

by Sharon Cook

Operation Crossroads

This summer at least 60 Canadian University students will live, work, and travel with African students and residents in the developing areas of over 30 African states. They will spend two months working in Africa engaged in community development, social work projects, schools, etc. for the months of July and August under the auspices of a private, non-government, voluntary summer work program called Operation Crossroads Africa.

OCA teams have contributed to the building of schools, community centres, and hospitals, as well as the construction of roads, bridges, public parks, and playgrounds. Although the work camp has been Crossroad's main interest, a number of special projects have been undertaken. These include inoculations, physical education, special radical units, and secretarial training.

Founded in 1958 by Dr. James Robinson, an American from Tennessee, OCA has included over 2300 university students to engage their summers in such work camp projects. In spite of the pictures of starkness such a summer might paint, there has been no shortage of volunteers. This year, for example, there were 3500 applicants from whom OCA could choose only 226.

Requirements from the host country are definite. "Crossroads go nowhere they are not invited" is Robinson's first rule. Each country must pick its own project - one that will meet a real need. It must supply materials, and, since the program emphasizes self-help, recruit an equal number of African counterparts, preferably college students, who will work alongside the Crossroaders. Firm in the OCA philosophy is the conviction that "self-respect is the most vital element in any aid program: you can't implant it by doing for people, only by doing with them. It is any people's willingness to share in their own uplift that separates the sincere from the suppliant."

Some of the more testing obstacles that must be dealt with before the volunteers develop meaningful communication with their African acquaintances are suspicion of the Crossroaders' motive, the language barrier, and the thorny problem of social problems at home. But these soon diminish as the team members through their personal desire to become more close to

the people and through their preparation for such problems during orientation, gain the Africans' confidence. The developing bonds continue to be reinforced as the Crossroaders are drawn into the pattern of village life and are invited to share in the discussions around the campfires after the day's work is done. Perhaps the most impressive impact made by the teams is that arising from their attitude towards manual labour. "This selling to Africans of the dignity of labour must rate among our most important accomplishments, claims Dr. Robinson.

From the summer's experience, many misconceptions concerning the Black Continent are clarified. The volunteers return with an impression of Africa as more of a modernized area than an under-developed one when they see the tremendous advances being made in industry, social welfare and education. They come back forever embedded with the memory of a people of unbelievable friendliness and generosity. And the insight gained from living with black and white students from their own culture in such a team relationship will do much to eliminate any prejudices they may have entertained before the summer.



The opportunity to participate in this summer's program is open to any student at Dalhousie. Those interested should contact Dr. Flint at the history department of Sharon Cook (429-4166) for application forms and more information on the organization.

UGEQ President Resigns

MONTREAL (CUP) -- Paul Bourbeau has resigned as president of L'Union Generale des Etudiants de Quebec after a disagreement with the union's executive over the power of the presidency.

The executive accused him of failing to carry out his jurisdictional duties. Bourbeau agreed, but in doing so explained he felt to carry out his duties as defined would be tantamount to accepting authoritarian control not in conformity with "present student aspirations."

Bourbeau attacked the structure of UGEQ in his resignation statement and called for a radical change in its make-up. "The time has come for us to reject the individualistic concept of authority and to stop playing the consumer corporation's game which requires 'supermen' like Kennedy and Trudeau." Continuing,

he said radical transformation has always been a viable process even though "bourgeois history attempts to prove the opposite."

He signed his statement: "Paul Bourbeau, a member of the executive who happens to be president". His major argument was that radical student action must be collective in nature not led by authoritarian figures.

The executive issued its own statement, formally disassociating from Bourbeau's position. Recognizing the UGEQ constitution has created an "authoritarian leadership" in the presidency, the executive nevertheless felt that the direction of UGEQ has always been a collective effort. The statement attacked Bourbeau for not providing even a minimum of leadership necessary to run the organization.

An interim president has not yet been selected.

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