



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY
Telephone 01-407 5522 ext. GRO-C

7 January 1981

The Editor
The Times
New Printing House Square
LONDON, WC1X 8EZ

Dear Sir,

As Chairman for the Management Committee for the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree, I feel I should respond to some of the assertions made by Mr Brian Meakin (Letters, 2 January 1981) concerning the arrangements for manufacturing blood products in the UK.

First, I should like to correct a serious inaccuracy in the letter. Mr Meakin claims that "the output from Elstree is limited by the plant and processes which are largely outmoded and inefficient by modern standards". Whilst acknowledging the inadequacies of the buildings at the Elstree plant, I must point out that it is entirely wrong to describe the manufacturing processes used by the Blood Products Laboratory in these terms. On the contrary, the technology used by the Blood Products Laboratory is entirely up-to-date and is, according to the Department's expert advisors, likely to remain valid for some years to come. Similar processes are in operation in the majority of blood products manufacturing facilities built in the last decade. Further, as a measure of efficiency, the yields of blood products which the Elstree plant achieves are as good as, or better than, those of many other - including more modern - plants.

The Blood Products Laboratory currently processes all the plasma supplied by the Regional Transfusion Centres in England and Wales. The laboratory is at present being upgraded at a cost in excess of £1.25m to enable it, amongst other things, to handle substantially increased volumes of plasma. This will increase the output of certain of its major products by up to 100%.

The question of co-ordinating the facilities at Elstree with those of the Protein Fractionation Centre at Edinburgh is one which has been receiving urgent attention. I can assure Mr Meakin that the UK Health Departments are working closely together to establish a unified structure for blood products manufacture. This will ensure that the best possible use is made of the existing production facilities at Elstree and Edinburgh.

Yours faithfully,

GRO-C

E L Harris
Deputy Chief Medical Officer

c.c. Dr Lane ←
Dr Walford
Mr Gregory
Mr GRO-A

1162

65/46