



The
REPORT
of
The Hansard Society
Commission
on
WOMEN
AT THE TOP

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January 1990



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Table of Contents

List of Tables	ii
Foreword	iii
The Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Preface	ix
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations	1
Part One – Introduction	15
Part Two – Barriers to Equality	20
Part Three – The Public Realm	26
Women in Parliament	26
The Civil Service	33
Public Appointments	39
The Judiciary	43
Part Four – Corporate Management	52
Women in Management	53
Women in Senior Management	56
Women on the Board	60
Part Five – Other Key Areas of Influence	64
Women in the Universities	64
Women in the Media	68
Women in the Trade Unions	73
Part Six – Strategies for Change	77
Good Practice	78
Appendices	
1 The Constitutional and Legal Framework	92
2 A Survey of Employers	96
3 Women on the Board	99
4 Examples of Organisations in the Private Sector who have taken Equal Opportunities Initiatives	102
5 Organisations that Offer Help, Advice or Training in Equal Opportunities Initiatives	112

List of Tables

3.1	Women MPs in Europe	27
3.2	Percentage of Women Cabinet Ministers	28
3.3	Women MPs at General Elections, Britain 1918-87	28
3.4	Women Candidates by Party	30
3.5	The House of Lords, December, 1989	32
3.6	Women in the Civil Service	33
3.7	Women on Public Bodies, Departmental Appointments	39
3.8	Women on Public Bodies, 1988	39
3.9	Women in the Judiciary, 1989	44
3.10	Women Judges in the Netherlands, 1989	45
3.11	Women Barristers and Solicitors	47
4.1	Women in Management in Littlewoods	54
4.2	Aggregate Breakdown by Sex, Main Boards	60
4.3	Aggregate Breakdown by Sex, Subsidiary Boards	60
5.1	Full-time Non-clinical University Staff	65
5.2	Academic Women: Oxbridge	66
5.3	Women in the BBC	69
5.4	Women in Publishing	72
6.1	Strategies for Change	79

Foreword

by

The Rt Hon Lord Barnett

Chairman, The Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government

The Hansard Society has a well-established practice of setting up commissions to consider and report on subjects associated with the effective functioning of Parliamentary government. In that context it has become increasingly obvious that the under-representation of women in the upper reaches of public life of this country, and in particular in the House of Commons, is a serious anomaly.

The Society therefore invited an eminent group of people, chaired by Lady Howe, to examine the barriers women face in public life and to report back. As will be seen from the following pages, it would clearly be wrong to consider public life solely within the narrow confine of Parliament and government, so the Commission rightly looked at other areas, such as business and the universities, from which the leadership of the country is drawn.

The thoroughness and objectivity of this Report is a testimony to many months of hard work. The members of the Commission deserve the thanks of society as well as the Society for producing a document that is not simply a criticism of the status quo but it is also full of constructive proposals for reform.

Thanks are due too to National & Provincial Building Society, for giving a generous grant without which the Commission and its Report simply would not have happened. The Hansard Society perceived National & Provincial, with its unique 'Financial Services for Women' programme, as a natural sponsor for this particular project.

With all its commissions the Hansard Society acts as catalyst rather than campaigner. The Council of the Society has seen this Report prior to publication and, since the Society exists solely to promote research and discussion, it neither accepts nor rejects the Commission's findings. We do, however, commend the Report to the public as a worthwhile contribution to the subject and hope it receives the widespread attention it deserves.

The Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top

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We are also grateful to all others who took the time to meet and discuss the work of the Commission with individual members.

Preface

The Hansard Society aims to promote wider knowledge and understanding of parliamentary government so as to strengthen the full and informed participation of all citizens in our democratic system. In furtherance of this aim, the Society held a one day seminar at Nuffield College, Oxford in April 1988 to discuss the under-representation of women in Parliament and to consider the establishment of a Commission to investigate ways of overcoming such barriers as continue to prevent women's full participation in public and political life.

The seminar attracted participants from a wide range of occupations, including politics, business and industry, law, medicine and academia. At the end of their deliberations, seminar participants agreed

- that barriers continue to block or impede women's careers in politics and public life; and
- that predicted demographic changes in the 1990s offer an opportunity for women to make progress towards parity with men in many areas including politics and public life, thus making the establishment of a Commission both timely and appropriate; but
- that any assessment of the barriers confronting women in political and public life must look at these spheres in the context of the wider social and occupational structure. Success for men in political and public life is often preceded or complemented by achievements in other areas, and this is likely to be the case for women also.

The Hansard Society therefore established a Commission with a mandate **to identify barriers to the appointment of women to senior occupational positions, and to other positions of power and influence, and to make recommendations as to how these barriers could be overcome.** The Commission has gone about its task by assessing the problems facing women

at the top of public, corporate and professional life, by identifying emerging solutions to these problems, by gathering and disseminating examples of good practice among employers and other organisations, and by making practical recommendations.

The Commission's assessment focuses on the circumstances of women in senior occupational positions and public life since change at the top, provided it extends beyond tokenism, will help all women. Women at the top of professional and public life have an important role to play in changing society's attitudes towards women in the workplace as well as in other positions of power and influence, and in shaping decisions of great public importance.

Therefore, the Commission by showing how the barriers to the advancement of women into positions of power and influence can be overcome, will also be helping to ensure that wider opportunities exist for all women, and that the skills and experiences of women are harnessed for the benefit of our society as a whole.

The Commission's assessment included:

- a review of published information about women in public life and employment;
- interviews with senior personnel in government, business, and the professions;
- interviews with experts in organisations committed to increasing equality of opportunity between men and women such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Women into Public Life Campaign, and the 300 Group;
- contact with a cross-section of companies known for their progressive attitudes towards the employment of women;
- a survey of employers on their policies and practices towards the promotion of women to senior positions;
- a survey of companies on the composition of their main holding and subsidiary boards.

The Commission believes that its Report brings together and evaluates information not otherwise available in a single document.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

GENERAL

It is the purpose of this Report to identify the barriers which stop or impede women from getting to the top, to highlight the good practice that we have discovered to be possible, to see where structures can be changed to help the advancement of women, and to recommend action to be taken by Government, the public service, the professions, industry and commerce, trade unions, and academia.

Public Philosophy and Legal Framework

1. As a nation, we are committed by our public philosophy and by law to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and to ensure genuine equality of opportunity for women in all aspects of life.

Need for Voluntary Measures

2. Good laws are essential, but not by themselves sufficient to change the practices and attitudes which maintain the profoundly unequal status of women in this country today. We need in addition a wide range of administrative and voluntary measures to translate the ideals of equal opportunity into practical reality – to bridge the unacceptable gap between promise and performance.

Women's Contribution and Wasted Talent

3. By 1995, over half the labour force will be women. But today only a tiny minority have reached positions of influence and power. Most women remain clustered in positions that do not make full use of their abilities. Generally, they are in badly paid, low status jobs, and their opportunities for training and promotion are severely restricted.

The 1990s: An Opportunity for Change

4. The 1990s offer an opportunity for change. Eighty per cent of new workers in the next five years will be women, most of whom will have major family responsibilities. This, together with the creation of more high-level jobs, will compel employers to compete more strongly for the best candidates for their companies, irrespective of gender. These facts of life may mean that the best man for the job in the 1990s is a woman. However, unless existing barriers are rapidly dismantled, women will continue to be denied equal access to positions of influence and authority.

The Glass Ceiling

5. For many women, there is a glass ceiling blocking their aspirations, allowing them to see where they might go, but stopping them from arriving there. In any given occupation, and in any given public office, the higher the rank, prestige or influence, the smaller the proportion of women.

The Barriers to Equality for Women

6. The barriers to equality are general and pervasive:
 - outmoded attitudes about the role of women;
 - direct and indirect discrimination;
 - the absence of proper childcare provision;
 - inflexible structures for work and careers.
7. Discrimination against women is still widespread. Too often organisations who say they do not discriminate have not properly considered how their normal policies and practices affect women. Discrimination assumes many forms: direct and overt; indirect and disguised:
 - subjective and informal selection procedures;

- stereotyped assumptions about the ability, character, suitability and ‘natural’ role of women;
- the use of ‘insider’, word-of-mouth and old-boy networks;
- unnecessary age bars;
- excessive mobility requirements.

Women are discouraged by attitudes at work expressed in everything from outright sexual harassment to a refusal to take them seriously. These barriers greatly reduce the number of women who have the chance to reach the top. To achieve promotion to senior jobs, women too often have to be **better** than men.

8. Work, especially at senior levels, is often organised on the unquestioned assumption that it can only be done full-time. This disqualifies many women who cannot work full-time because of their family responsibilities. For some jobs, full-time working is necessary, but many jobs at senior levels could perfectly well be job-shared or part-time, given sufficient imagination and flexibility by management. Indeed, this does happen, where men combine their main job with another acceptable activity, such as sitting on Boards, Commissions and Tribunals.
9. We lag well behind other comparable countries, such as France, Belgium, and Denmark, in providing reliable childcare and family support. Government should match its words about the importance of proper childcare with deeds to make this possible. There should be partnerships between Government, employers, parents, and other providers. There is also a pressing need for tax changes to encourage the development of, and access to, adequate childcare facilities.

The Equal Opportunities Commission

10. In recent years, the Equal Opportunities Commission’s budget has been cut in real terms. The Commission needs to be adequately funded so that it can properly perform its vital tasks of promoting equality of opportunity between the sexes, and working towards the elimination of sex discrimination. Never has the Commission’s role been more important.

KEY AREAS

Women in Parliament

11. Women are seriously under-represented in Parliament. In the General Election of 1987, 609 men were returned to the House of Commons. In the years since women's suffrage in 1918, only 139 individual women have taken up seats in the House. We are almost at the bottom of the league table of modern democracies, whether in terms of the proportion of women in the legislature or in the Cabinet. This means that the interests of women are not properly represented in Parliament, in Government, or in Opposition, and that all of us are deprived of women's talents and experience.
12. The present position is wholly unacceptable in a modern democracy. The causes of women's under-representation in political life are complex. They include unfair discrimination in the selection and election of candidates, the manner in which the electoral system operates in practice, and archaic parliamentary habits and practices unchanged since the time when the House of Commons was the best men's club in London. Because of the paramount importance of Parliament in our public and political life, **we recommend that a Speaker's Conference should be established to consider the ways in which parliamentary and party practices and procedures place women at a real disadvantage. We further recommend that the Political Parties should scrutinise their own policies and practices, and eliminate those that serve to hinder the progress of women.**
13. Women also remain seriously under-represented in the House of Lords. Only about 13 per cent of Life Peers are women; although even this is better than the dismal representation of women in the Commons. Women Peers have demonstrated their outstanding worth and impact in the Upper House. It would be much easier to ensure fair representation among the appointed than among the elected Members of Parliament. **We recommend that the Government should use their powers to ensure fair representation in the House of Lords in creating Life Peerages.**

Women in Public Office

14. In theory women have the right to participate, on equal terms with men, in holding public office and performing public functions at all levels of government. That is not what is happening in the real world. Since the mid-seventies there have been concerted efforts, by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Woman's National Commission, and the Women into Public Life Campaign, to increase the number of women in public appointments and public offices. The Public Appointments Unit does valuable work, maintaining an active list of names for consideration for public appointments, vetting names put forward to the Prime Minister, and finding information about potential appointees. There are plenty of women's names on its active list, and women are being short-listed for more and more appointments. Officials from most Government Departments are actively seeking women appointees. The number of women appointed remains very low, however, and varies greatly from Department to Department and from Minister to Minister. There may be good reasons why Departments should vary in the percentage of women on public bodies. But the percentage in the best Department – the Cabinet Office – is ten times greater than that in the worst – the MAFF – and almost nine times better than that of the MOD. The main obstacle to the appointment of women now appears to be at Ministerial level.
15. Ministers and Government Departments are specifically forbidden (Section 86 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975) from discriminating, directly or indirectly, against women in making appointments to public offices or posts, and in making arrangements for determining who should be offered public offices or posts. We doubt whether it is widely understood in Whitehall that Ministers and Government Departments are at serious risk of judicial review if they fail to eliminate discrimination in the exercise of their public powers. **We recommend that Ministers and Government Departments should scrutinise existing practices and procedures to ensure that they comply with the law.**
16. Much more needs to be done to secure equal rights for women in public appointments. **We recommend that the Public Appointments Unit should be used systematically for all**

significant appointments. Unnecessary conditions and requirements should be removed from the qualifications for appointments. New sources of recruitment should be sought, including advertising for public offices and posts wherever feasible. Proper weight should be given to all relevant experience, and not only to experience in paid employment. Ministers should be more effectively accountable to Parliament for their appointments, and an annual report should be laid before Parliament on progress in each Department.

The Honours System

17. Fewer than one-fifth of all honours go to women. This is not because of a shortage of qualified women. It is the result of old-fashioned and unquestioned assumptions and prejudices, and the conservatism of those who confer patronage. **We recommend that the Government should take steps to ensure fair representation in the Honours System.**

Women in the Civil Service

18. Women are seriously under-represented in senior positions within the Civil Service. The Civil Service is taking important steps to change this and to promote real equality for women at all levels. In many areas, the Civil Service is becoming a model employer. Provided that the current efforts continue, the Civil Service will, in time, make a major contribution to the equal representation of women in positions of influence and authority. **We recommend that the Civil Service should take much more positive action to afford women access to training to help fit them for work in which they are significantly under-represented, and to encourage women to take advantage of opportunities for doing that work. Ministers and Government Departments generally should also be more imaginative about part-time working and job sharing at senior levels, and should follow the best practice which some Departments have already initiated.**

Women in the Judiciary

19. Almost all of the senior Judges, who interpret and apply our laws, are men. No woman has ever sat in the supreme judicial authority of the United Kingdom: the House of Lords. There is only one woman in the Court of Appeal. Only a handful of women are High Court

Judges, Circuit Judges, Recorders, Assistant Recorders, Stipendiary Magistrates, and County Court Registrars. Judicial decisions have far-reaching consequences for everyone; the absence of women Judges limits the quality and vision of those decisions. The situation is quite different elsewhere in Europe, not only because they have career Judges, but also because they are more flexible about working conditions and practices. In France and The Netherlands more than one third of the Judiciary are women. Part-time judicial appointments are common in The Netherlands. In this country one main cause of women's under-representation on the Bench is the lack of women in senior positions within the legal profession from whom the Judges are appointed. When more women reach senior positions as barristers and solicitors, more women will be appointed to the Bench. The Government's decision to appoint senior Judges from qualified solicitors will widen the pool of available women appointees. However, in view of the family obligations of many women lawyers eligible for judicial office, part-time appointments to the Courts are essential, as are more flexible arrangements for High Court Judges from the Queen's Bench Division to be able to sit wholly or mainly in London. **We recommend that the Lord Chancellor should take urgent action to encourage qualified women barristers and solicitors to apply for appointment as Assistant Recorders (the first rung on the ladder to the Judiciary). We also recommend that the Lord Chancellor should make part-time judicial appointments to the Courts, and should make more flexible arrangements for High Court Judges to sit wholly or mainly in the Queen's Bench Division in London.**

Women in the Legal Profession

20. Until 1919 women were barred altogether from entering the legal profession. Until recently, because of prejudice and discrimination common to most professions, they were unable to obtain pupillages and tenancies in many of the leading sets of barristers' chambers or partnerships in many of the leading firms of solicitors. The position is rapidly improving. Women are in a majority among new law graduates and recently qualified solicitors. More and more, they are doing work which was regarded, only a decade ago, as an exclusive male preserve. Both the Bar Council and the Law Society have taken steps to encourage equal opportunities among their members.

However, serious problems remain. Ten years after admission to the Roll, three times as many women as men solicitors have ceased practising. Moreover, three times as many women as men remain assistant solicitors ten years after admission. Men achieve partnerships at twice the rate of women. At the Bar, women continue to find it much more difficult than do men to obtain pupillages and tenancies. **We recommend that both the Law Society and the Bar Council should establish efficient machinery to monitor the training, entry, working conditions, and promotion of women, and to discourage practices, procedures and working methods which handicap women lawyers. We also recommend that law firms and Chambers should be required to provide the Law Society and Bar Council with relevant information on these matters.**

Women in Management

21. Women's representation in management has slowly increased in the past two decades, but women at the very top are scarcely visible. A few large companies have demonstrated what can be achieved, with sufficient moral and financial commitment, to improve recruitment, training and promotion practices, and to remove barriers to equality for women at all levels of management. By deliberately adopting a strategy for change in this direction, these companies have gained a competitive edge in the labour market through making more effective use of the female talent that was already available. They have pioneered policies and practices for others to follow. **We recommend that all employing organisations in the public and private sectors should be ready in their own interest to follow these examples by adopting good practice strategy and should :**
- carry out equal opportunity audits at all levels to determine the extent to which women and men have unequal access to senior positions;
 - re-assess recruitment, training and promotion practices and procedures, identifying and removing requirements which impair women's career opportunities and which are not necessary for the efficient working of the organisation;

- establish policies and practices likely to enhance women's career opportunities, such as career break schemes; childcare assistance; flexible working conditions; re-entry training; management training for women; and equal opportunity training for line management;
- take full advantage of the provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act permitting positive training and encouragement for women for work in which they are under-represented;
- establish procedures for the periodic monitoring of the position of men and women in senior positions within the organisation, and in more junior positions from which candidates for promotion may be drawn; and
- establish yardsticks or voluntary targets against which to measure progress, and against which managers' performance may be judged, together with the means of achieving the desired objectives.

22. The Companies Act 1985 (Section 235(5) and Parts III, IV, and V of Schedule 7) provides for the annual report by Directors to shareholders to contain information about their company's policy on the employment, training and advancement of disabled persons; the health, safety, and welfare at work of the company's employees; and the involvement of employees in the affairs, policies and performance of the company. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is empowered (by Section 256(1)) to make Regulations adding to the matters to be specified in the Directors' Report. **We recommend that the Secretary of State should add the need to report on equal opportunities policy and practice, so that Directors actively consider the nature and content of their policy and practice, and that shareholders are given information about these matters.**

23. **We further recommend that the CBI and the Institute of Directors should take positive steps to make sure that their members are aware of the good practices being followed in the best firms.**

Women on the Board

24. Women are very poorly represented as both executive and non-executive directors. PRO NED was established in 1982 under the sponsorship of the CBI, the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange and other major City institutions to promote the use of non-executive boardroom members, and to encourage companies to draw upon a wider range of people to fulfil this vital function. Few women, however, are appointed, although they would bring qualities and expertise now missing. Much more could be done by PRO NED, and by Headhunters who operate in this area, to promote the use of women as non-executive directors. **We recommend that the requirements and qualifications for non-executive directors should be re-assessed by company boards and that proper weight should be given to experience gained outside the corporate sector, in particular in voluntary organisations; that new sources of recruitment to PRO NED's register should be sought; and that the institutions responsible for establishing and maintaining PRO NED should monitor and publish information about women's representation as non-executive directors.**

Women in the Universities

25. Between 1975 and 1988, the proportion of women studying in the universities increased from 35 per cent to 42 per cent. However, the proportion of women in senior academic posts is derisory. In bleak contrast with the position elsewhere, the numbers of women in senior academic posts is scarcely increasing. University College London is a rare exception. Because of a conscious policy of actively promoting equality of opportunity, nine per cent of its professors are women, compared with a national average of only three per cent. The situation is especially disturbing at Oxford and Cambridge, where the number of women Professors and Fellows remains tiny. The effect of opening the former men's and women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge to both sexes has meant that many men have been appointed to tenured posts in the former women's colleges, while hardly any women have gained tenured posts in the former men's colleges.
26. Academic jobs do more than offer personal fulfilment to their incumbents. Lecturers and professors have close contact with the

next generation of leaders, industrialists, policy makers, and opinion formers, and may influence and guide them. Oxford and Cambridge have long been traditional avenues to positions of power and influence. It is wholly unacceptable that the centres of modern academic teaching and excellence in Britain should remain bastions of male power and privilege. **We recommend that all Universities should appoint equal opportunities officers and that they should monitor and publish information about women's progress. We also recommend that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge should, as a matter of urgency, investigate the ways in which their practices put women at a disadvantage; and that in the absence of such investigations, women's under-representation in each of these universities is worthy of attention by the Equal Opportunities Commission.**

Women in the Media

27. The media have power and influence over our everyday lives. The images and ideas presented on television, on radio, or in the press shape, and are shaped by, the images and ideas we have of men's and women's roles. It is important that women have access to top jobs in the media, for without women at the top, the media risk putting forward a distorted view of society.
28. In broadcasting, there are many women presenters, overwhelmingly more than ten years ago. But the upper echelons of both television and radio remain almost exclusively male. The BBC has adopted an active equal opportunities programme since 1986, including equal opportunities officers, awareness training activities, women-only management courses, and informal women's networks. The BBC is also making welcome improvements in their career break scheme, in nursery provision, and in flexible working hours. But women still remain substantially outnumbered by men in senior positions, and, until 1988 there had never been a woman on the BBC Senior Management Committee.
29. In the Independent Television companies, the picture of women's progress towards the top is much the same. There are a number of women in creative jobs, such as producer, director, or presenter, but few at higher management levels. The experiences of Thames Television and Central Television suggest that more is needed than

simply the adoption of equality programmes and the hiring of equality officers. As with the BBC, so with the Independent companies: organisational values and managerial attitudes seem still to inhibit women's progress.

