

1983 at the London International Television Conference and published in Television in Transition eds. Philip Drummond and Richard Paterson, London: The British Film Institute, 1985, pp. 146-164; a development of these ideas is available in E. Ann Kaplan, "Sexual Difference, Pleasure and the Construction of the Spectator in Music Television," Oxford Literary Review (Summer 1986); further work on sexual difference in rock videos may be found in her forthcoming book, Rocking Around the Clock: Consumption and Postmodern Culture in Music Television. London and New York: Methuen, 1987.

For an example of a quantifying approach to sex-roles in Music Television, see Jane D. Brown and Kenneth Campbell, "The Same Beat but A Different Drummer: Race and Gender in Music Videos", Journal of Communication Inquiry, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 1986).

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Myth and Reality in Women's Employment in Broadcasting

TEN YEARS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

By Margaret Gallagher

Danish Summary: Margaret Gallagher beskæftiger sig i sin artikel med myter og realiteter i kvindernes ansættelse og indflydelse i de europæiske nationale TV-organisationer.

De europæiske landes TV-systemer har hidtil været underlagt offentlig kontrol og dermed en forpligtelse til at fungere som "public service" institution. Denne status, påpeger Gallagher, har givet anledning til en særlig mytologi, som medierne med flid har plejet og vedligeholdt om sig selv: forestillinger om frihed, objektivitet og pragmatisme i sammenhæng med forestillinger om professionalisme, kvalitet og pålidelighed som fundament for public service systemets mytologi om alsidighed og evne til at beskytte og respektere minoriteter osv. Det der kendetegner disse forestillinger er deres abstrakte og udefinerlige karakter, men fra denne synsvinkel er de nye medier en trussel mod det prisværdige status quo, som vil blive lagt øde af kommercialisme osv. Udfordringen fra de nye medier øger public-service institutionernes behov for at understrege deres 'anderledeshed' - deres rolle som formidlere af sociale normer og national bevidsthed.

Organisationernes samfundsmæssige rolle hviler på to tilsyneladende modstridende ideologier, som ikke desto mindre trives side om side og som har kunnet anvendes alternerende i situationer med skiftende ydre politisk og økonomisk pression til

at beskytte institutionernes egne organisatoriske interesser. På den ene side er der forestillingen om at medierne blot skal afspejle det omgivende samfund "som det er", på den anden side forestillingen om mediernes normative rolle i forhold til f.eks. offentlig moral og i forhold til kvaliteten af det offentlige informationsniveau.

I forhold til kravet om ligestilling i medierne har denne dobbeltideologi spillet en særlig rolle og Gallagher påpeger at institutionerne i denne sammenhæng synes at have fortolket sig i forhold til den normative ideologi - også fordi det er i overensstemmelse med mediernes image af at være moderne og progressive og følsomme overfor nye ideer og strømninger i samfundet. Institutionerne tog ligestilling på programmet og forskellige ligestillingsprogrammer så dagens lys gennem 70-erne og 80-erne, hvilket førte til udbredte forestillinger om at der skete ændringer, og at kvinderne begyndte at gøre sig mere gældende i medie billedet og erobrede nye arbejdsområder i produktionen.

Margaret Gallaghers undersøgelse, som blev foretaget i 1984 med støtte fra EF-kommissionen indeholder oplysninger om løn- og ansættelsesforhold m.v. for ansatte i alle public-service TV-organisationer i de dengang 9 medlemslande, punkterer på næsten alle områder disse nye myter. De ændringer og forbedringer der er sket siden begyndelsen af 70-erne med hensyn til kvindernes deltagelse i TV-produktionen er meget små. Gallaghers undersøgelse indeholder data om fordeling af mænd og kvinder i organisationerne, sammensætningen af forskellige medarbejdergrupper, rekruttering, videreuddannelse og fremmelser af kvinder og mænd, oplysninger om barselsordninger og børnepasningsfaciliteter, og på ledelsesplan: indflydelse på beslutninger og policy-udvikling.

