Solicitor General's response to LSD experiments

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OTTAWA CITIZEN March 4, 1998 Mike Blanchfield pA5

LSD EXPERIMENT SUBJECTS MAY GET 'ASSISTANCE'

Solicitor General Andy Scott says he hasn't ruled out an apology or compensation for 23 female prisoners used in a government-sanctioned LSD experiment in the early 1960s.

``It would be fair to say that the government would want to offer assistance if in fact it's established that assistance is necessary,'' Mr. Scott said yesterday.

Mr. Scott is still awaiting the results of a study by staff of Correctional Services of Canada into a report on the LSD experiment. The report, the contents of which were disclosed this past weekend by the Citizen, says 23 inmates at the Prison for Women in Kingston were given the hallucinogenic drug as part of a psychology experiment.

The report identified two women who said they both suffered long-term problems because of the exposure. It recommended an apology and a settlement package.

Mr. Scott said it is too soon to say whether the women deserve an apology or money. He said he was surprised by the contents of the report, which crossed his desk just after Christmas. He said it raised several questions, and he ordered Commissioner of Corrections Ole Ingstrup and his staff to answer them. He hasn't given them a deadline, but he expects a preliminary report on Monday, when the House of Commons resumes sitting.

``I needed to know to what extent I could deal with this as a subject independent of any legal action in our department,'' he said.``I asked them to put together a package that would offer some remedy -- I don't want to say compensation because that sounds legal -- but a remedy that would offer

assistance.''

So far, none of the women has filed a civil suit.

The report said 21 of the 23 women could not be located because of missing or inadequate files. Mr. Scott said he's been advised Corrections is actively looking for the women. The report also said that researchers did not obtain informed

consent in some cases, including when they gave LSD to a 17-year-old girl who was in solitary confinement.

``I haven't really been able to satisfy myself I know all the details,''
Mr. Scott said. ``How much of what went on, went on with some level of
informed consent? How much informed consent in a circumstance like that can
you really believe exists? Why women?'' ``There's a whole series of very
important human issues involved in
this,'' he added. ``I can assure you at the moment my intentions are good.''

Dorothy Proctor, the ex-inmate whose complaint initiated the investigation and the subsequent report, said it makes no difference whether those who took part in the study can prove they suffered adverse affects.

`The issue is, they were experimented upon without full knowledge and understanding of the drug,'' she said. `Literature was not passed around among the inmates to study.'' She said inmates were offered privileges such as being moved to a newer wing of the prison. `That's extortion,'' she said.

Kim Pate, the executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, said she can't understand what is taking so long for the Solicitor General and Corrections to respond to the report. `They've had this for six months,'' she said. `I think it's outrageous.''

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