



Photo: Mike Abrahams/Network

**Under the nuclear wing – removing US air force personnel will shatter the special relationship**

## Labour Facing Flak

**'What is the benefit to Britain of removing these missiles . . . ? I can't see any . . . I can see only heavy losses . . .'** With these deliberately chosen words on Panorama TV, US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger launched his preemptive strike against Labour's non-nuclear defence policy. In the same week, his assistant Richard Perle fired his own broadside against Labour's plans to remove cruise missiles and US nuclear bases from British soil. In case this old 'one-two' hadn't sunk in, Mr Price, US ambassador to Britain, swiftly assured the British public that these views were fully representative of the Reagan administration.

Following Washington's green light, it was open season on Labour's defence policy. George Younger broke his anonymity at the Ministry of Defence; top military brass expressed their dismay; and most of the national press vented their spleen. Only David Owen remained unusually quiet, his expressed desire 'to go for Labour's jugular' on defence momen-

tarily tempered by the Liberal Assembly vote for a non-nuclear Europe. In one brief week Labour and the peace movement had got a taste of things to come. With Thatcherism running out of steam but the memory of their 1983 election Exocets on Labour still strong, defence is clearly an issue the Right are eager to seize upon.

How will Labour cope? The omens are more promising than last time. The party is united around its policy. Its commitment to strong, conventional defence makes it less vulnerable to the charge of leaving the country defenceless. And its assertion of the sovereignty of the British electorate to decide the country's defence policy allows it to play a democratic, patriotic card against excessive US interference. The policy has involved compromises by both Right and Left and there is clearly an earnest desire to avoid a repeat of 1983's exercise in self-destruction.

The broader sweep of public opinion is also more receptive to a non-nuclear policy. The catastrophe at Cher-

nobyl brought home to many the realities of radiation; the US raid on Libya carried out by F-111s based in Britain illustrated how we could be drawn into a war not of our own choosing; and the succession of disarmament initiatives from the Gorbachev leadership have lessened cold war images of the Soviet Union. This greater concern for nuclear disarmament has been reflected in a series of opinion polls showing increasing numbers supporting Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament and solid majorities against cruise, Trident and a Eurobomb. The successful link across Scotland in protest at the arms race attracting 45,000 people clearly touched and gave expression to that groundswell.

Can Labour give coherent voice and shape to this mood? Several doubts remain. Firstly, there is an underestimation of the depth of opposition its non-nuclear policy will provoke. Perhaps the Weinberger episode will have dispelled a few illusions. Secondly, until now, Labour has refrained from campaigning on its defence

policy. This hesitancy has to end. Labour has no place to hide on this issue and it had best be bold and up-front about its policy.

Thirdly, the vast majority of Labour politicians keep the peace movement at arm's length. There are all too few like Ken Livingstone and Joan Ruddock, who appreciate its role in both creating the climate in which Labour's policy can flourish, and sustaining the popular momentum to carry through the policy when Labour gets into government.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the defence policy does not yet hang together with a new foreign policy. The removal of US nuclear weapons will inevitably disrupt Britain's previous relationship with the USA. The bloc system which has tied Britain and Western Europe to the USA for 40 years is under strain. For a British government anxious to end the subordinate 'special relationship' the only strategic option which makes geographical, historical, economic and political sense is to seek a role within an autonomous Western Europe. This option is not for a new militarist, nuclear-armed bloc à la David Owen, but as a grouping, de-aligned from the bloc system, and able to develop new relations with the USA, USSR and the Third World.

Yet at Blackpool it was left to Willy Brandt, in his address from the Socialist International, to make the point: 'There won't be peace without a European system of common security and there won't be a European system of common security without a British government playing a constructive role'.

If the Left can deliver a new strategic vision Labour may yet tap the yearnings of millions seeking a new, disarmament-orientated, internationalism. Such a perspective would also give Labour's defence policy the coherence it will need to withstand the onslaught of what will be a very dirty election dogfight. ●

Jon Bloomfield

## Black Power

There has been surprisingly little analysis in Britain of the events in Washington leading up to both houses of Congress overriding the president's veto of the sanctions bill.

The great model – the inspiration and example to the pro-Africa and anti-apartheid movement in the US – is the Zionist lobby. Ever since the war, it has used its tiny voting population (3%), money and organisational power to dictate American policy on the Middle East. Now, finally, the black Americans have shown what they can do: much less money, a lot more people (though probably greatly undercounted: well over 10% anyway), growing organisational skills.

