



## CANADIAN UNIVERSITY SERVICE OVERSEAS

**"I find the work very stimulating and rewarding. I know I would not have had the same opportunity in Canada."**

Born in Calgary, 25-year-old Stephen Gibbons grew up in Saskatchewan and graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with degrees in Arts and Education, both with a major in chemistry. Stephen is now teaching chemistry and physics at Union College, Sierra Leone.

"Union College, Bunumbu, is a teacher training college. We are concerned mainly with teachers for the primary school system of Sierra Leone. Future plans call for expansion into secondary school teacher training.

"I am teaching physics and chemistry from the General Science syllabus as well as two classes of mathematics. Since we are training teachers, our instruction involves methodology as well as subject matter. Some of our students have completed Form 5 and thus are fairly well advanced in the field of science, while others have only completed Form 3 which unbalances the class somewhat. All my teaching involves lab work as I use it to illustrate the scientific phenomena I wish to explain.

"I am doing research of a sort in the local primary school, a practice teaching school associated with the college. My students and I are trying to introduce primary school science units developed at Njala University College. We are also experimenting with some units of our own. The results of this work are being sent to the London Institute of Education as part of a competition in science teaching. The main aim of our participating in the competition is not to win but to provide a continuing hard look at the work we are doing here so that we may constantly re-evaluate ourselves.

"There will be a conference of science teacher trainers at Njala University College sometime in March where our college will present the results of some of the work we have been doing. It will also give us the opportunity to hear and discuss the work being done at other colleges.

"The help and support given to me by my principal is excellent. He is willing to throw the resources of the college behind all staff and he helps lecturers with any teaching problems they may have. Working at Union College means being treated as a professional. You are left alone in your classroom and allowed to get on with your job. This gives one great opportunity to develop his teaching technique.

"The satisfactions here are the same as those experienced by teachers around the world. You watch students develop their potential under your guidance. When you go into the practice teaching school and watch a student teach a lesson well, you feel so good you could extend your assignment for 10 years! You're satisfied.

"The frustrations are similar to those encountered in Canada. The teaching profession rates comparatively low on the social ladder and teachers are grossly underpaid.

"All in all I find the work very stimulating and rewarding and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I know I would not have had the same opportunity to work in a teachers college back in Canada." **Stephen Gibbons**