

The Canadian Parliament established the International Development Research Centre in 1970. In the sweeping language of the act, the IDRC is intended to "initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions."

The key word is *adapting*. Problems differ from place to place and ignorance is the mother of arrogance. The IDRC's board has eleven Canadian members and ten non-Canadian members, including six from developing countries. Its expenditures are modest: In its first eight years it spent about \$143 million in support of 819 projects — a few receiving \$1 million or more, a few less than \$5,000. In 1978, one hundred and ninety-three projects had been completed and hundreds more were in a second or third phase.

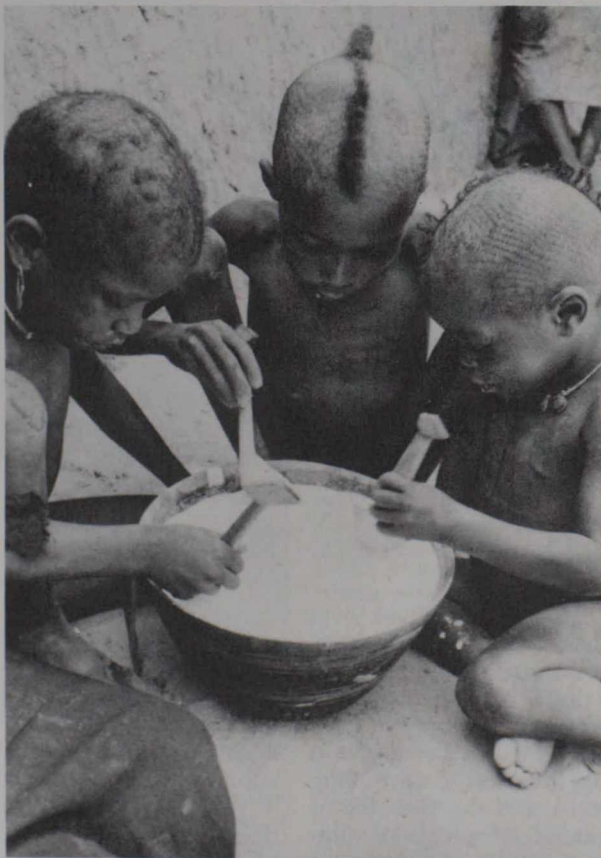
The IDRC is involved in health, education and food-production programs. The greatest emphasis is on food, particularly crop research in semi-arid tropical areas. In broad terms, the IDRC helps developing countries cope, adjust, survive and prosper in a rapidly changing world. It strives to help define the social, economic, political and cultural consequences of change and to disseminate information about development problems and solutions. It is a member of the worldwide Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Waste Not, Want Not

In developing countries, grain is harvested and threshed by hand and often stored in small containers. It spoils. It is eaten by insects, rodents and birds, spilled in handling and overexposed to the sun. Processing technology is poor, transportation inadequate, and distribution unfocused. Cereals lose weight and nutritional value. In some countries one third of each year's harvest is wasted. In Bombay an estimated 3,600 tons of cereals are eaten by rodents yearly, enough to feed a village of 20,000.

Various western techniques and technologies have been applied to different parts of the problem — irradiation, chemical pesticides, hermetically-sealed storage bins, prefabricated silos and refrigerated grain stores. For a variety of reasons, none of them worked very well. Rice mills designed for the well-graded, uniform grain of Japan were unable to handle the heterogeneous mixtures delivered to small Asian and African mills.

The IDRC believes the solution lies in a "systems" approach, encompassing all parts of a prob-



lem in a particular place. One has been tried in Maiduguri in Nigeria where sorghum, millet, maize, cowpeas and small amounts of wheat are grown. Ten years ago farm families sold only 10 to 15 per cent of their crops. The prices varied 30 to 40 per cent among the regional markets. Most households prepared grain and converted it to flour two or three times a week. The women dehulled the grain by hand-pounding with mortar and pestle, winnowed it and sent it to small plate mills, where it was ground into flour or grits. Imported wheat flour was used for traditional dishes and packaged cereals.

A survey of 1,100 households by the Home Economics Department of the North Eastern State analyzed present and potential tastes and found that the use of packaged cereals was rising and that wheaten bread, not a traditional dish, was being served at breakfast. Snack foods were popular — children in 40 per cent of the homes were regularly given money to buy them.

In 1974 the Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture and