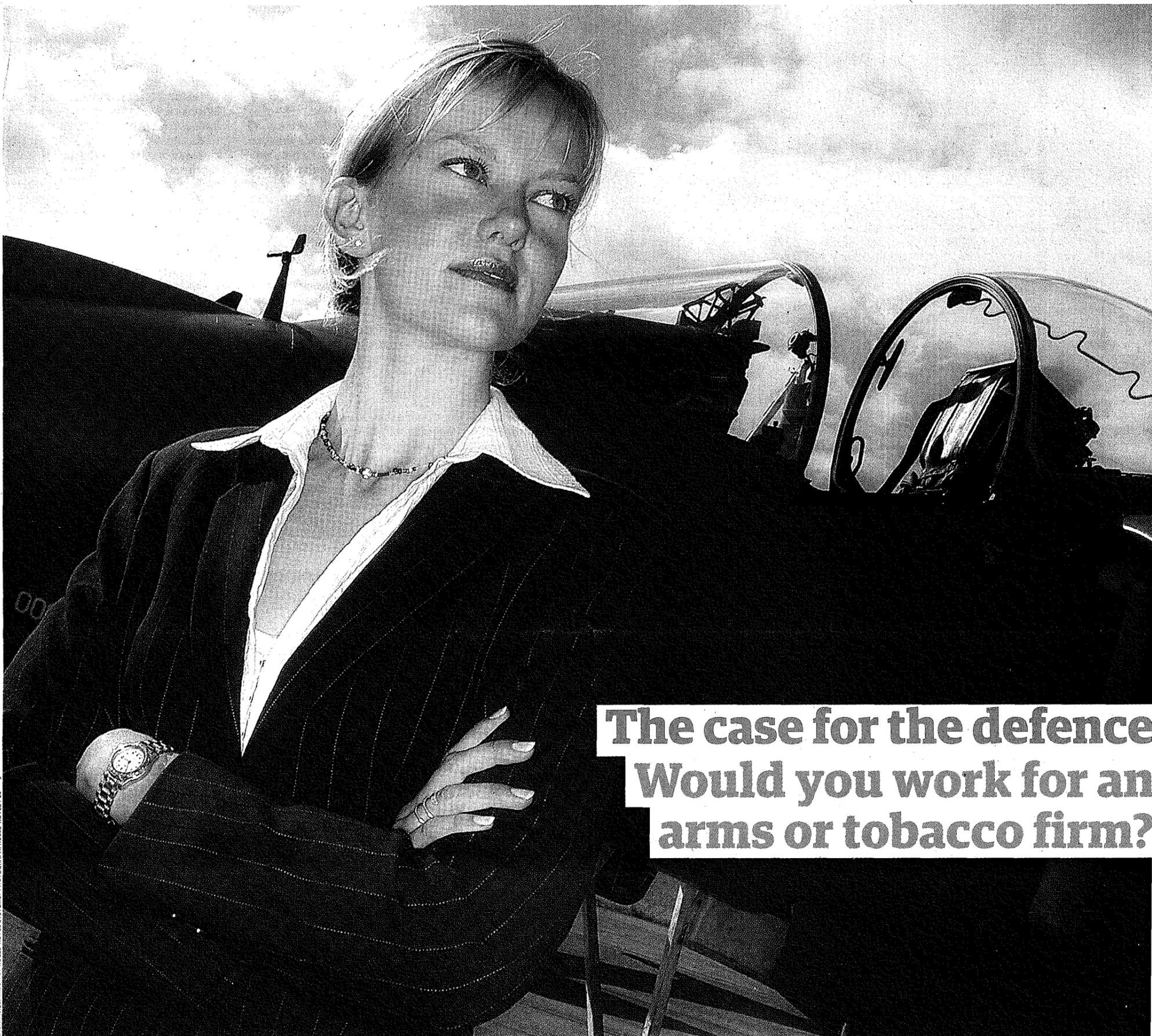


rise



Jobs that make a difference often aren't the most fascinating

» Free time, page 2



The case for the defence

Would you work for an arms or tobacco firm?

Laura Williamson of Rolls-Royce Systems. Photograph: Rolls-Royce PLC

Job of the week

The job Trainee company secretary, British Land Location Central London **Salary** 'Highly competitive', plus study support **The lowdown** A rare opportunity for a recent graduate in one of the UK's largest property companies **Find out more**

What happened next?

Danny Hood used to stick security tags on clothes in the delivery department of Next, while studying media and cultural studies at Southampton Solent University. Now he works as a television researcher for BBC2's music quiz show *Never Mind The Buzzcocks*. Hood's job involves finding former pop stars to appear on the show and scouring various publications for facts on them. "I love music and sometimes I think it's quite ridiculous that I get paid to read about it," says Hood. After graduating, he worked in sales, but hated it. Then he tried to get into TV, but it was only after

break into television, that he came up trumps. StartinTV.com found Hood work experience on a late-night music programme for Channel 4. He had been working there for two weeks when a director of the show's production company told him about an opening as a runner with At It Productions, creator of Channel 4's T4. Hood got the job. Initially he used to spend the mornings sorting out the post and shopping for the staff fruit bowl at Tesco. The afternoons were spent helping out whoever needed him. He also got a chance to work on T4's interview with Tony Blair. "Sometimes I worked until 11pm,"

He had been with At It for over a year when a former associate producer with the company told him that *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* was looking for a researcher. "She thought I'd be really cool for the job," says Hood. Eventually, he would like to direct live music performances and run his own production company. He reckons his initial willingness to work hard for little or no money has helped him to thrive in a competitive world. "I meet runners who begrudge doing menial tasks for free," he says. "But if you really want to work in television, you've got to give 100% and forget that you're doing

Earning curve



Source: The Society of Practising

Moral maze

Industries such as oil or tobacco may seem ethically dubious – but if the money was right, would you work for them? By Zenab Short

The pay and benefits were, the consultant admitted, the best she had seen for this sort of role. For the candidate, it was a dream job. The location was brilliant, with the possibility of stints abroad; the workplace culture was reputed to be one of “work hard but play hard, too”; and, as for the promotion prospects, well, “the sky’s the limit”, according to the recruiter. But Jenny Hayes withdrew her application. “I couldn’t have lived with myself,” she says. “No matter what the salary and opportunities for career development, I decided I was not prepared to work on the website of one of the world’s largest tobacco groups.”