30. In the press, women are found in fair numbers as general columnists, department heads, and editors, especially on magazines. However, men vastly outnumber women in any editorial conference, and women are scarcely found among the managerial reaches of the press. As elsewhere in the media, women do colourful work half way – perhaps two-thirds of the way – up the ladder, while men dominate the top jobs that determine the fate and perspectives of the newspapers.
31. In publishing, there has been a considerable increase in the number of women on the editorial side, with women accounting for about three-quarters of all employees in editorial departments. Women too have made a substantial mark as literary agents. However, men in publishing are more than twice as likely to become managers, and more than five times as likely to become company board directors. As elsewhere, the larger the company and the more senior the position, the fewer women in place. And again as elsewhere, many of the barriers confronting women are attitudinal: men and women are simply not judged by the same criteria.
32. **We recommend that management in the media should take the steps which we have recommended for management generally.**

Women in the Trade Unions

33. Trade unions are important to women in two ways. First, women can achieve positions of influence in society by becoming active in a trade union through elected office as a lay member or as a paid official. Secondly, trade unions have an opportunity to put women's issues on the bargaining agenda for negotiations with employers. Historically, trade unions have been organised and run by men for largely male memberships. During the past thirty years, there has been an encouraging increase in the number of women trade union members. But, until recently, this increase has not resulted in any significant improvement in the numbers of women who have become union officials or have been able to participate in union

governing bodies. The Trades Union Congress and some individual trade unions are attempting to alter the structures of their organisations which have traditionally prevented women from reaching the top. There has been an increase in the number of women holding top jobs within trade unions. Some unions have reserved places for women on executive committees; others have established women's committees; and most have appointed women's officers. Some unions are now backing equal pay claims on behalf of their women members.

34. However, women still have a long way to go before they are fairly represented at the top of the TUC and of individual trade unions, and before their needs and interests are adequately taken into account in the process of collective bargaining on pay, fringe benefits, and working conditions. **We recommend that trade unions consider the representation of women on Executive Committees, as full-time union officials, and at union Conferences; and where their representation is disproportionately low, we recommend that unions consider whether barriers of structure or attitude are impeding the progress of women. We further recommend that, acting as employers, trade unions should take the steps which we have recommended for management generally.**
35. **We recommend that the TUC and individual trade unions should take full advantage of the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act which allow steps to be taken to ensure that the number of women in the upper ranks of trade unions reflects the number of women members. We also recommend that trade unions should place women's rights and interests high on the collective bargaining agenda, and should fully support claims for equal pay and equal treatment.**

Good Practice

36. Though women still face enormous obstacles, we were heartened to discover a number of firms and institutions which, both from principle and from enlightened self-interest, have taken steps to use their women employees as effectively as possible. These employers have appreciated that action has to be taken at all levels: at the top, to achieve the best decision-making; and lower down, to make sure

that women have a chance to climb the ladder. **We commend, as examples among many:**

- the Civil Service's reassessment of criteria for fast-stream recruitment;
- British Rail's and Littlewoods' setting of voluntary targets for recruitment and promotion;
- the Bank of England's and Unilever's career planning for potential managers;
- Camberwell Community Health and Priority Health Services Unit's imaginative use of job sharing at a very senior level;
- British Petroleum's highly flexible career break scheme;
- Mars Confectionery's innovative use of specialist advertising to attract senior women.

CONCLUSION

37. There are still formidable barriers which stop women getting to the top: of structures, of working practices, of tradition and above all, of attitude. But there is strong evidence of what organisations can do to break down all of these barriers. It would take only a small amount of determination to make sure this country ceases to under-use nearly half of its talent. We urge Government and Parliament, industry and commerce, the professions, academia and the various branches of the public service to act on our recommendations, so that we may now cover at speed the last long mile of the journey towards equality. It can be done.

Part One – Introduction

There are some women in occupations with power and influence in Britain. During the past twenty years or so, there has been a quiet revolution in women's labour force participation, and more and more women have taken their places beside men in all walks of life. For much of the century, women's economic activities outside the home were subordinate to their roles as wives and mothers. But since the 1950s, when women comprised less than one-third of the labour force, this has changed markedly. Today women make up very nearly half of the labour force, and almost every occupation in all sectors of the economy can point to an increasing presence of women.

It remains the case, however, that many women are not able to fulfil their potential in the labour market. Some women have done so and have reached the top, but not yet enough women and not yet all women with the skills, talent and experience to do so.

The Glass Ceiling

Many women are blocked in their attempts to gain access to the higher reaches of public and professional life. They remain clustered in positions that fail to make full use of their qualifications and abilities. Over seventy per cent of women work in lower-level clerical and service sector jobs; over forty per cent work in jobs where they have no male colleagues. The total number of women elected as MPs in the 70 years since female suffrage was first introduced has yet to equal the number of men coming into the House of Commons in any single election. For too many women there is a glass ceiling over their aspirations – it allows them to see where they might go, but stops them getting there. In any given occupation and in any given public position, the higher the rank, prestige or power, the smaller the proportion of women.

A complex web of myths and outdated values has in the past established the view that women are not suited for positions of power and influence, wasted the talents of women, and restricted the resources available to the nation: losses recognised by the 1974 Government White Paper *Equality for Women*. *Equality for Women* argued forcefully for practical solutions to the problem of inequality, set the stage for the enactment of equal pay and sex discrimination legislation, and brought the Equal Opportunities Commission into existence.

It was made clear in the White Paper that Government action alone would not overcome the barriers confronting women. Legislation was seen as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition facilitating women's chances of breaking through the glass ceiling. In addition to legislation, the best efforts of employers, trade unions, the professions and educators would also be necessary. Fifteen years later, the gap between hope and fulfilment remains very wide – the complex web has not yet been unravelled and removed.

The Constitutional and Legal Framework

The constitutional and legal framework governing equal opportunities as between men and women is relevant not only to the legal obligations of Government, public authorities, employers, trade unions, and others. It reflects the wider public philosophy of the United Kingdom and of the international community. Although the United Kingdom has no written constitution or Bill of Rights guaranteeing equality of opportunity, without sex discrimination, in access to political and public life, we do have specific legislation forbidding sex discrimination. The United Kingdom is also party to international treaties which guarantee equal rights for women (see Appendix One).

The Equal Opportunities Commission was established under the Sex Discrimination Act and has the important duty of working towards the elimination of sex discrimination as well as promoting equal opportunities between the sexes. The Commission has the power to give assistance to individuals in legal proceedings under the Act. It may also apply in its own right for judicial review of the Act and omissions of Ministers and public authorities of all kinds which are contrary to the statutory principle of non-discrimination. The Commission has already exercised the power to apply for judicial review in cases involving discrimination in secondary education by local education authorities. No occasion has yet arisen in which the Commission has felt called upon to seek judicial review because of direct

or indirect sex discrimination in appointments to public office. However, Ministers and Government Departments are at risk of applications for judicial review if they fail to eliminate any direct or indirect sex discrimination in making appointments to public offices or posts, and in making arrangements for the purpose of deciding who should be offered offices or posts.

The budget of the Equal Opportunities Commission has been cut in real terms during recent years. It lacks the necessary resources to enable it effectively to discharge its vital law enforcement functions. However, it has achieved major successes in severely straightened circumstances. We agree with the recent report by the House of Lords' Select Committee on the European Communities (HL Paper 76, 25 July 1989) that it is essential that the Commission is adequately funded in its law enforcement functions.

Good laws are essential, but good laws alone are not sufficient to change the out-dated practices and attitudes that maintain the unequal status of women in Britain today. A wide range of effective administrative and voluntary measures are also needed to translate the ideals of equal opportunity into practical realities.

The 1990s: An Opportunity for Change

The 1990s offer special opportunities for increasing the presence of women in positions of influence. The number of young people available to employers over the first five years of the 1990s is expected to drop by about one-quarter, representing a loss of around one million young workers. In contrast, the number of women entering the labour market during this same period is expected to increase, with women likely to account for about eighty per cent of an anticipated 1.1 million new workers. Women aged 25-44, returning to work following breaks for childcare, are projected to make up the largest single group within this pool of entrants to the labour force.¹ These demographic changes carry tremendous potential for women.

In addition, the evolving structure of the labour market means that there is likely to be more room for women at the top. Most observers believe that the marked post-war increase in higher level and professional occupations will continue well into the next decade and beyond. Of the 1.7 million new jobs anticipated by 1995, some one million will be in professional and related occupations, bringing the proportion of the labour force employed in these occupations to just under one-quarter by the middle of the decade.²

Fewer young people and more higher level jobs means that employers will be forced to compete more strongly than ever for the best candidates for their companies, irrespective of gender. Economic necessity may compel us to recognise that the best man for the job in the 1990s is a woman.

Plan of the Report

The Commission has not attempted to consider every senior occupational position. Time, money and common sense dictated that choices had to be made between the various areas of public, corporate and professional life. The primary criterion for inclusion was the degree of influence and/or power attached to the position, in the sense that its incumbents have the ability to affect the everyday lives of other citizens.

It will be evident that not all occupations with power or influence have been included in the Commission's assessment. Notable absences include the police, local government councillors, the health authorities, the medical profession and teachers in schools, polytechnics and colleges. It will also be evident, however, that the obstacles to equal opportunities discussed here in relation to specific occupations exist on a wider and more generalised scale. Similarly, the strategies adopted to overcome obstacles in these specific areas are relevant to other areas as well. In this way, the recommendations of the Commission have relevance beyond the occupations referred to in this Report.

Following a general overview of the barriers that prevent many able women from reaching the top, presented in Part Two, the Report is divided into four main parts.

Part Three – The Public Realm extends the general discussion of barriers undertaken in Part Two in an assessment of four areas in the public realm with direct and immediate influence over our everyday lives. Overcoming the under-representation of women in Parliament, among the higher ranks of the Civil Service, in the judiciary and among public appointees is seen as particularly important given the level of influence invested in these positions.

Given the considerable power that corporations in Britain exercise in society, **Part Four – Corporate Management** argues that the proper representation of women in the corporate sector is essential. Women's progress into the upper echelons of senior management and the boardroom is discussed, and reference is made to companies committed to equality at the top.

Part Five – Other Key Areas of Influence brings together three other areas seen to have particular influence over our everyday lives: academia, the media and the trade unions.

Part Six – Strategies for Change outlines the actions taken by a wide variety of organisations in order to overcome the barriers that not only prevent women from exercising their full potential, but also deny employers the extra competitive edge that comes with the full use of all available talent and expertise. Appendices Four and Five provide further information about employers and other organisations active in creating equal opportunities for women.

Notes

1. Institute for Employment Research, *Review of the Economy and Employment. Occupational Update 1988*, University of Warwick, 1988.
2. Institute for Employment Research, *ibid.*, 1988.

Part Two – Barriers to Equality

Most women will, in varying degrees of severity, face barriers in their attempt to achieve parity with men in employment and public life. In some occupations and some sectors of society, such as the Church or the Armed Forces, these barriers are unique: they exist only in relation to that particular occupation or that particular sector. These unique barriers often require special attention if they are to be eradicated. But women also face general barriers which transcend differences of occupation and sector – out-dated attitudes towards women's roles in society, sex discrimination, inadequate provision of childcare facilities or support for the care of elderly dependents, and inflexibility in the organisation of work and careers.

These general barriers prevent women from reaching top jobs and positions of influence by reducing the size of the pool of potential highflyers. Inequality of opportunity at the beginning and throughout the middle stages of men's and women's careers inevitably means that many more men than women come within striking distance of the top. In order to ensure that more women get to the top, therefore, it is necessary to overcome barriers which affect their progress at lower levels. Increasing the pool of women on the lower rungs of career ladders is, therefore, an essential first step towards greater equality at the top of the ladder.

Thus, although the focus of this Report is on positions of seniority and influence, we begin by a brief overview of the barriers which militate against women's chances at all levels. These barriers to equality of opportunity between men and women in the widest sense inevitably limit women's opportunities at the top.

Traditional Roles

One of the most intractable barriers is the responsibility women assume for the care and well-being of the family. As wives, mothers and daughters,

women – often by preference but frequently because no other solution exists – provide the primary care for husbands, children and elderly or dependent relatives. In societies like ours where women also work outside the home this means, first, that women have two jobs rather than one; and second, that when these two jobs conflict, it is generally women's careers that suffer.

There is a clear link between the availability of safe, reliable childcare facilities and the continuing employment of women with young children, as experience elsewhere in Europe confirms. In France, Belgium and Denmark, for example, where publicly-subsidised pre-primary school care is widely available, well over half the women with under-fives go out to work. In Britain, however, where public provision is minimal, less than one-third of women with children under age five are in employment, usually part-time.

Many women choose to stay at home during the early years of their children's lives. These women require different kinds of options, such as career break schemes, if they are not to be penalised later on. Research suggests, however, that as many as one million women not now in employment would enter the labour market if adequate childcare facilities existed.¹ Furthermore, women who stay at home full-time for a short while to care for their young children will, once they have resumed employment, require after-school and holiday care facilities for their older children, as will women who remain in paid work continuously. Their needs must be met in order not to waste the talents of women who, even when their children are grown, will have careers extending ahead some twenty or thirty years.

A recent European Community report suggests that a rapid expansion in the number of daycare places in the UK is urgent if the estimated demand for care for about 2,000,000 under-fives is to be met.² In response to this demand, and to the needs of the economy in light of expected demographic changes of the next decade, the Government has initiated a five-point strategy for improving childcare provision. This plan places primary responsibility on employers, local authorities and voluntary organisations. Employers are encouraged to claim available tax relief on capital and running costs; local authorities and employers are invited to make use of school premises for after-school and holiday play schemes; voluntary organisations are encouraged to set up local registers of childminders. In addition, the Government has agreed to provide 'pump-priming' funding for the establishment of a national association of childcare providers designed to improve the quality and standards of care.

Despite requests, however, from various interested groups, the CBI prominent among them, the Government has so far declined to allow tax deductions for childcare expenses or to relieve employer-subsidized nursery care of its employee benefit taxation. It is worth noting that at current rates, workplace nurseries attract a higher rate of taxation as a benefit-in-kind than do company cars.

Although the government's five-point strategy is likely to be of some limited help to women, there is some risk in leaving the burden of providing childcare facilities almost entirely with employers, particularly in the absence of financial incentives. Because of the costs involved in establishing adequate childcare facilities, many employers are unlikely to be able to benefit fully from the reservoir of skills and talents which women possess. In 1989, there were only just over 100 workplace nurseries in the UK, provided mainly by employers in local authorities, hospitals and colleges, but including about 20 private sector employers.³ Thus although employer assistance with childcare is increasing, the relative paucity of such help means that the skills and talents of women will not be maximised within the economy as a whole, and British employers will be at a disadvantage when competing in European and North American markets where women's talents are more readily available. Help with childcare would increase the international competitiveness of British employers, and it is in the interests of both employers and Government to bring this about.

The provision of adequate childcare does not benefit women only: it is a rare employer indeed who does not experience an increase in sick leave among his or her employees during half-term holidays. Experience from the United States suggests that the provision of childcare facilities tends to lead to lower absenteeism and turnover, improved productivity, higher employee morale and more successful recruitment and retention of women.⁴ These same benefits could be made available to employers in Britain, with the right mix of employer based and publicly-funded childcare.

Inflexibility

The traditional way in which work is organised is often unnecessarily rigid and inflexible. Fixed, full-time schedules are the norm, with career success characteristically dependent upon full-time, uninterrupted commitment to an enterprise or occupation. For as long as women continue to bear the major share of domestic responsibilities, the demand for a full-time commitment to a career for the whole of their working lives will continue to bar their way.

Increased flexibility in the way in which work and careers are organised is therefore an important condition for equality of access to positions at the top.

Changes in the organisation of work which might benefit women are discernible but they need to be developed on a much wider scale. Flexibility became the byword of the 1980s, as firms strove for greater productivity and profitability. In the 1990s, flexible careers and workplaces may provide opportunities to enhance productivity further through the retention of trained, well-qualified women.

Currently, women with young children achieve flexibility while their children are young by restricting their participation in employment and public life, either through taking a complete break from such work or by returning to it on a part-time basis. Part-time employment is one of the few ways readily available for balancing paid work with family life, but it carries both financial and career disadvantages. Research shows that up to 30 per cent of women's life-time earnings can be lost post motherhood largely through a return to work part-time,⁵ and that almost half of all women returning to part-time employment after breaks for childcare do so to jobs below the level for which they are qualified.⁶

Women may thus be penalised by their attempts to achieve flexibility over their childrearing years. Women who take a complete break from paid work for children fail to conform to expected (male) career patterns, and only rarely find that the time they have spent at home is valued by prospective employers. Women who remain in employment on a part-time basis are only rarely able to do so in their chosen careers. Either way, career continuity is lost.

Senior positions are still often perceived as unsuited to less than a full-time commitment, because of fears expressed about client continuity, organisational inefficiency and loss of managerial control. It is unlikely that all senior jobs will suit part-time working arrangements, but probably many more jobs could accommodate them. Indeed, part-time work at senior levels already occurs where men combine their main job with another acceptable activity such as sitting on Boards and Commissions. The most inflexible employers are likely to be those who have never made the attempt to provide alternative forms of working for their staff and have not therefore perceived the benefits to themselves as well as to their senior women employees.

Employers benefit from part-time working arrangements through reduced labour costs, increased productivity, maximum use of plant and equipment, and the flexibility to relate levels of staffing to fluctuations in product or

service demand. Employers stand to benefit further through the extension of part-time hours to employees in senior and professional positions, thereby retaining women's skills and knowledge.

Sex Discrimination

Discrimination against women *qua* women takes many forms and can be highly resilient despite legal prohibition and cultural change. Sex discrimination can and in some cases still does affect women at all levels of achievement and thus effectively bars their progress towards the top. Women may be discouraged at work by sexual harassment, or by attitudes which suggest that their efforts to succeed are not taken seriously. Of particular salience are the barriers created by discrimination in recruitment and promotion.

These barriers include:

- unnecessary age bars and excessive mobility requirements;
- informal selection procedures which tend to be inconsistent, secretive and not open to accountability;
- stereotyped assumptions among selectors about women's career availability and intentions;
- unspecified selection criteria which change with the candidate;
- the use of word-of-mouth or old-boy networks to find potential candidates, to the exclusion of women;
- prejudice by selectors about what is 'right' for women, in particular that women are best suited to their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

All top jobs and positions of influence operate with mechanisms that provide channels of upward mobility for 'insiders' while barring 'outsiders'. Women are seldom members of the ingroup, and hence often fail to find the correct path upwards. This can be the case because of attitudes – as in the belief that a woman wouldn't be quite right for a particular job – or because women's early careers do not exactly match the expected stereotype. Particularly noteworthy is the exclusion of women from the informal structure of organisations.

Many women and some organisations have come to recognise the damage that exclusion from informal networks can wreak on women's chances for success and on the way organisations use human resources. Women-only networks, now flourishing in business, industry and the professions, are attempts to overcome this barrier, as are women-only training and

assertiveness courses. But however effective women-only undertakings are, they will not bring women into the informal networks of strategically placed men. The two-way channel of information provided by informal networks – listening and being heard – will thus remain closed to women in significant measure, unless those men in senior management who are in a position to bring women ‘inside’ make the positive effort necessary to achieve that end.

The barriers outlined above share two characteristics: each one reduces the number of women in the pool of potential highflyers, and thus limits the number of women who come within reach of the top; and each one stems from policies, practices and attitudes that have little place in Britain in the 1990s. These barriers are not a result solely, or even mainly, of ill-will. They result also from lack of awareness and insensitivity leading to discrimination which is often inadvertent and unconscious. There are too many organisations that claim to be equal opportunity employers, but whose practice falls far short of what is required. The test must always be not good intentions, but the actual percentage of women in key positions.

We hope, therefore, that our Report will have the effect of persuading even those organisations that see themselves as enlightened to review their practices in the light of our recommendations. To facilitate this end, much of our Report is devoted to showing how employers and other organisations are successfully overcoming impediments to the fairer representation of women at the top.

Notes

1. Hilary Metcalf and Patricia Leighton, *The Under-utilisation of Women in the Labour Market*, IMS Report No 172, 1989.
2. Bronwen Cohen, *Caring for Children: Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom*, Commission of the European Communities, 1988.
3. Penny Craig and Delyth Morgan, *Workplace Nurseries – Who Cares?* A report on the current provision of workplace nurseries, Workplace Nurseries Campaign, March 1989.
4. D. Petersen and D. Masengill, ‘Childcare Programs Benefit Employers, Too’, *Personnel*, May 1988:58-62.
5. H. Joshi and M-L Newell, *Family responsibilities and pay differentials: evidence from men and women born in 1946*, CEPR Discussion Paper No 157, 1987.
6. Jean Martin and Ceridwen Roberts, *Women and Employment: A Lifetime Perspective*, HMSO, 1984.

PART THREE – THE PUBLIC REALM

Equality between men and women in the public realm is more than a matter of fairness for individuals. The decisions taken by public servants have consequences for all members of society – male and female, young and old. **Politicians** govern us, and control our destinies in myriad ways – legal, economic and social. **Civil Servants** advise Governments and implement their policies. **Public Appointees** take decisions that affect our health, our enjoyment of the arts, our local environments. The **Judiciary** interprets and applies the laws made by Parliament. It is in the public interest that women should have equality of entry and advancement within these spheres of influence.

Women in Parliament

Proper representation of women in a nation's political life is essential. And yet, women are chronically under-represented in the national legislatures of every democratic society. The extent of under-representation varies between different societies, but on any reckoning Britain comes close to the bottom of the league of modern democracies. In fact, women in Britain play an increasingly important role in nearly every walk of life except national politics, ten years with a woman Prime Minister notwithstanding.

