WOMEN AT THE TOP
Progress after five years

A follow-up Report to the Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top

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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 expressed are those of the author, and the Society, as an independent non-Party foundation, is neither for nor against. The Society is, however, happy to publish these views and to invite analysis and discussion of them.
WOMEN AT THE TOP

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by

Professor Susan McRae

March 1996

The Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government
St Philips Building North, Sheffield Street, London WC2A 2EX
Foreword
by Lady Howe,
Chairman, The Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top

When the Report of the Commission on Women at the Top was published in 1996, there was extensive publicity for its recommendations and broad acceptance of the fact that much more needed to be done if women were ever to break through the ‘glass ceiling’ that prevents all but a handful of them reaching the top positions in society. In this necessarily briefer King-Hall Paper, Professor Susan McRae, who was the Rapporteur of the Commission, has analysed with thoroughness and clarity what has happened to those recommendations, and whether there has indeed been progress. Five years is, of course, a short period of time in which to expect much change, and this paper is written within that constraint.

Certainly there has been some progress, though no-one would wish to claim it has been spectacular. The Hansard Society’s interest in this subject is in making it possible for more high-calibre women to become involved in government in the broad sense: Parliament, the Civil Service, the judiciary, the corporate sector and others. As Susan McRae points out, one of the outcomes of the Commission’s report was the setting up of Opportunity 2000 and amongst its members there has been a faster move towards a more balanced workforce than elsewhere. In 1995, for example, the proportion of women directors within the Opportunity 2000 membership doubled from 8% to 16%. The importance of this in relation to the Hansard Society’s objectives is that the Opportunity 2000 model is equally applicable to all employers, and indeed membership spans the universities, the public and the private sectors.

The original report of the Commission on Women at the Top would never have happened without the support of the National and Provincial Building Society, to whom the Hansard Society remains grateful. On this occasion the Society is indebted to Sainsbury’s for their support. In the Commission’s report, Sainsbury’s were quoted as an example of good practice, so it is highly appropriate that they should now be associated with this follow-up study.
Acknowledgements
The author would like to thank Lady Howe and other members of the Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top, and the following individuals and organisations who contributed to this Report:

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Sean Quinn, CBI
Peter Roberts, Department for Education and Employment
Prof Michael Rush, University of Exeter
Marcia Williams, The Law Society

COMMISSION ON WOMEN AT THE TOP
The members of the Commission were as follows:

Chairman
The Lady Howe of Aberavon
Chairman, Opportunity 2000

Members
Sir John Banham
Former Director-General, CBI, and Chairman of Tarmac plc and of Kingfisher plc
Vernon Bogdanor
Alex Brett-Holt
Past President, Association of First Division Civil Servants
Baroness Denton CBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Alistair Graham
Chief Executive, Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council
Wilf Knowles
Managing Director, Equality Associates
Lord Lester QC
Joe Palmer CBE
Chairman, Personal Investment Authority
Dr Lisanne Radice
Past Chair, Trustees, The 300 Group
Rt Hon Gillian Shephard MP
Secretary of State for Education and Employment
Sir Kenneth Stowe GCB, CVO
Former Permanent Secretary, Department of Health
Katharine Whitehorn
Columnist, ‘The Observer’
(Sir Robert Reid, Former Chairman, British Railways Board, died in December 1993)

Rapporteur
Professor Susan McRae
Head of the School of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University

The Commission’s report, Women at the Top, was published by the Hansard Society in 1990. It is available, price £7.50, from the Society or can be ordered through bookshops.
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Introduction
In 1989 The Hansard Society established a Commission with the following 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 Hansard Society has a long-standing practice of setting up commissions to consider and report on subjects associated with the effective functioning of Parliamentary government. In that context, it had become increasingly obvious that the under-representation of women in the upper reaches of public life of this country, and in particular in the House of Commons, was a serious anomaly. The Society therefore invited an eminent group of people, chaired by Lady Howe, to examine the barriers women face in public life and to report back.

The Commission's assessment focused on the circumstances of women in senior occupational positions and public life because change at the top, provided it goes beyond tokenism, will 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. By showing how the barriers to the advancement of women into positions of power and influence could be overcome, the Commission aimed to contribute to the development of wider opportunities for all women, and the harnessing of the talents and experiences of women for the benefit of society as a whole.

One important outcome of the Commission's work is known: the launch in 1991 of Opportunity 2000 by Business in the Community, under the direction of a team of Britain's top business leaders. Opportunity 2000 campaigns to increase the quality and quantity of women's participation in the workforce. At its inception in 1991, 61 organisations joined Opportunity 2000; a membership that had grown to 293 by the end of 1995, representing well over 25 per cent of the UK workforce in both public and private sectors. During these years, the impact of the Opportunity 2000 has been both direct, by encouraging members to take concrete steps towards improving women's opportunities within their own organisations; and indirect, through stimulating realisation of the growing need for a sea-change in our attitudes towards the role of women in the workplace and in public life more generally. Six years have passed since the publication of the report of the Commission, Women at the Top, in January 1990; years which have brought changes to our society across the political, social and economic realms. Women continue to enter the labour force in increasing numbers, and in some parts of the country they outnumber men at work. Mothers with young children are now a fixed feature of the workplace and employers are increasingly taking steps to accommodate a diverse and changing workforce. For many, both men and women, lifetime jobs have become a thing of the past, replaced by challenging new approaches to career development and lifelong learning.

There have been some very public improvements in the position of women. A woman Speaker now presides over the House of Commons. Women may be ordained in the Church of England. A woman Chief Constable sits at the top of a major police force. Four former men's colleges in Oxford are headed by women; as is one former women's college in that same university, despite having had an opportunity to select a man for its top job.

In this context of change, the Hansard Society decided to seek new information about the representation of women in positions of power and influence. Were the recommendations of the Commission acted upon? If so, with what effect? Are there areas where substantial progress has been made? Are there areas where there has been no progress? The length of time since publication of Women at the Top seemed to suggest that an interim progress report was the best approach to answering these questions, based upon both published and previously unpublished data, contacts with informed people and organisations, and a new survey of 200 top British employers. The Rapporteur to the original Commission agreed to undertake the work necessary to produce that report, in consultation with Lady Howe, Chairman of the Commission; other Commission members provided welcome assistance and comments.

It is important to stress that the resulting Report is an interim progress report: 5 years or so is not a long time for women to have made radical inroads into the top of British professional and public life. Ten years might well be a better point at which to take stock of the extent of their progress, and to launch a new commission of inquiry into the remaining barriers to women's full participation at the top. This possibility notwithstanding, it seemed likely that 5 years would be long enough for signs of real progress to have become apparent, if it existed; and for areas of continuing concern to be uncovered. Identifying both of these areas is the purpose of this Report.
PART ONE: The public realm

Equality between men and women in the public realm is more than a matter of fairness for individuals. The decisions taken by public servants have consequences for all members of society – male and female, young and old.

With these words in 1990, the Hansard Society Commission began its assessment of women’s progress in the public realm. That assessment focused on politicians, who govern us; on civil servants, who advise Governments and implement their policies; on the judiciary, which interprets and applies the laws made by Parliament; and on appointees to public bodies, whose decisions affect our everyday lives. For this progress report, we have kept the same focus, for the simple but compelling reason that it remains in the public interest that women should have equality of entry and advancement within these spheres of influence.

Women in Parliament

Proper representation of women in a nation’s political life is essential. And yet the best that they have achieved so far in the national legislatures of democratic society is to be about 1 in every 3 people elected. The Scandinavian countries continue to have the best record over time; Britain, together with France, remains near the bottom of the European league.