Undersøgelsen viser at der samlet er ca. 30% kvinder ansat i TV-institutionerne heraf er de 60% ansat i administrationen, fortrinsvis i lavere kontorfunktioner, mens næsten alle administrativt ansatte mænd har lavere eller højere ledelsesfunk-

tioner. På tekniksidens er der meget få kvinder: 4%, og beskæftiget i meget få funktioner, fortrinsvis billedmix, billedkontrol, og filmlaboratoriearbejde. På værkstedsområdet er kvinderne ligeledes beskæftiget i afgrænsede funktioner indenfor kostume og make-up. På programsiden er der ca. 20% kvinder - især koncentreret i undervisnings- og børneprogramproduktion (hvor de udgør hhv. 25% og 38%). På nyheds- og aktualitetsområdet udgør kvinderne 14% og indenfor underholdning 16% af producere og redaktører. I organisationernes ledelse sidder der i gennemsnit 6% kvinder og kvinderne befinder sig gennemgående på det laveste af de tre øverste trin i hierakiet. Med hensyn til lønnen viser undersøgelsen at der er en stærk sammenhæng mellem kønssammensætningen i de enkelte faggrupper og så den lønmæssige placering af grupperne indbyrdes: I kvindedominerede fagområder er lønnen lavere end i tilsvarende mandlige fagområder: kostumeområdet er generelt lavere aflønnet end maler, snedker og scenearbejderjobs osv. Redigeringsteknikere er lønmæssigt på niveau med producere i lande med overvejende mænd i dette job, mens lønnen i lande med overvejende kvinder i dette job er betydeligt lavere. Undersøgelsen viser, at der ikke er sket markante stigninger i rekruttering af kvinder siden 1972 og at der ikke er sket ændringer i de jobs kvinder rekrutteres til (indenfor teknik fra 3 til 5% i perioden 1972-84).

Mange af de ledere som blev interviewet i undersøgelsen, henviste til den turbulente mediesituation som een af forklaringerne på, at der ikke er sket mere på ligestillingsområdet, men omvendt er ligestillingsprojektet på Thames Television (GB) markedsført i organisationen med henvisning til behovet for at udvikle institutionens indre ressourcer for bedre at kunne modstå konkurrencen fra de nye medier.

Gallagher påpeger til slut at policy-udviklingen bevæger sig fra det nationale til det regionale = europæiske niveau, og ser muligheder i at EF-kommissionen er gået aktivt ind i udviklingen af mediepolitikken i almindelighed og i udvikling af ligestilling på dette område. Hendes egen undersøgelse er et eksempel herpå og desuden har kommissionen i feb. 1986 ned-

sat en styringsgruppe om kvinder i TV bestående af repræsentanter fra topledelseerne i medlemslandenes TV-organisationer, og kommissionen har desuden bevilliget økonomisk støtte til ligestillingsinitiativer. Dette sidste mener Gallagher kan blive et vigtigt instrument i den nuværende pressede situation for public-service TV-stationer. Hun mener videre, at denne situation er velegnet til at udnytte til offentlige kampagner og lobbyvirksomhed fra kvindernes side og henviser til Channel 4's tilblivelse i England og til den sidste rapport om kvinder i BBC (Sims, 1984) som udtrykker bekymring for at institutionens kvinder kan finde på 'Greenham Common - lignende aktioner' i desperation over manglende muligheder for at få indflydelse. Kvinderne har, mener Gallagher, reelle muligheder for at spole re institutionernes dyrebare myter om sig selv som neutrale, alsidige og 'følsomme' overfor forandringer i samfundet netop i en situation hvor de er trængte ude fra på andre fronter også.

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The taken-for granted assumptions, criteria, procedures and practices which make media output what it is are paralleled in the context of media employment patterns. Both spring from the same structures of power and control in society, and are mutually reinforcing. Media organisations are reluctant to question the implications of either.

Organisational consciences are clear: there is no discrimination against women in broadcasting. A woman may apply for any job. There is equal pay for equal work. If there are few women in certain job categories, this is because women lack the necessary qualifications - a fault of the educational system as a whole. If women do not rise to the top positions this is because they are less career-conscious than men - a legacy of social and cultural conditioning.

Reference to "circumstances beyond our control" allows organisations to feel comfortable with manifest imbalances, to claim

that change depends on self-generated momentum and rhythm, and to circumscribe development within an organisational ideology of objectivity and of liberal professionalism whose norms and values remain unquestioned.

Research data from television organisations in eleven European countries are used to demolish a number of myths about the situation of women employees, and to question the commonplace assertion that this situation has been changing. Where policies in this field exist, they tend to be based on the concept of equal opportunities. Experience has already shown this to be static, more notional than real. Positive action seems to offer a more dynamic framework, but its political underpinnings need to be acknowledged and critically examined.

