7. The third meeting

7.1 The Working Party met in Oxford on 16 December 1988 with Mr Wilesmith in attendance. There was discussion about steps that had been taken since the last meeting in relation to human and animal medicinal products and occupational risk. Professor Asscher’s response was considered ‘somewhat complacent, particularly in relation to the problem of existing medicinal products’ and it was agreed that a further letter would be sent to him and that a letter would also be sent to Dr Thomas Little of the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC).

7.2 There was further discussion as to whether the Report should recommend that human food containing brain should state this fact on the label. The minute records:

There were second thoughts about whether labelling of brain in human food should be recommended. Assuming any infected animals entering the human food chain would be subclinical, the spleen and other lymphoid tissue might be expected to be a source of infection as well as the brain. Most spleens were thought to go for pet food and not for human consumption. The ingredients of baby food would be investigated, since, if these could contain ox or calf brain there might be some concern, since young animals appeared more susceptible to BSE.

7.3 Mr Lawrence had earlier sought the advice of Mr Charles Cockbill (MAFF Food Standards Division) in relation to the Regulations governing labelling. The latter had explained that the situation was as follows:

- As you may know, the current legal position is that brains can only be used in meat products which are cooked although they would not be prohibited from being sold in the raw state in, for example, a butcher shop. In the latter case however they would have to be sold under the name of brain. Where however they are used in a cooked product they may either be indicated in the ingredients list of that product under the name brains or under the generic term offal. This situation is set out clearly in schedule 3 to the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, which are as relevant to the case as the Meat Products Regulations 1984.

7.4 Mr Cockbill had gone on to advise that a labelling requirement could not be introduced without the approval of the European Commission, which would wish to be satisfied that the requirement was ‘proportional’.

7.5 At the third meeting those sections of the Report which had been drafted were considered and Sir Richard tabled for consideration some General Conclusions that he had prepared. These we consider in the context of the drafting of the Report (see Chapter 9).