

WOMEN AT THE TOP 2000: Cracking the public sector glass ceiling

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King-Hall Papers

King-Hall Papers are named after the founder of the Hansard Society, Stephen King-Hall, who was its first Chairman from 1944 to 1964, and first Director from 1944 to 1957. Without his vision and energy the Society with its object of promoting knowledge of and interest in Parliamentary Government, would never have existed. King-Hall Papers are a series of occasional papers which are published as a contribution to the continuous debate about the efficacy of Parliamentary Government, and how it can be maintained for the present and developed for the future. The views are those of the author, and the charity is neither for nor against. The Society is, however, happy to publish these views and to invite analysis and discussion of them.

Dr Karen Ross

Dr Karen Ross is Director of the Centre for Communication, Culture and Media Studies at Coventry University, UK. She has published widely in the field of inequalities, media and representation and has recently completed a book on women politicians and the media (*Women, Politics, Media: Uneasy Relations in Comparative Perspective*, Hampton, forthcoming). Her previous books include *Black & White Media: Black Images in Popular Film and Television* (Polity 1996) and *Managing Equal Opportunities in Higher Education* (w Diana Woodward, Open University Press 2000).

The Hansard Society

The Hansard Society promotes effective parliamentary democracy. A non-party organisation, it is supported by the Speaker, Party leaders, MPs, Peers, journalists and academics. The Society's activities include Mock Elections, the Parliament and Government programme and the E-Democracy programme.

The Fawcett Society

Fawcett is the UK's leading organisation campaigning for equality between women and men. Our vision is of a society where men and women are equal partners, at work, at home and in public life. We campaign for equality of rights, responsibilities and opportunities between men and women in the UK.

Foreword

by Lady Howe of Aberavon CBE

Chair, The Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top

The year 2000 marks the 10th anniversary of the publication of the Report of the Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top, whose recommendations did much to set the agenda of those seeking to break the so-called 'glass ceiling' in both the public and private sector.

The challenge to overcome the barriers identified by the Commission was taken up that same year by enlightened employers (concerned to ensure their future 'bottom line' competitiveness), through Business in the Community's initiative, 'Opportunity 2000'. Over the same period, Government and others pursued new equal opportunity initiatives, and considerable efforts were made to move women through to senior positions across all sectors. I chaired Opportunity 2000 (re-christened Opportunity Now) for its first eight years.

As 2000 also marked the start of a new century, The Hansard Society commissioned Dr Karen Ross to carry out a new review of the progress women have made over the past decade and to assess just how far the good intentions have actually carried women into top positions.

Reading the report, it becomes clear that some progress has been achieved. In 1990, we identified two groups of barriers to women's progress: structural and institutional; and attitudinal. Certainly many structural and institutional barriers have been either removed or adjusted. The 'long hours culture' may still need attention but flexible working, job sharing and so on are increasingly mainstream. The same cannot be said of the other main problem. The attitudinal barrier (the 'clubby culture', as we sometimes called it) to women entering the very top decision-making levels remains firmly fixed. Karen Ross's meticulous review makes plain the continuing failure to select from the increasingly visible pool of experienced and talented women with the right seniority to these top jobs - whether in the private or public sectors, or indeed in the political parties.

Other research reveals a similar failure. The Fawcett Society with The Industrial Society have recently pointed to the tiny percentage of non-executive as well as executive women directors of the FTSE 100 companies. (Catalyst and Opportunity Now will have shown similar trends, in a joint report on the progress of women in senior management in the UK, drawing on comparisons with the United States and Canada.)

The Hansard Society presents this new report as a stimulus to further discussion amongst those who are responsible for making senior appointments and as a wake up call to employers more generally. The success of Opportunity Now - members show 35.5% women managers compared with the 22% from the Institute of Management - to which many public sector organisations are also signed up, shows that strategies to promote talented women can and do succeed.

What is needed now is a determined joint effort to ensure that the last - hugely resistant - layer of the glass ceiling is actually removed. This really is essential. Ten years on from 'Women at the Top' and 25 years on from the establishment of the Sex Discrimination Act, top level decisions, wherever they occur, must be taken by those who can reflect the different life experience as well as the ability and qualifications of both halves of our population. That is the challenge which Karen Ross's detailed and perceptive report requires us all to consider and act upon.

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Introduction

Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. (Beijing Platform for Action 1995)

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 the barriers which continue to prevent women's full participation in public and political life. At the end of the seminar, participants agreed that barriers continue to block and impede women's progress in politics and public life; predicted demographic changes in the 1990s would offer an opportunity for women to make progress towards parity with men in many ways including politics and public life, thus making the establishment of a Commission both timely and appropriate; and suggested 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 structure.

A Commission was therefore established in 1989 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 Society has a long-standing practice of setting up commissions to consider and report on subjects associated with the effective functioning of Parliamentary government and democracy and this Commission aimed to explore women's under-representation in influential positions in society. Thus, an eminent group of people, chaired by Lady Howe, set about exploring the reasons behind the poor visibility of women at the top. The Commission's assessment focused on the circumstances of women in senior occupational positions and public life because they believed that change at the top, provided it went beyond tokenism, would help all women. The Commission believed that women at the top of professional and public life have important roles 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 public importance.

At the end of the Commission's Report, in 1990, it concluded that, *'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.'

With that rousing call, the Commission finished its work and this Report considers the extent to which the Commission's recommendations have been carried through, their hopes realised, their hard work put to good purpose. In 1995, the Hansard Society carried out an interim evaluation of the five years immediately following the original Report, to explore what progress had been made in that period. Throughout this current Report, reference will be made to both the original report (herein after referred to as 'the 1990 Report') and the interim report (hereinafter called 'the 1995 Report').

Whilst both the 1995 Report and this current one have slightly different foci to the original Commission's brief, there are sufficient similarities to bear comparisons with each other and the original Report. Whilst the 1990 Report focused on the public realm, corporate management and other key areas of influence, the 1995 Report focused almost equally on public and corporate life, including an extensive section disseminating the results of a specially commissioned survey of the top 200 companies. For this Report, we have emphasised the role played by women in public service and political domains, not only because others are already heavily involved with equality issues in the corporate sector - for example, *Opportunity Now* and the Industrial Society - but also because decisions taken by politicians, both national and local, by NHS Trusts, by boards of school governors, by judges, by Chief Constables, have a very real and important impact on the lives of all of us. Who makes those decisions, who sit as appointees on public bodies, who work as local councillors, who preside as lay magistrates, who manage local NHS Trusts is important and if those key posts are predominantly held by men, then the different perspectives and life experiences which could be contributed by women will continue to be excluded, to the detriment of us all. Perhaps, in the end, women and men would come to the same decisions over aspects of social policy, and gender is not the significant marker which we imagine, but it would be good for the

democratic imperative to find that out through practice rather than exclusion.

In the 10 years since the 1990 Report was published, British society has seen many changes and the gender dynamic has often been a significant part of that change. One significant consequence of the 1990 Report was the setting up, in 1991, of *Opportunity 2000*, by Business in the Community, launched with the intention to improve the quality and quantity of women in the labour force. There are now more women than men in paid employment, but much of that work is part-time and poorly paid, although women are now more likely to start their own businesses than men, often as a way to make work fit their lives rather than always the other way round. During the 1990s, many public employers started down the long road to equality, drawing up targets and action plans, initiating workplace nurseries, career break programmes and flexitime. The decade saw the first woman Chief Constable, the first woman Speaker and the first time the proportion of women MPs reached double figures. The decade also saw the setting up of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and an Assembly for Greater London. In these latter three elections, the Labour Party's various positive action strategies resulted in a doubling of the number of women MPs in Westminster and getting the new Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and London Assemblies off to the very good start of women comprising more than a third of their Members.

The change of government, in 1997, signalled a significant step change in pushing the equality agenda forward, not just for women but for all under-represented and marginalised groups, not just for senior personnel in paid work, but for customers, clients, students and patients. The Labour Government's *Modernising Government* White Paper, published in March 1999, set out key policies and principles underpinning the government's long-term programme of reform to modernise public services at both the level of provision and the level of consumption, across both national and local government, in the Civil Service and in the local hospital. Over the past three years, an equality framework has been put in place for the Civil Service and for public appointments, with targets set for recruiting and promoting women and other under-represented groups into senior positions.

So, with all this concern for equal opportunities, for removing structural, institutional and attitudinal barriers to women's career prospects and progress, how is the

situation for women in 2000 different to and better than the situation in 1990? What follows is a snapshot of where women are in top jobs in public service looking at a range of contexts including politics, the Civil Service, public appointments, the criminal justice system, the National Health Service, local government, higher education and the media. We have also included a short section on women in the corporate sector in order to provide both some comparisons with the public sector as well as a timeline for analysis with the previous two Reports. As well as giving a sense of where women are now, the comparisons made with the situation as reported in 1990 and 1995 allow a sense of what progress has been made and the long road still ahead for women to achieve equality, for their talents to be properly rewarded, their skills put to best use and for society as a whole to benefit.

For those of us who have been working for this all our lives, it is an historic occasion... but we must not imagine that our work is over. Our cause is a long way from full success. Women's political equality is achieved, but their moral and economic equality are still to be won. (Millicent Garrett Fawcett, writing to her supporters on the occasion of the Royal Assent being granted to the Act giving all women the vote, 1928)

Politics and Government

House of Commons

The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences. (Universal Declaration on Democracy 1997)¹

In the 70 or so years between the achievement of women's suffrage in 1918 and the general election of 1987, a mere 139 individual women had ever taken up seats in the House of Commons. In 1990, the Hansard Commission commented that women were seriously under-represented in Parliament and that this dismal situation meant that the interests of women were not being properly represented. There are several competing reasons put forward to justify why more women in Parliament is a 'good' thing, because of equity, because of fairness, to 'represent' women and crucially, because women bring different experiences and perspectives to the political process and without them, democracy is impoverished. In 1990, the UK's performance against its European Union neighbours was particularly disastrous, sharing bottom place with France and Spain as the countries with the fewest women Parliamentary members. However, after the 1997 general election, the UK now hovers around the midway point, between Luxembourg (higher) and Ireland (lower) in the (now enlarged) European Union - see Figure 1.

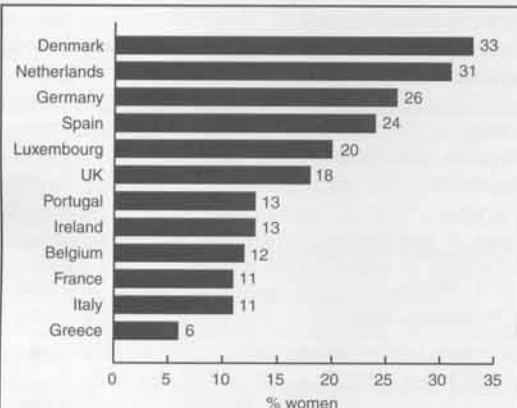


Fig 1 – European Union comparisons: women's representation in national Parliaments, 1997

(source: Inter-Parliamentary Union website: www.ipu.org/wmn)

Interestingly, Britain does more poorly when the number of women it sends to the European Parliament is concerned, where it comes in at 12th place, out of 15- see Figure 2.

