

House of Lords

Tuesday, 18th October 1988.

The House met at half-past two of the clock: The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

Prayers—Read by the Lord Bishop of Guildford.

Lord Rayleigh—Sat first in Parliament after the death of his uncle.

Gibraltar: Spanish Pensioners

Lord Merrivale asked Her Majesty's Government:

What assistance they propose to give the Government of Gibraltar (pending the restructuring of the system) to enable payments to Spanish pensioners to continue after 7th December 1988.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Lord Trefgarne): My Lords, Her Majesty's Government have now agreed to contribute nearly £19 million towards these costs for the period 1986–88. My right honourable friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is to meet the Chief Minister of Gibraltar again on 31st October to continue their discussions about the restructuring of the Gibraltar social insurance fund.

Lord Merrivale: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for that answer. On the restructuring of the fund, will the Minister say what consideration is jointly being given to the possible integration of the UK and Gibraltar social insurance schemes?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, this is one of the matters that is being discussed between my right honourable friend and the Chief Minister. In the light of the further discussions to which I have referred, I hope my noble friend will agree that I should not anticipate how those discussions may turn out.

Baroness Ewart-Biggs: My Lords, will the Minister say whether it is true that at the present time neither the British Government nor the Gibraltar Government are prepared to make any contribution to the remaining £257 million owed to the pensioners? Have the Government taken legal opinion that liability in this case lies with the Gibraltar Government?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, these discussions have been continuing for some time, as the noble Baroness will know. They are reaching a very important juncture. I hope that the noble Baroness will forgive me if I do not say anything to anticipate the outcome of the discussions shortly to take place.

Lord Merrivale: My Lords, perhaps I may ask my noble friend a further question. When these further discussions take place at the end of the month will Her Majesty's Government bear strongly in mind that these Spanish pensions are a heavy burden for

Gibraltar as they represent approximately 7 per cent of its GNP?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, I cannot confirm exactly the figure to which my noble friend refers, but of course it is the case that a commitment exists. However, it is also the case that contributions have been made over the years. An entitlement to pensions therefore also exists.

Lord Boyd-Carpenter: My Lords, I understand my noble friend's unwillingness to make any comments on the matter while discussions are at an important stage. Is he aware of the great interest in all quarters of the House in this matter? When these discussions have been concluded, will he be in a position to make a statement?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, we shall certainly be willing to answer questions on the outcome of these discussions, or let the House know in some other way as soon as that outcome is reached.

Lord Bottomley: My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Merrivale, made an appeal which was well briefed by those who have studied the position. I hope Her Majesty's Government will be generous in negotiations with the new Prime Minister of Gibraltar.

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, as regards generosity, we have already contributed the £19 million to which I have referred.

Haemophiliacs: Financial Assistance

2.42 p.m.

Lord Campbell of Croy asked Her Majesty's Government:

What progress has been made in compensating haemophiliacs who contracted AIDS from National Health Service transfusions.

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, a charitable trust known as the Macfarlane Trust has been established to provide financial help to both haemophiliacs infected with HIV and their dependants. On 17th March this year the Government made an *ex gratia* payment of £10 million pounds to the trust. This was not compensation but to enable the trustees to provide financial help for those in need of such assistance. I understand that the trustees have so far received 350 applications and have made 297 payments.

Lord Campbell of Croy: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for his reply. When this tragic subject was raised by some of us a few months ago the Government responded quickly and generously. However, can my noble friend now comment on reports that very little of the £10 million has yet been allocated, while several more of the haemophiliacs concerned have died in the meantime?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, my noble friend is entirely correct to point out that one cannot set up a

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[LORD HESKETH.]

charitable trust overnight, because it involves not only the department but also the solicitors acting for the Haemophilia Society, the Charity Commissioners and the Inland Revenue. The time which elapsed was some four months. I am under the impression that from now on it is expected that there will be an increase in the amounts and numbers of payments, but it obviously tended to start off rather slower than it will finish up.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, bearing in mind the Minister's reminder that this is not a fund for compensation, is he aware that about 100 cases for compensation are being prepared for court hearings? Is he also aware that it is immensely time-consuming and costly; that some of the cases concern people who contracted AIDS several years ago; and that in some cases the court hearings are being undertaken by widows because the victims have died? Is this not the most compelling possible case for the introduction of some form of no-fault liability?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, writs have already been served by some infected haemophiliacs who are pursuing their case for compensation through the courts. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further. The Pearson Commission, which reported in 1978, studied the evidence from other countries and considered a possible compensation scheme for personal injuries that have resulted from medical accidents. The commission concluded that such a compensation scheme should not be introduced here and recommended that negligence should continue to be the basis for liability for most medical injuries.

Lord Campbell of Alloway: My Lords, does my noble friend agree that this is a classic case for the introduction of a no-fault compensation scheme, even akin to the vaccine damage payment scheme under the 1979 Act? Does my noble friend agree that his reference to the Pearson Report truly, with respect, is not in point? Does he not agree that, because it is so clear that it is no-fault, there ought to be statutory compensation? I ask my noble friend on what basis that compensation should be awarded.

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, I really cannot go far beyond what I said in my last answer, except possibly to add that the Civil Justice Review has suggested ways in which personal injuries litigation might be made quicker and cheaper. I understand that the Government's response will be published later this year and it is our intention to monitor the benefits of any changes flowing from the review before considering the matter further.

Lord Kilmarnock: My Lords, in view of newspaper reports that only £132,000 had been disbursed by 9th October, will the Government bring pressure to bear on the trustees to see that they get on with processing this money, which, after all, has been provided by the Government for this purpose? Will he further tell the House whether the Government will disregard these sums, when they are paid out, for tax and benefit purposes?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, the answer to the last question is yes. To answer the first question, it is an independent charitable trust. The department appoints only four of the 10 trustees so it would be rather difficult to ask the department to put pressure on directly.

Lord Allen of Abbeydale: My Lords, as a member of the Pearson Royal Commission, I wonder whether the Minister will look again at the way he summarised its conclusion on medical injuries. Would it not be more accurate to say that the commission came to the conclusion that on the available information it was not prepared to recommend a no-fault scheme, but recommended that the Government should see what went on in the rest of the world where no-fault schemes were operating and perhaps think again when further experience had been gained?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, I have to admit that the noble Lord, Lord Allen of Abbeydale, is a far greater expert on this matter than I am. I seem to recollect drawing his attention to New Zealand when answering a Question in this context some months ago. It was felt that that was not an entirely encouraging example.

Lord Winstanley: My Lords, would it not be very damaging if a whole series of these tragic cases came before the courts for compensation? Would not the best way to avoid that happening be for the Government to embark rapidly on a satisfactory compensation scheme?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, I cannot add to what I have already said on this matter.

The Environment: Policy

2.48 p.m.

Lord Ezra asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether there has been a change of emphasis in their environmental policy.

The Minister of State, Department of the Environment (The Earl of Caithness): No, my Lords. We have a consistent programme of action for the environment. We have taken, are taking and will continue to take many major initiatives at both the national and international level.

Lord Ezra: My Lords, is the noble Earl aware that the Government have earned the reputation in Europe of lagging behind other countries in matters of environmental improvement and safeguards? For example, on acid rain they were late converts; on the matter of CFCs and the impact on the ozone layer they have been late converts, and on the matter of vehicle exhausts they have been late converts—

Noble Lords: Speech!

Lord Ezra: My Lords, those are a few examples. May I ask—

Written Answers

LONDON WEIGHTING
PAYMENTS: RATES

Lord Sefton of Garston asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are the present rates of London and Inner London weighting paid to civil servants by grade and how many are in receipt of these payments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport (Lord Brabazon of Tara): All non-industrial civil servants below Grade 3 receive London Weighting at the following rates:

	Salaried staff (per annum)		Weekly paid staff (per week)		Hourly paid staff (per hour)
	18 and over £	Under 18 £	18 and over £	Under 18 £	Part-time cleaners pence per hour
Inner London	1,527	1,145	29.25	21.94	69.4
Intermediate London	876	657	16.78	12.59	40.0
Outer London	641	481	12.28	9.21	29.2

On 1st April 1987 the numbers receiving these payments were approximately:

	Under 18	18 and over
Inner	400	71,500
Intermediate	200	20,200
Outer	200	19,800
	<u>800</u>	<u>111,500</u>

INHERITANCE TAX AND
FAMILY COMPANIES

Viscount Mackintosh of Halifax asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether, given their stated aim of creating a climate where family companies can flourish, it is their intention that clearance under Section 53(2) of the Finance Act 1982 will in all cases be refused on the death of a controlling shareholder where sufficient dividends can be voted by the executors to enable the inheritance tax liability to be met by instalments on the basis that hardship would not arise as the executors control the company and thus control the flow of dividends.

