

**Lord Skelmersdale:** My Lords, we are currently spending £3,051 million per year. That is action.

### AIDS Disease: Containment

2.50 p.m.

**Lord Campell 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 whether they are satisfied that the expected onset of the disease AIDS in this country can be contained within the next three years.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Baroness Trumpington):** My Lords, over the next few years there are bound to be new cases of AIDS arising out of those people who are already infected with the virus. In the current state of medical knowledge these cannot be prevented. The Government are however concerned to minimise the number of new people who become infected and action has been taken, and is being taken, to this end.

**Lord Campbell of Croy:** My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friend for that reply. Are the Government yet able to give the following assurances? First, that the blood transfusion service in this country has been made safe from this disease? Secondly, are the Government able to say whether haemophiliacs in particular can have confidence that they will not run the risk of infection?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, we have taken steps whereby we have actively discouraged at risk groups from donating blood. Blood donations are now all tested. As regards haemophiliacs, all blood products for this purpose are now heat treated and therefore no haemophiliacs can be newly infected.

**Baroness Nicol:** My Lords, can the Minister say whether the blood presently in stock and taken from donors before these new regulations came into force is being screened before use?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, the blood which is now being given to patients is screened and is safe.

**Baroness Masham of Ilton:** My Lords, is the Minister aware of the extreme stress under which some of the staff are working in such specialised units as the haemophiliac unit in Newcastle where about 75 per cent. of patients have the AIDS antibody? Is she further aware of the need for counselling? Is she also aware that she would earn the gratitude of many people if she could obtain some specific funds for the staffing of social workers dealing with counselling for so many people who need this service?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, in answer to the many parts of the question put by the noble Baroness, I am aware of the splendid work done at the haemophiliac centre at Newcastle. I am also aware that it has a social worker involved in the care of

haemophiliacs and their families. Counselling is being organised from St. Mary's in London and I should like to pay tribute to the incredibly hard work that has been done in order to get over 180 counsellors trained who will pass on their knowledge of counselling to other people. I do not think that the question of funding is one for me to answer because it is for local authorities and the regional health authorities to deal with that. However, I should like to make one simple point clear. The noble Baroness mentioned 75 per cent. of haemophiliac patients in the area to which she referred. The national percentage is not as high as that; it is 35 per cent.

**Lord Mackie of Benshie:** My Lords, is the noble Baroness in a position to tell the House how much money has been made available for extra research and to whom it has been made available?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, the Government have funded the Medical Research Council which has projects costing nearly £400,000. Other United Kingdom projects are under way in drug companies and universities. The MRC is always willing to consider other projects.

**Lord Wallace of Coslany:** My Lords, is the noble Baroness aware that it is very nice indeed for your Lordships' House to realise that the noble Baroness is giving us reassuring answers on her birthday? May we wish her many happy returns?

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear!

**Lord Campbell of Croy:** My Lords, is my noble friend aware that in the United States very large sums of money have been allocated for research and other programmes connected with AIDS? Are the Government confident that we in Britain will benefit from whatever is discovered as a result of those very expensive programmes?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, we are in constant touch with all bodies and persons wherever they are in the world who are researching and looking into AIDS disease. The Government initially gave £1 million for the original funding for testing and for other outlets for this research programme, and for counselling. The Government have just given a further £1 million and are looking into the need for more funding should that be necessary.

**Lord Sefton of Garston:** My Lords, may I ask the noble Baroness whether or not the Government have given consideration to the possibility of suing some of the commercial organisations in the United States which supplied contaminated blood?

**Baroness Trumpington:** No, my Lords.

**Lord Sefton of Garston:** My Lords, I asked whether the Government would consider giving consideration to recovering some recompense for the damage that has been caused in this country by the commercial organisations in the United States?

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**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, I shall pass the noble Lord's thoughts on to my right honourable friend the Secretary of State.

