

SNBTS DOCUMENT REQUEST No:

Penrose Inquiry**2011/00130****Witness Statement: Resignation as Consultant Adviser to SHHD 24 March 1986****John Cash**

It might be helpful to the Inquiry team to know that March 1986 was the second time I offered my resignation as SHHD Consultant Adviser in Blood Transfusion.

To the best of recollection the first occasion was in 1983, I presume soon after the conversations I had with Dr Reid (CMO, Scotland), which are recorded in my B2 Witness Statement (Item 9). I regret I have no records of this resignation event as all of the relevant documents were destroyed in 1992. But I do recall that Dr Reid persuaded me to continue as Consultant Adviser and that this was acknowledged in a generous letter I received from Mr Rennie (Secretary of SHHD). In 1983 the primary problems I had stemmed from Dr Scott's involvement in a serious industrial action in the SEBTS in early 1980. As I recall the conflict arose following the Secretary of State for Health (Dr Vaughan) announcing that local agreements for work/payment which were outside the Whitley Council terms must be abandoned (1 and 2). SEBTS had had such an agreement for its emergency/ out of hours cross matching service that had been in place for more than 15 years, which involved technical staff sleeping in the department, was significantly less costly than the Whitley Council arrangements but, most importantly, gave a substantially safer patient service. The SEBTS medical staff joined forces with the senior technical staff in this industrial dispute and I gave my active support to Dr McClelland and his team.

After weeks of acrimonious exchanges, and soon after I invited the GMC to intervene, the dispute ended abruptly when SHHD totally and publically withdrew from its position. Whilst, no doubt, this was a victory for common sense and patient safety, in my view, both at the time and thereafter, it was the cause of an almost complete disruption in professional relations between some important and senior members of SHHD's medical team and me, which I suspect lasted for more than a decade. I took the view in 1983 that my conduct in this industrial dispute may have not been appropriate for a consultant adviser to SHHD, that my professional relationship with the responsible DCMO had been irreparably damaged and

that as we were about to address the consequences of HIV in our donor panels I should offer to step down and allow SHHD colleagues to make a fresh start. Dr Reid did not agree with this position and persuaded me to withdraw my resignation.

Sometime in the first weeks of March 1986 I requested a meeting with Hugh Morrison (SHHD Under-Secretary with responsibility for the SNBTS). At this meeting I listed a series of events which I believed demonstrated that the SNBTS was, to its detriment, increasingly being caught up in the politically controlled management chaos of the NBTS. I advised Hugh that I believed it was time for someone to stand up and speak out, and regrettably that had to be me. I further advised how I intended to do this by way of a publication in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) and that as I intended to begin drafting this as soon as possible I felt obliged to tender my resignation as consultant adviser to SHHD with immediate effect (3). I further advised Mr Morrison that he would receive a copy of the manuscript I had lodged with the BMJ editor in good time for him and his colleagues to prepare for any subsequent media interest. In due course this promise was delivered (4) and my concerns were published in the BMJ (5).

References

1. Scrutator, British Medical Journal 8 March 1980 page 729 (C3-1).
2. Letter from Professor Whitby in British Medical Journal 22 March 1980, page 869 (C3-1a).
3. Letter from JDC to Mr Reid (SHHD) dated 24 March 1986 (C3-1b) (SNB.011.2544).
4. Letter to Hugh Morrison from JDC dated 1 September 1987 (B3-1b)
5. British Medical Journal, Leader 12 September 1987 page 617 (C3-1c)

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