

Zambia

# An inspiring visit

by Eric Wood

Mwapoleni mukwai. Mutushani? In difye bwino. Bushe aba kashana bali kwi. What am I trying to say to you? What can this mean?

I have just returned from Zambia, Central Africa, where I spent June, July and August on a cross-cultural learning experience with Canadian Crossroads International. The purpose of this article is to give an account of my experiences at work and play in Zambia and perhaps just pass on some of the issues I have been reflecting upon, since my return to Canada.

Crossroads sent about 50 selected young volunteers to developing countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia to work on development projects at the community level and learn the life of their hosts. These projects should be regarded as a tool with which the volunteers can gain a better understanding of the situation by working with the local people and not to be regarded as a form of foreign aid as such.

I am now studying graphic design at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and while in Zambia, I was fortunate to be working at an art school. I was able to pass on much of the knowledge I had previously acquired in design and also added more towards my own schooling at the same time.

Near Kitwe, a large modern city in the heart of Zambia's Copperbelt Province, lies the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, which is a group of training centres well placed on 150 acres of

**"All African people had one thing in common...a tremendous feeling for each other."**

beautiful semi-rural forested land, nestled between coppermines and their respective townships. Mindolo is a long standing institution, funded by various churches and organizations throughout the world which provides specific professional and domestic training to people from all parts of Africa. Mindolo offered a Youth Leadership Program, Women's Training Program, School of Business Management, School of Library Science, Ministerial Training College and on the campus, there is also a separate sister organization called the African Literature Centre.

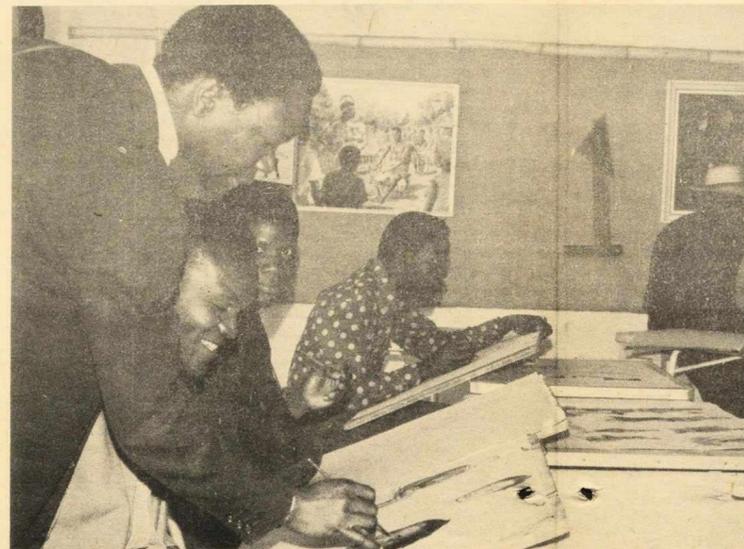
school and would later seek positions with some guidance from the ALC. We were hampered by the scarcity of supplies like brushes but we made do and often improvised. I was usually in class while others were teaching to help explain difficult concepts and give individual coaching. On my own, I held a cartooning class, which seemed to be quite popular, and worked with developing posters from ideas.

The life at Mindolo was very informal and family-like as all of the more than 100 students participated in social activities together, ate together and in general, mixed well. Throughout my stay I met many people from a wide range of African countries, and because the courses varied in length, there was a large turnover of students at the end of June. Each person would have his or her customs and language from home and I was always glad to learn of them. Things like food, musical instruments, handshakes, dress and greetings all different so much from one area of the continent to another.

All African people had one thing in common however: a tremendous feeling for each other and a real gift for making you feel so much at home. After two weeks, I felt so settled that newcomers thought I had been there a few months. It was so much easier to be accepted than I had expected while counting the days before I left from Canada.

The food in the modern dining hall seemed to lack a little (as most institution food does) but was, never-the-less, well balanced. You would always have the staple food, called nshima, made from maize, boiled cabbage or other greens, and stewed meat or fish. Therefore, visits to Zamby, the local hamburger joint, were always welcomed. About once a month we would hold an nsaka evening which would be best described as a banquet-like potluck supper with dancing and story telling afterwards. All of the staff and students would participate in the fun and eating, until late at night.

Socializing was not confined to Mindolo staff, however. From time to time I would accompany friends to some of the local country bars. I favored these places to the more sophisticated establishments downtown because the patrons really knew how to let loose and have a good



Mr. Emmanuel Nsama coaching Tommy Ray Mutundo in life drawing.

