

Operation Crossroads Africa

Annual summer project carries 325 students into 23 African states

By BILL CURRY
Special to Dal Gazette

After spending two months in Zambia as a 1964 Crossroader, I realized more than ever how shallow my previous knowledge of Africa had been. One can hardly know the real Africa through dated books and superficial newspaper accounts.

The Congo situation last fall was a stark illustration of the need for better understanding between people of different nations — a need which in no way is helped by the type of distorted press reports that followed the events in the Congo. Hopefully, we will receive more accurate accounts of the impending crisis in Rhodesia.

Now, perhaps more than ever, it is essential that we form a clear picture of the needs and aspirations of African countries — for as Canadians we may soon be asked to support other Commonwealth countries in bringing sanctions against South Africa for its apartheid policies. A simple commitment not to buy South African cherries or Outspan oranges may help, as a start. But perhaps it is more important that we make the effort to understand the currents of African thought, the diversity between the various countries, and the vast progress throughout the continent.

"The darkest thing about Africa is North American ignorance concerning that continent," states Dr. James H. Robinson, founder of Operation Crossroads Africa. Happily this is changing, as more and more young Americans come into direct contact with Africa and Africans.

Operation Crossroads Africa provides an opportunity each year for 325 students (about twenty-five Canadians) to participate in summer projects in one of roughly thirty African countries, and thereby learn for themselves what that country and the people are really like. Upon returning home, Crossroaders hope to build an "African awareness" by relating their experiences — telling of the modern cities, the different customs, the hospitality and the new friendships.

When Operation Crossroads Africa was founded in 1957, no more than a dozen students from this side of the world had ever been to Africa in any volunteer capacity. A great tribute was paid Dr. Robinson and Crossroads by John F. Kennedy when he hailed Crossroads as "the progenitor of the Peace Corps."

Since 1957, about two thousand students have participated. Canadians have been a part of the program since it began and are selected by the Canadian Crossroads Committee. A private voluntary effort, Crossroads depends on voluntary contributions to offset the \$1,350,000 cost to send each Canadian to Africa. Each Crossroader himself pays about 30% of this amount.

Projects are always chosen by the receiving country, and generally involve some form of construction — hospitals, schools, roads. While meeting vital human needs Crossroads work projects serve primarily as a valuable basis of contact and communication.

Almost ten thousand miles from my home, swinging a pick alongside a man of another continent and culture, I soon learned the depth of understanding that comes through a smile, a helping hand, a spontaneous song.

By our second day on the work site, visitors from the surrounding villages started coming to see the group of Americans — white and Negro together — who were actually working with their hands, piling bricks and digging in the dry stony earth. Once we adjusted to being the source of a new spectator sport, it wasn't long before we could greet the onlookers, "Moni, Muli bwanji?" — Hi! How are you? They melted, losing both suspicion and curiosity and even offering to help.

We certainly couldn't blame these people for being suspicious of us at first. Never before had they seen a white person work with his hands; and for whites to work under an African foreman was exactly the reverse of the previous relationships between whites and blacks.

Though the men with whom we were working had been told who we were and why we had come, they assumed we must be receiving a high salary to be working. However, it wasn't long before we began receiving invitations to visit their villages; they were flattered that we had come mainly to learn from them.

News of our presence seemed to spread quickly through the whole area. One man, hearing of the Americans who had come to work with his people, pedaled 100 miles to bring us a dozen oranges. Two former Crossroads counterparts sought us out to invite us to their community development project 150 miles away for a weekend.

We worked from 6:30 to 2:30 five days a week, and spent our weekends and evenings learning more about the culture, the geography and agriculture of the area by travelling about and meeting as many people as possible. Language was never a difficulty.

Slowly foundations for ten houses were laid, while a total of 700,000 bricks were piled and fired. By the end of our seven weeks at St. Francis Hospital, in the Eastern Province of Zambia (70 miles from the nearest town and 325 miles from Lusaka,

the capital) we had completed five two-room brick houses. We had also established many close friendships, some with workmen on the basis of only a few dozen phrases of each other's language.

We visited schools to speak on our various courses of study and on our different geographical backgrounds — Jim from the Bronx, Chip from L.A., Marty from St. Louis, Carolyn from Chicago. Political discussions ranging from U.S. civil rights to local elections filled many a late night.



We were invited to dozens of villages and at each were given a token of certain welcome — a chicken, a basket of papau, even a full stalk of bananas. From people with nothing to give, these gifts were particularly meaningful to us.

Living in a rural area, where the people for the most part exist at a subsistence level, we were able to see the contrast between these areas and the modern cities. With an urgent need to make the rapid transition from a poor agricultural society to a technologically advanced country, Zambia and other developing nations require dedicated heads of state.

