

PRESS RELEASE

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NO COMMERCIAL MANAGEMENT OF BLOOD PRODUCTS LABORATORY

Modernisation programme already under way says Dr Vaughan

After visiting at a blood donor session at Gestetner in North London, Dr Gerard Vaughan, Minister of Health said today:

"We sometimes take our Blood Transfusion Service for granted. We should not do this. We have a very high quality service in this country because the blood is donated by volunteers anxious to give their blood to help others. We are proud of this system and are determined to maintain it.

I know too how important it is that employers encourage their staff to give blood. Gestetner have offered to double the number of sessions they arrange. I congratulate the company and I hope other companies will do the same.

Blood saves lives. The demand for blood and its products is increasing all the time. We do not have sufficient for all our needs, especially when it comes to some special conditions such as haemophilia. We still have to buy much of our anti-haemophilia factor from overseas because we cannot manufacture enough at our own laboratory - the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree.

Earlier this year the Government agreed to spend £1½ million on modernising the Blood Products Laboratory. The first stage of this will come into use next week. When the work is complete in 1982 the laboratory will be able to produce almost twice the amount of anti-haemophilia factor that it can now. But this will still not be enough and we are considering how best to develop the laboratory further.

There have been rumours that we intend to hand the laboratory over to a commercial company to run. This is not so. We thought it only right to examine a number of different ways of developing the laboratory, including possibly bringing in commercial management. But we have decided against this.

I referred earlier to the increasing demand for blood. I would like to say publicly that we need every donation we can get. So please keep up the good work."