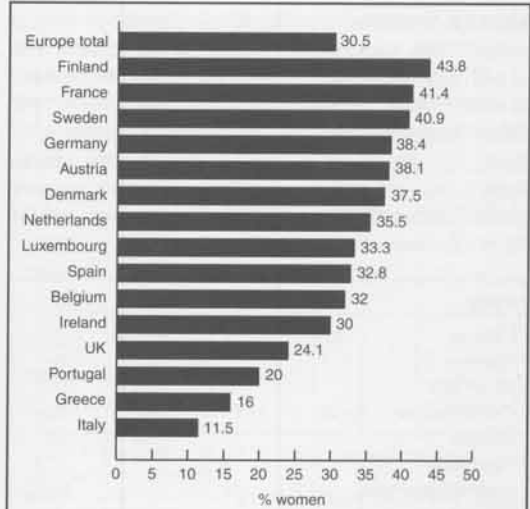


Fig 2 – Women's representation in the European Parliament (MEPs) by country, 2000

(source: London European Parliament website: www.europarl.eu.int)

Our showing in global politics is just as bad. Even when considered against countries whose records on democracy are somewhat less progressive such as Cuba, Argentina and China, the UK is again embarrassingly low down the league table. In a survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union whose results were timed to coincide with the Beijing +5 conference in June 2000, the lamentably poor representation of women across the world as elected members of national Executives and Legislatures across 176 countries were starkly displayed, including the UK's position at number 31. Figure 3 shows the top 10 countries whose Parliaments have the highest proportion of women Members.²

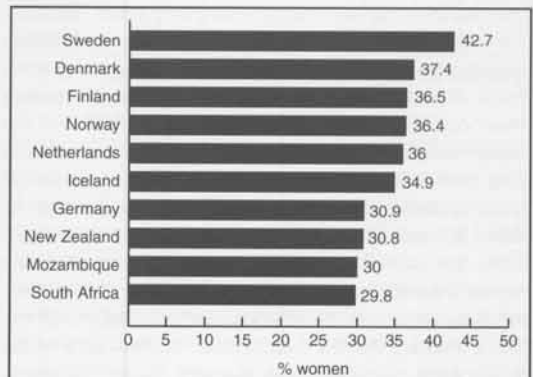


Fig 3 – Women's representation in global Parliaments, 2000

(source: Inter-Parliamentary Union website: www.ipu.org/wmn)

Although historically, women's representation in elite politics has been poor, the post-war period has nonetheless witnessed a steady increase in the number of women MPs and the decade since the original 1990 Report has seen women's representation double - see Table 1 - largely as a consequence of the Labour Party's decision to have all-women shortlists in some constituencies during the 1997 general election and the Party's subsequent victory.

Party	1983	1987	1992	1997
Labour	209	229	271	418
Women	10	21	37	101
% of Total	4.8	9.2	13.7	24.2
Conservative	397	376	336	165
Women	13	17	20	13
% of Total	3.3	4.5	6	7.9
Liberal Democrat	23**	22***	20	46
Women	0	1	2	3
% of Total	0	4.5	10	6.5
Other	21	23	24	30
Women	0	2	3	3
% Of Total	0	8.7	12.5	10
All MPs	650	650	651	659
Women	23	41	60	120
% of Total	3.5	6.3	9.2	18.2

* 65 of whom were elected for the first time

** Liberals and SDP combined

*** SDP Liberal Alliance

Table 1: Women elected to the UK (Westminster) Parliament over the past four elections by party*

(source: Labour Party Briefing Paper on 'Women in Politics' prepared by Rachel McCollin, National Women's Officer, 1999)

The reasons for women's poor record in achieving elected office are many and complex but are generally less to do with an especially poor performance (that is, compared with men) at the ballot box but rather with their failure to be selected by their own parties' selection committees. Even when women do manage to become prospective parliamentary candidates, they have often been 'allocated' to unwinnable seats, further decreasing their chances of being elected. The 1990 Report recommended that, '*political parties should scrutinise their own policies and practices and eliminate those that serve to hinder the progress of women*', and the Labour Party at least did indeed undertake such a scrutiny. In 1993, the Labour Party Conference voted to support the formal introduction of quotas for women candidates, whereby all-women shortlists would be used in half the seats deemed most winnable and half the 'safe' seats where MPs were retiring or standing down. However, this resolution was challenged under the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the 1976 EU Directive on Equal Treatment by two disgruntled party members

(Peter Jepson and Roger Dyas-Elliott) who took the Party to an industrial tribunal in late 1995 because they allegedly wished to stand in constituencies which had been 'forced' to have all-women shortlists rather than an open list. The Tribunal found in the complainants' favour and deemed the resolution unlawful, although by the time the ruling was made in January 1996, 34 women had already been selected through the process and very few constituencies, when offered the opportunity to re-select did so.

The outcome of the Labour Party's decision to run all-women shortlists made history in 1997 when 101 Labour women MPs were elected, nearly tripling their number from the 1992 position. The Conservatives managed to return 13 women (20 in 1992) and the Liberal Democrats returned 3 (one more than in 1992). The number of women elected is, obviously, related both to the number of women standing and where they stand. In 1997, the Labour Party selected 159 women to stand (63 per cent success rate), compared with the Conservatives' 67 (19 per cent success rate) and the Liberal Democrats' 122 (2 per cent success rate). The point is that without determined measures which actually force local parties to widen participation to include women and for them to then be allocated to winnable seats, Parliaments and Assemblies will continue to be dominated by men, not because they are better than women but because selection processes make it difficult for women to secure nominations. The newly established Northern Ireland Assembly was elected in 1998 without any positive action strategies in place and a mere 13 per cent of its members are women.

Party	Total Members	Women	% Women
Ulster Unionist Party	28	2	7.1
SDLP	24	3	12.5
Democratic Unionist Party	20	1	5
Sinn Fein	18	5	27.8
The Alliance Party	6	1	16.7
Northern Ireland Unionist Party	3	0	0
United Unionist Assembly Party	3	0	0
Northern Ireland Women's Commission	2	2	100
Progressive Unionist Party	2	0	0
UK Unionist Party	1	0	0
Independent Unionist	1	0	0
Total	108	14	13

Table 2: Northern Ireland Assembly Members by gender and party, 1998

(source: Northern Ireland Assembly website: www.niassembly.gov.uk)

In the wake of Labour's victory, some Conservatives began to acknowledge that women candidates are an electoral asset rather than the liability they once appeared and that more women need to be selected as prospective parliamentary candidates. In Keswick et al's (1999) exhortation to their own Conservative Party leaders to select more women as candidates, they explicitly point to Labour's winning strategy and to the fact that women voters support women candidates. Currently, fewer than 10 per cent of Conservative MPs are women and a mere 16 out of 73 candidates already selected to fight the 2001 general election are women, mostly standing in unwinnable seats. Keswick et al. also make the controversial suggestion that quotas is the key way forward, although consciously acknowledging that such a mechanism is highly unpopular amongst many members but insisting that without it, or significant attitudinal change, the Conservatives may become a spent force. Coupled with any quota system must be robust support structures for women and another Conservative woman - Fiona Buxton of the influential Bow Group - has suggested that good women must be encouraged to stand as candidates, must be supported and trained and that selection panels in constituencies also need training to challenge potentially discriminatory attitudes (Buxton 2000).

In the Scottish Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly elections in 1999, the Labour Party operated a formal 'twinning' strategy, whereby constituencies were paired and selection committees were pooled so that a woman and a man had to be selected in each set of paired constituencies. None of the other parties initiated any affirmative action strategies, although Plaid Cymru did promote an equal opportunities agenda during the application form process. In the event, Labour and the Liberal Democrats returned similar numbers of women and men to the Welsh Assembly (Labour returned 15 women and 13 men; the Liberal Democrats returned 3 women and 3 men), whilst the Conservatives have no women (but 9 men) and Plaid Cymru have 6 women and 11 men.

Party	Total Members	Women	% Women
Labour	28	15	53.6
Plaid Cymru	17	6	35.3
Conservative	9	0	0
Liberal	6	3	50
Total	60	24	40

Table 3: Members of the Welsh Assembly by gender and party, 1999

(source: Fawcett Society briefing paper, 'Where are the women in politics and public life?', 2000)

In the Scottish Parliamentary elections, Labour returned the same number of women as men (28: 28), the Liberal Democrats returned 2 women (out of 17), the Conservatives returned 3 women (out of 15) and the Scottish National Party returned 15 women (out of 35).

Party	Total Members	Women	% Women
Labour	56	28	50
SNP	35	15	42.9
Conservative	18	3	16.7
Liberal	17	2	11.8
Other	3	0	0
Total	129	48	37.2

Table 4: Members of the Scottish Parliament by gender and party, 1999

(source: Fawcett Society briefing paper, 'Where are the women in politics and public life?', 2000)

When the Greater London Authority was set up in 2000, most of the discussion surrounding its initiation involved the election of the mayor, but what was less well publicised was the fact that 11 out of the 25 Assembly members (44 per cent) who were elected are women - see Table 5. This result was achieved because the Labour Party again adopted 'twinning' for the election of the 14 Constituency Member seats and both Labour and the Liberal Democrats adopted 'zipping'³ for the 11 Additional Member seats.

Party	Total Members	Women	% Women
Conservative	9	2	22.2
Labour	9	5	55.6
Liberal	4	3	75
Greens	3	1	33.3
Total	25	11	44

Table 5: Members of the London Assembly by gender and party, 2000

(source: Greater London Authority website: www.london.gov.uk)

What is clear from the discussion above is that strategies which enhance women's likelihood for (s)election need to be consistently promoted if a better balance of women and men in Parliaments and Assemblies is to be secured, let alone developed to the point of parity. Even progressive countries such as those of Scandinavia only maintain their relatively high proportions of women Members because of a permanent quota rule. As the Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman has recently argued,⁴ the gains that the Labour Party won by way of the relatively high number of women

MPs who came in at the 1997 election could be lost if local parties are again left to their own selection devices and/or if there is a reversion to the practice of putting up women to stand in unwinnable seats. This latter strategy is particularly dangerous in what could be a difficult general election campaign for the government where many seats will be more vulnerable than in the landslide year of 1997. Coupled with the fact that more women than men have already indicated their intention of standing down at the next general election, the future for women's representation in elite politics could now be in the balance.

The point about striving for equal representation of women and men in Parliament is that women bring different perspectives and might therefore have different solutions to different social and economic questions. So, three years after the Labour Party's historic win, what impact have women MPs had on politics and the policy agenda? Whilst women both inside and outside government argue that there has been a positive impact on the policy agenda which can probably be attributed to the involvement of women MPs⁵ and there are now 25 women Ministers with a variety of portfolio responsibilities, only 5 women are in the cabinet⁶ and only 1 has responsibility for a spending ministry.⁷ Whilst it is perhaps a little unfair for some commentators⁸ to suggest that the other 4 women merely occupy the great housekeeping jobs of State - in her time, The Rt. Hon. Dr Marjorie Mowlam was, arguably, one of the most successful Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland - the lack of women holding significant Ministerial portfolios does seem puzzling. What is equally perturbing is the fact that of 41 Select Committees, only three (7 per cent) are chaired by women, two of which are administrative in nature.⁹ In the new Scottish Parliament, at least, women were immediately given key Ministries to control and lost no time in making a significant and sometimes controversial impact, demonstrating that given the opportunity, women will often operate a politics which is more overtly community-based than their male colleagues.¹⁰

The 1990 Report identified the inflexibility of Parliament as particularly unhelpful to women members and recommended, *'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.'* This has not happened, perhaps because by convention, Speaker's Conferences deal with electoral law rather than internal parliamentary processes. However, as noted in the 1995 Report, changes had taken place during the early

years of the decade with the Jopling Committee on Sittings of the House (1992) considering, amongst other things, the problems raised by the structure of sittings on Members with young families. As a result, an experimental period of revised sittings and procedural changes was undertaken in 1995 whereby the number of late sittings was reduced, certain Fridays designated as non-sitting days, contentious business rescheduled away from Thursday evenings and earlier notification made of recesses and future business. All these changes had been permanently adopted by 1996.

The incoming Labour Government in 1997 built on this early foundation of parliamentary and procedural change in developing its strategies for modernising government and the Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee (chaired by The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett MP) has made a number of recommendations. Part of this Committee's specific remit is to consider how to change existing procedures which make particularly heavy and conflicting demands on Members, 'not least because it could help the House become more representative of society by allowing parents of young children to combine a representative role with family duty.'¹¹ However, the Committee is also clear that although such a consideration is important, 'our primary purpose is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the House and its individual members.'¹² Out of their deliberations have come a number of new (and so far, 'experimental') initiatives, including initiating a second debating chamber - Westminster Hall - to enable more business to be conducted in parallel session and chaired by a Deputy Speaker and re-scheduling Thursday sittings to start earlier in the morning.

These changes undoubtedly benefit all Members, not just women or working parents but a lot more could still be done to make the task of managing work and family for women Members an easier one. The anomaly of no crèche but a rifle range and a sash on which to hang up one's sword are anachronisms in a modern Parliament and Britain could perhaps learn from the South African example, where ANC study groups routinely include Members who bring their young children in to meetings with them.¹³ It was, arguably, a result of women's involvement in the setting up of the Scottish Parliament which led to that Parliament having a 'normal' working week from the outset, enabling all MSPs to more easily attend to their constituency business and family life as well as discharging their parliamentary responsibilities.