The issue of South Africa has been building for many years now. It's nothing if not clear-cut for black Americans: Africa, the powerful symbol of identity and pride evoked through the idea of 'Black is Beautiful' and the civil rights movement.

It is essentially this growing identification of American black people with Africa, and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the issues, which lies behind what otherwise would seem a surprise reversal.

The white liberal anti-apartheid movement has never been particularly strong in the US. Where it has scored has been in campaigns to block bank loans and investment in South Africa, and there is a strong analysis among campaigners across the board about the importance of withholding economic support from the apartheid system which would make Reagan's claims that sanctions equal job losses simply laughable.

Now that the pro-Africa lobby has won this victory, we should all get used to the idea that the US is going to be subject to continuing and if anything mounting pressure to support further moves against South Africa. ●

Barbara Rogers



There's votes in virtue – Nancy Reagan campaigns against drugs

## Poll Teasers

Try this quiz:

1 Who is head of the African National Congress?

2 Who is prime minister of Israel and who is his designated successor?

3 What terrorist act was directly linked to Col Gadaffi by President Reagan and served as justification for the April bombing raid?

4 What is a Stinger missile and has the US supplied any to Saudi Arabia?

5 Where does the state of Maryland rank among the 50 US states in terms of amount of federal grant received?

If you got all five right, then you scored higher than all 17 candidates in the recent primary election for Maryland's seat in the US senate. If you got four right, then you tied with the victor of the Republican primary, former Reagan aide Linda Chavez. If you got one and a half right, you tied with Democratic congresspeople Barbara Mikulski and Mike Barnes.

The quiz, given by a Maryland tv station ('We thought

they were darn basic questions,' commented a disappointed tv producer) proves several things about American politics: first, that the Reaganites do not have a monopoly on ignorance (Barnes, who lost the primary, actually serves on the House foreign affairs committee). Second, that to succeed in American politics, you mustn't waste time on issues of little importance to your electorate, like foreign affairs.

If the Democrats do win the biggest prize on offer in the forthcoming elections on November 4, namely control of the Senate, for which they need to pick up four seats, it will probably be due to one issue: drugs. Since last summer, America has suddenly discovered an 'epidemic' of drug use. Never mind that there is virtually no evidence this epidemic exists: never mind that most of the proposals are impractical, unconstitutional, or simply absurd: when America goes on one of

its periodic 'benders of political hysteria', to quote the *Washington Post*, watch out!

Late one night last summer, 49-year-old Republican senator Al D'Amato (the favourite in the New York race) turned up on a Harlem street in a leather bomber jacket to purchase a vial of 'crack' (a concentrated form of cocaine), and 'prove' to the hidden tv cameras that it was easily available.

Democratic senator Alan Cranston (a tight race in California) recently endorsed Reagan's proposals for a compulsory death sentence for murders committed in the course of drug dealing (Cranston used to be an outspoken opponent of capital punishment and once sponsored a bill to decriminalise marijuana).

In Arkansas, both candidates for governor – and their wives! – took urine tests to prove they were not cocaine users. In Florida, Republican senator Paula Hawkins (coming up strongly from behind) applied, unsuccessfully, to make a guest appearance in an anti-drugs role on *Miami Vice*.

What would be the significance of a Democratic capture of the Senate? The answer is probably not too much. On foreign policy issues, most of the important battles have been fought out within the administration. The 'Great Communicator', until the sanctions vote, has had little trouble getting his foreign policies through Congress: even on the CIA-backed war against the Nicaraguan government, arguably unpopular with the electorate at large, Reagan has been able to get the already solidly Democratic-controlled lower house to roll over and play dead on request.

The election might make more of a difference to the international economy. If they command both houses, the Democrats will have a substantially bigger knife to hold in Reagan's back when he negotiates issues like trade barriers and farm price supports with foreign leaders.

What does it all mean to the

1988 presidential race? Again, not a lot. The putative presidential contenders involved this year, men like Cuomo and Kemp in New York and Richard Gephardt in Missouri, are all virtual shoo-ins in their respective bailiwicks. The most significant developments might be in the broader sociological trends in American politics. The embourgeoisement of the Southern redneck has been one of the keys to the Republicans' dominance of federal politics since 1968.