Photo / Wood

something new and different would inevitably happen to me. Partly because I was a stranger, and partly because I was almost always the only white present, I would meet most of the regulars and they would not hesitate to buy me a beer to start a conversation. If you want to learn the culture you have to see all sides, right?

The Copperbelt has a high expatriate population largely due to the mines. Most of the mine expatriates, especially the wives, seemed to spend most of their time complaining about the place. Perhaps they had good reason to complain. There were frequent shortages of basic commodities such as soap, butter, soap powder and cooking oil, and luxuries like chocolate and cheese where virtually non-existent. You have to provide your own entertainment unless you want to go to the stuffy theatre, with an all white stigma attached to it, or to the cinema. I had occasion to attend a dinner party at which most of the guests were mine employees and all were expats but it was so stuffy with everybody talking about their show horses and how hard it was to get good help. No wonder they did not like it; they were not prepared to adjust.

Most of Zambia is high plateau grassland dotted with big broadleaf trees and a few small hills. I was there during their winter season which meant cool nights (5°-10°C) and short days which warmed up around 11 a.m. to about 20°-25°C. May through October is the dry season and it never rained while I was there.

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The copperbelt was where everything seemed to happen in Zambia with the exception of the capital city, Lusaka. It is a collection of modern towns and cities which all seemed spacious, beautiful and well planned. Everything was divided into sections; first class trading, second class trading, light and heavy industrial areas and council-provided housing in separate townships with small greenbelts and arterial roads in between. As in most places I visited in Central and East Africa, the Asians and Arabs were strong in the retail businesses. The government controls the big department stores (ZCBC, ZOK) and also some of the agricultural markets (ZAMBOARD).

A big problem in Zambia now is urban migration causing large squatter townships on the outskirts of the cities. Extensive campaigns are underway with agricultural relocation schemes in varying states of success to make rural life more attractive. In the schools all students study agriculture. The farmer's hoe along with the eagle are the national symbols of Zambia.

Everybody has the opportunity to go to primary school but not all can go to secondary school because the facilities are not available. Competition for secondary school is keen and many are left out to fend for themselves. Reforms of the educational systems are underway but I am not yet familiar with the briefs concerning this. Once I visited a Dutch volunteer who was a secondary school teacher at a boarding school for boys. The situation was not a pleasant one. Boys were sometimes 2 and 3 to a bed as the school was overcrowded. They had been eating nothing but beans and nshima three meals a day for several weeks. They had meat once a term. The dining hall reminded me of a Charles Dickens story and the boys had to eat standing up. They had a nice collection of projectors and audio visual teaching aids but no electricity. Every young person, at one time or another, has to take so many months of national service training with the military and many of my friends have told me "it is no holiday".

Local Church services were really of interest. The music of the choirs was quite rhythmic and often accompanied by drums and maracas-like instruments. Somehow (when in English) the message seemed so much more vital and close to home in the different setting. It was also nice to see the church in action with development schemes.

At present I am divided about if and how foreign aid should be executed. It's disheartening to see things like 10 diesel locomotives sitting idle because their manuals for maintenance and repair were written in German or new tractors rotting in the fields because no one can get spare parts. Remember Zambia's only trade link by land is the TANZAM railway northeast to the Indian Ocean through Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. (Zambia is a landlocked republic bordered by Zaire, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Botswana, Namibia, and Angola!) Failures like these make me wish that there could be some successful information organized to co-ordinate all foreign aid to find out what form if any at all, is best for that particular developing country to make more decisions by competent persons at the receiving end.

In Tanzania I had friends at an agricultural research institute who were volunteers with CIDA and when I was there the project evaluators from CIDA came to the project not knowing what a combine was or anything else associated with farming. It is very disappointing to see good projects cancelled and poor ones continued because of poor communication.

Medical care largely controlled by Asian doctors, was free in Zambia. The hospitals were usually reasonably modern and well equipped but sometimes lacked technicians to operate the machines. Not unlike other African countries Zambia suffers a high infant mortality rate and tries hard to educate mothers to wean children

rather than subject them to the abrupt switch from breast feeding to nshima and vegetables.

