



pital was July 1, 1962 — the first day of the historic Saskatchewan doctors' strike.

"At the time I was more sympathetic to the doctors. In the year leading up to it, it was really framed by people in the university as though communism were taking over. But since that time I have changed my mind considerably and believe that what was brought in then was very progressive."

Over the years, being sympathetic to doctors has not always been possible for Fyke. After earning a master's degree in health services administration from the University of Alberta in 1971, he moved into a series of increasingly responsible positions. After first managing smaller Prairie hospitals he moved to roles in government, serving as deputy minister of health in both Saskatchewan and British Columbia. He was then chosen to manage the Capital Health Region and its collection of hospitals and long-term-care homes.

"I think doctors and I have had a love-hate relation-

ship over the years," he says. "I like working with physicians, I enjoy debating them, but we have had our disputes, our battles. Sometimes I win, sometimes they win. Obviously I don't have the support of everyone, but I do have the support of a lot of them. And I believe we have kept our respect for each other."

Fyke is known for saying to physicians: "I won't come into the OR and do your surgery for you if you don't do my job." He says he will take the same approach at the new blood agency.

"I am not an expert in blood and blood products," he says. "I would be a fool to expound on technical and scientific issues of blood — I will be looking to physicians for that. On the other hand, I do have some skills in dealing with organizational issues and in operating a large organization within the realities of this country. Those are the skills that I will bring to the table. I would consider my opinion on the structure of organizations to have more bearing than perhaps the opinion of a

Can the Red Cross survive its bloodless future?

The blood tragedy has been devastating for the Canadian Red Cross Society and the people who work for it, but its new head says the 102-year-old charity still has a bright future.

Dr. Pierre Duplessis says that even though that future won't include the collection and distribution of blood and blood products — these duties are being turned over to the new Canadian Blood Services (CBS) come September — the Red Cross's long history of work in humanitarian aid, social services and water safety will continue.

"Aside from the blood system, we have enthusiastic support for many of our programs," says Duplessis, who took over the agency's top job of secretary general in September 1997. "People saw how relevant we were during the ice storm in Eastern Canada. In 3 to 4 weeks we collected and distributed more than \$11 million."

Besides its disaster relief, the Red Cross runs programs in water safety, youth services, abuse prevention, food banks, lunch programs and help for seniors in jeopardy. Its home-care program alone helps 73 000 Canadians a year. "We have more than 130 000 volunteers across the country," says Duplessis, "and I think that is a gauge of our continued support."

Duplessis acknowledges that morale has taken a huge hit because of the tainted-blood affair and the subsequent Krever Inquiry. "The worst impact of all

was for some technicians, who really were trying to do their best, to realize that their work could have somehow harmed some people. It was a terrible mistake, and we are sorry and we apologize. But it was never done deliberately."

Duplessis, a community health expert, has taken on the challenge of leading the Red Cross as it moves away from the blood business and the CBS takes over. Once the transition is complete, the Red Cross will be a shadow of its old self, with activities focused on water-safety programs, community health and emergency response.

Duplessis replaced Doug Lindores, a former senior federal official hired by the Red Cross in 1993 to reorganize its blood operations. Lindores was fired unexpectedly in March 1997. Unlike him, Duplessis has a medical background. He began his career as a general practitioner after graduating from the University of Montreal in 1970. He has served as medical adviser to Quebec's health ministry, worked as an administrator in various hospitals and taught at McGill. His most recent position was deputy secretary general of the Quebec College of Physicians.

His interest in the Red Cross began 4 years ago, when he was asked to participate in a task force on the blood supply. "Although there is still a great deal of struggle ahead of us, I think this is a very exciting time. I feel honoured to have the position."