House of Lords

As with the number of women now sitting in the House of Commons, the proportion of women in the Lords has at last reached double figures although, as Table 6 demonstrates, this is largely because of the reform of the House of Lords in 1999 which reduced the overall total Membership by removing the majority of hereditary (predominantly male) peers. For example, in April 1999 there were 1290 Members including 96 women (7 per cent). One year later, in late March 2000, there were 669 Members, of whom 105 were women (16 per cent) and at the time of writing (November 2000), there are 695 Members, including 111 women (16 per cent), with totals and proportions changing weekly. Currently, women chair only two of the 14 House of Lords Select Committees, both of which are sub-committees.¹⁴

Category	1989		1995		2000	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Archbishops/Bishops	26	0	26	0	26	0
Hereditary Peers	785	2.5	762	2.2	549	19.5
Law Lords	19	0	24	0	28	0
Life Peers	350	12.9	374	17.4	92	4.3
Total	1180	5.5	1186	6.9	695	16

Table 6: Members of the House of Lords by gender and category, 2000

(source: House of Lords Information Office and website: www.government.uk)

Women have been allowed to sit in the House of Lords since the Life Peerages Act in 1958 and the Baroness Wootton of Abinger was created the first Life Peer under that act.¹⁵ In 1963, the Peerage Act allowed women who succeeded to peerages to be admitted and the Baroness Strange of Knokin was the first such woman to take her seat in the Lords under that Act.¹⁶ In 1994, the Lords rejected a bill which would have allowed women to succeed equally with men and it wasn't until the House of Lords Bill received Royal Assent on 11 November 1999 that the Labour Party's goal of ending the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote was finally achieved. However, the passage of the Bill was not an easy one and, although only two pages long in its original form, it attracted 385 amendments and much time in debate. One of the amendments agreed enabled 92 hereditary peers to retain their rights to sit and vote (known as the Weatherill amendments after Lord Weatherill, then Convenor of the Cross Bench Peers). This allowed for 75 hereditary peers to be elected from their own party or cross

bench groups (42 Conservatives, 28 Cross Benchers, 3 Liberal Democrats and 2 Labour), 15 to be elected as Deputy Speakers or Committee Chairs in addition to the retention of the Earl Marshall and the Lord Great Chamberlain. A mere 5 women (5 per cent) were elected to the second chamber through this process.¹⁷

The Civil Service

The 1990 Report noted that women were seriously under-represented in senior positions across the Civil Service and although there had already been some important steps taken to redress this imbalance and develop strategies to encourage women's advancement, there was still some way to go. The 1990 Report recommended 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.' The Report further recommended that, 'Ministers and Government Departments... should also be more imaginative about part-time working and job sharing at senior levels...' As early as 1984, the Civil Service had recognised that determined efforts would be required if women were to achieve their potential and in that year, initiated the Programme of Action for Women in the Civil Service. In the first 10 years of that programme, the introduction of family-friendly policies, improved promotion systems and equal opportunities awareness training for managers resulted, inter alia, in 5 departments having in excess of 15 per cent of the top three grades occupied by women¹⁸ and 5 agencies had women Chief Executives.¹⁹ By 1994, part-time working enabled 62 women in grade 5 posts being able to work more flexibly compared with only 3 women at that grade working part-time in 1984.²⁰ On the other hand, by 1994, 6 departments had no women in the top three grades.²¹ Table 7 below charts women's progress into senior grades between 1984 and 1999.

Grade/Level	1984			1999		
	Total	Women	% Women	Total	Women	% Women
SCS Level	3593	212	5.9	3602	621	17.2
Grade 6/7	18031	1336	7.4	22116	5071	22.9
Total	21624	1548	7.2	25718	5692	22.1

Table 7: Women in the Civil Service by senior grade, 1984-1999

(source: Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service Data Summary 1999, Table 1, p.8)

As Table 7 above illustrates, there has been a steady rise in the numbers of women obtaining senior posts within the Civil Service but this average improvement obscures considerable differences across Departments, as already noticed in previous years. So currently, whilst 6 Departments have at least 25 per cent of SCS grades occupied by women - Health (38 per cent); Culture Media & Sport (36 per cent); FCO (30 per cent); Social Security (29 per cent); Welsh Office (27 per cent); and the Home Office (25 per cent) - 4 Departments still have fewer than 10 per cent of women in SCS grades: Intelligence Services (3 per cent); MOD (6 per cent); Northern Ireland Office (6 per cent); and the CPS (9 per cent).²²

Whilst improvements have been happening, slowly, since the mid-1980s, it was arguably the incoming Labour government in 1997 with a 'modernising government' mandate which began to encourage an acceleration of change culture and promotion of women and members of other under-represented groups across all strata of government, including the Civil Service. The *Modernising Government* White Paper published in March 1999 set out the government's commitment to public services and public servants, acknowledging that as reforms in services take place, so changes must also occur within the structures which deliver those services. Within the Cabinet Office, work on modernising government is taken forward in four main work-streams and the four main priorities for encouraging diversity in the Civil Service for the period 2000-2005 (reported by the Diversity Sub-Group to a meeting of Departmental Heads in Sunningdale in autumn 1999) are awareness, leadership, management capability and equal opportunities.²³

The Action Plan which sets out to strategise how the diversity agenda within the Civil Service is to be delivered includes: recruit people from under-represented groups direct into senior posts, using head hunters; specify prominent posts as part-time or job share; and visible top-level commitment.²⁴ As a consequence of the Sunningdale meeting together with Sir Richard Wilson's report to the Prime Minister later in 1999²⁵ and a survey of staff attitudes towards equality issues in the Senior Civil Service,²⁶ a plan to modernise the Cabinet Office has now been initiated by a cross-Departmental 'Change Management Group'. Key issues currently being addressed are collaborative working, valuing diversity and the long-hours culture.²⁷ The Civil Service staff attitude survey revealed a certain cynicism amongst civil servants towards the promotion of equal opportunities within

the Service, including: 75 per cent of respondents felt that promotions are made on grounds *other than* merit; a strong perception that networking and patronage are too influential as factors in career development; that the current culture encourages those who are different to conform to the 'norm'; and working long (and specifically late) hours is regarded as the key enabler for success. The principal conclusion to the study was that, 'the main barrier is perceived to be a deeply embedded culture which has the impact of excluding those who are different. In the main, this is not a question of overt discrimination or prejudice, it is an altogether more subtle (and less conscious) process.'

Cultural change is notoriously difficult to achieve, especially if a very strong steer is not being given from the top. However, Sir Richard Wilson seems determined to achieve the targets for the Civil Service set out in the *Modernising Government* White Paper. For example, amongst the top 600 posts in the Senior Civil Service, the proportion of women postholders has increased from 12.7 in 1998 to 17.7 in 2000 and Sir Richard believes the Service is set to exceed its target of 25 per cent by 2005. For the Senior Civil Service level as a whole (the 'old' grades 1-5), there has been an increase amongst women postholders, from 17.8 per cent in 1998 to 22.1 per cent in 2000, although Sir Richard believes that the 2005 target of 35 per cent is unlikely to be achieved, suggesting a more realistic lower figure of 28.3 per cent.²⁸ In summer 2000, the lone woman Permanent Secretary (Rachel Lomax, DSS) was joined by two new women (Mavis McDonald at the Cabinet Office and Juliette Wheldon, Treasury Solicitor), instantly increasing the percentage of woman at the top of the Civil Service by 300 per cent. But it is still a poor show, given that women comprise 49 per cent of Civil Service staff overall.

A number of specific Departmental initiatives are already in place to deliver a more diverse Civil Service including: bringing in more senior managers from under-represented groups (DfEE); using theatre workshops for diversity training (LCD and the Cabinet Office); making the business case for family-friendly and childcare policies (DSS); a specific welcome for people wishing to adopt alternative working patterns (Scottish Office); improved remote access working (Home Office); and childcare voucher scheme for staff with children under school-age and mentoring scheme for women managers (Cabinet Office). On the specific issue of more flexible working for women, the Civil Service is running an 'Energising Senior Women' programme, being carried out in conjunction with 'Mothers in Management' where 50 senior women civil

The Criminal Justice System

The Judiciary

servants act as mentors to women in more junior grades.²⁹ Such initiatives combined with positive recruitment of young women – for the first time ever, in 2000 the numbers of women and men recruited to the Fast Stream were the same – encourages the hope that having targets for senior women in another ten years will be redundant.

One of my priorities as Lord Chancellor is to modernise the judicial appointments process. I am committed to creating an open, effective and accessible system where everyone who is eligible for appointment and who wants appointment shall have a fair chance to secure appointment. (The Lord Chancellor, The Rt. Hon. The Lord Irvine of Lairg, Judicial Appointments, 1999)

The 1990 Hansard Society Commission took the view that the role that women play in the judiciary is an important area to audit, given the importance and status accorded members of the legal profession generally and the influence that judges and magistrates in particular have over the lives of Britain's citizens. The 1990 Report argued that the lack of women in senior positions within the judiciary, (then standing at around 4 per cent), 'limited the quality and vision' of decisions made by the Courts and suggested that one of the reasons for women's low visibility as judges, recorders, stipendiary magistrates and registrars was the lack of senior women in the wider legal profession from whose corps they are appointed. Optimistically, the Report believed that when more women reached senior positions as barristers and solicitors, more would be appointed to the Bench. However, the Report also argued that rigid working practices – in law as elsewhere in other professions – often militated against women's career progression, especially the low frequency of part-time appointments. The Report recommended that, 'the Lord Chancellor should take urgent action to encourage qualified women barristers and solicitors to apply for appointment as Assistant Recorders [and 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.'

The Lord Chancellor (currently The Rt. Hon. The Lord Irvine of Lairg) has personal responsibility for the appointment, or for advising the Queen on the appointment, of all members of the professional judiciary in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including some office holders whose jurisdiction also extends to Scotland. The most senior appointments are made by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, although the advice of the Lord Chancellor is also sought. He (sic) therefore has, potentially, considerable discretion in influencing the overall structure and composition of the judiciary, including the relative proportions of women and men.

The Lord Chancellor noted in the foreword to his booklet on applying for judicial appointments, that he is committed to modernising the judicial appointments procedure.³⁰ The booklet also makes clear the policy on equal opportunities, stating that, notwithstanding the overriding principle of 'merit', women and ethnic minority practitioners are encouraged to apply.

Over the past 10 years, the situation has seen some improvement in terms of women's advancement into senior positions within the judiciary and Table 8 demonstrates changes at the top between 1989 and 2000. However, a woman has yet to sit as a Law Lord, only 1 woman sits as a Lord Justice (the same as in 1990), only 9 High Court Judges are women (compared with 7 in 1995) and there has been little change in rates of women's participation as Recorders over the past decade. Given the ambitions of many of the changes brought in during the past 10 years, there still appears to be a significant problem for women achieving the most senior appointments within this important domain.