Media Myths and Images

The countries of Western Europe are all sustained by various national myths. Nowhere is this more evident than in the national mass media systems which both embody and help to propagate national mythology. Concepts such as freedom, objectivity, pragmatism and voluntarism all occupy prominent places in both the national and the media mythologies of most of our countries. These ideals, allied with other related notions such as professionalism, quality, accountability, come together in the ethos of public service broadcasting which - the contemporary argument goes - is under attack, with the introduction of 'new media technology'.

The overwhelming majority of broadcasting organisations in Western Europe have public service obligations and duties laid down in their charters and operating conditions, with the classic model being the BBC, much of whose corporate ethos can still be traced back of its early days under the management of John Reith.

"Fifty years ago the structure of British broadcasting was established in a mood compounded of earnestness, the fear of anarchy on the air waves, a desire to ensure that "sound" values predominated. It was both a conservative and Conservative prescription. But the curious internal chemistry of society ensured that this regulatory framework became the climbing frame on which, and for all its faults, the best public service system in the world grew, one which sought to inform, educate and entertain, which tried to achieve balance and objectivity, which respected minorities of all kinds and which believed in the potentialities in all of us, our capacity to widen and deepen our interests".

(Hoggart, 1982, p. viii).

Such an intensely romantic view of public service broadcasting subscribes to the mythology, the self-created imagery of the established media. In this vision the new media technologies are cast as a major threat to the laudable status quo, which is to be plundered and laid waste by commercial, economic and political interests. Bathed in the glow of its subsequent 'golden years', the commercial and political origins of public service broadcasting itself, and its role in the creation of the social-industrial complex, are conveniently forgotten. Terms such as 'objectivity', 'balance', 'professionalism', 'responsibility', 'accountability', 'quality' - so widely used to define public service broadcasting - are in fact, and in themselves, highly abstract and pretty well indefinable. Behind these have always lurked the privilege of a few controllers, the occupational interests of a few thousand 'professionals'. The power to decide what constitutes 'balance' or 'accountability' has always rested with a narrow range of individuals: primarily white, middle-class males, of middling years, mostly resident in - or within commuting distance of - our national capitals. One of the first of these, John Reith, was convinced that 'few people know what they want, and very few what they need' (Briggs, 1961, p. 238). To this day, the relationship between broadcasters and the public remains both obscure and ambiguous.

The affectionate nostalgia which allows Richard Hoggart to characterise public service broadcasting as something 'which respected minorities of all kinds and which believed in the potentialities of all of us' is a superb testament to the quite phenomenal myth-making power of the media. Image-creation, which

is, of course, central to the raison d'etre of the media industries, is nowhere more important than within the media themselves, vis a vis their own media and public images. As the hegemony of state broadcasting agencies is increasingly challenged by new media technologies, it is inevitable that existing institutions emphasise their 'difference' and uniqueness in terms of a traditional - though somewhat apocryphal - role as guardian of standards, or keeper of the national conscience.

This is a situation of which pressure groups can take advantage, in a limited way. In the small space created by the media organizations' need to re-establish their national and corporate identities, there is some possibility for political manoeuvre. To the extent that these new identities must be forged through a redefinition of the public service idea suited to the late twentieth century, there is some scope for calling the bluff of media management - for example, in relation to definitions of 'accountability' and 'responsibility'. Women, in particular, backed by the outcrop of equality legislation enacted in most countries of western Europe in the past decade, have a case to press.

Women and Media Mythology

Public service broadcasting incorporates, and apparently successfully accommodates, two conflicting ideologies. On the one hand, there is the view that broadcasting is - and should be - no more than a mirror of contemporary life. This claims an essentially passive role, in which the media merely 'reflect' society 'as it is'. But a second view sees public service broadcasting as having an exemplary, even a normative role to play - for example, in relation to the observance of standards of public morals, or by increasing the amount and the quality of information available to, and the level of sophistication among, the public at large about social, economic and political issues and problems.

These two apparently incompatible visions are contained side by side within public broadcasting systems because, particularly in relation to external economic and political shifts and pressures, they can each be called on at the appropriate moment to codify and rationalise courses of action which protect or advance organisational interests. These shifting ideological sands have certainly been evident in the way in which broadcasting organisations have responded for the questions of what constitutes equality of opportunity for the women they employ, and of how equal opportunities policies should be implemented.