Lord Brabazon of Tara: I understand that there have been very few cases of the kind in question. However, where the company has surplus funds sufficient to discharge the inheritance tax liability, the Inland Revenue take the view that there would be no hardship since the liability could be met by dividend payments from the company. If the noble Lord has a particular case in mind, I would be very happy to ask my right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to look into it.

WOMEN'S PRISONS: ALLEGATIONS
AGAINST STAFF

The Earl of Longford asked Her Majesty's Government:

What steps they are taking to defend the reputation of the staff in the women's prisons against the allegations made by Mrs. Jean Ritchie in her book Myra Hindley: *Inside the Mind of a Murderess*.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Earl Ferrers): The material contained in the book does not call for any response from Her Majesty's Government.

URBAN REGENERATION GRANTS

Lord Northfield asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will give details of urban regeneration grants so far approved, and of the time taken to approve them in each case; and how many applications are still under consideration.

The Minister of State, Department of the Environment (The Earl of Caithness): The information requested is listed below.

Six projects have been offered urban regeneration grant. These are:

Project name	Local authority	Grant (£m)	Private	Date received	Date of decision
			invest- ment (£m)		
Whitworth St.*					
Granby Village	Manchester	3.300	10.800	31/08/87	14/03/88
Whitworth St./ Princess St.	Manchester	0.473	1.656	10/07/87	17/12/87
Whitworth St.					
Albion House	Manchester	0.301	1.178	10/07/87	17/12/87
Blackbrook					
Valley Site 6	Dudley	3.563	17.224	24/07/87	22/12/87
Round Oak 2	Dudley	3.250	14.250	15/06/87	19/10/87
Anglican* Cathedral	Liverpool	2.229	7.848	11/06/87	05/02/88
Totals		<u>13.116</u>	<u>52.956</u>		

*Schemes substantially revised after original application.

Seven schemes are currently under appraisal and a number of other are being discussed informally with the Department.

HAEMOPHILIACS: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
—MACFARLANE TRUST

Lord Newall asked Her Majesty's Government:

What progress has been made since their statement of 16th November 1987 concerning financial assistance to haemophiliacs infected with the AIDS virus.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Lord Skelmersdale): Our announcement indicated that the Government would make an ex-gratia grant of £10

million to enable the Haemophilia Society to establish a special trust fund to provide financial help to haemophiliacs infected with the AIDS virus and their families. A charitable trust fund to be known as the Macfarlane Trust has now been established. Letters exchanged with the Haemophilia Society and the trust deed incorporating the objects of the trust have been placed in the Library.

It will be the duty of the trustees to ensure that payments from the trust are made in the most effective way and take into account the differing circumstances of those affected. However to ensure that all the £10 million reaches those in need,

regulations have been laid which disregard any payment from the trust fund when deciding entitlement to housing benefit and which also protect the confidentiality of the individual by making it unnecessary to report payments to the local authority. Similar regulations and arrangements have been introduced for income support and family credit. Because the Macfarlane Trust is charitable, beneficiaries will not be liable to income tax on payments made to them.

Now that the Macfarlane Trust has been established the £10 million is being paid to the Haemophilia Society.

House of Lords

Tuesday, 31st March, 1987

The House met at a quarter-past two of the clock:
The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

Prayers—Read by the Lord Bishop of Liverpool.

Lord Stevens of Ludgate

David Robert Stevens, Esquire, having been created Baron Stevens of Ludgate, of Ludgate in the City of London, for life—Was, in his robes, introduced between the Lord Ampthill and the Lord McAlpine of Moffat.

Lord Basnett

David Basnett, Esquire, having been created Baron Basnett, of Leatherhead in the County of Surrey, for life—Was, in his robes, introduced between the Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede and the Lord Murray of Epping Forest.

Blood Products Laboratory

2.42 p.m.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government why there is a delay in developing the national blood products laboratory scheme.

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, in 1981 approval in principle was given for the construction of a new blood products laboratory at Elstree. Construction began in May 1983.

To enable the building to be completed earlier than traditional methods would allow, a "fast track" design system and build contract was adopted. When an innovative unit like the laboratory is built under this method, it is extremely difficult to forecast the completion date accurately at the outset. At that time our working assumption was that the new BPL would be completed at the end of 1985 or early 1986. There is no single identifiable reason for the building taking longer than expected other than the complexity of the design being greater than anticipated. The building will still have been completed two or three years earlier than traditional contracting methods would have allowed.

However, I am now pleased to say that the building will be officially opened at the end of April. After commissioning, limited production will begin later this year. Self-sufficiency will follow.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, while I thank the Minister for that very encouraging and helpful reply, may I ask him this question? While Scotland has

been self-sufficient in blood products for many years, is it not strange that although more people give blood in England, England has been rather slow?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, this is the reason why we embarked on building the blood laboratory in the first place.

Viscount Melville: My Lords, may I ask the Minister from which countries we are importing these products?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, so far as I am aware, we are importing no blood from foreign countries into this country.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes: My Lords, perhaps I may ask the Minister whether that is true about blood products, in particular gamma globulin, which is of concern to many people going abroad who have to have anti-hepatitis injections.

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, I shall have to write to the noble Baroness on that point.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, may I ask the Minister whether he thinks that with the problem of non-A and non-B hepatitis and the AIDS viruses it is now very important that we have our own blood products?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, one of the main purposes of building the laboratory is to produce the very products to which the noble Baroness refers. In fact it is for the treatment of plasma rather than whole blood that the laboratory is being built.

Lord Harmar-Nicholls: My Lords, my noble friend said the building would be opened in April. Is he saying that it will actually be in business doing its job in April?

Lord Hesketh: My Lords, it is a very complicated plant and, like many complicated pieces of machinery, after the building is opened a period of build-up will take place. We hope that by the end of the year we shall achieve 75 per cent. capacity.

Restart Programme

2.46 p.m.

Lord Sandys: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of those who attend a Restart interview then go into employment.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Lord Young of Graffham): My Lords, we have no means of knowing precisely what percentage of those people who attend a Restart counselling interview go into employment. Some are placed directly following their Restart interview, but others will have found jobs after

conservation of the Broads as a whole is the fundamental first objective of the Bill for all interests. Wildlife conservation can join Clause 2(1)(a) as part of the objective of enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads, which is where it belongs.

In making that suggestion the two parts are indivisible; I do not want to find that they have fallen between two stools. As Clause 2 reads at present it is nonsense and does not stand up to logic or comprehension. I believe that in future years it will appear as though Parliament did not understand what it was talking about unless the minor adjustments for which I am asking are made.

Haemophiliacs: Financial Assistance

3.46 p.m.

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat a Statement currently being made in another place by my right honourable friend the Minister for Health on haemophiliacs infected by the AIDS virus. This Statement is as follows:

"With permission, I wish to make a Statement about haemophiliacs who have become infected with the AIDS virus as a result of treatment with infected blood products. I should explain that I am doing so in the unavoidable absence of my right honourable friend who is unwell.

"As the House knows, the position under successive governments has been that, while compensation may be sought through the courts if there is a question of negligence, there is no state scheme of no fault compensation for those damaged by medical treatment.

"The Haemophilia Society has, however, put to us a powerful case that the position of haemophiliacs is wholly exceptional and should be treated as such. Their employment prospects and insurance status were already affected by the haemophilia itself. The treatment that led to their infection was designed to help them to live as near a normal life as possible. The hereditary nature of haemophilia can, and in some cases does, mean that more than one member of the family may be affected.

"The Government, having considered all the circumstances, have concluded that it would be right to recognise the unique position of haemophiliacs infected with this virus. We therefore propose to make an *ex gratia* grant of £10 million to the Haemophilia Society to enable it to establish a special trust fund. It will be able to make payment to the affected individuals and families throughout the United Kingdom and to do so with greater flexibility than could readily be achieved in any other way.

"The House will wish to know that we have put this proposal to the society, which has welcomed it warmly. The society has asked for advice and assistance in administering the fund, which we have gladly agreed to arrange.

"The grant of £10 million is being made from the reserve. When the full details of the grant and trust fund have been settled, there will be an exchange of

letters with the society. I shall arrange for copies to be put in the Library.

"I know that the House wishes to express its sympathy to the individuals and families who have been affected in this tragic way. I hope that the whole House will welcome this action to translate that sympathy into practical help".

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, I should like to thank the Minister for reading the Statement that was read in another place by the Minister for Health. For once it is a pleasure to give an unqualified welcome to a statement of government policy. It is a rapid and positive response to the proposals which came not only from the Haemophilia Society but from both sides of your Lordships' House in the debate on Tuesday of last week, including the speeches made by the noble Lord, Lord Campbell of Croy, and myself.

