

I hope that Norman is still proud of what he achieved with his campaign. It had a considerable and beneficial effect on public attitudes and behaviour. In my opinion it is one of the most substantial contributions that Norman made to improving British public health and safety, exposed to such a sudden and frightening threat.

One tragic aspect of the epidemic was because, initially, no one understood that the disease was transmitted by body fluids. Every haemophiliac in the country received frequent blood transfusions from the National Health Service. We acquired the necessary blood from a donation service but also by importing supplies from a wide and not totally reliable range of overseas sources. Very quickly, before our scientists and doctors appreciated that blood supplies needed to be treated to be safe, more than 1,200 haemophiliacs in Britain contracted HIV.

The haemophiliacs who spent the rest of their lives with this disease were eventually given compensation by John Major's government. Not surprisingly, they continued and still continue to campaign for more generous compensation for their suffering and to help them with the costs of their illness. When I became the only health minister from that time still prominent in the public eye, these campaigners usually named me in their campaigns, because it improved their prospects of publicity.

In fact, I was not the minister responsible for blood products, which was regarded as a small specialist area of activity and was handled by Simon Glenarthur, a parliamentary undersecretary in the Lords. Simon behaved impeccably throughout the crisis but unfortunately he acted on the medical and scientific advice given to him which was not based on full knowledge of the dangers. Various public inquiries have subsequently been held into the victims' claims, but Simon's reputation has always emerged unscathed as he quite correctly acted conscientiously in the light of the scientific evidence available to him.

Ministerial activity, with its greater pressures and longer working hours, had quite an effect on my daily life including my following of jazz. At first, Roy Gibbons, my allocated government driver, became