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sometimes lose money in the way in which the noble Baroness has described. However, they can protect themselves against this loss in a variety of ways. The noble Baroness and your Lordships will be fascinated to see the leaflet that is available which sets everything out in clear and concise terms as to the steps that consumers should take in the event of the misfortune described by the noble Baroness.

Baroness Burton of Coventry: My Lords, but that is not getting us anywhere except in a very long time. We know about the Cork report. Will the Minister say whether there is any chance that some action might be taken soon? Am I not correct in believing that prior to the general election it was the intention of the Department of Trade that some action would be taken to help consumers in this matter? Could he inquire whether the insolvency department in the Department of Trade and Industry is given information about the malpractices that occur and is definitely dealing with them?

Lord Lyell: My Lords, the insolvency department is receiving information about malpractices; but it believes that these problems should be dealt with under the entire umbrella of the Cork report as a whole. I will inquire whether there are any other details that I can ascertain for the noble Baroness and I will write to her.

Baroness Elliot of Harwood: My Lords, does the noble Lord realise that there is great urgency about this matter? Unfortunately, one of the things that result from the present recession is the fact that many companies go out of business suddenly without warning and people who are dealing with them suddenly find that the companies have heavy debts which they are unable to pay. It is a tremendously urgent matter and unfortunately is one of the consequences of the present recession. I hope that the Government realise that this is something that could be dealt with more swiftly and better, because the problem is getting worse.

Lord Lyell: My Lords, the Government appreciate the urgency of the problem. I am sure that my noble friend and the noble Baroness, Lady Burton, will appreciate that this entire problem is part of a major jigsaw in insolvency, and that jigsaw covers the Cork report and one or two other things. But I take note of the urgency and the comments of my noble friend and the eternal vigilance of the noble Baroness.

Lord Mishcon: My Lords, the Minister has just referred to the jigsaw of the Cork report and an examination of insolvency. Does he realise that the Government take an extremely long time to solve puzzles and this happens to be one of them? Is he aware that a considerable amount of dust has accumulated on the Cork report which is in the library of the Secretary of State? Will he kindly dust off the report and tell us when we are likely to see action in regard to it?

Lord Lyell: My Lords, the noble Lord is always very flattering to me when he refers to legal matters. I have my copy of the Cork report. I shall forbear from

reading to the noble Lord and to your Lordships the fascinating paragraph 1055 that covers much of the ground we have been over this afternoon. The noble Lord and your Lordships will appreciate that this massive report—I stress it is only part of the jigsaw covering the problems raised by the noble Baroness, and others—was a result of five years of comprehensive study of the whole of the law covering insolvency and other problems. But I will bring the concern of the noble Lord to my right honourable friend.

Lord Molloy: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that there is another element that I would ask him to consider? Many of the bankruptcies that take place are quite genuine in these hard times. People have no desire to defraud or cheat. Sometimes it happens; but there is another element where firms are created to go bankrupt and they work this racket very skilfully. They are aided—lamentably I have to say—by the national press and various magazines. Will the noble Lord be prepared to take on board and consider this element?

Lord Lyell: My Lords, not only have I taken it on board, but the Government and the Central Office of Information have also taken it on board. At a later stage I may discuss this with the noble Lord, I have a valuable little leaflet. If any of your Lordships wish to read it we can make it available in the Library.

Baroness Burton of Coventry: My Lords, I hope that all those people will take on board one simple question. Looking at the complicated jigsaw, may I ask the Minister whether he will look into the matter and answer a Question after the Recess about whether the Government consider it possible that one section might be taken out of the Cork report so that the problems affecting private consumers over insolvency might be dealt with?

Lord Lyell: As of today, my Lords, I could not give the noble Baroness that guarantee; but if the noble Baroness will study Chapter 22 of the Cork report and start at paragraph 1048, I think she will find the answers and, indeed, answers to many other questions germane to the points she has raised this afternoon contained in a sympathetic statement by Mr. Justice Megarry, as he then was. She will find that the Cork report covers that point. It suggests, among other things, that it is extremely difficult to separate the interests of the consumers from other creditors: for instance, small traders who might be equally grievously affected by bankruptcy or by fraudulent practices. If the noble Baroness wishes to put down a Question, I invite her to do so and we shall attempt to answer it.