Figure 1 provides information about the participation of women in the national assemblies of the EU member states. The figure shown for the United Kingdom relates to 1992 and combines the House of Commons, where women were 9.2 per cent of all MPs following that general election, and the House of Lords, where women comprised 6.5 per cent. In 1990, when the Hansard Society Commission reported a similar comparison, the UK shared with France and Spain the uncertain distinction of having the fewest elected women representatives. With the admission of Portugal and Greece to EU membership over the intervening years, the UK has moved up the ranking; but only in comparison with countries where attitudes towards women are not notably progressive.

The House of Commons

There has, however, been some movement in women’s representation as elected members of the House of Commons. Table 1 indicates the proportion of women elected by party from 1945, when they comprised fewer than 4 per cent of MPs, to 1992 when they accounted for 9 per cent. At the time of writing in 1995, there were 64 women in the House of Commons, representing almost 1 in 10. However, as we noted in Women at the Top, these figures offer little sign of women’s cumulative success as candidates for elected office. It is true that increasing numbers of women are putting themselves forward as candidates. But it appears also to be true that it is harder for a woman to get elected now than was the case 30 years ago.

Table 1: Women MPs at General Elections, Britain 1945–1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 calculates the percentage of women MPs from 1950 until 1992 in relation to the number of women candidates from all parties during those elections. As shown, about one third of women standing for Parliament during the late 1950s and 1960s were elected; but only about 1 in 10 since the late 1970s. The explanation for this is likely to be complex. For the most recent period, a large part of that explanation will lie with the repeated elections of a Conservative majority, as that Party tends to put forward proportionately fewer women candidates than either Labour or the Liberal Democrats. These differences by party are captured in Table 2.
Table 2: Women Candidates by Party (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the years before 1979, no single explanation is readily available. It seems likely that a number of factors would have come together to produce the pattern shown in Figure 2, such as differential selection for safe seats, number of women candidates by party, election outcomes, and so on. For the early years, the 'novelty value' of being a woman candidate may have been a factor assisting their electoral chances. In both 1950 and 1974, 17 per cent of women candidates were elected from a similar base (126 and 143 candidates respectively). During the intervening years, however, fewer than 100 women stood at each election, with considerably better results.

The Hansard Society Commission stressed the importance of proper representation of women in the House of Commons and argued that the nation as a whole suffers from their under-representation. Accordingly, we recommended that a Speaker's Conference was established to consider ways in which parliamentary and party practices and procedures disadvantaged women, and that the political parties scrutinise their own policies and practices to eliminate those that hinder women.

A Speaker's Conference has not been held. By convention Speaker's Conferences deal with aspects of electoral law and not with the internal workings of Parliament. However, the Joosling Committee on Sittings of the House considered, inter alia, the difficulties created by the pattern of Parliamentary sittings for Members with young families. Upon their recommendation, the House experimented in 1995 with revised hours of sitting and other procedural changes, which have recently been agreed as permanent. Accordingly, the number of late sittings has been substantially reduced; certain Fridays have been designated as non-sitting days; contentious business on Thursday evenings has been avoided; and there has been earlier notification of recesses and of some future business. As a result, the business of the House has become more predictable and less onerous: changes that are said to be to the advantage of all Members, and particularly appreciated by women Members.

The inflexibility of Parliament was identified by the Hansard Society Commission as a factor contributing towards the under-representation of women. We argued that as politicians, women have all the usual problems of balancing domestic commitments with employment, compounded by the structure of Parliament. The changes noted above will, over time, make it easier for women with children to work as Members of Parliament – provided, of course, that they are elected.

There were 568 women candidates at the general election in 1992; 59 of them stood for the Conservative party. Sixty women were elected, 20 for the Conservatives. At the time of writing in 1996, the political parties were selecting candidates for the next general election. The Conservative Party has taken some steps to encourage the selection of women, but by the end of January 1996 had chosen only 5 women to fight Conservative-held seats, out of a total of 23 women candidates (excluding sitting MPs).

Report appearing in the Press at that time suggested that the Conservatives might end up with fewer women MPs at the next election than they currently have.

In contrast, the 1993 Labour Party conference endorsed a policy of women-only shortlists as part of a campaign to bring about a 'quantum leap' in the number of women Labour MPs. Under that policy, half of Labour candidates in each region were to be drawn from women-only shortlists in both target seats and seats where a Labour MP was standing down. The policy was challenged by two male would-be candidates, however, who brought a complaint against the Party under the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and the 1976 EU directive on equal treatment. Their complaint was heard at an Industrial Tribunal in December 1995, when women-only short-lists were held to contravene the law. The Labour Party has since signalled its intention not to appeal against that ruling.

But however contested the policy of women-only shortlists was, it had an impressive effect: by the time of the Tribunal ruling in early January 1996, 34 women had been selected for 'most winnable seats' (excluding sitting MPs). Opinion polls throughout 1995 suggested that a Labour Party victory was the most likely outcome of the next election. Should this happen, expectations are that the number of women Labour MPs will triple, and
change, perhaps permanently, the political landscape of the country.

The House of Lords

Women are more likely to be found in the House of Lords than in the House of Commons; although they make up only 7 per cent of the total membership of the House of Lords, they represent about 13 per cent of its most active members. Since 1990, moreover, just under 23 per cent of all new Life Peers have gone to women, who accounted for 25 per cent of all new Life Peers created in 1995. There were 82 women peers in 1995, an increase of 17 since 1989.

Women have been allowed to sit in the House of Lords since the passage of the Life Peerages Act 1958. In 1963, the Peerage Act allowed women who succeeded to peerages to be admitted. But, even where a peerage can be held by a woman or transmitted by the female line, the male line of succession always takes precedence. In 1994 the Lords rejected a bill whose effect would have been to allow females to succeed equally with males.

The composition of the House of Lords is presented in Table 3. In both 1989 and 1995, the proportion of Life Peerages held by women was higher than the proportion of seats held by women in the House of Commons: 17 per cent in 1995 compared with about 13 per cent in 1989. Moreover, there has been an increase in the proportion of honours that go to women, thus ensuring women's continued representation. The Birthday Honours List of 1990 included 22 per cent women; in both the Birthday and New Year Honours Lists for 1995, women accounted for 32 per cent. Most recently, about 10 per cent of the highest level of Honours, DBE/CBE level, have gone to women; doubling the proportion awarded to women in 1990.4

Table 3: The House of Lords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archbishops/Bishops</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hereditary Peers</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Lords</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Peers</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>65 (6%)</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>82 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: House of Lords Information Office

The Civil Service

In 1990, the Hansard Society Commission noted that important steps were being taken within the Civil Service to overcome the historic under-representation of women and to promote real equality between men and women at all levels. The drive towards equality in the Civil Service began in 1984 with the Programme for Action for Women in the Civil Service and has continued since then, with some notable successes. Table 4 shows the growth in women's representation in the Service from 1988 to 1994, when the first Action Programme marked its tenth anniversary.

Table 4: Women in the Civil Service (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Permanent Secretary</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Under Secretary</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Executive Director</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Senior Principal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Principal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In 1994 there were 2 women permanent secretaries, rising to 3 in 1995
Source: 1994 Progress Report on Women in the Civil Service

The figures shown in Table 4 need to be read in context: top jobs in the Civil Service comprise only a small proportion of all jobs with the Service. The limited number of jobs at the top means limited promotional prospects for both men and women; fewer job opportunities, if coupled with discrimination, means even greater limitations on women's prospects. Seen in this light, the progress made by women in the top Civil Service grades is encouraging, even if they remain a small minority at almost all levels.

