

**The Role of the British FPA in  
Establishing School Sex Education  
—Right and Left Entanglement  
derived from Contraceptive multi-functions—**

**Hiroko Hirose**

This paper aims to clarify one of the causes that has made the Right and Left framework less effective as a picture for our time. For this purpose, the paper analyses the social and political interest observed in the early 1970s around the British FPA who was on the side of the left and took the initiative in promoting school sex education in England.

The findings are as follows.

1. The FPA, which had been fighting for family planning in England, took the initiative in improving school sex education. This inevitably pulled sex education into the field of family planning debates.
2. Contraception was referred to with a different emphasis on its functions on various occasions; family planning, support for individuals' sexual choice, social political measures for unwanted pregnancy, social political measures for overpopulation.
3. The participation of the FPA in sex education provoked continuous and strong criticism against it by the Moral Right. Even though this criticism did not represent the views of the majority of British society, the FPA together with the Moral Right played the roles of framing the far left image of school sex education by working on the offensive and defensive battle between them.
4. As the issue of unwanted pregnancy grew painful, the preventive function of contraception gradually became emphasised.
5. The social innovative role of contraception, such as to free individuals from the traditional sexual morals, became relatively less referred when people discuss on family planning. This encouraged conservative people to support the introduction of a free NHS family planning service.
6. The overpopulation issue further emphasised the necessity of a family plan-

ning service breaking the political taboo that had been discouraging both right and left, or especially left wing people from supporting Government policy making on sexuality.

7. The pragmatic attitude of the British FPA was significant. They paid careful attention to maintaining an acceptable and discrete image of the FPA: they tried to improve the co-operative relationship with the Government no matter what political party was in power; they even supported the Neo-Malthusianism that was attacked by the Left including the IPPF that was the international organisation of the FPAs.

8. Not only the Labour Government but also the Conservative Government, confirming the effectiveness of contraception as a means to tackle the social problems, tried to keep mutual supports with the FPA. For this, the Conservative Government, for instance, did not hesitate to confront the Moral Right who were considered to be on their side.

These findings can be summarised as follows.

Two features should be pointed as factors that characterised the basic image of school sex education in 1970s.

First, school sex education was voluntarily advocated and improved by the FPA who had been fighting for family planning for decades. This inevitably laid school sex education on the platform of family planning debates. The shifting focus among four contraceptive roles and functions affected the image and roles of sex education. For example, the heavier became the social political side, the closer became the relationship between the FPA and the government.

Second, the overpopulation issue highlighted the need for a free family planning service. This more directly emphasised the importance of social political role of contraception than the issue of unwanted pregnancy had done; in the latter, contraception was seen not only as its practical solution but also as its symbolic cause.

Contraception, in spite of growing attention to its preventive function, however, always carries other functions that are not necessarily defended by Conservatives. By supporting the introduction of the family planning service, the Conservatives, therefore, had to predict and at the same time accept the consequence of this; this may encourage public to choose their each sexual life with alternative family style which may promote women's carrier and their financial independence. The emergence of unwanted pregnancy and overpopulation issues generated this compromise.

These new social problems which thrived beyond the understanding and explanation with the framework of the Right and Left prepared the background where political interest confronted hybridising old right and left issues and, as a part of this, left wing sex education obtained institutionalisation under the Conservative Government in a moderated way.

The content of this paper is as follows :

## I Introduction

- (1) The Question
- (2) The Purpose and the Method of this Paper

## II The Understanding of Contraception and its Surroundings in the Early 1970s

- (1) Acceptance of Family Planning Idea and Contraception
- (2) Sexual Revolution and the Criticism against Permissive Society
- (3) 1967 Abortion Act and 1967 National Health Service (Family Planning)

Act

## III FPA and Sex Education

- (1) Courses for Sex Educators
- (2) Containing Criticism - Publishing the FPA Statement on Sex Education
- (3) The Criticism from Mrs Whitehouse

## IV Overpopulation - Another Function of Contraception

- (1) Growing Attention on the Overpopulation Problem
- (2) Friction Between the British FPA and IPPF - On Neo-Malthusianism

## V The Debate on 1974 NHS Reorganisation Act - Entanglement in the Par-

liament and Parties

(1) The Government Bill - Sustaining Subscription Charge

(2) The Lord's Amendment for Free Family Planning Service - The Defiance of the Conservatives

(3) The Common's Support for the Government Bill - The Disorder of the Labour

VI Beyond the Right and Left Framework