

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

CANADA

The summer 1975 issue of Despatch, the Annual Report of the Canadian Red Cross Society for 1974, gives an account of the Society's activities and financial statements for the year. It is a review which conveys to the reader the extensive and important nature of the work carried out by the Canadian Society. The Report by the National Commissioner, Major General A. E. Wrinch, contains information on the various services and programmes: Blood Transfusion Service—Veterans' Services—Nursing—Health and Social Development Services—Sickroom Equipment Loan Service—Service for Seniors—Emergency Services — Homemaker Service—Outpost Hospitals and Nursing Stations—Women's Work—Volunteer Services—Youth—Water Safety—Public Relations—Campaign and Financial—International Affairs.

We quote below a passage in which the National Commissioner describes developments in the Blood Transfusion Service, one of the Society's most important sections:

... The past year has been a year of progress and an extremely busy one in blood with certain new programmes that had been planned earlier being brought into being, others were expanded, while yet others were under intense study. At the same time new records were set—the outstanding one being the collection of 1,000,924 units, the first time for a year's collections to exceed 1,000,000! This is truly an accomplishment in itself.

Another record was set in total miles driven which averaged over one and one-third per unit of blood. There is a wide variation between divi-

sions in the ratio of miles driven per unit of blood collected, a fact that should be studied for miles cost money. The geographical distribution of population obviously is an important factor in this problem but distant clinics with low attendance is another—and one that should be controllable at least to a degree.

The supply of the tissue-typing antisera for hospitals is one aspect of a full blood programme that has not been covered by the blood transfusion service and hospitals have always had to turn to commercial sources—a costly solution. A modest beginning was made in 1974 with a view to developing a capacity for the production of these antisera and also to perform platelet typing. This will be a costly undertaking and one that could not have been envisaged while Red Cross was bearing a percentage of the costs of the technical side of the programme. When agreement was reached for government to reimburse the Society for the full technical costs, the way was opened for us to undertake this work, to expand certain other existing activities, and to enter into new programmes. In a very few years the service will bear little resemblance to the one we knew even in recent years; there will be substantial benefit to the Canadian people as a result of the great lessening of financial restrictions.

While we had established a rare blood bank some years ago in the Tri-Service Medical Centre in Ottawa, it was in 1974 that two centres, Ottawa and Montreal, became fully operational in freezing blood—a move toward the day when all centres will have this capacity. Freezing will bring far greater flexibility and is the one process that can eliminate the local and temporary shortages that occur for a variety of reasons that are only too well known to us and to others in the field. Other technical benefits will accrue and the establishment of substantial freezing capacities in the centres, while expensive, will give great results. . .
