

Business Briefs

Health

Physicians protest lack of TB drugs

Physicians around the United States are protesting the lack of inexpensive drugs to treat TB, according to a *New York Newsday* article. The production of the most effective and least expensive drug against TB, streptomycin, was discontinued months ago by Eli Lilly and Co. and Pfizer, Inc. These pharmaceutical giants said that they stopped production because the raw materials from France no longer met federal standards.

Acting New York City Health Commissioner Margaret Hamburg and other health officials told *Newsday* that the U.S. companies could easily sterilize the materials to bring them up to standard. Hamburg and others said that the companies have shifted their production into much more profitable drugs.

New York City, facing an outbreak of drug resistant TB, is now running out of streptomycin. Dr. Karen Brudney, a TB expert at the city health department told *Newsday*, "We are completely out at the health department and so are most hospitals."

Streptomycin is one of the five most important TB drugs for strains resistant to more than one drug, TB specialists say.

About 1.7 billion people, or one-third of the world's population are, or have been, infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The overall proportion of infected people is similar in the industrialized and developing nations. However, 80% of infected individuals in industrialized countries are at least 50 years old, while 75% of those in developing countries are younger than 50 years old.

It is estimated that TB caused 2.9 million deaths in 1990, making the disease the leading cause of death from a single pathogen in the world. While the largest number of deaths occurred in Southeast Asia (940,000), the Western Pacific (890,000), and Africa (660,000), it is estimated that more than 40,000 deaths still occur annually in the industrialized nations.

In industrialized countries, TB has been declining very rapidly as transmission, measured as the annual risk of infection, had dimin-

ished. Nevertheless, TB remains one of the most common notifiable infectious diseases. Furthermore, in many industrialized countries, the declining trend has slowed down and, in the U.S.A. and Japan, it has reversed.

Development

Nigerian press features Schiller Institute proposal

In a front-page banner headline story, the Nigerian national newspaper *The Guardian* of Oct. 7 gave extensive coverage to the Schiller Institute's "True Fourth Development Decade Proposal." Under the headline, "U.N. Population Policy Unhelpful, Says Report," the article reads:

"United Nations sponsored global population control and environmental protection campaigns are designed to retard the economic development of Third World countries, a report has said.

"The report titled: 'For A True Fourth U.N. Development Decade, A Concrete Solution to the World Economic Breakdown Crisis,' says that the U.N. population control policy stems from official fears in the United States that developing economies' high population density could engender negative security and economic threat to American global interests. . . .

"For instance, a series of formerly classified documents written by American national security directors—Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft—between 1974 and 1977 argued that the new world economic order created excessive optimism among Third World countries, encouraged population increase and therefore a security threat to the United States.

"Indeed, the 'most explicit of these documents,' according to the report, was National Security Study Memorandum 200, or NSSM 200,' which was tagged: Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests.

"Essentially, NSSM 200, reportedly declassified recently by the American govern-

ment, sought to, in 13 unidentified developing countries:

- promote radical depopulation programmes there;

- discourage the clamor for a new world economic order and the Vatican for encouraging economic optimism and resistance to depopulation plans. . . .

"The institute argued that the real agenda of a proposed U.N. conference scheduled for June next year, in Brazil, to discuss the global environment is to curtail development in the developing countries."

'Free Market'

Pope warns against hedonistic consumerism

Pope John Paul II, in two addresses in Rome in late November, warned against unbridled free market ideology and warned the newly emergent democracies of eastern Europe against the "hedonism" predominant in the West.

Speaking at the international conference of the Christian Democracy in Rome Nov. 24, the Pontiff stated, "Today, there is an attempt to build democracy on the basis of moral relativism, which leads to rejecting any certainty concerning human life and human dignity, or man's fundamental rights and duties." Society, the Pope said, "cannot be reduced to the simple domain of production and exchange of economic goods," because "if the market is a basic element of a free and human society, another basic element is solidarity."

The Pope warned eastern Europe against western hedonism and ruthless capitalism, in his keynote address to the Vatican synod on the future of Europe, which began Nov. 28. "The Europe of today is wounded, weak, and without any orientation," he said. "It is suffering from a grave disease—losing the memory of its Christian roots.

"One must not underrate the danger which goes along with the newly gained freedom of contact to the West, because not ev-

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everything that is coming from the West reflects evangelical values.”