A few years back - for me it happened some time during 1982 - students of either the portrayal or the participation of women in the media might have begun to become aware of some potential change in the definitely bleak pattern of relationships established by earlier research. One knew, for example, of the by then well-established equality projects in Sveriges Radio and in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. More recently, Thames Television in the United Kingdom had launched its positive action project. An emancipation project had been started in the Dutch broadcasting system NOS. In Ireland the state broadcasting organisation, RTE, had established an equality liaison committee to follow up the recommendations of its working party on women and television. The launch of Channel 4 in the United Kingdom, with its stated and then visible commitment to giving women a voice, was a source of immense excitement. But apparently important initiatives had been taken too in France, with the preparation of a report on women and television for the Ministry of Women's Rights; and in Denmark, with the creation of an equality committee in Danmarks Radio. It all seemed tremendously encouraging.

Responding to various kinds of internal and external pressure, the broadcasting organisations seemed to be interpreting themselves in terms of their normative or exemplary responsibilities. Also important, I think, was the somewhat amorphous but nonetheless undeniable attention focussed on the issue of equality by the United Nations Decade for Women, and the introduc-

tion of new legislation in most European countries. Insofar as the media are keen to promote their image in terms of 'modernity', 'progressiveness', or 'being in touch with new ideas', equality was bound to become a suitable subject with which to become involved. Significant, I believe, is the fact that, following four years of persuasion, the European Broadcasting Union agreed to hold a professional discussion on the question of women and television, in April 1983. This discussion showed that although many broadcasters felt uneasy with the subject, there was a feeling of change being in the air: there was talk of 'a new awareness', a 'rapprochement', of the fact that women had 'arrived' in certain occupational fields in television, even of 'an amazing revolution over the last few years' (excerpts from the discussion are reported in Berg-Camponovo, 1983).

This is heady talk. Perhaps the stuff of which myths are made. It was, however, in this mildly intoxicating climate that I began to want to find out for myself just how much, and in what ways, the situation of women was changing within the broadcasting organisations of Europe. With the backing of the Commission of the European Communities, which persuaded me to restrict the project to television, I spent most of 1984 doing just that. It was an essentially deflating experience.

From Myth to Reality: the Research Study

The research study had two main components. I designed an Information Schedule for the collection of the basic data, much of which was quantitative, concerning distribution of women and men in the organisations; demographic details of various groups of staff; recruitment, promotion and training of women and men; maternity and child-care provision; and management, decision-making and policy development. This schedule was sent to all television organisations operating under government concession in the member states of the European Economic Community. Thirty organisations provided information in some form

or another, and I visited twenty-five of these, covering nine countries and talking to some 150 individuals including members of personnel departments, senior management, trades unions, professional associations, women's groups and equality committees. These interviews formed the core of the project's second component, which was to make a more qualitative analysis of the situation, particularly in organisations which had already launched some equal opportunities or positive action initiative. The research results derive from an exceptionally large data base (see Gallagher, 1984, for the complete analysis). A sample, however well designed, would have made the findings vulnerable to attack from those whom they displeased. Consequently, I decided to include all employees in each of the participating organisations. This amounted to almost 75,000 people, of whom 22,600 were women. The overall pattern of the results is certainly more striking than the small exceptions which it contains. This pattern tends to over-ride differences in organisational structure as well as national/cultural differences.

The Pattern of Reality

Women account for about 30% of the television workforce in most countries, but these women tend to be concentrated in a comparatively narrow range of jobs, most of which are relatively poorly paid. To take the administrative sector as an example, 60% of all women working in television are found here, but just 2% of these women are in the top two tiers of the administrative hierarchy. By contrast, although only 15% of all men working in television are in administration, 20% of these men are in the top two tiers. In the technical area, only 4% of posts are filled by women. The majority of these women are in vision mixing and vision control, and in the film laboratories - jobs which have a tradition of attracting women. Even if they are now beginning to break into the camera and sound areas, there are still almost no women in technical maintenance or in transmission control. Only two women were found in lighting (both in SFP, in France). Women accounted for less than 1% of technical staff in RAI (Italy) and in BRT (Belgium).

In the crafts sector jobs are almost completely segregated on the basis of gender. Two-thirds of all women in this sector are in wardrobe and make-up, compared with just 6% of all men. On the other hand, two-thirds of the men working in television crafts are carpenters, painters, scene or studio assistants and property assistants or buyers. All of these jobs combined account for only 4% of women crafts workers, and almost all of these are in props. Across all of the organisations I found only three women scene-painters (one each in SFP, France; RAI, Italy; and NOS (netherlands), and three women carpenters (one each in Danmarks Radio; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Germany; and NOS). This segregation - which I found in practically all occupational sectors in television - has a profound effect on the earning power of women, a point to which I return below.

