

WORLD RED CROSS DAY

Every year, on 8 May, National Societies commemorate Henry Dunant's birthday. The activities of the Red Cross, Red Crescent or Red Lion and Sun Society concerned are then publicized as widely and vividly as possible. By proposing *Give blood—save life* as the theme for 1974, the League of Red Cross Societies is stressing the importance of the free gift of blood as a practical symbol of human solidarity. Moreover, a resolution adopted by the XXIInd International Conference of the Red Cross last year:

affirms that a service based on voluntary blood donation, motivated by humanitarian principles, is the safest and most effective way of supplying blood needs,

urges the Governments of all nations to adopt the highest standards in providing a safe blood service to their citizens, and to formulate those standards on the concept of non-remunerated blood donation,

recommends to each National Society and its Government that they undertake a strong combined effort to attain the humanitarian objectives of a total national blood service based on the broad voluntary participation of the people.

The League has prepared a document kit which, in addition to messages from leaders of various international institutions, contains statements by directors of blood transfusion services in different countries. To this the League has added information regarding the recruitment of blood donors and photographs depicting the activities of a number of National Societies in this field. We reproduce below a League editorial entitled "Blood is red all over the world" and hope that this World Red Cross Day may be as successful as it has been in preceding years.

One gesture—holding out the arm to give blood—is enough to save a life threatened by serious illness or by the consequences of an accident.

All over the world millions of men and women regularly make this gesture, which "does not hurt", takes little time and only has its full meaning if it is anonymous and entirely voluntary. It has one aim only: assistance to anyone in danger of death, and this without any discrimination, but with the assurance that the blood given is made available to the receiver free of charge.

Simple in itself and within the possibilities of everyone, provided they are in good health, this act of genuine generosity and profound solidarity—of which every donor is readily aware and which gives him real satisfaction—provides an opportunity, and such are few and far between, of giving direct and immediate assistance as in most cases the blood is given to someone else in a very short time.

Such a gift is truly in line with one of the Red Cross principles: to relieve suffering, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It is clear that the Red Cross, whose purpose is to protect life and health, had to participate in this fundamental action.

Its role in blood donor recruitment is important and vital. In addition the Red Cross has always and everywhere supported the concept that blood must be given and received free of charge, as any commercialization in this respect runs counter to its doctrine.

The present world needs for blood are enormous. This can continually and very easily be proved. It is in the first place due to the development of modern medical techniques, making it possible to save more lives than in the past. It is also related to the growing number of accidents of all kinds, caused by the progress which, on the other hand, benefits mankind to a greater or lesser degree. These needs unfortunately increase much faster than the supply of available blood. It is therefore essential and urgently necessary to redouble the efforts made so far by all specialized organizations, including the Red Cross, both at national and international level.

An attempt must therefore be made to improve on past results, and tribute should be paid to all those throughout the world who have understood the importance of their gesture and make it on a regular basis. Their number ought to be doubled, tripled or even further increased in certain countries.

No organization is better placed than the Red Cross to launch a world campaign aimed at promoting this indispensable gift of blood

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as, through its impartiality and freedom of action, it wins confidence and arouses universal generosity and solidarity.

The Red Cross hopes that this campaign of a universal character, launched on World Red Cross Day, will not be just a passing event, but that it will become a permanent action directed at arousing public opinion, thus contributing to meeting the blood needs in all countries.

On the occasion of World Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Day 1974, all men, whoever they may be and not only those close to our movement, are urged to respond to the appeal "GIVE BLOOD—SAVE LIFE". No matter by whom, to whom and where the blood is given, the only thing that counts is saving life, the life of a stranger who will no doubt always remain so. Is blood not red all over the world?