Some Departments, of course, do better than others in ensuring equal access to top jobs. In 1994, 5 departments (DSS, DoE, Heritage, Home Office and Cabinet Office) had over 15 per cent women in the top three grades – the Senior Open Structure – and 5 agencies had women Chief Executives. At the same time, 6 Departments had no women at this level: CSO, Education, Inland Revenue, Northern Ireland Office, ODA and GCHQ. Table 4 indicates that a 'benchmark' has been set to achieve at least 15 per cent women across the Senior Open Structure by the year 2,000.

Diverse changes within the Civil Service aided the progress made by women, including the continued introduction of 'family friendly' policies, more objective recruitment and assessment procedures, better methods to complain of, and deal with, discrimination and harassment, improved promotion systems and equal opportunities awareness education for all managers, especially at the highest levels. Part-time working has become widespread, extending upwards to allow 62 women in grade 5 posts to work more flexibly, compared with only 3 such women in 1984. In large measure, the impetus for change came from within the Civil Service itself, viz the establishment of the first action programme in 1984. But in addition, external initiatives focused specifically on equal opportunities, such as Opportunity 2000, encouraged the development of better practice. By October 1994, 28 departments and agencies had become members of Opportunity 2000; 11 had been founder members in 1990.

The inroads women have made into top Civil Service jobs is one notable sign of the effectiveness of these policies; another is the reduced leaving rates of women in comparison with men. During the 10 years that the Civil Service has been taking steps to improve opportunities for women, their overall leaving ratio has moved from exceeding that of men (9.8 per cent compared with 7.2 per cent in 1983–84) to falling below it in 1991–92, where it has remained. In 1993–94, the overall leaving
rates were 6.0 per cent for women and 6.5 per cent for men. Moreover, proportionately more women are appointed to senior jobs than apply: in 1993–94, women were twice as successful at being recruited to posts at grade 7 and above as their number of applications would suggest. For grades 1–5, women represented 7 per cent of candidates, but 20 per cent of those appointed. Combined with continued monitoring to ensure equal access to the top, these two developments are likely to yield considerable benefits in terms of improved representation of women across the full range of Civil Service top jobs. The Civil Service may in these areas act as a model for other employers, but their efforts will need to be sustained.

The Judiciary

The Hansard Society Commission took the view in 1990 that any consideration of the role of women in the public realm must accord the judiciary a prominent place. In every country, legal qualifications provide routes to positions of power and influence. Law as a profession brings both high status and high salaries. And although our laws are made by Parliament, they are interpreted and applied by the judiciary. The decisions taken by judges and magistrates have far-reaching consequences for all members of society, and the under-representation of women among their ranks limits the quality and vision of those decisions.

The Hansard Society Commission found that women were seriously under-represented among the judiciary and comprised in 1989 only 4 per cent of its members. In light of that under-representation, we recommended that the Lord Chancellor should take urgent action to encourage qualified women barristers and solicitors to apply for appointments as Assistant Recorders (one of the first rungs on the judicial ladder). This, as we will report below, he has done with some success. However, the Commission also recommended 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. In these areas, progress has been more difficult.

The Lord Chancellor has personal responsibility for the appointment, or for advising on the appointment, of all members of the professional judiciary in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This invests in him considerable power to influence the overall structure and composition of the judiciary, including its balance both between men and women and among different ethnic groups. The Lord Chancellor retains this power even if each judicial appointment is made upon grounds of merit without regard to ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion or disability. Accordingly, the steps taken by the Lord Chancellor to improve the representation of women in the judiciary assume a particular importance.

Table 5 shows the proportion of women among the judiciary, and indicates two areas where they have made progress since 1989. When the Hansard Society Commission made its report in 1990, women represented 1 per cent of High Court Judges and 5 per cent of Assistant Recorders. By 1995, there were 7 per cent and 15 per cent women, respectively, in these positions. Elsewhere in the judiciary, however, there has been little improvement: there remain no women Law Lords; there is only 1 woman Lord Justice of Appeal; an increase in the number of Stipendiary Magistrates brought little or no increase in the proportion that are women.

The Lord Chancellor has reaffirmed his commitment to bringing more women into the judiciary, and taken steps aimed at increasing the number of women applying for judicial appointment. These steps include a major programme of changes announced in July 1993 designed to improve the procedures for judicial appointments. Among these changes was a move to time-limited competitions for judicial vacancies, particularly at the level of Assistant Recorder where the number of applications far exceeds the availability of positions. In addition, vacancies are advertised in both national and specialist legal press. Job descriptions and statements of eligibility and selection criteria for each judicial office are available to candidates, who must complete a standardised application form. Shortlisted candidates in open competitions are interviewed by a three-member panel, which now includes a lay interviewer.

Table 5: Women in the Judiciary (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1989 %</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>1995 %</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Lords</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Justices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Court Judges</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit Judges</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipendiary Magistrates</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorders</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Recorders</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Lord Chancellor's Department

The new judicial appointments system was established to overcome the problems and criticisms associated with the use of the 'old boy network'. It is designed to be open to all qualified people who wish to put themselves forward. All appointments to the Circuit Bench and District Bench are now filled under the new arrangements; and the Lord Chancellor has announced that this will apply to the selection of Assistant Recorders during 1996–97.

In addition to establishing more open appointments procedures, the Lord Chancellor has developed contacts with individuals and organisations in positions to encourage women to apply for judicial appointments. In June 1994, he wrote to all Heads of Chambers, Presidents of Local Law Societies and women judges seeking their assistance in encouraging women to come forward. With the General Council of the Bar, the Law Society, the Association of Women Solicitors and the Association of Women Barristers, the Lord Chancellor's Department has hosted 4 events for women in the legal profession; at which staff from the Judicial Appointments Group have been available to give information and advice about
applying for judicial appointments. The Lord Chancellor reports that these events have been well received, and thinks that they may have contributed to the increase in applications from women for Assistant Recordership over the period that they were held.18

Of course, the steps that might be taken by any Lord Chancellor to improve the representation of women in the judiciary are restricted in their effectiveness by the number of women with appropriate seniority and experience in the legal profession, and the number of vacancies. Growth in the number of women barristers and solicitors is therefore a necessary condition for improvement in women’s judicial representation, if not a sufficient one.