About a fifth of television producers and directors are women, but they are concentrated in two main programme areas: education, where they account for 25% of all producers and directors, and children's programmes where 38% of all producers and directors are women. In fact 15% of all women producers and directors are working on children's programmes, compared with 5% of all men. Conversely, women are under-represented in the more prestigious departments such as news and current affairs (14% of producers, directors and editors), light entertainment and variety (16% of producers and directors) and sports (6% of producers, directors and editors).

The potential of women to influence policy or to direct change in television is negligible. In the top three grades of senior management, only 6% of posts are held by women. Put more directly, out of every 25 men working in television, one is at this senior managerial level. Only one out of every 150 women is to be found here. Almost all of the women who are in senior management are on the lowest of the top three steps.

The Reality of Equal Pay for Equal Work

Women's earnings in television amount to about 75% of men's. The gap is not explained by an age differential or by length of service. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that administrative jobs - where the majority of women are to be found - are among the most poorly paid, while technical jobs - where there are almost no women - tend to attract the highest salaries. To show how the relatively poorly paid jobs tend to be concentrated in a single occupational sector, I divided the salary ranges of three organisations - Bayerischer Rundfunk (Germany), RTE (Ireland) and the BBC (U.K.) - into four equal groups. As one would have expected, unspecialised service jobs tend to be in the bottom group. However, roughly two-thirds of all administrative jobs were also found in the bottom quarter of the range, compared with about 15% of production and crafts jobs (in a single, combined category) and just 6% of technical jobs.

As a generalisation it is true that when a job category is dominated by women, that job tends to be relatively poorly paid. To take the crafts sector as an example, jobs in wardrobe tend to be less well-paid than scene-painting or upholstering, which are mainly filled by men. The editing area gives some interesting insights here. Film and video editors enjoy relatively high status in Greece, Ireland the United Kingdom, where they are paid at a level roughly equivalent to producers and directors. Across nine organisations in these countries, just 13% of editors (including assistants) are women. However, in Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany, where editors are paid at the level of junior production staff, 70% across eleven organisations are women. In fact in the German companies, where on average 90% of editors are women, editing is popularly known as 'the housewives' shift'.

However, even when doing the same job, women tend to earn less than men. For example, among journalists women's salaries are approximately 75% of men's across a number of organisations - ranging, for instance, from 67% in TF 1 through to 87% in An-

tenne 2 (both in France). I compared salary levels in Danmarks Radio for six job categories which are not dominated by either women or men. In all but one of these job categories, women were between one and three salary steps behind men, the difference relating not to age but presumably to the specific tasks to which they are assigned and the valuation given to these, through additional payments and merit awards.

Another example from Danmarks Radio shows how assessment of value affect overall salaries of women and men. Within the technical areal, there is a low level unskilled general assistant occupation known as 'driftsassistent'. There are some 150 such jobs and about a third of them are paid at the lower og two salary bands for the job category. There are few women driftsassistents (less than 10%) but three-quarters of them are in the lower band, as against one-quarter of the men. This has nothing to do with length of service or age, which are roughly equivalent for women and men. It does appear to have something to do with placement. Almost all of the women are in 'general' semi-technical areas, such as the video archive, workshops or purchasing. The men are predominantly in the more 'properly' technical areas - O.B.s, laboratories, engineering, studios - which tend to be seen as specialised and may be therefore more highly valued.

There is also the question of the relative rates at which women and men progress through the same salary range. To take again the example of Danmarks Radio: there are in this organisation some 120 low-level technical assistants, known as 'driftstekniker'. More than half of these jobs (55%) are held by women. The jobs span three salary bands. However, women account for 90% of those at the bottom, 57% of those at the middle, and just 33% of those at the top levels. On the other hand, women are - on average - two years older than men at the top level, five years older at the middle, and seven years older at the bottom level. This suggests that, over time, a higher proportion of women is left behind in the lower-level, lower-paid jobs.

The Myth of Progress

So much for the overall pattern. It probably holds few surprises. What may be more surprising is the fact that, contrary to the assertion - commonly put to me in my interviews with senior management, and also by many women working in the television organisations - that there had been a notable evolution in the situation of women employees in recent years, the data show that development has actually been absolutely minimal.

