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Dr Oliver  
Mr Parker

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS - AIDS

I attach a copy of a paper prepared for the September meeting of ACDP in which - with the agreement of HSE - we are asking ACDP to consider providing guidance on the safe handling of clinical and other material which might be capable of transmitting AIDS.

I think we have now reached the stage with AIDS where we are obliged to seek expert advice and, under normal circumstances, we would expect ACDP to be the source of such advice. We are, of course, in the process of suggesting to Ministers that consultation should begin on the disbanding of ACDP. If agreed, this is likely to be a long process and we should not, I think, pre-judge the outcome by failing to refer appropriate matters to the Committee. The submission to Ministers makes the point that, apart from "hepatitis" and "Howie", there would appear to be no major issues, at present, for which the joint HSC/DHSS structure of ACDP would be of particular relevance in relation to the advice needed by Ministers.

This is certainly true of AIDS: we need expert scientific advice on this and, so far from being helpful, the employee/employer component of the ACDP is more likely to be a hinderance to the scientific debate. ACDP is therefore by no means the best possible source of advice on AIDS but, because it exists, and because of the status it has been accorded, it is currently the most appropriate source of such advice.

If you are in agreement with this line (which I discussed also with Mrs Fosh before she went on leave), would you please let me know so that I can send the papers to Mike Chapman of HSE before the end of this week.

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16 August 1983

cc Dr Sibellas  
Mr Fanning  
Mr Harrison  
Mr Winstanley  
Dr Graveney  
Mr Lister