

Witness Name: Alice Mackie

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INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN2189034

The Vancouver Sun Sat., Jan.14, 1978

RED CROSS

Jail blood barred in health fear

By BRIAN MORTON

Red Cross officials cannot collect blood from inmates in penal institutions. And a prisoner at Mission Medium Security Institution isn't too happy about it. Red Cross officials, however say the rule is necessary and helps to protect the health of people receiving transfusions.

In a letter to The Vancouver Sun, an inmate (who chose to remain anonymous) described how he was greeted on the phone by the Vancouver Red Cross when he called to say he had 200 available donors at the institution. He said he was told they had a shortage of staff at the Red Cross and that they couldn't get around to them until March. He asked in his letter if inmate's blood isn't good enough to donate. *"Now I wonder is there really a shortage of staff? Or is our blood different than other humans?"*

Apparently it is, according to a Red Cross spokesman. **Florence Edwards, director of blood donor recruitment for the Red Cross in Vancouver, said they received directives from their Toronto headquarters in Christmas, 1973, that they could no longer collect blood from inmates in institutions. Prior to this, she said, prisons were one of their largest sources of blood. The reason? Hepatitis.**

She said at the time there was only about a 35-percent chance of discovering the disease in carriers. And the rate of hepatitis was very high among inmates. **It was simply too much of a chance to take.** She said she was sorry the inmate who called in got the impression they were putting him off: *"He probably hit us in a crisis situation. At this time our phones are really busy."* She said they have many volunteers helping them out and he may have reached one of them.

Edwards said their Red Cross teams are committed to specific centres *"three or four months in advance"* and that they can't drop everything and go. They must plan their clinics. She said: *"We're not against them (the inmates) - we have medical reasons for doing this."*

Dr. Roger Perrault, national director of Canadian Red Cross blood transfusions services, was reached in Toronto Friday and said the ruling came down when they discovered the high rate of hepatitis among inmates. "The hepatitis virus has only recently been discovered." He said the rate

was between three and seven times higher in inmates than in non-inmates. He said that, even with a much higher rate of detection these days, they cannot afford to take the chance.

Webmaster

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