

Haitian community project spurred by former resident, now Montrealer

St-Ard residents help improve irrigation.

Despite the warm, deep-blue sea, glowing with coral and filled with exotic fish, a breeze that mellows the climate and keeps it as dry as a perpetual summer, the plantations of bananas and sugar cane and the great variety of fruit trees which give it an abiding air of spring, the region of St-Ard in Haiti has a long way to go towards its development.

In this nation, identified by the United Nations as one of the poorest in the world, the region of St-Ard, with its 10,000 inhabitants, contains surprising resources. Although the people of St-Ard are attempting to find solutions to their problems, misery, malnutrition and illiteracy nevertheless prevail.

This conclusion was formulated last April by Pierre Normil, a 28-year-old community development officer who recently spent three months in St-Ard. He was born in the village and had not returned for 15 years.

Pierre Normil, who has lived in Montreal since 1969, left Haiti at the age of 13. He went to study in France with the intention of becoming a priest. Last January, he returned to St-Ard, to promote interest in community development and to determine how the villagers could assume responsibility for the future of their community themselves.

St-Ard, a coastal region in the plain of Arcahaie, located nearly 30 miles north of the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, is known the world over for its coffee. Access is by dirt roads and transport is scarce.

Action undertaken

Assisted by a grant from the Montreal YMCA and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Pierre Normil stayed in St-Ard for three months.

At the end of that time the people of St-Ard drew up a two-year development plan covering health, education and agriculture, and the marketing of agricultural and fishing products. The estimated cost for operations in the first year was about \$40,000.

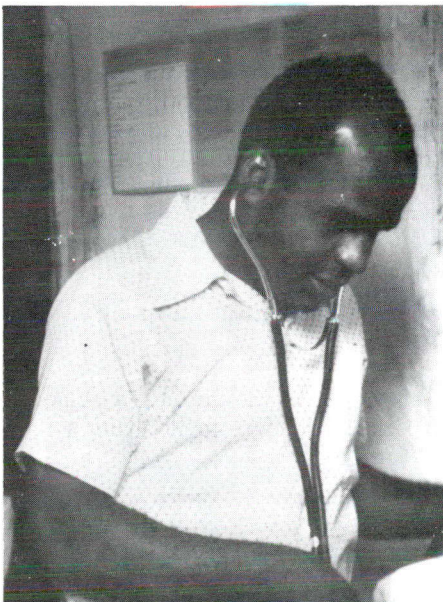
Normil intends to submit the St-Ard community development plan to Canadian development organizations. During the first three months, to deal



with the most urgent needs, people in the area have established a small clinic, a co-operative pharmacy and a community school. The best educated residents have undertaken teaching duties; a young Haitian doctor, Lyonel Banks, goes to St-Ard to treat patients at least once a week.

Achievements and plans

In the first year the community clinic and co-operative pharmacy will extend



Lyonel Banks, a Haitian doctor, visits patients once weekly at the community clinic.

their activities. A co-operative sewing workshop will be established, and the irrigation system will be improved with the aid of technical advisers from the Haitian Department of Agriculture. Younger persons will continue to attend school to learn from their elders.

The establishment of marketing co-operatives for fish and bananas is planned for 1975. The rearing of poultry and pigs will also be built up, and two plants are planned, one for the packaging of sugar cane products, the other to manufacture cement blocks.

At the same time, the literacy program will be expanded and recreation promoted by the establishment of a cultural and recreational centre. A youth hostel may be set up on the beach, which was cleaned up in the summer.

Financing

However, in order to carry through the St-Ard community development project, money was needed. This was the task undertaken by Pierre Normil on his return to Canada in April. He had been assured of a grant of \$6,300 from the Government of Haiti.

His enthusiasm was infectious. First, the Montreal YMCA provided over \$12,000 in cash and services. Georges Chammah of the YMCA, the co-ordinator of the project in Canada, is working to form a support com-