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Witness Name: **GRO-B** ANON

Statement No.: WITN4864001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 15 April 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B** ANONYMOUS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 18 March 2021.

I, **GRO-B** will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1954 and my address is **GRO-B**
2. I live with my wife, having been together for over 40 years. I have four grown-up children, one son from my wife and three step children from my wife's previous relationship, who I have brought up as my own. I am virtually retired now, having all but passed my fruit and veg shop on to my son. I was previously a miner, which is relevant to this statement.
3. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the

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treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together.

4. I have chosen to remain anonymous as I have kept my infection with HCV within my family.

Section 2. How Infected

5. I was born in into a mining family. My father was a miner and my elder brother, who is three years older than me, joined him down the pit. My father wanted a different career for me so after leaving school aged 15 I trained as a toolmaker and mechanical engineer.
6. I joined a respected engineering firm and my boss encouraged me to undertake training at college as part of my apprenticeship. I gained a MECP (Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice) qualification and began working in a chain works in South Wales. The company had a contract to supply chains to the National Coal Board at that time.
7. At some point, a friend of mine warned me that the company I worked for would soon go bust. He explained that the boss of the company had been conned by his brother and he would soon go bankrupt. I was subsequently offered a job at the which paid £36 a week, £10 more than my previous job. I worked a couple of weeks notice at the engineering firm and then started work at the pit. This would have been around 1974, when I was 20 or 21.
8. I worked as a fitter at first before undertaking my 'face' training as in coal face. This paid much better when I became a band A miner. I did work all over the pit in multiple roles before this.
9. On 21 October 1981, I was working on the 'drams', which were carriages on rails that were used to transport 'muck' – which was what was surrounding the coal - away from the face. I was around half a mile underground, at one of the deepest points of the mine. I was working on

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the drams when one of the drams came off the rails and went over my right foot.

10. My right foot was caught under the 'dram' and I was dragged along the rails upon which the 'dram' ran. I screamed down to the other worker behind me to stop the 'drams'. Due to faulty equipment, the wire that ran alongside the dram's rail was missing, which meant my colleague was unable to stop the 'drams' until reaching another point some 10 metres or so away.
11. After my colleague stopped the 'drams', my foot came out from underneath the dram. When it came out, the steel cap of my boot was completely flattened and my foot was crushed. My colleague called the trainee who was at the back of the row of 'drams' to bring me an injection of morphine from out of the first aid box. I remember there being a lot of blood coming from out of my boot and my foot continued to bleed heavily. When the trainee arrived, I refused the injection of morphine as I am scared of needles and was worried he would inject it in the wrong place.
12. My colleagues went to the phone and called for help. They contacted the 'ambulance men' on site above ground and said that I had been involved in a bad accident. The 'ambulance men' were the medics that were always on standby above in the medical centre. Some other workers rushed down to attend to me, while we waited for the medics. The medics would have taken approximately 2 minutes to come down in the mine shaft lift. However, it was around a 15 or 20 minute walk from where the mine shaft came down to where I had been hit by the 'dram'.
13. My colleagues with me near the 'drams' then put me on a stretcher and started making their way with me to meet the medics halfway. Other workers joined in to take over carrying the stretcher with me in it. As soon as the ambulance men arrived I was given gas and air, which eased the pain to a certain extent. I would describe it as like having had a good few beers, but the pain was still there. It was without doubt the worse pain I have ever experienced.