Zambia, the second greatest copper-producing country in the world, is a vivid example of dynamic progress under strong African leadership. President Kaunda, who steered the country to independence on October 24, 1964, is one of the most respected African statesmen. Chairman of PAFMECSA, the organization for Pan-African unity, he will certainly play an important role in the seemingly inevitable confrontations with Rhodesia and, finally, South Africa. Through Dr. Kaunda, a long-time believer in non-violence, we can be assured

that if at all possible the transition in those countries will be peaceful. Hopefully that possibility yet remains, if we put faith in leaders like Kaunda. Nonetheless, a concerted fundraising campaign by the Canadian Crossroads Committee will add ten openings for the 1966 summer, giving thirty-five Canadians the opportunity to meet Africa first-hand, along with 300 U.S. students.

From person-to-person confrontation, I can say, that the people of Zambia generally are aware of their political situation, and recognize that independence demands greater responsibility on their part.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Bill Curry is presently a first year Law student at Dalhousie. He spent last year working for the Canadian Union of Students as an Associate Secretary, and before that he was Senior Stick of United College in Manitoba. At the recent CUS Congress in Lennoxville, Bill was elected President of the Association of Atlantic Students for this year. He went on Crossroads Africa two summers ago, and here gives the Gazette some of his impressions.

The focus of world attention must soon shift to Southern Africa. We have every reason to believe that Zambia will accept

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Progress is being made with the bricklaying. The project was in Katete, Zambia. This is one of five houses being constructed.



Bill Curry hard at work building a house which is to be part of the St. Francis Hospital complex.

One-third of all former Crossroaders are working in underdeveloped countries or are involved in African studies and projects here. For African, Canadian and American participants, Crossroads has been the beginning of a new awareness of the world, of learning and understanding — such as no previous generation has experienced on an international basis.

Interested students may contact Bill Curry through the Students' Council office, or Prof. George Rawlyk (History Dept.).

KING'S —

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Arts Rep. decided before Shaw announced his tie breaker to change his abstention to a vote for Simpson. A procedural wrangle ensued. Hillis and Simpson returned and were thereupon banished once more from the chamber. A new vote was taken. Simpson was elected 8-6.

Most observers feel that the results indicate that the Dal Council will be unwilling to press King's too hard for this year.

SUPA —

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U.S. South. "What has been forgotten is that the powerful among the people and institutions of North America were more than willing that the society of the white South should be broken.

"It will surely be a different matter when the protests are against some position which is dear and close to the American liberal establishment. We have only to think of how much is immediately accomplished by protests about Vietnam, the Dominican Republic or nuclear policy."

U.G.E.Q. —

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system based on social and economic discrimination is to deny the right of all to an education according to ability, it is to reject the democratization of education of which the first step is free education, and it is to show a complete absence of any sense of social justice.

"Universities, now almost wholly financed by the state, should have their affairs taken out of the hands of businessmen who know nothing about the university. To argue otherwise is to show proof of a reactionary and basically capitalist philosophy."

UGEQ draws the conclusion that "the commissioners wish to leave the question of education in the hands of private enterprise, that is to say in disorder, in atrophy and in stagnation."

CANADA —

(Continued from Page 1)

said it was the responsibility of the Vietnamese people, not the United States, to provide for the government they wanted.

At 11:30 when the university buildings were closed, many of the 200 persons in the audience followed Mr. Myerson, Mr. Jagan and others to the quadrangle to continue the debate in open air.

4,000 —

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Mazrui, professor of political science at Makerere College, Uganda, told the University of Toronto's International Teach-in.

"Violence is necessary because there is no alternative now on the horizon," he said.

Mr. Mazrui was answering a question after taking part in a panel discussion on revolution and self-determination.

Mr. Mazrui said the countries of the world should attempt to isolate South Africa, diplomatically and economically.

PROTESTS —

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NATIONAL STUDENT DAY EDUCATION PROGRAM

October 18: Teach-in on "Financing Higher Education", 7:30 Physics Theatre.

October 21: Inter-university debate and student forum, at 12:00 noon.

October 26: Rally: "Why and How Will We March?" Physics Theatre, 12:30.

October 27: March on Provincial Legislature with the presentation of the brief to the Premier and leaders of the opposition parties.

-Tentative plans for a door to door campaign.

-Public forum on the march and on educational opportunity.

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Realizes crisis in education says Curry

Mr. Diefenbaker himself stated that this is merely an "interim measure" with the goal of enabling all Canadians whatever their financial position to be educated to the full extent of their ability. The Association of Atlantic Students particularly welcomes Mr. Diefenbaker's recognition of the pressing needs of the Atlantic region for special consideration under any program for advancing post-secondary education.