The statement is a positive recognition of the great hardship, too often resulting in death, suffered by those who have been struck by two potentially life-destroying conditions. Our sympathy, like the sympathy of the Government, goes out to the victims and their families.

As the Minister said, and as I said last week, the position of haemophiliacs is exceptional. I have great respect of the Haemophilia Society, whose officers I have met. I am sure that, with the readily accepted offer of assistance from the DHSS, it will admirably administer the *ex gratia* payment. However, I should like to put one question to the Minister. Does this not give added weight to the argument for some kind of system of no fault liability for others who may suffer under circumstances where proving negligence by a health authority or a doctor is neither easy nor desirable? If the Minister does not now wish to give a considered answer to that question, I hope that the Government will carefully consider the matter and that he will bring back a Statement to the House.

Lord Kennet: My Lords, I should like to associate these Benches with the comments of the Government as regards the tragedy of the haemophiliacs and also with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Ennals, in praise of the government scheme. I should like to ask the Minister a question in almost the same terms as that asked by the noble Lord but phrased in a different way. It is clear that the haemophiliacs who contracted AIDS in this way deserve the best form of government financial help—and I avoid the expression "compensation". Is this rather large block grant to a society which consists of those who are ill and those who are caring for them for that society to administer a new form which has been devised? If so, do the Government see any future in such a way of administering help in the case of other medical conditions, or indeed misfortunes that may befall people, which are not illnesses at all but something quite different? In short, are we at the beginning of a new age of social and health administration?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I am most grateful to both the noble Lords, Lord Ennals and Lord Kennet, for their immediate and generous response to this Statement. I certainly agree that the position

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of haemophiliacs is quite exceptional. When members of the Haemophilia Society met my right honourable friend on 3rd November, he took the point very quickly and, as the House has now discovered, reacted very rapidly. Personally I am delighted that we have been able to help sufferers from haemophilia who have contracted AIDS as a result of the treatment they have received, which incidentally is through no fault of the clinicians treating them or indeed the Government.

That brings me very neatly to the subject of no fault compensation. As the noble Lord, Lord Ennals, will remember, last week we had a debate on the subject in which the noble Lord, Lord Allen of Abbeydale, raised that question, which was considered many years ago by the Pearson Commission. The commission reported in 1978. Having studied the evidence from other countries and considered a possible compensation scheme for personal injuries resulting from medical accidents, the report concluded that this was a very difficult matter but that on balance such a compensation scheme should not be introduced here; it recommended that negligence should continue to be the basis for liability for most medical injuries. I should point out that in this case no court has judged compensation to be in order and of course it would be a matter for the courts so to judge if anybody were to bring an action.

The noble Lord, Lord Kennet, asked whether this issue ushered in a new form of social security arrangement. I do not view this measure as a form of social security arrangement, whether new or old. Certainly it is not entirely new. I am advised that the family fund administered by the Rowntree Trust would be similar. As we have all agreed, the needs and treatments of haemophiliacs are quite unique, and I cannot think of any further groups that would qualify for such assistance.

It is easy to make such a remark. Nobody knows what the future will bring. In 1980 and 1981 we did not know about the terrible scourge of AIDS, nor realise how many people it would affect so disastrously in the following five or six years. Moreover, it will continue for some considerable time to come.

Returning to my original remarks, I am very pleased that both the noble Lords have been so generous in their response.

Lord Boyd-Carpenter: My Lords, from these Benches I also warmly welcome this very proper act of generosity by the Government toward these doubly unfortunate people. I also welcome the method that has been adopted, which in these circumstances seems to be so much more sensible than setting up some bureaucratic organisation.

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I am extremely grateful to my noble friend for putting the point of view of these Benches. I should point out that the fund is unique in that it is specifically for those people who are facing the singular and tragic circumstances of haemophilia and HIV infection.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, I should like to make one brief supplementary remark. The Minister accepted that the Government agreed with one of the negative conclusions of the Pearson Report, but so far as I know they have not agreed with any of its positive proposals. I happen to disagree with the one conclusion that the Government have accepted. I wonder whether the issue, which has still not been answered, is one to which the Government will give further thought.

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, that goes extremely wide of this Statement but, as I said in the debate last week, this matter will continue to engage the energies of my noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor.

Lord Campbell of Alloway: My Lords, having taken part in the vaccine damage debate in your Lordships' House some time ago, and indeed having initiated it, I only wish to rise briefly to congratulate the Government on having met what is a wholly exceptional situation with such humanity, speed and generosity. The situation is exceptional in a number of ways but not wholly exceptional in others.

As is well known to the noble Lord, Lord Ennals, one aspect of the matter has a more general significance. If one looks at the state of the art of medicine at the relevant time, there was then no known causative link between the treatment and the infection. This is a problem of more general application.

Secondly, until we reach forward in the law to accept some form of strict liability, in cases where fault is not an essential ingredient the only way that the Government can deal with such catastrophes is not by compensation as it is ordinarily understood but by offering a generous *ex gratia* grant. I congratulate the Government on their action. However, there are greater problems that lie beyond this wholly exceptional situation.

Lord Skelmersdale: I am very grateful to my noble friend for underlining that point. Of course, in order to be in a position to pay compensation, there must be something that requires compensation. As I said to the noble Lord, Lord Ennals, that can only be established through our legal system and therefore compensation would not be appropriate in this particular case whereas an *ex gratia* payment clearly is appropriate.

Lord Walston: My Lords, can the Minister tell the House approximately how many haemophiliacs there are who are confirmed sufferers from AIDS or who have died?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, according to the estimates of the Haemophilia Society, with whose figures we do not disagree, I regret to tell the House that there are some 1,200 HIV infected people. Of that number, 57 have AIDS and so far 41 have died.

Lord Galpern: My Lords, can the Minister say whether this contribution is to be a final and full settlement of the claims for the misery that will be suffered by such people in the future? In the event of the Haemophilia Society indicating quite clearly and

fully to the satisfaction of the Minister that additional aid is required, will that request be taken into consideration?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I do not accept that this payment is in settlement of a claim. As I have already explained, it is an *ex gratia* payment in respect of a particular and tragic circumstance. The offer was made to the Haemophilia Society at the end of last week and it has been gratefully accepted.

Lord Somers: My Lords, I do not think anybody who is interested in such matters will feel anything but heartfelt gratitude to the Government for making that Statement. But I wonder whether the noble Lord could tell me one thing. One sees in every surgery and hospital waiting room a notice urging one to become a blood donor. When one volunteers to do this, is one given a strict examination to make sure that one is not a carrier of the virus oneself?

Lord Skelmersdale: Yes, indeed, my Lords, and the country remains extremely grateful to those people who continue to give blood at this very difficult time. Not only is the blood tested initially before full amounts and further amounts of blood can be given, but the blood products are now also heat treated.

Lord Sefton of Garston: My Lords, will the Minister tell the House whether or not the Government have given further consideration to the suggestion that was made to the noble Baroness, Lady Trumpington, about the possibility of suing the suppliers of Factor VIII?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I think I need a little more notice of that question. If I may, I shall look into it and write to the noble Lord, Lord Sefton.

Lord Sefton of Garston: My Lords, I should be obliged if the noble Lord would allow us to know the reasons for not suing them.

Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill

4.1 p.m.

Second Reading debate resumed.

Baroness Blatch: My Lords, I intended to start my remarks by saying that it is an understatement that the Bill has taken so long coming. With the intervention of the Statement it has taken an even longer time. It has taken a long time to set out a framework for a statutory body to manage the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and I for one welcome its arrival in this House for a Second Reading.

As has already been mentioned in the debate so far, it was in 1947 that the Hobhouse Committee recommended that the Broads should at least have national park status, and I should like to add my praise to the Norfolk County Council and the relative local district councils who lent their support to the running of the non-statutory Broads Authority over these years as a kind of holding operation. Of course, more recently the Countryside Commission,

following a review, concluded that a statutory body consistent with that set out in the Bill was their preferred option for a way forward. I also welcome their support for the progress of the Bill so far.

Of course the fate of the Norfolk County Council's Private Bill which floundered on a technicality is well known. Nevertheless there was, and still is, widespread support for a Broads Bill and the Government have recognised the national importance of the Broads, and indeed the international importance of the Broads, and have decided to introduce their own Bill. That, too, is a matter for congratulations.

It is essential that we in this House recognise the delicacy of progressing the Bill through both Houses. It would indeed be a tragedy if its passage was thwarted. Already the Bill in its present form is a hybrid and too much interference with its content could run the risk of re-hybridising it. I make apologies to noble Lords for the jargon. But the real risk is that of losing the Bill itself if parliamentary time cannot be found to start the process again.