Hayes (not her real name) is one of an increasing number of graduates to have scruples about the ethics of their work, according to Tom Hadley of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation. “Pay is no longer the main motivator. Graduate jobseekers also weigh up the culture of the workplace. Does it offer flexible hours? What are the promotion prospects? And, more and more, is what the business does ethical?”

While he admits to wondering if graduates are being choosier simply because they are in a strong position, with more jobs on offer than there are good candidates, he does sense a genuine demand for roles that have some meaning, that make a difference and are ethical. But what constitutes an ethical business?

“There is an image of ‘evil oil’. That lurked in the back of my mind”

For graduate trainee Emily Brand, the answer, surprisingly, is tobacco. “What attracted me to British American Tobacco was precisely the controversial nature of the product,” she says. “Everyone has an opinion about smoking, and I relish tackling reactions to my job head-on. I’m very much a libertarian and defend people’s right to smoke as a personal choice.

“Nevertheless, I checked out BAT’s record on corporate social responsibility before I joined, and I liked what I saw. We’re very open about the risks of smoking and invest in research to develop less harmful products. At the same time, we manage our environmental impact carefully and treat the people in our supply chain with respect.”

There are those who argue that it is impossible for a tobacco business to be socially responsible. Lobby group Ash (“our vision – a world free from the harm caused by tobacco”) criticises BAT’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports as nothing more than a PR exercise. “At the end of the day, people work for companies like them because they pay well above the

market rate. How can they pay so well? Their product is cheap to manufacture, so they make big profits,” claims Amanda Sandford of Ash.

While Brand concedes that BAT has a smaller pool of candidates to recruit from because of the nature of the product it makes, other controversial industries, such as armaments, continue to attract graduates eager to sign on the dotted line.

“I’m extremely proud to work for Rolls-Royce Systems,” says Laura Williamson, an experimental engineer on the Joint Strike Fighter programme. She does research and development on vertical take-off aircraft, which are due to replace the Harrier jump jet in four to five years’ time. Does she ever think about how the plane she is working on will ultimately be put to use? “No, I think about how lucky I am to be working with such cutting-edge technology. For an engineer, it’s really intellectually satisfying stuff. Anyway, defence is one of the most heavily regulated industries in the world; the government is in a far better position than me to decide where the products I build will end up.”

Andrew Burcham, who joined BAE Systems as a graduate trainee, and who is now working on the development of Astute, a new nuclear-powered submarine, says he thought long and hard before entering the defence industry. “You only have to take a look at the names of university societies to tell how passionately students feel about doing the right thing.

“For me, it was a case of: in an ideal world, we wouldn’t need the defence industry. However, we live in a world where states have often needed to defend themselves from aggression. I am doing work of significance for our national security, so my job is about making a difference.”

While a straw poll of graduates I carried out tended to view tobacco, armaments and medical experimentation on animals as no-go areas, others see this good cop/bad cop pigeon-holing of employers as naive. “Some liberal-minded graduates see the defence industry as immoral,” says Alan Sharman of the Defence Manufacturers Association. “But would they also refuse to work for BT, which supplies the MOD’s communications; for farmers whose food is used to feed service personnel; for textile companies that supply their clothing; for Shell or BP, which supply the fuel for the ships, tanks and aeroplanes? Where do they draw the line?”

Mechanical engineer Ross Lloyd went through a similar thought process before joining BP as a graduate trainee. “Awareness of climate change has made people feel negatively towards the oil industry. When I was younger, there was an image of ‘evil oil’. I remember a film with Michael Caine playing a wicked oil baron hell-bent on environmental destruction. So exposure to things like that lurked in the back of my mind.

“But I researched the company and realised BP does an enormous amount to address environmental issues. It’s made a big investment in clean and renewable energy, like hydrogen, wind and solar power – that’s what I tell people who challenge me about working in the oil industry. I really wouldn’t work here if I didn’t believe BP was an ethical employer.”

This emphasis on living and working ethically dates from the end of the Thatcher era, according to Sherridan



We’ve swung since then towards quality of life, doing the recycling bit, buying organic ... and this is the era of personal development. But that doesn’t mean business is a nasty place. We need big business for a strong economy, but people, including graduates, now demand transparency about how it makes its profits, and that it acts in a socially responsible manner.”

Others are more guarded about this newly transparent world. “Call me

cynical, but I think CSR is a marketing ploy,” says Terry Jones from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. “The consumer demands big business should be more ethical; those businesses that comply then sell more products, and thus they make bigger profits. So it’s a case of enlightened self-interest.”

And while CSR and ethics does matter to a degree it is, ultimately, enlightened self-interest that propels

BP’s environmental record persuade Ross Lloyd to join them Photograph: Andy Johnstone/Newsline Scotland

graduates into the arms of employers. “My search of our archives produced just 35 queries relating to corporate social responsibility or ethical careers says Laura Hooke of Graduate Prospects. “And this was out of 43,000 queries.” Maybe graduates aren’t that bothered just yet.



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Edited by Jimmy Leach

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