

Mr. Brechin

44A
H/13/10

BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY: SHORT TERM REMEDIAL MEASURES

1 You minuted me on 13 November to record Mr Scott-Moncrieff's agreement that, to satisfy Medicines Division's short-term requirements for the BPL, additional capital funds would be made available in 1980-81 to enable minimum essential remedial measures to be put in hand. You suggested that Ministers should be told that "any necessary funds over and above the CBL basic PES line will be found in 80/81" and added orally "though it will mean minor adjustments in other programmes". I have quoted these words in a paper being submitted to Ministers.

2 You know that Dr Lane's estimates for 1980/81 (of which you have a copy) include a capital sum which is some £600,000 higher than that currently earmarked by the Department. (Possibly less than £0.6m, since I have learned from Mr King that an additional sum has already been reserved). This reflects the assessment by a working group, which included representatives of HS2, Works Group, Med SM4 and Medicines Division as well as Dr Lane, of the minimum measures that must quickly be undertaken to upgrade the BPL sufficiently to enable Medicines Division to allow it to continue operating until the completion of longer term arrangements for its replacement as a source of blood products. Most of the money will be required to improve the quality assurance of the products, to which Medicines Division attach great importance and which is necessary if the Director is to certify the products as fit for use in patients. I might add that I have recently been told by Medicines Division that action now in hand does not go far enough in some respects to meet their requirements.

3 You are, I think, aware that it was agreed administratively by previous governments that the criteria applied by Medicines Division to commercial laboratories should be applied also to Crown premises. You are certainly aware that the only alternative source of supply at present is the importation of very expensive and possibly in some respects inferior products manufactured from blood obtained overseas. These would quickly gobble up £0.6 million of NHS money, while reliance on them would reduce our blood collection programme to a level from which it would take years to recover.

4 Mr King has raised with me the question of whether I can guarantee that all the money sought will be spent in 1980/81. I am advised that the likelihood is that it will be; but I will undertake that if there is any slippage I will let you know as early as possible in the year so that unspent money can be used for other purposes.

5 I appreciate the difficulties that finding the additional funds may cause, but I shall be most grateful for your help.

10 December 1979

GRO-C

J HARLEY
HS2A
1209 Han Hse
Ext GRO-C

cc Mr Wormald Mr J H James
Mr Dutton /Mun/like Mr G T King
Dr Walford