

Infected Blood Inquiry

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Waldegrave gets the ring fence moved.

William Waldegrave served in many roles in government but his evidence is focused on his time as Secretary of State for Health between 1990 and 1992.

He understood the special role of the CMO and their freedom to talk directly to the public on public health issues.

However, ministers should always question and test scientific advice... sometimes dissident scientists were proved to be right.

His brief from Mrs Thatcher was clear.

“Kenneth has stirred them all up. I want you to calm them all down”.

He had always thought that the Clarke reforms were well founded.

On almost his first day in office he was briefed on the government position on the HIV/Haemophilia litigation.

The legal advice was that the plaintiffs claim would not succeed. There had been no negligence.

His instincts were to settle out of court if that was possible without conceding on the principle that the

NHS had not been negligent. He wanted to provide some further support to injured patients and their families.

The Prime Minister took a different view.

Mrs Thatcher wanted the issue settled in Court. In the event the plaintiff's solicitors proposed a settlement which the government could accept.

In the view of Waldegrave;

“this was the right thing to do”.

The Department of Health would bear some of the cost but the major contribution would come from Treasury reserves. [£42m to the Macfarlane Trust on top of the £34m already granted].

There were last minute haggles with the Treasury about costs which Waldegrave was “vexed” about.

Holding the ring fence around the settlement proved to be difficult.

Other groups also sought support including those who had been

infected by skin grafts and organ transplants.

The Treasury insisted that the settlement should not be extended.

Waldegrave stuck to his guns, despite the advice from senior officials, and eventually with the support of John Major, by now PM...

... had the ring fence moved to incorporate a few hundred additional cases.

We finish with an exchange about facts, spin and lies.

This was thoughtful measured evidence and for a politician refreshingly frank and straightforward.

