

Canadian foreign policy . . .

Whitey get with us — or Whitey get out

By AL BROMLING

"Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But don't come to help."—Mon. Ivan Illich (In an address to a group of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed global villagers who arrived in Mexico on a summer vacation work project for American college students.)

"What really matters in relation to such people is that they loyally and efficiently carry out the decisions made by our government and our people." — Mwalimu Nyerere (Referring to the role of foreign technical assistance personnel in Tanzania's socio-economic development plans.)

It's too bad really—the present mortality rate of North American Dreams I mean. It was a pleasant illusion while it lasted—that the

affluent society's good white liberals could live out the American myth of progress among the dispossessed masses of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

It's time to examine the flow of our surplus good white liberals with their 'helping' hands for the masses in the developing nations of the world. It's not so easy today to be a 'good neighbour' in the global village. Whether the foreign aid personnel are highly-paid experts with external aid, middle level skilled technical personnel with Canadian University Service Overseas or culture blind do-gooders on a missionary experience—it's time to reassess. Unless we are an integral part of the revolution in the Third World we should stop mucking about in the interest of international develop-

ment. Our ignorance about the process of social revolution in the developing nations is exceeded only by our arrogance in assuming that we can direct it along the North American Way.

Mon. Illich speaks for the Third World when he defies us to send our affluent innocents to muck about 'helping' Mexican peasants become 'just like us'. He mocks our pretentious arrogance. We may come as guests, or at best as servants but always peripheral to the liberation-development struggle of the developing nations.

But Tanzanian President Nyerere also speaks for the Third World when he invites trained personnel who will serve quietly and effectively as part of the social and technological revolution that this African nation wants.

What then, is Canada's role in international development? Shall we continue to frustrate the revolution of rising expectations by perpetuating national and international power structures that militate against the satisfaction of these aspirations? Shall we continue our absurd attempts to superimpose science and technology on the developing nations without thought of subtle differences of social and cultural values? Should we send our good white liberals and our tied-aid dollars to perpetuate the institutions which assure that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer?

No doubt we will. Whitey has not quite had his day.

We will cling to our myths in spite of the message of the Third World revolution—"Whitey get with us or Whitey get out."

We are at the end of the Development Decade—the ten years of the sixties that the people of the United Nations dedicated to the expansion of social and economic opportunity in the Third World. Ten years in which the gap between the affluent and the destitute has widened; the schism between the white affluent and the coloured poor looms as the crucial problem of the human community. Less than 20 per cent of the world's people have a monopoly on about 80 per cent of the world's

annual produced wealth.

Even faced with this reality, Canadians have not consented to divert just one per cent of the Gross National Product into the social and economic development

Background

Al Bromling is a graduate student at The University of Alberta. The last two years he served as a member of Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) and taught school in India.

The following is a partial assessment of Canadian foreign aid and policy—a help or hindrance to The Third World. Debate Wednesday night during International Week will focus on that question.

of the Third World. And the pittance we do provide is largely counter-productive to social development in the developing nations. This is not only Canada's fault—the absence of essential coercive social discipline in the soft states of the Third World means the ruling elites divert much of the aid for purposes of consolidating the power structure. All the economists' rubbish about the trickle down impact of such aid cannot disguise the fact that the structures are hardening and becoming less and less capable of bearing the revolutionary processes of development.

The Canadian government is moving toward some recognition of the blatant expediency and ineffectiveness of Canada's foreign policy on non-project financial aid with no strings attached. Such aid is less insulting and less obviously exploitive, but little more effective.

The expanded role of technical assistance personnel would be an encouraging sign for development, except that it is often not integrated with substantial programs of social and economic development. Alternatively, the foreign personnel may be used to avoid the real changes in the power and opportunity structures that would open the way for revolutionary social and economic transformations in the society.

The Trudeau government's move to establish an international development research centre in Ottawa shows an awareness of the complexity of the problem. However, I fear that the highly-touted 'think tank' on development will be an exercise in model building and academic publishing. There seems

to be no chance that the centre will actually examine the very premises of our foreign aid—the social myths and ethnocentric assumptions about how to graft western technology to Third World social systems.

Nor will they face the reality that rebalancing the wealth of haves and the have-nots is largely a zero-sum game. Somebody has to lose. The nitty gritty is in the economic pie and the size of the slice is proportional to the power position in the human community. Orthodox foreign aid ignores this reality. We weave a web of illusion and call it a strategy for international development.

The Ottawa centre is to become a pivotal structure for reshaping Canada's foreign aid policies and priorities. I doubt it. The affluent world has too much at stake to seriously consider a redistribution of power and wealth in the global village. Canadians propose to lift the world on their shoulders by sticking their heads in the sand.

We do have a role in the drama of development in the Third World—largely in the form of technical assistance and patient understanding of each culture's struggle to attain the desired synthesis of modern technology and its own national life style. But even more vital is the need for us to realize the precarious injustice of our affluence and commit ourselves to share it.

A Canadian international development commitment must be a commitment to revolutionary processes and crumbling structure. We tend to be more finicky about property rights than we are about human rights—and it may be absurd to seek a commitment to justice in the world community when we cannot achieve it in the Canadian community. But such are the imperatives of world survival.

There are alternatives of course—not a nonsensical choice between capitalism or socialism, but a choice among modes of revolution. We cannot presume to choose for the Third World peoples. They may choose revolution within the concept of human rights and dignity—where development is partially a zero-sum game and just coercion is the engine of progress. Or they may choose revolution with violence and terrorism—where development is a totally zero-sum game and the process is likely to turn upon itself and become the tyranny of pseudo-liberation.

The question remains—is Canada's foreign aid and technical assistance a help or a hindrance to the social and economic revolutions in the societies of the Third World? The sad fact may be that it is mostly irrelevant.



HAS SHE A PLACE IN THE . . . Third World?

International Week begins Saturday in Dinwoodie Lounge

The University of Alberta is holding an International Week starting Feb. 1.

Student groups actively engaged in this project include: Canadian University Services Overseas, World University Service, Club Internationale, Forums Committee, United Nations Club, Crossroads Africa, Varsity Christian Fellowship, and Student Christian Movement.

The purposes of International Week include:

(i) to present the problems of world poverty;

(ii) to create an awareness and consciousness of these problems of world poverty to stimulate further community study and action; and

(iii) to enable a situation where international students can state frankly their concerns and feelings regarding world problems.

This week will serve as a follow-up to the World Weekend of Concern held in Edmonton last year when Barbara Ward spoke about these problems. Our essential goal is to create an aware

public which will be prepared to act on their convictions and new attitudes.

The SCM (Student Christian Movement) has taken the responsibility for starting off the International Week with a Teach-In on the People's Republic of China as a case study in revolution and the political problems of world economic and social development.

The Teach-In will be held Saturday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in Dinwoodie Lounge in the Students' Union Building. All sessions of the Teach-In and the rest of International Week are open to the public and people are welcome to come and go as they please. Anyone of high school age and up would find the week's events informative and stimulating.

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