Table 3.1 Women MPs in Europe (following most recent General Election).

	Total No. MPs	Total No. women MPs	% women MPs
Sweden	349	133	38.0
Norway	157	54	34.4
Finland	200	67	33.5
Denmark	179	55	30.7
Netherlands	150	32	21.3
Germany	519	80	15.4
Italy	630	81	12.9
Belgium	212	18	8.5
Spain	350	23	6.6
Britain	650	41	6.3
France	577	33	5.8

The House of Commons

The representation of British women in national politics has hardly increased since women got the vote. In the General Election of 1987, 609 men were returned to the House of Commons. In the seventy years since women have sat in the House, only 139 individual women have been returned. It is true that 1987 was a record year for women, with over five per cent elected for the first time – but a more striking improvement might have been expected. Indeed, there are almost three times as many women representing the UK as MEPs as there are women in the House of Commons.¹

Table 3.1 provides comparative data for the representation of women in various European parliaments. Only France has a lower percentage of women MPs than Britain, which roughly equals Spain – a country where attitudes towards women are hardly thought exceptionally progressive.

Table 3.2 provides similar information about the participation of women in senior political office.² In this case, France just eclipses Britain. Since 1945 there have only twice been more than one woman minister in any British cabinet; until 1988, there had never been more than two women junior ministers in any Government, apart from 1966 when the Labour Government appointed four women.

Table 3.3 presents the number of women Members elected at General Elections between 1918-1987.³ Particularly noteworthy is the lack of cumulative success for women candidates. Increasing numbers of women are coming forward to stand for elected office, and yet no more women

Table 3.2 Percentage of Women Cabinet Ministers (following most recent General Election)

	Total No. Cabinet Ministers	Total No. women Cabinet Ministers	% women Cabinet Ministers
Norway	18	8	44.0
Sweden	21	7	33.0
Finland	18	4	22.2
Denmark	21	4	19.0
Germany	18	2	11.1
Spain	19	2	10.5
Netherlands	15	1	6.6
Belgium	19	1	5.3
France	20	1	5.0
Britain	22	1	4.5

Table 3.3 Women MPs at General Elections: Britain 1918-1987

Date	Con	Labour	Other	Total
1918	—	—	1	1
1922	1	—	1	2
1923	3	3	2	8
1924	3	1	—	4
1929	3	9	2	14
1931	13	—	2	15
1935	6	1	2	9
1945	1	21	2	24
1950	6	14	1	21
1951	6	11	—	17
1955	10	14	—	24
1959	12	13	—	25
1964	11	18	—	29
1966	7	19	—	26
1970	15	10	1	26
1974	9	13	1	23
1974	7	18	2	27
1979	8	11	—	19
1983	13	10	—	23
1987	17	21	3	41

Source: Women in the House of Commons Factsheet No. 5, 1988.

Labour candidates were elected in 1987 than in 1945, no more women Conservatives elected in 1983 than in 1931.

The relative paucity of women MPs may mean that the interests of women are not properly represented in Parliament, on Select Committees, or in Government. Since 1986 a Ministerial Group on Women's Issues has existed to co-ordinate policy issues of special concern to women and to consider the practical effects of legislation on women. The Ministerial Group is a non-cabinet committee, without financial resources, that depends entirely upon persuasion to effect change. The Group met four times in 1989, and comprises a Home Office chairman and ministers from twelve other departments. The scarcity of women Ministers means that currently the chairman of the group and eight of the twelve departmental representatives are men; in previous years women's representation has been even more restricted.

The nation as whole suffers from the under-representation of women in its national political life. The country fails to benefit from their talents and experiences. As Britain becomes an increasingly complex place in which to live, the need to make use of all available human resources grows apace. This need will not be satisfied unless women take their full place beside men, in Government and in Opposition.

Barriers to Equality

Among the barriers that keep women out of the House are those discussed in the previous chapter: traditional roles, inflexibility and sex discrimination, but the particular inflexibility of Parliament makes matters even worse. As politicians, women have all of the usual problems of balancing domestic commitments with employment, but these problems are compounded by the structure of Parliament. It is difficult enough as a working mother to find time to give to one's children after work, but almost impossible to do so when the working day does not end until very late in the evening. Parliament is not a flexible institution, and makes few concessions to women with children. Archaic Parliamentary habits and practices have not changed since the time when the House of Commons was the best men's club in London.

Being a Member of Parliament is to hold a very visible form of power, and power and femininity are often seen as incompatible. Women tend to be socialised to put themselves last and others first, and although commendable behaviour in the home, this attribute is unlikely to get women into the House. There need to be more role models for women to emulate, if the negative

link between femininity and power is to be broken.

Women's relatively poor representation in other senior occupations, as lawyers for example, also tends to reduce their chances of achieving careers in political life. The lack of an 'appropriate background' can be used by constituency selection committees as justification for not choosing a woman candidate. More importantly, prejudice against women among selectors acts against women's chances. A woman candidate is still seen as a risk, despite all the evidence that voters are not prejudiced. What matters to voters is party endorsement. If a woman is selected to represent a particular party, then the evidence suggests that her chances of election are as good as those of the party which chose her.⁴

The major political parties have each taken action to try to overcome these barriers. Table 3.4 sets out the proportion of women candidates by party in the last two General Elections.

It is SDP party policy to have women candidates on each shortlist. This policy was first adopted by the SDP in 1982 after a complicated process of negotiation. The original draft of the SDP Constitution contained elaborate proposals for positive discrimination in favour of women candidates. This was rejected by the membership, but the party authorities nevertheless declared that there must be at least two women on every shortlist. This policy was then adopted by the Liberal Party.

The Labour Party in 1988 also adopted the policy of compulsory women's representation on shortlists, and in 1989 instituted a policy of reserving places for women on the Shadow Cabinet. Members of Parliament voting on the composition of the Shadow Cabinet are required to vote for at least three women or their ballot papers will be considered spoiled. This will guarantee women a minimum representation of just over 16 per cent. Labour also made an explicit appeal to women voters in 1987 by promising a Minister for Women if chosen to form the next Government. This was perhaps the first deliberate appeal to the women's vote made by any British political party.

Table 3.4 Women Candidates by Party (percentages)

	1983	1987
SDP	13.8	19.6
Labour	12.3	14.5
Liberal	9.9	13.7
Conservative	6.3	7.2

The Conservative Party is currently the only one of the major national parties to reject a policy of compulsory female representation on constituency shortlists. As an alternative, women are encouraged to put themselves forward and potential candidates are invited to meet party members at conferences held exclusively for high achieving women.

In all Western democracies, under whatever system of representation, political parties determine which individuals will have the opportunity to seek elective office. The Commission believes that all of the parties in Britain should scrutinise the ways in which their practices and procedures place women at a disadvantage. They should monitor the selection of candidates, and make known publicly the progress they are making towards a fairer representation of women.

Proportional Representation

It is the unanimous finding of all studies of the legislative representation of women that systems of proportional representation favour the election of women. The first-past-the-post electoral system is likely to be one of the main reasons for the low representation of women in the House of Commons. It may also be among the main reasons why the United States, despite its highly active women's movement, has such low representation of women in Congress.

Under proportional representation, it is the multi-member and/or party list element that favours women. In single-member constituencies, selection committees often hesitate to choose women candidates, while in constituencies with more than one member or a party list, there will be concern to secure a 'balanced ticket'. The absence of a woman from the list is seen as likely to cause offence and narrow the party's appeal.

The National Committee for Electoral Reform, an all-party group chaired by a member of the Conservative Party, is a pressure group in favour of the introduction of proportional representation. One major reason for their support is the likelihood that proportional representation would bring more women into Parliament. In the absence of other changes directed at achieving this same objective, electoral reform may eventually be the only way to ensure women's fair representation.

The present proportion of women MPs is wholly unacceptable in a modern democracy. The importance of the House of Commons in public and political life is paramount. The Commission believes that a Speaker's Conference, the Select Committee on Procedure and the Political Parties themselves

Table 3.5 The House of Lords – December 1989

	Men	Women
Archbishops/Bishops	26	–
Peers by succession	745	20
Hereditary Peers	20	–
Law Lords	19	–
Life Peers	305	45
TOTAL	1115	65

Source: House of Lords Information Office

should scrutinise the ways in which parliamentary and party practices and procedures place women at a real disadvantage.

The House of Lords

Women have been allowed to sit in the House of Lords since the passage of the Life Peerages Act 1958. In 1963, the Peerage Act allowed women who succeeded to peerages to be admitted. But, even where a peerage can be held by a woman or can be transmitted by the female line, the male line of succession always takes precedence.

At 16 December 1989, there were 65 women peers. The composition of the House of Lords at that time is shown in Table 3.5.

The percentage of Life Peers who are women, about 13 per cent, is far higher than women have ever been able to achieve in the Commons. At the same time, fewer than one-fifth of all honours go to women, and the ratio for Life Peerages is even lower, at around one-eighth.⁵ Some of these women, moreover, are widows of prominent public figures, a manifestation of ‘male equivalence’.

But women do play a disproportionately active part in the work of the House of Lords. Of the 134 Life Peers who spoke more than eleven times during the 1984-5 session, 27 were women.⁶ This suggests that an increase in the number of women in the House of Lords would help to make it more effective. Furthermore, it would not be difficult to ensure fair representation in the Upper House. Government patronage should be used to ensure this fairness by giving explicit attention to the number of women Life Peers in every creation. The Commission believes that appointments to Life Peerages in the Upper House should be monitored, and that the male line should no longer take precedence with regard to hereditary peerages.

The Civil Service

Civil servants give advice on, and carry out, Government policies which have consequences for all members of society. It is important, therefore, that both sexes should be fully represented in the Civil Service. Furthermore, if the Civil Service is to make the best possible use of all its human resources it will need to make full use of women across all levels of the civil service hierarchy.

Currently, one in twenty civil servants in the senior grades (grades 1-7; see Table 3.6 following) are women. This represents a marked improvement over past decades, although much of the change is quite recent. It is believed by some senior Civil Servants that the past five years have witnessed a real breakthrough both in attitudes towards women and in women's relative position. Table 3.6 shows women's representation in the top Civil Service grades between 1971 and 1988, and sets out Treasury projections for the year 2016.

The figures in Table 3.6 need to be read in context. Top jobs in the Civil Service comprise only a small proportion of all jobs within the Service. Grades 7 and above represent little more than four per cent of total Civil Service employment; grades 3 and above, less than two per cent. The limited number of jobs at the top means limited promotional prospects for both men and women; fewer job opportunities, if coupled with discrimination, means even greater limitations on women's prospects.

The proportion of women in grade 3 and above remained static at about four per cent from 1982 to 1987, before increasing to five per cent in 1988. Changes forecast by the Treasury (column 3) are based upon 1984-85 rates

Table 3.6 Women in the Civil Service⁷ (Percentages)

	1971	1988	2016
Job Grade			
1 Perm. Secretary	—	2	30
2 Deputy Secretary	3	4	
3 Under Secretary	—	5	
4 Executive Director	—	4	—
5 Assistant Secretary	6	9	30
6 Senior Principal	2	10	—
7 Principal	8	10	24

of promotion for women and, despite the obvious improvement shown, indicate the intractability of the obstacles facing women. Even if the rates of promotion among women improved, and women and men enjoyed equal opportunities of gaining top positions, women in 2016 would still make up only 38 per cent of Principals and 34 per cent of Assistant Secretaries. Overall, women's representation in grades 3 and above would remain at just under one third.

The barriers that have confronted women in the Civil Service, and impeded their progress to the top, are much the same as those facing women in other jobs. But there are two extra difficulties to overcome. First, fewer women than men are selected for fast stream entry and promotion, and those who are selected have often been less successful. Secondly, although women are judged to perform as well as men in their jobs, they have in the past been less likely to be assessed as candidates for promotion. Each of these barriers has recently been modified. This was not done to improve women's chances of promotion, but in practice, this was the effect that modification has had.

The Fast Stream

Fast stream selection is one of the most important avenues to top jobs within the Civil Service. Because women tend to experience more career interruptions than men, fast stream selection offers the best chance for reaching the top, in that it provides more intensive training, planned career development, and 'grade skipping' of junior grade jobs. Those selected for the fast stream thus advance much more quickly up the career hierarchy. In 1985-86, women made up almost half of fast stream applicants, but fewer than one-third of those selected. This relatively poor representation of women among fast stream entrants contributes to their under-representation in senior posts.

Until 1987, fast stream entry was based upon a series of written cognitive tests, supplemented by written and oral work-related exercises and interviews. The most important differences between men and women occurred at the cognitive test stage, with men more likely to achieve both the highest and the lowest test results and women more likely to gain middle range results. Under highly competitive selection procedures, these test differences meant that far fewer women were selected for interviews and fewer still subsequently appointed.

Since 1987, the Civil Service Commission has been supplementing cognitive test results with a biographical data sift aimed at increasing the

overall success rate of candidates through the use of improved predictors of the range of skills actually required for success. This action was not taken specifically to improve women's chances vis-a-vis men; rather, the intent was to improve recruitment generally. In operation, however, this change has resulted in a significant improvement in the selection of women from 29 per cent in 1985-86 to 41 per cent in 1987.

The increased selection of women as fast stream entrants should in time result in higher proportions of women in the top grades. In the past, however, the fast stream career progression of women has been slower than that of men. Of the men and women joining the Civil Service via the fast stream in 1972 (and staying) 50 per cent of men had gained Assistant Secretary status by 1987, but only 14 per cent of women. In actual numbers, this rate of promotion meant 27 male and two female Assistant Secretaries from the 1972 recruits.

Assessment for Promotion

Investigations into equal opportunities in the Civil Service suggest that in the past line managers have tended to assess women as being less suitable for promotion than men. This has reduced the pool of potential highflyers, and slowed the progress of those already headed towards the top.

In the early 1980s, for example, women's chances of advancement from Executive Officer (EO) to Higher Executive Officer (HEO) were on average 73 per cent of that of men, while their chances of moving from Principal to Senior Principal/Assistant Secretary were 65 per cent of men's chances, after allowing in each case for differences in seniority and grade background. The evidence suggests that in annual staff assessments, line managers have tended to judge women's suitability for promotion more harshly than that of men. Outstanding women are assessed as such. Borderline women tended to be marked as unsuitable for advancement, while borderline men, seen to have greater long-term potential, tended to be given the benefit of the doubt and earmarked for promotion.⁸

This annual assessment of promotability was not, until recently, always available to the Civil Servant in question, thus giving women little opportunity to make a strong case for their own long-term potential. Since 1987, however, a new system has been adopted to bring more openness into staff appraisal through the use of a structured assessment of promotability, and to link promotion assessment more closely to actual work performance. Again, although increasing equality between men and women was not the

main impulse for this change, it has had a positive impact in increasing women's chances of promotion.

Other Changes

The Civil Service has taken additional action likely to improve the representation of women not only in senior grades but across all levels, first, by retaining women in place in the Civil Service and thus increasing the pool of candidates available for promotion to the top; and second, by easing the career/family dilemma of those women already poised to gain promotion.

One such measure involves the relaxation of most age requirements for recruitment. Many competitions now have no age requirement at all, and the age limit for training grades has been raised to 52 years. Taking into consideration the breaks from paid employment taken by most women in order to care for their children, this change is likely to benefit women in particular. Other actions include the provision of childcare facilities, part-time working hours, and enhanced career break schemes.

Childcare

The provision of adequate childcare facilities has been identified by the Civil Service as a problem of recruitment and retention. All government departments have been given permission to set up childcare facilities, provided these can be met within their normal budget resources, on the grounds that such facilities are a cost-effective way of recruiting and retaining good staff. Assistance can involve on-site provision of care, with funds provided for capital and running costs, but may also be based upon contracting out childcare. Each department is free to decide upon its own needs.

Fifteen departments had set up play-schemes to provide care for children during school holidays by the end of 1988; while two others – the DSS in Newcastle and the DE in Bootle, Sheffield – were operating 'care parent' schemes to put parents in touch with local childminders. By the end of 1989, no nurseries for pre-schoolers had as yet been established, although plans to do so were well advanced in several departments, including: the Civil Service College, Sunningdale; Home Office, Croydon; and MOD, London.

Part-time Working

Since 1981 the number of part-time workers in the Civil Service has nearly doubled. At present over 25,000 women work on a part-time basis, comprising 10 per cent of all staff. Helped on by the *Holmes v. Home Office*

judgement in 1984 in which Ms Holmes, an Executive Officer in the Home Office, won the right to return to work from maternity leave on a part-time basis, part-time working has been extended to the senior grades: in 1989, 218 women Principals (grade 7), 18 women Assistant Secretaries (grade 5) and one woman Executive Director (grade 4) were working part-time hours.

Job-sharing arrangements also exist. In 1989 there were about 1,880 job-sharing partnerships encompassing 3,800 staff. Only two of these partnerships were at grade level 7, however, and none were higher.

Although both part-time and job-sharing are new working arrangements within the Civil Service, especially at top grades, they are widely acknowledged as good value for money. Part-timers give managers very good returns; the slight increase in managerial time is more than offset by higher returns in morale and productivity, and by the retention of highly qualified personnel.

Career Break Schemes

At the most senior levels in the Civil Service there is no disparity in resignation rates between men and women. Women elsewhere, however, have disproportionately higher departure rates than men, and fewer subsequently return once having left. Career break schemes are one way of improving the retention of women employees over their childrearing years, and thus of increasing the pool of women available for promotion to senior positions.

Three career break options exist for women in the Civil Service. Maternity leave of up to 52 weeks is available to all women who have worked for a minimum of 15 hours per week for one year. These women receive 13 weeks full pay in addition to Statutory Maternity Pay (if eligible), provided they return to work at the end of their leave. For women wishing to take a longer break, formal 'keeping in touch' schemes had been put in place in 13 departments by 1988, with a further nine setting up schemes in 1989.

Under keeping in touch schemes, women must resign and apply for reinstatement. Contact is maintained by supplying literature and through attendance at important staff meetings; periodic interviews with management take place, and women on a scheme have the opportunity to undertake work experience and training during their absence.

Keeping in touch schemes are new to most departments, with the earliest schemes introduced in the Department of Employment in 1984 and the Cabinet Office in 1985. Up to the end of 1988 some 800 women had taken part in a scheme, with 96 returning to employment within the Service. The

most senior job grade represented among scheme participants was Principal (grade 7).

Potentially more advantageous to women, as well as to the Civil Service, is long-term special leave. Unlike the keeping in touch scheme where employees must resign, long-term special leave offers periods of unpaid absence from six months to five years. Continuity of employment is maintained, and the likelihood of staff returning to work thus enhanced.

The majority of those taking long-term special leave are women. As part of the drive towards greater equality of opportunity between men and women, departments have been encouraged to publicise the availability of special leave. Widespread use of long-term special leave would reduce the number of women leaving the service for family reasons and enhance the number potentially in place to aim for the top.

Since 1984 the Civil Service has been committed to a Programme of Action designed to achieve equality of opportunity between men and women. A great many changes have been implemented towards this end. The impact of these changes is only now being felt at the top of the Civil Service hierarchy, in particular through the increased presence of women in job grades 5-7.

The Civil Service may in these areas act as a model for other employers, but their efforts will need to be sustained. Women held high rank in the Civil Service before and after the Second World War (the first woman Permanent Secretary, Evelyn Sharp, took up her post over 40 years ago). Nevertheless, for various reasons, but in particular the fall-off in the fast-stream recruitment of women, as well as attitudinal barriers, the advancement of women towards the top thereafter declined markedly. Positive action will be required to redress this, and progress is now being made. By ensuring that women at all levels of attainment have equal opportunities to enter and to aim for the top, the Civil Service may, in time, contribute to the equal representation of women in positions of influence and authority.

Public Appointments⁹

Public appointments are made to an extremely wide variety of organisations, ranging from the executive bodies of national museums and galleries through health and safety advisory committees to Social Security Appeal Tribunals and prison Boards of Visitors. Almost 46,000 places must be filled, with more than half of the posts nominated and appointed by Government Departments and the remainder filled by government appointment on the basis of names put forward by outside bodies such as the TUC and the CBI, or by local authorities, voluntary and professional organisations. In 1988, only just over one in five of these places were filled by women.

Table 3.7 sets out the best and the worst among government departments as regards women appointed, while Table 3.8 shows the proportion of women found on the various types of public bodies. Executive bodies, where women are the most under-represented, are also the most powerful: they normally employ staff and have their own budgets; they include bodies classified as public corporations for public expenditure control and national accounting purposes.

Two departments excluded from Table 3.7, because they are among neither the best nor the worst, but which should be among the best given their far-reaching responsibilities, are the Departments of Education and Science (DES) and Employment (DE). In 1988 women accounted for 13 per cent and

Table 3.7 Women on Public Bodies – Departmental Appointments 1988 (%)

The Best		The Worst	
Cabinet Office	44	Revenue	7
Home Office	36	Energy	7
Scottish Office	31	MOD	5
DHSS	27	MAFF	4

Table 3.8 Women on Public Bodies 1988 (%)

Type of Public Body	
Executive	15.8
Advisory	18.3
Tribunal	20.8
NHS Authorities	28.8

17 per cent respectively of the membership of public bodies associated with these Departments. Also not shown are appointments made directly by the Prime Minister. Between 1979 and 1988, Mrs Thatcher appointed 65 women to public bodies, representing 14 per cent of all appointments for which she was responsible.

