Order of Military Merit awards

Awards of Canada's Order of Military Merit have been announced by Government House for 49 men and two women of the regular and reserve components of the Canadian Forces. It is the fourth such list of appointments since the inception of the Order in July 1972.

The Governor General, with the approval of the Sovereign, in his capacity as Chancellor of the Order, makes appointments to the Order's three degrees of membership. The awards will be presented at an investiture at Government House later in the year.

The Order of Military Merit was established on July 1, 1972, to provide a means of recognizing conspicuous merit and exceptional service by regular and reserve members of the Forces. Professionalism, outstanding service and devotion to duty form the criteria of the award. The new Order forms part of the system of Canadian honours which also includes the Order of Canada and a series of three decorations to recognize acts of bravery.

Manitoba pharmacare plan

All citizens in Manitoba will be covered by a pharmacare plan as of January 1, 1975, to alleviate the costs of prescription drugs, Manitoba Health and Social Development Minister Saul Miller announced recently.

Under the program, the province will pay 80 per cent of the costs of prescription drugs over an initial deductible of $50 per individual or family unit, for 12 months.

Mr. Miller said that the present pharmacare program for senior citizens would continue till December 31, after which senior citizens would come under the new general program which includes all Manitobans. From July 1 to December 31, persons 65 and over will be covered for 80 per cent of their prescription drug costs over an initial amount of $25 deductible.

The new program may include coverage for the costs of some drug preparations other than prescription drugs. These include insulin, nitroglycerine and digoxin.

Computers and kids

A member of Ottawa's Carleton University's Department of Psychology has been involved in the development of a new application for the conception of computer-aided learning. Professor of Psychology Robert Knights and Donald Richardson, head of the Department of Psychology at the Rideau Regional Hospital, are the directors of a research project on computer-controlled testing and teaching of retarded and disadvantaged children. The project is supported by grants from Health and Welfare Canada and continues with the co-operation of the National Research Council. It is unique in that it utilizes computer-aided learning with young or handicapped children.

The project has been in progress since 1971, when the Information Science Section of the National Research Council and Carleton University co-operated in the development of the automation of several psychological tests for children. In the summer of 1972, testing was done with mentally retarded children at the Hospital School in Smiths Falls, Ontario on the prototype terminal developed by NRC, to determine the feasibility of automated psychological testing. The first tests automated were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a test of verbal intelligence, and the Raven Progressive Matrices, a test of reasoning ability. The researchers found a close correlation of the automated test scores with those obtained from the presentation of the tests by a psychologist. This close correlation plus the favourable reaction of the children toward the terminal prompted the leasing of the terminal from Lektromedia, a Montreal-based company which produces the commercial version of the NRC prototype.

Sophisticated terminal

This terminal, said Knights, is the first of its kind in Canada. It combines special audio-visual features with those capabilities normally found in a cathode ray tube keyboard terminal. It is able to project slides, play prerecorded messages, show graphic display and sense the touch of a finger on a specially-built glass screen covering the face of the terminal.

In 1973, active testing was begun at two Ottawa kindergartens, Carleton's Preschool and at the Hospital School. The children were given four tests measuring different abilities. In addition, a training program of basic colour and word recognition was attempted. Professor Knights explained that recorded messages introduce the child to the procedure and give him several examples to try before beginning the actual testing or training. Each question appears visually in the slide area and the child responds by touching the answer he thinks is correct. The taped instruction may be to "Find the red ball" and the computer records the child's answer.