Probably the most critical indicator of Southern Republicanism will be the tight senate race in North Carolina between reasonable, anti-racist, intellectual Terry Sanford – despite those drawbacks, still a slight favourite – and Republican James Broyhill, a right-winger whose supporters include apartheid's friend senator Jesse Helms, and the evangelist Reverend Pat Robertson, a truly frightening presidential hopeful, next to whom Ronald Reagan looks like Voltaire.

The one region where the Democrats may find some comfort is in the Midwestern farm belt. Since the collapse of commodity prices in the early 1980s, a growing agrarian populist movement has been making headway in states like Texas, Missouri and Iowa. Historically, the two periods of liberal reform in the past century were both made possible by farmers joining the urban lower classes in political protest.

The current farm depression – the worst since the 1930s – may be creating the conditions for a rerun of that alliance. That would influence not only the Democrats' chances in 1988, but who they choose as their candidate. Key races to watch are senate contests in Missouri and South Dakota.

Oh yes, the answers: 1 the tv station accepted either Nelson Mandela or Oliver Tambo. 2 Shimon Peres: Vitzhak Shamir. 3 Bombing of the La Belle discotheque in West Berlin. 4 A hand-held anti-aircraft missile; yes. 5 35. ●

Jeff Ferry



Vishnu Sharma – a key figure in anti-racist battles for 30 years

## Fighting The Raj and The NF

Vishnu Sharma holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the community in Britain and India. Born in 1922 in the Punjab, he was imprisoned at the age of 14 for his activities opposing the British Raj in India. Following independence, he continued his campaigning for workers' rights until political and economic pressures led to his departure from India in 1957. The day after his arrival in England, Vishnu applied for membership of the Communist Party, and joined the Indian Workers' Association in Southall, becoming the general secretary before long and national president in 1977.

Trace the development of local and national immigration and anti-racism campaigns, movements and organisations over the last 30 years in Britain, and Vishnu Sharma will feature. A founder of the 1960s Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and Ealing Community Relations Council, he became the first general secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in 1967, and retains his involvement with JCWI even now as its chair. It was at JCWI that Vishnu led the successful campaign to

end the virginity testing of asian women immigrants.

But as important as any national position was Vishnu's work in building and supporting the rights of the Southall community. He organised the marches opposing Ealing council's bussing of black schoolchildren, encouraged the development of the Southall youth movement, and in 1979 was at the forefront of the protest against the NF election meeting in Southall. The death of Blair Peach at that demonstration and the mass arrests of innocent people undoubtedly shook Vishnu Sharma enormously at the time and has left a mark of deep personal sadness with him.

Vishnu has always been – and will remain – a fighter. He has inspired and helped me despite our differing political views, and I owe him much. I'm sure he will be remembered for his commitment, sincerity and loyalty to the Communist Party, to the people he served, above all to his country of birth, India, to where he is now returning. I wish him happy birthday and a long retirement in struggle. ●

Virendra Sharma

## Shares At The Sales

This summer produced an unprecedented double-first in the advertising spending league table. According to the *Media Register* the Trustee Savings Bank spent £2.4m on advertising in August, and British Gas £1.7m, making these two campaigns the largest that month, dwarfing the traditional big spenders such as cigarettes, soap powder and stores. Yet the TSB campaign was not aimed at gaining a single new account. Nor was the goal of the British Gas ads to persuade us to use more therms. These huge promotions were to persuade the British public to buy shares.

These advertising campaigns were not just huge: before British Telecom used similar techniques in late 1984 they were unprecedented. They had previously been regarded as illegal.

Any City lawyer would say that ICI could extol the virtues of its chemicals and Marks and Spencer could advertise the long lasting qualities of its underwear but neither could tell the public that its shares were worth buying. These rules date back to the 1920s when the hawking of worthless shares through adverts, letters and over the doorstep, became a serious problem.

British Telecom changed all that. Dewe Rogerson, a City PR agency, was told at government level to sell the shares like soap powder, a task never suggested before. The agency's task was twofold. Firstly it had to give popular expression to the government's own vision of a share-owning democracy, in this case by persuading a sceptical public that a phone company of dubious quality was really a most attractive purchase. Secondly it had to enthrone the somewhat reluctant professional City investors who were unsure about

BT's future earnings pattern.

Dewe Rogerson knew all about the ban on advertising shares and the Companies Act requirement for all application forms to be attached to a full prospectus. With the Department of Trade and Industry as the main guardian of the Companies Act, the agency decided to push against rules on share sales to see just how flexible they were.