I strongly believe that the Bill deserves our support. I also believe that there is considerable support for it inside your Lordships' House, across all parties, and of course outside, too. There is nevertheless substantial evidence that the Broads' eco-system is deteriorating. The rivers are polluted, as has already been said. There is erosion of the river banks, there is diminishing wildlife and until the experimental Broads grazing marshes conservation scheme was introduced by the Government large areas of the Broads were under threat. Incidentally, the high take-up of that scheme has certainly mitigated the worst effects of that loss: and of course the farmers are to be congratulated for their co-operation in the scheme.

This area of the Broads is unique in Britain and in view of the different interests, with the conservationists, the navigation rights and, of course, the access of people for pursuits of leisure, it is time to consider—indeed it is long overdue to consider—a framework for sound management which will address the issues of balancing various interests and, of course, strategically planning for the future of the area. Sadly, the history is one of fragmentation and diffuse responsibilities.

There are just two points that I believe should be given further consideration and I ask for the Minister's indulgence on both of them. The first is the need for the Bill to say something about a chief officer post for the new Broads Authority; that it should be full-time and should be permanent. The second issue is the concern shared by some who have taken part in this debate so far and others outside that insufficient emphasis is given to safeguarding, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads.

On the first issue, there are a number of references to this area of Norfolk and Suffolk being comparable to the national parks. Certainly the task to be undertaken and sustained is as great as that of the national parks—dare I say even greater? Therefore it seems to me appropriate that the Minister gives some thought to this issue. May I suggest also that more

House of Lords

Tuesday, 10th November, 1987.

The House met at half-past two of the clock: The LORD CHANCELLOR on the Woolsack.

Prayers—Read by the Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

Lord Carlisle of Bucklow

The Right Honourable Mark Carlisle, QC, having been created Baron Carlisle of Bucklow, of Mobberley in the County of Cheshire, for life—Was, in his robes, introduced between the Lord Windlesham and the Lord Carr of Hadley.

Lord Colnbrook

The Right Honourable Sir Humphrey Edward Gregory Atkins, KCMG, having been created Baron Colnbrook, of Waltham St. Lawrence in the Royal County of Berkshire, for life—Was, in his robes, introduced between the Lord Carrington and the Lord Rawlinson of Ewell.

Lord Shuttleworth—Took the Oath.

The Earl of Cromer—Took the Oath.

Haemophiliacs: AIDS Infection

2.55 p.m.

Lord Campbell of Croy: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government what proposals for action they are considering towards haemophiliacs who were infected with the AIDS virus through injections required for their condition, within the National Health Service, before the Factor VIII serum was made safe.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Lord Skelmersdale): My Lords, my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and my honourable friend the Minister for Health met representatives of the Haemophilia Society on 3rd November. The society presented a case for special financial help for people with haemophilia who have been infected with the AIDS virus. We are giving careful and urgent attention to the representations it made.

Lord Campbell of Croy: My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friend for that reply. Is he aware that those people, who number about 1,200 in all, are the victims of a tragic misfortune through no fault of their own? Many of them are not in a position to proceed through the courts, where in any case negligence is unlikely to be an issue because the danger was not known at the relevant time.

Lord Skelmersdale: Yes, my Lords. My noble friend has described the plight of those unfortunate people very well indeed. I agree that compensation as such will not be appropriate. Throughout that unfortunate period we were relying on what I might call state of the art technology.

Lord Mellish: My Lords, is the Minister aware that there will be universal support for the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Campbell? It is to be hoped that the Government will show generosity and will understand that such people are genuine victims as the serum was not known to be infected and we knew nothing about AIDS at that time.

Lord Skelmersdale: Yes, my Lords. My right honourable friend is well aware of the tremendous sympathy which abounds in this country for those people.

Lord Winstanley: My Lords, are there not two vital questions which the department must answer? Knowing that patients suffering from haemophilia were treated with blood products infected with the AIDS virus, must we not first know whether the Government were aware that the products were infected at the time; and, if the Government were not aware, should they have been aware? If the answer to those two questions is yes, do the Government not have a moral as well as a legal responsibility to compensate the victims?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, as I explained in answer to an earlier supplementary question, throughout this unfortunate period we were using what I described as state of the art technology. So far as I know, the Government's knowledge was up to date at all times. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Factor VIII was contaminated.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, if England and Wales had been self-sufficient in blood products, as Scotland was, would the tragedy have been as great as it now is? Will he agree that those haemophiliacs have a double tragedy in suffering not only from haemophilia but also from AIDS? Are the problems of their families not also very great?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, as I have said, neither medical science nor technology was initially able to prevent the devastating impact of the disease. The availability of heat treatment processes and screening tests provided a breakthrough in the safety of Factor VIII serum from whatever source. No haemophiliac patients are known to have been infected with the AIDS virus following the use of blood products in the past 12 months.

Baroness Seear: My Lords, is the noble Lord able to give the House any idea when there will be an answer to the inquiry? Many of those people are suffering grievously, financially as well as medically. They will be most anxious to know as soon as possible what help, if any, will be given.

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I do not have an answer to that question. However, I hope that it will come very soon, and I take the noble Baroness's point.

The Earl of Halsbury: My Lords, is this not a recap of the thalidomide situation? No one knew that drug was going to have the effects that it had. An honourable settlement was made by the Distillers Company, of which I was then a director, in favour of the victims. Can Her Majesty's Government not follow the lead that has been given?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I am sure that my right honourable friend will have that point in mind.

Lord Prys-Davies: My Lords, we are particularly anxious that the Government's sympathy for haemophilia/AIDS victims should be translated in the short term into practical support. Will the Minister confirm to the House that the inquiry will consider the following three questions? As the haemophilia/AIDS victim has to meet exceptionally heavy additional expenditure because of his two life-threatening diseases, will the Government consider introducing a special weekly benefit to haemophilia/AIDS victims? Secondly, as a large number of haemophilia/AIDS victims have family dependants—

Noble Lords: Too long!

Lord Prys-Davies:—will the Government consider how that dependency can be met during the onset of the disease and after the death of a breadwinner? Finally—

Noble Lords: Too long!

Lord Prys-Davies:—are the Government satisfied that the quality of counselling and the facilities available to haemophilia/AIDS victims are consistent with their right to dignity and privacy?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, the Government will of course consider the first two points. As regards the last point, we have provided £104,000 to each of the six haemophilia reference centres in England so that they may provide haemophiliacs and their families with the specialist HIV counselling that is needed.

Lord Winstanley: My Lords, perhaps the noble Lord can answer one short and specific question. Have all stocks of blood products which may have been contaminated with the AIDS virus now been destroyed?

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I do not know the answer to that. I shall look into it. What I know is that no untreated or unscreened blood products are now in use.

Lord Campbell of Croy: My Lords, in considering this matter urgently will the Government bear in mind a possible comparison with the vaccine damage scheme and the special arrangements made there?

Sixty of these people have so far developed AIDS and 45 of them have died.

Lord Skelmersdale: My Lords, I am not sure that that scheme is comparable; but I shall certainly make sure that it is looked into.

County Courts: Legal Advice

3.4 p.m.

Viscount Hanworth: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are satisfied that county courts provide enough help to claimants who do not employ a solicitor.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Mackay of Clashfern): Yes, my Lords. County court staff give such claimants the assistance they may require on procedural matters. Their duties do not however extend to giving legal advice for which they are neither trained nor qualified.

Viscount Hanworth: My Lords, while I thank the noble and learned Lord for that reply, may I ask what steps, if any, have been taken to find out whether all county courts are being as helpful as they should be? Is the noble and learned Lord aware that in my experience some county courts are helpful while others are not?

The Lord Chancellor: My Lords, the general understanding among county court staff is that, when asked, they should give such advice on procedural matters as I have mentioned. If the noble Viscount has any particular case in mind where such advice has not been given and if he would draw it to my attention, I shall see that it is not repeated.

Lord Elwyn-Jones: My Lords, as the duty solicitor schemes do not apply to county courts, will the noble and learned Lord have inquiry made into the complaints of the various bodies like the CABs, the law centres and local advisory agencies, which complain bitterly of lack of funds, and ensure that they are properly funded in order to perform this important public duty?

The Lord Chancellor: My Lords, I think that that is another question.

Consumer Protection: Code of Practice

3.6 p.m.

Lord Gallacher: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government when it is proposed to publish the code of practice as required under Part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

[BARONESS SEEAR.]

I echo the noble Baroness, Lady Ewart-Biggs, in saying that I hope that time will be found for this Bill in the House of Commons. It is necessary that these changes should be made, and it would be a great pity if, after all the work that has been done, the Bill did not ultimately reach the statute book.

Viscount Davidson: My Lords, I should not like this Bill to pass without saying a few words on behalf of the Government. I have no doubt wearied your Lordships with repeating constantly that the Government remain neutral on the substantive issues which we have discussed during the passage of this Bill. If we have taken sides, as it were, it has been only for the purpose of suggesting drafting amendments. We have not sought to recommend any destination but only the best way to get there.

