

Witness Name: William Wright

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INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN2287061

Sent by Royal Mail today 18/06/09.

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Thursday 18th June 2009.

Rt Hon Andrew Burnham MP,
Secretary of State for Health,
Richmond House,
79 Whitehall,
London,
SW1A 2NS.

Dear Minister,

**UK GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ARCHER INQUIRY INTO
CONTAMINATION OF NHS BLOOD PRODUCTS.**

Having contracted hepatitis C from a single dose of NHS Factor XIII in 1986, I write regarding the government's response to the Archer Inquiry which was set out in a Written Statement by Dawn Primarolo MP on May 20th. I have set out below a number of questions arising in relation to NHS blood contamination and the UK Government response via that Written Statement.

I would also be grateful if you could please acknowledge, given my address, that the Scottish element of this matter is not simply a case of awaiting the results of the Penrose Judicial Inquiry, sensibly ordered by the Scottish Government.

It will potentially take at least two years to report; will have to address policy decisions taken pre-devolution; may have in-sufficient powers; is open to legal wrangling in relation to access to UK Health Department documentation and past and present officials and Ministers; and may make recommendations that would need attention from eg Treasury and DWP with their reserved powers.

PERSONAL INTEREST IN BLOOD CONTAMINATION.

When I was admitted to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in May 1986, for a large haematoma in my thigh, I was not at that time registered with any bleeding problem but was treated with Factor XIII and then registered as

a 'mild haemophiliac'. I was immediately warned of the possibility of contracting nonA-nonB hepatitis and later confirmed to have contracted hepatitis C.

Over the last 23 years, I have attempted on several occasions different interferon treatment combinations to combat the effects of the Factor XIII treatment ie hepatitis C. On the last attempted occasion in 2007 I was, after a month, taken off the treatment and told by doctors they would not attempt it again. The only remaining treatment they say will be made available is liver transplant but 'I will have to get a lot more ill first'.

Following that last failed attempt at interferon treatment I developed a CFS/ME type condition and had to give up work resulting in a halving our family household income. My future and that of my family, presently appears very uncertain in both health and thus employment terms. My last full-time position was as Director of a Scottish national charity.

THE CONTEXT OF THE BLOOD CONTAMINATION DISASTER

Given your prior ministerial experience, you have clearly already endured facing up to the collective anger of those who have been left behind nationally recognised tragedies and continue to face the consequences. I happened to watch live your attendance in your last ministerial capacity at the Hillsborough 20th Anniversary commemoration and the collective dis-satisfaction and frustration you had the personal decency to risk facing and acknowledge.

Question 1 – In relation to the numbers who have died from HIV or Hepatitis C as a consequence of receiving contaminated UK NHS blood products, do you accept those numbers are twenty times as many as were tragically killed in the Hillsborough disaster and are likely to increase further?

Q2 – why then has your Government never ordered a Judicial Inquiry into the blood contamination such as the Taylor Report following Hillsborough?

Your own ministerial willingness to face up to public dis-satisfaction and opprobrium with the Hillsborough families contrasts sharply with that of your ministerial colleagues/predecessors in response to the Archer report. Despite acknowledging it was a 'serious matter', the Government elected to slip the Government response to the Archer Report out in a Written Statement immediately prior to a parliamentary recess.

Q3 – Why did neither Mr Alan Johnson or Ms Primarolo, make a statement in person on the Archer Report in the House of Commons or call a press conference to announce their position, take questions and explain their

response? Was it Mr Johnson or Ms Primarolo who made the decision to make only a written statement rather than a more public verbal one?

THE CONTENT OF THE REPORT.

As stated by the Haemophilia Society, it is indeed hard to believe that Ministers can have read the recommendations of the Archer Report in full. In that respect can you please address the following:-

Q4 – How did the Government arrive at the figure of £12,800 for the increase in annual payments for individuals infected with HIV and why are those infected with Hepatitis excluded from such an annual scheme?

Q5 – Why, when compared with the funding of the Haemophilia Society in Ireland, is the funding of the UK Haemophilia Society restricted to £100,000, which is clearly not new money as its funding was recently cut back by £70,000?

Q6 – Why did the Government set the timing for the review of the ‘financial relief’ for individuals affected by hepatitis C for ‘five years’ rather than 5 months or a year, or two or immediately?

Q7 – When will you personally be meeting with representatives of the Haemophilia Society and your own political colleagues Lord Morris and Lord Archer to discuss these matters?

Q8 – Can you confirm you personally have read the Archer Report and have you examined the detailed and compelling timeline on the Tainted Blood web-site which sets out a highly damning account of the institutional and systematic failures relating to blood product contamination.

I apologise for the impatient tone of these enquiries. However I should point out that haemophiliacs have found the tone of your colleague Ms Primarolo’s remarks ‘offering her deepest sympathy to all who suffered’ patronising and high handed as has repeatedly been the case with Ministers over the years, while failing to take any meaningful action. I trust you personally will be willing to engage more actively and transparently in this affair at a time when public opprobrium toward politicians is so acute.

I look forward to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Wright.