Judicial Office	1989		1995		1999	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Law Lords	10	0	12	0	11	0
Lord Justices	27	4	32	3	35	3
High Court Judges	81	1	95	7	104	9
Circuit Judges	434	4	515	6	549	7
Stipendiary Magistrates	64	13	89	13	96	15
Recorders	703	5	901	6	1335*	12
Assistant Recorders	484	5	340	15		

* as at 12 April 2000, all Assistant Recorders become Recorders

Table 8: Women in the Judiciary, 1989-1999
(source: Lord Chancellor's Department)

In early 1999, the Lord Chancellor commissioned Sir Leonard Peach to carry out an independent assessment of the procedures for appointing judges and Queen's Counsel to see whether there was scope for 'further development'. In December 1999, Sir Leonard presented his report and amongst his recommendations was the establishment of a Commission for Judicial Appointments which would investigate complaints raised in relation to the operation of the appointments system. He also recommended a shift to an 'assessment centre' approach to selection which is currently being piloted and the development of 'succession planning' for the most senior judicial posts, with specific consideration

given to women and minority ethnic practitioners. In his report, Sir Leonard discussed two contradictory theses with which many of us are familiar: on the one hand, the 'trickle' up theory suggests that as more women enter the profession, over time they will achieve senior posts. On the other hand, evidence from those professions which have seen precisely such an expansion at the point of entry, such as higher education, have seen little real evidence of women successfully climbing the career ladder over the past 20 or even 10 years. There is currently (2000) an independent investigation being conducted into the issues which inhibit applications for judicial appointments amongst women and minority ethnic practitioners.³¹

The judiciary more generally has seen considerable change over the past decade, both structurally and procedurally and some of those changes have particularly affected women who have had career breaks and/or who have been working in practices and chambers without a high profile so have been rendered almost invisible in terms of peer evaluations. There has now been a recognition of some of those barriers to women's progression. For example, since 1998, it has been possible for individuals who have had a career break for family reasons, to apply to undertake their sittings as Recorders in concentrated blocks, rather than spread over a number of years.³² There is also flexibility in age criteria to allow individuals who are entering the profession late to be afforded the opportunity of career development. It is also now possible to be appointed to the District Bench on a permanent part-time basis.³³

The Lord Chancellor acknowledges in his annual report 1998-99, that women (and minority ethnic practitioners) remain a small proportion of the professional judiciary which partly reflects, he suggests, their numbers in the legal profession who have the appropriate experience. He therefore cautions against too easily reading off unfavourable comparisons between the numbers of practising women solicitors and barristers against the number of women judges. Instead, he suggests that women are actually doing rather well, pointing out that the proportion of women serving as Assistant Recorders is appreciably greater than their proportion in the profession as a whole with the relevant level of experience. It also appears that women have been more successful in their applications for Silk than their male colleagues over the past 3 years: 1998 (22 per cent of women compared with 11 men); 1999 (18 per cent women compared with 10 per cent of men); and

2000 (19 per cent women compared with 15 per cent men).³⁴ However, it should be noted that the volume of male applicants is nearly 10 times that of women so that in 2000, for example, out of 506 applications for Queen's Counsel, 453 (90 per cent) were from men. When all applications for open competition appointments are considered, though, men do slightly better than women. For example, in 1998/99, women comprised 24.6 per cent of applicants, 26.4 per cent of interviewees and 23.5 per cent of successful appointees.³⁵

During 1998/99, 3 new Law Lords were appointed, 4 new Lords Justices of Appeal and 7 new High Court Judges – *none* were women. It can only be hoped that the research being undertaken currently to identify inhibitors to women applying for judicial appointments provides some recommendations for further changes in procedures and practices to enable women's proper contribution to justice to be achieved. Interestingly, the one aspect of the judicial process where women are conspicuously successful is in the lay magistracy where they currently comprise 49 per cent of all magistrates.³⁶

The Legal Profession

Part of the problem of women's take-up of judicial appointments lies, obviously, with their presence in the pool of prospective candidates, i.e. as barristers and solicitors with appropriate seniority and experience. But, as noted above, even volume is no predictor of eventual office. As Table 9 shows, the number of women called to the Bar and practising as solicitors has risen significantly over the past 10 years and women are getting better qualified: the number of women holding practising certificates has doubled over the past decade.

Barristers	1987	1995	1999
Called to the Bar	37	46	45*
Practising at the Independent Bar	14	22	
Solicitors	1987	1994	1999
Admitted to the Roll	45	53	52
Practising	19	29	35

* aggregate figures for 1999

Table 9: Women barristers and solicitors 1987-1999 (% of all)

(source: The Law Society and The General Society of the Bar annual reports)

However, despite their growing numbers in absolute terms, women in the profession are still progressing more slowly than men. Over the past ten years, the proportion of women solicitors admitted to the Roll rose from 46 per cent (1988/89) to 52 per cent (1998/99), but men are still twice as likely to be partners in private practice than women.³⁷ Similarly, the proportion of women called to the Bar has risen from 40 per cent in 1990 to 45 per cent in 1999, but out of 7 women applying for High Court Judge appointments in 1999, *none* were appointed and of 16 applications by women for Circuit Judge appointments, only 2 were successful (12 per cent). Kamlesh Bahl, Vice-President of the Law Society, is pleased at the initiative of one large law firm, Linklaters, to allow flexible working at partnership level to allow women (and men) to vary their hours and work from home and points out that it makes commercial sense to do so. A considerable amount of money is invested in training lawyers which would otherwise be wasted if ways are not found to retain staff who wish to have children and also continue to develop their careers.³⁸ However, such flexibility in law firms is still unusual and elsewhere, other new initiatives, such as the setting up of a helpline by the Law Society for trainee solicitors suffering racial or sexual harassment and discrimination, are responding to the continued existence of a professional culture which can make it hard for women to thrive.

The Police Service

The police service is seen by many as being similar in culture to the military, i.e. macho and aggressive, and external investigations into the activities of police officers in specific circumstances, such as those conducted by Lord Scarman in the wake of the inner city civil disturbances in the 1980s and the more recent report by Lord Macpherson into the Stephen Lawrence investigation, have consistently highlighted institutional discrimination.³⁹ Whilst those two enquiries focused on aspects of racism, high profile industrial tribunal cases such as that brought by Alison Halford, then Assistant Chief Constable in Merseyside, under the Sex Discrimination Act demonstrate evidence of sexism within the service as well.

The police service was not included in the original 1990 Hansard Commission's ambit, but its inclusion in the 1995 Report was on the grounds that senior police officers have an important contribution to make to civil society as a whole. As pointed out then, equal opportunities issues only began to be seriously addressed in the late 1980s and the Metropolitan

Police was the first to develop a policy statement, working with the Equal Opportunities Commission to formulate a strategy which would encourage women's career advancement within the service as a whole, not just in Greater London. By 1989, the growing number of tribunal cases being brought under the Sex Discrimination Act prompted the Home Office to issue the following statement: 'It is not enough for a force to claim to be an equal opportunities employer: Chief officers of police must take the necessary steps to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and to guard against the risk of discriminating unlawfully.'⁴⁰

More than ten years on, whilst women are at last managing to secure a few of the top jobs in the police service as Chief Constables, they remain significantly under-represented across all ranks within the service except constable. A review of research undertaken into equal opportunities in the police service found that women officers believe that there remain a number of barriers to their career progress, including the long hours culture, lack of encouragement, blocking of applications by immediate supervisors and unfair selection processes.⁴¹ As Table 10 shows, there has been steady progress over the past decade, although it still seems to be slower than could be expected. A little caution needs to be taken in making direct comparisons over time since there seems to have been a 'flattening out' of some intermediary ranks such as Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Superintendent since 1995.

Interestingly, possibly because of more proactive efforts to attract women and members of minority ethnic communities into the force, whilst women comprise 17 per cent of all ranks, they comprised 28 per cent of all new recruits in the period 1 April 1999 – 31 March 2000 and comprised only 13 per cent of 'wastage' during the same period. However, when women leave the force, they are more likely to resign (45 per cent) than to retire (39 per cent) and resignations amongst women are more than twice as frequent than amongst men. Women from minority ethnic backgrounds appear to be progressing less slowly than women officers more generally and the highest ranking minority ethnic woman holds the rank of Chief Inspector and even here, she is a woman alone at this rank.

Elsewhere in the criminal justice system, women's take-up of senior posts is uneven. For example, of the 1051 prison officers in post in 1998 on Governor grades, only 13 per cent were women;⁴² on the other hand, the proportion of women on Chief Probation Officer grades doubled between 1995 and 2000 so that 30 per cent of CPOs currently are women.⁴³ However, given that women comprised nearly half of all probation officers in 1988 (43 per cent)⁴⁴ and currently comprise 56 per cent of the total, it is clear that they are still significantly under-represented at senior grades.

Rank	1990		1995		2000	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Chief Constable	48	0	51	2	47	6.4
Deputy Chief Constable	58	0	46	4.3	no such rank	
Asst. Chief Constable	127	0.8	104	2.9	149	8.1
Chief Superintendent	606	1.7	280	2.5	no such rank	
Superintendent	1542	1.9	1096	2.8	1226	5.1
Chief Inspector	2379	2.3	1792	2.8	1574	6.9
Inspector	6962	2.7	6322	3.7	5941	6.5
Total	11722	2.4	9691	3.4	8937	6.4

Table 10: Women in the police service by senior rank, 1990-2000

(source: 1990 and 1995 statistics - 'The Independent', 16th June 1995, p5; 2000 statistics - 'Home Office Statistical Bulletin no. 15/00, Police Service Personnel 2000, Table A, p2)

Local Government, Health, Higher Education and the Media

The Government is working to transform Britain into a society which is inclusive and prosperous. Eliminating unjustified discrimination wherever it exists and making equality of opportunity a reality for all is at the heart of the Government's agenda. Equality of opportunity is not only inherently right, it is also essential for Britain's future economic and social success... We will continue to act to stamp out discrimination, remove barriers and improve the position of groups facing disadvantage and discrimination in employment, public life and public service delivery. (Hansard, House of Commons, Written Answers 100 810 – The Rt. Hon. Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, 30 November 1999)

Whilst the 1990 Hansard Society Commission focused on the position of women across both the public sector and the corporate world, its range did not include either local government or the National Health Service. For this Report, we decided to both look back over the past decade to assess progress across those areas covered by the original Commission – in this section, this means higher education and the media – but also to extend the analysis to consider other aspects of public service in which women predominate.

Local Government

As in other areas of public governance, the majority of employees in local authorities are women⁴⁵ but barely 1 in 10 have a woman Chief Executive and in 1998, only 14 per cent of chief and deputy chief officers were women.⁴⁶ Whilst this is a considerable improvement on the position in 1990 when the 6 women Chief Executives comprised only 1.3 per cent of the total,⁴⁷ it still represents a significant failure on the part of local authority hiring committees to recognise the talents which women bring to the job. In a study currently being undertaken by Bristol Business School into the experiences of women Chief Executives (CEs), preliminary findings suggest that women CEs still feel disadvantaged by, for example, harsher judgements made on them over their gravitas, charisma, managerial approach and sartorial style. Their sex is often implicated in the ways in which they are viewed by male colleagues, succinctly exemplified by one respondent in that study who suggested that the lot of the woman CE is not an easy one: 'You're seen as an ogre or a tart.'⁴⁸ Whilst the Local Government Association recognises that a number of structural issues play a part in preventing women from achieving senior appointments, for example, 'recruitment and selection procedures, employment practices and working arrangements',⁴⁹ it also acknowledges that the

'culture' of local authorities and direct discrimination are also highly influential factors. A small-scale study of women managers within one local authority also found prejudice and discrimination mentioned by respondents and a perception that *all* women were affected by outmoded assumptions about the reality or likelihood of women's greater commitment to their families than their employers.⁵⁰

Not only are women poorly represented as senior officers within local government, they are also in a minority as local councillors. In 1997, the Local Government Management Board carried out the first national census of local councillors and found that just over a quarter of the 21,000 councillors are women (27.3 per cent) and that men are twice as likely as women to be Leaders of Councils. Part of the problem is one of confidence, of women putting themselves forward; part relates to a lack of adequate support structures, including mentoring, for newly appointed councillors, which would benefit women and men equally; and part relates to the structure of council business which makes involvement difficult for individuals with domestic and/or other caring responsibilities to undertake work outside 'office hours'.⁵¹ But, as elsewhere, a significant part of the reason for under-representation lies in the culture of many councils, especially those with long traditions of male-dominance and masonic involvement.⁵²

Top 5 Councils	% women (of total)	Bottom 5 Councils	% women (of total)
Aylesbury Vale	57	Bolsover	8
Islington	50	Durham	8
Cotswold	49	Forest Heath	8
Pendle	47	Isle of Anglesey	8
North Wiltshire	46	Castle Morpeth	9

Table 11: Women councillors by frequency (top 5/bottom 5), 1999

(source: Fawcett Society Annual Report 1999/2000)

The considerable variation in the proportion of women councillors as set out in Table 11 suggests that it is not simply a question of region (although 17.9 per cent of councillors in Wales are women, compared with 29.5 per cent in the South West), but that other factors must also be involved. Perhaps very few women come forward in Anglesey or Pembrokeshire but then the question to be asked is why not and what can be done to encourage them to do so, rather than simply accepting that the vast majority of councillors are men and that's the way it is.

