

Sunday, 19th May 1991

The Observer P. 10

Waldegrave under pressure over HIV transfusion cases

Susan Young and Sarah Lonsdale

SOLICITORS acting for the 'forgotten Aids victims' of the NHS have written to Health Secretary William Waldegrave demanding government compensation for their clients now that haemophiliacs have received payments.

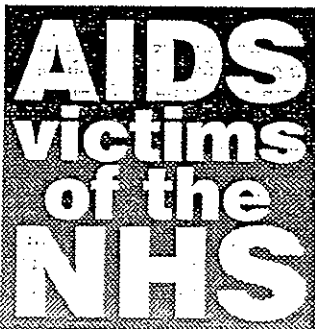
In a letter sent to Mr Waldegrave this weekend, on behalf of the Transfusion Aids Solicitors Group, Merseyside lawyer Graham Ross argues: 'Requests have been made for the previous payment to haemophiliacs to be extended to the whole blood victims, only to be refused.'

'I had hoped that with the final settlement of the case of my haemophiliac clients, the comparatively small additional cost of extending compensation to the transfusion victims would be considered a fair and proper burden on public funds.'

He was dismayed to read in *The Observer* that a Department of Health spokesman was still quoting the usual argument against payment to non-haemophilia victims — that they were not suffering from a hereditary disease. Mr Ross said the argument was 'wholly illogical'.

Up to 400 NHS patients who received life-saving blood transfusions between 1981 and 1986 for the treatment of leukaemia, aplastic anaemia and complications at childbirth are thought to have been infected with HIV, the Aids virus. So far, 77 cases are known to the Department of Health.

Their solicitors are now pressing the Government to



**AIDS
victims
of the
NHS**

match the payments of between £21,500 and £60,500 received by haemophiliacs.

The eight lawyers are urging their clients to get their constituency MPs to step up pressure on the Government. They also want MPs to sign Labour Scottish health spokesman Sam Galbraith's early day motion calling on the Government 'to follow the logic' of the haemophiliac decision. The solicitors will be meeting a cross-party group of MPs sympathetic to their cause in the next few days.

Mr Ross adds in his letter to Mr Waldegrave that some of his clients have died without knowing whether their families would benefit from a pay-out. 'Time is pressing on. My clients' levels of immunity to infection continue to drop as time goes by. For most of them, bad news only follows bad news. For once, let me give them some good news.'

'I am convinced there is a total consensus in this country that people expect their Government to show compassion to these people and give them compensation. It's their money: the Government is charged with spending.'

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Edinburgh Evening News P. 11

Blood stop: The south east Scotland Blood Transfusion Service will be at Portobello Town Hall on Monday, May 27.