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14. When I arrived at the top, above ground, my boot was cut off my right foot in the medical centre. The boot was completely saturated and full of blood. My big toe was hanging off and remained connected by a piece of skin at the back. Blood was still oozing out of my big toe, and the two toes immediately next to it were crushed.
15. After this, the ambulance men put a pad over my foot to try and stop the bleeding. They then bandaged the foot up and tried to wash the coal dust off me as best they could. An ambulance arrived soon afterwards and I remember the blood was still coming out through the bandage.
16. I was rushed to Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil. I believe I arrived around 6pm, and the accident must have happened around 4.30pm. I remember that I was on an afternoon shift that lasted from 1pm to 8.15pm.
17. Prince Charles Hospital is around miles from the pit. I remember upon my arrival, that the ambulance men informed the doctors that I would need a blood transfusion as I had lost a lot of blood both in the pit and in the medical centre.
18. At the hospital I was put on a bed and the ambulance man fetched my clean clothes for me from my locker. I was then finally given a morphine injection. I believe the hospital notified my sister about the accident, who then told my wife.
19. I was attended to at first by an orthopaedic surgeon. He undid the bandages and my toe was still bleeding. It was barely hanging on and this led to an argument between the orthopaedic surgeon and another surgeon. One surgeon believed that they should cut the skin off and the toe should be amputated, whereas the other believed they should sew it back on.
20. As they were unable to agree on what to do, one of the surgeons phoned Dr John Homble, who was the top surgeon at Prince Charles Hospital.

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Dr Homble instructed that they should try and sow my toe back to my foot. After this decision had been made, I was administered with general anaesthetic and taken into theatre for the operation. I remember being told that I needed a blood transfusion as I had lost over two pints of blood.

21. I came around from the operation around 10pm that night to find my toe had been sown back on. I had plaster fitted up to my knee and was kept in hospital for over a week. I was then discharged with crutches and told not to put any weight on foot at all.
22. I went back to Prince Charles Hospital every month or so, and after 6 months the plaster was removed. I then had around 3 months of physiotherapy to build back the strength in my right foot.
23. About 11 months after the accident, I returned to work back down the pit. If I had not gone back within 12 months I would have lost my job. I could not afford for this to happen but I also enjoyed working and I wanted to get back down the pit.
24. On my first day back, I was down at the coal face and limping badly. A colleague asked me what was up and I said my foot was in agony. He offered to have a look at it, so he took the boot off and my foot had swollen up like a balloon.
25. Financially, during the 11 months when I was off work I had been reliant on a combination of Social Security sickness benefit and the Coal Board making up the rest of my basic wages up to 80% of what they would be if able to work. I had lost 20% of my flat wages and I could no longer work overtime, which was always on offer. Quite clearly, having walked approximately 2 miles to the face in the pit, my foot could not deal with the pressure.
26. I went to see my GP who gave me a further sicknote. I remember him saying that I couldn't work with my foot in that condition. I was off sick

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for 2 weeks before going back to see my GP. The swelling had died down somewhat, but he still signed me off for a further month.

27. After another month off, I tried to go back to work but I was still in agony. I had a conversation with my manager and he said that I had to be put on light duties. I was given a task, which was a light duties job but represented a drop in wages as it was grade B, not grade A.
28. I was forced to accept this and I worked there for a while, but my foot continued to play up. I was on and off the sick for a while before my GP referred me back to Dr Homble. My GP knew that something wasn't right and believed I would need another operation.
29. I saw Dr John Homble at Prince Charles Hospital where he undertook a number of x-rays. After this he said that I needed an operation to fuse the toe using two pins. I asked him if he could do this as soon as possible as I needed to work to provide for my family, and he put me on the urgent list.
30. I had the operation within a month, and my foot was in plaster for another 6 months. This was followed by physiotherapy for an additional 6 or 7 weeks before I was able to work again. I was walking on a stick to relieve some of the pressure on my foot but it still didn't feel right, even when working on light duties.
31. I eventually went back to my GP and was referred to Dr Homble again. Dr Homble sent me to a private hospital where they put my toe in an advanced scanning machine. The doctor moved my toe around and observed it on a big screen. He could see the fusing and said it still wasn't properly fixed. He subsequently sent a report to Dr Homble and told me that I would need another operation.
32. Consequently, I had a second corrective operation at Prince Charles Hospital. I was again in plaster for 6 months and had another 6 weeks of physiotherapy before returning to work. My foot continued to cause me grief and I was forced to go back on the sick.