The National Health Service

The 1990 Report did not cover the National Health Service, but this has traditionally been a service in which women have comprised the majority of the workforce but a minority of senior staff. In 1998, 950,000 people were employed in the NHS hospital and community health services, where women comprise 79 per cent of the non-medical workforce but only 33 per cent of medical staff.⁵³

As part of the Labour Government's modernising push, the NHS has been a particular target for equality strategies. In 1998, the General Whitley Council agreed that a review of the equal opportunities section of the handbook would take place and in 2000, the GWC reached a new agreement to make equality and diversity an integral part of the NHS. In April 2000, the NHS Executive published *The Vital Connection: An Equalities Framework* for the NHS. Briefly, this framework for action sets out the overall direction, priorities and expectations of the NHS for equality, diversity and social inclusion. The key actions that NHS employers need to take now to develop an organisation-wide approach to planning and accounting for progress in equality is laid out in that document, as is a new requirement for all NHS organisations to publish an equality statement as part of their annual report

The Rt. Hon. John Denham MP, Minister of State for Health writes in the foreword to *The Vital Connection* that, 'we must be clear that there is no place in the modern NHS for discrimination, harassment, stereotyping or prejudiced treatment',⁵⁴ and the document itself sets out a range of equality targets, equalities indicators and an equality standard. The Minister goes on to suggest that, 'We can only achieve our aims for a modern health service if we build an explicit commitment to equality, diversity and inclusiveness into everything we do, and crucially into how we recruit, develop and manage our staff. And we must match that commitment by determined and practical action in all parts of the NHS.'⁵⁵

Twelve per cent of nurses, midwives and health visitors are men and yet they comprise 22 per cent of managers and the average weekly pay of male nurses is £34 more than that of women colleagues.⁵⁶ Table 12 sets out the proportion of women and men in senior appointments in the NHS over the past ten years and shows that although the percentage of women consultants has increased, it has done so by a meagre 6 per cent. Given that 10 years ago, women comprised

37 per cent of senior house officers, their lack of advancement to consultant status by 2000 is disappointing.

Grade	1990		1995		1999	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Consultant	15520	15.6	18401	18.8	22017	21.4
Staff Grade	266	30.8	1757	33	3645	34.1
Associate Specialist	875	37.8	1067	34.2	1443	34.7
Registrar Group	9709	25.7	10821	31.4	12105	35.8
Senior House Officer	10900	37.3	12933	40.1	14777	44.4
House Officer	3018	45	3224	49.4	3543	50.8

Table 12: Women NHS staff in senior grades, 1990-1999
(source: DoH medical and dental workforce censuses)

There is no doubt that the visibility of women in senior managerial posts within the NHS is generally poor, geographically uneven and varies by specialism. Currently, only 23 per cent of Chief Executives are women and within that small proportion lie considerable geographical and occupational discrepancies. For example, there are twice as many women Chief Executives in the London Region (35 per cent) than in the North West (17 per cent) and only 16 per cent of Finance Directors are women.⁵⁷ The targets set by government for achieving a more representative leadership tier within the NHS include increasing the proportion of women in executive posts at board level to 40 per cent by 2004 across all sectors of the service.⁵⁸ On current figures, this is an extremely ambitious target and it is hard to see how it will be achieved without specific positive action strategies being put in place.

As far as senior clinical staff are concerned, Table 13 shows the position of women consultants across the NHS by specialism.

Specialism	1999	
	Members	Women
Accident and Emergency	438	17.5
Anaesthetics	3136	23.8
Clinical Oncology	305	26.2
General Medicine Group	5015	18.1
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	1057	22.4
Paediatric Group	1355	37.6
Pathology Group	1932	30.6
Psychiatry Group	2808	31.8
Radiology Group	1540	27.7
Surgical Group	4431	5.4

Table 13: Women consultants by specialism, 1999
(source: DoH medical and dental workforce census, 1999)

It is clear that while women are much more visible in those areas traditionally associated with women practitioners, such as paediatrics, they are also gaining a significant presence as consultants in less 'obvious' specialisms such as pathology and psychiatry. However, their relatively low visibility in that most woman-centred area of obstetrics and gynaecology is puzzling, especially given that out of the 10 principal specialisms, obstetrics and gynaecology has the second highest number of women staff overall (46 per cent) after paediatrics (54 per cent).

Higher Education

In the 1990 Report, the Commission argued that women's presence in higher education was not simply a matter of personal fulfilment but that the relationship which teaching staff have with the next generation of leaders, policy makers, entrepreneurs and opinion-formers is important and can be extremely influential. As part of the Labour Party's election campaign of 1997, their policy platform was 'education, education, education', and part of that campaign featured key figures in British society talking about inspirational teachers. Whilst the 1990 Report focused almost exclusively on Oxbridge, on the grounds that those two universities were the traditional routes into power and influence, and the 1995 Report continued this focus, this current Report looks at the higher education sector more widely.

In 1997/98, there were approximately 128,076 academic and research staff in UK higher education, of whom one-third were women.⁵⁹ In 1999, the Association of University Teachers (AUT) published the findings of a comprehensive research study which looked at the gender, pay and employment circumstances of UK academic staff.⁶⁰ The study revealed numerous discrepancies both between women and men's pay and conditions, but also between the situation for pre-1992 and post-1992 staff.⁶¹ From the study, it was clear that women are less likely to be on a permanent contract than men (47 per cent: 59 per cent) and rates of casualisation for women increase as they move into less 'traditional' subject areas.

In another review, the Bett Report found that men's salaries were consistently higher than those of women, even at senior levels, where women professors' salaries are an average of 4 per cent below that of comparable men.⁶² When the AUT gave evidence to the Equal Opportunities Commission's Equal Pay Task Force on 3 July 2000, the Association reported that pay

differentials between women and men in the sector had in fact widened rather than reduced and stood at 18 per cent in 1998/99, compared with 17 per cent for the previous year. Nearly half of all male academic staff (49 per cent) were at the top of their (usually more senior) scale whilst scarcely a quarter (26 per cent) of women were in a similar position. The Bett Report estimated that it would cost approximately 2.5 per cent of the higher education sector's total costs (£283m in 1997/98) for institutions to meet their obligations on equal pay.⁶³ Table 14 shows the progress of women across the sector in senior lecturer/researcher posts and as professors over the past 5 years.

Post	1995/6		1998/9	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Professors	8649	8.6	10261	9.8
Senior Lecturers and Researchers	16050	8.3	19599	21.9
Total	24699	8.4	29860	17.7

Table 14: Women in higher education by senior appointment, 1995-1999
(source: Higher Education Statistics Agency individualised returns - only HEIs with 500+ staff have been included)

The 1990 Report commented that barely 1 in 20 professors in the pre-1992 universities were women. Table 14 shows some improvement by 1998/99, in gross terms, but women in senior positions tend to be employed in the post-1992, that is the 'new' university sector. Oxbridge fares particularly poorly when compared with the rest of the sector: in a league table of 95 universities, Oxford is positioned joint 69th in terms of the percentage of women senior lecturers and researchers (16.7 per cent) and Cambridge comes in 87th (11.6 per cent). As far as women's professorial appointments is concerned, in a league table of 80 universities, Oxford comes in at 46th (8.7 per cent) and Cambridge is placed 68th (6.5 per cent).⁶⁴ These percentages have scarcely moved from the position in 1995 and the pre-1992 universities have been repeatedly criticised by both government and unions for their failure to promote women and other under-represented groups into senior posts. Table 15 gives a breakdown of the 'best' and the 'worst' universities in terms of the number of women professors.

University	Total	% Women
Top 5		
The University of East London	16	37.5
South Bank University	55	30.9
The University of Northumbria at Newcastle	20	30
The University of Wolverhampton	50	30
The Robert Gordon University	37	24.3
Bottom 5		
Cranfield Institute	84	4.8
UMIST	128	4.7
Imperial College	330	4.5
The University of Bradford	59	3.4
The University of Salford	48	2.1

Table 15: Women professors in higher education by frequency (top 5/bottom 5), 1999

(source: Higher Education Statistics Agency individualised returns - only HEIs with 500+ staff have been included)

Only one institution in the 'top 10' professorial list is a pre-1992 university and not only are women more likely to thrive in the post-92 sector, but discipline-based gender-sensitive discrepancies mean that they are 10 times more likely to achieve a chair in education (20 per cent women) than in engineering and technology (2 per cent women). In 2000, there are still no women professors in civil engineering and although there has been a 300 per cent increase in the number of women in chemistry chairs, this simply means that the one lone woman has now been joined by two more colleagues.⁶⁵ Whether this dismal state of affairs is because women are not attracted to these subject areas because they are simply not interested or because there are no female academic role models or because they feel they will be made unwelcome is impossible to determine, but what is clear is that traditional gender stereotypes still exist in 2000, despite our best efforts to encourage young women to study so-called 'male' subjects. The failure of all universities, but especially the more elite pre-1992 institutions, to widen participation for staff at senior levels finds a mirror reflection when consideration is taken of the proportion of less 'traditional' students whom they recruit.

All universities are currently given a 'benchmark' target of recruiting a designated proportion of students from under-represented groups and ten universities have been given extremely low targets, that is, less than 10 per cent. Nine of those universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, are members of the elite 'Russell' group of universities and none of the 9 have managed to achieve even their minimum targets.⁶⁶ Without a

much more determined effort by all universities, but especially the pre-1992 institutions, to improve career opportunities for talented women, the contribution to higher education which women could make will continue to be wasted.⁶⁷

The Media

In 1990, the Hansard Commission argued that the presence of women in senior appointments within media industries was important to ensure a balanced view of the world. The media, then as now, have considerable influence over the lives of their audiences, if not telling us what to believe and think, then certainly encouraging them/us in what we should think about. Whilst women are certainly present across the media industry in significant numbers - for example, 40 per cent of the BBC's staff in 2000 are women⁶⁸ - their progress to the very top of their organisations has been slow. The 1990 Report welcomed the BBC's involvement in equal opportunity strategies since 1986, including the recruitment of equal opportunities officers, awareness training, women-specific training programmes, career break programmes, nursery provision and flexible working. But even as late as 1988, there had never been a woman on the BBC senior management committee. In 2000, the situation has improved considerably so that, whilst in 1989, 10 per cent of senior managers were women, this had risen to 27 per cent by 2000.⁶⁹

Interestingly, the proportion of women in 'middle management' posts has remained constant over the 10-year period, at 35 per cent, although it is hard to make a direct comparison as job titles and functions change over time. The BBC itself reports that in recent years, its approach to gender equality issues has shifted from a focus on targeted training and employment initiatives towards a consideration of the needs of working parents and quality of working life issues.⁷⁰

In 1990, the position of women in the commercial media sector was broadly similar to the BBC profile, with many women working as producers, directors, editors, writers and presenters, but very few in senior management positions. Now as then, organisational values and managerial attitudes seemed to inhibit women's progress, so that although women are making their way up the career ladder, the positions of decision-making which determine the perspective, scope, range and direction of individual channels and newspapers are overwhelmingly held by men. Whilst

Public Appointments

the BBC's statistics are relatively straightforward to access, the same cannot be said for the commercial and independent media sector, which is fragmented and diverse. However, in organisations which have a strong union or other membership presence, it is possible to gain some statistical data from surveys so, for example, a 1994 Skillset⁷¹ census showed that the ratio of women to men as producers/directors was 1:3 and that women were more likely to be working in national radio (46 per cent, compared with 54 per cent of men), than in, say, new media such as satellite, cable and digital (31 per cent, compared with 69 per cent of men).⁷²

In print media, once again, although there are significant numbers of women working on newspapers and magazines, they are much less likely than men to be editors or deputy editors and for women with childcare responsibilities, this level of promotion is significantly less likely.⁷³ Magazines were seen as offering all women more opportunities for career advancement. In 2000, a woman working as editor-in-chief on a national newspaper is rare and currently, women do not control or run major media such as newspapers or TV companies, although there are women-run independent media businesses, especially in new media such as e.business and specialist media such as women's publishing. It is a sad irony that a new media project which is likely to be launched in 2001 with the specific ambition to provide opportunities for women journalists to write about Europe, has decided to avoid including 'women' or 'gender' in its title to avoid alienating potential male consumers.⁷⁴

The relatively poor visibility of women in decision-making posts in key areas of governance such as parliamentary politics, the civil service and other areas of public service is replicated when consideration is given to the appointment of women to public bodies. A decade ago, the 1990 Report commented that, *'women have the right to participate, on equal terms with men, in holding public office and performing public functions at all levels of government [but] that is not what is happening in the real world.'* As the Commission pointed out, more needed to be done to secure equal representation of women in these important functions since women as well as men are similarly affected by the decisions taken by public bodies. In addition, the Commission cautioned that women's marginalisation from such appointments could be illegal. The 1990 Report made a series of recommendations relating to the appointment of women, including that the Public Appointments Unit (PAU) should be used systematically for all significant appointments and that unnecessary conditions and requirements should be removed from the criteria for appointments.

