

Jill Taylor

12/12/2003 14:49

To: Zubeda Seedat/PH6/DOH/GB
cc:
Subject: Re: Lord Owen PO

Zubeda

Thank you for doing this. I think the draft looks good and if Richard is content with the cover note let us send it off. We will certainly have to do something with this paper, Richard said he would do a note for PS(PH) as requested by Robert.

Jill
Zubeda Seedat



Zubeda Seedat

12/12/2003 14:33

To: Jill Taylor/PH6/DOH/GB **GRO-C**
cc:
bcc:
Subject: Lord Owen PO

Jill,

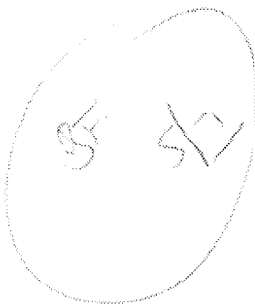
I attach a revised draft to the Lord Owen PO. I have also attached a background note which I have mainly lifted from a PQ (06314) we did in June.

Grateful for any comments you have.

Thanks
Zubeda



PO 1037390 Lord Owen payment Sch & review.doc PO 1037390 Lord Owen Background note.doc



PO1037390

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Owen CH

Thank you for your letter of 7 October to John Reid about the hepatitis C payment scheme and the review of internal papers between 1973 and 1985. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

I was pleased to see your comments on the financial assistance scheme for people infected with hepatitis C as a result of being given blood products by the NHS. The decision to make ex-gratia payments was taken by the Secretary of State for Health on compassionate grounds. At this time the details of the scheme including the eligibility criteria and the size of awards, are still being discussed. We are making every effort to progress this scheme as swiftly as possible, and we expect to make a further announcement about the scheme shortly.

I am aware that an informal review was commissioned by Yvette Cooper last year. I have been advised that the review is being undertaken by the Department of Health to clarify the facts surrounding the drive for UK self sufficiency in blood products in the 1970s and 1980s. The review is based on papers available from the time. The review does not address why papers from your Private Office at the time were destroyed, and is not addressing allegations that files from that period went missing. Officials have been asked to conclude the review as soon as practicable. We are aware that it has been some time since the review was first commissioned, and officials have been asked to conclude the review as soon as practicable.

JOHN HUTTON

12/12

Tony Sampson

From: Richard Gutowski

Date: 12 December 2003

Copy: *Gerard Holbington*
Robert Finch
Jill Taylor
Zubeda Seedat
Vicki King

PO 1037390 - LORD OWEN

MS(H) has asked for a full background note on the review of internal papers between 1973 and 1985 and comments by Lord Owen about the destruction of papers from his Private Office at the time.

Lord Owen has publicly stated that the Department of Health had failed to honour the commitment he made in the 1970s to make the UK self-sufficient in clotting factors for haemophiliacs. However, the fact that self sufficiency was not achieved appears to have been linked to the massive increase in demand for clotting factors at the time not to any failure to implement Ministerial initiatives.

In 2002, Yvette Cooper originally agreed to an internal trawl of papers after lobbying initially by Lord Morris and later Michael Connarty, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Haemophilia.

A DH official was asked to undertake a detailed review of the surviving papers between, roughly, 1973 and 1985 and put together a chronology of events. Without this it is difficult to answer any detailed accusations levelled against the Department by Lord Owen and others. The remit for the work was to review surviving documents from 1973 to 1985 to address a number of issues, chiefly:

- how the Department implemented the policy of UK self sufficiency in blood products begun in 1973;
- to chart the developing understanding of the seriousness of non A/non B hepatitis (later identified as hepatitis C);
- to examine the extent to which problems at Bio Products Laboratory delayed the achievement of self sufficiency;
- whether the achievement of self sufficiency would have led to fewer cases of hepatitis C in haemophilia patients.

It was not set up to address Lord Owen's comments, dating from the late 80s, that the papers from his period as a Minister had been "pulped". Unfortunately, none of the key submissions to Ministers about self sufficiency from the 70s/early 80s appear to have survived. A search of relevant surviving files from the time failed to find any. One explanation for this is that papers marked for public interest immunity during the discovery process on the HIV litigation have since been

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destroyed in a clear out by SOL. This would have happened at some time in the mid 90s.

A report was submitted to officials in the blood policy team earlier this year, however there are a number of outstanding issues which need to be resolved before the report can be finalised and submitted to Ministers.

PS(PH) is aware of the background to this review. Earlier this year, officials agreed to conclude the review as soon as practicable. Unfortunately we have been unable to make any progress during the year.

R.M.GUTOWSKI

Room: 633B SKH

Ext: **GRO-C**