

Aid for a thirsty world

It has been assessed as the most serious cause of disease, with an estimated death toll of up to 15 million children a year. But the crisis of contaminated water in developing countries receives less attention—and aid—from Canada than famine emergency or vaccination programs. Last year Ottawa's Michael Lubbock set out to rectify that imbalance: he embarked on a one-man crusade for clean water. His purpose was to help wipe out diarrhea and other deadly afflictions spread by unsanitary water supplies. "It is ludicrous—water is health, and you cannot grow food or better yourself if you haven't got health," he said. In May, 1986, Lubbock began to speak publicly about an idea he had for a national nonprofit organization that would fund water projects overseas. Little more than a year later Ottawa-based WaterCan has funded clean-water projects in Zambia and Mozambique, through money that Canadians have donated in an unorthodox way: while paying their water bill.

The WaterCan appeal is simple and effective. Potential donors receive a

pamphlet with their municipal water bill requesting a contribution; they can enclose their cheque conveniently in the same envelope as their water payment, and the utility sends the money to WaterCan. Last January 20,000 house-

This year, while paying water bills, many Canadians have helped fund water projects in Mozambique and Zambia

holds in Dartmouth, N.S., began receiving the appeals. By the end of June, donations had reached \$5,630. Last month Toronto residents began receiving the pamphlets, and next month Halifax citizens are scheduled to join the list. The positive response from the municipal governments is a tribute to the zeal of the program's creator. "It is just like everything good in the world," said Lewis Perinbaum, vice-president of special

programs for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). "It is individuals that get things going, not organizations and governments." For 81-year-old Lubbock, WaterCan is the latest in a history of voluntary foreign-aid projects with development agencies including UNICEF, now known as the United Nations Children's Fund.

Last month the first WaterCan cheques were distributed, one for a \$3,600 system of wells in Zambia. Under WaterCan, which, according to Lubbock, was inspired by an existing British scheme called WaterAid, every dollar allotted to projects is matched by two dollars from CIDA. Eligible projects must be small-scale and community-operated. British-born Lubbock, a retired banker, currently works from his home lobbying mayors, MPs and anyone else who might be persuaded to involve their municipality. Indeed, by January, 1988, both West Vancouver and Spruce Grove, Alta., are scheduled to be WaterCan participants. And municipalities in countries including the Netherlands have expressed interest in the project. "We have made great progress, considering how long it usually takes to get this kind of effort off the ground," said Lubbock. "I am very happy."

—JULIA BENNETT in Toronto

PREVIEW

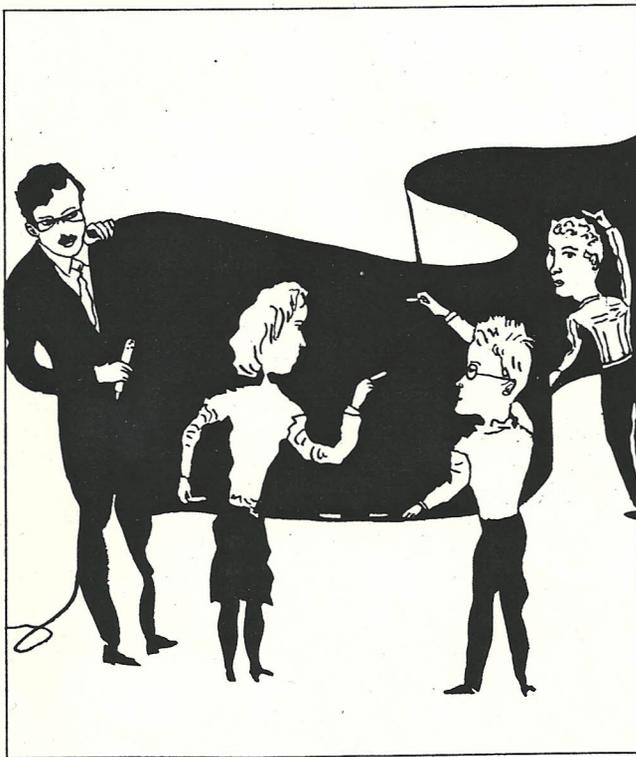


ILLUSTRATION BY GAIL GELTNER

IDEAS

The Schools We Deserve, prepared by William Barker

September 30 and October 7, 9.05 p.m. (9.35 NT), Radio

ET TU, TOM BROWN: "We get the schools we deserve," declares writer and editor William Barker, whose two-part *Ideas* series on education starts this week. In looking at the school as sociological arena, Toronto's Victoria Park Secondary is contrasted with elite Ridley College, private and only recently co-educational. Guests include Caroline Persell and Peter Cookson Jr, co-authors of *Preparing for Power*, a book on the psychology of the private school, and noted American educator Mortimer Adler. But the most remarkable insights, explains Barker, come from the students and teachers: "Their comments are warm, unexpected, funny... These students are struggling to unify their world, but at some cost. Until we make special demands on our schools, the schools will not change our society."