In 1991, women held 23 per cent of public appointments and by 1994, this had increased to 30 per cent and the 1995 Report was able to argue that the Hansard Society Commission's 1990 Report had contributed to that positive development. Whilst the PAU is only one of several sources of potential appointees that Departments can use, the Nolan Committee endorsed the Hansard Commission's suggestion that it be used more systematically. Following this recommendation, the Unit subsequently saw an increase in search requests (up 20 per cent) between 1990 and 1995 and was also more successful in 'placing' candidates (from 100 placements in 1990 to 180 by 1994/5). However, 1994/5 was an exceptional year and therefore this success was due to very particular circumstances.⁷⁵

Although the number of searches over the past five years has increased by 75 per cent (from 236 in 1995/96 to 311 in 1999/2000), the number of placements has remained almost the same (105 in 1995/96 and 104 in 1999/2000), which means that the PAU appears to be doing more searches but with less success. By 1995, approximately one-third of the PAU's active list of potential appointees were women who then comprised 49 per cent of the Unit's 750 successful placements during 1990-1995. In 2000, women still comprise approximately one-third (32 per cent) of the PAU's 'pool' of potential appointees and accounted for 44.5 per cent of known successes in the

five years since 1995. However, it should be noted that for the year 1999/2000, women constituted 56 per cent of 104 successes, so this could mean that women are being more actively sought out by Departments than in the past.⁷⁶

As mentioned elsewhere, the incoming Labour Government's intention to modernise all aspects of governance included the Public Appointments procedure, although here it was already building on the culture of change initiated by the previous government in the wake of the Nolan Committee's Report. In 1994, the Committee on Standards in Public Life was set up under Lord Nolan and its first report, in 1995 looked, amongst other things, at Executive Quangos. One of its recommendations led to the establishment of the Commissioner for Public Appointments later that year. In 1999, Peter Kilfoyle, (then) Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office, published the government's updated plan for increasing the participation of under-represented groups, arguing that the plan, 'required all Departments to continue their work towards the equal representation of women and men in public appointments.'⁷⁷ In 2000, the annual update plan was published, *Quangos: Opening Up Public Appointments 2000-2003*, which showed that the proportion of women public appointees in late 1999 stood at 33 per cent, an increase of a mere 3 per cent over the five-year period from 1994 and scarcely approaching the government's target of equal representation. Table 16 provides a breakdown of women public appointees by Department.

Whilst government has certainly paid lip service to the 1990 Report's recommendations to be more imaginative in their methods of recruitment, by encouraging, '*individuals in under-represented groups to apply for appointments by targeted advertising [and] attracting potential appointees and in drafting job descriptions and application specifications which do not contain unnecessary requirements which might discourage or eliminate their applications*',⁷⁸ women are still significantly under-represented. Despite accepting the Commissioner for Public Appointments' seven 'principles',⁷⁹ some of the 28 Departments and regulatory authorities which make public appointments continue to have fewer than 25 per cent women appointees and most have targets for 2003 which fall far short of the government's 50:50 goal for women and men. Part of the problem seems to lie in the different approaches taken towards equality issues by different Departments, so that although government

Department	Total appointments 1999 (% women)	Total Ministerial appointments 1999 (% women)	2003 Targets* (% women)
Cabinet office	37	37	47
Central Office of Information	36	36	no target
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	43	43	no target
Department of Culture, Media and Sport	31	33	circa 50
Department for Education and Employment	37	37	50
Department for International Development	28	28	42
Department of Health	44	45	50
Department of Social Security	36	36	33
Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions	24	27	40**
Department of Trade and Industry	26	26	35
Export Credits Guarantee Department	20	20	not known
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	29	33	circa 50
Her Majesty's Treasury	18	18	40
Home Office	41	41	45
Inland Revenue	11	11	no target
Lord Chancellor's Department	25	25	40
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	8	12	circa 20
Ministry of Defence	16	18	circa 25
National Assembly for Wales	25	29	circa 35**
Northern Ireland Office	36	35	45
Office for National Statistics	0	0	n/a
OFGEM (Gas and Electricity Markets)	34	0	no target
OFTEL	27	24	no target
OFWAT	37	0	n/a
Office of the Rail Regulator	23	14	no target
Royal Mint	18	18	40**
Scottish Office	42	36	50**
Scottish Executive	47	48	50**

* Source for 2003 targets is 'Quangos: Opening Up Public Appointments, 2000-2003

** 2002 targets

Table 16: Women public appointees by Government Department, 1999 (actual) and 2003 (targets)

(source: Public Bodies, 1999, Cabinet Office, Table 2.1)

has an overall target of *equal* representation across all Departments, the targets set on a year-on-year basis vary considerably. It is the responsibility of each Department to undertake its own advertising for posts to public bodies and currently, only 4 Departments are using web pages as a vehicle through which to publicise vacancies.⁸⁰ Table 17 sets out the 'best' and the 'poorest' Departments in terms of their proportion of women appointees over the period 1990-1999.

1990		1995		1999		
Best	% Women		% Women		% Women	
1	Cabinet Office	47	Home Office	40	Scottish Executive	47
2	Home Office	37	Office of the Electricity Regulator	40	Department of Health	44
3	Office of the Electricity Regulator	35	Scotland Office	40	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	43
4	Scotland Office	33	DFWAT	40	Scotland Office	42
5	Department of Health	31	Department of Health	37	Home Office	41
Worst						
1	Central Statistical Office	0	Export Credit Guarantee Department	0	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	8
2	Export Credit Guarantee Department	0	Scottish Courts Administration	5	Inland Revenue	11
3	Department of Energy	3	Ministry of Defence	6	Ministry of Defence	16
4	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	5	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	9	Royal Mint	18
5	Ministry of Defence	6	Inland Revenue	12	Export Credit Guarantee Department	20

Table 17: Women public appointees by Government Department (best 5/worst 5), 1990-1999

(source: Public Bodies, 1990, 1995, 1999, Cabinet Office)

That Departments can set differential targets for achieving improved representation of women (and other under-represented groups) is, arguably, because the overall target is not time-limited. In the 2000 Plan (for 2000-2003), Departments not only identify their actual targets but also specify what steps they are taking to achieve them. Again, whilst the same broad principles are espoused across all Departments, some are more proactive than others in seeking out 'less-traditional' appointees. For example, the Cabinet Office states that, 'whenever a vacancy on one of the Cabinet Office Advisory Bodies occurs, we will actively seek to identify suitable women and ethnic minority candidates through approaches to the PAU, the

Women's Unit, the Women's National Commission, and other representative organisations as appropriate.' The DTI asks, 'all Directorates to identify any women and ethnic minority candidates who have applied and been considered suitable for appointment but who have not been successful, so that they may be considered for inclusion in the Department's own list.'

Gisela Stuart MP, a Health Minister, suggests that her Department's record in appointing women is exemplary, pointing to the fact that since May 1997, 51 per cent of ordinary, non-executive appointees and 39 per cent of chair appointees to NHS Boards have been women.⁸¹ These results have been achieved by advertising strategies which actively encourage women to come forward, by valuing the experience and expertise of users and carers and by initiating criteria which stress local community involvement.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments (Dame Rennie Fritchie, since February 1999) is responsible for advising on, monitoring and auditing Departmental appointment procedures to all executive and NHS public bodies and has approximately one-third (12,000) of all public appointments under her charge. In a statement made specifically for this Report, Dame Rennie argues that, 'Together, the PAU and I are working closely with other interested groups, in particular the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities and Disability Rights Commissions and the Women's Unit, to progress even further towards a level of representation on public bodies that is not only morally just but socially beneficial.'⁸² In her 1999/2000 annual report,⁸³ she suggests that, 'on equal opportunities, the associated problems have not changed much in the 25 years or so that I have been involved...', but is anxious that the boundary between, 'the legitimate aim of equal opportunities and positive discrimination' is not blurred. What seems to exercise Dame Rennie and indeed, the Committee on Standards in Public Life,⁸⁴ is the drop in standards which is perceived (by them at least) to be implied by the setting of targets for under-represented groups. Of course, what concerns organisations which actively *promote* women into public life,⁸⁵ is not women's ability to perform but the *opportunity* to serve. Dame Rennie is also concerned with the lack of information and poor perception that 'the public' has of the appointments process more generally⁸⁶ and has, amongst other things, initiated 'Public Service Week', the first of which was carried out in November 2000, to raise public awareness. But for the 1750 women who are *already* on the PAU's database and all the other women who are otherwise

The Corporate Sector

known to government Departments and agencies as being willing, able and well-qualified to serve, it is less a question of information than actually being appointed. Table 18 shows the total annual new appointments and re-appointments to public bodies within the Commissioner's remit, categorised by

Status	1996/7		1997/8		1998/9		1999/2000	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Chairs	216	20	269	29	391	34	320	30
Members	1537	36	1661	40	2854	40	2520	40
Total	1753	34	1930	39	3245	39	2840	39

Table 18: New appointees and re-appointees to public bodies by gender, 1996-2000

(source: The Commissioner for Public Appointments - Fifth Report 1999-2000 - Table 1a, p27)

gender and year.

What Table 18 shows is that the appointment of women to Chairs of public bodies has actually worsened over the past 12 months from a more positive upward turn in 1997-98, whilst the appointment of women as Members has remained static. It is also the case that although women comprise 39 per cent of appointments/re-appointments, only 6 of the 29 appointees who receive remuneration in excess of £50,000 are women (20 per cent).⁸⁷

The blatant disparities in remuneration levels together with the stasis in women's representation over the past three years is surely worth an urgent review and seems to require an explanation beyond Dame Rennie's suggestion that such a 'levelling off is not unusual', although the Commissioner goes on to warn against complacency saying that, 'we must refresh and renew our efforts to reach groups that are under-represented'⁸⁸ Perhaps what needs to be monitored and scrutinised more carefully is the relationship between applicants and appointees as well as the wider issue of attracting 'non-traditional' members of the public to come forward to serve the public's interest.

In the 1990 Report, the Commission argued that, 'women's representation in management today has slowly increased in the past two decades, but women at the very top are scarcely visible.' At that time, a decade ago, women accounted for less than one per cent of boardroom executive directors and barely 1 in every 15 senior managers. The 1990 Report made a number of recommendations about how this situation should be remedied, including following the example of those companies which had already made a commitment to promote equal opportunities for women and thereby made better use of their talents. Key amongst strategies for change was the need to carry out equality audits to identify poor practice both in terms of recruitment and promotion generally but also specific actions which would assist women with domestic responsibilities, such as career break schemes, childcare initiatives, flexible working conditions, training for women managers and gender awareness programmes.

One of the most important initiatives which emerged in the wake of the 1990 Report was the setting up, in 1991, of *Opportunity 2000* by Business in the Community, to increase and improve women's employment opportunities. At its launch, 61 companies signed up to its aims and by 1995, the number of participating companies had grown to 293, all publicly committed to improving prospects for women in their workplaces, setting goals and developing action plans for their achievement, ensuring women's presence at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. By 1999, the number of companies participating in the project had increased to 340⁸⁹ and that year (July) saw the initiative change its name to *Opportunity Now*,⁹⁰ in preparation for the new millennium and in recognition that the initiative would not stop once the year 2000 had arrived. The re-launch included an agenda for future action, where priorities are strengthening and improving its Benchmarking Index,⁹¹ addressing career development for women at non-management levels and tackling the under-representation of women in science, engineering and technology and women from minority ethnic communities.

