

Oxfam - Canada

Bringing it all back home

by Eleanor MacLean

Where is the Third World? In Senegal, Bangladesh, Cape Breton or the North-West Territories?

OXFAM-CANADA is a private, non-profit organization that asks this sort of question often.

It funds development projects both in Canada and in its main areas of concentration — Southern Africa, the Caribbean, the Latin American Andean region, the area of East India and Bangladesh, and Native Peoples (including Canada). The aim of these projects is to combat underdevelopment by creating or assisting local self-help projects.

Canadians who watch TV or read newspapers know what the results of underdevelopment look like — poverty, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, unhealthy and unsafe housing, complete vulnerability in times of natural disaster. But few people have been encouraged to determine what the causes of these problems are.

The basic causes of underdevelopment are complex, but one thing is certain: they have a lot to do with the way the richer countries like Canada control the world's trade and resources.

So OXFAM-CANADA proceeds on two fronts.

Projects

On the one hand, it continues relief and supports development projects in the fields of agriculture, nutrition, medicine, literacy and community development. Thus it works to eliminate the results of underdevelopment. The projects that are chosen must be able to be copied and adapted easily by other communities in the area, and they must be based on

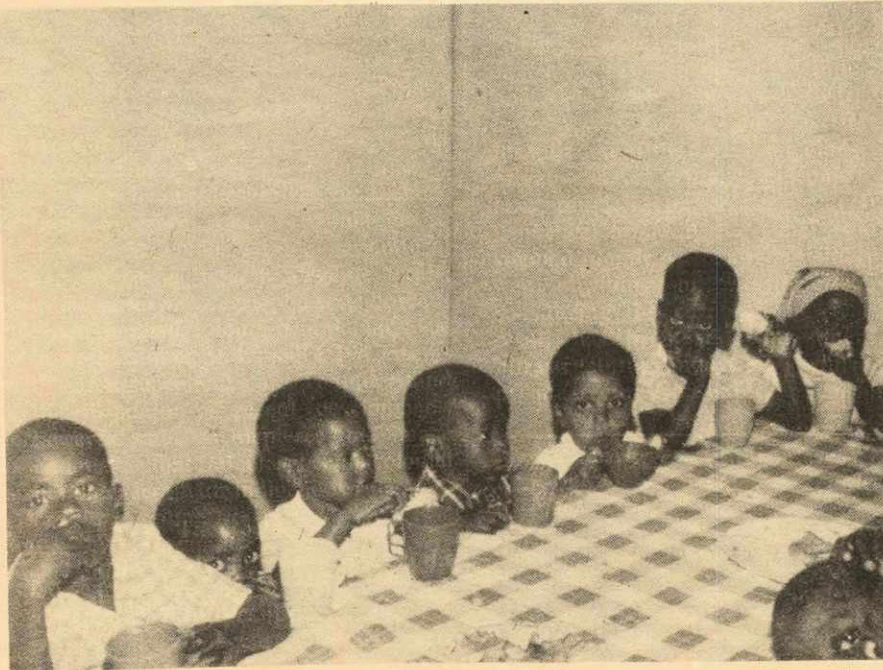
community action and a technology appropriate to that area.

Mozambique - an example

OXFAM-CANADA projects for Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde - Guinea-Bissau are good examples of this policy. Speaking recently to an information meeting on Southern Africa, Judith Marshall, Programme Development officer for OXFAM-CANADA in Southern Africa, described projects approved for

first time, schools are open to all Mozambican children (formerly only 12% could attend). All the textbooks are being revised so that emphasis is now on teaching the children the importance of establishing sound rural communities with productive farmlands. OXFAM-CANADA has approved funding for such a project.

"The new texts teach the young the extreme value of agricultural develop-



End of the Independence Celebration "treats" for school children in Maputo, Mozambique, June 1976.

newly independent Mozambique, still in the process of reconstruction after colonial wars. Since independence, education policies have changed. For the

ment in the overall achievement of attaining self-reliance in their country. The government hopes to turn out literate farmers", Judith commented.

