

We must recognise that Red Cross is involved in environment. It is up to us to harness the interest being generated to the benefit of our activities in this field and to realize that we have a meaningful contribution to make here...

France

We have read in the French Red Cross Review¹ the following interesting article on "The Red Cross and Present-Day Medico-Social Problems".

The French Red Cross Society's medico-social vocation is defined in article 1 of the Society's statutes: "The French Red Cross shall work for the prevention and alleviation of all human suffering. It shall participate in all medical preventive efforts, carrying its continuous action beyond disasters, particularly for the benefit of mothers and children".

This does not mean that the onus of satisfying all needs or even certain needs is on the Society. But it is a service auxiliary to the public authorities and, as such, it must play a part in all efforts in the medico-social field. Its very simple organization enables it to adapt to circumstances. It is for that reason that, for several years in particular, it has unceasingly developed the range of its activities, modernizing and transforming its institutions. This is too little known. The efforts of the French Red Cross to keep abreast of changes in medical technology and to study new fields of action where it might extend its scope must be underlined.

French medical statistics show three main points:

- the decline of tuberculosis;
- longer life of children affected by congenital ailments, infirmities and affections which were formally fatal.
- increase of the elderly population.

These three points have guided the French Red Cross medico-social policy-making.

¹ *Vie et Bonté*, Paris, May 1971.

Pediatrics

The regression of tuberculosis has resulted in the conversion of antituberculosis establishments.

Haemophilia. — On the other hand, children affected by new and by rare diseases are of grave concern to the French Red Cross. There are in France about 2000 cases of haemophilia, 600 of them of school age and for whom the French Red Cross has opened three establishments to provide them with medical care and schooling. For miopathy cases the French Red Cross has opened the first specialized centre at Hendaye and is planning a second at Meaux.

Metabolism deficiency. — Children afflicted with metabolic trouble require constant medical supervision and in some cases hospitalization. The French Red Cross has therefore made available to Parisian hospitals an institution which provides not only assurance of medical care but also an attractive setting more in keeping with real life.

The physically disabled. — According to an estimate by the *Direction Générale de la Population*, 1% of the juvenile population are physically handicapped. This proportion is unlikely to be reduced by road accidents. There are two establishments for these cases.

The question arises whether children with scoliosis are to be counted among the physically disabled. Whether they are or not, this affliction among girls is a new important problem. That the Montchic and La Rochelle institutions are proceeding along the right lines is proved by the success which they have achieved.

The mentally maladjusted. — Specialized establishments being important for these cases the French Red Cross could not remain aloof from this problem. It at present has sixteen establishments providing in-patient and out-patient care for 800 mentally maladjusted.

Hospitals — Retirement homes. — The French Red Cross still carries on its traditional work, managing nurseries, kindergartens, holiday camps and nursing homes for children.

Aged Persons

The French Red Cross of course takes a special interest in anything affecting children, but it does not as a consequence neglect adults. Its sanatoria are also being converted into functional re-education centres, since the need for them is keenly felt.

It is endeavouring to modernize its hospitals to meet the demands of the present day. But the main problem is that of the elderly of whom there are 8,500,000. Many have only a small pension from the welfare service as their sole resource. The French Red Cross can and does do a great deal for them. It already has five homes for the able-bodied elderly and three more are on the drawing-board. For the semi-invalid elderly there is a pilot centre at Eaubonne. In addition, at Satrouville the "Foyer Logement" offers them the possibility of a desirable independence in a community. Other schemes have also been tried, notably the system of home helps who enable the elderly to remain in their own homes whilst feeling that they are assisted and not alone.

Home helps. — In fact it is in this direction, in individual assistance, that part of the French Red Cross activity is oriented. Whilst it is important for an elderly person to be able to remain at home, it is equally so for sick people in rural areas. For many the French Red Cross home help service in rural areas has avoided or shortened hospitalization which might have been emotionally detrimental. That service, moreover, was set up as an experiment at the request of the Ministry. Its success has demonstrated it to be well worth while. It confirmed that the French Red Cross mission is indeed, in a manner of speaking, the testing ground for new forms of assistance.

Departing from routine and from the past, the French Red Cross must remain five to ten years in advance. It must seek new solutions to problems which arise. It must lead the way and then retire graciously from the scene. That is its vocation.