In 2000, there are 355 companies committed to the scheme and in April, *Opportunity Now* released its third Benchmarking Report in which it argued that a clear shift had taken place in workplace culture over the past few years. Part of the shift relates to corporate understanding of the business case (rather than 'only' the equity/justice case) for encouraging women's progression to the top. Amongst its findings was the

fact that gender issues are now the responsibility of board members in 75 per cent of respondent organisations, that 70 per cent of companies have formal policies supporting gender-oriented goals and 40 per cent of employers are developing indicators for managers with which to measure their performance against gender-goal criteria. In addition, half the responding employers had established equal opportunity awareness training although the report notes that monitoring of 'race' in the context of gender is still an infrequent practice amongst companies.

In the 1995 Report, it was clear that there had been forward progress since 1990 for women as board members, although as that Report noted, women still constitute a tiny minority. In 1989 and then again in 1995, postal surveys were distributed to the top 200 companies and findings showed that, for example, in 1989, 80 per cent of companies had *no* women board members but 5 years later, the percentage had gone down to just over half.⁹² Women made the most progress as non-executive directors, where their proportion on main boards improved from 3.9 per cent in 1989 to 10.4 per cent by 1995. And even though they doubled their presence as executive directors between 1989 and 1995, this increase was from 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent (i.e. 7 women out of a total 702 board members). In 2000, admittedly with a different respondent base,⁹³ *Opportunity Now* organisations reported that 8 per cent of their board members are women which is the same proportion as in the previous year.

Whilst it is to be expected that *Opportunity Now* employers are much more likely to have a positive approach to the recruitment of women to their senior executive positions, a mere 1 in every 12 is not quite the ratio which could be expected from companies involved in a programme dedicated to the improvement of women's career opportunities. It remains a damning fact that only one FTSE 100 company has a woman chief executive.⁹⁴ The slow progress that women are making at the very top of companies is, arguably, a consequence of their failure to progress into management positions lower down the organisation. The 1990 Report highlighted the existence of a 'glass ceiling' preventing women's career development and in 1995 (and currently), the same barriers still prevailed, at structural, institutional and attitudinal levels. In 1990, a survey of the CBI Top 100 companies carried out for the Hansard Commission found that approximately 7 per cent of women occupied senior management positions and a repeat exercise in 1995 of the CBI Top 200 companies

carried out for the 1995 Report, showed women's proportion had moved forward by only 1 per cent over that period.

In 1995, there was considerable pessimism about women's opportunities for career advancement in management for the reasons given above. Whilst the 1990 Report had suggested that with increasing numbers of women in junior positions, sheer weight of numbers would inevitably drive women upwards, this optimistic prediction was already being undermined scarcely three years later. In 1993, researchers tested the 'critical mass' thesis and found no evidence that time and volume (of women at the bottom of the managerial career ladder) would necessarily push women upwards, instead arguing that it was young men who were more likely to be promoted.⁹⁵ Table 19 shows the progress of women managers at different responsibility levels over time.

Responsibility Level	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Director	1.6	3	3.3	4.5	3.6	6.1	9.6
Function Head	4.4	5.8	6.5	8.3	10.7	11	15
Department Head	7.8	9.7	12.2	14	16.2	16.9	19
Section Leader	13.3	14.2	14.4	18.2	21.9	24.9	26.5
All Executives	7.9	10.7	12.3	15.2	18	19.9	22.1

Table 19: Women in senior appointments in the corporate sector (% of each level), 1990-2000

(source: Institute of Management/Remuneration Economics, National Management Salary Survey 2000)

It is clear from these figures that, 10 years on, women are finally beginning to achieve a presence in the boardroom, albeit still small in percentage terms, and the latest National Management Salary Survey published by the Institute of Management and Remuneration Economics in October 2000 reported that 22 per cent of all managers are now women.⁹⁶ Moreover, in *Opportunity Now* companies, women comprise 35 per cent of managers, comparing highly favourably with the average identified through surveys such as that mentioned above.⁹⁷ Some recent research suggests that one explanation for women's growing presence at middle management is that the glass ceiling, if not exactly shattering, is at least shifting upwards and that younger women appear to be experiencing less restrictions than older women in rapid rise career terms.⁹⁸ However, a time-series analysis will show whether or not those opportunities currently being enjoyed by younger women are still in evidence when they try and make their next career move. It continues to be tough for women in the corporate sector (as elsewhere) but certainly initiatives

such as *Opportunity Now* and the companies involved, continue to develop strategies which encourage women's progress. Acknowledgement of such activities through the public announcement of good practice awards such as those made by *Opportunity Now*,⁹⁹ keep equality issues in the public eye and at the same time reward those organisations which are going the extra kilometre.¹⁰⁰ But there is still some considerable distance to travel for women, not just in UK plc but across all society, in public and in private, in personal and professional life.

Conclusions

*It is worth noting that already nearly 20% of women earn more than their male partner. Women's earnings are increasing faster than men's [but] the pay gap is narrowing very slowly. If this rate of change continues, it will close around 2036. So, young women today can still look forward to working for less money than their male counterparts for most of their working lives.*¹⁰¹

In 1990, the Hansard Society Commission concluded that formidable barriers continue to restrict women's progress to the top. These barriers were and are structural and institutional and, perhaps most importantly, attitudinal. The 1995 Report argued that progress had been made in the years 1990 to 1995 but that there was no room for complacency. It also suggested that a mere half-decade was probably an insufficient time period in which to try and evaluate progress, suggesting that 10 years would be a better measure. This Report has mapped women's progress in making inroads into senior positions across precisely that time period and, although there have been moves forward, the scale and volume of those shifts in no way matches either the ambitions or the talents of women. A simple comparison between the dismal picture of women's presence in top jobs in 1990 and the situation now in 2000 would suggest, on the surface, that the proportion of women in senior positions in key sectors has doubled and sometimes tripled, but what needs to be borne in mind is that the baseline in 1990 was extremely low. So although every woman CEO, every woman professor, every woman Chief Constable, every woman QC is to be celebrated for her achievement in the face of significant obstacles, these are small triumphs to show for a decade of explicit equality campaigning. That the number of women Permanent Secretaries has tripled over the past 12 months – from one woman to three – nonetheless seems a poor show for 16 years of specific positive action strategies for women in the Civil Service: women still comprise barely 1 in every 5 officers at Senior Civil Service level. Fewer than one in five of our elected MPs in Westminster are women; a woman has yet to sit as a Law Lord; only one woman is a CEO of a FTSE 100 company. After 30 years of equality legislation, 10 years of *Opportunity Now* and the combined campaigning of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Women's National Commission and the Fawcett Society, women are still struggling to fulfil their potential. In this new millennium year, what more should and could be done?

The difficulties which women face are both attitudinal/cultural and financial. Even in these allegedly 'enlightened' times, research with women

suggests that they continue to experience overt discrimination and prejudice from male colleagues and managers and sometimes, sadly, from other women.¹⁰² In 1976, there were 243 applications made to the Equal Opportunities Commission to bring a case under the Sex Discrimination Act (1975); by 1986 the number had risen to 612 and by 1998, it had risen substantially to 4025. Over that 22-year period, the cases won (as a proportion of all applications) have dropped from 10 per cent to 7 per cent,¹⁰³ suggesting that it is increasingly difficult to make a good 'case' under equal opportunity legislation. The culture of many workplaces also militates against women's career advancement, so that women are often seen in biological rather than meritocratic terms, passed over for promotion on the grounds that they are more committed to their families than their employers.¹⁰⁴ This outmoded attitude is also prevalent in selection as well as promotion contexts, where women are deemed to be less appropriately qualified or able than men.¹⁰⁵ These attitudes are awkward to legislate against – witness the low rates of success in tribunals mentioned above – and in any case, will simply become implicitly manifest rather than explicitly articulated. But the point is that not only are they unfair and unjust but, as those organisations who have signed up to the *Opportunity Now* initiative have demonstrated, there is a firm business case for getting more women into positions of decision-making responsibility. Women have a highly visible and significant presence in the burgeoning e-commerce revolution, 30 per cent of new business start-ups are women-owned and 25 per cent of all businesses are run by women.¹⁰⁶

Part of the push for women-owned small businesses has been the rigid culture of traditional employment practices amongst mainstream employers who have been slow to respond to government initiatives which emphasise the importance of work-life balance issues. Women are good [for] business. In March 2000, the government launched a campaign to promote precisely a better work-life balance, including the setting up of Employers for Work-Life Balance, an alliance of 22 major employers working in partnership with government. But even the Chair of this new partnership, Peter Ellwood of Lloyds TSB, suggests that job-shares for CEOs is 'impossible',¹⁰⁷ sending out contradictory messages about flexible working and long-hours culture. The recognition that working reduced hours severely hampers career progression is well documented, but arguably nothing will change if the very stakeholders charged with promoting flexible working do not practice what they preach. The Equal Opportunities Commission sees the work-life balance

as central to achieving equality for women and men and it is currently campaigning for: the introduction of paid parental leave; wider opportunities for part-time/new ways of working; a reduction in long hours working, more encouragement for men to take an active role in parenting; and greater protection from discrimination for carers and others with family responsibilities.¹⁰⁸ Giving evidence to the Select Committee on Education and Employment, Christine Pointer, Chief Executive of Waverly District Council painted a graphic portrait of the long hours culture in local government, 'You are managing this swamp from 9 until 5 [and] then your elected members arrive after they have done a day's work and so have you. That is the reality of it.'¹⁰⁹

The other significant problem which women face is continuing disparity in pay levels, a situation which affects all women across all sectors and at all income levels. In 2000, the Women's Unit published the findings of their commissioned research on women's incomes over their lifetimes, focusing on both gender and motherhood.¹¹⁰ Key conclusions from that report were that the level of a woman's educational achievement has the biggest single impact on her likely lifetime's earnings, but the hours she works, how many children she has and when she has them, and whether she divorces, all have significant impacts on her lifetime income. Notwithstanding that working mothers bear the highest financial penalty for having children in terms of pay and employment opportunities, even women without children earn less over their lifetimes than comparable men, with disparities growing smaller as educational qualifications rise. For example, women graduates without children earn 12 per cent less than comparable men, whilst women who have no children and fewer skills earn 37 per cent less than male equivalents. As discussed earlier, pay differentials occur even amongst very highly placed women and even when these differences are relatively small, for example, women professors earn an average of 4 per cent less than male colleagues, their continued existence provides a clear signal that discriminatory practices permeate all employment strata.

This Report set out to review the progress of women into senior positions – top jobs – over the past decade and, although there has been a steady move forward across all the sectors monitored, the position of women relative to men continues to be extremely poor. This is especially disappointing given the proportions of women who occupy the middle tier of their chosen career, who have the necessary experience and seniority but who are still being passed over for

promotion or not considered as suitable public appointees or rejected as prospective parliamentary material. This Report does not ask for special favours for women but for equality of opportunity. The 'merit' argument is persistently evoked in counterpoint to calls for positive action, but its champions rarely disclose what 'merit' actually means, for themselves or anyone else. For example, if the criteria for appointment or promotion include the number of previous jobs at a particular level, or the volume of other chairs and directorships already held, or the years already spent in public service, or contacts at the local lodge, then it is easy to see how women can be subtly excluded, even though they may well be the best people to do the jobs in question. The often expressed concerns about 'lower' standards which are articulated in response to setting targets for improving the numbers of senior staff from under-represented groups are mostly entirely misplaced. They simply serve as distractions from taking positive actions to remedy continuing institutional and structural discrimination, however unwittingly they occur. Recognising that inequalities between women and men continue to exist and blight our political and economic life is an important first step but the harder one is to do something about it. In June 2000, the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, entitled 'Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century', took place, more familiarly known as the Beijing+5 conference. At the end of their deliberations, the Assembly included the statement set out below, which was subsequently adopted by the UN.