They turned out to be extremely flexible. Advertising a forthcoming share issue proved to be fine as long as no judgement was passed on the value of the shares. Implying that you would miss something if you did not apply and running a parallel corporate campaign to extol the 'product' were equally permitted. At the same time BT advisers came up with the 'mini-prospectus' idea, which left out much of the detail in a full prospectus which is intended to protect the investing public.

TSB and British Gas are also Dewe Rogerson clients, and both have taken the BT hype a stage further. The TSB sell had two powerful external aids. A court decision that no-one actually 'owned' the TSB meant that successful applicants were buying into a hugely-expanded asset, since the proceeds of the share-issue went not to the Treasury, but straight back into the bank.

And then there was the influence of the well-publicised 'grey' market, which enables share-dealing ahead of the formal issue by speculators trying to second-guess the real opening price of shares. Reports from the TSB 'grey' market suggested that investors would more than double their initial stake.

British Gas will feature the biggest-ever direct mail campaign, with a 'personalised' letter to every gas consumer. To avoid being pronounced a failure, it must beat the 5m applications which the TSB attracted. For the government it is to be the crowning glory in their share-selling spree: no holds barred. ●

Tony Levene

## Union Mergers

**Leaders of four centre-right unions met in secret conclave during TUC week to draft an ambitious blueprint for a new mega-union which could dominate the TUC by the end of the century. 'Project 2000', as it is codenamed, carries a wide ranging brief to invite other like-minded unions to join in.**

But this latest manifestation of the centre-right's quest for realignment within the TUC has already suffered a couple of body blows. Two of its Brighton architects – leaders of the building workers' union UCATT and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants – have had to pull out after the executives of both unions damped down their power-broking aspirations and put a block on future involvement.

These rebuffs have left leaders of the right-led electricians union, the EETPU, and the Amalgamated Engineering Union as custodians of the Project 2000 gameplan. The prospect of a bilateral merger between the two increased when right-winger Bill Jordan clinched the AEU presidency. But it still remains strewn with obstacles. The AEU's policy-making national committee has ruled out any merger talks involving an abandonment of the AEU's longstanding commitment to regular officer elections and the district committee structure. The electricians do these things rather differently: the ruling executive calls the shots.

The declared aims of Project 2000 are informed by a need to respond to changing skill and job territories. But a powerful subtext is the evident desire to eclipse the Transport and General Workers Union's block vote pre-eminence. Though hit by membership decline, Britain's biggest union still wields 1.4m votes, spurring the search for a rival centre-



City University, London EC1  
Oct 31–Nov 2

**A weekend of politics, entertainment and fun!**

# HAVE YOU REGISTERED?

**Extra participants include:**

**Germaine Greer, Valerie Riches, Judith Williamson, Gordon McLennan, leading Sandanista, Sam Aaronovitch, Angela McRobbie, Jock Young, George Galloway, Bernard Wiltshire, Barbara Burford.**

For last minute details phone 01 251 4406 **NOW!**

**OR**

**Buy your ticket on the day.  
See you there!**



t h e  c l o t h

A U T U M N · W I N T E R  
C O L L E C T I O N 1 9 8 6

*main stockists*

*London · HARRODS, WAY IN DEPT · WHISTLES · JONES · Glasgow · ICHÉ-NE-SAN · THE WAREHOUSE · Dublin · KOKO*

6 MARXISM TODAY NOVEMBER 1986

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right grouping.

Project 2000's many precursors in the field have proved abortive, and in the medium term it too seems destined to remain a paper tiger.

But the developing courtship between two white collar unions with leftward leaning leaders merits close scrutiny. The mooted marriage between ASTMS and TASS would create the largest white collar union in the TUC; and on current membership figures, its sixth largest affiliate.

Both Clive Jenkins and Ken Gill are backing the plan, and a November joint union executive meeting is expected to map out the next stage of the 'TASTMS' amalgamation strategy.

If it comes off, both general secretaries would work in tandem until retirement. The move would make strong industrial sense for members working in engineering, a shared job territory in many cases. The merger talks have already prompted a joint white collar pay campaign at the Lucas Group which enabled union negotiators to coordinate limited industrial action.

But what shape would a joint TASTMS rulebook take?

