

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

If news stories trickling out of Canada are true, impeachment is too good for Bill Clinton. Drawing and quartering would be more appropriate.

According to these reports, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are conducting a criminal investigation of an illegal blood collection scheme with links to then Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. During the 1980s, "hot blood" contaminated with hepatitis C and HIV was taken from Arkansas prisoners and sold to Canada, where the plasma ended up in blood products for hemophiliacs.

According to Mark Kennedy, an investigative reporter for the Ottawa Citizen, the prisoners' plasma was sold to Canada for about \$50 a unit, and the revenues were split between Health Management Associates, the private firm that ran the blood program for Cummins State Prison in Grady, Ark., and the Arkansas Department of Corrections.

Allegations of Gov. Clinton's involvement surfaced on the Canadian TV program "Bynon" on Oct. 15. According to Dr. Michael Galster, a doctor in private practice who treated Cummins' prisoners for the state, the FDA shut down

A deadly deal that leads to Arkansas

Canadian reporters are amazed that their U.S. counterparts have ignored this story.

Health Management Associates three times during the 1980s for its improper practices.

The blood program, however, was too profitable to stay shut. Each time, HMA was able to regroup and continue the blood program. According to Dr. Galster, a 1986 public inquiry into HMA's operations produced a deposition that HMA was kept in business by Gov. Clinton's intervention in its behalf.

According to Dr. Galster, one deposition alleges Mr. Clinton told

HMA officials, who boasted of their contacts to him, that if they would pay \$100,000 to a designated judge, "he would see to it that their contract would be renewed for the next two years."

Dr. Galster says news reports show Mr. Clinton defended HMA on dozens of occasions from media attacks on its practices.

The suffering caused in Canada by contaminated U.S. blood has been a major political issue in that country for the past five years or more. A commission headed by Justice Horace Krever was established to determine how prison plasma ended up in Canadian veins. The failure of Canada's regulatory authority is a hotly debated issue, as is compensation by the government of the victims.

Dr. Galster says that during the 1980s he often noticed prisoners with Band-Aids over the vein in

their arm. Unable to find reports of blood work in their files, he questioned the prisoners, who responded to his inquiries by explaining that they had just donated blood.

Dr. Galster knew the prisoners were too ill to be blood donors. But it did not occur to him that the state prison would be involved in profiteering on dirty blood, and he assumed HMA had a method of filtering or cleansing the plasma.

It was only years later when he read a Canadian report tracing the contaminated blood to Arkansas that he put 2 and 2 together.

The result was a fictional novel, "Blood Trail," written under the pen name of Michael Sullivan. Dr. Galster thought his thinly disguised novel would prompt U.S. journalists to investigate.

But he found he overestimated the investigative inclinations of the U.S. media, at least where Mr. Clinton is concerned. Dr. Galster began investigating himself, and found the truth to be a more amazing story than his fiction.

Dr. Galster has turned the documents he has uncovered over to the Mounties, who might or might not be permitted by the Canadian government to bring charges where they

belong.

No doubt Dr. Galster is interested in promoting his book, but he seems genuinely outraged that public officials were part of a business that did not mind infecting and killing people if a dollar could be made.

At any rate, Dr. Galster's evidence has reinvigorated a debate and an investigation that the Canadian government had hoped was over. Ottawa reporter Mark Kennedy shows no signs of letting go of the story. Recently, he interviewed two of the Arkansas officials who ran the prison plasma business. He was stunned when they defended the business as a way of providing prisoners with "pocket money."

Dr. Galster says prisoners have told him, and are willing to testify, that they were paid in narcotics for their blood. Some prisoners were so drained of plasma that they were left on the point of death, a condition Dr. Galster says is cited in the FDA reports.

Canadian reporters are amazed that their U.S. counterparts have ignored this story.

Paul Craig Roberts is a national syndicated columnist.