Despite general acceptance of the need for a gender balance in decision-making bodies at all levels, a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality has persisted. Notwithstanding substantial improvements of *de jure* equality between women and men, the actual participation of women at the highest levels of national and international decision-making has not significantly changed since Beijing 1995 and gross under-representation of women in decision-making bodies in all areas, including *inter alia* politics, conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, the economy, the environment and the media hinders the inclusion of a gender perspective in these critical spheres of influence. Women continue to be underrepresented at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels, as well as at the highest levels of the corporate sector and other social and economic institutions. Traditionally assigned gender roles limit women's choices in education and careers and compel women to assume the burden for household responsibilities. Initiatives and

programmes aimed at women's increased participation in decision-making were hindered by a lack of human and financial resources for training and advocacy for political careers; gender-sensitive attitudes towards women in society, awareness of women to engage in decision-making in some cases; accountability of elected officials and political parties for promoting gender equality and women's participation in public life; social awareness of the importance of balanced participation of women and men in decision-making; willingness on the part of men to share power; sufficient dialogue and co-operation with women's non-governmental organizations, along with organizational and political structures, which enable all women to participate in all spheres of political decision-making. (*Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, UN, New York, June 2000*)

Like this current Report, the Assembly discussed a number of improvements in women's situation since the original conference in 1995 but, as we have tried to make clear in this Report, they argue (as we do) that the barriers to women's full participation in decision-making remain considerable. What is needed now, surely, is not more legislation but specific acts of will, positive action strategies and a strong steer from government and other policy-makers. We can achieve equality between women and men but we have to *want* to.

Notes

- 1 Cited in press release no. 98, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 8 June 2000.
- 2 It should be noted, however, that in the IPU's table, the achievements of Scotland and Wales are not included
- 3 'zipping' means that Party Lists must have alternate women and men candidates from the top of the list down, that is, every other List candidate *must* be a woman (or a man).
- 4 Harriet Harman MP, 2000.
- 5 For example, Fiona Mactaggart MP (2000) suggests that women have been crucially involved in legislation which specifically benefits women, such as the parental leave directive, working families tax credit, improved maternity benefits and the development of a coherent childcare strategy. Similarly, Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director of the Fawcett Society states that: '*without some of the women MPs (working with some of the trade union women), the family friendly agenda could have been lost completely. Women have shown that it is possible to do politics differently.*' (correspondence with Ms Stephenson, 2 October 2000)
- 6 The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett MP (President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons); The Rt. Hon. Ann Taylor MP (Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury and Chief Whip); The Rt. Hon. Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP (Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster); The Rt. Hon. Baroness Jay of Paddington (Leader of the House of Lords and Minister for Women).
- 7 The Rt. Hon. Clare Short is Secretary of State for International Development.
- 8 See Langdon, 2000.
- 9 www.open.gov.uk: Marion Roe MP (Administration); Gwyneth Dunwoody MP (Transport sub-committee); The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett MP (Modernisation of the House of Commons).
- 10 For example, the Minister for Health, The Rt. Hon. Susan Deacon, launched a £250,000 project to stop smoking amongst young, socially disadvantaged young women, backed a pilot project to give young women free bulk supplies of the morning-after pill; the Transport Minister, The Rt. Hon. Sarah Boyack has proposed road tolls to fund improved public transport in a nation which has the lowest rate of women car drivers in Britain.
- 11 From Select Committee's First Report, 7 December 1998.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 See Ross, forthcoming.
- 14 Baroness Hilton of Eggardon (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and Baroness Wilcox (Aircraft Cabin Environment).
- 15 Baroness Wootton was a Labour Peer and died on 11 July 1988.
- 16 Baroness Knokin is still a Member as an elected hereditary peer under the House of Lords Act 1999.
- 17 House of Lords Annual Report 1999-2000.
- 18 DSS, DoE, Heritage, Home Office and Cabinet Office.
- 19 Forensic Science Service, Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, Public Record Office, Occupational Health Service and the Contributions Agency.
- 20 By 1999, 12 per cent of women at Senior Civil Service level were working part-time and plans are currently being considered to open up senior appointments to job-sharing: the Cabinet Office is about to introduce a database of staff who work part-time or job share to encourage more flexible working amongst senior staff (cited in Sherman, 2000).
- 21 Central Statistics Office, Education, Inland Revenue, Northern Ireland Office, Overseas Development Agency and GCHQ.
- 22 Data provided by the Cabinet Office, 3 November 2000. It should be noted that Departments with fewer than 10 SCS grade officers have not been included in this analysis.
- 23 'What Works' Diversity Website, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk.
- 24 *Diverse Civil Service: Civil Service Reform – A Report to the Meeting of Permanent Heads of Departments*, Sunningdale, 30 September – 1 October 1999.
- 25 Sir Richard is Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service.
- 26 In late 1998, questionnaires were delivered to 3000 staff (1700 returned) and interviews undertaken with a further 60 civil servants, asking them about their experiences of and attitudes towards the under-representation of women, members of minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities in the Senior Civil Service (Schneider, 1999).
- 27 Cabinet Office Departmental Report, 2000.
- 28 Report by Sir Richard Wilson to the Prime Minister on Progress 1999-2000.
- 29 Letter from Paul McLaughlin, Diversity Division, Civil Service Corporate Management, 29 September 2000.
- 30 *Judicial Appointments*, Lord Chancellor's Department, 1999.
- 31 This study is being undertaken by Dr Kate Malleson and Dr Fareda Banda.
- 32 A requirement for a full-time judicial appointment is prior experience of part-time sitting.
- 33 The Joint Working Party on Equal Opportunities in Judicial Appointments and Silk recommend an

- extension of these arrangements to include the High Court Bench (cited in Peach, 1999: Annex F).
- 34 Lord Chancellor's Department, 20 April 2000.
- 35 *Judicial Appointments Annual Report, 1998/99*, p.21.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p.58.
- 37 *The Law Society's 1999 Annual Statistical Report*, Table 2.9, p.18.
- 38 Cited in Crace, 1999.
- 39 Lord Scarman's Report 1981; Lord Macpherson's Report 1999.
- 40 In Circular 87/1989 cited in the 1995 Hansard Society Progress Report.
- 41 Russell, 1997.
- 42 *Statistics on Women in the Criminal Justice Service, 1999*.
- 43 *Probation Staffing Statistics, June 2000*, Table 7, p.10.
- 44 *Probation Statistics, England and Wales 1998*, figure 6, p.9.
- 45 Local Government Association Strategy on Gender Equality, 2000.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 Cited in Hughes, 2000, p.7.
- 48 Fox and Broussine, 2000, p.12.
- 49 Local Government Association Strategy on Gender Equality, 2000, S3.6.
- 50 Veale and Gold, 1998.
- 51 Gill, 2000.
- 52 Fox and Broussine, 2000.
- 53 Department of Health non-medical workforce census 1998.
- 54 NHS Executive, *The Vital Connection: an Equalities Framework for the NHS – Working Together for Quality and Equality*, 2000, p.1.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p.1.
- 56 Cited in Stephenson, 2000, p.3.
- 57 NHS Executive, *The Vital Connection: an Equalities Framework for the NHS – Working Together for Quality and Equality*, 2000, p.15.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p.42.
- 59 Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- 60 Association of University Teachers, *Pay gaps and casual jobs: an analysis of the gender, pay and employment of UK academic staff*, AUT, 1999.
- 61 Descriptions of higher education institutions as either 'pre' or 'post' 1992 relate to the year in which many polytechnics and other HEIs were summarily redefined as universities, implying a subtle hierarchy which 'pre' institutions claim for themselves, as being 'older', more established and 'proper' universities, compared with their newer colleagues.
- 62 An independent review of higher education pay and conditions was chaired by Sir Michael Bett and published in 1999.
- 63 Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions (the Bett Report), 1999, para 340.
- 64 These statistics are taken from the AUT pay gaps and casual jobs report, 1999, op. cit.
- 65 Higher Education Statistics Agency individualised staff return 1997/98.
- 66 Cited in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 6 October 2000, pp.6-7.
- 67 For a fuller discussion of managing equal opportunities in higher education, see Woodward and Ross, 2000.
- 68 Correspondence with Lee Rogers, Editorial and Investigation Team, BBC Information, 12 September 2000.
- 69 Correspondence with Veena Bhatti, Diversity Centre, BBC, 11 September 2000.
- 70 Correspondence with Lee Rogers, Editorial and Investigation Team, BBC Information, 12 September 2000.
- 71 Skillset is the National Training Organisation for Broadcast, Film, Video and Multimedia.
- 72 *Skillset survey census 1995/6*.
- 73 *Women in Journalism, 1998*.
- 74 Private correspondence with project team, September/October 2000.
- 75 However, the PAU have subsequently pointed out that 1994/5 was an exceptional year since the regional police authorities were set up then and the PAU played a major part in the recruitment of appointees. It cannot, therefore, be seen as a typical year, (from correspondence with Nick Brown, PAU, 12 October 2000)
- 76 Statistics provided by Nick Brown, PAU, 12 October 2000.
- 77 Cabinet Office press release # 113/99, 25 May 1999.
- 78 *Quangos: Opening up Public Appointments 2000-2003*, p.5.
- 79 Ministerial responsibility; appointment on merit; independent scrutiny, equal opportunity; probity; openness and transparency; and proportionality (procedures should be appropriate for the post in question).
- 80 Correspondence with Nick Brown, PAU, 12 October 2000.
- 81 See Stuart, 2000.
- 82 Part of a statement submitted in correspondence by Dame Rennie Fritchie, 3 November 2000.
- 83 *The Commissioner for Public Appointments Fifth Report, 1999-2000*.
- 84 In the Sixth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (chaired by Lord Neill and published in January 2000), the Committee asks the Commissioner for Public Appointments to consider, 'how the concept of 'merit' can be reconciled with

- the need for a balanced and appropriately qualified representation,' (p.122), again implying a potential mutual exclusivity between the two concepts.
- 85 For example, the Women's National Commission, The Fawcett Society.
- 86 Her Office commissioned MORI to investigate perceptions of the Public Appointments process, which found poor levels of awareness and cynicism about the process more generally (see *The Commissioner for Public Appointments Fifth Report, 1999-2000*, pp.39-43).
- 87 *The Commissioner for Public Appointments Fifth Report, 1999-2000*, Statistical Annex, Table 1, p.30.
- 88 *The Commissioner for Public Appointments Fifth Report, 1999-2000*, p.5.
- 89 Incomes Data Services Studies, Opportunity 2000, no. 671, July 1999.
- 90 *Opportunity Now* has as its strapline, 'employers committed to women'.
- 91 This is a 'business management tool' which companies use as a form of self-assessment against which to measure themselves on key indicators of equal opportunities. It is basically a questionnaire sent to participating organisations and data from completed forms are used to model how women are progressing in the workplace.
- 92 It should be noted, however, that in the 1990 survey, the base was 144 (72 per cent response rate), compared with 120 in 1995 (57 per cent response rate).
- 93 Whilst the respondent base is not directly drawn from the Top 200 companies, many of the companies in that index are also part of *Opportunity Now*, so comparisons are not entirely invalid.
- 94 She is Marjorie Scardino at Pearson PLC (the media group).
- 95 Gregg and Machlin, 1993.
- 96 Press release, 19 October 2000, Institute of Management/Remuneration Economics. The survey was sent to 21,000 employees in 487 companies.
- 97 Press release, 7 July 1999, *Opportunity Now* (from *Opportunity 2000 Benchmarking Report and Index 1998/99*).
- 98 Simpson and Altman, 2000.
- 99 Women's National Commission/The Future Foundation, *Future Female: A 21st Century Gender Perspective*, 2000, p.13.
- 101 For further details of these 'award' companies and the *Opportunity Now* initiative more generally, see: www.opportunitynow.org.uk.
- 101 Women's National Commission/The Future Foundation, *Future Female: A 21st Century Gender Perspective*, 2000.
- 102 For example, Women's National Commission/The Future Foundation, op.cit., The Fawcett Society's, *Where are the Women?* campaign.
- 103 Data provided by David Perfect, EOC, 11 October 2000.
- 104 Fox and Broussine, 2000.
- 105 Harriet Harman, 2000; Tessa Keswick et al., 1999; Fiona Buxton, 2000.
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- 107 Peter Ellwood cited in the *Financial Times*, 9 March 2000.
- 108 Equal Opportunities Commission, *Women and Men in Britain: The Work-Life Balance*, 2000
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