TASS has a highly disciplined conference with around 150 voting delegates. ASTMS has a big hitter gathering which allows for more than 800 voting delegates, to reflect the diversity of its membership spread. The vexed question of compliance with the 1984 Trade Union Act on secret individual ballots for executive elections and before industrial action should prove fertile ground for inter-union debate. TASS elects its executive members on a branch vote system, through a single transferable vote. It has shown no signs of altering its balloting modes to fall into line with the law, and has reiterated its declared hostility to state interference in internal union affairs.

Freed from its strife torn link up with the engineers, TASS's hard left leadership has cast around for small un-

ions of a similar ideological bent. It now likes to be known as the 'manufacturing union' and has absorbed the tobacco workers, sheet metal workers and pattern makers into its structure.

ASTMS - zealously expansionist since its creation - has used its flexible structure to open up new job territories through merger. Growth by acquisition is enshrined in the ASTMS rulebook, aided by the considerable degree of industrial autonomy given to small unions and staff associations which join up. Its finance sector membership - many of whom transferred en bloc from former in-house staff associations - are likely to be most resistant to the TASTMS concept.

The emergence of TASTMS would have a devastating effect on APEX, the clerical union, which has seen membership drop from 140,000 to around 90,000 over the past six years. Both the GMBU and AEU have made tentative merger overtures to APEX, and the union has called a special executive to consider options in January.

The current make-up of the TUC has been determined by successive amalgamations: in 1945 there were 191 affiliates compared to 88 today, despite the more recent arrival of the teaching and civil service unions. A confluence of internal pressures, personality clashes and dwindling membership and finances has tended to shape the merger pattern as much as industrial logic.

The TUC has been unable either constitutionally or through backroom guidance to impose a coherent pattern on union merger moves. As the labour market continues to fragment, inter-union competition for both membership and recognition rights is set to intensify. And all the signs are that the initiatives for carrying through mergers which attempt to answer the challenges posed by external structural change, will continue to rest upon the whim or will of the individual unions themselves. ●

Helen Hague

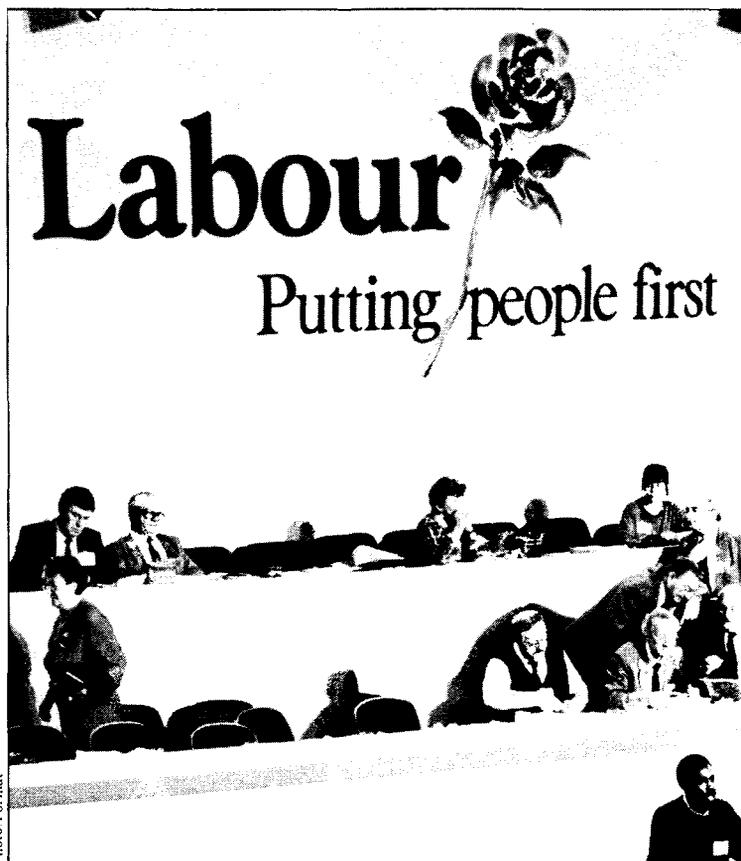


Photo: Forum

## Roses Are Red

**There's a seductive symbolism in the Labour Party's new rose. It rejects the harsh representation of the French socialist emblem, but is similar enough to be fashionably European.**

Described as softer, more feminine, more sophisticated, it is a Saatchi-type image for the looks-conscious consumer.