I traced the progress of cohorts of women and men who had been recruited to nineteen of the television organisations approximately ten years ago. The first point worth making on the basis of these retrospective data is that women represent an average of 46% of all recruits stretching back as far as 1972. Women's share of recruitment to television now (for example, 42% in 1983) is consequently no higher than it was in the early 1970s. The sectoral distribution of women and men has not changed noticeably over the ten year period: most women recruits to television a decade ago were appointed to low-level administrative jobs, as they are now; and even at that time a small percentage of technical vacancies was filled by women. Women were recruited to at least 3% of technical jobs as far back as 1972, compared with 5% in 1984. Such increase as there may have been is not, therefore, dramatic nor is it uniform. In NOS (Netherlands), for example, 3% of technical vacancies were filled by women in 1974 although no 1982 appointments to the technical area were made among women.

A second point is that, across all of the organisations studied, the average woman was at a disadvantage compared with the average man right from the date of recruitment. She was appointed to a lower-level job, in a lower salary band. Over time, this difference was maintained or even increased in all but three of the organisations (SFP, France; RTE, Ireland; NOS, Netherlands), where women did manage to close the salary or grade gap a little. However, in two of even these three organisations (RTE and NOS) the biggest individual increases were

made by men. It was generally true that although women, on average, made modest progress in their careers over the time period, none (out of a total of over 700) actually 'broke through' to the very top jobs in the way that the men did.

The third point to emerge from this retrospective analysis is that the tightest structural brake on women's career development in television is their concentration in the administrative sector. Even including the low-level clerical and secretarial functions, administration accounts for a smaller proportion of jobs (27% across 24 organisations) than the technical (32%) or the production and craft areas (30%). So in terms of sheer numbers alone, there are fewer opportunities in administration. And when it comes to top jobs, in the majority of organisations the administrative sector furnishes a much smaller percentage of senior management staff than either the technical or - particularly - the production fields. The data also showed that, although only a minority of men are recruited into low level administrative jobs, they are rather more likely than women to move out of these, generally into assistant technical functions from which careers can more easily be made.

Finally, there is little indication of progress in the area of senior management. As I have pointed out, only 6% of top management posts are held by women - across 22 organisations. Four organisations (one in Belgium and three in Germany) did not have a single woman at this level. And there is no real sign that a younger generation of women is making its way into top management. Fifteen organisations were able to provide information on the age distribution of their top management staff, and eight of these had senior managers under the age of 35. However, only three organisations - the BBC, STV and TSW: all in the U.K. - had any top women managers in this age category. Moving higher up the age spectrum, every organisation had senior managers aged under 45. But only six had women managers in this category. In RTE (Ireland), the only women in senior management were over 55 years of age, although 80% of men in RTE's top management grades were in younger age bands.

Myths about Women Working in Television

The mild state of intoxication which had infected the early stages of my work on this project could clearly not survive the evidence of the quantitative data which the research was inexorably producing. Perhaps even more sobering was the realisation, which came through the interviews, that trite and traditional assumptions and stereotypes about women still persist - and are indeed voiced - in personnel and other key departments within many of Europe's television organisations. The notions that women are not career conscious, have high rates of absenteeism, are not worth investing in because they are likely to leave their jobs (to get married, to have babies, to relocate if their husband changes jobs), are simply just not suited to certain kinds of work: these were all put to me in various guises, some more honest than others. On the other hand, the data illustrated the lack of solid foundation on which such preconceptions are based.

Firstly, this study showed that staff 'wastage' is not strikingly greater among women than among men. Of women recruited to 17 organisations between 1972 and 1980, 49% remained by 1984. This compares with 62% of men recruited over the same period. In four of the five French organisations studied, and in RAI (Italy), wastage was greater among men than among women. In only two cases - Danmarks Radio and Granada (U.K.) - was it possible to analyse the job categories of those who left the organisations. Both cases suggest that women who leave are likely to have been recruited to low-level clerical posts or to service jobs, and that among professional recruits women may be more likely than men to stay with the organisation.

For example, 22 (32%) of the women recruited to Danmarks Radio in 1973 had left the company by 1984; 18 of these were general office assistants, and the other four were canteen staff. Of men recruited to Danmarks Radio in 1973, 15 (25%) had left by 1984. But of these five were journalists, four were technicians, and four were middle-level administrative executives. The remaining two were general office assistants - the only men re-

cruited to such posts in 1973. In other words, although recruitment of women is often regarded as a poor investment, it seems quite possible that - looked at more carefully - the opposite may be true.