Northwest Territories

As part of its work with Native Peoples, OXFAM-CANADA has funded the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories for work on land claims. OXFAM-CANADA contends that the native peoples of Canada constitute developing communities with very much in common with those that are being helped overseas. If the problems are similar, perhaps the solutions should be as well. Economic poverty — which is the Dene's [Indians] present lot — causes the even more serious problem of political poverty. The Dene know that within a private enterprise economy such as Canada's, the only way to secure their own participation as equals in it is to own property.

Local issues: The Price of Fish

On the other hand, a very important part of OXFAM-CANADA's work involves education — making Canadians more aware of this country's role in shaping the economies and politics of other countries; making Canadians aware of how their own country can be developed and "underdeveloped" at the same time.

The recent play, "What's That Got to Do With the Price of Fish?", is an example of how OXFAM-CANADA has attempted to realize these educational objectives. Created and performed by the Mimmers Theatre Troupe of Newfoundland and produced by OXFAM-CANADA's St. John's Committee and the Resource Foundation, the play opened in Sydney and Halifax, Nova Scotia, and ended its tour of Canada in Vancouver in mid-summer. It has just finished playing in St. John's to capacity audiences.

An evening of songs, skits and comical anecdotes about the not-so-comical history of Newfoundland since Confederation, the play looks at politicians, carpetbaggers from abroad, industrial tycoons and strategies that were supposed magically to improve their lot and make them Canada's "Happiest Province".

For those who have seen the play, the question, "Where is the Third World?" becomes "What can we do about the inequalities suffered by the people who actually live behind our sub-heads and categories of 'Third World', 'Regional Disparity', 'Cultural Minority'?"

Local activities

For the Martimes, OXFAM-CANADA has 2 staff people in Halifax who are involved in education programmes and in fund raising for development projects. Education activities make use of DEV-ERIC, OXFAM-CANADA's educational branch in the region, which consists of one part-time staff person, a library and news clipping service, and audio-visual and curriculum materials. Staff and volunteers have conducted workshops and public meetings on such issues as Food, Canadian Aid Overseas, Underdevelopment in Canada, and are ready to work with students, teachers and community groups on suggested issues.

The newly reconstituted Halifax-Dartmouth local OXFAM-CANADA committee is looking for interested volunteers for their programme for this year. OXFAM-CANADA's Third World Crafts Shop on Barrington Street, another branch of the organization, is run by volunteers. It aims to provide a fair market for products of Third World co-operatives, to educate Canadians about conditions in developing countries, and to offer them an alternative to the system of mass production and mass consumption.

Anyone interested in doing work with the local committee in any of its various activities can contact:

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Spiritualism in Japan

by Keiji Akiyama

To many Western observers, Japan seems a strange, almost an incomprehensible country. The travel editor of "Saturday Night" magazine, who visited Japan in 1975, reported his sense of shock at discovering a persistent juxtaposition of Western and traditional Japanese images: the Shirto shrine just a few yards away from a MacDonald's hamburger stand in Kyoto's pedestrian shopping district; the grandmother in a kimono walking in Tokyo's Ginga with her granddaughter, the latter wearing an American football jersey and blue jeans.

It seems odd to me that he should find such situations and events so very strange. Nobody remarks upon the bizarre conduct of a Frenchman who eats with chopsticks in a Chinese restaurant in the Champs D'Elysee. Nobody is taken aback by the sight of a Canadian girl in a poncho and snow boots. In the same way, in Japan it is now regarded as natural to eat at a MacDonald's hamburger dressed in a football jersey and sitting on straw mats in a room with paper windows. After all, Canadians may drive a Japanese car. They may sit back in their rocking-chair in their carpeted living-room and watch their favorite programme on their Japanese colour T.V.