But the rose is also a symbol of seduction. In the language of flowers you don't offer such a loaded gift to a sick aunt. A red rose, usually from a man to a woman, says more than words. This association with the worst aspects of sexual politics cannot surely have been overlooked by the party's image-makers. Or is it that the entire facelift is consciously geared-up to a return to quaint old-fashioned English-rose ways?

Labour MP Robin Corbett's remarks on this year's conference delegates reveal a more worrying side to the bloom: 'When I walked

through the door I thought I was in the wrong place. All those people looking so clean, sensible and presentable. There were even men wearing ties and women wearing dresses. Where were the legions of women in dungarees I meet every year? I couldn't see one in the place.'

So, lipsticked glamour takes over as the face of feminism and style sells socialism? The triumph of the typeface and layout artist has ensured that form and presentation are no longer deadly labour sins because the party's found gloss.

Corbett clearly sees male/female stereotyping as a means of glueing together political rifts. But where were the feminist policies associated with the dungarees? They too had disappeared, subverted for the sake of unity. At least they were spared the indignity of being propositioned with a rose. ●

Jackie Wills

# Healthy Questions.

In an area as controversial as health care, there are bound to be many questions. But when it comes to NHS medicine supply the answers are often assumed. If you want more information about British medicines and their contribution to the nation's health and wealth, contact ABPI at the address below.

**Q. How does the pharmaceutical industry affect the UK economy?**

A. In 1985 UK pharmaceutical exports exceeded imports by over £830 million. Our domestic spending on medicines is only half that of our major competitors like the US, Japan and Germany. If Britain is to be able to afford good welfare services, we must be able to pay for them – pharmaceuticals are an area in which this country is outstandingly successful.

**Q. What contribution to UK employment does the pharmaceutical industry make?**

A. Over 80,000 people are employed directly by the UK pharmaceutical industry. A further 250,000 to 300,000 British jobs owe their existence indirectly to the pharmaceutical industry.

**Q. Why is the number of NHS prescriptions rising?**

A. Between 1979 and 1985 the total number of prescriptions dispensed in the UK rose by only 5%. Factors involved included the 'ageing' of the population, rising unemployment and the shift to community care. For some groups of medicines, such as tranquilisers, the total fell significantly.

**Q. Does the pharmaceutical industry care about 'Third World' health?**

A. Only about 10% of the UK pharmaceutical industry's revenue is derived from the entire Third World. Yet through ABPI, British medicine manufacturers accept their responsibility to aid global health progress. For example, pilot projects to improve medicine distribution are being funded in East Africa and the Maldives.

**Q. Why should all the growth money available to the NHS go to medicine costs?**

A. It does not. Since 1982 the proportion of NHS

resources going to pharmaceuticals (costed in manufacturers' prices) has stayed roughly constant.

Less than one NHS pound in ten goes on medicines. Some 80% of NHS medicines are prescribed by General Practitioners. DHSS figures show that between 1979 and 1984 overall spending on the family practitioner services went up 10% more than their medicine costs.

**Q. Haven't we already got the medicines we need?**

A. Medicines and vaccines are not the only key to better health. But they have contributed significantly to the control of infections and the relief of disorders like depression, arthritis and heart disease. Unfortunately, however, many illnesses are still incurable, or only partly treatable. Providing research investment continues, many more effective pharmaceuticals will be developed to protect against conditions such as cancers, multiple sclerosis and AIDS.

