

When you care enough

to do the very best

CUSO — social conscience and social action

By **TED DROUIN**

Why doesn't Canada send some of its university graduates to work in underdeveloped countries?

The answer to this question—a question asked by a group of students from three Canadian universities in 1961—was CUSO, the Canadian University Service Overseas.

Since that time CUSO's success has been obvious. It has doubled its number of volunteers six consecutive years.

From every province in Canada—including Alberta—students have laid their social consciences on the line and signed up for a two-year stint in 32 of the world's underdeveloped, but developing countries.

From the University of Alberta came Mrs. Cathy Carter, who worked in a teacher training college in Kofaridera, Ghana from 1965 to 1967. J. Robert Duclos, now in U of A's French department, spent the same period in Accra and Kumasi, Ghana.

OIL WORKER

Another Alberta graduate, Bob Liddle, civil engineer, now is working on an oil pipeline.

By Canadian standards, the Gujerat oil field in Northwest India is a small field, producing only about 50,000 barrels a day. Crude oil runs through a pipeline about 200 miles to the refineries. Mr. Liddle, working with two other white engineers, joined this project—the first Indian pipeline built without outside assistance.

Bob Liddle's official position was inspector, though the title does not imply what it would in Canada. Rather than supervising work in the field, he spent most of his time at the planning boards, working out minor details.

TOUGH CLIMATE

While Mrs. Carter was exposed to tropical Ghana rather than monsoon India, she agreed with Bob Liddle that the most difficult part of the two years was getting used to the climate. Both agreed the heat was very oppressive compared to the rigors of a Canadian climate.

After the season of dry hot weather, the Indian people awaited with anticipation the rainy season which begins in June. Bob compared the joy of experiencing the first rain to the eagerness of Canadian children going out to play after the first snowfall. The change in seasons, however, is much more rapid than in Canada. The hot, dry season can become the rainy season in fewer than ten days.

When the rains came in Ghana, Mrs. Carter said the people, adults and children alike, would go out to play in the water, their joy and total lack of inhibition providing a very refreshing sight.

SEASONED FOOD

Mr. Duclos, however, said he did not find the temperature difference very uncomfortable. While it was much warmer, he said he felt the most difficult adjustment was getting used to the food, which is more highly seasoned than what our palates are used to.

What struck Mr. Duclos the most was the people's friendly attitude. During his first year in Accra, he said he found an atmosphere somewhat similar to the city environment at home but when he was transferred to Kumasi, he found the people more friendly than he had seen anywhere else.

Cathy experienced much the same thing. What struck her most was the extreme friendliness of the people. "They are completely natural and uninhibited." For example the first time she walked down a street, everyone said hello, or good morning, even though she knew no one. She later was informed that it was considered impolite or rude to neglect this greeting.

MORE RESERVED

The people of India, however, are more reserved, though just as sincere. Mr. Liddle felt the inhabitants were less inhibited than their Canadian counterparts noting the people had received him quite well, with no lack of warmth.

Asked whether he considered it an advantage to have had his wife with him, (Mrs. Liddle taught food arts to Indians while her husband



CUSO WORKER AND FRIENDS

... in local version of an ETS clunker

worked on the pipeline) Bob replied that he thought she was a terrific help. It's unlikely that depression will overtake both husband and wife at the same time. One can encourage the other.

Aside from the personal support aspect, Bob felt people were more eager to accept them into their circles because he had a wife. He said this was because the Indians have much stronger family ties than do Canadians.

FEW AFFECTED

During the conflicts over Kashmir which broke out while Bob was in India, few CUSO volunteers were affected. None were in-

involved in the hostilities or the politics. A few volunteers eventually were evacuated from the area on the Canadian high commissioner's advice, because he felt their safety may have been in jeopardy.

Mr. Duclos stated much the same thing occurred in Ghana a year ago during political unrest there. He stressed that Canadians were not involved in any way, that they generally were unaffected by the change of power. There were, however, some inevitable after-effects felt, but these weren't serious.

CUSO volunteers seem well trained to avoid any political activity while serving overseas. Each one seemed particularly defensive on this point, and were almost over-eager to argue that political involvement is not their aim.

ALL ENTHUSIASTIC

All interviewed returnees were enthusiastic about their two-year term overseas, stating they all enjoyed the experience which they considered to be most valuable. No one had any real complaint to make, though Mr. Duclos suggested that perhaps the level of communication between the volunteers and the CUSO executive was at times insufficient and at times frustrating.

Questioned about this, Frank Bogdasavich, CUSO representative, said the volunteer is expected to submit a progress report every three months, and that any illness should be reported at once, along with a full medical report. He also said in the case of complaints by volunteers, the matter was investigated and acted upon according to the investigation.

OTHER JOBS

There were instances, said Mr. Bogdasavich, when a volunteer was sent to do one job, but found that other jobs were in greater need of being done. In such cases, the volunteer usually felt frustration at not being able to do what obviously needed doing. He cited the example of a music teacher who went to an African country to teach music. Upon his arrival there, the musician saw what was needed was not music, but health and sanitation education. There was little CUSO could do to remedy the

situation because the government insisted the people be taught music.

Mr. Liddle has seriously thought of returning overseas, but this time he says it will not be with CUSO. CUSO training is a training which enables people to serve later in higher capacities. He said that CUSO policy generally was to discourage former volunteers from returning under CUSO. He should look to higher agencies for further commitment.

FIRST STEP

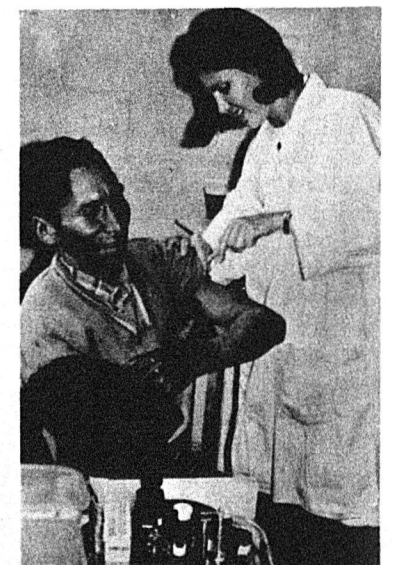
Mr. Duclos has also thought of returning, but feels much as does Mr. Liddle, that CUSO is a first step and that a person can go on to higher positions after his CUSO training.

But Mrs. Carter is returning to Ghana next month for what she believes will be a 15-year term. Only this time not with CUSO, but under what she calls an independent contract with the government of Ghana. One is tempted to speculate about the independence of the contract, however, because her husband has just received a 15-year appointment in Ghana himself.



IF CUSO WERE HERE, THE TAP WOULD HOLD BEER

... a cause of social foment overseas



A FRIENDLY SMILE

... a sharp, sharp needle