I should nevertheless like to say that the Government are happy with the outcome, and I trust that the noble Lord's Bill will have a fair passage through another place. If enacted, the Bill would, I think, remove from Parliament the great majority of those cases where a couple, in order to marry, have to promote a personal Bill in Parliament. It is costly to them; it takes up a lot of parliamentary time and, perhaps more seriously, it can be highly embarrassing to the couple concerned to hear intimate details of their lives discussed on the Floor of the House.

Many of your Lordships have described the personal Bills procedure as inappropriate. The noble Baroness, Lady Wootton of Abinger, and the noble Lord, Lord Lloyd of Kilgerran, have promoted general marriage enabling Bills. The noble Lord, Lord Lloyd of Kilgerran, withdrew his Bill in the knowledge of the group being set up by the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury. The report of the group, *No Just Cause*, has provided the background to the debates in this House at all its stages. The minority report formed the basis of the original Bill, but the amended Bill has some features of the majority report, in that it makes some relaxation of restrictions on marriage between parents and children-in-law.

The Bill, if enacted, would remove most impediments to marriages between affines, those themselves related by marriage. This result is achieved by a Bill which is, one must admit, already of considerable complexity, but this is perhaps only to be expected when one considers the complications introduced by the various types of relationship, the need to balance the interests of the couple with the interests of society at large and the two legal systems. I should like to end, and I know that my noble and learned friend Lord Cameron of Lochbroom joins me in this, by congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Meston, on his foresight and tenacity in introducing the Bill and on successfully piloting it through your Lordships' House.

Lord Meston: My Lords, may I briefly thank all noble Lords who have spoken both this evening and throughout the passage of the Bill? It is, I hope, a useful Bill, with its origin in the report *No Just Cause*. I join in paying tribute to my noble friend Lady Seear for the excellence of that report, which has proved to be of great assistance to us in understanding the issues

involved in this sometimes complex area. I suggest that it has become a better Bill in its passage through your Lordships' House. It has been extended to Scotland. It has been extended, with qualification, to in-laws and it now has the additional safeguard of minimum age of 21 years for marriage. It is a Bill which has enjoyed, I am grateful to say, constructive help and support and comment from all sides, not least from the Bench of Bishops, who added the considerable weight and authority to this Bill.

I am also grateful for the Government's stance on the matter. They have been benevolent, neutral and helpful. I am particularly grateful. I hope that that attitude will continue, if not improve.

The noble and learned Lord, Lord Denning touched very sensibly upon the practicalities of how this Bill, if enacted, will work in practice. As I have already stressed several times in the passage of the Bill there are safeguards written into it. There will nevertheless be difficult and borderline cases. There must be inherent in the deliberately vague definition of the "child of the family". But like the noble and learned Lord, I share the view that when these difficult cases arise it should be a matter for decision by the most senior judges who sit at first instance in this area of the law.

This is not a party matter. It is a Bill which will benefit people at all levels and all strata of society certainly hope this is a Bill which will have a fair welcome and some of the Government's precious time spent in another place.

On Question, Bill passed, and sent to the Commons.

Yorkshire Water Authority Bill

Reported from the Unopposed Bill Committee with amendments.

House adjourned at ten minutes past 10 o'clock.

Written Answers

BLOOD DONATIONS FROM PRISONERS

Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government

Whether they are aware that the National Blood Transfusion Service policy is not to take blood from prisoners, on the grounds that there is a much higher proportion of prisoners who carry the virus responsible for transmitting jaundice than of the general population; what information they have about the proportion of these carriers among inmates and the general population respectively and whether they will ask the NBTS to consider accepting prisoner donors subject to screening.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Baroness Trumpington): Regional Transfusion Directors (RTDs) have clinical responsibility for the acceptance of blood donors. They do not collect blood from groups known to be at risk from certain diseases.

I am advised that RTDs in England started to phase out collecting blood from prisoners in 1980. Among the factors which they took into account was the large number of donations from prisoners which routine screening for hepatitis showed could not be used. The available tests are not able to screen for all types of hepatitis virus or the presence of the virus in the early stages of the disease. The primary concern of the National Blood Transfusion Service must be to protect recipients of donated blood.

As collections from prisons have ceased, RTDs no longer have information on the relative proportion of blood donations from the general and prison population which could transmit hepatitis.

BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PERSONS: COLLECTION OF DATA

Baroness Fisher of Rednal asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why the collection of data, now undertaken triennially, which includes the statistics of registered blind and partially sighted people in England and Wales, has not yet been produced for registrations as at 31st March 1985.

Baroness Trumpington: Statistics on the number of people registered as blind and partially sighted in England are normally collected from local authorities triennially and data on registrations at 31st March 1985 were due to be collected last year. This collection was deferred, exceptionally, until March 1986 in order to provide a check on a separate return due at that date, on form BD8, giving details of the causes of blindness and partial sight for new cases. We plan to publish the statistics this autumn. The normal three-yearly cycle of registration returns for blind and partially sighted people will be restored with the return relating to the position at 31st March 1988.

NORTHERN IRELAND: HEALTH CARE EXPENDITURE

Lord Blease asked Her Majesty's Government:

What was the percentage of the Northern Ireland gross domestic product spent on health care, for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and, for the same period, what was the actual estimated proportion spent under the publicly financed National Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office (Lord Lyell): The information is not available in the form requested. Public expenditure on health and personal social services for 1982, 1983 and 1984 represented approximately 12.0 per cent., 11.9 per cent. and 11.7 per cent. of Northern Ireland's gross domestic product in those years.

NORTHERN IRELAND: SCHOOL BUS PASSES

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they can confirm that the Belfast Education and Library Board is withdrawing bus

passes from a large number of pupils in its area, and whether they will take steps to ensure that

- (i) existing parental choice is not restricted by withdrawing bus passes from those who choose a school more than three miles from their home; and
- (ii) existing comprehensive schools in Northern Ireland are treated in the same way as integrated schools, so that parents who cannot afford to pay for their children's transport remain free to choose comprehensive education for their children where it is available.

Lord Lyell: Bus passes are not being withdrawn. However, from the beginning of the 1986-87 school year there will be a change in the arrangements relating to secondary pupils which will generally restrict payment for school transport to the cost to the nearest appropriate school, being a school which can provide an education appropriate to age, abilities and aptitudes of the pupil, provided that it is more than 3 miles from the pupil's home; a parent may select a school other than the nearest on grounds of religious conscience.

Where a pupil living outside statutory walking distance of the school attended is deemed to be ineligible for the full payment of school transport costs, financial assistance not exceeding the cost of travel to the nearest appropriate school will be paid provided that school is outside the statutory walking distance from the pupil's home. Pupils presently enrolled will continue to receive school transport under the existing arrangements until they complete their school courses. When assessing applications for school transport made on grounds of religious conscience, boards have been asked to have regard to schools which have been specifically established to provide integrated education; this arrangement will not extend to comprehensive schools.

THE BUILDING INDUSTRY: SKILLS

Lord Graham of Edmonton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What are their views on the special survey by the Federation of Master Builders entitled *Manpower in the Building Industry, Shortages, Recruitment and Training*; and

Whether they accept the findings of a survey carried out by the Federation of Master Builders that 50 per cent. of labour shortages in the construction industry are due to a lack of training, and whether they will draw this to the attention of the Construction Industry Training Board; and

Whether they have noted that in a recent survey carried out by the Federation of Master Builders 59 per cent. of firms contacted reported a shortage of carpenters and 47 per cent. reported a shortage of bricklayers; and whether they intend to review training facilities for these trades; and

Whether their attention has been drawn to a survey carried out by the Federation of Master Builders which shows that 60 per cent. of firms contacted experiencing a shortage of labour stated that this was affecting their workload.

Written Answers

TRIBUTES TO DECEASED PEERS

Lord Brockway asked the Leader of the House:

Whether consideration should be given to the proposal that a decision whether tributes be paid to a deceased Peer should be made by the usual channels.

The Lord President of the Council (Viscount Whitelaw): It is already the practice for the usual channels to consider whether or not tributes be paid to a deceased Peer. The House has, over the years, found that it is in the interests of good order that tributes be arranged in this manner. But it is of course open to any member of the House to propose, through the usual channels, that tribute be paid in any particular case.

CIVIL DEFENCE: LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTICIPATION IN EXERCISE

Lord Jenkins of Putney asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether any authorities have been instructed to take part in a regional civil defence exercise in the South-East against their will.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Glenarthur): No.

GLOUCESTER PRISON DISTURBANCE: STAFF CONDUCT

Lord Harris of Greenwich asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action has been taken to follow up the reports in the media at the time that prison officers at HMP Gloucester incited prisoners to acts of indiscipline during the industrial action there last April.