**Q. Does the pharmaceutical industry spend more on promotion than research?**

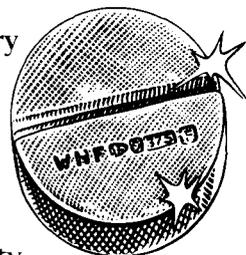
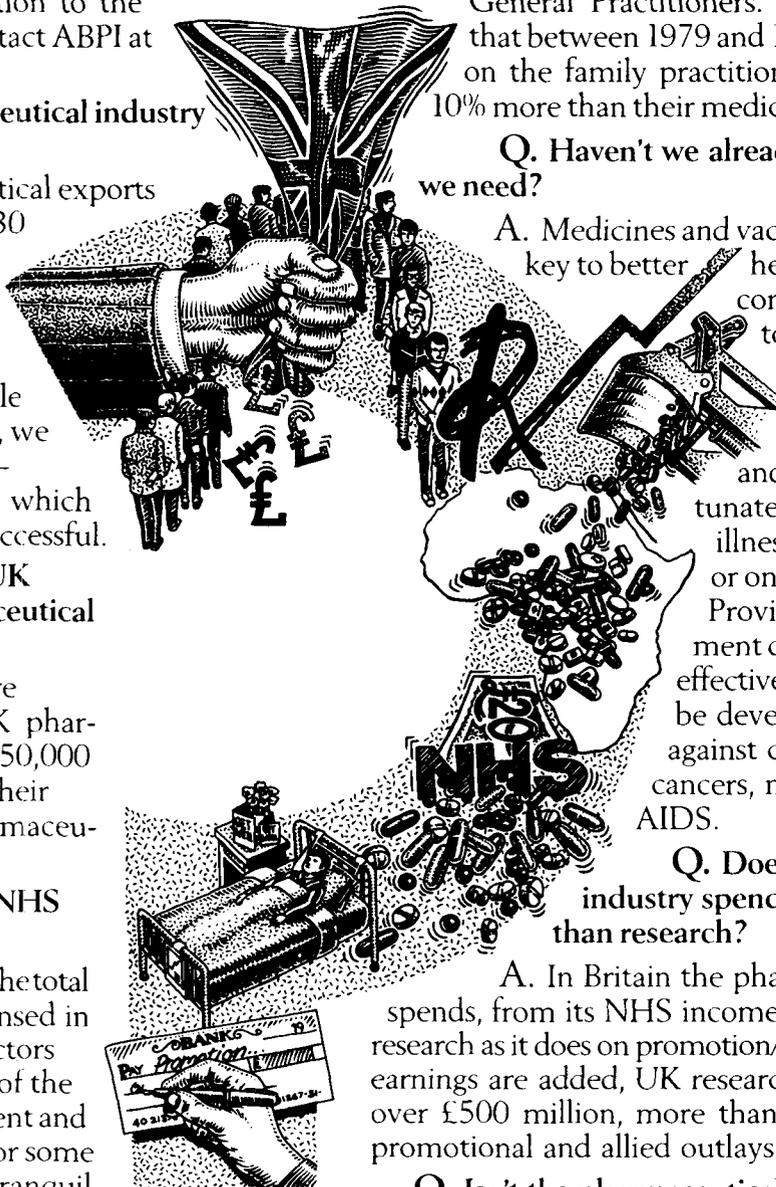
A. In Britain the pharmaceutical industry spends, from its NHS income, twice as much on research as it does on promotion/information. If export earnings are added, UK research spending stands at over £500 million, more than three times UK promotional and allied outlays.

**Q. Isn't the pharmaceutical industry excessively profitable?**

A. The UK pharmaceutical industry's profits from the NHS are currently below the average for the companies quoted in the "Financial Times" 500 Index. The UK pharmaceutical industry has consistently invested more in this country than it has made in profit from the NHS.

For further information about medicines and health in Britain, write to Gail Turner at The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's Health Information Desk, or telephone her on 01-930 3477.

British Medicines and Britain's Health.  
The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.  
ABPI, 12 Whitehall, London SW1A 2DY.



## Sex on the agenda

About 120,000 teenagers will become pregnant over the next 12 months and two thirds of them will become mothers. The decision not to have an abortion may be the only positive decision many feel they've ever taken. Even if it's only a decision not to decide.

Their own mothers may welcome the new grandchildren but grit their teeth because they know what their daughters are letting themselves in for, that it's the agony and the ecstasy, and they know that their daughters don't know – yet.

Many of them will be the children of mothers who belonged to the first generation of women whose sexual lives have been lived in the era of scientific-chemical birth control. The daughters are all part of that era themselves.

And all of them are regarded as having done the *wrong* thing, ruined their lives.

I'm their mothers' generation, and like many of them I was a teenage werewolf, a thrill-seeker prowling around respectable coffee bars and dance halls for pleasure. The pill did not improve the quality of sex but it certainly allowed respectable girls to go for it.

The fact of the pill apparently offered the historic possibility of fear-less sex. Strangely enough, when it came to thinking about having, rather than not having children, it enabled women of the pill era, to do what in a sense, today's teenage mothers have done: decide not to decide – for a while. That's what I did anyway in my heterosexual days. Now my fertile days are numbered and I'm in my

lesbian incarnation, so it's a bit more difficult: I'd have to decide to decide.