Public appointments of women remain at a low level, despite improving in recent years. Since the mid-seventies, there have been concerted efforts to increase women's representation on public bodies, by the Equal Opportunities Commission in the first instance and, latterly, by the Women's National Commission (WNC) and the Women into Public Life Campaign (WIPL). These groups point out that women are as much affected as men by the decisions that public bodies take, that women bring different experiences and perspectives to public life, and that society stands to gain considerable benefits by a more equal representation of both men and women on public bodies.

The Public Appointments Unit

The Public Appointments Unit (PAU), which forms part of the Cabinet Office, is responsible for maintaining an active list of names for consideration for public appointments, for vetting all names put forward to the Prime Minister, and for finding information about any potential appointee when requested. Although a high proportion of public appointments are made without reference to the PAU, the more important the appointment, the more likely they are to be consulted. Advice of the PAU is particularly likely to be sought about appointments in which ministers are personally interested.

The PAU maintains an active list of potential appointees, comprising in 1989 some 5,800 names, of whom 1,767 (or about 30 per cent) were women. Women's representation on the active list increases slowly but steadily, at about one per cent per year in recent years. The Women into Public Life Campaign had a marked effect on the numbers of women on the active list in 1987, resulting in a jump of about 10 per cent in one year.

The PAU can claim direct responsibility for only about 100 appointments each year. In the past four or five years, about one-third of these appointments has gone to women. In addition, the PAU influences other appointments by confirming the suitability of names, by putting forward names that are used at a later stage, and by generally encouraging the appointment of women. The PAU interviews all potential appointees on their register immediately

prior to their being considered for a job. More general interviewing is not carried out because the PAU does not wish to raise expectations of appointment. Public appointment vacancies are not advertised.

The PAU is a small operation, run by a part-time director, a full-time deputy and six or seven other staff. But although small, a lack of human or financial resources does not seem to be the main impediment to the appointment of women. The PAU is clearly committed to placing more women in public appointments: active steps have been and continue to be taken by the Director towards this end, including speaking to various women's groups, asking outside bodies to ensure that women are on shortlists, and encouraging ministers to consider women. As a result there are plenty of women's names on the PAU active list and women are increasingly short-listed for appointments. In addition, officials from most Government Departments are now actively seeking women appointees, and many expressly request that women's names are included on any list sent to the Department. There is, in other words, widespread approval and backing for the appointment of more women, seemingly at all levels.

Women are rarely appointed, however, even when short-listed. In other words barriers still exist – the most important of which appears to lie at ministerial level. Evidently, ministers are not risk-takers in the matter of women and public appointments. They want to make appointments that will bring the expertise and experience that they feel most needs representing on the public body in question. They prefer, therefore, to appoint people known to themselves or their Department, be they men or women. Ministerial enlightenment towards the appointment of women tends to evaporate when actual appointments are being made. This is not because of any inherent prejudice against women but because the desire to appoint a particular type of person, with particular merits and experience takes precedence. More men have the background and experience currently favoured by ministers – financial and management experience at a senior level in industry, and so more men are appointed.

This, then, is the barrier to the appointment of women to public bodies that must be eradicated. One way it might be overcome would be if the value of non-male, non-conventional careers was more widely appreciated and, in particular, was recognised as valuable by those responsible for public appointments. The careers women have may not always follow the standard male pattern but they generate experience and knowledge nonetheless, and should be accepted by ministers (and others) as appropriate for public

appointments.

The skills women develop through involvement in the voluntary sector is particularly relevant to their participation on public bodies. Women on voluntary organisations gain a detailed wealth of knowledge about issues of direct concern to the communities affected by the decisions taken by public appointees. Volunteerism is given far greater recognition in the United States as a sensible way for women to rise to positions of influence. Through voluntary organisations, women must research and assess evidence, put forward ideas in committee, allocate funds, reach joint conclusions, and so on: all skills required by public bodies if they are to do their jobs well and to have their decisions accepted as fair.

The Public Appointments Unit has said that in comparison with men, all female public appointments, without exception, have proved satisfactory. This needs to be more widely known. Insofar as the appointments made by Ministers tend to favour men and exclude women, it is possible that Ministers are acting in contravention of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) Section 86, which specifically forbids Ministers and Government Departments from discriminating, directly or indirectly, against women in making appointments to public offices or posts, and in making arrangements for determining who should be offered public offices or posts. The Commission doubts that this is widely understood in Whitehall, and believes that Ministers and Government Departments should scrutinise existing practices and procedures to ensure that they comply with the law. Indirect discrimination results when a requirement or condition of appointment is such that the proportion of women who are able to comply with it is substantially smaller than the proportion of men who can comply, despite formally equal applicability to both sexes. Given that almost 80 per cent of public appointments go to men, there seems to be a strong case for arguing (at the least) the existence of conditions leading to indirect discrimination.

Guidelines for Change

On the grounds that women's differing experiences need to be more highly valued, and that women's absence from public bodies limits the effectiveness and acceptability of such bodies, guidelines for the appointment of women have been put forward by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Public Appointments Unit, following consultations with the Women's National Commission and the Women into Public Life Campaign (among others).

- Qualifications for public appointments should be examined and unnecessary requirements eliminated.
- New sources of recruitment should be sought.
- Application forms should allow applicants to demonstrate all relevant experience, not just experience in paid employment.
- Unconventional experience should be valued.
- The size of the pool available should be identified.
- The Public Appointments Unit should be used more extensively.

In addition to these guidelines, it is important that the following further changes are considered.

- The job to be done should be clearly specified and the attributes needed for that job clearly identified.
- Effective and systematic means of collating names within Departments should be established, with one person assuming overall responsibility.
- Potential appointees should be encouraged to update their curriculum vitae whenever significant changes in their suitability for appointment occur.

The Prime Minister has recently insisted that the name of at least one woman must be placed on each short-list for public appointment. With this encouragement, and with full use of the guidelines specified above, Ministers and others responsible for public appointments will be expected to make much faster progress in overcoming women's unequal representation on public bodies. Their efforts to do so will need careful monitoring in the years ahead. We believe that all Ministers should report annually to Parliament about the progress of their Departments in this area.

The Judiciary

In any consideration of the role of women in the public realm, the judiciary has a prominent position. In every country, legal qualifications provide routes to positions of power and influence. Law as a profession brings its practitioners both high status and high economic rewards. Moreover, although our laws are made by Parliament, they are interpreted and applied

by the judiciary. The decisions taken by judges, magistrates and registrars have far-reaching consequences for all members of society, and the under-representation of women among their ranks limits the quality and vision of these decisions.

Until 1919 women were barred from entering the legal profession. The first women lay magistrates were appointed in 1920 and included Mrs Lloyd George, Mrs Beatrice Webb and the Marchioness of Londonderry. In 1947, women formed 22 per cent of lay magistrates in England and Wales; by 1989 their representation had grown to 42 per cent. Overall, however, the professional judiciary remains unbalanced, with men comprising 96 per cent of its members in 1989, and women only four per cent.

Table 3.9 presents figures for the total number of judges, stipendiary magistrates and county court registrars in 1989, together with the number of women in these positions.

Candidates for full-time judicial office are drawn from among the ranks of practising barristers and solicitors on the basis of their professional ability, experience, standing and integrity. And although women have now achieved parity with men in acquiring legal qualifications, past gross disparities between men and women in pursuing legal careers created a pool of candidates for the present judiciary heavily dominated by men.

To be considered for appointment as a judge, barristers must have been called to the Bar and solicitors admitted to the Roll for at least ten years; normally they are between 35 and 50 years of age. For appointment as an acting stipendiary magistrate, seven years professional practice is required and candidates must be aged between 38 and 60 years. Similar conditions exist for other judicial offices. Women who interrupt their careers too often fail to satisfy these requirements, either because while their male colleagues are building reputations and good standing within the profession, they are

Table 3.9 Women in the Judiciary 1989

	Total Number	Number of Women
Law Lords	10	0
Lord Justices	27	1
High Court Judges	81	1
Circuit Judges	434	17
Stipendiary Magistrates	64	8
County Court Registrars	222	7
Recorders	703	38
Assistant Recorders	484	25

building families, or because they do not have sufficient years of practice within the necessary age limits.

It is generally necessary to sit as an Assistant Recorder or Recorder before being appointed to the High Court or to the Crown or County Courts. Table 3.9 shows that a mere five per cent of these posts are currently held by women. Between January 1986 and September 1989, of 299 lawyers who were appointed as Recorders, 13, or four per cent, were women.¹⁰ These figures are disappointing for several reasons. First, appointments are made from among lawyers in their late thirties and beyond. In spite of their historic under-representation, a significantly higher proportion of potential women candidates could be expected to be available. Secondly, since Assistant Recorders and Recorders are not obliged to sit for more than four weeks a year, these are exactly the kinds of part-time appointments which could be filled by women with family obligations. Thirdly, such appointments give women the necessary skill and expertise to become senior Judges, filling an important gap.

We do not know to what extent the Lord Chancellor's Department is making special efforts to encourage women lawyers to apply for these appointments. The information before us indicates that positive steps in this direction need to be taken.

More generally, we are impressed by the much higher proportions of women who serve as Judges in the career judiciary elsewhere in Europe. For example, in the Netherlands and France near parity between the sexes exists. Judges are recruited upon qualifying as lawyers rather than after completing a career in the practice of law, which obviously makes it easier for women to be appointed. Table 3.10 sets out comparative figures for the judiciary in the Netherlands.

Table 3.10 illustrates a further important factor. In the Netherlands even senior Judges may be appointed on a part-time basis. This makes it very much easier for women to serve in this capacity. In Britain, the

Table 3.10 Women Judges in the Netherlands 1989

	Total Number	Total Women	Women Part-timers
Supreme Court	87	31	7
Courts of Appeal	302	58	10
High Courts	553	185	70
County Courts	128	14	—

overwhelming majority of Tribunal chairmen sit part-time. This includes some 1,200 legal appointments, of which 85 per cent are held by men. The Lord Chancellor, however, does not make part-time appointments to the judiciary. If Judges were able to sit for, say, three or four days a week or 30 weeks a year, it would clearly be easier for lawyers of both sexes, with family obligations, to be able to accept such appointments. Similarly, more flexibility about the need for High Court Judges of the Queen's Bench Division to sit for many weeks outside London would make it easier for lawyers with family responsibilities to accept judicial appointments. The Lord Chancellor should take appropriate action to encourage qualified women barristers and solicitors to apply for appointment as Assistant Recorders. The Lord Chancellor also should consider making these and other judicial appointments on a part-time basis, and consider introducing greater flexibility into the geographical requirements for sittings by High Court Judges of the Queen's Bench Division.

Barristers and Solicitors

The judiciary is drawn from among the ranks of practising barristers and solicitors. Barriers at this level are bound to lead to an imbalance at the top. Women's careers in law have been investigated by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Law Society, and various independent researchers.¹¹ In each case evidence of sex discrimination and prejudiced attitudes towards women has been found. Traditionally, the law was regarded as an all-male preserve, largely because the majority of solicitors and barristers worked in small all-male groups. When women began to enter the profession it was considered that 'women's work' was in family and criminal law, and concerns were expressed as to whether clients would have confidence in women lawyers.

In the mid-fifties only two per cent of solicitors and 3.2 per cent of barristers were women. Table 3.11 sets out the changes in the representation of women since the early 1970s.¹² Most noteworthy is the sharp discrepancy between the rates at which women pass the relevant qualifying examinations and their participation rates as qualified barristers or solicitors. Women solicitors have a particularly high drop-out rate.

Women Solicitors

The 1987 Annual Statistical Report of the Law Society indicated that at ten years beyond admission to the Roll, over one-third of women solicitors had ceased practising, but only 12 per cent of men. Three times as many women

Table 3.11 Women Barristers and Solicitors (percentages)

	1970s	1980s	1987
Barristers			
Qualifying	21	27	33
Practising	7	13	14
Solicitors			
Qualifying	9	31	54
Practising	5	14	19

as men remained assistant solicitors ten years after admission, while men achieved partnerships at twice the rate of women.

Women solicitors often find themselves outside important informal networks – Rotary Clubs, the Round Table, the Freemasons – and consequently may have more limited access than men to contacts and sources which bring new work into their firms, hindering their progress towards partnership.

Inflexibility in working arrangements leads some women solicitors to give up legal practice altogether, and prevents others from achieving the prominence necessary for promotion to the judiciary. Only a few firms offer career breaks to their employees; there is a widespread lack of creche or nursery facilities; few opportunities exist for part-time employment. The Law Society recommends the introduction of these working arrangements to firms of solicitors and other organisations employing solicitors, and in addition proposes the following:

- varying levels of practising certificate fees, with a reduced or nominal level set for women who are away from their profession looking after children;
- a general waiver of the rules for granting practising certificates for women who return to their profession after raising children, so that such women no longer have to prove their fitness to be solicitors;
- the development and advertisement of returner courses for women solicitors coming back to work after raising children;
- tax relief for childcare expenses for women who return to work.

In 1986/87 more women than men passed the final solicitors' examinations, more women passed at their first attempt, and women received higher class degrees than men. It is important that the changes noted above are implemented, in order to ensure that these newly qualified women

solicitors are able to take full advantage of their training.

Women Barristers

The first step for women who want careers as barristers is to find a seat in Chambers. But for all members of the Bar, men and women, too much depends upon this first step. Those who join fashionable Chambers do better than those who do not, regardless of individual merit. Times are changing slowly, but women still find it more difficult than men to find tenancies in the top Chambers. Women are beginning to enter specialist commercial and patent Chambers, but the numbers doing so remain small.

Chambers have traditionally selected the ‘person in the right place at the right time’ or the one ‘whose face fits’. In the past, this has frequently led to the exclusion of women. The Bar Council’s code of practice requires that there must be no sex discrimination in selecting pupils and that it is the duty of the Head of Chambers to ensure equal opportunities without sexual or racial discrimination.

No-one has yet been brought before the professional conduct committee for breach of this code but, slowly, Heads of Chambers are heeding the rule. Changing social mores and peer pressure are making Chambers which intentionally exclude women the exception rather than the rule – as was the case some ten or fifteen years ago.

Once a seat in Chambers is obtained, women compete on equal terms with men; the pay and prospects are the same. Occasionally, clients will refuse to have a woman barrister, but equally some clients will not be represented by men. The partnership barrier which faces women solicitors does not exist at the Bar, and some women do become Heads of Chambers when they reach the appropriate seniority.

However, many women fail to gain seniority because they have been forced to leave the Bar to raise families. The Bar could be, but is not, a flexible career.

It is important for the Bar to take whatever action is possible to alleviate this situation, but within the context of a self-employed profession there is a limited amount it can do. The following steps, however, are likely to be feasible, and of some help to women:

- chambers should allow reduced contributions for women who have children and who wish to remain members of Chambers until they can return to the Bar;
- re-entry training in the form of a few months’ pupillage should be available for returners, to ensure they are up-to-date;

- reductions in Bar Council subscriptions for women taking time out for domestic responsibilities should be more widely available;
- the Bar Council and Barristers' Clerks Association should take active steps to encourage part-time or job-sharing arrangements.

Although the Bar Council and the Law Society have made it clear to their members that there must be equal opportunity without sex discrimination in access to the legal profession, much needs to be done to translate this principle into practical reality as there is considerable unevenness in women's opportunities. Women have undoubtedly succeeded in many areas which only 15 years ago would have been regarded as unsuitable for them. They are becoming senior members of the profession in key positions. As elsewhere, however, most women still have to be better than men in order to be treated equally.

The Bar Council and the Law Society should call for periodic information and explanations from law firms and Chambers about the progress being made to secure equality in recruiting, training and promotion. Unless there is systematic monitoring, combined with the reforms noted above, it is doubtful whether the mere passage of time will be sufficient.

It is likely, however, that changes proposed in the Lord Chancellor's 1989 White Paper on the legal profession, if implemented, will improve women's chances. The Lord Chancellor has proposed, for example, that pupillages and tenancies should be granted more openly on grounds of merit, and the abandonment of the requirement that all barristers must have clerks and work from established chambers. Merit, if genuinely used as a basis for the selection of pupils, may reduce the scope for choices based upon subjective criteria of suitability which are often prejudicial to women; the creation of opportunities for barristers to work either from home or in local communities close to home may ease the obstacles facing women attempting to combine family responsibilities with careers at the Bar.

The Lord Chancellor's proposals are intended to increase flexibility within the legal profession and are likely to increase the number of law practitioners. If the White Paper becomes law, the pool from which the judiciary of the future will be drawn will be larger and will include more women.

The changes proposed by the Law Society together with those contained in the Lord Chancellor's White Paper could, if implemented and combined with other reforms, significantly increase the number of women barristers and solicitors in practice and hence in position for elevation to the judiciary.

The Lord Chancellor has stated his wish to see more women in judicial office.¹³ In his view, women have a range of qualities equal to, and in some ways distinct from, those of their male colleagues, and professional experiences and backgrounds not always found among male candidates for judicial office. A judiciary without women is unbalanced, whatever the knowledge and expertise of its male members. In the past, the pool of women candidates has been too small for women to make their mark within judicial office; if the future is to see significant changes then special steps will need to be taken by the Lord Chancellor to ensure that as many as possible of currently qualified women are brought into the judiciary.

Notes

1. In 1989, 15 per cent of UK Members of the European Parliament were women. However, although women fare considerably better as MEPs in comparison with their representation as MPs, as a nation the UK continues to find itself towards the bottom of the European league, as the following figures indicate.

Women MEPs 1989 (%)	
Denmark	38
Luxembourg	33
Germany	31
Belgium	28
France	22
Spain	15
UK	15
Portugal	13
Italy	10
Ireland	7
Greece	5

2. The figures in tables 3.1 and 3.2 were compiled by Dr Lisanne Radice.
3. Subsequent to the General Election of 1987, Kate Hoey, Labour, was elected to the House of Commons, bringing the total number of women MPs to 42.
4. See, for example, Elizabeth Vallance, 'Women Candidates and Electoral Preference', *Politics*, 1981; Jill Hills, 'Candidates, The Impact of Gender', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 34, No 2, 1981; J. Rasmussen, 'Women Candidates in British Bye-Elections: A Rational Choice, Interpretation of Electoral Behaviour', *Political Studies*, Vol. 29, 1981; Elizabeth Vallance, 'Women Candidates in the 1983 General Election', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 37, No 3, 1984;

5. Gavin Drewry and Jenny Brock: *The Impact of Women on the House of Lords. Studies in Public Policy* 112, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1983.
6. Donald Shell: *the House of Lords*, Philip Allan, 1988:52
7. Figures for Table 3.6 are taken from *The Employment of Women in the Civil Service: Report of a Departmental Committee*, HMSO, 1971; *Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service: Progress Report 1984-1987*, Cabinet Office, 1988.
8. *Who Flies Highest?* An FDA Review of the Promotion Chances of Men and Women in the Civil Service, April 1982; Sue Corby, 'Men fly higher than women', *FDA News*, February 1988.
9. Although public appointments are not only and not always made by Government Ministers, we focus here on these appointments because Ministers have responsibility for particularly important appointments and because their choices can set standards for others to follow.
10. Sally Hughes, 'So You Want to be a Judge?' *Counsel*, November 1989.
11. See, among others, The Equal Opportunities Commission, *Women in the Legal Services*, 1978; F. Gibb, 'One Law for the Men...', *The Times*, 27 February 1987; The Law Society, *Annual Statistical Report*, 1987; D Podmore and A Spencer, 'Women Lawyers in England: The experience of inequality', *Work and Occupations*, Vol 9, No 3, 1982; D Podmore and A Spencer, 'Gender in the Labour Process – The case of women and men lawyers', in D Knights and H Willmott (eds) *Gender and the Labour Process*, Gower, 1988.
12. Sources for Table 3.11 include: *Equal in The Law: Report of the Working Party on Women's Careers*, The Law Society, 1988; *Solicitor's Career Structure Survey*, The Law Society, 1988
13. Speech given by the Lord Chancellor to the Griffin Society February 1989.

PART FOUR – CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The demand for graduates in Britain has been increasing at about five per cent per annum since 1983, and is expected to continue rising at that rate. The supply of graduates is expected to fall, however, at an average of three per cent annually for the next ten years.¹ This means that by 1998 there will be 30 per cent fewer graduates and fifty per cent more job opportunities. Women are an under-utilised resource; increasing the number of women in corporate management is therefore part of the solution to these predicted shortages. Companies which adopt and publicise management development practices that benefit women's careers will have a distinct advantage in recruitment and gain an important edge over their competitors.

Economic self-interest on the part of private sector corporations is thus likely to be one of the main forces drawing women into senior management positions. It should not, however, be the only force for change. Men and women in the corporate sector have enormous influence over our daily lives. As individual job-holders, we are affected by the fortunes of individual companies. As citizens, not only does our well-being and prosperity improve, or deteriorate, with the well-being of an economy largely dominated by private sector corporate giants, but so too does our quality of life as noise and pollution are controlled or not; as old factories are abandoned and new ones built; as the delivery of food to our tables becomes increasingly complex and laden with controversy. Thus, it is essential that the experiences of both men and women are represented at the most senior decision making levels.

Much of corporate Britain is aware of the need to bring women into managerial positions, and considerable effort has been directed towards getting them onto the first rungs of management. Many firms are overcoming the barriers at this level, and others will do so over the next decade. The

existence of two seemingly more impenetrable barriers – getting women into senior management and getting women into the boardroom – are only now being recognised, however, and largely remain to be tackled.