Lord Glenarthur: Further investigation indicates that there is substance in these reports. However it has not been possible to identify individual named prison officers alleged to have acted in this way. The result of this investigation was reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has advised that in the absence of evidence identifying the officers concerned it will not be possible to consider criminal proceedings. For the same reason disciplinary action cannot be pursued. But in view of the disturbing nature of the events that has been revealed my right honourable friend has referred the matter to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons to be taken into account in the course of his inquiry into the prison disturbances in the spring.

AIDS: ADVICE TO DOCTORS

Baroness Masham of Ilton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether there are any ways in which they could draw to wider public attention the anxieties of doctors working with patients with AIDS or involved with AIDS virus, and their wish for concerted continuing health education so that the risk of infection to heterosexuals and babies through transmission from infected bisexuals and drug addicts be reduced.

Baroness Trumpington: A series of guidance documents on AIDS has been issued to doctors and other health professionals. The purpose of the ongoing AIDS United Kingdom information campaign, which includes support for voluntary bodies such as the Terrence Higgins Trust, is to provide information to the general public and those in high risk groups about AIDS and the ways in which transmission of the infection can be prevented. We are reviewing the options available to ensure that this information reaches those who may be at risk of transmitting or catching the infection.

BLOOD PRODUCTS: SCREENING

Lord Irving of Dartford asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will confirm that all plasma derived products, particularly Factor VIII and Factor IX concentrates, which are currently being distributed from blood products laboratories and commercial companies have been individually donor-screened for anti HIV; and

Whether they will state the dates from which distributed products have been manufactured from donor-screened anti HIV plasma, both in the commercial market and in British products manufactured at blood products laboratories.

Baroness Trumpington: It is necessary to distinguish Factor VIII and Factor IX from other plasma derived products, as these are the only ones for which Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) transmission has been established.

Factor VIII and Factor IX are made by the Blood Products Laboratory (BPL) at Elstree for distribution in England and Wales, and by the Protein Fractionation Centre (PFC) in Edinburgh for distribution in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In addition, commercial Factor VIII is imported for distribution in England and Wales. No commercial Factor IX products are licensed for marketing in the United Kingdom. All Factor VIII and Factor IX manufactured or used in the United Kingdom is heat treated to inactivate HIV.

By the end of 1985 all licensed commercially manufactured Factor VIII released in the United

Kingdom was made from individually donor-screened plasma. The heat treatment used by the BPL is more rigorous than that used in commercial processes. The BPL product has a good record of safety in clinical trials and has been shown to be safe when made from screened and unscreened plasma. All plasma processed at BPL since 2nd June 1986 has been derived from individually screened donations.

Products derived from screened plasma will become available from BPL for distribution in England and Wales during August 1986. By December 1986 all issued products will be derived from donor-screened plasma. All plasma processed at PFC since January 1986 has been derived from individually screened donations. By the end of August 1986, all products distributed by PFC in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be derived from donor-screened plasma.

PROHIBITION OF FEMALE CIRCUMCISION ACT 1985: IMPLEMENTATION

Baroness Jeger asked Her Majesty's Government:

What action has been taken to implement the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985; and how many prosecutions have been brought under this legislation.

Baroness Trumpington: The Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 came into force on 16th September 1985. Information on court proceedings for 1985 is not yet available. The Government have agreed grants totalling £86,000 to voluntary organisations to fund schemes to promote an information and education campaign about the implications of the Act and the potentially adverse effects on health of the practice of female circumcision.

EXERCISE BRAVE DEFENDER

The **Earl of Bessborough** asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will make a further statement about exercise Brave Defender?

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Lord Trefgarne): I informed your Lordships last October that I was placing in the Library an unclassified initial assessment of Exercise Brave Defender. This gave our initial judgment that the exercise had been an overall success and in particular demonstrated that the revised military home defence concept for guarding vital installations worked in practice.

The exercise was not designed to test our total military home defence capability nor could it realistically simulate wartime conditions in the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, further detailed analysis has confirmed our first impressions. We were particularly pleased with the co-operation between all three services, the integration of US forces and the participation of the reserves on such a large scale. The participation of civilian police forces nationwide was particularly useful since it underlined the fact that the primary responsibility for the internal security of the United Kingdom rests with the police. Following the exercise, studies are under way into improvements to mobilisation procedures; refinements in the deployment of static and mobile guard forces in the defence of vital installations; and the training and equipment available for Home Defence Forces.

We intend to build on the foundation of Brave Defender by conducting further military home defence exercises on both a local and national scale, although no date has yet been fixed for any future national exercise.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Lord Glenarthur): I was referring to drift nets and other gill nets. Bag nets, fly nets and other stake nets are the lawful methods of fishing for salmon in Scotland outwith estuary limits. Net and coble is the only permitted method of netting salmon within estuary limits. None of the lawful nets are designed to catch fish by enmeshing them. Accordingly, they do not fall within the terms of the symposium's recommendation and the Government have no proposals to phase them out.

SALMON: RESTOCKING OF SCOTTISH RIVERS

Lord Moran asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they think that the current widespread restocking of Scottish rivers with farmed salmon parr and smolts may damage the genetic distinctiveness and so the long-term viability of salmon stocks in such rivers; and if so, whether they will take steps to halt such restocking until the facts are established and invite the Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon Conservation to study the problem and report on the desirability or otherwise of introducing into rivers stock originating from fish farms.

Lord Glenarthur: The stocking or restocking of salmon rivers is a subject which is being studied by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Research is being carried out at the department's freshwater and marine laboratories into genetic subdivisions in Scottish salmon stocks. In the circumstances I do not at present consider that it would be appropriate to invite the Salmon Advisory Committee to study the subject. Meantime, the advice given is always to restock with indigenous stock only.

From 7th January 1987 it will be an offence under Section 24(1) of the Salmon Act 1986 intentionally to introduce salmon or salmon eggs into inland waters in the area of a district salmon fishery board without the board's consent.

DUICH MOSS SSSI: REPRESENTATIONS

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

Why they did not point out to the combined community councils of Islay and Jura that their view that only "a small number of (Greenland Whitefront) geese occasionally roost in a remote corner" of Duich Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest on Islay is inaccurate, when they responded recently to representations from the combined community councils.

Lord Glenarthur: The Government were aware that this issue had already been discussed between the community councils and the Nature Conservancy Council.

DUICH MOSS SSSI: PEAT EXTRACTION

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

Who the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Scottish Office considers has been responsible for "outside and ignorant interference" in the decisions made by the Scottish Office to allow the extraction of peat from the Duich Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest in Islay.

Lord Glenarthur: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the noble Lord on 30th October.

FORESTRY COMMISSION: REVIEW REPORT

Lord Melchett asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they have received information to the effect that the National Audit Office has now completed its study on the economics of forestry, and whether they have been informed that the study will be published.

Lord Glenarthur: The Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the National Audit Office review of Forestry Commission Objectives and Achievements was published yesterday. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

SCOTTISH VOLUNTARY BODIES: GRANT AID

Lord Mowbray and Stourton asked Her Majesty's Government:

What provision they propose to make in 1987-88 concerning grant aid to voluntary bodies working in the environmental field in Scotland.

Lord Glenarthur: As announced in another place on Friday 12th December by my right honourable friend in reply to a Question by my honourable friend the Member for Edinburgh Central, I am pleased to announce the introduction of a new scheme of grants to take effect in the financial year 1987-88 to assist voluntary bodies carrying out environmental conservation or improvement work in Scotland. The scheme is designed primarily to assist central administrative costs of relevant bodies and will be known as the Special Grants (Environmental) Programme. Up to £150,000 will be available for grant payments in 1987-88. Further details are available from the Scottish Development Department, and will be circulated shortly to relevant bodies.

BLOOD PRODUCTS: SCREENING

Lord Winstanley asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether all stocks of blood products which might be contaminated with AIDS have now been destroyed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Baroness Trumpington): Transmission of AIDS by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has only been established for the blood products Factor VIII and Factor IX. There are no longer stocks of commercial Heat-Treated Factor VIII and Factor IX made from unscreened donations in the United Kingdom. Because they have been shown to be safe, as a result of a rigorous heat-treatment, stocks of Factor VIII and Factor IX made by the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree (BPL) from unscreened donations are still held, although they are not issued for routine treatment. These products have a long shelf-life and limited clinical trials using batches of Factor VIII and Factor IX from these stocks are continuing under close medical supervision.

All Factor VIII and Factor IX distributed from BPL for routine treatment is heat-treated and derived from individually screened donations.

HARLAND AND WOLFF ENTERPRISES: SUGGESTED EXPANSION

Lord Hylton asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will consider extending the terms of reference of Harland and Wolff Enterprises to include all persons being made redundant in Northern Ireland.

