

right, its hard-won image of responsiveness and political detachment would be irreparably damaged in the Third World.

The precedent for growing government involvement in the IDRC came after Hopper's departure in 1977. A selection committee of four governors chose Ivan Head, then the Prime Minister's foreign policy adviser, from among thirty-nine candidates. Head was a lawyer who had once spent several years in Malaysia as a junior Canadian diplomat, but his scientific credentials were nil. "Ivan Head would not have been appointed, although he's a very able person, if he had not been in Mr. Trudeau's office," says Sharp. "He was the Prime Minister's selection." Other recent appointments to the board include former Liberal cabinet minister Donald S. Macdonald, named Chairman in 1980; Maurice LeClair, President of Canadian National Railways, made a governor in 1981; and Gordon Osbaldeston, the new Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, in June 1982. Another top public servant, Marcel Massé, sits on the board as CIDA President.

The Canadian government has not been timid about indicating its priority areas to the IDRC. A Ministry of State for Science and Technology background paper prepared for the 1979 UN Conference on Science and Technology in Vienna recommended an infusion of up to one percent of Canada's foreign aid budget to the Centre, to fund joint research ventures between Canadian scientists and their counterparts in the Third World. The new Conservative administration pledged that Canada would implement the recommendation as funds became available. After announcing the initiative in Vienna, the government invited the IDRC to take on the program. After hasty consultation with the board of governors, Centre management readily agreed. Conditionality thus crept in through the back door. Joint research projects had been part of the original mandate but few had been approved. Because the new money is kept in a separate account and cannot be spent unless there is a Canadian component, the IDRC finds itself promoting research opportunities for Canadian scientists much more intensively than before. Observers question whether developing country researchers stand to gain as much as their Canadian colleagues. Carleton University economics professor Ted English, the recipient of an IDRC research fellowship in 1979, says the danger lies in the new program's becoming just another pork barrel for Canadian academics. Roger Young, a senior researcher at the Ottawa-based North-South Institute, says: "My own view is that they're overstating the Canadian capacity to contribute to any of these problems."

### **Renewable energy**

A second instance of government agenda-setting came in August 1981, when Prime Minister Trudeau flew to the Nairobi UN Energy Conference to announce a four-year, ten million dollar grant to the IDRC to fund Third World renewable energy research. The Centre promptly accepted the initiative, although an internal task force report recommending more support for energy research had been disregarded just two years earlier. Head commissioned the report by two senior staff members shortly after his arrival, but the idea of moving into energy in a big way encountered opposition from the four division directors, and the report was shelved without any discussion of its substance. "We felt at that time we did not know enough about the energy

requirements of the developing countries to move into the area," says Head.

However, report co-author David Henry says the findings were vetted by a group of twenty leading energy specialists from seven developing countries (including Brazil and India), the World Bank, the UN and several international research organizations. He says Head chose to avoid the issues addressed in the report to preserve peace among the Centre's senior staff, who were concerned that greater attention to energy might create competition for what was considered a shrinking budget. Shortly after, as it became apparent energy research was a government priority, another study was commissioned and the Centre had its homework done in time for the Prime Minister's trip to Nairobi. "The impetus seems to be coming from government to the IDRC," says Young, "and the original intention was that the IDRC would be a uniquely independent and autonomous body and would make its own mind up about its program emphasis and the focus of its work."

Just as Strong attempted to give the Centre legislative protection from government interference, Hopper tried to deter the buildup of "obsolete talent" that results from an entrenched bureaucracy. "I saw no reason to assure anybody that joined the organization a job for life," says Hopper. "It was clear the mix of needs of developing countries was going to alter, and therefore the IDRC had to maintain a flexibility with regard to its professional staff that would permit it to adjust and reshape that mix of needs." Legislative exemptions from Treasury Board and public service hiring practices allowed the Centre to hire staff from around the world — not just Canadians — on short term contracts, which would not be renewed if fresh ideas were needed. Generous termination benefits were offered. However, experience has shown that staff members generally stayed longer than Hopper anticipated. Many program officers view their work as a lifetime career. Two of the division directors have been there since the beginning and a third for seven years. Their yearly reappointment by the board of governors is considered a formality.

### **Who knows best?**

Under Hopper the keyword was sensitivity to the research priorities of developing country researchers. That orientation has changed as program officers become more familiar with their work. "As professionals we have a much better idea of what the priorities are," says Seward, "so we can afford now to express our own opinions." Head says the IDRC may be more controversial in the future if he decides on principle that certain practices are wrong: "In some of my public statements I'm edging ever closer to that in being critical of agricultural policies in some developing countries." But the Centre may gain nothing from taking a more assertive role in the Third World. Paternalistic preaching should be avoided if the IDRC wants Third World governments to cooperate in the promotion of development research. The Centre deals almost exclusively with scientists and research institutions when it should be paying more attention to ordinary people. "What no one seems to ever spend enough time doing is finding out what it is the target population really wants," says Roger Young.

At least one ambitious IDRC project failed for this reason. Between 1971 and 1977 the Centre funded and