Women in Management

Women's representation in management has been increasing slowly but steadily over the past two decades. In 1971, women made up less than five per cent of general management staff; in 1988, they accounted for 11 per cent. In managerial jobs outside of general management, women hold just over one in every four jobs – an increase from one in five jobs held in 1971. Almost two-thirds of women in management have middle-rank status, representing one in five of all middle managers. Women at the very top, however, are scarcely visible. Less than one per cent of chief executives are women, and only five per cent of the Institute of Directors (1988).

The barriers that have impeded the entry of many able women into management are those found elsewhere: family responsibilities, workplace inflexibility and discriminatory attitudes. Few corporations have organisational cultures which encourage the development of women – the concept of 'careers for women' is only now beginning to be a part of human resource management thinking. Few role models exist to guide an aspirant's behaviour; while mentors, if sought, must be chosen from among the best available men. There are, however, signs of change, as the following companies illustrate.

In 1987, **Littlewoods** won the Women in Management award, public recognition for a policy it has developed over twenty years of promoting equal opportunities for its workforce. Initially designed to improve the representation of ethnic minorities within the organisation, the policy was intensified in 1985 to take account of the fact that women had not yet achieved a sufficiently high profile in managerial positions. The results of this enhanced action on equality for women are detailed in Table 4.1, which also includes Littlewoods projected targets for women in management by 1991.

The driving force behind Littlewoods equal opportunities programmes is its Director, John Moores, son of the founder and now Life President of the

Table 4.1 Women in Management in Littlewoods (%)

	1985	1988	1991
Director/Senior Executive	3	5	10
Senior Manager	2	7	15
Middle Manager	10	17	35
Jr. Middle Manager	22	29	50
Junior Manager	50	56	50

company. The Board of Littlewoods is fully committed, both morally and financially, to the integration of women at the highest levels. This commitment has engendered a systematic approach to the achievement of parity between men and women through changing selection and recruitment policies and through the setting of targets for the promotion of women in the company. Targets are seen as compatible with commercial criteria for promotion; it was explained to staff that targets mean more women being promoted on the grounds of their ability, not their sex. In terms of recruitment, value is now placed on experience gained in ways other than through paid employment, taking into account time spent at home with children and voluntary work.

Littlewoods has also improved the number of women on general management development courses and has sent middle and senior women managers on courses specifically aimed at business leadership for women. In 1988, assertiveness training, women managers' meetings and a poster campaign to promote the role of women in the company formed part of its development programme. In addition, the number of women in management training increased sharply. In 1985, women took under a third of the places on management trainee schemes; by 1987, their representation had grown to over 50 per cent. This change is seen by Littlewoods as a necessary development for a company serious about improving the representation of women at all levels of management.

In order to ensure that women managers are not lost to the company once trained, special initiatives such as childcare provision, improved maternity leave, paid leave for family reasons, jobsharing and career break schemes are also now under consideration. The company admits it still has some distance to go before women are fully represented at the top. However, John Moores firmly believes that it is in the company's and women's interests for Littlewoods to continue to take positive action: "It is not only fair, it makes

sound business sense and, as the figures show, the programme is beginning to work”.

Littlewoods is Britain's largest private company and employs 35,000 staff nationwide. Their successes in attracting women into senior positions result from imaginative thinking and a sustained culture of equality over many years.

Women in **J Sainsbury plc** account for just under one-third of managerial staff: 37 per cent of junior managers, 12 per cent of middle managers and three per cent of senior managers. Current patterns of recruitment and management development are likely to improve these figures.

During a recent review of the branch management structure, the opportunity was taken to open up career opportunities for women by creating part-time positions at middle management levels and at junior, section management levels. By mid-1989, just over 230 part-time line managers had been appointed. In order to encourage part-timers (usually women) to seek promotion to managerial jobs, Sainsbury's has modified its requirement that managers should be geographically mobile.

In 1989 Sainsbury's launched a career break scheme, aimed at junior managers and above who have at least two years' service. Managers have the option of taking a complete break from work for up to three years or of working part-time for a minimum of 20 hours per week for two years. Managers are able to re-enter full-time employment without loss of seniority or grade, and to pick up pensions and other service-related benefits. Managers and staff at Sainsbury's new store in Streatham will be able to make use of a workplace creche, opened as a condition of the planning permission consent.

Sainsbury's regularly monitors staff composition with regard to numbers, promotions, recruitment and turnover, having regard to the participation of women and of ethnic minorities. The company's policy is to fill vacancies principally through internal promotion; some recruitment into senior management positions is external, and this has been a route for women to reach senior positions in the company.

The actions taken by Littlewoods and Sainsbury's illustrate the ways in which some companies are attempting to increase the number of women in management. These two companies are not alone in their use of such strategies: **The Wellcome Foundation** has established Life Skills Workshops to assist women (and men) managers with life and career planning, and publishes an equal opportunities sub-committee newsletter to

inform staff about the progress of women throughout the organisation. **The Abbey National Building Society** introduced Women in Management courses in the early 1980s and in 1987 implemented Women's Development Courses to encourage women to apply for promotion to managerial positions – in the past three years, the number of female Branch Managers increased by over 100 per cent. **Tesco Stores Ltd** established a Network club in 1988 for all female executives, whose purpose is to provide a forum among professional women within the company for the exchange of ideas on matters of mutual concern and interest. **Royal Insurance (UK) Ltd** has extended its 12 month maternity leave scheme to adoptive mothers, and has targetted men for certain 'women's jobs' as a way of combatting stereotypes within the organisation. Each of these companies demonstrates corporate commitment to the removal of barriers preventing equal access between men and women to managerial jobs.

Women in Senior Management

Women are at present very poorly represented at the top of corporate Britain. A survey of 100 top CBI firms, carried out for the Commission, revealed in excess of 30,000 male senior executives, but just over 2,000 women (see Appendix Two). These results accord with the 1988 Businessman Survey in which women accounted for eight per cent of the executive workforce, but only two per cent of those earning over £41,000; and with the 1988 British Institute of Management survey where women made up nine per cent of senior management, but less than one per cent of chief executives.

These statistics reveal a potentially intractable, at least in the short-term, barrier to women's chances of success in senior management, namely the predominance of men at the top of corporate Britain. Recent increases in the number of women in junior and middle management, and the proliferation of women's networks, although both of considerable importance, cannot be expected to wholly counterbalance the disadvantages that accrue to women simply because they are in a minority. Moreover, a predominance of men at the top can mean that the kinds of attitudes which impede the progress of women remain unchallenged.

Attitudes are important because they provide the foundation for many of the barriers which confront women. Such attitudes may be overtly sexist, but usually they simply reflect unthinking acceptance of tradition: women have not often been at the top of corporate Britain in the past, and so ways of getting them there in the future are not sought. Major alterations in the distribution of positions at the top are unlikely to occur, however, without changes in attitudes. In the survey of employers undertaken by the Commission, men's attitudes were repeatedly cited as one of the main factors constraining women's advancement.

It remains unclear whether the barriers thrown up by traditional attitudes will persist in the face of increased numbers of women junior and middle managers. The sheer weight of numbers of women should by itself bring some change. In all three surveys cited above, moreover, women were reported as being younger than their male colleagues. This suggests that there is a generational aspect to be considered, and that when the men who are currently at the top of corporate Britain step aside, younger men and women, with more contemporary attitudes, will be there to take their places. With the passage of time, in other words, women are likely to begin to overcome their unequal showing at the top. Waiting for generational change, however, often makes poor economic sense.

Headhunters

One route to the top of corporate Britain is via headhunters. Headhunters assist companies with appointments at Board and senior executive levels. Salaries for those appointed average between £60-65,000, although many appointments far exceed these sums. Public sector appointments average about £35,000 per annum.

Overall, women comprise about five per cent of those who write in to headhunting firms – the avenue least used by headhunters to find appropriate candidates, and between one to nine per cent of all those considered for appointment via other contacts. These percentages are said to be increasing, albeit slowly.

Headhunters search out – or hunt for – appropriate candidates for specific jobs. Headhunting is thus a pro-active process, and as such could be a vehicle for increasing the number of women in senior positions. Interviews with several major London headhunting firms were carried out to determine what role these firms currently play in creating more opportunities for women at the top.

All headhunters interviewed said that their main criteria in selecting candidates was ability. None made special efforts to recruit women to their registers, although one firm had recently begun to keep a separate list of potential women non-executive directors. Another firm had begun to promote suitably qualified women to clients, on the grounds that such women should have equal consideration and, more importantly, because the few women who had reached that level were, by definition, better than equivalent men candidates. This firm, however, stood alone among those interviewed.

In contrast, the majority of firms either checked the potential acceptability of women candidates with clients before presenting a woman for interview, or assumed from the general ambience of the organisation that women would not be welcome. Estimates were made that about 10 per cent of clients would subtly or otherwise reject a woman candidate.

There were also differences in acceptability between regions: – *if it's a Northern brewing company* – that is, traditional by industry and by region – *it's got to be a man*. This clearly discriminatory approach was thought to be justified on the grounds that even if such a firm reluctantly accepted a woman for the post, it would not be helpful for her subsequent career.

Reactions of clients towards women were said to vary from *wouldn't really fit in here* through *hadn't really considered it, but why not?* to a very few organisations who welcomed women candidates all other things being equal. All headhunters had one or two “successes” to report with female appointments, but on the whole did not attempt to change their clients' minds by promoting the cause of women.

To the extent that headhunting firms do not challenge their clients' discriminatory attitudes towards the appointment of women, the barriers to women's opportunities will be more difficult to overcome. Therefore, the role currently played by headhunters in encouraging women's representation at the top seems circumscribed. This may change in the future. Most of the firms currently placing women in top jobs do so in the growth industries in our economy: public relations and advertising, retailing, information services and consultancies, and financial services. As these industries continue to grow and prosper, the most successful headhunting firms will be those that recognise the economic value of well-qualified women candidates. Those headhunters who recognise this will be doing themselves, their client firms, and women, a good turn.

Steps for Improvement

Women's representation in management has slowly increased in the past two decades, but women at the very top remain scarcely visible. A few large companies have demonstrated what can be achieved with sufficient moral and financial commitment. All corporations, in both public and private sectors, should take steps to improve their recruitment, training and promotion practices, and to remove barriers to equality for women at all levels of management. These steps will include the following:

- equal opportunity audits at all levels to determine the extent to which women and men have unequal access to senior positions;
- a re-assessment of recruitment, training and promotion practices and procedures;
- establishment of policies and practices likely to enhance women's opportunities, such as career break schemes, help with childcare, flexible working conditions, management training for women, and equal opportunity training for line managers;
- positive action under the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act to bring women into areas where they are currently under-represented;
- periodic monitoring of the position of men and women within the organisation, including both senior positions and junior positions from which candidates for promotion may be drawn;
- the setting of yardsticks or voluntary targets against which to measure progress and the performance of managers with responsibility for the implementation of equal opportunities.

The Companies Act 1985 (Section 235(5) and Parts III, IV and V of Schedule 7) provides for the annual report by Directors to shareholders to include information about the company's policy on the employment, training and advancement of disabled persons; the health, safety and welfare at work of employees; and the involvement of employees in the affairs, policies and performance of the company. We believe that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, under the powers granted to him by Section 256(1) of the Act, should require Directors to report also on equal opportunities policy and practice in their annual reports. This requirement would cause Directors to consider actively the nature and effectiveness of their policy and practice, and would bring the matter to the attention of shareholders.

Women on the Board

Over the years of working towards equality between men and women, company after company has realised that without financial and moral commitment from the very top, progress will be, if not non-existent, then at least so slow as to be imperceptible. Members of the board and in particular the chairman and chief executive, are the key actors in the process of promoting women to positions in senior management. But not, it seems, to positions on the board itself.

Up-to-date information about the representation of women on the boards of holding companies in Britain is quite scarce.² The Institute of Directors reports a membership of about five per cent women but this provides only a limited picture. Figures for individual companies can be obtained from each organisation's Annual Report, but few sources exist which provide an aggregate view. Because of this lack of information, a survey of 180 top CBI firms and ten major building societies was carried out by the Commission requesting information about the composition of each organisation's main holding board and primary UK subsidiary boards. Results from this survey are presented in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 (for full details see Appendix Three).

The under-representation of women at boardroom level is readily observed. In addition, 81 per cent of corporations taking part in the survey had no women at all on their main holding boards; 58 per cent had no women

Table 4.2 Aggregate breakdown by sex – Main Boards (N=144)

	Men	Women	(%)
Executive Directors	795	4	(0.5)
Non-Executive Directors	642	26	(3.9)

Table 4.3 Aggregate breakdown by sex – Subsidiary Boards

	Men	Women	(%)
Executive Directors N=123	3,771	68	(1.8)
Non-Executive Directors N=80	569	31	(5.1)

Note: Differences in size of respondents result from the exclusion of companies (1) without subsidiary boards, and (2) with subsidiary boards but without non-executive directors.

on either their main or subsidiary boards; 22 per cent had one woman on either their main or subsidiary boards. Only 22 per cent – less than one-quarter – had more than one woman on any of their boards in any capacity. If boardrooms are where power and influence reside, then women are clearly excluded.

The survey undertaken by the Commission reveals that, on the evidence of what jobs are actually done by women in some major corporations, women are capable of holding a wide variety of executive board positions. About 40 per cent of the functions carried out by women involve finance, accounting, equity or pension management; one-quarter involve general management, and one-quarter are sales related. Only a tiny proportion of women directors in the survey were responsible for personnel matters, although this area has in the past been one very closely associated with women (see Appendix Three).

The appointment of women to board level is a very recent phenomenon. The overwhelming majority of both executive and non-executive women directors included in the survey had been appointed since 1986; only two women had been appointed prior to 1980. Thus it seems that the barriers to women on the board in the corporate sector are beginning to fall; to say they are falling slowly, however, seems more than an understatement.

PRO NED

Women have their widest representation on boards as non-executive directors, especially on subsidiary boards where they account for five per cent of non-executive directors as shown in Table 4.3 above. PRO NED is a non-profit-making organisation set up in 1982 under the sponsorship of the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange, the CBI and other major City institutions to promote the use of non-executive boardroom members. It might, therefore, be a vehicle for increasing women's presence in boardrooms.

PRO NED's name is intended to encapsulate its aims: to encourage public companies to make greater use of independent non-executive directors. PRO NED stresses the word *independent* in describing the type of non-executive director the organisation seeks to place. All too often, corporations rely on the old boy network to find non-executive directors. This not only limits the quality and breadth of talent available to Chief Executives, but it impairs women's progress into the boardroom.

PRO NED keeps a register of names compiled from people who write in (about 40-50 per week) and interviews everyone who has the right credentials. About five per cent of the register are women, and in recent months efforts have been made to increase their number. Thirty per cent of short-lists offered to clients contain at least one woman's name; recently two all-women short-lists were prepared.

In the past, PRO NED's directors have felt that attempting to force reluctant companies to consider appointing women would be counter-productive. Some clients have very clear criteria for non-executive directors and are not prepared to discuss them. However, in a campaign to bring more openness into the selection of non-executive directors, PRO NED's present policy encourages clients to consider more imaginative choices: this provides the opportunity to propose more potentially suitable women.

Although proportionately more women are currently being appointed – 7 in 1989 out of a total of 60 – women still represent only a tiny minority of non-executive directors. They are, however, better represented at this level than as executive directors. Women's near invisibility as executives is one of the main reasons for their poor showing as non-executive directors. Almost invariably clients want people with plc executive board experience to sit on their own boards in a non-executive capacity. Not only does this type of person often bring extra status to the boardroom, but knowledge and experience as well. Since there are many more men than women executive directors, this imbalance is perpetuated and reinforced at the non-executive directors level.

PRO NED now takes various steps to overcome the unintentional exclusion of women that comes with reliance on plc executive board experience. First, women who do not fulfil this requirement are included on PRO NED's register. Senior managerial or Civil Service experience is put forward as an acceptable alternative in the case of women, but only rarely when it comes to men. Secondly, PRO NED takes time to discuss the impact of impending demographic changes and skill shortages with their clients, arguing that if clients want women to choose their company as their re-entry company following breaks for children, then they should look like a progressive company with opportunities for women to advance to senior positions. One way of achieving this image is to have women on the board.

PRO NED could be a good springboard for promoting women as non-executive directors, but much more needs to be done if it is to be

effective. The majority of firms seeking non-executive directors still use other sources, most often the old boy network. The institutions responsible for setting up PRO NED, and for ensuring its continuing existence, need themselves to be more pro-active in encouraging companies to make better use of the organisation.

Further, the requirements and qualifications for non-executive directors should be re-assessed by boards and proper weight be given to experience gained outside the corporate sector, in particular in voluntary organisations. Lessons here might be learned from the Civil Service Commission who supplement their traditional recruitment criteria with a biographical data sift. New sources of recruitment should also be sought. We believe that these steps, combined with an increased use of PRO NED and like-minded head hunters by corporations, will be likely to lead to the increased appointment of women.

It is clear that corporate Britain has an increasing need for more women in management, at all levels including the most senior. The first barrier women who want careers in management must get over – getting on the bottom rung of the ladder – seems finally to be falling, and the number of women working at junior and middle management levels can be expected to increase markedly over the next decade.

Women remain seriously under-represented at senior management and board level, however. This barrier must be overcome if women are to take their proper places alongside men in the corporate sector. It is likely that the increased number of women holding junior and middle range jobs will have an impact over time on both senior and board level positions. Boardroom commitment, especially from the Chairman and Chief Executive, is vital if this is to happen without all concerned having to wait for the current generations of top managers and chief executives to retire.

Notes

1. Institute for Employment Research, *Review of the Economy and Employment: Occupational Update 1988*, University of Warwick, 1988.
2. A survey on the representation of women on boards was carried out by Ashridge Management towards the end of the Commission's deliberations. The findings of this survey are in line with those reported in the text: only 21 of the UK's top 200 companies had women in the boardroom, comprising 24 women in total. The survey also found that the number of women on boards had risen by 50 per cent in the previous three years. See 'Powder in the Boardroom', Ashridge Management, 1989.

PART FIVE – OTHER KEY AREAS OF INFLUENCE

Women in the Universities

Academic life offers personal fulfilment to its incumbents, time for reflection and a chance to influence the next generation. It is a sphere where, in theory, women should find few barriers to equal opportunity. Many academic posts allow considerable flexibility, with a regular, daily 9 to 5 attendance often not required. Academics can usually decide for themselves what time of the day is most suitable for their teaching and lectures; and, in the arts and social sciences at least, it generally should be possible to plan research so as to fit in with domestic and family commitments.

Further, the long university vacations and generous arrangements for Sabbatical leave would also seem to make it easier for women to balance conflicting obligations. There would seem less need, therefore, for special career break schemes and flexible working arrangements for those in academic life; and women might be expected to reach the top of academic life more easily than in other occupations. Yet, in practice, the position of women in academic institutions is hardly better, if at all, than it is in jobs which lack these advantages.

Recent years have seen a very considerable increase in the numbers of women studying for degrees. Between 1975 and 1980, the number of male university undergraduates increased by only 11 per cent while the number of women undergraduates increased by 30 per cent. By 1988, women formed

about 43 per cent of all UK university undergraduates. Yet this has not been accompanied by any significant increase in the percentage of women in tenured posts. At December 1986, women comprised 11 per cent of full-time non-clinical university staff in the UK, and about 14 per cent of all tenured staff. These figures are little changed since the early 1980s.

The Double Disadvantage

Women suffer from a double disadvantage in academic life. First, a higher proportion of women tend to be found in the research grades. In 1986, women represented 30 per cent of non-university-financed research and analogous staff (excluding part-time and clinical grades), and 29 per cent of research staff overall.¹ At Cambridge, over three-quarters of academic women were on short-term, fixed posts, but only 39 per cent of men. Women comprise 31 per cent of contract research workers, and only 7.1 per cent of tenured staff.² Since most of these research workers are hired for a specific length of time, to carry out specific projects, their representation on academic bodies is rare, as is their eligibility for promotion.

Secondly, even when in tenured positions, women are promoted less often than men and thus tend to be concentrated in lower grade posts. In 1984, out of 10,000 professors, readers and senior lecturers in the universities, less than 500 were women.³ Table 5.1 provides comparative figures for all UK non-clinical university staff as at December 1988.

In general, the proportion of women promoted from lecturer to senior lecturer tends to be less than the proportion of women lecturers available for promotion. In 1986, there were 536 staff promoted from lecturer/assistant lecturer to senior lecturer/reader: 483 men (90 per cent) and 53 women (10 per cent). In both 1985 and 1986, women were consistently under-represented in the promotion round compared to their numbers in the pool of staff from which promotions are made. In Medicine and Dentistry, for example, women received 18 per cent of the promotions, but comprised

Table 5.1 Full-time Non-clinical University Staff

Academic Staff	Men	(%)	Women	(%)
Professor	3,454	(97)	95	(3)
Snr Lecturer	6,902	(94)	449	(6)
Lecturer	14,222	(85)	2,481	(14)
TOTAL	24,578	(89)	3,025	(11)

Source: Association of University Teachers (AUT)

37 per cent of lecturers. In Language, Literature and Area Studies, women made up 27 per cent of lecturers, but received only 16 per cent of promotions. The Association of University Teachers argues that, all things being equal, the proportions of staff being promoted should more closely reflect the proportions of men and women available for promotion. Unless we are to believe that women are less able than their male colleagues, the fact that they are not promoted in numbers appropriate to their representation suggests that here, as elsewhere, barriers exist which prevent women from achieving their full potential.⁴

In the universities, then, the higher one goes up the ladder, the fewer women one will encounter. As a result, the few women academics that are there often feel isolated, and women undergraduates may feel that academic life is not for them. If they do, women will continue to be excluded from the rewards and personal fulfilment that life in academia can confer.