There is a grave danger that the East Europeans will be drawn into another “dance around the golden calf,” said the Pontiff. “The Christian East has to arm itself for defense against the secularization, hedonistic consumerism, practical materialism, and formal atheism that is widely spread in the West.”

Labor

Pension funds drastically underfunded

The U.S. government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. reported that the nation's 50 largest underfunded pension plans have a potential combined shortfall of \$21.5 billion, a 50% increase over last year's shortfall. Chrysler, Tenneco, and Paine Webber, for example, have not funded 40% of their obligations; Loews is 60% underfunded; United Airlines is 20% short.

The PBGC guarantees these pension funds in the event that the companies cannot meet payments or go out of business. The PBGC is funded through premiums assessed on these companies, and itself is nearly bankrupt because of the increasing number of corporate bankruptcies and rising underfunding of pension plans.

As PBGC executive director James Lockhart said, corporate funding of pension plans have fallen short because of a combination of lower investment earnings (in large part because of lower interest rates) and lower corporate contributions to the plans because of declining profits in the “recession.” In other words, companies simply aren't paying into their pension plans, and the government's PBGC is increasingly faced with having to, in effect, subsidize these plans.

The implications are enormous. The PBGC is almost broke, and will have to raise their premiums beyond the maximum level of \$72 per employee. This rate—which has skyrocketed way beyond the \$1-2 per employee

just a few years ago—has already driven many corporations to drop their pension plans, foisting whatever obligations they had onto the PBGC. This has virtually bankrupted the PBGC and forced huge rate hikes. If premiums are increased much more, thousands of companies will drop their plans, dramatically slashing PBGC revenue and increasing its obligations by untold billions of dollars. This would necessitate a taxpayer bailout just as in the Savings and Loan and FDIC mess—or, more likely, retirees would receive just a small percentage on the dollar.

Agriculture

Italian government restores subsidies

More than \$2 billion in subsidies to farmers have been reinstated by the Agriculture Committee of the Italian Parliament, in a unanimous vote, after 400,000 farmers descended on Rome at the end of November to protest their elimination by Giulio Andreotti's government, in compliance with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Driving tractors and marching through the streets of the Italian capital, the farmers, who came from all parts of the country, called for the immediate dismissal of the minister of agriculture, and a new mandate for the Italian delegation to the European Community.

Meanwhile, thousands of farmers demonstrated Nov. 26 in Tokyo against moves to pry open Japan's closed rice market amid mounting pressure from the United States and other rice-growing nations, according to UPI. Carrying placards and chanting slogans, the rice growers and sympathizers from every region objected to claims that the longstanding ban on rice imports was jeopardizing a successful conclusion to the world trade talks. Some wore green costumes resembling vegetables imprinted with the demand, “Ban Rice Imports.” Others carried an angry scarecrow. “Japan is already importing beans, wheat, and other products,” said demonstrator Eijiro Shimada. “If rice is next, that will be a serious matter.”

● **WINE** production was virtually wiped out in Armenia in the early 1980s, on the pretext of Mikhail Gorbachov's campaign against alcoholism. Sources say that every grapevine was to be uprooted and all winemaking equipment smashed. One man found with a winepress in his basement was sentenced to jail by a judge, even though he had made no wine, because he was “capable” of it. The man asked the judge for a new trial, on a charge of rape. “Why? You haven't raped anyone.” “True,” said the man, “but I am capable.”

● **THE U.S. BUSINESS** and Industrial Council, a group with 1,500 members, has called on conservatives to dump their commitment to “free trade,” and to replace it with a commitment to trade war, saying that free trade is “a wonderful theory with no basis in the world of today's economic cold war.”

● **BLACK AMERICANS** moving to the South outnumbered those who moved to the North by 355,000 in the second half of the 1980s, reports Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

● **AIDS** transmission through heterosexual activity now accounts for 25% of all cases in Palm Beach, Florida, according to the state's District Public Health Administrator, Dr. James Howell.

● **THE NETHERLANDS** government's economically motivated support for euthanasia is affirmed in a new draft law. No doctor should fear any criminal investigation if he consults a second doctor and fills out a form with questions like: Did the patient know what he was asking for? Which second doctor was asked? How was the patient killed? The paper goes to a local public prosecutor, and if everything seems to be okay, the patient is to be buried.