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33. After this I went to see my manager. He knew I had been a good worker who had suffered an unfortunate accident. My manager arranged for me to see the Coal Board doctor. This doctor advised me that the only other option now was to take the toe off but that this would have caused me to lose my balance, causing another problem
34. I decided immediately against having my toe amputated and I continued to walk with a stick. The Coal Board doctor said that I wasn't fit to go underground again and he said I would be pensioned off. Because I had put in a legal claim for negligence against the Coal Board owing to the faulty equipment that prevented the alarm from being raised sooner at the time of my accident. The Coal Board doctor saw that I had instigated this claim and decided to 'finish' me for 12 months whilst this legal claim was ongoing. This meant that the termination of my employment on medical grounds was suspended for a year.
35. I saw him again after 12 months but my legal claim was still ongoing. As a result, he extended the suspension of my retirement for a further 12 months pending the outcome of the legal action. I was ultimately paid £12,000 as a result of the negligence claim. I then went back to see the Coal Board doctor who 'finished' me for good. I received my Mine Workers Pensions Scheme payout, which was either £2,000 or £3,000, and I received a further £20 a week. It took over 4 years from the time of my accident in October 1981 for me to finally be signed off from the mining company around 1984 or 1985.
36. After this I set up a general store in my local area, having taken a mortgage out on the shop. I then decided to set up a fruit and veg shop. My life continued in this way until the early 2000s when I began to feel generally unwell. I was constantly under the weather, tired and lacking in energy. I noticed that my urine was a dark colour and my eyes and skin had a yellow tinge.

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37. I went to see my GP and he said that it might be a problem with my liver. He asked me about my drinking and I said, truthfully, that I had never been a big drinker and only really drank moderately and occasionally.
38. My GP then advised me to go to a drop in centre in GRO-B This was where drug addicts and alcoholics would go for support and treatment. When I complained to him that I was not alcoholic and had never taken drugs, he said it would be best to go there as I would get tested and it would be a quicker process.
39. I attended the Drug Aid centre where I had blood tests. I was asked if I was a drinker and I said no, you can phone my wife and ask her. The Drug Aid centre worker said that she knew it wasn't alcohol and she believed something was wrong. They gave me tablets to assist my liver and told me not to drink alcohol. I went there back and forth for a while.
40. I was eventually referred to a liver specialist as they believed something more serious could be wrong. I was marked as urgent because my blood tests were showing issues with my liver function.
41. I was referred to Dr Dra, whose name I am unsure how to spell, the top liver specialist at Prince Charles Hospital. My wife came with me to the appointment and I was told I needed a liver biopsy. A month or two after this I went back to Prince Charles Hospital for the liver biopsy.
42. The liver biopsy was meant to be quick and I was only meant to remain in hospital for one night afterwards, at the most. However, the biopsy did not go smoothly. The doctor performing the biopsy used a needle around a foot long with a tube to extract a piece of my liver. The first time he failed to extract anything from my liver, so he tried again using the same needle. Again, this was unsuccessful.
43. Whilst I was screaming in agony, the doctor tried another needle and, on the third attempt, was successful in performing the biopsy on my liver. I was attended to by another doctor after the biopsy who said that I should

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be kept in hospital for a couple of days. I was given painkillers and after 3 days I was discharged.

44. I returned to Prince Charles Hospital a few weeks later with my wife where I was told by Dr Dra that I had HCV. I knew that this had something to do with the liver but I immediately asked him how on earth I had got that. He said that the main cause was infected blood and he knew that I had received a blood transfusion during my operation in October 1981 after the accident with my foot. Dr Dra also asked if I had ever injected drugs and I said that I hadn't, and in fact I had refused an injection of morphine after my accident owing to my fear of needles. I have only ever had injections for medical reasons such as vaccinations or medication.
45. After my diagnosis I asked Dr Dra what to do now. He said that they did not do treatment at Prince Charles Hospital, but they specialise in this at Royal Glamorgan Hospital. I asked him what would be involved and he said that it wasn't a very pleasant experience. He asked if I would like to be referred and I said that I would.
46. A few weeks or months later, I received a phone call from the Royal Glamorgan Hospital inviting me to an appointment. I was seen by Dr Angela Edwards who was in charge of the department at the time. I saw her twice before she went on maternity leave and I was then seen by Dr Pam Hams.
47. Dr Hams told me that my HCV was most likely caused by infected blood received either as a result of my accident or during my operation to save my big toe in 1981. She offered me a course of treatment that I began in the mid 2000s, to the best of my memory. This consisted of a weekly injection into my stomach, along with 4 or 5 tablets taken daily. I cannot remember the names of the drugs. At first I received the injection at the hospital before they showed me how to do this myself. I didn't enjoy this but I was determined to get better, so I tolerated it.