It is important, however, to note that academic jobs do more than offer personal fulfilment and individual rewards to their incumbents. University teachers have close contact with the next generation of leaders, industrialists, policy makers and opinion-formers, and may influence and guide them. Perhaps this is nowhere more obvious than at Oxford and Cambridge which have long been traditional avenues to positions of power and influence in Britain and, indeed, in the rest of the world. Women, however, are as under-represented in Oxbridge as they are elsewhere. Table 5.2 sets out comparative figures for Oxford and Cambridge over the last decade.

Throughout this century there have been women students and fellows in both Oxford and Cambridge, but their numbers remained very small until the 1970s when the majority of single sex colleges altered their admissions' policies. Table 5.2 suggests that despite some welcome growth in women's representation at all levels, equality remains a distant goal.⁵

Table 5.2 Academic Women: Oxbridge (%)

	1973/4		1984/5	
	Oxford	Cambridge	Oxford	Cambridge
Undergrads	21	17	39	35
Postgrads	20	17	30	28
Fellows	13	5	14	8
Professors	3	2	5	3

Source: Whitehead, 1987; DeWitt and Nixon, 1988

There are a number of possible reasons why there are so few women fellows and professors in Oxbridge. Like women in other professions, women at Oxbridge are subject to 'taken for granted' assumptions and disparaging stereotypes: *blue-stockings* was never intended as a compliment. The fact that men out-number women by over two to one at the post-graduate level acts against women's interests. Each university has a tradition of hiring its own graduates, and with few women in place to apply, few women are hired. Furthermore, selectors tend to assume that women's primary interests and responsibilities lie elsewhere, and thus often do not see them as potential heads of committees or professors.

Moreover, those few women who are hired are relatively isolated, despite the existence of Women Tutors Groups and other support networks. The importance of role models for women cannot be over-estimated. Women need to feel that the university and the senior common room are places where they *belong*. This will only happen when there are large numbers of women in the university, freely going about their business and leading their own lives. The difference in atmosphere between an Oxford college, for example, and almost any North American university in this respect is very dramatic.⁶

The barriers facing women at Oxford and Cambridge can be summarised quite succinctly: in two overwhelmingly male-dominated institutions, women simply are not *good chaps*. Almost all of the senior academic and administrative posts in Oxbridge are filled by men, and when these men take time to consider promotions, they only rarely consider women.

There is little empirical evidence available about the processes at work which bar women's progress at Oxford and Cambridge, or at any other university: academics have only just begun to research themselves. The Commission believes that all institutions of higher education should appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer who would produce regular audits on the progress of women within the institution, and that this should be combined with the setting of voluntary targets. These targets would not be given any statutory force. Their function would in part be that of consciousness-raising; and failure to achieve the target would give rise to questions about whether the institution is adopting the right approach to ensure that equal opportunity becomes a reality.

Further, another obvious reform would be to ensure that there is no age limit on university posts, so as to avoid discrimination against women who have taken time out of employment to raise children. The scheme for 'new blood' posts, first introduced in 1983, was successfully challenged under the

Sex Discrimination Act since it proposed an age limit of 35. The present 'new academic appointments' scheme formally abides by the law, but as many advertisements for these posts suggest that candidates will 'not normally be over age 35', there is still sufficient opportunity for informal age barriers to operate.

It is likely that the persistence of out-dated attitudes about women's roles and career aspirations constitutes the main barrier stopping women from reaching the top of academic life. It might be thought somewhat ironical that institutions dedicated to the unravelling of truth are themselves still wrapped in the myths of the past. But irony notwithstanding, changes in attitude can have dramatic consequences for women's chances of advancement. This is no where more aptly revealed than by one of the few success stories in this area: the experience of University College, London which has 15 women professors out of 174, or 9 per cent as compared with a national average of three per cent. This is the result of a conscious policy of equal opportunities having been adopted by the College; and in the words of its former Provost, Sir James Lighthill, in a letter to the Commission, of its 'simple refusal to be blinkered by traditional preconceptions and misconceptions'.

It is wholly unacceptable that Britain's universities should remain bastions of male power and privilege. All universities should take steps to ensure women's fair representation, and should monitor and publish information about women's progress. Oxford and Cambridge, centres of academic excellence in Britain and worldwide, have particular need to take positive action. We believe that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge should investigate urgently the ways in which their practices put women at a disadvantage; and that in the absence of such investigations, women's under-representation in each of these universities is worthy of attention by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Women in the Media

The media have power and influence over our everyday lives. The images and ideas presented on television, on radio, or in the press shape, and are shaped by, the images and ideas we have of men's and women's roles. It is important, therefore, that women find access to top jobs and other key areas

in the media, for without women at the top, the media risk putting forward an unbalanced view of our society.

At first sight, it would seem that women do well in the media compared to their showing elsewhere. The closer reality is not, however, quite so impressive.

Television and Broadcasting

There are many women presenters in television and broadcasting, overwhelmingly more than ten years ago. Women's names now appear on programme credits as producers or directors in addition to their more expected role of assistant researchers. The IBA is encouraging companies to put women on their boards. The Today programme often has two women at the helm; the producer of Question Time is a woman, as is the Controller of English Services at Bush House and the Head of Magazine Services. All of this sounds impressive, and so it would be but for the fact that the upper echelons of both television and radio remain almost exclusively male.

Table 5.3 presents the changes in the participation of women at selected job grades within the BBC between 1982 and 1989. The occupational titles referred to at each management level are typical of those found at that level in the BBC hierarchy.

The growth of women's representation across all levels of management shown is noteworthy. Following action taken at Board level, the BBC adopted an active equal opportunities programme in 1986. There is now in place a Corporate equal opportunities officer, together with seven others in

Table 5.3 Women in the BBC (%)

	1982	1985	1989
Middle Management (Personnel officers/ radio producers/assistant producers in television)	22	27	35
Higher Management (Senior personnel officers/ television producers)	11	13	20
Heads of Department (Executive producers)	7	9	16
Senior Management (Heads of regional television)	—	6	10

Source: The BBC

various divisions including Television, Radio, the World Service, and News and Current Affairs. Managing Directors in each directorate are responsible, with their Chief Personnel Officers, for the progress of all aspects of equal opportunities including women and ethnic minorities, and for regular consultation with the trades unions over equal opportunities issues. In addition, awareness training activities, women-only management courses and informal women's networks have been established.

Despite the obvious progress made within the BBC, women remain substantially outnumbered by men in senior positions, and until 1988, there had never been a woman on the BBC Senior Management Committee. A review of women's progress in 1985 revealed that policy statements and exhortation, although successful to a certain degree, had failed to overcome barriers at the most senior level. Accordingly, a new strategy is under preparation which proposes that the ratio of male and female employees should be balanced at all levels in the organisation to reflect the proportion of women in the working population at large. In addition, major improvements have been made in their career break scheme, in nursery provision and in flexible working arrangements.

In the Independent companies, the picture of women's progress towards the top is very similar: there are a number of women in creative jobs such as producer, director or presenter, but few at higher management levels. Channel 4 initially had some bold policies which ensured that many women were visible, but even here, women are most often found in jobs such as wardrobe, make-up, and research, or in post-production jobs like editing. The number of women who have the necessary experience for promotion is thus limited.

There appear to be three main reasons why women are found where they are in broadcasting and television. First, autonomy: a woman who is a producer is running her own show, attracting attention and earning good money (there appears to be little discrimination over salaries). To move onto the managerial ladder might mean moving to a subordinate position outside London, with no guarantee of ultimate success. Many of the brightest women simply are not interested in this route. Secondly, women presenters have a short shelf-life; they do well when they are young and attractive, but whereas male presenters can age with impunity, women drop out of the limelight as time takes its toll. Finally, there is the usual problem of stereotyped attitudes at the higher levels of senior management. Men at the top simply do not expect to see women take their places alongside them.

It remains the case, therefore, that despite some steps towards change, women are still largely excluded from the upper echelons of television and radio. The experiences of **Thames Television** and **Central Television** suggest that more is needed than simply the adoption of equality programmes and the hiring of equality officers. Six years after adopting its equal opportunities programme, Thames Television was forced to admit that there had been little change in women's representation at the top. Central Television came to much the same conclusion at the end of a two-year investigation into obstacles to women's careers: the adoption of an equal opportunities policy per se had little impact on its employment structure. As with the BBC and the Independent companies, organisational values and managerial attitudes were found still to be inhibiting women's progress.

The Press

Women have a good chance of entering the press through the same channels as men – journalism courses and general reporting – plus an extra edge in women's journalism, with a large number of jobs available in fashion, beauty and home care. According to the National Union of Journalists (where the post of President was last year filled by two women job-sharing), women enter training for journalism in about the same numbers as men, but eventually account for only one-third of N.U.J. membership. Current figures on the distribution of women among the various occupations within the press are not available, but overall women comprise 22 per cent of total employment in magazines and newspapers, with significantly high numbers in magazines.

Women in the press are found in fair numbers as general columnists, department heads and editors, especially on magazines. The Observer, for example, has women in place as Arts Editor and Magazine Editor, and in 1988 there were two women Fleet Street editors. Men will still vastly outnumber women in any editorial conference, however, and there is a tendency to fire a woman editor who does badly, where a man would be moved sideways.

Women are scarcely found in upper management. Even in women's magazine empires, women are more likely to be editing specific magazines than to be making high-level strategic decisions. We have in Britain no women publishers comparable to Katharine Graham of the Washington Post. Instead, the press mimics the pattern found elsewhere in the media: women doing colourful work half way up the ladder – perhaps even two-thirds of

the way up – while men dominate the top jobs that determine the fates and perspectives of papers.

Publishing

There has been a considerable increase in the number of women on the editorial side of publishing in recent years, with women accounting for about 75 per cent of all employees in editorial departments. Publishing is a trade that is attractive to women because it is possible to work from home during childrearing years, but too many women remain editors and too few reach the top. Research shows that men in publishing are more than twice as likely to become managers, and more than five times as likely to become company board directors.⁷ As elsewhere, the larger the company and the more senior the position, the fewer women in place.

Table 5.4 sets out the location of women in the publishing industry in 1988. The comparatively high figures for women in management need to be read with some caution, as in many instances women managers in publishing hold posts at much lower levels than men managers. Furthermore, women directors in publishing tend to sit on the boards of smaller companies, and represent only 13 per cent of directors in companies with 100 or more employees. There are, moreover, few women managing directors, and few in charge of sales and production.

As elsewhere, many of the barriers confronting women in publishing are attitudinal: men and women are not judged by the same criteria, and women too often find themselves struggling against out-dated stereotypes. Research shows that this is particularly the case for women with children. Many managers (usually but not always men) consider certain top jobs inappropriate for women with family responsibilities; women with young children are thus less seriously considered for promotion. Few firms offer career break schemes, and pressure is put on women to prove their commitment through returning to work as quickly as possible from maternity leave.⁸

Table 5.4 Women in Publishing – 1988

	Number	Percentage
Employees	3,518	60
Managers	353	40
Directors	57	22

Like the rest of the media, publishing is a heterogeneous industry, with different target markets and different corporate cultures. Across most publishing houses, however, barriers to women at the top exist. To succeed, women are required to adopt male standards and career patterns. Few women are able or willing to do this, and so few succeed.

In an industry with high visibility of women in middle range jobs, it is relatively easy for their poor representation at the top to be overlooked. Nonetheless, the consequences of near all-male control of the media are important, not least because an increased representation of women's differing experiences and perspectives could, plausibly, lead to a very different media than that which exists in Britain today.

Women in the Trade Unions

Trade unions are important to women in two ways. First, women can achieve positions of influence in society by becoming active in a trade union elite through elected office as a lay member or as a paid official. Secondly, trade unions have an opportunity to put women's issues on the bargaining agenda for negotiation with employers.

Historically, trade unions have been organised and run by men for largely male memberships. As, over time, trade unions began to attract women members, the pattern of involvement by women was essentially passive. This changed gradually, however, and today the pace of change is accelerating as both the Trades Union Congress and many individual unions attempt to alter the structures of their organisations which have, in the past, deterred women from reaching the top.

The Trades Union Congress

In 1989 there was a significant increase in the number of women members elected to the General Council of the TUC. This was due partly, but not wholly, to an increased allocation in seats reserved for women through the introduction of new rules for the election of Council members.

At the 1989 Congress, changes in the rules governing election to the General Council were initiated, in part to redress a perceived imbalance between larger and smaller unions (smaller unions being perceived as having

a disproportionate number of seats on the General Council), and in part to increase the representation of women on Council. The size of the 'women only' section on Council was reduced, but large unions which have automatic representation on Council must now include a woman among their nominations. These changes led to 15 seats on the General Council being held by women out of a possible 53 (28 per cent).

Individual Unions

Organisational structures are changing within individual unions in an attempt to increase women's participation. Some unions have reserved places for women on executive committees, others have established women's committees, and most have appointed women's officers. In many unions, women's issues are combined with other equality issues such as race and disability.

Traditionally, office-holders within unions have been men, even within unions with high proportions of women members. This is changing noticeably and there are now a number of unions in which women do quite well numerically. In 1988, for example, the executive of the AUT (Association of University Teachers) comprised 21 per cent women in contrast to a general membership with only 15 per cent women. Twenty-eight per cent of delegates to the most recent Communications Managers' Association (CMA) conference were women, selected from a membership that comprises only 20 per cent women.⁹

Not all unions have made such progress however. In COHSE, whose membership is 79 per cent women, just less than one in five Executive members are women; 70 per cent of the NUT's membership are women, but only 24 per cent of its Executive Committee; the Musicians Union has no women at all on its Executive Committee, despite a membership that is almost one-fifth women.¹⁰

There has been an increase in the number of women holding the top jobs within some trade unions. Brenda Dean has for some years been General Secretary of SOGAT (76 per cent of whose members are men) and a member of the TUC General Council. Dianne Warwick has been General Secretary of the AUT since 1982 (85 per cent men members) and in 1989 was elected to the TUC General Council. During 1989, the FDA (the Association of First Division Civil Servants) appointed Elizabeth Symons as its General Secretary, and she too became a member of the General Council of the TUC.

The increased participation of women in their trade unions can do more than bring success and positions of influence to individual women. In addition, there is the possibility that increased numbers of women in trade unions will encourage unions to secure achievements of particular assistance to their women members. One of the most significant developments has been the readiness of trade unions to back cases brought by women members claiming equal pay for work of equal value. Successful claims for equal pay have recently been brought by TGWU, GMB and BIFU.

There have been trade union initiatives on the issue of childcare provision, such as the holiday play scheme operating in the Westminster area which was largely initiated by the Council of Civil Service Unions. The 1989 TUC Conference saw the acceptance of a composite motion on childcare which called for recognition of childcare provision as a prerequisite for both men and women to maintain earnings and career progression. Unions have been active in securing childcare facilities at management development courses, thus enabling women with family responsibilities to participate in training which will enable further career development.

Trade unions and the TUC are changing their structures to enable women to participate more fully in the trade union movement. We encourage trade unions to consider the representation of women on Executive Committees, as full-time union officials, and at union Conferences; and that where their representation is found to be disproportionately low, we urge unions to consider whether barriers of structure or attitude are impeding the progress of women. We believe that, acting as employers, trade unions should take the steps which we have recommended for management generally, and that they should take full advantage of the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act allowing the TUC and individual unions to ensure that the numbers of women at the top of unions structures reflect the numbers of women members. And further, that the real test of whether genuine change is taking place will be in the ability of trade unions to put issues of importance to women on the agenda for negotiation and in doing so, help secure women's advancement towards equality with men.

Notes

- 1 These figures come from the Association of University Teachers, who provided a wealth of information about inequality between men and women in the universities and about the steps AUT have taken to try to overcome this inequality.

- 2 CUWAG: Survey Committee of the Cambridge University Women's Action Group: Report on the Numbers and Status of Academic Women in the University of Cambridge, September 1988.
- 3 Celia Davies, 'Women in Academia: A Chance for a Change?', in *The Psychology of Women at Work*, 1989.
- 4 AUT Woman, No 17, Summer 1989
- 5 Figures in Table 5.2 come from H DeWitt and L Nixon, 'Men and Women in Oxford', *Oxford Magazine*, Eighth Week, Trinity Term, 1988; Joan Whitehead, 'Why so Few? Women Academics in the University of Cambridge', *The Cambridge Review*, October 1987.
- 6 One woman in Oxbridge describes her own experiences in this way: *I had a job interview at a university in the United States recently. The chair of the search committee was a woman, and women faculty members were involved at every stage of the interview process. The number of women present – bright, confident and absolutely unself-conscious women – made me feel that this university was a place where a woman could live and work and be herself and be appreciated for what she was. Here I am a woman who has made it, or who is at least tolerated in a man's world. There is not a single moment in which I am not conscious of my 'privileged' status. In the States, where there are so many more women working as academics, that sort of self-consciousness disappears. A woman can just be a woman and do her work.*
- 7 Frances Tomlinson and Fiona Golgan, *Twice as Many, Half as Powerful?* Report of a survey into the employment of women in the United Kingdom book publishing industry. Women in Publishing, February 1989.
- 8 Tomlinson and Golgan, *ibid*, February 1989.
- 9 These figures come from a survey of progress towards equality undertaken by the women's committee of South East Region TUC in 1988.
- 10 These figures were provided by the South East Region TUC (SERTUC) women's committee.

PART SIX – STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Many organisations have invested a considerable amount of time and resources finding ways of overcoming the barriers that prevent women from reaching the top. In most cases, these organisations have travelled through a learning curve, discovering what actions lead to success and, just as important, what actions do not. In most cases, the first step for such organisations has been to declare themselves to be equal opportunities employers, an action usually followed by the introduction of corporate equal opportunities policies and the preparation of equal opportunities literature. In isolation, these steps were found to be insufficient to overcome the barriers. Therefore more precise steps were taken, including equal opportunities audits and monitoring, a re-assessment and revision of corporate policies and procedures governing recruitment, promotion, career paths and working hours, assistance with childcare and schemes for career breaks, and, in some instances, the introduction of voluntary targets to improve the representation of women in senior positions.

The Commission believes that although each organisation will need to work out its own solutions, the process can be speeded up by seeing what steps others have already taken. Accordingly, we have brought into our Report various examples of good practice. Although women still face enormous obstacles, it proved possible to discover a number of firms and institutions who, from both principle and enlightened self-interest, have taken steps to use their women employees as effectively as possible. These employers have understood that action must be taken at all levels, from the boardroom downwards, if women are to be ensured their chance to reach the top.

Good Practice

This section brings together various examples of good practice among employing organisations. Table 6.1 provides a summary both of the barriers that prevent women from moving upwards and of the strategies adopted by employers in the attempt to create more equal opportunities for women. Although both barriers and strategies are presented within three main groupings, these groupings are not mutually exclusive. In particular, out-of-date attitudes may underlie the barriers associated with women's traditional roles as well as, for example, lead to inflexibility in the organisation of workplaces.¹

Overcoming Organisational Barriers

Equal Opportunity Audits and Monitoring

Equal opportunity audits are designed to provide an organisation with a comprehensive picture of the patterns of employment of women; the effect of the organisation's working arrangements upon the potential for career development among women; the relationship between current recruitment, training, promotion and general employment policies and practices, and the development of equal opportunities; and the attitudes of employers and their supervisors/managers towards the present position and any potential changes.

The first step in an audit is to establish where men and women are located in the organisation and how their positions and rates of career progress compare. The numbers undertaking each job and the numbers at each grade are facts readily obtainable from standard statistical data. For a full audit, this initial statistical information should be expanded to include an analysis and comparison of the length of time spent in each grade or at each level, the number and type of training courses attended or recommended by managers, the number of applications made for promotion and the number of interviews attended before promotion was obtained. This fuller statistical picture reveals the situation of women within the organisation. It should, however, be supplemented by interviews with sample groups of women and their managers, designed to explore their perceptions of any barriers to women's careers which they believe might exist, and to seek their views on what action the employer might take to improve the situation. Similar enquiries should be directed at male staff to ascertain their attitudes to women and their

Table 6.1 Strategies for Change

Barriers	Strategies
Organisational Barriers	
Unfair Selection or Promotion Procedures	Equal Opportunities Policy Equal Opportunities Training Dual Interviewing Precise job specifications Objective assessment criteria External advertising Equal Opportunity Audits Monitoring Targets
Inflexible Working Arrangements	Senior level part-time/Jobsharing Flexi-time Working at home Annual hours Other flexible arrangements
Mobility	Requirement dropped or modified Dual career job search
Age limits	Requirement dropped
Traditional Roles	
Work and Family Life	Career Break Schemes Workplace Nurseries Childcare Vouchers Parental Leave Enhanced Maternity Leave Other childcare help
Attitudinal Barriers	
Lack of Confidence	Equal opportunity advertising Headhunting Internal promotion policies Women-only training courses
Prejudice	Boardroom commitment to change Equal opportunities training for managers Awareness training for all staff

careers.

It is only upon the basis of the results of a full audit that decisions can be made about any changes that are required. On the basis of such an audit, a programme of action can then be undertaken to overcome actual and potential barriers.

