

May 1951



HERE is Canada's third largest city, and here is the majestic port through whose eyes the Dominion sees the Pacific. And here is safe port for those who are weary of grape and grain, and who seek the pacific serenity AA has brought to this shore.

Six-and-a-half years old, AA in Vancouver. It was back on December 15th, 1944, that five grimly determined men held the first meeting of all Western Canada. That "dry launching" was in the home of a non-alcoholic Vancouver businessman. Within a month there were eight members, within a year 118.

And from those first meetings stems a custom perhaps unique to Vancouver AA... "calling the

roll." Members who have stayed dry since their last group meeting answer the call of their name with "Here, No!"; those who have slipped reply, "Here, Yes!" Pros and cons of the system still form the basis of interesting and sometimes heated discussions.

But here, no! stayed ahead from the beginning, and growth amazed B.C.'s founding five. By May, 1946, there were 230 in regular attendance and the first separation into smaller groups took place. Nine groups were set up within Vancouver and there were already offshoot groups established in Calgary, Chilliwack and across the Strait of Georgia in Victoria. Twelfth Step work on a patient

in a private sanitarium resulted in his taking AA back to Edmonton and firmly starting a group there.

It was in February, 1947, that province's 26 month old AA sent a delegation to the Cabinet for British Columbia to ask that funds be appropriated to establish a hospital exclusively for alcoholics and that an education program on alcoholism be inaugurated. The hospital funds have never materialized, but \$20,000 was set aside for education and the study of alcoholism is in the B.C. school curriculum.

One year later another milestone was reached by Vancouver's united AA groups when the doors of the Provincial Mental Hospital at Essondale were opened wider to alcoholics and a system of "vol-

untary committals" was approved. Regular AA meetings were established within the first year.

In addition to pioneer work in hospitals, a program was directed at penal institutions. Starting with group meetings in Oakalla Prison Farm, Vancouver's provincial gaol, groups have been extended to the federal penitentiary in New Westminster.

Vancouver AA now directs its entire program toward the non-material aspects of recovery from alcoholism. The Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Traditions are an ever sufficient therapy, and there are more than a thousand men and women here who can offer the proof of themselves to the newcomer. Here are helping hands for those who have sincere hearts.