Women in the Legal Profession
Table 6 examines changes in the proportion of women in the legal profession since 1987. In 1994–95, women made up over half of all solicitors admitted to the Roll and almost half of all barristers called to the Bar. In both professions, these figures represent the continuing improvement in women’s opportunities within the legal profession. Women now account for about 1 in 3 practising solicitors and 1 in 5 independent barristers. However, many of the barriers identified by the Hansard Society Commission persist, and women in 1995 remained more likely to be assistant solicitors than partners; more likely to practice outside the leading barristers’ Chambers than within.

| Table 6: Women Barristers & Solicitors (%) |
| Barristers | 1987 | 1995 |
| Called to the Bar | 37 | 46 |
| Practising at the Independent Bar | 14 | 22 |
| Solicitors | 1987 | 1994 |
| Admitted to the Roll | 45 | 53 |
| Practising | 19 | 29 |

Sources: The Law Society, The General Council of the Bar

Law Society figures indicate that in 1994 26 per cent of women solicitors were partners, compared with 59 per cent of men. Women are more than twice as likely as men to be assistant solicitors: an outcome that arises only in part from the more recent entry of women into the profession. Among solicitors in private practice with 10 to 19 years’ experience, 91 per cent of men are partners, but only 67 per cent of women. Similar detailed information is not available about practising barristers, but an examination of the membership of 17 leading London Chambers suggests that women account for only 13 per cent of Members (or 99 out of 772 Members).19 Moreover, women continue to be poorly-represented among Queen’s Counsel, who are recognised leaders of the profession. In 1994 and 1995, women accounted for 8 per cent of applications for Silk, out of 539 and 492 applications respectively. Thus, although women applicants in 1994 were proportionately more successful than men (21 per cent of women were appointed versus 14 per cent of men), they remain a tiny minority among Queen’s Counsel.19

A judiciary without women is unbalanced, whatever the knowledge and expertise of its male members. The UK has women among the judiciary: but not enough. In the past, the pool of women candidates for judicial office has been too small for women to make their mark. This is no longer the case, although considerable scope remains for improvement in the representation of women as partners in Solicitors’ firms, among the leading Barristers’ Chambers, and as Queen’s Counsel. It may well be that 5 years is too few to have passed for women’s progress throughout the judiciary to be widespread. The increase in the proportion of women as Assistant Recorders is encouraging; but it seems likely that the Lord Chancellor will need to take further steps to ensure that those women find routes upwards.

Public Appointments
Appointments to public bodies have become increasingly important over the past 5 years. Concomitantly, the fair and equal representation of women on public bodies has also grown in importance. In 1990, the Hansard Society Commission argued that much more needed to be done to secure equal rights for women in public appointments, pointing out that women are as much affected as men by the decisions that public bodies take, that women bring different experiences and perspectives to public life, and that society stands to gain considerable benefits by a more equal representation of both men and women on public bodies.

In consequence of the importance that the Commission attached to public appointments, we made a number of recommendations directed primarily at the Public Appointments Unit (PAU) which forms part of the Cabinet Office. These recommendations are set out below, together with the steps taken by the PAU to implement them. But in addition to steps taken by Government and others,19 the representation of women on public bodies may be enhanced by the appointment of a Commissioner for Public Appointments, following a Nolan Committee Recommendation accepted by the Government.

In 1991, women held 23 per cent of public appointments. By 1994, this had grown to 36 per cent, marking substantial progress towards the Government’s stated aim that women should hold between a quarter and a half of all public appointments by the end of 1996.20 Implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Hansard Society Commission contributed towards the improvement in women’s representation, in the following ways. In 1990, we recommended that the Public Appointments Unit should be used systematically for all significant appointments. Although the PAU, as just one of several sources that Departments can use, places only a small proportion of the thousands of appointments made each year, its work was recently endorsed by the Nolan Committee. In the period from April 1990 to March 1995, the number of search requests received by the PAU increased by 20 per cent and in 1994–95, it placed 180 candidates — up from 100 placements in 1990. Most
significantly, the PAU is now recognised as a useful
source of candidates from under-represented groups, such
as women and people from ethnic minority groups.
About one third of the PAU’s active list of potential
appointees are women, who represented 49 per cent of
the Unit’s 750 known successes over the past five years.21

The Hansard Society Commission also recommended
that new sources of recruitment should be sought, including
advertising for public offices and posts wherever feasible.
The need to seek new sources of recruitment has been addressed by the PAU, par-
ticularly within the context of the Unit’s 1995 Review of
Guidance on Public Appointments which constituted the
Government’s evidence on public appointments to the
Nolan Committee. The Review contained detailed
proposals for the greater use of advertising, specifically
that there should be a presumption in favour of advert-
sing for paid appointments and that Departments
should consider annually the case for advertising for any
lists or databases that they may hold. These recommenda-
tions were subsequently endorsed by the Nolan
Committee and accepted by Ministers as standard policy.22

The Commission further recommended that Ministers
should be more effectively accountable to Parliament for
their appointments, and an annual report should be laid
before Parliament on progress in each Department. These
suggestions were reinforced by the Nolan Committee: it is
intended that the Public Appointments Commissioner
will publish an annual report on the operation of the
public appointments system, and that all Secretaries of
State will report annually on the appointments made by
their departments. The Government has accepted both
recommendations and details of public appointments
will appear in Departments’ Annual Reports and other
official publications from 1996.23

The concerted efforts of a wide variety of organi-
sations and individuals to increase the representation of
women in public appointments appear effective, although
no room exists for complacency. Women are almost 1 in
3 of those appointed to public bodies; they should be
1 in 2.

PART TWO: Corporate Management

In 1990, the Hansard Society Commission on Women at
The Top reported that:

Women’s representation in management has slowly
increased in the past two decades, but women at the very
top are scarcely visible.

At that time, women accounted for fewer than 1 in
100 boardroom executive directors and only 1 in 15
senior managers. The Commission recommended that
employing organisations in the public and private sectors
should follow the best practice of those few large compa-

nies known to be committed to removing the barriers to
equality for women at all levels of management. The
Commission further recommended that the Secretary
of State for Trade and Industry should add the need to
report on equal opportunities policy and practice to the
annual reports of Directors to shareholders, and thereby
courage Directors actively to consider the nature and
content of that policy and practice. Finally, the Commis-
sion called upon the CBI and the Institute of Directors
to take positive steps to make sure that their members
were aware of the good practices being followed in the
best firms.

Since 1990, more organisations have become aware
of the need to take positive steps towards increasing the
representation of women at board level and in senior
management. Opportunity 2000 was launched in 1991
to increase and improve women’s employment oppor-
tunities. From an initial group of 61, the Campaign
has grown to include 293 employers (1995) publicly
committed to improving women’s prospects in their
organisations, to setting goals for increasing women’s
representation at all levels, and to putting into place
action plans designed to achieve these goals.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has not,
however, added the need to report on equal opportunities
policy and practice to the annual reports of Directors to
shareholders. While supporting the aim of equal oppor-
tunities, the Secretary of State does not believe that
including reporting requirements in the Companies Act
would contribute to that aim, for two reasons. First, in
order to ensure that such reports were meaningful, a
substantial input of management time would be needed
in recording, collating, and checking the accuracy of data
from all parts of the organisation. That data would then
need to be presented in a publishable form; and the entire
process monitored for compliance by the Companies
Registration Office. Alternatively, the reporting require-
ment could be made less burdensome, for example, by
requiring companies to state their equal opportunities
policy. In this case, however, its value would be limited
since companies would simply insert general statements
of intention without specific information on their
achievements. The Secretary of State believes that com-
panies should be encouraged to develop individual
approaches within a framework of best practice, free
from rigid requirements in the Companies Act.24

As an employer itself, moreover, the Department of
Trade and Industry has taken numerous steps to improve
the representation of women throughout its managerial
grades. In mid-1985, women comprised less than 4 per cent of Grades 1–4; by January 1993, this had grown to just over 9 per cent. In January 1995, women accounted for 12 per cent of Grade 3 staff in the DTI and 16 per cent of Grade 5.

