

The Northern Echo

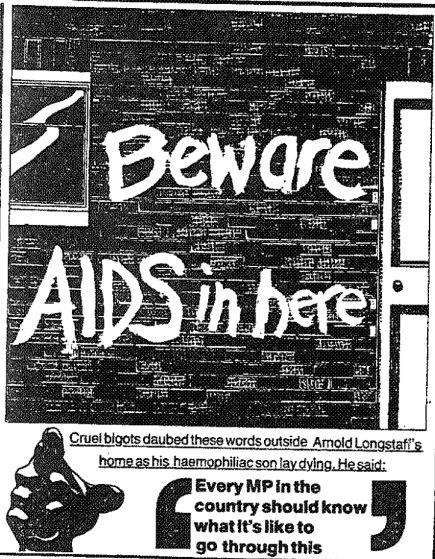
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A FIGHT FOR JUSTICE



Echo steps up campaign

By PETER BARRON

A SPECIAL campaigning supplement, produced by The Northern Echo, has been sent to every MP in Britain as part of the fight to win Government help for haemophilic AIDS victims.

The Northern Echo, which has campaigned for Government action for the past year, printed 3,000 copies of the 16-page supplement called A Fight For Justice.

And at the weekend, copies landed on the doormats of the nation's 650 MPs, as well as health chiefs, medical experts and trade union leaders.

The supplement marks the latest move by a team of Northern Echo journalists to persuade the Government to provide financial support for the families of 1,200 haemophiliacs, infected with the AIDS virus through contaminated blood products.

It comes at a time when the Government is facing a significant increase in pressure, with MPs from all sides of the House bom-

barding ministers with calls for action.

Last Tuesday, the Prime Minister became involved in the public debate for the first time, promising to hold talks with Health Secretary John Moore.

Mr Moore will tomorrow meet representatives of the Haemophilia Society and North-East AIDS expert Dr Peter Jones, to consider the calls for help.

On Thursday, the society will outline the haemophiliacs' plight to a gathering of all-party MPs at Westminster, and on the following Tuesday there will be a debate in the House of Lords.

The Northern Echo has worked in conjunction with the society, which is pressing the Government to provide families with weekly benefits, a mortgage protection scheme, a disability premium to cover the costs of coping, and "recompense for distress" caused by their National Health Service treatment.

Features included in the hard-hitting supplement include interviews with haemo-

philiac families who have been devastated by the medical tragedy. They include parents in Hartlepool who had the slogan "Beware — AIDS in here" daubed across their home as their son lay dying.

The Haemophilia Society's AIDS co-ordinator Jonathan Cooper said The Northern Echo's supplement was "a great initiative."

Dr Peter Jones, director of the Newcastle Haemophilia Centre, said: "I think the campaign document is superb."

"It is the finest piece of campaigning journalism that I have seen since the Sunday Times series on Thalidomide."

"I think it is rare for a newspaper to go to so much trouble to check their facts, as was done in this case."

Major extracts from the supplement will be reproduced in The Northern Echo this week, but if any reader wishes to obtain the full publication they should contact the Editor's Secretary at Priestgate. The cost is the same as The Northern Echo — 18p.