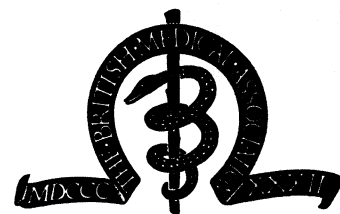


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The wind of change

"The wind of change is blowing through this continent," said Harold Macmillan in Cape Town in 1960, and this week's journal shows how that wind continues to blow. War, drought, AIDS, and debt have made Africa the lost continent, and John Wright and Helen Ford write from east Swaziland to describe the miseries of life in present day Africa. Some 40 million people are facing starvation (p 1479). In east Swaziland "nearly half the population of 400 000 people is short of food, with 40 000, mostly elderly people and children, at an advanced stage of starvation." Women must make journeys of up to 15 miles to find water. But not all is gloom. John Black has gone back to Eritrea 10 years after he first visited in the midst of war, and he finds signs of optimism in the area, which will soon become independent (p 1480).

The wind of change that is blowing through Britain's health and community services is a breeze compared with the gale in Africa, but it is still enough to make people uncomfortable. Last weekend a meeting of general practitioners from inner London unanimously rejected Tomlinson's proposals for London's health services (p 1507). Hart thinks that those reacting to

Tomlinson's ideas fall into four categories: visionaries in favour, realists who are in favour but sceptical, old fashioned campaigners against, and those who are simply despairing (p 1456). Julia Neuberger is one who sees an opportunity for community health services in Tomlinson's proposals (p 1486).

Those many doctors who have difficulty distinguishing among community health services, primary care, and community care should read Trish Groves's article, in which she provides a guide to the changes in community care (p 1489). Health services in London will have to grapple with these changes at the same time as with the Tomlinson report and while still trying to absorb the NHS changes, which are showing signs of coming unstuck (p 1451).

Those who wish that change would simply go away may comfort themselves with Jim Drife's reminiscences on hospital Christmas pantomimes past (p 1509). The programme includes an obstetric registrar singing "The Lost Chord," a chiropodist singing "Underneath the Arches," and a choir of speech therapists singing "Doo Wah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Doo."

BMJ

Editor's Choice