This is the first problem: to decide or not to decide. The great thing about birth control has been that it has allowed women to defer the decisions. But the trouble with family planning ideology is that it is exactly that: it suggests that it's all rational and planned, and therefore it is not ideologically fitted to the irrational and the indecisive and the unplanned. So it benignly disapproves of the teenage mother.

Young single parents have few political allies; they are now the target of a new Tory demonology, which has to some extent cheekily borrowed legitimacy from the very success of the birth control movement. The birth rate among teenagers has dropped by about 50%, since the early 1970s. So there's a notion that there's *no excuse!*

The Tory party's reaction to Sara Keays was that she must have known what she was doing, and therefore should never have got pregnant. It could cope with her being a cabinet minister's 'mistress' but not with her daring to be a single mother.

And on the extremist edges of the Right there is now a witchhunt against the single parent. Dr Rhodes Boyson told a Tory Party conference fringe meeting this year that the single mother is to blame for the evil hordes of wild boys, whose mothers failed to give them fathers. And Sir Frederick Catherwood suggested at another fringe meeting that they should have their benefits cut off.

Where does birth control politics stand amidst all this? Of course it defends 'choice', as it must, and it defends the young mothers. But its ideas about 'choice' are infused with WASP (white anglo-saxon protestant) and Yuppie (young upwardly mobile professional) values. It laments the teenage mother because she's ruined her life and because she's poor, the assumption being that she's poor because she's feckless.

Meanwhile, there's been a baby boom among Yuppies of

30+; they are family planning's success story. They are having their babies before its too late, but not before CSEs, GCEs and degrees have been passed, careers established, houses bought, nannies hired. If they're feminists they talk about motherhood a lot and keep threatening to write books about it. And some of them get married, too.

They *chose* to be mothers, it appears. Perfect mothers, perfect babies.

But there's something wrong here because it is not choice that differentiates the teenage mother and the 30+ Yuppie mother: it is class that makes the Yuppie mothers a success and the teenage mothers supposed failures. The teenage mother hasn't got her CSEs, and who knows if she'll ever have what's called a career. All she's got is a baby for whom, unlike her Yuppie sisters, she alone is totally responsible, 24 hours a day, in return for which she's got a passionate relationship. It's the one relationship that gives her any power and status and it makes her a woman.

But she didn't choose! It just happened. Anyway choice presupposes alternatives – between what? Being an adult and having to remain a *child*, infantilised by school, by unemployment, by baby wages on a work scheme and semi or unskilled jobs, by having to live in someone else's space, your mam and dad's home, sharing a bedroom with a little sister?

Recently I heard an eminent and pro-woman gynaecologist saying that pregnant teenagers would be better off pursuing their careers and wasn't it all awful.

No doubt she'd agree that part of the problem is that this society isn't fit for mothers. Childcare, for example, is the most successfully privatised bit of what the welfare state should have been. It should be a major political priority, but it isn't.

Yuppie mothers *buy* private solutions to what are public and political problems for

the majority of mothers in Britain. They buy some other poor woman's time. And that applies to feminist Yuppies, too. This is not to condemn, it is just to say that there is an enormous class-culture gap between them and the young single mothers, who lack just about everything money can buy. What their problems expose is the isolation of politics, with some important exceptions, from the people living on the hardest edge.

What they could do with, and what they haven't yet got, is a caring party that cares for them. And to be more precise, that means making the space in politics so that they, too, can join in. And it means ordinary things, like they will be among the million people who get the jobs (no use if they don't get childcare, too) after – if – Labour wins the next general election.

A further thought about sex and birth control. The early birth control movement was both about the maternity crisis among working class women in particular, but about the pleasure crisis, too.

Birth control politics now, as then, needs to address women's sexual disappointment. It is that feeling which Victoria Gillick articulates in her pessimistic outlook. She speaks to the problem of teenage pregnancy by trying to proscribe both contraception and conception among the young. I think she wages war against girls becoming sexual women because she thinks men have been doing women over since Adam. And she doesn't buy the idea of free choice because she doesn't think women have any.

Sexual politics is the territory feminists share with Gillick. Don't get me wrong, I think she's horribly wrong, but Gillick with her angry pessimism marches in where Yuppie liberalism feared to tread – she's put the sex back into the technocratic politics of birth control. At least, she's put it back on the agenda by trying to take it off. Are we going to make sure it stays there? ●

Beatrix Campbell

