

# West German student gives his impressions of Georgina

By UDO MESENICH

My girlfriend looked at me with a knowing smile, she noticed the frightful expression on my face. The traffic light was red, but the driver continued to make a right turn. In Germany you must just stop. The next crossing wasn't far away, the driver had to stop because of a stop sign. With a distance of 10 meters, a car approached from the right side, nevertheless the driver hit the gas pedal. I thought that he perhaps didn't recognize the danger. I tried to warn him, but in the moment I opened my mouth, I felt my girlfriend's hand on it. "Don't panic", she said, "I know in Germany you are forced to wait but here in Canada always the first car at a crossing has the right of way".

It was on the 3rd of October that my girlfriend emigrated from Germany to Canada. Until now I still can't understand this decision. How could she leave our small and beautiful village beside the Rhein? Our village with its narrow cobblestone streets and unique houses. No cars are allowed in the city where there are long shopping streets. Everything you need you can buy there: fresh bread, vegetables, meats, cheese, tools, toys, etc.

In the evening a car wasn't necessary. We could go with our friends at nearly every corner into a pub, where we drank draft beer in a restful atmosphere with its rustic antique wooden framework. I recognized already on my second evening how difficult this could be in Georgina. There were two pubs to choose from, but after I had seen the first one, the walk to the second one was not required. In the moment I entered it I felt like I was in a train station. No sign of cosiness! In Germany most of the pubs are comfortable; in the background low music is played and the tables are situated as best as it is possible.

In this pub in Georgina there are two big rooms connected by a door. Some men were sitting in front of a T.V., they were watching a movie and their eyes were glued to the set. Other men were playing billiards. I had a big shock when I asked for a beer and the woman behind the bar gave me two bottles. Beer in bottles, in a pub, unbelievable! I also noticed a great difference in the price, in Germany one beer would cost \$1 but here it costs \$3. As well, the legal drinking age is 16 but you can't drive a car until you are 18. That's what the laws say in Germany.

Toronto was my last hope. With a car it takes 1-1/2 hours to get downtown. No one would

make such a long trip in Germany to have fun. If we didn't want to have such a quiet evening, we would just take a five-minute walk to the nearest disco. When we wanted to have a total different amusement, we sat down in the car for a quarter of an hour and drove to Bonn or Koblenz, two big cities where the offer of entertainment was still various and because there is no speed limit on the Autobahn (a major highway), you get to other places more quickly.

All of this my girlfriend left behind to begin a new life in Canada. In all my letters I tried to persuade her to come back home to our Germany. But I had no success. So I bought a ticket and I'm now staying here with her for six weeks. I'm still hoping that she will return with me at the end of my visit.

When I arrived in Canada at the airport I had to show my passport to the customs officer and answer all his questions. I realized that I'm not the only one who could lose someone close through emigration. A

policeman was standing in front of a door and nearly every tenth passenger had to go in this big room. A sign was hanging above the door: immigration. I never saw such a room in Europe.

As we were driving from the airport towards Sutton I had my first surprise: I asked, "What a beautiful sea, what do you call it?" I was quickly corrected, what I thought was a sea was actually Lake Ontario. I inquired about the beach and if it was nice to swim there in the summer. I was again enlightened about the water's occasional contamination. I remembered the lake that my girlfriend and I went several times in Germany. We had to drive five minutes through the forest and after that we had to climb two kilometers up a mountain. On one side the "Black Lake" is bounded by a steep rock. On the other, every visitor can lay down on the grass after swimming. The water is so clear, even fish two meters below the surface can be observed.

I had some problems at first as to my accommodations. My girlfriend's acquaintances suggested that they had a spare room free. On my first evening a strong wind was blowing outside. It whirled up all the snow.

I had never seen such a storm as this. In Germany we rarely ever see snow. Last winter we experienced only one day of snow fall. A new friend of mine told me, when he saw me watching the snow, that people in the north will tie themselves to their car while searching for help in a Canadian blizzard.

This is so they will be able to find their car again. Many people have froze to death because they fail to use this precautionary measure. I shook my head but why should this man lie to me, he was so kind to offer me a place to stay. My grandfather was right when he told me: different countries, different habits!