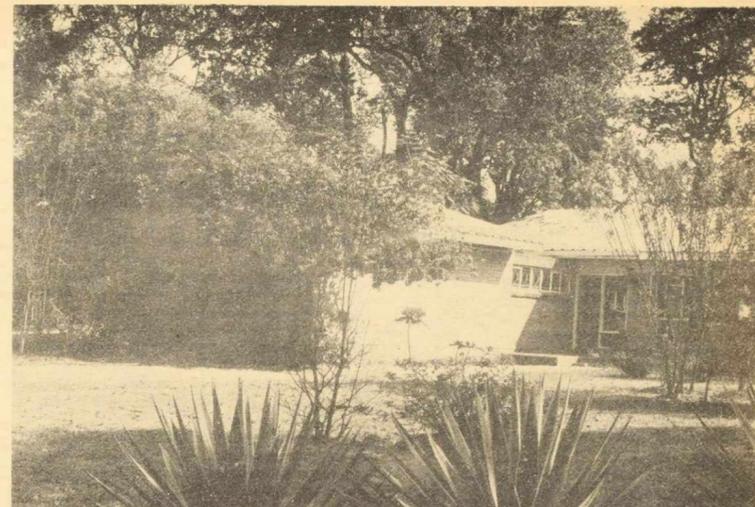
Because of transport problems in Zambia, mobile clinics and training centres are gaining in popularity. Mindolo operates a mobile women's training centre that spends time in smaller towns and villages where such training is unavailable. Nutrition centres are often found in the urban townships if they are not mobile ones. Mothers come to have their infants weighed and examined and to learn some hints on child care.

Of course the large urban migration and the subsequent problem with squatter townships is not evident to the tourist because often these rather unsightly communities are well away from major tourist routes. The people who live there that can afford municipal housing cannot get it because of the waiting lists. Sometimes 10,000 people can live in one of these mud brick, scrap metal, and stick townships of one room huts over an area of about 3 times the size of Dalhousie's campus. Others who earn less than \$50.00 a month as a houseboy, gardener or car washer in the streets are destined to remain there and their children will probably do the same.

**"Our way of life seemed appalling when I got back..."**

Do not let the term 'one room hut' put you off, because in Africa most of the living is done outside the home. About the only thing done inside is sleeping. Cooking, maize pounding, washing and relaxation all take place outdoors.

Mindolo seemed like an oasis in the midst of all this and I felt I was not getting the true picture of Zambia if I did not venture out to other parts of Zambia on weekends and holidays. This is encouraged both by Crossroads and my superiors in the African Literature Centre. In June I had the pleasure of accompanying 2 Dutch volunteers on a 5 day journey through part of Zaire into Zambia's Luapula province. The experiences encountered were as new and exciting as the roads were corrugated. One other time I met some Crossroaders by travelling south to Victoria Falls on the Rhodesian border. Words cannot describe the sensations. One Crossroader visiting another was a good time to share experiences and compare projects. I spent a weekend with my best friend's brother and his family, which proved to be very entertaining and educational. Everytime when returning to Mindolo after a



The Africa Literature Centre's Art Studio.

Photo / Wood

weekend out, I was made to feel so welcome that I felt I had been away for a month.

There have been strict security measures enforced now since the country was declared in a state of alert. The post office and high court in Lusaka were bombed while I was in Zambia and there was also a terrorist attack on a small border village (Namibia border). Public buildings, bridges and all communication centres were under heavily armed guard. A photographer can have quite a problem if he/she is not careful as to where he points his lens.

Despite the bad news, I really had a fantastic time. In your normal day to day activities you would not really feel the tension that newspapers love to blow up. When I came back to Canada the questions people asked me were surprising because they still had the image of Africa that I had before I left Canada. People really thought everybody was in turmoil and running around inciting riots. It sounds bigger over here than it really is. I was in a relatively safe country but it is one that plays a key role in trying to untangle affairs in Southern and Central Africa.

Another disturbing thing was what people here know and care about other parts of the world. We

seem to have closed ourselves in with no window on the world. My friends could ask me questions, meaning well, but by the tone of their questions I could see images of dancing natives trading ivory for beads and escorting you on exotic jungle safarries. It is really more different than most people seem to think. The modern cities with skyscrapers and six lane boulevards have just as much to offer and are just as exciting as our cities, if not more. People all wear jeans and shirts or dresses and those who went to school all speak English well. Our way of life really seemed appalling when I got back-Silent people on the streets and in buses and elevators, moral and sexual perversions, giving away millions of dollars or merchandise on the media to entertain people in their homes. Wow!

If any people reading this article feel they would be interested in participating in such experience, I urge them to get in contact with me immediately as Crossroads is going through the selection process this week. Also I would be more than glad to come and give a presentation to any group interested. I can be reached through the Dalhousie Gazette or at 423-6553.

## Forum

# Ian Smith-The strategies of a racist

by Jim Robson

A negotiated settlement for the independence of Zimbabwe seems unlikely, largely because of the intransigent position of Rhodesian leader, Ian Smith.

