

## 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*