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FEDERAL AID TO VICTIMS OF NEW DRUG

"This is one meeting which I am sure all of us wish was unnecessary", said the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. J. Waldo Monteith, to a gathering of provincial ministers and others called together in Ottawa on August 17 to discuss the financing of treatment and care for babies deformed by the drug thalidomide. Mr. Monteith declared that "sympathy is not enough" and that there was general determination to see that everything possible was done to relieve the situation of the unfortunate infants "in so far as health, welfare and financial assistance can be effective".

He continued:
 "...It is not our intention to have this conference spend its time going over the history of thalidomide. This would contribute nothing toward helping those afflicted with the problem. At the same time, we realize your interest in this matter and have had prepared for your information a detailed outline of what has occurred, beginning with our receipt of a New Drug Submission pertaining to thalidomide.

"For my part, I would draw your attention to two items covered by the document. As you will see, the first deals with the Government's action on April 18, 1962, in requesting the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada to set up a special committee to review objectively and critically our New Drug Procedures and to make such recommendations as it considers appropriate in

the public interest. Unfortunately, the significance of this study does not seem to be generally realized. To my mind, its importance can hardly be exaggerated in the light of its implications for the future.

INTERNATIONAL SPREAD OF INFORMATION

"Besides this initiative with respect to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Canadian Government has acted to further the availability of information regarding new drugs at the international level. Last May, when the World Health General Assembly met in Geneva, Canada initiated and co-sponsored a special resolution, the general purport of which is to improve the lines of communication among nations and to further the standardization of procedures regarding new drugs. This resolution was unanimously approved and has been referred to the Director-General of the World Health Organization for study with the request that he report to the Executive Board of WHO in January 1963. Canada is represented on this Board and proposes to press for action concerning that part of the resolution dealing with an international warning system.

"And now, turning to this conference, no doubt you have all examined the statement I issued on August 1, 1962, indicating that such a meeting was being called. I would draw your attention particularly to the assurance which I gave to the effect

(Over)