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Lords Written

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Contaminated Blood: Judgment

Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 5 April (*WA 130*), whether their response to Mr Justice Burton's judgment in the High Court on 26 March concerning contaminated blood supplied by the National Blood Authority will be reported first to Parliament. [HL1708]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government have decided not to seek leave to appeal against the judgment given by Mr Justice Burton on 26 March.

Although an appeal would have provided an opportunity to seek clarification on some aspects of the judgment that may have a bearing on the future liability of National Health Service bodies, the Government did not wish to subject the claimants to a further period of uncertainty while the appeal was under way.

The Government are now focusing on the implications of this judgment, which will take time to consider.

PQ 2053/2000/2001

HOUSE OF LORDS

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN ANSWER

23/4/01

The Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

Further to the Written Answer by the Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 5th April (WA 130), whether their response to Mr Justice Burton's judgment in the High Court on 26th March concerning contaminated blood supplied by the National Blood Authority will be reported first to Parliament. (HL1708)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Hunt of Kings Heath):

The Government have decided not to seek leave to Appeal against the Judgement given by Mr Justice Burton on 26th March.

Although an appeal would have provided an opportunity to seek clarification on some aspects of the judgement that may have a bearing on the future liability of National Health Service bodies, the Government did not wish to subject the claimants to a further period of uncertainty whilst the appeal was underway.

The Government are now focussing on the implications of this Judgement, which will take time to consider.

GRO-C

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Baroness Hayman): On 30 March, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) considered the independent assessment from DNV Consulting of the public health risk due to BSE infectivity from burning cattle during the present foot and mouth disease outbreak. This assessment was placed in the Libraries of the House on 15 March. Taking account of comments from SEAC and the Environment Agency, this assessment has been revised to include the possible BSE risks from burying cattle carcasses on farm and in landfill. Copies of this 1 April revision of the DNV risk assessment have been placed in the Libraries of the House, and are today being published on the MAFF Foot and Mouth Disease Internet site.

SEAC advised that the risk from burning (or burying) cattle born on or after August 1996 would be at least 400 times lower than the risk from burning (or burying) a similar number of cattle born before this date. In the light of SEAC's advice, the Environment Agency is advising that, depending on local hydrogeological and other factors and subject to site specific risk assessments, cattle born on or after 1 August 1996 may be buried.

Full Employment

Lord Greaves asked Her Majesty's Government:

What is their definition of "full employment".

[HL1362]

The Minister of State, Department for Education and Employment (Baroness Blackstone): The Government's Green Paper, *Towards full employment in a modern society*, sets out the modern definition of full employment as employment opportunity for all, all over the UK. The Government have set ambitious targets for the end of the decade: a higher percentage of people in employment than ever before; an increase in the lone parent employment rate to 70 per cent; and a narrower gap in the employment rates for minority ethnic groups, disabled people and other disadvantaged groups and areas.

However, this is only a start. Full employment is not a fixed number. Higher, sustainable, levels of employment can be achieved by continuing to run a strong, stable economy; reforming tax and benefits to make work pay; improving education and skills; and opening up jobs to all sections of society by offering more help and more choices to those facing the greatest disadvantage—especially young people, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents and people from minority ethnic groups.

Embryonic Tissue: Applications for Use in Research into Parkinson's Disease

The Duke of Montrose asked Her Majesty's Government:

How many applications there have been to experiment with the use of specially created embryonic stem cell tissue in the treatment of

Parkinson's disease and Huntington's chorea since 22 January; and in what ways it is proposed to use the embryonic tissues; and [HL1484]

Whether they are aware of any experiments with the use of specially created embryonic stem cell tissue in the treatment of Parkinson's disease and Huntington's chorea having been undertaken in the United Kingdom before 22 January. [HL1485]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Hunt of Kings Heath): Any research in the United Kingdom involving the use of embryos to derive stem cells can only be carried out under licence from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) under the strict conditions contained in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Research Purposes) Regulations 2001 permit the use of embryos in research for Parkinson's disease and Huntington's disease. The HFEA has not received any licence application for such research, but we understand that applications are being prepared.

Contaminated Blood: Judgment

Lord Morris of Manchester asked Her Majesty's Government:

When they expect to be able to respond to Mr Justice Burton's judgment in the High Court on 26 March concerning contaminated blood supplied by the National Blood Authority; and whether their response will be reported first to Parliament.

[HL1602]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government are continuing to consider the wider implications of the High Court judgment. The Government's response will be reported to Parliament.

Supermarkets and Suppliers: Code of Practice

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer asked Her Majesty's Government:

When they expect the code of practice which is to be followed by supermarkets when dealing with suppliers to take effect; and who will enforce it.

[HL1542]

Lord MacIntosh of Haringey: The Office of Fair Trading is currently consulting with supermarkets and the representatives of suppliers on a draft of the code of practice. The Director General will advise the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the terms of the code of practice on the completion of this consultation.

The supermarkets will be expected to give binding undertakings to abide by the code finally agreed. The Office of Fair Trading is responsible for monitoring compliance with undertakings given under the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Lord Morris is referring to the reply given in PQ 1958.

— see Flag A

The Hepatitis C litigation against the National Blood Authority (NBA) was brought, under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, on behalf of 111 people infected with hepatitis C through blood transfusions prior to the introduction of a blood screening test in September 1991.

On 26 March 2001 Mr Justice Burton found in favour of the claimants. The Haemophilia Society (Lord Morris is President) are using this Judgement to press their case for compensation. The Government decided not to offer financial assistance to haemophilia patients infected with hepatitis C through blood products. It concluded that an exception could not be made to the general rule that compensation or financial help is only given when the National Health Service, or individuals working in it, have been at fault.

The Judgement does not affect this decision as the Consumer Protection Act did not come into force until March 1988.

SofS decided on 6 April that leave to appeal against the Judgement should not be sought. Official are currently looking at the wider implications of the Judgement.