Monitoring is a dynamic process which provides information about changes over time throughout the organisation. After the initial audit and the introduction of a programme of action, regular periodic monitoring is essential to enable the effectiveness of the programme to be evaluated and further appropriate action to be planned. This will enable the career paths of men and women working with a framework of an equal opportunities policy and programme of action to be analysed, and the feedback obtained will assist employers to develop and maintain increased levels of awareness which should ensure that neither structural nor inadvertent discrimination affects career progression decisions.

Examples of Good Practice

In early 1988, the board of **British Rail** decided to set and monitor gender recruitment targets after realising that guidelines and exhortations were not achieving sufficient change. Targets were set at particularly demanding levels: 50 per cent women for salaried entrants, 25 per cent for wages entrants other than permanent way, and 33 per cent for graduate entrants to advanced training schemes (20 per cent for engineering). In 1988, the salaried percentage was almost met, but there were insufficient applicants to meet the graduate entry objectives. Prospects for 1989 were more encouraging. Annual staff appraisals of managers include discussion of whether gender targets have been achieved.

Following additional analyses in late 1988, British Rail instituted a further programme of action for 1989. This programme included:

- the setting of gender targets for promotion as well as more precise recruitment targets;
- identification of potential women promotees;
- positive action to attract women returnees;
- special training for managers with recruitment responsibility.

British Rail has seen a 70 per cent increase in the number of women managers and executives in the past four years, with the proportions in higher management increasing rapidly. The initiatives already taken or in hand are likely to continue this growth.

The **Bank of England** has also undertaken an examination to discover why there are comparatively few women in management and supervisory positions, despite its general success in recruiting able women. In the past, the Bank had taken the position that the under-representation of women in senior positions could be explained by past disadvantage, and that if neutral, non-discriminatory policies which ignored gender were adopted, then balance between men and women in senior positions would eventually be achieved.

In the early 1980s, however, the Bank began to look closely into the question of why there were still comparatively few women in management and supervisory positions, and this led to the introduction of a limited re-entry scheme and, more recently, a part-time working option. In 1988, a detailed analysis of the position of women (and ethnic minorities) was carried out together with a review of procedures and policies. The overall conclusion was that much of what the Bank was already doing (although not specifically on equal opportunity grounds) was good practice in the equal opportunities context, including, inter alia, the following:

- equal opportunity training (including written guidance) to interviewers;
- centralised recruitment and dual interviewing with a Personnel Division interviewer;
- recruitment profiles (person specifications) for use by interviewers so that they are less likely to make subjective judgements about applicants;
- open performance assessment systems under which performance is assessed against neutral and measurable criteria (such as responsibilities and targets) rather than a normative profile of skills and personal characteristics implicit in which were value judgements about what was acceptable;
- a system of centralised career management and planning for potential managers which reduces the likelihood of women being overlooked for career development moves and promotion;
- a system of promotion for junior staff which is not dependent upon length of service in certain categories of work, replacing a previous system which could have operated to the disadvantage of some women.

As a result of the statistical audit and policy review, the Bank decided that a number of additional measures were required, the most significant being

equal opportunities training for all staff (the groundwork for this is currently being laid) and an improved and extended career break scheme, which is about to be formally introduced.

The examples provided by British Rail and the Bank of England reveal the ways in which equality audits and monitoring the career paths of women in management positions can have a profound effect on the policies companies subsequently pursue. In a growing number of companies, audits and monitoring are revealing problem areas which companies are eager to tackle and are providing the raw data on which awareness training for staff can be built, thus preventing discrimination from inadvertently entering into career progression decisions. For organisations intent on overcoming barriers of discrimination, audits and monitoring are a major step forward.

Part-time and Job Sharing

It is widely believed that jobs at the top do not suit part-time or job-sharing arrangements. These jobs are seen as unsuitable for less than a full-time commitment, with fears expressed about disruption to client continuity, organisational inefficiency and a loss of managerial control. It is true that part-time hours would not be feasible in all senior level jobs; but it is also likely that many more jobs than at present could be undertaken on a part-time or shared basis. The experiences of those organisations that have created senior level part-time employments clearly suggest that the fears noted above are frequently unfounded.

A recent estimate puts the number of job-sharing partnerships at about 2500, mainly in the public service sector. More than 40 per cent of local authorities operate sharing schemes, with doctors, teachers, librarians, legal advisors and civil servants among those working on a job-sharing basis.

The benefits of part-time hours or job-sharing arrangements include:

- improved recruitment;
- increased staff retention;
- retention of skills and knowledge over childbearing years through the provision of employment at a level appropriate to women's training and qualifications;
- increased flexibility of cover over peak periods, holidays and sickness;
- enhanced career opportunities as between men and women.

Marks and Spencer plc have for some years provided part-time career paths for women. **Royal Insurance** initiated a policy of offering part-time employees the same staff benefits available to full-timers, such as pensions

and related benefits, staff house purchase loans, maternity leave, employee share options, and support for study leading to formal qualification. **Boots The Chemist** has introduced job-sharing for Senior Assistant level and above. The advantages for Boots lie in improved retention and recruitment of qualified men and women; the advantages for their employees lie in career continuity and development.

The Financial Times introduced job-sharing in 1985 as a 15-month experiment and in 1989 had six job-sharing partnerships in production editing and on the news and foreign desks. Job-sharing arrangements are at management's discretion and sharers must have at least one year's experience.

The position of Unit General Manager of the **Camberwell Community Health and Priority Health Services Unit** is carried out by a job-share partnership, who together control a budget of £15 millions. The two women sharing this top job have total joint responsibility for the decisions they take, although each has clearly defined separate responsibilities.

Job-sharing need not be confined to employees. Patricia McDonagh and Caroline Rathmell are solicitors who escaped from assistant solicitor status in 1988 by opening the first job-sharing legal partnership in the country. Although the Law Society recommends the introduction of part-time careers for solicitors, including part-time partners, few firms as yet have brought in such arrangements. Ms McDonagh and Ms Rathmell overcame this by setting up on their own. One now works mornings five days a week, with the other taking over each afternoon.

These examples demonstrate that part-time working or job-sharing is feasible at all levels including the most senior. What is needed is for more employers to recognise the value of using well-qualified part-timers and sharers in their own organisations.

Equal Opportunity Training

Equality of opportunity between men and women in recruitment, training and promotion in the **Westland Group plc** is corporate policy, as it is in many other companies. Westland goes further than some companies, however, and provides detailed written guidelines about the types of assumptions that often prevent good policy from being translated into practice. Westland's instructions to recruiters include the following:

Possible Pre-conceptions

In the application of the equal opportunity policy, it is essential that managers guard against discrimination on the basis of possible

assumptions that individuals, because of their sex and marital status possess characteristics which would make them unsuitable for employment. Examples of such assumptions might be:

- *lack of commitment to work*
- *have outside commitments which would interfere with work*
- *be unsuitable for the job because of a feeling that certain types of work are only suitable for a member of the opposite sex or of single status*
- *possess limited career intentions*
- *have limitations imposed by so-called traditional female interests and experience*

The company emphasises that discrimination as a consequence of any such pre-conceptions is unacceptable.

Westland's explicit instructions are more likely to prevent discrimination than similarly-intended guidelines which leave the details of discrimination up to the individual recruiter, as in the following excerpt from another organisation's corporate equal opportunities booklet.

Conducting an Interview

Guard against the effects on your judgments of stereotypes. One way of doing this is to develop a list of commonly held beliefs about members of different groups and find out what influence, if any, these have on your judgement. Do not make assumptions such as: Married women are unable to travel; Asians are good at accounts.

Mobility Requirements

In recognising that it often lost valued management staff because of its mobility requirements, **Unilever plc** has not only modified its requirements for managers, but will now carry out dual-career job searching in appropriate cases. Unilever realised that its wastage rates for women managers were too high to be good economic practice and carried out a survey among its former women managers – those who had left to have children and who had not returned to Unilever although they had returned to work. Through this survey Unilever learned that its executives – both men and women – were keeping their family circumstances secret, for fear that if management knew that they were planning a family or had spouses with careers and potential mobility requirements of their own, it would harm their promotional chances within the company. And when Unilever's managers or their spouses were required to move location, Unilever lost an employee. The company now carries out career/family counselling and planning sessions with its managers, and when necessary will look for jobs for spouses either within Unilever itself or among

companies in the new location.

Overcoming Barriers arising from Traditional Roles

Career Break Schemes

Career break schemes have been devised to overcome the permanent loss to employers of women's skills and expertise as a result of their temporary absence from employment while caring for children. Women on career break schemes leave full-time employment for a specified number of years in order to raise their children, but continue to maintain links with their previous employers in a variety of ways. Flexibility in career break schemes is important. Some women will want to take several years away from work in large blocks; others will prefer shorter periods away combined with the option of returning on a part-time or job-sharing basis.

The advantages of career break schemes include:

- reductions in the time and money spent on the recruitment, induction and training of new employees because of the retention of trained people who will be returning to work;
- women on career break schemes provide an important source of help during staff absences or emergencies;
- career break schemes which include periods of working and/or re-training prevent the loss of skills which often occurs over the period of family formation;
- career break schemes help women with long term career planning.

There is a wide variety of career break schemes. Under the scheme at the **National Westminster Bank**, women are entitled to a maximum five years' break from full-time employment, provided they undertake two weeks paid work each year. The bank guarantees re-entry at their original level of employment and provides any necessary re-training at re-entry. Schemes in other banks allow for two- and three-year breaks from full-time working hours, and eventual return on a part-time or flexi-hours basis.

Some organisations allow their women employees to choose the career break variant which best suits their personal needs. The example of this flexibility provided by **British Petroleum** warrants attention. In 1988 eight women at BP were on parental leave: four were not working at all, three were working three days per week, and one was working a full-time shift split into three days in the office and two days at home. As a result of this flexibility BP is likely to retain the skills and expertise of eight women which

other organisations might well have lost.

Unilever plc has established a system whereby women managers can choose between a career break scheme or an early return to work and substantially enhanced maternity pay disbursed in a lump sum six months after returning. Unilever's aim is to make resignation a poor third choice. All managers satisfying a service criterion who meet performance requirements are eligible for these schemes. In order to keep in touch with women on either maternity leave or a career break, Unilever created the post of network organiser. The network organiser advises and guides women on leave from the company; maintains contact with women through the distribution of company news about appointment notices, conferences, training events, and so on; maintains an up-to-date information library about issues of concern to women; acts as a clearing house for work assignments for career breakers; liaises with management about development and placement processes; and facilitates the re-entry of career breakers into employment. Unilever's aim is to encourage women to identify with, and continue to feel a part of, the company. The costs involved are seen as the necessary price to pay for the retention of qualified, experienced personnel.

The processes by which firms are striving to solve the career break problem are varied and continually evolving. Flexibility is an essential criterion of career break schemes, but should not be confused with ad hoc entitlement. It is equally important that companies establish the principle of entitlement to a career break scheme and that they allow sufficient flexibility in career break scheme arrangements so as to suit the varied needs of both their women employees and themselves.

Childcare Schemes

The limited provision of publicly-subsidized facilities has encouraged employers to find ways of providing alternatives, including workplace nurseries, the use of childcare voucher schemes, and holiday play schemes. Some employers, such as **Aquascutum, London and Manchester Assurance**, and the **Open University**, recognised this need in the 1970s and have operated nurseries for more than a decade. Most employers, however, entered the field only during the 1980s. By 1989 there were estimated to be between 100-200 workplace nurseries, primarily in the public sector. No detailed statistics exist, but it is likely that in 1989 fewer than 50 private sector employers had established on or near site childcare facilities.

Westminster Health Care, a private health care company in North Yorkshire, set up a 30-place nursery after finding it could not recruit women nurses and care assistants in any other way. Westminster Health Care offers places to other employers in Harrogate, and charges an hourly rate for each child. **The Fleet Street Nursery** and the **Kingsway Nursery** are consortia of individuals and firms providing places for children aged 6 months to 5 years; individuals pay approximately £105 per week (1988), with employers paying two-thirds of this cost in appropriate cases. **London Weekend Television** makes use of both of these facilities, and reports an 80 per cent return from maternity leave among its women employees.

The most extensive move towards employer based nursery care comes from the **Midland Bank**. Over the years 1989-1992, Midland plans to establish 300 nurseries as part of its campaign to retain women employees. Places in these nurseries are likely to range between £10 and £15 per day per child. Midland will be seeking other employers as partners in establishing these nurseries, as the cost to one employer of providing such a large number would be prohibitive. In joint ventures, Midland will undertake to pay the bulk of costs in exchange for the use of partners' premises.

Workplace nurseries will not be feasible for all employers, nor will they suit all women. Workplace nurseries are convenient only when women are continuously employed on the same site and for fixed, predictable hours. They are not practical if mother and child need to undertake an extensive journey by public transport. Many inner city sites lack open spaces for children to play, and mothers are unwilling to see their young children spend all of their time indoors. Therefore, a variety of other childcare options need to be available to women and their employers, including:

Childcare Voucher Schemes

Under these schemes, employers provide vouchers or cheques to their employees which are then used as payment or part-payment for the childcare arrangements which employees themselves have made. Employers decide the level of benefit they wish to give to staff and purchase cheques or vouchers in this amount. And although classed as a taxable benefit, childcare cheques or vouchers will not attract National Insurance contributions from either employer or employee, thus representing a cost-effective alternative for employees to workplace nurseries. Childcare Vouchers are issued by the **Luncheon Vouchers** group and childcare cheques by consultants **Mercer Fraser Ltd**. In both cases, parents may use only approved childminders, including relatives, au-pairs, and nurseries as well as recognised

out-of-school schemes. Minders paid with Childcare Vouchers redeem their vouchers on a weekly basis, while childcare cheques from Mercer Fraser may be paid directly into the minder's bank.

Out-of-School Care

Childcare problems do not disappear when children go to school, and it is important that employers examine the possibilities for entering into partnership schemes with other employers, local authorities, local education authorities, and voluntary organisations to develop childcare schemes for out-of-school hours and school holidays. The increasing concern about this area of care is emphasised by the fact that the Department of Education and Science has recently issued guidelines for schools on the use of school premises for such projects. Schools and education authorities have been asked to be sympathetic towards the use of school buildings for out-of-school care funded by employers and others as an alternative to workplace-based facilities.

Information and Referral Schemes

In 1989 the **National Childminding Association** inaugurated a 'Childminding in Business' consultancy service aimed at employers who want to use childminders as a childcare option for their employees. Childminding schemes will be devised to meet employers' particular requirements, allowing employers to select from a pool of experienced childminders for their staff. Other referral/information schemes include **Luncheon Vouchers** who intend to establish a central data base of schemes, and consultant **Robin Chater** who has been sponsored by **Lego** to establish a national childcare register. In addition, lists of local childminders are held by some employers who try to assist parents to find appropriate care near to their homes.

Overcoming Attitudinal Barriers

Lack of Confidence

Women often fail to apply for positions at the top because they lack confidence and thus see themselves as not having the necessary experience and potential for success. Employers cannot promote women into top jobs if women themselves fail to come forward, and so some have accepted the need to provide special training for women and to make special efforts to attract women into their organisations.

Women-only Training

Most corporations offer their employees with managerial potential or responsibilities the opportunity to improve their effectiveness and career prospects through training courses in a variety of management skills. It has been increasingly recognised that women benefit more from courses designed specifically for them.

The measures taken by the **Prudential Corporation** to enhance women's chances of progress within the company centre on their Career Development for Women course, a four day course run by external consultants in tandem with Prudential trainers. This course covers assertiveness; career/life planning; influence at meetings; power; and action planning. The first of these management development courses led to the establishment of a Woman's Network in the company. In addition, Prudential launched a new course in 1989, Career Confidence, designed as a preparatory course for women waiting to attend Career Development for Women.

Lombard North Central also has a two-tier system of training for women: a Women's Development Course was introduced in 1987 for grades below management; senior women managers attend a one week women-only course prior to participation on a joint course with senior men managers entitled Power and Influence in Organisations.

Equal Opportunity Advertising

Mars Confectionery ran two advertisements specifically targetted at attracting high calibre women into the business at management levels. Both advertisements produced spectacular results: 575 applications were received in response to the first one, 356 from women. Management advertising normally attracts less than 20 replies from women, so a total of 356 applicants is remarkable. As a result of this success, Mars commissioned a full study into the candidates' backgrounds and the factors which persuaded them to apply. The data acquired led to recommendations being made to enable the company to be even more successful in future recruitment campaigns.

Commitment to Change

The experience of many organisations shows that without commitment to change at the highest level – the Chief Executive and the Boardroom – even the most comprehensive revisions of procedures will fail to fulfil the primary objective of getting more women into senior positions. This commitment to change may take many forms, but frequently encompasses both written intentions and concrete action, as the following two examples demonstrate.

IBM UK invests much pride in its organisational culture and values as the context within which appropriate attitudes towards equal opportunities have been developed. The IBM Corporation is based upon a value system which incorporates 'respect for the individual', with equal opportunities policies and practices designed to create an atmosphere of fairness and equity. This value system is expressed as follows in corporate personnel policies:

IBM UK has always believed that its continued success depends on the skill and motivation of its employees. This is reflected in IBM's basic belief in respect for the individual. It follows from this belief that IBM should:

- *help employees develop their potential and make best use of their abilities;*
- *pay and promote on merit;*
- *maintain two-way communication between manager and employee, with opportunity for a fair hearing and equitable settlement of disagreements;*
- *ensure equal opportunity...*

Furthermore, IBM believes in equal opportunity irrespective of age, sex, marital status, colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or disability. Discrimination on any of these grounds is expressly forbidden.

Every two years, the corporation carries out employee surveys that allow a focus on equal opportunity issues, thereby facilitating assessment of employee satisfaction with equal opportunity policy and practice. Continuous monitoring and tracking of employees is carried out, allowing management to ensure that progress has been, and continues to be made. And although the number of women employed at IBM is constrained by the relatively small number of women who study for university degrees in technology and engineering, in recent years women have comprised 30 per cent of their graduate intake. In addition, women are increasingly being appointed to managerial positions within IBM UK. In the corporation's view, these promotions provide role models for other women while at the same time reaffirming IBM's commitment to equality of opportunity for all.

Mars Confectionery is also committed to equality between men and women at the top. The company philosophy was summed up as follows in a submission to the Commission:

We are a results oriented business and our attractiveness to women as a leading employer is best confirmed by the fact that we are able to attract and retain an increasing number. In 1989 we have women at every level in the organisation, including Senior Management and Director level.

The number of women managers, which is a particular target group for our recruitment, increased in 1988 by 25% and over one third of women managers gained a promotion in grade during the year.

We monitor progress of all Mars Units in Europe against quantified objectives to ensure that our Affirmative Action programme is bearing fruit.

The company notes that they have no intention of operating a quota system: recruitment decisions are based upon the quality of the individual, in line with the company's fundamental purpose which is to improve business performance. In practice, of course, recruiting staff from among the best men *and women* available means good business performance.

In addition, Mars believes that it is essential that no woman should be forced to choose between having a career or having children, and therefore is evolving policies and working patterns that allow women (and men) to meet both types of responsibilities. These include flexible, part-time return from maternity leave, enhanced maternity leave, and reserved places in external nursery facilities. The provision of out-of-school care for the over-fives has also been recognised as an area for future consideration. Mars' commitment to high calibre women does not stop with recruitment.

The strategies presented above represent only a selection of the actions taken by organisations concerned to fulfil the twin demands of justice and economic efficiency. The Commission **strongly recommends** more organisations to follow the leads offered by the employers discussed above. More women at the top has become an economic imperative if British firms are to retain their foothold in an increasingly complex and competitive world. But getting women into top jobs demands strategic planning: it does not just happen through good will or good intentions.

Notes

1. Not all of the strategies presented in Table 6.1 are discussed in the text which follows, in some cases because the actions associated with these strategies are self-evident. Appendix Three provides a list of employing organisations that have implemented many of the strategies omitted from the text, and the Commission would encourage interested parties to follow up the details of these strategies with the organisations concerned.

Appendix One

The Constitutional and Legal Framework

International Treaties

The United Kingdom has ratified the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Article 25 of the **International Covenant** guarantees to every citizen the right and the opportunity without sex discrimination and without reasonable restrictions:

- a. to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;...
- b. to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Article 7 of the **International Covenant** obliges States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, to ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- a. to vote in all elections or public referenda and to be eligible to election to all publicly elected bodies;
- b. to participate in the formulation of Government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of Government;
- c. to participate in non-Governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 forbids sex discrimination in a wide range of activities, including employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services to the public. Unlawful sex discrimination may be direct or indirect.

There is *direct* sex discrimination where a woman is treated less favourably than a man on the ground of her sex. There is *indirect* sex discrimination where a man and a woman are treated equally, in a formal sense, but unequally in effect, and where the equal rule with an unequal effect has no objective justification. For example, a requirement that employees must be willing to work anywhere in the country, or work full-time, or be below the minimum age of 28 years, may have a disproportionate adverse impact on women. If so, the requirement cannot pass muster under the Sex Discrimination Act unless it can be shown to be objectively justifiable. The legislation also covers indirectly discriminatory practices and procedures, such as ‘old boy’ recruiting networks or word-of-mouth recruitment.

The employment and related provisions of the Act are also important to the subject matter of our Report. Employers must not discriminate, directly or indirectly in recruitment, training, promotion, or any other aspect of the employment relationship. Similarly, trade unions must not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against their members, not only in relation to admission to membership and the ordinary benefits of membership but also as regards the collective bargaining process.