The belief that absenteeism is much higher among female than among male employees was commonly expressed to me during this study, when management staff tried to explain why the careers of women in their organisations did not prosper as fully as those of men. In fact, this belief was not empirically confirmed. Across 14 organisations able to provide comparable information for the year 1983, women lost an average of 11.1 days through sick leave, compared with 8.9 days for men: a difference of only 2.2. days on average. This is hardly the substantial differential which is generally believed to exist. In no organisation did the difference between women and men amount to more than seven days, and in most it was less than four. It was particularly small in the German and British organisations. In one case - Westdeutscher Rundfunk - men had a higher average rate of absenteeism than women.

Absenteeism in general is considerably more prevalent in the lower-level jobs, and of course it is here that a much higher proportion to women than men is to be found. It was difficult, in the context of this study, to establish comparative rates of absenteeism for women and men in top management, partly because there are so few women at the top, and partly because in a number of organisations no record is kept of sick leave taken by very senior staff. However ten organisations were able to provide the relevant data and in three of these women in senior management lost less time from work through illness than senior men. In four others, the differential between women and men at the top was smaller than that applicable to female and male employees in the organisation as a whole.

The data also showed that, although occupational folklore and working conditions still generally ignore the fact, children are the offspring of men as well as of women. Across the 6 organisations able to provide information on the number of male

employees taking paid paternity leave in 1983, 4% of all men took advantage of this. Exactly the same percentage of women working in television took maternity leave - either paid or unpaid - across 19 organisations for which the data were available. Most of these women (85%) took only the statutory provision of paid leave. Very few women - less than 1% on average - apparently resign on the birth of a child. In fact, the study showed that the average woman working in television is much less likely to be married than the average man; and that the average married woman is more likely to be childless than the average married man.

Issues concerning the conflicting demands of family and work still command very little attention in most of the organisations covered by this project. Among them are the issues of flexibility of working time and the provision of family leave; the return to work after maternity or a career break; the stereotyping of career paths and promotion ages; facilities and finance for child care. Most of the management staff to whom I spoke during the research saw the family-career dilemma as primarily a problem which women themselves must solve. The provision of creche facilities, for example, is generally dismissed - sometimes after a dutiful investigation of costs - as a luxury which would benefit only a 'minority'. Subsidised sports facilities, private dining rooms and bars come into a different category when it comes to meeting staff needs. Fundamentally, child-care is still regarded as a private, rather than an organisational matter. As such, it ranks very low in managements' scales of priority.

Separating Myth from Reality

The impression that the relationship between women and the media was undergoing - indeed, in some interpretations, had already undergone - truly important change was certainly challenged by the findings of this research. Yet it would be unjust to reach the final conclusion that there has been no movement of

any kind, that the proclamation of equal opportunities policies or the establishment of equality committees have been nothing more than what the American historian Daniel Boorstin would have called 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin, 1963, pp. 19-54): media-created 'stories' which reconcile ideological drives (to seek out the new, the original) with bureaucratic needs (for predictability and continuity).

It was, however, evident that - in the minds of many senior managers - the guarantee of equality of opportunity was a kind of 'event' which somehow or other 'happened' with a policy statement or the establishment of a committee, rather than a long-term process which depended on the implementation of special measures, attitude change in literally thousands of decision-makers and line managers, and the commitment of financial and human resources. In this sense, media people seem to working within the ideological framework which encompasses the notion of 'responsibility' in a good deal of programme-making: important issues must be aired so that 'something' can be done about them, without necessarily defining what should be done, or who should do it. The broadcaster, therefore, 'deals' with problems and issues by the mere fact of recognising their existence. This easily breeds the misconception that the recognition and the solution of a problem are one and the same thing.

It was striking too how often media managers fell back on the other, 'mirror of society', strand of ideology which underpins public service broadcasting in order to explain their inability to take positive action to improve the situation of women workers. According to this view, it is not the job of any broadcasting organisation to attempt to set the pace for society as a whole. This perspective is usually bolstered by references to the recalcitrance of the trades unions, and the economic situation. A further factor here is the notion of 'professionalism', which plays such a powerful part in defining the environment of media institutions. Although almost impossible to define, its strength is such that it makes many

media people extremely nervous of anything which even hints at 'special treatment', or 'making allowances', and which might therefore result in a substandard or 'unprofessional' product.

Many women, and indeed a number of men, whom I interviewed during the research felt strongly that there was a distinct lack of will, in the senior echelons of the television organisations, to act. Management were said to be 'dragging their heels' over decisions on the implementation of proposals, even to be 'hiding behind' a formally stated commitment to an equal opportunities policy. Of course, perceptions of change vary enormously depending on the organisational location of the individual. Many senior staff did apparently genuinely feel that the general attitudinal and organisational climate had changed to the advantage of women, and that it would be just a matter of time before this change brought visible results. However, assessing the de facto situation in mid-1984, and bearing in mind that discussions about equality have been in progress in a number of these organisations for well over ten years, it is hardly surprising that the sentiment most frequently expressed by the feminist activists I met was pure and simple exhaustion.