**Lord Ritchie of Dundee:** My Lords, I hate to cause the noble Baroness any discomfort on her birthday, but may I ask that she answer the question put to her by the noble Baroness, Lady Nicol; namely, whether there is screening of existing stocks of blood?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, the screening of blood procedure came in only last week, so with any blood that was imported before the screening began there was an element of risk. It is not actually blood but plasma which is imported, because we are self-sufficient in blood. The blood in this country now has no risk, as I said. The tests were started only last week, so as from last week all blood is safe.

**Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos:** My Lords, is the plasma which was in stock before screening started to be used?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, routine screening of all blood donations has been introduced, as I said, and all supplies of Factor 8—which is the blood clotting agent needed by haemophiliacs—are heat treated, which therefore makes them safe. No blood coming into this country has any risk attached to it.

**Lord Taylor:** My Lords, is the noble Baroness, on behalf of the Government, prepared to try and tackle AIDS at its source; namely, promiscuity among homosexuals?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, we have made very clear, and publicly, the groups of people at high risk. I can enumerate those or I can write to the noble Lord. I think that the House would probably prefer that I write. We have also given money to the Terrence Higgins Trust, which is very active and very helpful in trying to put the word over to the high risk groups that they should not give blood.

**Baroness Nicol:** My Lords, I am now a little confused about the answer to my supplementary question which the noble Baroness first gave to me, and I am sorry to press her on this matter on the occasion of her birthday. It is not clear to me—it may be my own lack of technical knowledge—whether we can be absolutely certain that every blood transfusion of any kind now given is made with blood which is safe. Is this heat treatment applied at the time of the making of the plasma or before it is turned into whatever is used in the transfusion?

**Baroness Trumpington:** My Lords, a blood transfusion is made from whole blood. Plasma which is given to haemophiliacs is heat treated which thereby makes it safe. I cannot answer whether stocks of blood from the past are being used which have any risk, but I am assured that the risk of being infected by the AIDS virus through receiving a blood transfusion is now very remote indeed since routine screening of all donations started this month. By that I feel it is implied that only routine screened blood will be used for donations. If I am wrong I shall write to the noble Baroness.

**Lord Winstanley:** My Lords, is the supply situation now such that old stocks of blood products which may have been contaminated could now be destroyed?

**Baroness Trumpington:** Yes, my Lords.

### Geneva Negotiations: East-West Relations

3 p.m.

**Lord Jenkins of Putney:** 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 wish the Geneva talks to succeed, and, if so, whether they think that the release of the spy dust stories and the timing of the recent expulsion of Soviet diplomats were conducive to that objective.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Young):** My Lords, we have made clear on many occasions that we want the Geneva negotiations to succeed. The expulsion of Soviet diplomats from London was related solely to considerations of national security. Speculation about the wider effects of the expulsions on East-West relations was clearly not well founded.

**Lord Jenkins of Putney:** My Lords, in spite of a somewhat doubtful note in her reply, may I nevertheless congratulate the noble Baroness on her birthday—which I understand is also today.

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear!

**A noble Lord:** What about Tom?

**Lord Jenkins of Putney:** My Lords, will the noble Baroness accept that there is a feeling abroad, of which I think she must be aware, that the West is going into these negotiations leading up to the summit talks in a doubtful, uncertain and reluctant way? As I understand it, the Prime Minister is going to Washington in order to dispel some of those doubts. Will the noble Baroness agree that if the object of the exercise is to make it clear that the West is equally keen to reduce nuclear arms to a workable level and is embarking upon these talks with enthusiasm and a determination that they will succeed, then in those circumstances the Prime Minister will carry a lot of goodwill with her on her visit to Washington?

**Baroness Young:** My Lords, I should like to thank the noble Lord, Lord Jenkins, for his kind congratulations, and I should like to add mine also to the noble Lord, Lord Ponsonby. May I say that the answer to the second part of his question is, "Yes". We hope that the discussions that will be taking place in November will be successful and will have a constructive outcome.

**Lord Paget of Northampton:** My Lords, will the noble Baroness tell us how the difference between success and failure on these occasions is defined? Will it be any easier to define it at Geneva than it has been at the Bahamas? And does it actually matter very much either way?