**Women on the Board**

As part of our up-dating of the work of the Hansard Society Commission, we repeated the surveys of chief executives and chairmen first carried out in 1989. Those surveys gathered information about the representation of women in boardrooms and senior management, and sought respondents' views about the best way for women to progress through senior management and onto the board. Respondents were additionally asked for their views about the obstacles stopping women from achieving positions of influence, and whether any of these barriers existed in their own organisations. In 1995, we combined the two questionnaires previously used for these purposes into one, which was sent to the Times Top 200 companies plus a number of leading Building Societies. In all, 210 organisations were contacted in 1995, of whom 120 (57 per cent) returned usable, completed questionnaires.1

Tables 7 and 8 chart the progress women have made at boardroom level over the five years since the publication of *Women at the Top*.2 Our results indicate that the boardroom presence of women has increased in all areas, but that they nonetheless remain a small minority. In 1989, 80 per cent of firms reported no women on their main boards, as either executive or non-executive directors. By 1995, this had dropped to barely half of the organisations we surveyed. Over the period, women made the least progress as executive directors on main boards, and the most progress as non-executives on those boards.

**Table 7: Representation of Women on Main and Subsidiary Boards, 1989 and 1995**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women (N)</th>
<th>Men (N)</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>Base (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAIN BOARDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSIDIARY BOARDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3771</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women accounted for just one per cent of main board executive directors in 1995, an increase from half of one per cent in 1989 (Table 7).3 The proportion of responding organisations with female executive directors on their main boards doubled from 3 per cent to 6 per cent (Table 8). On subsidiary boards, women's representation as executive directors grew from around 2 per cent to nearly 6 per cent.

But it is as non-executive directors that women remain best represented. In 1989, they accounted for 4 per cent of non-executives on main boards; in 1995, the figure stood at just over 10 per cent. Growth in women's representation as non-executive directors also occurred on subsidiary boards, where it rose from 5 per cent to 8 per cent.

**Table 8: Distribution of Women on Main Boards, 1989 and 1995**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organisations with women (N)</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Base (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-executive</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No women</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on main board</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1990, one of the Commission's recommendations concerned the activities of PRO NED, a not-for-profit-making organisation set up under the sponsorship of the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange, and CBI and other major City institutions to promote the use of non-executive boardroom members. That recommendation was as follows: *We recommend... that new sources of recruitment to PRO NED's register should be sought; and that the institutions responsible for establishing and maintaining PRO NED should monitor and publish information about women's representation as non-executive directors.* Since 1990, PRO NED has been 'privatised', in effect, and become part of an international executive recruitment firm. Thus, although its purpose and activities remain the same, it no longer derives financial support from the Bank of England and the other financial institutions. It is important to assess PRO NED's activities since publication of *Women at the Top* in the light of these changed circumstances.

In 1990 we reported that women made up 5 per cent of PRO NED's register but figured in 30 per cent of shortlists given to clients. Out of 60 appointments to 1989, however, only 7 had gone to women. At that time, the near-invisibility of women as executive directors was cited by PRO NED's director as the reason for their poor showing at the non-executive level. In 1995, women comprised 8 per cent of PRO NED's register; since March 1991, they have been included in 22 per cent of (269) shortlists submitted to clients. Of 43 potential appointments over this time, 7 went to women recommended by PRO NED. Once again, the main obstacle confronting women appears to be the requirement by clients for listed company main board experience. A review by PRO NED of 124 potential appointments from mid-1992 until mid-1995 revealed that 49 per cent of clients had specified that candidates must have listed company board experience.

It is clear that women have improved their representation as non-executive directors against the odds. It is equally clear that continued improvement in participation at this level is made harder by their severe under-representation at executive director level. In order to
understand the latter, it is necessary to turn to an examination of women’s progress into senior management.

Women in Senior Management

The slow progress of women into executive positions on the main boards of British corporations is in large measure due to the persistence of barriers which prevent their progress to other senior levels. In 1996, the Hansard Society Commission documented the existence of a glass ceiling over the aspirations of many women in management in Britain; allowing women to see where they might go, but stopping them from arriving there. Five years on, women in management remain hampered by glass ceilings and hemmed in by glass walls, restricting their earnings and blocking them from reaching the operational roles at the heart of each corporation.

In 1989, the survey of the CBI Top 100 firms carried out for the Commission revealed in excess of 30,000 male senior executives, but only 2,000 women in similar roles. Women senior executives, in other words, accounted for not quite 7 per cent of senior management. In 1995, we gathered the same information from the Times Top 200 firms, with much the same result: more than 34,000 male senior executives and just 3,200 women, representing slightly more than 8 per cent of the total. Our survey results accord reasonably well with research carried out by others. The 1994 IM National Management Survey, for example, indicated a slight decline in women’s representation in management from just over 10 per cent in 1993 to 9.5 per cent one year later. That survey found fewer women at all management levels except director, which had remained static just below 3 per cent.

Six years ago, the Hansard Society Commission argued that the sheer weight of numbers of women junior and middle managers would by itself bring some change to senior levels of management; an argument given added force by the fact that women who had already gained higher level jobs tended to be younger than their male colleagues. In 1995, women senior managers remained generally younger than men in similar positions. Nonetheless, generational change does not appear to have done the trick, and the evidence suggests that waiting for it to do so may well take a long time.

In 1993, two economists used information about 20,000 senior managers working in around 400 British companies to evaluate the progress women were making in climbing corporate career ladders. In particular, they wished to test the view that the increasing entry of women into lower levels of management would, in time, ensure their access to positions higher up. Tracking the promotions and remuneration levels of both men and women from 1989 to 1992, Gregg and Machlin (1993) found no evidence to support the view that it is simply a matter of time before women work their way up the corporate hierarchy. Instead, they report that, allowing for a range of personal and organisational characteristics, women senior executives are less likely than their male colleagues to be promoted, among whom young men are the most likely to advance quickly. Women executives also earn substantially less than their male colleagues; a gap which widens, according to Gregg and Machlin, the higher one moves up the corporation.

Table 9: Views on the best way for a woman to progress through senior management and onto the Board (N=120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The same way as men (ideally)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through merit / talent / ability / competence</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a mentor or senior sponsor (networking)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence in own specialism / field</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success across a range of functions</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break out of specialism / staff functions (move into line management / operational management)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience / success in main activity of org</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven achievements / good track record</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience / Perseverance / self-belief (also called being ‘thick skinned’)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good qualification (academic or business)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a focused, structured career plan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External or overseas experience / profile</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table sums to more than 100% because respondents gave more than one answer.

Our 1995 survey did not ask about earnings or promotions. However, we did ask companies about the best route for women through senior management and into the boardroom. Their replies, which are summarised in Table 9, provide a first look at the types of obstacle which continue to impede women’s progress upwards and to depress their earnings.

Routes upward

The strong tendency among chairmen, chief executives and other senior managers (our respondents) is to say that women gain advancement in the same way as men. One in 7 of our respondents said so explicitly. And if we add to their replies, those which suggest that the way upwards is through merit, talent, ability or competence (on the premise that this is how men gain promotion), then over one third (36 per cent) of our respondents believe that the route to the top for women is the same route as that followed by men.

A number of these respondents nonetheless acknowledged that in practice the way upwards might not be perfectly identical for men and women:

In your view, what is the best way for a woman to progress through senior management, and onto the board?

In exactly the same way as a man – through intelligence, persistence, ambition and hard work. Obviously, slightly more resilience may be required – especially in the face of sexist jokes or attitudes.

I would like to think that the best way for a woman to
progress is identical to a man – i.e., hard work, talent, capability, good people skills etc. etc. However, I suspect that a woman needs something more, which is hard to define because it varies with the culture of the organisation.

Thus, while arguing that the way upwards is essentially 'gender-blind', these respondents also appear to recognise that women might face a harder climb to the top than men, largely because men got there first and defined the route.

