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Whitehall alert over U.S. 'buy blood' plan

by KEITH RENSHAW

AMERICAN medical firms are inquiring about setting up "Buy Your Blood" collection points in Britain that could also involve the buying of human organs for spare parts surgery.

The purchased British blood would be sold on the growing international market, including America itself.

In Britain the giving of blood and organs is entirely voluntary and unpaid and the envy of most other countries.

else they would need to do to establish a case for coming to Britain.

A number of firms, not all of them American, are looking for bases in the big European market.

Large sums of cash could be involved if payment for blood were ever permitted in Britain as it is in America.

One American woman of a rare blood group earned £120,000 by selling her blood at the rate of six pints a month over two years.

In Britain such donors are recognised by special, golden heart awards—but no cash.

The American interest in Britain comes against the background of the need to

up-date and expand the National Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree, Herts.

It is estimated that upwards of £20 million is needed to put the laboratory on a modern footing for meeting Britain's requirements. But Government spending curbs are being applied.

Dr Vaughan is investigating the possibility of introducing British drug firms into the problem. They would put up badly needed cash and join in a partnership with the laboratory.

There would be no question of freely given British blood being used for any future commercial developments at the laboratory.

Partnership

Dr Gerard Vaughan, the Health Minister, is determined not to permit any undermining of Britain's voluntary system and is prepared to bring in new laws to prevent this incursion if the Americans decide to go ahead.

New laws would be necessary because, say Whitehall experts, there is nothing at present to prevent the gathering of blood and the manufacture of blood products being put on a business basis.

All incoming foreign firms would need to do is to comply with planning and medical inspection regulations. The Americans are asking about these regulations and what

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