

## International Development Research Centre focuses on the future

*The International Development Research Centre, a public corporation created by the Canadian government to support development-related research is marking its tenth anniversary this year.*

*The Centre's research, which is designed to adapt science and technology to the needs of developing countries, is concentrated in five sectors: agriculture, food and nutrition sciences; health sciences; information sciences; social sciences; and communications. In the following article taken from the quarterly, IDRC Reports, the Centre's president Ivan Head looks forward to IDRC's next ten years.*

The year 1980 is much more than the tenth anniversary of IDRC. In both international attitudes and international relations it reflects a striking departure from the past. That contrast was marked in the first sense by the report of the Brandt Commission; it was marked in the second sense by the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Development....

Disaster, said the Brandt Commission, may proceed from several sources: from an epidemic of political instability spawned by economic deprivation; from a sequential collapse of industrial and financial institutions brought about by maldistributed wealth and resources, by the disappearance of confidence, of credit, of markets; from a deteriorating biosphere suffering from the disappearance of forests and arable soil; from nuclear holocaust prompted by a reliance on armaments rather than co-operation.

### North-South issues

Injustice along the North-South axis of the international community is more a product of indifference than of greed, more of inertia and ignorance than of intention. Yet its results are appalling whether measured in terms of human misery or of planetary degradation.

Disaster will not be averted, nor justice achieved, without a series of actions involving sectors as basic yet distinct as food, population, and health, and sectors as complex and interrelated as terms of trade, monetary practices, and transfer of technology.

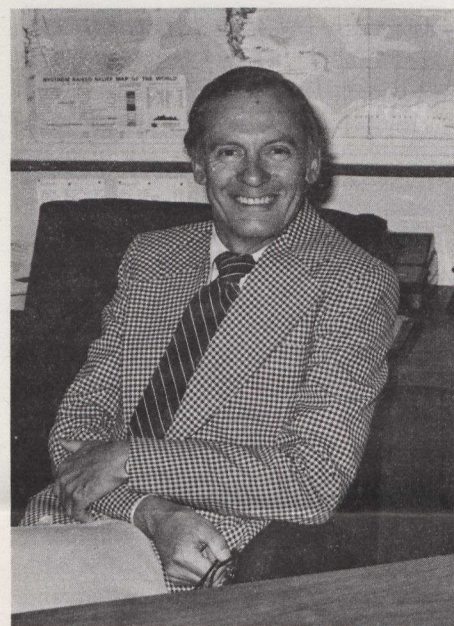
There are many reasons for economic disparity between North and South but it is clear that resource transfers, no matter how large, will not by themselves lead to any appreciable change. The structures of the international monetary, financial, and trading communities will not permit it. The lack of human competence and institutional capacity within the develop-

ing countries will continue to deny it. To overcome these defects and deficiencies, a number of prescriptions are required, a variety of actors needed.

IDRC is one such actor, its activities one such prescription. Over a period of ten years it has attempted to discharge its mandate of supporting development-related research in a fashion that enhances the indigenous human and institutional competence of the developing countries. It has done so in ways that were, in the Centre's infancy, oft-times innovative and sometimes unprecedented. It has experienced the satisfaction both of successful results and of emulation by other organizations created in its image. It has every reason to be proud of its accomplishments.

### Changes to come

Yet in the decade to come the centre will undoubtedly change far beyond our present ability to anticipate. Just as in the past ten years developmental theory has proved to be critically flawed, so will the next ten open new avenues of research, new techniques of research management, new methods of co-ordination and co-operation. Forecasting and planning will



Neill McKee

*IDRC President Ivan L. Head.*

become essential elements in Centre processes. The insistence of the public and the Parliament of Canada on effective expenditure of tax revenues will increasingly require IDRC to engage in evaluation and accountability exercises. The shifting priorities of the developing countries will demand of the Centre flexibility and ability to respond.

In one respect, however, there will be no change. IDRC will continue to focus its attention on people, will continue to insist that their welfare be the central goal of all centre projects. Human beings are not only the beneficiaries of development activity, they are the only true engines of the development process. They have been the *raison d'être* of IDRC for the past ten years. So will they be for the next ten.

### International board of governors

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan has announced the appointment of a new chairman and five other new members to the board of governors of the International Development Research Centre. The re-appointment of three governors was also announced. The new chairman is former federal Cabinet minister Donald Macdonald of Toronto. The new governors are Filipe Herrera of Santiago, Chile; Francis Keppel of Cambridge, Massachusetts; Dr. Frank DeMarco of Windsor, Ontario; David Lawless of Winnipeg and Marcel Massé of Ottawa. The governors re-appointed are the Honourable Rex Nettleford of Kingston, Jamaica; Sir Geoffrey Wilson of Oxford, England and Norman Currie of Toronto.

The act of Parliament establishing the Centre provided for a 21-member board of governors, to be appointed by the Canadian government. Eleven of the governors, including the chairman, must be Canadian citizens. It has been consistent practice to select the other governors internationally from persons, many of them from developing countries, who have made a contribution in the field of development.