In summary: be good, get into fertile territory and compete on level terms with the existing male models.

A second group of responses provides a clear strategy for moving upwards: first, excel in one particular field or function and across a range of such jobs; and second, break away from these roles into the mainstream operational heart of the organisation. These two aspects of the route upwards were considered equally important. More than a third of respondents (36 per cent) referred to the need to develop excellence in a particular specialism or functional area or to broaden that excellence across a range of functional jobs. Just under one third (28 per cent) specified the importance of moving out of functional or specialist areas into the main operational centre of the company. Indeed, several respondents considered that women's inability first to move sideways was a significant barrier to their eventual movement upwards:

[the main problem is that of the 'glass wall' – barriers preventing women from moving sideways into different functional areas, rather more than the 'glass ceiling'.]

## Barriers to progress

In 1990 the Hansard Society Commission report cited two, potentially intractable, related barriers to women's chances of success in senior management: the predominance of men at the top of corporate Britain, and traditional attitudes towards women. In regard to the first, we argued that increases in the number of women in junior and middle management, and the proliferation of women's networks, although both of importance, could not be expected to counterbalance the disadvantages that accru to women simply because they are in a minority.

We went on to argue that too many men at the top may lead to the kinds of attitudes which impede the progress of women remaining unchallenged. It is clear from our follow-up survey that men still hold the large majority of jobs at the top, and that unthinking or overtly sexist attitudes continue to bar women's way. Other problems exist, but few that are as unyielding as the myriad attitudes which undermine women's chances of success.

Table 10 summarises respondents' views about the barriers which slow, or halt, women's progress into positions of influence. The table is presented so as to conform with information presented in Women at the Top in 1990 (p79). At that time, the emphasis was on 'strategies for change', to help organisations overcome the barriers faced by women. Five years later, it appears that much remains to be done.

### Table 10: Views about the obstacles stopping women from achieving positions of influence (N=120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible working arrangements</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment practices</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men recruit in their own image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men think women are risky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal and subjective practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of old boys' network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male work cultures / work culture that do not encourage women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long working hours culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of role models / mentors / networking</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADITIONAL ROLES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having to balance work and family roles</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking career breaks</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real or perceived lack of mobility</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of family commitments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTITUDBAL BARRIERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice of (older) male colleagues / managers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No lead from men at the top</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdated attitudes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are not 'serious' about careers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women work only for 'pin' money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women cannot travel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undervaluation of women's management styles</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived lack of leadership skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women not 'tough'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's own limitations due to lack of determination to succeed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of willingness to take risks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table sums to more than 100% because respondents gave more than one answer.

Table 10 has been divided into three groups of obstacles: those pertaining to organisational structures or practices; those deriving from women's familial roles; and those inhering in men's and women's attitudes. Among each group, however, evidence may be found of attitudes prejudicial to women's advancement. For example, while 1 in 10 respondents cited work cultures that encourage long working hours and 1 in 7 cited inflexible working practices, 1 in 5 referred to recruitment practices which allow (typically male) recruiters to act upon views that, intentionally or otherwise, discriminate against women. Similarly, 1 in 14 referred to women's real or perceived inability to move because of family commitments; 1 in 10 cited the under-valuation of women's management styles – in particular, their apparent lack of 'toughness'. For example:

Speaking generally, what do you consider to be the most serious obstacles stopping women from achieving positions of influence?

Selection decisions which are made on the basis of a 'safe pair of hands' and where the appointment of a woman is regarded as a potential risk...
... my own observation over time is that women are not always able to separate emotions from difficult decisions and can confuse the issues. The same can apply to some men as well, and they too would not get to the top positions, but it seems to more often be the case with women.

A substantial proportion of respondents (29 per cent) considered that women’s own attitudes can act against their chances of advancement. Women are said to lack confidence, determination, commitment and willingness to take risks. To put these views into perspective, it is important to note that 20 per cent of respondents referred explicitly to male prejudice against women, while a further 20 per cent cited outdated attitudes (held largely by men):

Despite efforts to dismantle practices that discriminate against women, there remain deeply-rooted emotional and cultural discriminatory attitudes that influence women’s advancement in organisations.

Men who will not give women the chance to progress through the company. It comes to men being the gatekeepers to women’s progress and their attitudes which are a major barrier.

The feminist movement. It makes male managers feel threatened and encourages them to invent reasons for not promoting women.

The attitude, passive or neutral as well as elitist or hostile, of the existing male dominated boards. Some element of vision and positive discrimination – benefit of the doubt – is necessary to kick-start the process.

It can take more than a generation to change entrenched attitudes; but change they must if women are to take an equal share of jobs at the top. From the above, it is clear that 5 years has not been long enough to eradicate attitudes prejudicial to women’s progress. Such attitudes appear to remain common, if not always intentionally harmful nor acted upon.

The attitudes that both men and women hold about women’s opportunities in the workplace tend to be linked to the responsibilities women traditionally assume for the care of families. This link is apparent in Table 10 which indicates that more than 1 in 2 respondents gave as an example of a barrier some aspect of women’s domestic role. Predominately, this referred to women’s need to balance work and family commitments. One in 3 respondents cited the importance of women getting this balance right; which for many meant putting work first, family second:

fit is equally important such women have a clear view that a successful career is their first priority rather than being secondary to motherhood etc.

... commitment to the company and commitment of time on company business to be their first priority. It is more likely currently that a woman will decide that family commitments are a competing first priority than that a man will. It is not feasible to compete for top executive positions if there is another first priority call on one’s time.

Whilst I appreciate the special difficulties faced by women in career development, the company can only go so far in helping with this problem – i.e., good career break arrangements, attractive maternity schemes, etc. Beyond that it is up to women to make a choice – career or family. Only the most dedicated appear to be capable of achieving both.

As the last respondent noted, women may face ‘special difficulties’ in attaining career success; difficulties which many organisations have sought to alleviate through the introduction of enhanced maternity benefits and extended career break schemes. In 1990, the Hunsford Society Commission recommended the widespread introduction of such schemes. By 1995 as many as one quarter or more organisations offered them. Our survey of chairmen and chief executives suggests, however, that for women aiming for the top, taking a career break may be more of a hindrance than a help:

Speaking generally, what do you consider to be the most serious obstacles stopping women from achieving positions of influence?

The understandable desire by many women to take a career break at just the time when employers can least afford to be without them.

Having children in the middle, late-middle of their career, i.e., 29–36 years of age – when they miss out on reorganisations, take-overs and other opportunities. This is compounded on their return by a not-surprising reluctance to work late or work away from home when reorganisations, take-overs and opportunities need consolidation, bedding-in etc.

Of the 1 in 7 respondents who reported this view, only one went on to suggest that it was up to the company to ensure that women were penalised as little as possible for also being mothers:

Clearly, taking time out for family reasons can give women a disadvantage against male colleagues and it is the responsibility (and business imperative) of progressive employers ... to develop personnel policies that minimise this disadvantage.

It seems likely that until the views expressed by the last respondent become more widespread, women will continue to face barriers that prevent the majority from achieving the senior managerial positions which allow fuller participation in boardroom decision-making.

Bringing in equal opportunities policies and waiting for generational change has not done the job of demolishing the glass ceilings and glass walls that surround women. As the final two examples from our survey illustrate, positive action is needed, not just words:

Thinking of your own organisation, which, if any, of these obstacles might stop women from getting ahead?

