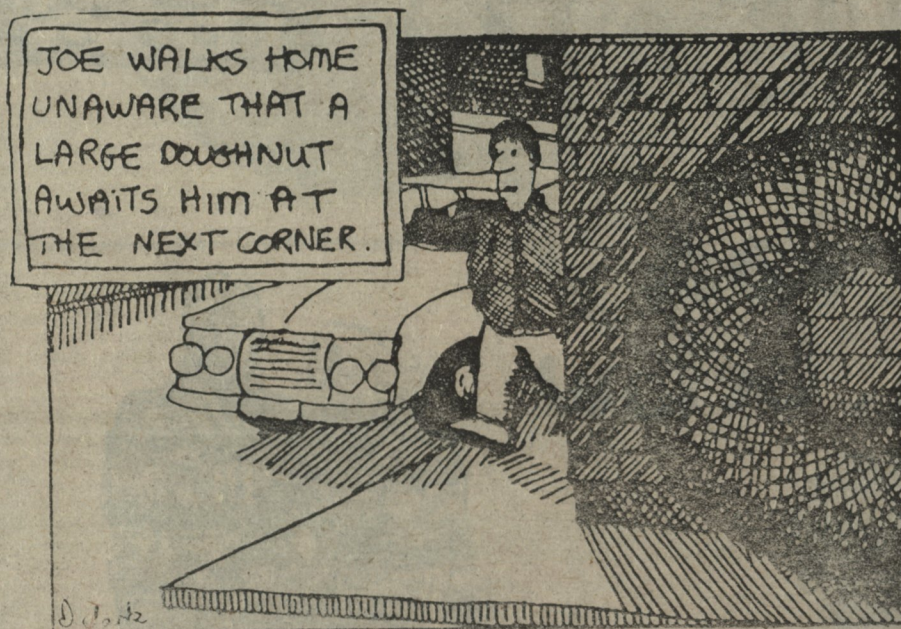
"And flooded us out of the apartment. Wait a minute...."

"What?"

"The sheets are dry. So much for your ideas."

Of course, inventiveness should not be reserved for periods of extreme heat-

"Mom, my clothes will NOT burn if I put them in the oven."



Graphic: Caplano Courier

WUSC OFFICIAL RETURNS FROM TRIP

By Sam Okello

Out of curiosity, I took myself to see a World University Service of Canada official while spending Christmas in Ottawa.

Harindar Aulach, WUSC's Student Refugee Coordinator, had recently returned from a tour of major refugee-receiving areas in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Aulach is an imposing figure in his dark blue suit; his opaque forehead and neatly-trimmed moustache give him a slightly East Indian appearance. He is the kind of personality that comes across better when he meets someone for the first time.

Aulach's talk, although promising, was didactic and lengthy. He said many interesting

things about his trip to refugee-receiving countries.

His tour took him to Britain, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Pakistan, India, Italy and Switzerland.

Aulach was able to strengthen WUSC's selection base by meeting Canadian immigration officials and other members of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). He hopes that his trip

played a major role in creating public awareness of the nature of the whole program.

What is perhaps most impressive is his fund of common sense and tolerance which enabled

him to interview refugees applying to come to Canada under WUSC auspices.

Aulach was also able to visit Dikhil refugee camp in Djibouti. The

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JACK SCORPIO

By BRIAN LINKLETTER