Mr. Curry expressed the hope that the Opposition Leader's promise would prompt the other parties to make clear statements to the Canadian electorate on both their interim and long-range education policies. He also hoped that the ideas set forth in this election campaign "will deal not with the mistakes of the past but with the future of our country, as embodied in the potential of its youth."

"Whatever the make-up of our next Government," he said, "it must be totally committed to a policy of increased finances to the education field."

The Association of Atlantic Students represents all students at fourteen universities and colleges in the four Atlantic Provinces, and forms one of the four regions that make up the Canadian Union of Students.

STUDENTS GRADUATE IN RUSSIA

Students from 47 countries are the first graduates of Lumumba Friendship University, Moscow. Engineering, agronomy, Law and economics degrees have just been conferred on 228 students, mainly nationals of the developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Over 100 medical students are expected to graduate next year. Lumumba University opened in February 1960 with 415 students and now has six faculties with a total of 3,000 students from 82 countries. The rector, Professor Rumiantsev, foresees an enrollment of 4,000 next year. The university has 79 chairs and 112 laboratories. (Unesco Features, Paris)

USSR STUDENT COUNCIL

At its regular meeting held recently, the Student Council of the USSR dealt with the following points and took corresponding decisions. 1. Report on the work of the Council's Presidium and Secretariat during the years 1963-1965. 2. Preparations of Soviet students for the IXth World Festival of Youth and Students in Algeria. 3. Development of contacts by student organizations of the USSR with student unions in foreign countries, and participation in different international events. 4. Questions connected with co-ordination of activities of student organizations of the USSR. 5. Election of the Presidium and Secretariat of the Student Council of the USSR. Lev Spiridonov was elected President of the Student Council of the USSR. New members of the Presidium and the Secretariat of the Student Council were also elected. (Student Council of the USSR, Moscow)

Letter to the Editor

A COMPLAINT

Dear Sir: I would like to register a complaint. This campus is much too dull. No where is there the feeling of excitement. No where does a yearning passion for the go go things of life find fulfillment.

This is particularly true of the boys. I have visited a number of university campuses in the course of my work and never before have I found such apathy, such a pathetic display of virile young manhood.

Nor is this an opinion hastily formed. I have sat for days on the front steps of the library watching the campus intellectuals trundle by. Do they wave. No! Do they stop to chat or offer to take me to their apartments. No!

Young men of Dalhousie, now is the time for all of you to, with one accord, rise up.

Lovingly yours,
A Nice Kid.

CONFUSION

MONTREAL (CUP) — The coordinating committee of the Union Generale des Etudiants du Quebec has rejected an informal suggestion that they support the Canadian Union of Students' day of action for free education.

The approach was rejected because of its informality however, and does not rule out the possibility of co-operation. Peter Maloney, president of the CUS Quebec region, acknowledged this in a statement on Sept. 28. He said that at a regional meeting of CUS last weekend, delegates concluded that a day of action in Quebec without UGEQ support would not be fruitful.

He said that Andre Morazin a Loyola College council member was delegated to phone a member of the UGEQ coordinating committee. The committee was meeting in Sherbrooke that day. Mr. Maloney said of the approach "we asked him to bring it up and to discuss general areas of support by UGEQ of the national student day."

He added that Richard Guay UGEQ vice-president has assured him that the door to discussion is still open. In connection with Mr. Morazin's suggestion last week, UGEQ spokesman Richard Guay commented:

"In the first place, CUS should have approached us directly about support, not just a member university." Richard Good, vice-president of CUS also confirmed that informal approaches have been made for some weeks.

He said "We're presently communicating with UGEQ on a more formal basis." "In no way has CUS been rebuffed," he continued, "because no official approach has been made."

A "McGill Daily" story on Sept. 27 which implied a rejection of the national day of action by Richard Guay was retracted in the following issue. CUS plans to hold its national day of action on Oct. 27, with each campus planning its own contribution.

The South African National Student Press Association (SANSPA) is willing to strengthen the contacts to Afrikaans student newspapers. A SANSPA member said after discussion with the editor of an Afrikaans student newspaper that the chances of co-operation in news exchanges and the organization of a national newspaper competition were "most encouraging" although the Afrikaans universities might be unwilling to become full affiliates of SANSPA. (SANSPA, Cape Town)

31 University of Washington College of Education students are working this summer with 170 disadvantaged Negro and white children who are deficient in arithmetic and reading skills. The students are enrolled in Introduction to Teaching. The programme should help prepare the children involved for the next school year and provide a chance for University students who may have come from an isolated racial background to work with both whites and Negroes. The course will run for four weeks. (University of Washington Daily, Seattle)