None – much work has been done over the past few years to educate staff in equal opportunities and to ensure access to women on educational and personal development programmes. Employment policies are flexible enough to cater for individual needs. This is now bearing fruit. The status of women in this organisation has changed over the past 5 years. In 1990 whilst the Executive and Senior Management team was smaller, it contained no women. Now 12.5% of the total
grouping are women and this is expected to grow.
Eleven out of 54, or 20 per cent, of senior managers in
this company are women.
None – [our organisation] operates an equal
opportunities policy, and we believe that regardless of
gender, employees will be given opportunities to reach
their full potential – including senior positions within
the company.
Of 1,324 senior managers, 59 are women (4.4 per cent).

PART THREE: Other key areas of
influence
In this section, we provide basic information about
change in two key areas: academics at Oxford and
Cambridge universities, and the police. The Hansard
Society Commission included Oxbridge in its 1990
assessment, largely because of the possibilities that exist
there for influencing and guiding future generations of
leaders, industrialists, policy makers and opinion formers.
Oxford and Cambridge universities have long been
avenues to positions of power and influence within
British society, and the Commission argued strongly that
it was wholly unacceptable that these two centres of
modern academic teaching and excellence should remain
bastions of male power and privilege.
Inclusion of the police is new, and acknowledges the
increasing importance of the leaders of the police service
to society as a whole, as well as the challenges facing
women who wish to contribute at that level. The years
since publication of the Hansard Society Commission
Report have seen both the sex discrimination case
brought by Alison Hallford, former Merseyside Assistant
Chief Constable, and the eventual appointment of
Britain's first woman Chief Con- stable, Pauline Clare.
Women are a small minority within the service as a
whole, and barely visible at the top. Indeed, until 1983
many forces, including the Metropolitan Police, main-
tained an unofficial – but clearly unlawful – 10 per cent
recruitment quota on women.51

Oxbridge
Women graduating from British universities outnum-
bered men for the first time in 1994, representing 51 per
cent of students gaining first degrees. Professionally,
however, women make up less than one-quarter of the
lecturers teaching undergraduates in the ‘old’ university
sector, and barely more than 1 in 20 professors.52 In 1990,
the Hansard Society Commission argued that all
universities, and Oxford and Cambridge in particular,
needed to take action to improve the representation of
women academics at all levels. Further, in the absence of
such action by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge,
we suggested that the position of women in each univer-
sity warranted attention from the Equal Opportunities
Commission.
By 1995, 32 universities in Britain had become mem-
decision to join the campaign 'to increase the quality and
quantity of women's participation in the work-force' was
announced jointly in autumn 1993. As a condition of
that membership, each university has established clear,
achievable objectives; set up Equal Opportunities
Committees; and begun effective monitoring of
recruitment and promotions.
Table 11 provides current information about academic
women in Oxbridge and although it indicates that there
is still some distance to go before women gain parity with
men, the journey at least appears to have been started. In
both universities, the trend is for an increasing propor-
tion of women in every academic grade; and for women to be appointed in the same, or higher, proportion as they apply. In Cambridge, for example, women represented 22 per cent of total applicants for academic positions between March 1989 and March 1994. They were 24 per cent of those shortlisted, however, and 26 per cent of those appointed. In Oxford, similar figures for one year (1992–93) indicate that women were 20 per cent of applicants, 25 per cent of shortlisted candidates, and 34 per cent of appointees. Thus, although neither Cambridge nor Oxford come up to the national average for women lecturers (23 per cent), it is to be hoped that over time they will do so.

Table 11: Academic Women: Oxbridge (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Oxford and Cambridge Universities

The Police Service

The police service did not fall within the remit of the Hansard Society Commission; its inclusion in the current report acknowledges the increasing importance of the leaders of the police service to society as a whole, as well as the challenges facing women who wish to contribute at that level. Since publication of the Hansard Society Commission Report, three police forces have joined Opportunity 2000 and Britain's first woman Chief Constable, Pauline Clare, has been appointed. By 1995, women represented 16 per cent of all police officers and 3 per cent of chief constables; growth in their representation has come at all ranks of the service (see Table 12). Nonetheless, formidable barriers to progress at the top remain.

Equal opportunities for women did not become an issue in the police service until the late 1980s. The Metropolitan Police were the first to issue a policy statement on equal opportunities in 1987, and in 1988 published a report in collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission which was intended to advance women's opportunities not only in the Metropolitan Police but in the wider police service as well. In 1989, leaders across the top of the service began to recognise the extent of structural and cultural change needed within their organisations. Prompted by a growing incidence of litigation in industrial tribunals on grounds of sex discrimination and a poor public image, the Home Office issued Circular 87/1989 informing all forces that

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.

This circular is seen as the cornerstone of organisational change in human resource management in the police service, and a necessary first step towards the development of equal opportunities throughout the service.

Table 12: Women in the Police Service, 1990 and 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Women 1990</th>
<th>Total 1990</th>
<th>Women 1995</th>
<th>Total 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Constable</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chief Constable</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst. Chief Constable</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Superintendent</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Inspector</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector</td>
<td>6962</td>
<td>6962</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Independent, 16 June 1995, p. 3

Progress towards equal opportunities for women has been visible since 1990, when they were 11 per cent of all police officers and less than half of one per cent of chief constables. Much of this progress has come within the Metropolitan Police, where collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission led to the introduction of part-time working and career breaks, the abolition of height requirements and the removal of the 'W' or the word 'woman' in reports indicating the gender of an officer. The Metropolitan Police became a member of Opportunity 2000 in 1991, and continues to work towards the elimination of bias in both selection and promotion procedures.

Nonetheless, it remains possible to identify a conflict of values between leaders and others within the service as a whole, which severely hinders women's opportunities. Indeed, several commentators have highlighted the persistence of discrimination against women (Coffey, Brown and Savage, 1992; Reiner, 1992; Elliott, 1993) which renders women's career development within the force more like a game of chance than one based on skill and expertise (Taylor and McKenzie, 1994). Balance between men and women is needed in the police service as much as it is needed elsewhere in professional and public life. On this reckoning, the service has a long way to go before that balance is achieved.
CONCLUSION

The Hansard Society Commission concluded in 1990 that formidable barriers remain which stop women getting to the top of structures, of working practices, of tradition and above all, of attitude. But we also argued that it would take only a small amount of determination to ensure that Britain ceases to under-use half of its talent. It is the purpose of this Report to assess how successful women have been so far in overcoming those barriers and entering jobs at the top. It is important to remember that this is an interim progress report: only 6 years have passed since the publication of Women at the Top, and this is unlikely to have been sufficient time for women to have made radical inroads into positions of power and influence across British society. But as the previous sections have shown, they have made some progress in most areas and good progress in some areas.

Women in Parliament

About 1 in 10 MPs, and 1 in 8 active peers, are women; a level of representation which puts Britain well towards the bottom of the European league. Changes in practices and procedures in the House of Commons, introduced during 1995, are likely to make it easier for women to combine work as a Member of Parliament with family life, but they will still need to be elected first. The apparent reluctance of the Conservative Party to select women candidates for 'safe' seats may mean fewer Conservative women MPs after the next election than currently sit in the Commons. In contrast, the (now abandoned) policy of women-only shortlists adopted by the Labour Party may bring record numbers of women into political decision-making at the top, should that Party win at the polls next time.

