



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY
Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Minister for Health

4448

PO(3)5702/51

The Rt Hon John Selwyn Gummer MP

5 November 1985

Many thanks for your letter of 8 October enclosing one from your constituent Mr Colin Walker about the new Blood Products Laboratory (BPL) at Elstree. Responsibility for the BPL rests with the Central Blood Laboratories Authority (CBLA), a Special Health Authority of which, as you may know, Mr Colin Walker has recently been appointed a member by Ministers.

Building of this new production facility at Elstree was commissioned by the Government in 1982 to enable the country to become self sufficient in blood products. (The United Kingdom is already self sufficient in whole blood.) To enable self sufficiency in blood products to be achieved as quickly as possible, the decision was taken to adopt a fast-track design and build policy for the Elstree project. I am advised that a consequence of this method is that cost estimates at the outset are much less firm than is the case when conventional project development procedures are used. This has certainly proved the case at BPL where the estimated cost of finishing this project is substantially in excess of earlier expectations. Nevertheless, because of the importance of this project the Government has authorised increased resources to enable it to be completed.

I have been advised that urgent discussions on the staffing aspects of the new laboratory are taking place between Departmental officials and CBLA representatives. No doubt Mr Walker will pursue his concern on this point at the next meeting of the CBLA later this month.

E 3.

I hope your constituent is reassured by this. I share his view that this major capital investment will make an important contribution to the Health Service, and that it should be brought into production without delay.

GRO-C

BARNEY HAYHOE