Daily life is influenced by rational principles, which lead people to do whatever seems to be convenient, preferable and economical. Mixing various components from different cultures is often the best way to achieve to this principle.

In spite of this cultural blend so evident in modern Japanese life, certain events unique to that country continue to occur. These point to a spiritual framework that is often only dimly perceived and understood by outsiders. Indeed, many Japanese themselves express a certain bewilderment in the face of such happenings.

As an example, in the fall of 1970, Mishima, a world-famous novelist who was in the running for a Nobel Prize, trespassed on the grounds of the Defence Dept. His intention was to inspire certain officers to carry out a coup d'etat. When

he found no allies, he killed himself in the ceremonial manner, Seppuku. By this method, one cuts open the abdomen with a sword.

There was another 'strange' incident in 1974. A soldier belonging to the Imperial Japanese Army was discovered on a small island in the South Pacific. He had been in a state of military readiness for more than twenty-seven years.

A clue to the motives behind these actions can be found in the spiritual context of Japanese life. Perhaps the most outstanding and illuminating book of those that attempt to explain such phenomena is "lki no loozo" (the structure of lki) by Shyuzo Kuki. The major thesis of Kuki's book is that many words are untranslatable across cultural lines. They may have entirely different connotations in different languages, and their meaning may be reduced through translation.

Kuke chose to analyse the word "lki" as a way of exploring and elucidating the traditional Japanese spirit. The closest meaning to lki in English are found in the words 'stylishness', 'smartness' and 'dapperness'. However, these can account for no more than one-third of the meaning that a Japanese person would read into the three letter word, 'lki'. To them it contains the sense "beauty of life".

Structurally, 'lki' consists of three components, according Kuki's analysis. These are 'lkiji', 'Teikan' and 'Bitai'. Lkiji implies a deep commitment to life and is a certain philosophy of life. One lives by one's own implicit or explicit values. The second component, 'Teikan', is close to the English word 'renunciation'. It may involve unhesitant sacrifice in the face of duty. Social status, wealth, family and even life itself can be willingly given up by those in whom this concept or ideal is embedded.

At first sight, it seems that 'Ljiki' and 'Teikan' are mutually exclusive, or at least contradictory to one another. However, 'Teikan' exists only in so far as it is based on the premise of 'Ljiki'. For the sake of life, one must throw away contradictions in life, even if being alive is itself the

contradiction. It would be meaningless to throw something away for its own sake alone.

The third component of 'Lki', i.e. 'Bitai', is concerned with appearances and attitudes. The aim is both to attack and to impress others by one's actions. One looks at oneself through the eyes of others and assesses the effect on them.

Synthesis of these three complex concepts in the activities of daily life requires extreme self-discipline, both internal and external. If beauty is an art, and art is created by human, then the beauty of life is also subject to human creation and control. It is by using this logic that Kuki could assert that "Lki" means 'beauty' of life!

The operation of this cultural value-system was further demonstrated by the behaviour of the famous "Kamikaze" pilots during the second World War. They deliberately committed suicide in their attack on the enemy, after filling their gas tanks for a one-way journey. Their actions have often been explained by reference to Emile Durkheim's theory of a form of alternistic suicide stemming from great social solidarity. However, solidarity was not demonstrated in this way by the pilots of their countries involved. Kamikaze was not mandatory for Japanese pilots, but resulted from their own attitudes towards what they saw as their duty. One such pilot left behind a letter for his mother and friends:

Mitsuo Mazuda, Navy Sergeant, 22 years old.

Mother, I apologize for my selfishness and the trouble I have caused. However, I am Mitsuo of the great Japanese Navy, and I am going to prove myself worthy to be your son. Although I grew up in a poor family, I believe my sincerity and loyalty to equal that of others. I shall be happy if what I do helps to defeat the enemy. I feel that painful burden of my responsibility.

Living eternally in the Pacific Ocean, I shall try my best until victory is ours. Thank you, mother. Thank you so much, friends and neighbours..."

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