The Civil Service

After 10 years of concerted efforts to bring women into the top jobs in the Civil Service, clear signs of progress are apparent: there were 3 women permanent secretaries in 1995; five departments had over 15 per cent women in the top 3 grades. Women no longer leave the service in greater proportion than men; a higher proportion of women are appointed to senior jobs than apply. Much of the progress women have made in the Civil Service can be attributed to the introduction of more objective recruitment and assessment procedures, the development of 'family friendly' working arrangements, and an improved promotion system. The service aims to have 15 per cent women across the whole of the Senior Open Structure (grades 1–3) by the year 2000.

The Judiciary

There has been encouraging growth in the representation of women at the level of Assistant Recorder, one of the first rungs on the ladder upwards in the judiciary. In 1989 only 1 in 20 Assistant Recorders were women; by 1995 they had become 1 in 7. The Lord Chancellor, who has responsibility for the appointment, or advising on the appointment, of all members of the judiciary, has taken a variety of steps towards increasing the presence of women. The effectiveness of his actions is necessarily limited by the number of women barristers and solicitors qualified to enter the judiciary. Women now account for about 1 in 3 practising solicitors and 1 in 5 independent barristers; but they remain less likely than men to become partners, to practice within the leading London Chambers or to become Queen's Counsel. The increasing number of women entering the legal profession provides grounds for optimism about their future representation in the judiciary, although it seems likely that the Lord Chancellor will need to take further steps to ensure their continued progress upwards.

Public Appointments

The efforts of the Public Appointments Unit and a wide variety of individuals and organisations to increase the representation of women in public appointments appear to have been effective: 5 years ago fewer than 1 in 4 public appointments went to women; today the proportion is almost 1 in 3. The appointment of a Commissioner for Public Appointments in December 1995, together with the acceptance by Government of a range of recommendations by the Nolan Committee, may bring more women into public bodies over the next 5 years.

Women in Corporate Britain

Although women have increased their presence in the Boardrooms of Britain's top companies over the past 5 years, they remain a small minority. About 6 per cent of companies surveyed for this Report had women executive directors of their main boards; but women accounted for only 1 per cent of executive directors overall. It seems likely that the poor representation of women at this level is attributable to the slow progress they appear to be making in senior management more generally. In 1995, as in 1990, women in management remain hampered by glass ceilings and hemmed in by glass walls, restricting their earnings and blocking them from reaching the operational roles at the top. Better women fare better as non-executive directors. In 1989 they accounted for 4 per cent of non-executives on main boards; in 1995, the figure stood at just over 10 per cent. However, it is clear that women have improved their representation in this area against the odds, and more efforts are needed to overcome the barriers which hinder their progress through senior management if they are to achieve parity with men in the boardrooms of the nation.

Women at Oxbridge

In both Oxford and Cambridge universities, the trend is towards an increasing proportion of women in every academic grade; and for women to be appointed in the same, or higher, proportion as they apply. Nonetheless,
neither university has yet to match the national average for women lecturers, which in 1994–95 stood at 23 per cent. In Oxford, 18 per cent of lecturers in 1995 were women, while in Cambridge the proportion was 14 per cent. Both universities have joined the Opportunity 2000 campaign and are thus publicly-committed to improving the representation of women at all levels. This is likely to be a slow process, given the traditions of both institutions, but it appears that the work has at least begun.

The Police Service

The police service has come late to equal opportunities in comparison with other institutions in our society and perhaps consequently, has a long way to go yet before the presence of women begins to be felt in top police jobs. In 1995, women were 16 per cent of all police officers and 3 per cent of chief constables: an improvement over 5 years previously when they had held 11 per cent and less than half of one per cent, respectively, of these roles. It seems likely that the commitment to equality found among most leaders within the police service is not fully matched across all ranks. For as long as that commitment to equality and to cultural change is missing from the service, women’s chances of reaching top jobs will be limited.

The Report of the Hansard Society Commission, *Women at the Top*, identified the barriers that confront women and the ways of overcoming those barriers adopted by a range of institutions and organisations, and made recommendations aimed at bringing about changes in women’s opportunities. This Report has attempted to measure progress so far; to assess the effectiveness of the Commission’s recommendations; and to point to areas where the need remains for concerted efforts to improve women’s representation. On balance, there has been progress. There is as yet, however, no room for relaxation.
Endnotes

1. Letter, Rt Hon Tony Newton, MP, Leader of the House of Commons, 10 November 1993.


6. Ibid.

7. These were Forensic Science Service, Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, Public Record Office, Occupational Health Service and Contributions Agency.


9. For a full description of these programmes of action see the Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service ten year progress report, HMSO, 1995.

10. Ibid, Chapter 2, paragraph 35.

11. It should be noted that women are not in fact underrepresented among the lay magistracy, where they comprise 47 per cent of magistrates. Letter from ME Ormerod, Private Secretary to the Chancellor, 16 January 1996.

12. In response to a request for information about the recommendations made to him by the Hansard Society Commission, the Lord Chancellor brought the following to our attention: First, although there are wide opportunities for practitioners to sit in a part-time capacity, the question of part-time appointments to the Courts is inhibited by statutory provisions preventing the reduction of salary for certain categories of judge. Secondly, judges of the Queen’s Bench Division are required to hear the most serious criminal cases on Circuit as well as the most complex or heavy civil cases. Given the problems faced in trying to meet the demands of the Circuits for Queen’s Bench Judges, it would be difficult to give any undertaking that steps could be taken to allow even a few Queen’s Bench Judges to sit wholly or mainly in London. Letter, 24 November 1995.


15. Speech by the Lord Chancellor to the Woman Lawyer Conference, 8 April 1995; Letter from ME Ormerod, Private Secretary to the Lord Chancellor, 16 January 1996.


19. For example, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women’s National Commission.

20. Letters from Rt Hon John Major, Prime Minister (25 October 1995) and Sir Robin Butler, Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service (25 October 1995).


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Letters from The Rt Hon Ian Lang, MP, Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry, 18 October 1995; Mrs LM Kenna, Personnel Division DTT, 10 January 1996.

25. In 1989, 182 questionnaires about women’s boardroom representation were sent to the chairman of organisations included among the CBI Top 200. Of these, 144 responded, yielding a 76% response rate. For the survey of employers in 1989, 95 questionnaires were sent to the chief executive officers of organisations included among the CBI Top 100. Of these, 45 firms, or 47%, responded. The 1995 survey combined both sets of questions and achieved a 57% response rate. The lower response rate is likely to be due in part at least to the added length of the 1995 questionnaire.

26. To check that the results of our survey were not distorted by a biased response one might plausibly assume, for example, that many respondents would be among those organisations with the best records — we compared our findings with two other sources of information: the British Institute of Management annual survey and Ashridge survey of women’s representation on the boards of the Times Top 200 organisations in 1992–93. Although differences in composition and definition are likely to exist between these three sources of information, their results are generally in accord. For 1994, the BM reported that women accounted for 2.8% of directors; while Ashridge reported up 4% of all directors. Our survey (see text) disaggregates executive and non-executive directors, accounting for the smaller proportion in the former role.

27. Shortly after the completion of this Report, Laura Ashley announced the appointment of 3 additional women executive directors, bringing the boardroom representation of women in the organisation to 5 (out of 9 executive members). The Guardian, 16 January 1996.


29. Information given in the text is taken from ‘University Statistics, Volume 1: Students and Staff’, which relates only to the former UGC-funded universities. Information about the former polytechnic sector is not recorded separately for men and women. Letter from P Roberts, Department for Education and Employment, 4 October 1995.


31. The Home Office Circular was quoted in Taylor and McKenzie, ibid, p.262.

References


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