New Realities, New Myths

In a technological sense broadcasting is at a crossroads. New myths are already in the process of creation. Utopian predictions and doom-laden prophecies compete with one another for dominance in the marketplace of ideas and opinions. The increased number and type of media outlets means that new political and economic actors have been able to seek, and in some cases gain a foothold. In western Europe governments are encouraging, or participating in, cable and satellite developments primarily for industrial and commercial reasons, to ensure that their countries enjoy the assumed benefits of the communications revolution as economies make the transition from manufacturing-based to service- and information-orienta-

ted activities. Deregulation may mean less state control, but it will certainly mean more commercial control. Already developments in France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom have shown that it is the advertising and press giants - Havas, Berlusconi, Springer, Murdoch - who have established themselves most quickly.

If they are to have any influence on the organisational and substantive arrangements now being set in place, women cannot afford to wait. Lobbying at all levels - of the type which did bring some success when the fourth television channel was being allocated in the United Kingdom - is essential. To back this up we need solid research which is capable of challenging the generally complacent assertions of the potential new actors on the media scene, and of cutting through the mythology of pluralism which they are in the process of creating.

The new media developments present a severe test for public broadcasting organisations whose rationale now has to be reaffirmed. Inevitably, broadcast management frequently cite this turbulent environment as one of the obstacles to any fundamental reconsideration of policy and practice in the employment of women, just as they refer often to the economic recession and its impact on the scope for change. However, as I have suggested, these conditions can also be used to challenge the claim that - however much they would like things to alter - the broadcasting institutions are constrained by this or that external or internal circumstance. For example, the argument that it is in the economic interests of an organisation to cultivate and use all of the latent talent represented in its staff, is a difficult one to resist - particularly so at a time of financial restraint. It is significant, I think, that the positive action project in Thames Television was 'marketed' within the company in just these terms - human resource development and good management practice.

A further potential challenge to the status quo lies in the fact that the site of policy development is increasingly mov-

ing from a national to a regional, European level - again, in response to the new technology debate which has made clear the need for various kinds of collaboration and for European-wide ventures - and that the Commission of the European Communities has now prepared a draft directive concerned with regulation of the new media. Although this is likely to be vigorously opposed by many of the member states, and may never actually be adopted, the interventionist stance which the Commission has taken has made the broadcasting organisations nervous, and anxious to demonstrate that their preference for self-regulation is founded on good practice and good faith.

In this already jittery climate the Commission of the European Communities has very recently established a Steering Committee on Women and Television, composed of senior management representatives of the television organisations of the twelve member states. The Committee met for the first time in February of this year, and will be meeting again in November. Its main purpose is to see that equality of opportunity is actively pursued within the television companies. The Commission will provide a certain amount of financial support for positive action projects. In the contemporary technological, economic and political environment which I have described this is, I think, a potentially influential initiative.

The contemporary vulnerability of public service broadcasting is, I think, admirably illustrated in the final sentences of a recent internal BBC report which looked at the absence of women in top jobs in the Corporation:

"If women do not achieve the responsibility they deserve, the more militant will decide to take matters into their own hands. Frustrations can lead to 'Greenham Common' type activities and younger BBC women are not prepared to 'wait to be noticed'. The BBC has a potent resource in its women staff who are ready to focus attention on their perceived lack of opportunities. Sensitive action by management could channel this vitality into support for the organisation and

would reassure those women members of staff who are such effective advocates for the flourishing survival of public service broadcasting". (Sims, 1984, p. 37).

Three sources of anxiety are obvious here. The first is the women's movement per se. Women's organised power, and their success in public campaigning, are clearly seen as threatening in themselves. However, they are particularly threatening in terms of their potential to damage the organisation's image as a 'sensitive' institution: and this is the second source of anxiety.

The third is the 'crisis' in public service broadcasting: women's potential to damage the image puts the organisation in an especially vulnerable position at this particular time, when the 'survival of public service broadcasting' is in question.

These overlapping anxieties, I suggest, come together at this moment - this historical, political, technological moment - in a way which opens a space. This particular space will, of course, close as the circumstances which have created it change. Others will open up. But I think that there are ways of using this one, and that we should be pursuing them.

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