Smith has no intention of surrendering state power to the Zimbabweans represented at the conference in Geneva. His strategy involves a number of devious tactics. Firstly, his insistence on using the "Kissinger principles" (see *Dalhousie International* Oct. 1976) as a bargaining position instead of a basis for discussion, is an attempt to delay the Geneva talks and allow the Rhodesian state to regroup militarily. In fact the Rhodesian army had already begun its insidious attacks on Zimbabwean refugee villages inside Mozambique.

These vicious attacks have not been primarily against the guerrillas of the Zimbabwean Peoples Army (ZIPA) but against men, women, children living in these villages.

Last August, the Rhodesian army slaughtered 670 people, mostly women and children at the refugee camp at Nyazonia. An Oxfam and a United Nations report document the attempt to hide this bloodletting. "Survivors explained that the Rhodesian troops, after mowing down hundreds of men, women and children with gunfire, had ordered the survivors to put the bodies of the children into huts where the refugees lived. Then they set fire to the huts." (Oxfam Report)

Nov. 2, the Rhodesian army launched a full scale invasion of Mozambique border areas in a so-called "hot pursuit" action against ZIPA. This time the Rhodesian army distinguished themselves as Mozambique soldiers; killing women and children, destroying crops, and animals, and burning villages.

While the army attempts to smash resistance to the Rhodesian state, Smith continues to use his second tactic of stalling and delaying the proceedings at the Geneva conference in attempt

to accumulate more capital for the white ruling class through the export of coal, chromium, tobacco, and other foreign exchange earners.

The removal of Henry Kissinger from the diplomatic front will make it difficult for Smith to preserve the two billion dollar development fund promised to Rhodesian settlers after a transfer to majority rule.

Smith's ruling clique is running out of time and



he knows it. His withdrawal from the conference is a deliberate attempt to regroup his forces. It is safe to assume that he will not reappear, or submit to any of the demands for independence until he has received assurances from the U.S. government (that is the Carter Administration) that the neo-colonial set up promised by Kissinger will be

*Forum is an opinion column open to anyone who wishes to present any informed opinion on a topic related to the concerns of the International.*

up held.

Smith's third tactic involves the use of the news media to bolster his so-called "legitimacy" as leader of the Rhodesian state. Unfortunately Smith has had some success in this area. The general public in Western Europe and North America is receiving an abnormal amount of exposure to Smith's racist ideas and his rationalizations for refusing to grant majority rule. T.V. and news coverage maximize exposure to Smith and minimize exposure to the Zimbabwean leaders.

A content analysis of an article in the *Halifax Mail-Star* on November 4, 1976 reveals this type of coverage. Emphasis is placed on particular word usage. Smith and Foreign Minister Pieter von der Byl are given formal titles as though they were the legitimate holders of state power. The positions of African nationalist Joshua Nkomo and Robert Magabe are not discussed. Verbs used to describe their position such as "contend" and "demand", create doubt and suspicion in the reader's mind. On the other hand, statements by der Byl and Smith are supported with simple, non-controversial verbs such as "said" and "telling". In terms of paragraph emphasis, information supporting the Smith regime is given five paragraphs while Zimbabweans only receive two paragraphs and which, in any case, were non-supportive.

Ian Smith's overall strategy of using combinations of delay and attack on the military, diplomatic and propaganda fronts will fail. The Zimbabwean people do not support his self-proclaimed right to rule their country. They are willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement provided they receive independence by Sept. 1977. This is not an unreasonable request. They are, however, willing to fight the Smith regime until it is forced to capitulate.

**NEXT ISSUE-THE AFRICAN POSITON - UNITY FROM DISUNITY**



The students and staff of the 76/77 Graphic Arts and Painting course.

Photo / Wood

The ALC was mainly composed of a school of journalism offering a six month Pan African Journalism course and an art studio offering a one year Graphic Arts and Painting course. Of course, this was where I was placed.

The Art Studio is headed by a Canadian woman Marjorie Murray and she is assisted by a Zambian artist, Emmanuel Nsama, a former student of Murray. Nsama, attended and completed studies at Sheridan College, here in Canada. The course only began a few weeks before my arrival so the classes concentrated largely on basic skills. Some of the students would return to their jobs with mission presses or with the government while others were just out of

time. The Zambian people really enjoy their beer and dancing to modern congolese music in the form of scratchy records or distorted blaring from a juke box. To my surprise Jim Reeves had captured the Zambian market on country and western music. It was almost religious! Frequently, in an adjoining room you could procure some chibuku. Relax, this is the name of the local porridge, like brew, made from maize and available in one half gallon pails for about 25 cents. It is usually the hard core drinkers who go for it or those who are short of money. They say its very nutritious but it sits heavy in your bloated tummy as it continues to ferment overnight. Everytime we went to these places