Viscount Long: No. This is a specific scheme and its wider extension would not be appropriate.

PRISONERS IN POLICE DETENTION: COSTS

Lord Harris of Greenwich asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is the cost to the Home Office for every prisoner detained in a police cell rather than in prison department accommodation.

The Minister of State, Home Office (The Earl of Caithness): The average cost per prisoner per night of prisoners held in Metropolitan Police cells during the financial year ended 31st March 1986 was approximately £170. The cost represents actual expenditure by the police in staff, accommodation and services, and is determined by various factors—in particular, the number of prisoners and the number of locations at which they are held.

The cost of prisoners held by other police forces varies considerably according to the circumstances. Comprehensive figures could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

PRISONERS IN POLICE DETENTION: STATISTICS

Lord Harris of Greenwich asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is the average number of remand prisoners detained in police cells in each week in 1986,

because of the shortage of prison accommodation; and which were the police forces concerned.

The Earl of Caithness: The average number of prisoners held in police cells in England and Wales each week this year is as follows:

Week-ending	Average per night
4th January.....	5
11th January.....	2
18th January.....	17
25th January.....	19
1st February.....	22
8th February.....	26
15th February.....	38
22nd February.....	33
1st March.....	40
8th March.....	66
15th March.....	85
22nd March.....	51
29th March.....	36
5th April.....	53
12th April.....	63
19th April.....	99
26th April.....	144
3rd May.....	195
10th May.....	173
17th May.....	176
24th May.....	134
31st May.....	116
7th June.....	145
14th June.....	168
21st June.....	188
28th June.....	173
5th July.....	171
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Police forces by which prisoners have been held include the following:

Metropolitan	Hertfordshire
Avon and Somerset	Kent
City of London	Merseyside
Bedfordshire	Northamptonshire
Cambridgeshire	Suffolk
Essex	Surrey
Gloucestershire	Sussex
Greater Manchester	Thames Valley
Leicestershire	West Yorkshire
Hampshire	

Other forces may have held prisoners briefly during the industrial action in April–May but are not centrally recorded.

Viscount Trenchard: My Lords, will my noble friend agree that the reason why our record on training is worse than that of other countries is that we had a period of the best part of two decades prior to 1979 when the atmosphere for private industry was so unfavourable and the profits were so low that research and development and training were both reduced below the level of our competitors abroad? Will he further agree that there is a danger that if the Government do too much in this now that conditions are different British industry will leave it to the Government rather than efficiently increase its training itself?

Lord Lucas of Chilworth: My Lords, my noble friend Lord Trenchard is probably quite right. I do not think that I can agree with him that the reasons he puts forward are the only reasons. I am grateful to him for his second supplementary question because I hope that this exchange of question and answer will be widely reported and that British industry will appreciate that the Government are giving considerable support but cannot do the whole job on their own, and that it is in the interests of British industry itself to invest perhaps something in the order of 3, 4 or 5 per cent. of payroll—not the 0.15 per cent. of turnover currently invested—which will return to them a dividend.

Lord Davies of Leek: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that the implication that there is not enough training in industry does not apply to the British pottery industry, where undoubtedly training is some of the best in the world?

Lord Lucas of Chilworth: My Lords, I am quite sure that the noble Lord, Lord Davies of Leek, is right. There are some sectors of British industry where training is of a continuing high standard; there are other sectors where it lags behind.

Lord Jacques: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that earlier this year the National Institute of Economic and Social Research published the results of some research on the differences between West German companies and British companies? They took companies of the same size, doing almost the same thing. In the case of Germany the productivity was 63 per cent. higher. Among the reasons which they found for that was a complete lack of training in the British; for example, in the case of foremen. Is the Minister aware that the results showed that not a single foreman in the British companies had a certificate for craft qualifications, whereas in the case of the German companies every one of the foremen had a craft certificate, and some of them had a master craftsman's certificate? There is the point, and the sooner we get down to it the better.

Lord Lucas of Chilworth: My Lords, I appreciate the great concern expressed by the rhetorical question of the noble Lord, Lord Jacques, and I take note of all that he said.

Blood: AIDS-Free Products

3.4 p.m.

Lord Ritchie of Dundee: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that all blood products provided to patients are free from contamination by AIDS.

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, we are taking three complementary steps. First, we have mounted a campaign to dissuade people in AIDS high risk groups from donating blood. Secondly, we shall shortly introduce a screening test for all blood donations, once we have evaluated the test kits available. Thirdly, we are pressing ahead with heat treatment of blood products to inactivate AIDS virus where this is technically possible.

Lord Ritchie of Dundee: My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness the Minister for her encouraging reply to my Question. I should like to ask her whether she can give us any idea of what proportion of the cases of AIDS infection which have so far occurred in this country has been directly traceable to contamination from blood products.

Baroness Trumpington: No, my Lords.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, I wonder whether the noble Baroness can say to what extent Britain is now self-sufficient in blood products such as plasma and Factor 8, especially for haemophiliacs, who suffer from the double disadvantage of their own disease and the dangers that the blood which they need is not free from contamination. Does she agree that there seems to be a lower standard of blood collection in the United States, where of course payment is often made? May I ask what the Government are doing to make Britain independent of all but British blood?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, we are already self-sufficient as regards whole blood and blood components needed for ordinary transfusions. We are not yet self-sufficient in blood products such as Factor 8. At present, our blood products laboratory at Elstree makes about 40 per cent. of the Factor 8 required to treat haemophiliacs in England and Wales. The rest is supplied by commercial companies in the United States of America and Europe. The redevelopment at Elstree, costing over £35 million, is proceeding urgently and is on schedule. It is due to come into production in 1986, achieving full capacity by the end of 1986.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, may I ask the Minister whether she is aware that Scotland has a much more efficient blood transfusion service and has been self-sufficient in blood products? Will she say which regional health authorities are lagging behind in their producing of plasma so that they can be self-sufficient in Factor 8?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, no, I cannot give a breakdown, but I was interested to hear what the noble Baroness said about Scotland.

Baroness Faithfull: My Lords, may I ask my noble friend the Minister whether she is aware of the very deep distress and concern felt by haemophiliac families? Is she aware that in certain areas centres of counselling have been set up but because of the lack of resources social services departments are unable to fund them?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, in answer to my noble friend Lady Faithfull, yes, I am aware of the situation. I have recently had talks with some of those splendid doctors who are caring for haemophiliacs. Urgent talks are about to start, which will include the matter of haemophiliacs together with other questions on AIDS.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, I am sorry to press the noble Baroness again but is it not deeply disturbing that we are only 40 per cent. independent for blood products in this country? Is there not something that the Government can do urgently now that AIDS has become really one of the most serious problems that the nation faces?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, I really think I have answered the noble Lord, Lord Ennals. As a past Minister for the DHSS, he should know that perhaps in his day more could have been done to bring up the amount of blood products.

Lord Ennals: My Lords, neither the noble Baroness nor I had heard of AIDS when I was Secretary of State.

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, in answer to that, the amount of blood produced for transfusions has not altered since AIDS.

Baroness Dudley: My Lords, can my noble friend tell us whether there is yet any kind of cure or vaccine for AIDS?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, there is at the moment no cure, but considerable research into this disease is in progress both in this country and abroad. Research in the United Kingdom is being co-ordinated by the Medical Research Council and there are currently five projects under way.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, may I ask the noble Baroness the Minister whether she will write to me, because her colleague said on television on Monday that he was very concerned about the regional health authorities which were lagging behind and I think he knows which ones they are?

Baroness Trumpington: Yes, my Lords.

Lord Ritchie of Dundee: My Lords, may I be permitted to ask the noble Baroness whether, in view of the urgency of the situation and the very costly enterprise that the giving of the forthcoming blood tests to any would-be donors will involve, any additional funding is to be available to the National Health Service and to the blood transfusion service?

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords, we wrote to regional health authorities on 20th February 1985

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asking them to set aside funds in 1985-86 for the introduction of the AIDS screening test in their blood transfusion centres. We would expect regional health authorities to find the money needed from within the £9,505 million made available for the hospital and community health services in 1985-86.

Lord Jenkins of Putney: My Lords, the noble Baroness has failed to answer a number of questions during the course of this period of questioning. Will she tell us whether she has not been briefed or whether she has failed to read the brief?

Female Circumcision: Minister's Comment

3.10 p.m.

Lord Kennet: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Baroness Trumpington was speaking for the Government when on Third Reading of the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Bill (col. 1142) she said, "It is not very difficult to make up one's mind, whether one is in the Chamber or not, as to whether one is in favour of female circumcision or against it", thereby implying that those Lords who voted for Amendment No. 1 on Report were in favour of female circumcision.