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48. Dr Hams warned me that the treatment would make me feel very ill. I was given leaflets listing the side-effects and what the medication entailed. I started the treatment around 6 weeks after my diagnosis and I was told that it could last for either 6 or 12 months.

49. After having the injection, which I did on a Tuesday, I was terrible for the following two days. I was nasty, angry and argumentative, which is completely out of character for me. I could not control my anger and I used to snap at my wife and my sister who worked in my shop, for no reason. My wife used to say to me that I should take my son to Hereford after a couple of days of taking the injection as she could not cope with my behaviour.

50. I knew I had to take these injections but I didn't like the person it made me. I was unable to work during the course of treatment, so my wife and sister were forced to help out at the shop. I also became depressed and lost all energy and motivation.

51. During the treatment I went to the Royal Glamorgan Hospital every 3 weeks for tests. My viral load was showing signs of decreasing and, after 6 months of treatment, they told me that I had cleared the HCV. I was tested a further 6 months afterwards and I was again told that I was fine and the HCV had not returned. After this I believe I was discharged from the care of Dr Hams.

Section 3. Other Infections

52. I did not receive any other infections as a result of receiving an infected blood transfusion after my accident in October 1981.

Section 4. Consent

53. I believe that I consented to being tested and treated for HCV.

54. I signed a number of forms consenting to the liver biopsy procedure. I believe that these forms indemnified the hospital against legal action in case anything went wrong with the procedure.

Section 5. Impact

55. The greatest impact of my infection with HCV has undoubtedly been the treatment I received. This was particularly difficult for my wife and cannot have been a nice experience for her. It affected our relationship as she couldn't bear to see me after the injection due to the fear of how it would make me react.

56. For a number of years before I was diagnosed I felt generally unwell but had no idea why. I put off going to the doctors as I was busy working and running the fruit and veg shop. I began to feel depressed and tired and this forced me to finally seek answers.

57. The treatment itself made me lose a lot of my sense of taste and smell, and this persists even now. Thankfully the treatment was successful, though I was aware that I could develop liver cancer and die if it did not work. My liver is fine now, yet I still don't drink alcohol, not even at Christmas or on my birthday. I used to enjoy the occasional beer but I cannot risk the effects this would have on my liver.

58. Once diagnosed with HCV I had to have my own things such as cutlery, towels, toothpaste and my clothes were washed separately. I felt like a leper, even though unbeknown to anyone I had had the virus for years.

59. With regard to my children, once I had been diagnosed I wouldn't touch them or hug/cuddle them. This obviously had an effect on our normal relationships.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

60. I have not faced any real difficulties in obtaining treatment as a result of my infection with HCV. In hindsight, I was probably treated differently to other patients at the dentist. I was always offered a late appointment and the nurses and dentists wore noticeably more protective equipment. This was the same on one occasion when I saw a chiroprapist.

61. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with HCV.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

62. Dr Hams told me about the Skipton Fund soon after being diagnosed with HCV. Dr Hams gave me the forms and helped me in completing the application. I believe that I applied to the Skipton Fund around 2007.

63. My application was rejected by the Skipton Fund because there was no record of me having received a blood transfusion. Upon receiving this letter, I phoned Dr Hams at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital and asked her what to do. She advised me to seek legal advice, but I did not follow this up. I wanted to pursue this but my wife said I should leave it, so I did. I do not believe that I applied for my medical records from Prince Charles Hospital as I assumed they would have been destroyed.

Section 8. Other Issues

64. I have gone through a lot and it has affected my life, so I was very disappointed to be rejected by the Skipton Fund. I have been impacted enormously by my HCV treatment. I do not understand why my blood transfusion has not been recorded, and I believe that I should receive compensation for what has happened to me.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

15-4-2021