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Mr. Filton
File

THE GUARDIAN

Panic and the blood

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The page-long report on Aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) which we publish today on page 13, makes unpleasant and distressing reading. But in view of the sometimes hysterical coverage of the subject in the American media, the subsequent sporadic outbreaks of public panic, and the fact that there are now an estimated 24

cases of Aids in Great Britain, it is necessary to address the subject in detail and with care. Some reaction to the epidemic of Aids has resembled the bewildered sixteenth century response to the Black Death; an antidote to hysteria is necessary.

Our own Government's response to what may prove a major medical and social problem here has so far been slow and insufficient. Although Aids is not categorised as an infectious disease, it is essential that doctors are required to report all cases to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. Secondly Mr Norman Fowler may soon have to explain convincingly why he has maintained his decision to depend largely on American Factor VIII blood for Britain's haemophiliacs, instead of continuing to buy from countries where Aids is not prevalent, or seeking to become self-sufficient. Thirdly the Social Services Secretary should be pressed to say at what stage he will earmark an increase in research funds for study of this syndrome. Most study suggests that Aids is not highly infectious and only transmissible through most intimate or prolonged bodily contact. But America's Aids dilemma incites anxiety, even though the homosexual population here and in the US should now be regarded as potential casualties and not victims of prejudice.

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