Baroness Trumpington: My Lords the Government remain of the view that the noble Lord, Lord Hatch's amendment, which the House decisively rejected, would have damaged the Bill irreparably. My remarks referred to noble Lords who voted against the amendment. It is not for me to comment on the motives of those who voted for it.

Lord Kennet: My Lords, would the noble Baroness agree that she has not retracted the absurd statement that there are 14 Members of this House in favour of the atrocious mutilation known as female circumcision? Is it her own personal opinion and is it the collective opinion of the Government that not to retract an absurd and unpleasant allegation of this sort is not in accordance with the best traditions of this House?

The Lord President of the Council (Viscount Whitelaw): My Lords, it is for me to answer collectively for the Government in this matter. I consider that my noble friend Lady Trumpington has acted perfectly properly in this case. I stand fully by what she has said.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Lord Boyd-Carpenter: My Lords, will my noble friend the Leader of the House say whether it is in accordance with the normal practice of this House to seek to continue by way of Starred Question a debate on which the House spent a great deal of time not very long ago?

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[LORD TREFGARNE.]

United Kingdom Government and the Government of the Argentine over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. I can tell the noble Lord that discussions aimed at solving that dispute are in progress this very day in New York—no; to be precise it was yesterday, and I think they are continuing today—when my honourable friend the Minister of State, Mr. Ridley, is having discussions with an Argentinian delegation, at which discussions Falkland Island councillors are also present.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, does the Minister not realise that, in the meanwhile, the Argentine Government is purporting to license companies to drill on our side of what would be the median line between the Falkland Islands and Argentina in the Magellane Este Block, and that the noble Lord the Foreign Secretary has already said that if companies take up these licences protests will be made? How can the noble Lord say, therefore, that any benefit will accrue to the economy of the Falkland Islands when we continue to claim only the resources out to the three-mile limit?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, as I have endeavoured to make clear not only today but on earlier occasions when noble Lords have asked me about these matters, the solutions to the economic problems which beset the Falkland Islands are to be found in an agreement with the Argentinians when the various threats which have been uttered by both sides and, indeed, the islanders themselves are brought to an end, and all the resources around the islands, including the oil resources, if there are any, and of course the fish resources, to which the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, has drawn attention on several occasions, can be developed and used to the benefit of all concerned.

Lord Morris: My Lords, may I ask my noble friend the Minister whether he can assure your Lordships' House that any potential or current economic benefit in the light of the considerable hydro-carbon discoveries in that particular area will not be eroded in any way by a trade-off with the Argentinian Government?—and when I refer to potential benefits I mean benefits not only to the Falkland Islands but to this country itself.

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, what I cannot do is prejudge the outcome of the negotiations between the United Kingdom Government and the Argentinian Government in this matter, except to say that those negotiations are being conducted with the knowledge and agreement of the Falkland islanders themselves.

The Earl of Lauderdale: My Lords, would my noble friend confirm categorically that the United Kingdom Government alone are the licensing authority for that part of the continental shelf around the Falkland Islands which leads up to the median line?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, I speak without a specific note on that point but as I understand it that is the present position.

Baroness Elles: My Lords, would my noble friend please confirm that, unless something is done by this Government and by the Community to assist in improving the economic situation of the Falkland islanders, the future of the present population is at risk?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, as I have repeatedly said, and as I say again now, the long-term solution to the economic problems of the Falkland islanders is the resolution of the dispute with the Argentinian Government, and that we are working to achieve.

Lord Goronwy-Roberts: My Lords, with the indulgence of the House, may I press this point? While the question of the sovereignty of the islands is not a matter of dispute within this country or in the Falkland Islands, nevertheless one of the two working parties which are now negotiating ways and means of co-operation between the Falklands and the Argentine should surely be looking into the possibilities mentioned by the noble Earl, Lord Lauderdale, among which are the distinct possibilities of very big finds in hydro-carbon oils, and also an extensive area of sea food in that general maritime region.

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, that, of course, is correct; what the noble Lord has mentioned are important elements in the equation which we hope will in due course lead to a solution to this matter. But, in the meantime, as I have repeatedly said and as I say again, the position is that a solution must be found to our dispute with the Argentinians if a way forward for the long term is to be found.

Blood Products: Imports

3.7 p.m.

Lord De Freyne: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps are taken at present to see that blood products imported into Britain are completely free from infection.

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, blood products which are imported for medicinal purposes are subject to licensing under the Medicines Act. The controls over manufacturing and distribution (including import) include provision for checks on the selection of blood donors and the facilities used for collection of the blood, the in-process manufacturing controls and testing of the final product before release.

Lord De Freyne: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for that reply. Can my noble friend tell me how much was spent last year on imported blood products, and the country or countries of origin? May I also ask how he can be sure that these imported blood products are completely free of infection?

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, blood products are not purchased centrally—they are purchased by health authorities—and I regret that up-to-date information on the expenditure on imported products is not available. The country from which these products come is mainly the United States, and some also come from Austria and one or two other European countries. So far as concerns making sure that these products are free from infection, undoubtedly the careful checks which are made at all stages are extremely effective for all except a very few products, one of which is used in the case of haemophiliacs. There is a danger that Factor VIII, which has to be injected into haemophiliacs, can have in it a strain of hepatitis, and at the moment there is no way of testing for these strains. That is the one product as to whose freedom from infection we cannot be absolutely certain. However, every effort is made to see that it is not infected and, although occasionally something may happen, it is not of a serious nature.

Lord Wells-Pestell: My Lords, may I ask the Minister whether the House is really to understand that the Government do not know how much money is spent on importing blood into this country when it seems to be fairly common knowledge that the amount we spend per year is something like £10 million? Are the Government aware that a lot of this blood is bought from people in poor countries where there is a high incidence of blood-transmitted disease and, furthermore, that blood in some countries is obtained from junkies and alcoholics and others who have nothing to sell other than their blood?—and they sell it. Therefore, we have embarked on a very dangerous undertaking.

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, I am sure that that undertaking was embarked upon before this Government came into power and that the noble Lord knows a great deal about this matter. There is no doubt that much of the material which comes to us comes from areas—some, I believe, comes from Mexico—which occasion the making of the most careful checks. I am sure that the noble Lord knows very well how these arrangements are made. It must have been exactly the same in his time.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, why do the Government refuse to sanction the capital expenditure on blood transfusion laboratories in this country which will enable us to meet our own requirements from domestic sources?

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, the long-term aim is that we should be self sufficient in blood products. At the moment, we import less than half of what is needed in the country. The main laboratory is at Elstree and it is now being upgraded. By the end of next year there will be a doubling of the production there.

Lord Auckland: My Lords, can my noble friend give the figures as to the amount of blood products imported in the last 12 months, what they are used for and whether, when they arrive in this country, there is the absolute minimum of delay in the checking of these samples?

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, I do not think that I can answer that very fully but, certainly, immediately anything comes into the country it is checked at all stages. I should come back to the point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Wells-Pestell, where he said that I should know the actual total expenditure on blood products. I cannot give an accurate figure but I would think that it is something of the order of £5 million to £6 million—but that is only an estimate.

Lord Wells-Pestell: My Lords, may I ask whether it is true that the Government have decided to spend in the region of £1½ million to extend the laboratory at Elstree, where, if the laboratory was completely upgraded, I accept that it would cost something like £30 million? But once the laboratory had been completely upgraded and that amount had been spent, it would make it unnecessary for us to buy blood from abroad and we should recover that £30 million within three years as a result.

Lord Cullen of Ashbourne: My Lords, as I have said, we are anxious to get to the point where we are independent of supplies from abroad. As the noble Lord said, we are spending about £1½ million to upgrade Elstree, and that will be completed by the end of next year. We should very much like to be able to spend the £30 million or whatever is needed completely to rebuild or hugely to expand Elstree; but at the moment (for reasons which the noble Lord will understand, since we have met these reasons before now) we are not anxious to do so.

Lord Mackie of Benshie: My Lords, does the noble Lord not agree that it is very important for this House to know whether there are sufficient supplies of blue blood available?

BSC Corporate Plan

Lord Denham: My Lords, at a convenient moment after 3.30 p.m. my noble friend Lord Gowrie will, with leave of the House, repeat a Statement to be made in another place on the British Steel Corporation Corporate Plan.

Iron and Steel (Borrowing Powers) Bill

3.15 p.m.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (The Earl of Gowrie): My Lords, I beg to move, that the Bill now be read a second time. A Second Reading of an Iron and Steel (Borrowing Powers) Bill would normally afford to the Government spokesman an opportunity to review the wider issues affecting the corporation and the steel industry generally. I hope that your Lordships will forgive me if I do not take that opportunity. There are good reasons why I should not do so. The Government are now in a position to announce their decisions on the British Steel Corporation's corporate plan. I shall be repeating a Statement which is to be made by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Industry in another place later this afternoon. That Statement will deal with the