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UK AIMS TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN SUPPLY OF BLOOD PRODUCTS

Dr David Owen, Minister of State at the Department of Health and Social Security, today strongly supported the World Health Organisation policy that each country should be able to supply its own blood and blood products to meet clinical needs.

He told the World Federation of Haemophilia Congress at the Tara Hotel, London, that the NHS was not at present able to provide sufficient Factor VIII concentrate, needed by haemophiliacs for the management of bleeding, and health authorities were having to buy expensive imported products.

Following a special allocation of £500,000 last year substantial progress was now being made in building up production capacity in the NHS, and self-sufficiency in home-produced Factor VIII was expected to be reached in mid-1977.

Dr Owen stressed the Government's belief in the importance of the voluntary blood donor system. He said: "Blood voluntarily and freely given by the healthy to those in need is a manifestation of the values which we should all strive to maintain in society. There are dangers of developing a modern society whose values are solely conditioned by the market place, where 'What is the price' and 'What is something worth?' predominate. We should not be afraid, nationally and internationally, to champion the true values of a society: love, altruism, and concern for our neighbours which alone provide essential cohesion and peace which we all seek."

NOTE FOR EDITORS

1 Factor VIII is a clotting factor in the blood which is missing from the blood of people with haemophilia. To control bleeding, Factor VIII must be injected into the bloodstream, and the form now preferred by clinicians is freeze-dried anti-haemophilic globulin

(AHG or Factor VIII) concentrate. This is manufactured from blood plasma both by commercial firms and by central laboratories of the National Blood Transfusion Service.

2 In some countries, the screening of blood donors for hepatitis is less rigorous than in the UK. For this reason, the Government's policy of making the UK self-sufficient in the supply of blood products commands wide support.

NB DR CWEN IS SPEAKING AT 5 pm TODAY.