3.27 p.m.

AIDS: Incidence and Control

Baroness Dudley: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper. The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government how widespread is the disease AIDS in the United Kingdom and Europe, and what steps are being taken to prevent it spreading in the community.

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The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security (Lord Glenarthur): My Lords, 14 confirmed cases of AIDS have been reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre at Colindale, and a further two cases are under investigation. On the basis of the information available to us there are some 60 cases within other member states of the Council of Europe.

The Medical Research Council has established a working party and co-ordinate research into the disease. The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre is operating a national surveillance system, which includes making available a summary of information for doctors about the incidence, identification and methods of control of the disease. Although there is no conclusive evidence that AIDS is transmitted by blood or blood products, the department is considering the publication of a leaflet indicating the circumstances in which blood donations should be avoided.

Baroness Dudley: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that Answer. Can he tell me whether there is a cure on the way?

Lord Glenarthur: My Lords, up to the moment it has not proved possible to identify exactly what is causing the disease. Until that has happened, I am afraid I could not say that we can produce a cure.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes: My Lords, will the Minister tell me whether any special action is being taken to inform dental and medical practitioners of precautions that they should take? I understand that it is quite possible that a carrier could come into a surgery and that the dentist, the doctor or another patient could become infected.

Lord Glenarthur: My Lords, I do not know the answer concerning dental surgeons specifically, but the mechanisms by which the disease is transmitted, and the causative agent, as I have described to the noble Baroness, are not known. Although promiscuous male homosexual activity and intravenous drug abuse are risk factors, there is no evidence that the disease can be transmitted through non-physical contact.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, may I ask the noble Lord why we import blood compounds from America: and is there not a fear that this condition can be transmitted through anti-haemophilic cryo precipitate, which is a blood compound?

Lord Glenarthur: My Lords, I do not know the answer concerning the chemical to which the noble Baroness referred. I shall find out and let her know. We have to import Factor VIII, which is an agent used in the cure for haemophiliacs. We shall need to continue to do that until we are self-sufficient ourselves.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes: My Lords, I thank the Minister for his earlier reply, but may I ask him whether it is now believed that this disease is transmissible in many more ways than originally believed? Will the Minister issue instructions to practitioners, or ask his department to look into the need to do so?

Lord Glenarthur: Yes, my Lords, I will do that.

Baroness Masham of Ilton: My Lords, may I ask the Minister whether he will be good enough to answer the first part of my supplementary question, which was why we have to import blood compounds from America and why we cannot manufacture our own?

Lord Glenarthur: My Lords, we need to import it because we have not got enough ourselves. We are trying to build up our own stocks. The noble Baroness might like to know that last year the Blood Products Laboratory manufactured 22 million international units of Factor VIII. At the same time, we imported 35 million international units in 1981 at a cost of between £3 million and £4 million.

UNCTAD: Belgrade Meeting

3.31 p.m.

Lord Hatch of Lusby: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will explain what policy they followed at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Belgrade.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Lord Belstead): My Lords, our policy was to recognise the interdependence of the economies of the world and of the many issues under discussion in Belgrade, and to seek a realistic and constructive outcome which would contribute to strengthening international economic co-operation and world economic recovery.

Lord Hatch of Lusby: My Lords, the Question on the Order Paper asks what was the British Government's policy. I hardly think that the noble Lord's reply constitutes an Answer to that Question. May I ask the noble Lord to put aside his brief for a moment and to take the House into his confidence? Was not this conference a wasteful fiasco for a month? Is it not the case that, on the side of the industrialised nations, Britain, America and West Germany were the main stumbling blocks to an intelligent dialogue with the developing countries? Was that not the sole cause of the fiasco but one of them? May I ask him, in particular, what the British Government representatives did in urging upon the conference the findings of the report of the Commonwealth Group, especially their recommendation that there should be smaller conferences on single issues?

Lord Belstead: My Lords, so far as policy is concerned, I think, if I may say so, that for the Government to say that we recognise the interdependence of the economies of the world—which is a great deal more than just a bland statement of the obvious: it is something which is extraordinarily difficult to achieve, and if only we could do so it would overcome so many problems of the world—and to say that we seek a realistic and constructive outcome at Belgrade, is a reasonable Answer to the noble Lord's Question. So