

Our army of health workers is based on a network of hospitals, strategically located across Canada and supported in turn by a widely dispersed system of small dispensaries and outpost health centres, located where they can bring essential health services within reach of every considerable group of the native population, no matter how isolated. Full account is taken, of course, in our planning, of all existing provincial, municipal and missionary hospitals and health services so that there will be no unnecessary duplication and so that our officers can make the best possible use of every other facility available.

To improve our hospital facilities, we have taken over since the war seven fully-equipped modern hospitals, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, which were built for the United States or Canadian armed forces. The Sioux Lookout Indian Hospital officially opened today brings the number of our Indian Health Services hospitals to 21.

To supplement them there are 35 dispensaries and outpost nursing stations that provide suitable working quarters for nurses and doctors in the field. Good examples of these nursing stations or health centres are seen at Osnaburgh House, Big Trout Lake or at Lac Seul, immediately north of this town. At Lac Seul, a nurse with a nurse's aid and caretaker, provides emergency care for four patients.

Similar centres are being established at Pikangikum, at Lansdowne House, and possibly at Sandy Lake in order to complete the feeder system radiating northward from the Sioux Lookout Indian Hospital. Similarly, wherever required, these centres are being established in all parts of this country. For Eskimos, such centres range across the top of Canada, from Coppermine on Coronation Gulf - beyond the Arctic Circle - to Lake Harbour on Baffin Island and Fort Chimo and Ungava Bay.

Last fall a special wing for Indians was completed at Fort William Sanatorium. Two hundred beds in the immigration and quarantine hospitals at Halifax and Quebec have recently been reserved for Indian patients. A splendid new hospital at Moose Factory on the southern point of James Bay will be opened in May, and plans are going forward to construct a hospital at Norway House on the northern point of Lake Winnipeg.

Over the past three years, I have been able to visit a number of our Indian hospitals and nursing stations and to see the excellent work that they are doing. Let me say here that while the people of Canada through Parliament will readily provide the money, while the hospitals and health centres can be built, the effectiveness of our Indian Health Services depends above all else on the quality of the men and women that we have been able to recruit to do this vital work.

In the face often of hardship and danger, often at the expense of personal health, these devoted Canadians are carrying out their professional duties under difficulties that sometimes stagger the imagination. Every form of transportation must be used, every hazard of travel must be faced. They travel cheerfully as occasion requires by canoe, riverboat, dog-team or on snowshoes -- as well as by train, plane or car.

Health care is brought where it is needed when it is needed. Our Indian Health Services personnel enlist science fully, but they must still often bring to their everyday task