

CUSO Gives Students Chance To Help Others

The Canadian University Services Overseas answers a question—the question of a student's future once he has his degree.

CUSO asks the student to give his initiative and ingenuity to help a community that wants and needs his help. There's no money in it, but, as Gordon Banta and others have found, there are rewards. Two years or more of rewards.

Application deadline at the U of A for prospective CUSO workers is January 30, 1965. Applications to be given to, further information to be gleaned from, Prof. J. King Gordon, of the political science department.



The Canadian University Services Overseas provides 129 young Canadians with a chance to help people.

Generally known as CUSO, the organization was established in 1961. It is intended to give opportunity to qualified people who wish to serve abroad, wherever there is need for service. However, the countries receiving assistance must indicate their readiness to be helped.

A CUSO volunteer serves on a basis of equality with those he lives and works with. One such volunteer is Gordon Banta, a graduate of the University of Alberta.

Banta, who received his B.Sc. in Agriculture in 1963, has spent the last 15 months in CUSO service. He is one of the 19 volunteer workers currently in India. There, through his own initiative he has utilized his knowledge of agriculture to bring Hatibari leper colony to self-sufficiency. After harvest, the Hatibari colony even had surplus produce, which could be marketed to provide revenue for the colony.

The achievement has provided more material comfort for the colony. It has also provided incentive and a sense of well-being to an otherwise forgotten group of people.

Upon his arrival at the colony late in 1963, Banta began immediately to attempt the building of a better morale within the group, and organize the patients into work groups. The following is an excerpt from a letter written to friends in Alberta:

"There are about 250 lepers here, most of whom are beggars. They know nothing about agriculture. Our labour efficiency varies between 10-15% of that of a normal Indian worker. But then, I couldn't work very hard if I had no fingers to work with."

Conditions gradually improved for CUSO worker Banta. However, even with the co-operation of the patients, problems arose. One of these was the weather. In a letter dated July 3, Banta says:

"I'm starting to learn what it means to get 70 inches of rainfall in 3 months. It started raining here on June 27 and has rained every day since. After 3 months there is no more rain, so it is essential to get the seeds in quickly:

Then in a later letter:

"We have gone through another crop



season and a monsoon. We had 85 inches of rain, about 10 inches above normal. Most of it came in one month, which could never be normal. We lost roads, houses, bridges, and people. The crops took quite a beating."

There were other problems too, such as marauding animals. Banta's reports are not without humor:

"The rain got most of the maize, and two female elephants and a baby took the rest one night. It looked like they had a dance while they ate! . . . About one week ago, a caterpillar 5 inches long appeared and in one day ate all the leaves off one variety of tree. It gives a person a rather insecure feeling."

While Banta was overcoming various difficulties as well as he could, his home campus hadn't forgotten him. A movement sprang up among U of A Agriculture students to provide the Hatibari project with financial aid. Students and professor of the faculty of agriculture were canvassed, and a donation in the neighbourhood of \$300 was made by the Ag Club. The result was a sum of about \$600, which arrived at Hatibari on May 5, 1964. This was Gordon Banta's response:

"THE MONEY HAS ARRIVED. It came yesterday . . . I can't tell you how much this is going to mean to Hatibari patients. For the first time a steel plow will bite into Hatibari soil. I plan to use some of it (the money) for intercultivation equipment. The rest I'm not sure of, but it will be spent on

things to help the people help themselves. Again, thank you very much."

The material rewards which the future holds for Gordon Banta and others like him may not be particularly great. A CUSO volunteer fulfills an immediate need and the result of his action is usually of basic benefit to the community involved in his project. CUSO accepts qualified graduates in any field; however, the demand for teachers, medical personnel, engineers, and agriculturists is particularly great. The CUSO bulletin describes an ideal volunteer as one who:

"In addition to intellectual ability, they must possess emotional maturity and resourcefulness, and must be able to adapt themselves to unfamiliar and sometimes difficult environments." These are young people willing to try.

CUSO is affiliated with UNESCO and is supported financially by Canadian universities and member organizations including CUS, WUS, and SCM.

WRITTEN AND
ILLUSTRATED BY
PAT HUGHES

EDITED BY
JANIS KOSTASH

LAYOUT BY
BILL MILLER