vidual experimental groups. You don't want to add another layer of bureaucracy—but issues come up, and who do you call?" The organization, for the moment called U.S.-LHC Collaborators Organization, will serve as a contact point among all the parties who would negotiate a U.S.-CERN agreement, including the physics community, CERN management, and federal agencies. It will be run by an executive committee consisting of six at-large members and two members each from U.S. groups wanting to collaborate on CMS, ATLAS, the LHC itself, and a separate, smaller B-physics experiment.

Some physicists at the Fermilab meeting found this focus on CERN and the LHC difficult to stomach. One declared that if CERN had thrown its support behind the SSC, the machine would have been built. He called it humiliating that U.S. physicists now have to supplicate CERN simply to become a "province" in the world of high-energy physics. But another physicist at the meeting called those the sentiments of the "two-standard-deviation people"—the ones who grouse out on the wings and don't represent the community as a whole.

Most saw that if they want any chance to pursue the physics goals that motivated the SSC, they have to put the LHC at the focus of their plans—and soon. "Much work will have to be done to make this happen," Joel Butler of Fermilab told the group. Failing that, "the U.S. high-energy physics community will face some very hard choices."

–Robert P. Crease

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

U.K. Panel Floats a Plan

LONDON—The British government may have got more than it bargained for when it assembled a committee of women scientists and engineers and asked them what could be done to improve the prospects of women in science and engineering. The Cabinet's Office of Science and Technology (OST) was keen to show its equal opportunity credentials when it commissioned the study a year ago. But some of the proposals that the committee came up with, in a report* issued last week, would be costly and would entail the kinds of social expenditures that the Conservative government has traditionally been reluctant to support.

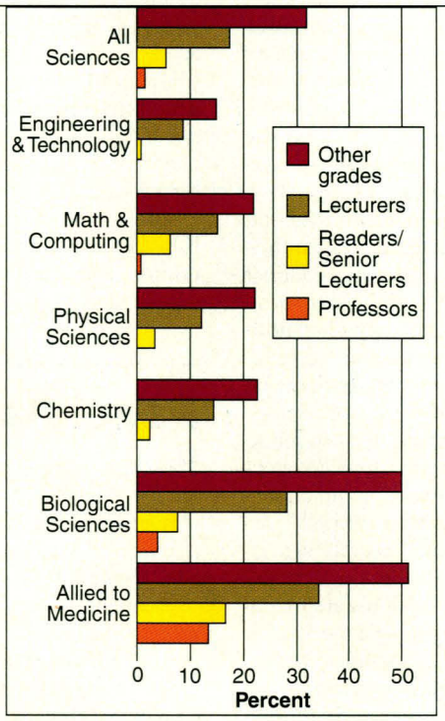
The Committee on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology calls for tax relief on child-care costs and more publicly funded child-care services. It wants the Department of Employment to support and fund "returners' schemes" to help women make the transition back from full-time parenting to careers in research. And, to ensure that its recommendations are not just politely buried, the committee calls on OST to set up a unit to monitor progress in meeting the goals the committee laid out.

One of this unit's first tasks, says the committee's deputy chair, biologist and professional forrester Jean Balfour, former chair of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, should be to analyze the costs and benefits of child-care schemes. There is growing support for such schemes in Britain: Even the normally conservative Confederation of British Industry, which represents employers, has said that affordable child care is essential for long-term economic growth. But few women academics believe that this report will succeed where many other campaigns for public support for child care have failed. Eve Roman, an epidemiologist with the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's Cancer Epidemiology Unit in Oxford, who employs a nanny to look after her three children, says: "I am taxed twice, once on what I earn and then again on what I pay the nanny. I would welcome tax relief on child care but I would be astonished if the Government accepted this recommendation."

The urgent tone of the report is backed by some dismal statistics: Women account for just 1% of members of engineering institutions in Britain and 3% of Fellows of the Royal Society. A scant 22 out of nearly 500 professors of biological sciences are female. Only 15.5% of those in full-time academic posts in science, engineering, and technology are women. In industry, the only research-based occupation in which women outnumber men is that of laboratory technician. In view of these figures, the committee has set an ambitious goal: At least 25% of all public appointments and senior positions in science, engineering, and technology, in government departments and in industry, should be held by qualified women by 2000.

This is unlikely to happen unless more young women opt for scientific careers, however. The committee therefore calls for better training for teachers, including guidance on maintaining girls' interest in all science subjects. And it urges the Department of Education to consider introducing a broader curriculum for students over 16—most only study three subjects—to encourage more young people to continue studying science.

William Waldegrave, Britain's science minister, said last week that the report made a "valuable contribution" to the debate and that he would consider its recommendations carefully. The Royal Society gave its "very warm support" to the report.



Academic ceilings. Percentage of university posts occupied by women.

Balfour says some R&D-based companies have already begun to move in the direction her committee is advocating. One of them is the research arm of the drug company Glaxo, where most of the 3700 staff are scientists of graduate level and above. John Hume, director of human resources, says that 4 years ago Glaxo R&D introduced a range of facilities to help women with children return to work, including financial assistance for child care, maternity leave arrangements better than the state minimum—12 weeks' paid leave for those with 2 years service—and flexible working arrangements. The proportion of women who return to work after maternity leave is now 97%, up from 60% 4 years ago, staff turnover is down from 12% to 4%, and the number of women among senior staff has doubled to above 17%, Hume says.

British women scientists and engineers are also beginning to organize themselves. The Association for Women in Science and Engineering in the U.K. (AWISE) is being launched this month to provide an information exchange and a collective voice for women. Chemist Joan Mason of the Open University and Cambridge University, who is coordinating the group, says: "We want to provide a support network for women who are having trouble and falling off the career ladder. Women who want to have children and a career, as men do, need to support each other, as men do."

–Sharon Kingman

Sharon Kingman is a science writer based in London.

*The Rising Tide: A Report on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, 1994.