The governing bodies of universities and other institutions of higher education must not discriminate in employment, nor in the provision of educational opportunities.

There is one provision of the Sex Discrimination Act to which we draw particular attention because of its obvious relevance to the subject matter of the present Report. Section 86 applies to any appointment by a Minister of the Crown or Government Department to an office or post, not covered by the specific provisions of the Act forbidding sex discrimination in employment. In making the appointment and in making arrangements for determining who should be offered the office or post, Section 86 requires that the Minister or Government Department shall not discriminate directly or indirectly.

This means that Ministers and their advisers have a specific statutory duty to ensure genuine equality of opportunity without sex discrimination in making appointments to public offices of all kinds. We do not believe that

the implications of this legal obligation have been fully appreciated in Whitehall.

The Minister for the Civil Service is responsible for ensuring equal opportunities in public appointments. Individual Ministers are also responsible within their own Departments for ensuring practical application of the principle of non-discrimination. Ministers are of course accountable to Parliament as well as to the Courts for the manner in which they discharge these duties.

Positive Action

We draw attention to little-used provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act allowing positive action to be taken without breaching the principle of non-discrimination. Section 47 permits training bodies to afford women only access to facilities for training which would help fit them for work in which they are significantly under-represented or to encourage women only to take advantage of opportunities for doing that work. Section 48 contains a similar provision in relation to employers. Section 49 provides that trade unions, employers' associations, and any other organisation whose members carry on a particular profession or trade for the purposes of which the organisation exists, may take important positive steps in certain circumstances. If such an organisation comprises a body whose membership is wholly or mainly elected, it may make provision to ensure that a minimum number of persons of one sex are members of the body:

- a. by reserving seats on the body for persons of that sex, or
- b. by making extra seats on the body available (by election or co-option or otherwise) for persons of that sex on occasions when the number of persons of that sex in the other seats is below the minimum, where, in the opinion of the organisation, the provision is needed to secure a reasonable lower limit to the number of persons of that sex serving on the body. However, this provision does not make lawful
- c. discrimination in the arrangements for determining the persons entitled to vote in an election of members of the body, or otherwise to choose the persons to serve on the body, or
- d. discrimination in any arrangements concerning membership of the organisation itself.

In other words, trade unions, employers' associations, and professional bodies are given the power to improve the representation of women on their elective bodies, without discriminating in the voting or membership

arrangements of the bodies themselves. The Sex Discrimination Act does not permit discrimination in favour of women in making appointments to public offices and posts, nor in recruitment. However, goals and targets are not unlawful, provided they do not result in 'reverse discrimination' of this kind.

Appendix Two

A Survey of Employers

In April 1989, a brief questionnaire requesting statistical information about men and women in senior management positions, together with information about organisational practices towards women in management, was sent to 95 corporations from the CBI Top 100 Companies. Five corporations were not approached because they had failed to respond to an earlier request from the Commission for similar information. Companies among the Top 100 which had already responded to this request (ones who belong to the EOC's Equality Exchange network) were sent a shortened version of the questionnaire. By the end of June 20, 45 companies had returned the questionnaire (47 per cent), providing the following information:

1. Number of women and men in the top levels of the organisation (to be interpreted as 'senior management'):
Men = 31,184 Women = 2,113 (6.7%)
2. In 15 out of 35 companies, women in senior management were said to be generally younger than their male colleagues. The other companies could not provide this information, or had too few women in senior management to make the information relevant.
3. Only two companies reported making any special efforts to recruit women: Sainsbury's who used special recruitment advertising; and British Petroleum who make special efforts to attract women into scientific careers. The overwhelming majority report that their recruitment efforts are based upon a philosophy of equal opportunities.

4. Special training programmes for women are more widespread and were cited by the following organisations:
London Weekend Television; Barclays Bank; Grand Metropolitan; Abbey National; Lloyds Bowmaker; Midland Bank; NatWest; Prudential.

These special training programmes generally involve women-only training courses for management, with a few organisations offering up-date courses for women returners.

5. Very few companies offered part-time or job-sharing at a senior level. Of those doing so, BP offers part-time at its lowest senior level as part of their career break scheme; Sainsbury's gave no details; Lloyds Bank has made part-time working hours available throughout all levels; the Head of Personnel at LWT works a three-day week; the TSB has the matter under consideration.
6. All but three companies had equal opportunities policies in place.
7. In the majority of cases, either the Personnel Director or an Equality Officer was said to be 'accountable', but the question appears to have been misinterpreted by respondents to mean who is 'in charge' of day-to-day operation. In five cases, the chief executive was cited; in 3 the group board.
8. A wide variety of answers regarding monitoring procedures were cited; the most common (among firms not belonging to the EOC Equality Exchange Network) being 'informal'. In the more advanced firms, central reviews are carried out with details being given to either the Chairman or the Board.
9. Of the firms not included in the EOC Equality Exchange, equal numbers had and had not carried out audits. Among those firms sent the shorter version of the questionnaire, other information appears to suggest that the majority have carried out audits.
10. Fifteen of the firms not in the EOC's network had no other measures to develop women's careers at other than senior levels. Of the remaining firms the measures in place correspond to the measures taken by firms in the EOC equality exchange: Update training for women returners; In-house women's self-help groups; Women's networks; Career break schemes; Career counselling. A number of

firms stressed, however, that their training for management programmes were equally open to men.

11. The following obstacles stopping women from achieving positions of influence were cited:

“Current ethos and attitudes that Senior Executives work hard, often long hours, often 6/7 days a week. This rarely sits comfortably with married women who have domestic commitments. At the end of the day, many women do have domestic commitments.”

“Partly, their (women’s) own perception of an appropriate role and approach to carrying out the job (confidence in their own ability); Partly, the traditional perception about women’s ability and the desirability of their working in a given environment; Partly, their need to combine a career with family responsibilities. Promotion opportunities are frequently lost because of a break in employment.”

“The fact that professional women have only been entering the Company in reasonable numbers since the late 1970s.; Higher wastage rates for women than for men; A need for more commitment to EO from middle and junior management.”

“‘Men’s attitudes’; [progress] doesn’t seem too bad if the woman has a ‘profession’ – eg. accountant, company secretary or similar – but it depends, often, on the top manager’s view of his or her female staff.”

“In many cases, the women themselves who feel that if they do a good job, the rewards will come to them rather than actively pushing themselves forward.”

“This particular industry has been traditionally male dominated and although women are now making inroads in line management within the organisation, one female failure tends to affect future recruitment of females whereas the same is not true of a male failure.”

“Exclusion from male work/social networks – female ones not directly comparable and lacking power.”

“Women leaving usually due to 1. husband moving place of work; 2. starting family; 3. to go to lighter industry... The nature of the early career appointments in steel production (physically demanding, 24 hour shifts, dirty & hot) do not appeal to many women.”

Appendix Three

Women on the Board

In June 1989 a questionnaire was sent to 180 of the Top 200 CBI firms and 10 leading building societies asking for information about the sex composition of their main boards of management and subsidiary boards. One hundred and forty-four (76 per cent) returns were received. Additional results of this survey are as follows:

Table 1a Companies with Women on Main Boards (N=144)

No. of Women:	No. of Companies	(%)
None	116	(80)
Executive Directors	4	(3)
Non-executive Directors	24	(16)

Table 1b Companies with Women on Main or Subsidiary Boards (N=144)

No. of Women:	No. of Companies	(%)
None	83	(58)
One	30	(20)
Two+	31	(22)

Table 2a Aggregate breakdown by sex – Main Boards (N=144)

	Men	Women	(%)
Executive Directors	795	4	(0.5)
Non-Executive Directors	642	26	(3.9)

Function represented by women directors, and date of appointment, if known:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Buildings & Design, 1983 | 2. External Affairs, 1984 |
| 3. Legal Services, no date | 4. (function not given) 1976 |

Table 2b Aggregate breakdown by sex – Main Subsidiary Boards

	Men	Women	(%)
Executive Directors (N=123)	3,771	68	(1.8)
Non-Executive Directors (N=80)	569	31	(5.1)

Note: Differences in size of respondents result from the exclusion of companies (1) without subsidiary boards, and (2) with subsidiary boards but without non-executive directors.

Note: 12 women executive directors (17%) are accounted for by only two companies who each have 6 women in this capacity.

Functions represented by women Executive Directors, Subsidiary Boards

Function	Number	Group Total
Managing Director	6	13
Regional Managing Director	2	
General Manager	1	
Operational Director	4	
Finance Director	8	19
VP Financial Planning	1	
Chief Financial Officer	1	
Director of Financial Mge		
Information Services	1	
Director of Private Banking	2	
Director of Equity Securities	3	
Accounting Manager	1	
Pensions Manager	1	11
Commercial Director	1	
Design Director	1	
Buying & Merchandising	1	
Buying & Distribution	1	
Sales Director	1	
Purchasing Director	1	
Marketing	5	
Station Trading	1	
Personnel Director	4	
Head of Personnel	1	
Company Secretary & Director of Group Legal Affairs	1	

**Women Executive Directors, Subsidiary Boards:
Range of year appointments made**

Pre 1980	0
1980-1985	5
1986-1989	20

**Women Non-executive Directors, Subsidiary Boards:
Range of year appointments made**

Pre 1980	1
1980-1985	11
1986-1989	20

Appendix Four

Examples of Organisations in the Private Sector who have taken Equal Opportunities Initiatives

Prepared by: The Equal Opportunities Commission
 Employment Development Unit
in liaison with The Education and Training Unit and
 The Work and Family Unit

Training in Equal Opportunities Policies

Organisation	Initiatives taken
Esso	Training given to entire workforce on equal opportunities.
Fisher Controls Limited, Leicester	Equality of opportunity between men and women.
Legal & General Group plc	Training for recruiters; seminars for all senior managers.
Littlewoods	Training in the law and good practice in fair selection and recruitment. Assertiveness training for women.
London Weekend Television Ltd.	Training for all staff in equal opportunities.

Northern Foods Plc	Produced a video to assist with equal opportunities training.
Save the Children	Training in equal opportunities.
Thames Television	Special training for managers on equal opportunities, including positive action.

Monitoring

Organisation

Initiatives taken

British Rail	Monitors gender and registered disabled. Currently analysing the position of female employees and focusing on senior women.
British Telecom	Analysed the position of women employees in their workforce.
Ford Motor Co.	Monitors whole of workforce.
Gallaher Limited	Carry out monitoring of their workforce, including religion.
IBM	Monitors race and sex.
Midland Bank	Records numbers and distribution of women. Also analyses the figures for recruitment, promotion, training and progress on implementing its equal opportunities policy.

Positive Action

Organisation

Initiatives taken

Avon Cosmetics	The developing of female supervisors for more senior management jobs.
Barclays Bank	Management development courses for women.

Women at the Top

BBC	Runs a women-only engineering course, an operational awareness course and equal opportunities training for managers.
BBC Television Service	Mentoring/career counselling given to women.
British Gas Corporation	Encouragement of recruitment of women, especially into engineering-type jobs. Training courses for women returning to work.
British Rail	Run women-only development courses and management skill courses. Plans to launch a conversion scheme to enable non-technical female staff to become engineers.
British Telecom	Women's development course for second line managers and also sends women on courses in higher engineering. A one year access course is available for women employees with no age or qualification limits.
Brown and Root (UK) Ltd. (B. & R.)	Positive action in recruitment.
Central Television	Has worked with the Women and Work Programme (Coventry Polytechnic) to produce a model course.
Eurosearch Limited	Women's discussion, self development groups, confidence building.
Ford Motor Company	Women in management courses.
IBM	Runs development training for women.
Independent Television	Runs seminars on equal opportunities for women aimed at ITV managers.
Littlewoods	A return to work scheme for women with Information Technology skills.

Equal Opportunities Initiatives in the Private Sector

London Weekend TV	Runs women's courses in assertiveness training and life planning.
M.B. Group	Consciously attempting to recruit more women into engineering, runs a women's conference.
Midland Bank	An initiative for women clerks and cashiers to attend a year-long accounting course at Loughborough University. Courses to assist women with career and life planning and to develop management skills.
National Westminster Bank	Management development courses for women.
Post Office, Cabinet Office and Marks & Spencer	Training schemes for women executives.
Royal Bank of Scotland	Assertiveness training, personal development, awareness.
R.N.I.D.	Offers management and assertiveness training courses to women.
Scotrail	A scheme to enable women in traditionally female jobs to enter predominantly male environments.
Smiths Crisps	Women's development courses for second line managers.
Thames Television	Encouragement of recruitment of women in technical and management areas. Assertiveness training courses. Childcare programming. Career counselling.
Vickers Shipbuildings and Engineering	Encouraging women into apprenticeship training.

Work and Family Initiatives in the Private Sector

1. Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity Provisions

(a) Pregnancy and Antenatal Provision

The Sex Discrimination Act allows an employer to afford special treatment to women in connection with pregnancy or childbirth. Women have a statutory right (Employment Act 1980) to paid time off work for antenatal care. Littlewoods plc allow men paid leave to accompany their partners to antenatal clinics. Park Bakeries offer on-site antenatal classes run by a local health visitor.

(b) Maternity Provision

Improving on statutory entitlement employers may:

- lower the length of service requirement
- improve provision for part-time staff
- increase maternity payments

Service Requirement

The statutory requirement for a right to return to work is two years' length of service for employees who work 16 hours or more each week. These employers offer a right to return after one year's service:

Amersham International
Galleon Roadchef
Kingsway Children's Centre
Link House Advertising

Maclean Hunter
Orbis Limited
Penguin Books
Sunderland Forge Services

Provision for Part-time Staff

The statutory requirement for a right to return to work for those employees who work between eight and fifteen hours each week is five years' length of service.

Link House Advertising

Two years' service required by part-time employees.

Rowntree Mackintosh

One year's length of service for all staff who work more than 14½ hours a week.

Tyne-Tees TV

Eighteen months service required by part-time employees.

Increased Maternity Pay

Some organisations pay women on maternity leave more than statutory rates. Most of the additional payments are dependant on the woman returning to work in some cases for a specified minimum period.

These employers offer enhanced maternity pay:

Amersham International	3 months leave on full pay
British Gas	
British Telecom	
Esso	
Link House Advertising	13 weeks full pay
London Weekend Television	
Macleane Hunter	20 weeks full pay
Penguin Books	25 weeks full pay
Sunderland Forge Services	11 weeks full pay
Television South West	13 weeks at full pay
Tyne Tees TV	18 weeks at full pay
Vis News	13 weeks at full pay

Return to Work

A number of employers will consider a return to work on a part-time basis following maternity leave. Examples are:

Liverpool Victoria Insurance	Longman Group
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(c) Paternity Leave

In the UK there is no statutory right to paternity leave but there is a trend towards improved paternity arrangements:

One day:	American Express
	B.O.C. (Derby)
	C.I. Caravans (Newmarket)
	Danish Bacon Co. (Selby)
	Plessey Telecommunications (Sunderland)

Women at the Top

Two days:	Acorn Shipyard Borg Warner Boulton & Paul British Aerospace (Brough) Hotpoint (Mexborough) Lonrho Textiles (Newcastle) Mobil (Coryton) Pan Books Pedigree Dolls & Toys (Canterbury) Smith & Nephew Pharmaceuticals Soda Stream (Peterborough)
Three days:	Bass Brewing (Sheffield) Freemans Mail Order Hodder & Stoughton Kalamazoo Legal & General Rediffusion Rowntree Mackintosh John Smith's Brewery
Five days:	Aeroquip Butlins Gratton Warehouses Haymarket Publications Kitchen Stores Hall Foster (Newcastle) Longman Publishing Macmillan Books Marks & Spencer Morgan Grampian
Ten days:	IPC Magazines Penguin Books Thomson Magazines
Two weeks plus:	Battersea Law Centre (6 weeks) Channel 4 (3 weeks) Time Out Magazine (6 weeks)

2. Parental Leave

The UK lags behind a considerable number of EEC countries in statutory and collectively agreed parental leave. One example is:

City Limits Magazine allows 20 weeks paid parental leave.

3. Adoptive Parents

Although not covered by the statutory provisions some employers make separate but similar provision for staff who are adopting young children. Examples:

Guinness	Adoptive leave for mother only
Haymarket Publishing	Children under 12 months are covered by the company's maternity and pay agreements
Littlewoods	6 weeks at $\frac{9}{10}$ ths pay
Rank Xerox	Up to 2 months at company's discretion
A number of Independent Television companies.	

4. Family Leave

Many organisations will allow some leave to cope with domestic crises, but such leave is almost invariably discretionary. Examples:

Allied Breweries	3 days: discretionary
Foster Brothers Clothing	Up to 2 weeks
Lloyds Bank	Up to 4 weeks paid leave
Iveco Ford	3 days
Weir Pumps Limited	Up to 1 week's paid leave

5. Childcare Support

An upsurge of interest, but examples of provision are not commonplace.

(a) Workplace Nurseries

Aquascutum	10 place nursery
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Kingsway Children Centre	36 place nursery
Spencer's of Banbury (Silhouette Limited)	20 place nursery
Co-op Bank	A financial service package for organisations wishing to set up businesses providing childcare facilities.

(b) Childcare Payments

City Limits Magazine Haymarket Publishing	Penguin Books Thames Television
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(c) Out-of-School Provisions

An aspect of childcare provision which employers have yet to discover.
Examples:

Delta T Co-operative	Workplace nursery used in school holidays
Holiday Inn Hotel Group	Proposal stage

6. Career Break Schemes

A career break scheme offers periods of extended unpaid leave, typically from 2-5 years, with contact between employer and employee maintained during the break. Employees are required to make themselves available for a minimum period of paid work during the break, usually two weeks.
Examples:

Boots	Reservist scheme
BP Oil	
British Gas	Career break and reservist scheme
British Rail	Career break and reservist schemes open to all staff at all levels
Esso	
ICI	
Legal & General Group plc	
Marconi	Selected scheme in operation

Shell

United Biscuits Limited

The banking world has taken the lead in developing career break schemes. All the major banks offer some type of career break scheme to selected employees.

7. Flexible Working Arrangements

(a) Job-sharing

An arrangement whereby usually two employees share the responsibilities, pay and benefits of one full-time post between them. A wider range of jobs thus becomes available for part-time working. Examples:

British Telecom	Introduced a job-sharing scheme at the beginning of the year
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Boots	Job-sharing at supervisory and management level
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Royal Insurance (UK) Ltd.

Thames Television	Where applicable
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(b) Term-Time Working Contracts

Parents with school-age children may work during school terms and take unpaid leave during school holidays. Students provide temporary cover during the holidays. Examples:

Boots	Flexible contract for working parents
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Dixons Stores Group

Thistle Hotels

Appendix Five

Organisations that Offer Help, Advice or Training in Equal Opportunities Initiatives

Equal Opportunities Commission

Overseas House
Quay Street
Manchester M3 3HN
061 833 9244

Established under the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to work towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The Commission provides a general information and advisory service for individuals, employers, trade unions and other organisations, and may also be able to provide a consultancy service for organisations on specific issues or projects.

Industrial Society: Pepperell Unit

Robert Hyde House
48 Bryanston Square
London W1H 7LN
071 262 2401

The Pepperell Unit campaigns for greater equality of opportunity in employment. It works with organisations in the private and public sectors, with individual women and men and with people in education. The Unit offers specialist training to develop the skills and abilities of women in management to enable them to contribute on equal terms with their male colleagues and take up senior positions in organisations. The Unit also provides training for managers in organisations to enable them to manage diversity and make the most effective use of all their human resources.

National Childminding Association

8 Masons Hill
Bromley
Kent BR2 9EY
081 464 6164

Advises employers on the setting up of childminding schemes.

New Ways to Work

309 Upper Street
London N1 2TY
071 226 4026

Runs a register to match would-be job sharers in London and the Home Counties.

The 300 Group

36–37 Charterhouse Square
London EC1M 6EA
071 600 2390

Seeks the equal representation of women in Parliament and encourages women to seek and hold office.

**United Kingdom Federation of
Business and Professional Women**

23 Ansdell Street
London W8 5BN
071 938 1729

Promotes the active role of women in decision-making and fair opportunities in education and training.

Women in Management

64 Marryat Road
London SW19 5BN
081 944 6332

Promotes the advancement of women in, or aiming to be in, management positions; offers training and development sessions; and has a Career Changers Network.

Women's National Commission

Government Offices
Great George Street
London SW1P 3AL
071 270 5903

Established under Government sponsorship, the Commission comprises representatives of national organisations with a large female membership

Women at the Top

including women's sections of the major political parties, of trade unions and the churches, professional and business women's organisations and other organisations broadly representative of women. It aims to ensure that the informed opinion of women is given its due weight in the deliberations of Government.

Working Mothers Association

77 Holloway Road
London N7 8JZ
071 700 5771

Provides a local support network for working parents and encourages all relevant agencies and employers to improve conditions for working mothers.

Workplace Nurseries

77 Holloway Road
London N7 8JZ
071 700 0281

Gives advice on setting up nurseries in the workplace.

Business in the Community

Women's Economic Development Initiative

227A City Road
London EC1V 1LX
071 253 3716

Aims to make business aware of the changing economic role of women, to promote good practice in industry and to increase the resources available for projects directly involved in getting women into paid work or to start up and run their own businesses.

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

279-281 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1BY
071 247 7052

Went independent in May 1989 (from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) as the first comprehensive 'umbrella' organisation acting as an advocate and support for all women's organisations and giving them a voice to government and other decision makers. Has more than 150 member organisations of the widest possible range representing around five million women.

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