

YOUTH AND BLOOD DONATION, SYMBOL OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY

The International Federation of Blood Donors held its seventh Congress in Monaco in October 1971, and the report of its work has now been published.¹ This reproduces various technical communications on, inter alia, "The Importance of Blood Donation for Organ Transplants" and current blood transfusion problems. It contains also a report by the Belgian Red Cross Society's constantly developing blood donor service, for the number of donors has unceasingly increased from 131,000 in 1969 to 147,000 in 1971.

*We would like here to reproduce some excerpts from two papers in which we believe our readers may be particularly interested. The first is entitled *Les jeunes et le don du sang dans les pays européens (Youth and Blood Donation in Europe)*. The authors, Dr. Z. S. Hantchef, special consultant to the League of Red Cross Societies, and Mr. G. Hullebroech, Assistant Director-General of the Belgian Red Cross, based their study on the results of an enquiry in all countries of Europe by the League's Health and Social Affairs Bureau which was designed to determine (a) the importance of youth's participation in blood donation, (b) the utility of greater effort to recruit more young donors, and (c) the best educational methods to make young people understand the value of blood donation. Here are some of their conclusions on this subject which is so topical and important for the future.*

¹ By the *Amicale des Donneurs de sang de la Croix-Rouge monégasque*.

Many countries have decided to continue or start a campaign of information and persuasion among youth. They consider that blood donation is of undoubted educational value and that it is essential to prepare for the future. To this end, they emphasize the importance of personal contacts, the advisability of visits to blood transfusion centres, the effectiveness of lectures and discussions, and the value of real-life examples. In one country, it is proposed to send a letter to all young people reaching the age of 18 years.

Everyone agrees to underline the essential role which teaching can play in the preparation of youth for blood donation. It seems to us that this is a method of which general use should be made. We must endeavour to have blood donation included in school programmes for adolescents. Is not knowledge of the problem posed by the need for blood equally as necessary in the training of citizens as understanding of our political institutions and knowledge of the highway code? Blood donation should be considered by everyone as a civic duty . . .

. . . Courses in school would be extremely useful in so far as they acquaint young people with the problems of blood groups and blood donation and inasmuch as they develop altruism. They must be interesting and attractive, for it is essential not to weary young audiences. For that purpose, as complete a documentation as possible must be prepared for teachers. The information should be adapted to class ages. If possible, recourse should be had to attractive audio-visual media: cassettes, slides, films, posters . . .

. . . Action would be long-term. It could not be restricted to information; it should include active participation by young people. Achievements in this field prove their efficiency and testify to the important role which the Junior Red Cross can play . . .

. . . We would stress that, by common agreement, National Red Cross Societies and blood donor groups could promote day programmes to arouse youthful interest in blood donation. Ways and means for this vary widely. In their choice and implementation, young people themselves can demonstrate their vitality and enthusiasm as much as their social sense and originality of ideas.

We are convinced of youth's disposition for blood transfusion activities, in so far as such participation will be genuinely required

and sought by those who deal with these problems, and also to the extent that young people can participate in a manner consistent with their ideas.

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The second study from which we quote explains the high moral significance of blood donation. It comes from the pen of Mr. J. F. Apolinario Navarro, President of the Las Palmas committee of the Spanish Red Cross, for whom, as he says, "one of the main methods—and perhaps the main method—to instil this spirit of solidarity is blood donation".

... My blood may flow in his veins, or his in mine. My blood may save his life; his may restore me to life. This is a thought never to be lost sight of, but it is not enough unless we ask ourselves the reason for this reality; unless we think of and reflect on the transcendency of the act of giving. Here, too, what the eye does not see is the essence, the *raison d'être*, of what it does see. To save a life is a fine thing, to forge a link of solidarity is far finer still.

Although the duty of giving blood demands another, "the healthy man's duty to the sick", it must be added that the physical, the physiological, duty is as nothing compared to the moral and social duty. The profound reason is human solidarity. But this does not merely mean solidarity among neighbours, nor even fellow citizens, but solidarity with everyone: for the peace of the world, universal solidarity, which can be understood only through solidarity which people feel for one another.

That, we can well believe, is not easy to understand, and yet it is absolutely necessary for man's future. The creation of a world climate which enables many lives to be saved is a very fine ideal. But as it is not easy to make it understood, what can be done to facilitate it? The problem is one of education...

... The first barrier to be overcome, in fact, is the one which selfishness consolidates in the human heart; and because war, like peace, is born in the human heart, education is essential to make good workers for peace.