

A WOMAN'S PLACE: WHO DECIDES?

Lesley Sutherland

The short answer to the title is men. The slightly longer answer, and why I think it is important to change, is what now follows. This article describes briefly the establishment and priorities of the European Women's Lobby, reviews the situation in Scotland in terms of women's participation in decision-making - both in politics and in the workplace - and concludes by forecasting developments in Scotland and in the rest of Europe with regard to equality. It will be my contention that democracy and equality are closely inter-linked, and that substantial progress towards greater equality and democracy will only come as a result of radical and fundamental change.

It may help if at this stage I clarify my point of departure into the thickets of decision-making. I do not construe decision-making in the narrow sense of women's participation in management; decision-making takes place at all levels, and in our society women are substantially excluded or marginalised from that process. It is not just women's choices which are constrained, but women's power to exercise choice, and it is this inequity, and inequity, which I would like to confront.

THE BACKGROUND

I would like first to sketch in some theoretical background. I will touch briefly on:

power in organisations;

women claiming equality while also claiming to be different from men;

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women's place in employment.

In the research field the assumption that organisations and institutions are gender-free has been challenged, and Savage and Witz (1992) provide a helpful analysis of some of the main themes. Some theorists argue that what look like gender differences in jobs are actually power differences, and consequently once women get access to the positions of organisational power in equal numbers their gender will become insignificant. While I believe there is some truth in this analysis, it is too simplistic and mechanical and does not take the dynamics of organisations into account. Other feminists reject male structures and recommend seeking alternative forms of organisation, at least in the short term. Although I recognise the value of developing new and more congenial forms of organisation, it nevertheless leaves those of us who are unable to extract ourselves from existing organisations, and wish to change them now, without a strategy. A third approach argues that gender should not be seen as a fixed attribute but as a relational quality, and gender relations as power relations. Organisations are therefore gendered in the sense of process rather than as a fixed element. This allows for flexibility and adaptability in the power process of organisations, in which gender has a key role, and this seems to me to be more apt.

On the question of 'same or different', much early feminist discourse turned around whether women were different from or the same as men. To be forced to choose between sameness and difference is to accept a false dichotomy. Cynthia Cockburn, a well-known theorist, rejects the male challenge that women cannot claim to be equal if they claim to be different (1991). She argues there are differences and similarities within gender as there are between the two genders. Women should retain but rework the concept of gender difference in their own terms, rather than accepting the meanings ascribed by our male dominated society, according to Cockburn, who suggests women are looking for parity not sameness. It would seem appropriate here to introduce the concept of '*democratie paritaire*' - democracy of parity or equivalence - to which Cockburn alludes and which is gathering support in Europe as a concept, since it combines equality and gender, while affording space for difference. I will return to democracy of parity in my conclusions.

In connection with employment, women's place has been 'defined in domesticity', to quote one of Cockburn's chapter headings. A quotation from Porter (1982, p.118) serves to clarify this idea: 'Women in work are perceived as being migrants from the domestic domain (whether they have husbands or not) and it is this fact that crucially differentiates their

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experience of work'. Carole Pateman (in **The Sexual Contract** (1988, Polity Press), quoted by Cockburn (1991, p.23)) clarifies the link between women's lack of rights in society and their inequality in employment: 'women have not been incorporated into the patriarchal structure of capitalist employment as "workers"; they have been incorporated as women; and how can it be otherwise when women are not and cannot be men'.

In this necessarily sketchy review, I hope I have done enough to show that women's status in society, in employment and in the home are closely inter-related and that social relations are not gender free. Women's place is defined by assumptions and stereotypes which serve to maintain the power structures as they are, and in which the gender relationship is constantly redefined, reinforced and adapted to sustain the power imbalance. Men achieve superordinate positions not necessarily because of intrinsic worth or superior merit but because they can depend on subordinate females to liberate them to concentrate on those areas, whether in work or in the home. Pringle and Watson put it thus: 'what feminists are confronted with is not a state that represents "men's interests" as against women's interests but government conducted as if men's interests were the only ones that mattered'.

THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Let us look at what is happening in Scotland and in Europe generally. The research information available shows that women are under-represented in all key areas of decision-making - in politics, in top positions in the workplace, in public life and in the institutions of society. It is thanks to the efforts of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Scotland, to organisations such as Engender, and to various academics, journalists and researchers that we have some idea of the Scottish picture with regard to gender and equality. Nevertheless, there remain huge gaps in information, and substantial parts of women's experience are unanalysed.

The inequalities in women's place in Scotland are substantially replicated in Europe as a whole, although a few countries do better and a few do worse. Over recent years I believe that many women here have looked to the Europe Union to deliver improvements in terms of equality or more generally in social policy. Although much is made by some of Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, which refers to equal pay for men and women, it is important to recognise that this was included as a minimum-wage measure to prevent men's wages being undercut by women. Equality is not thereby enshrined in the Treaty, nor was the Community constituted on equality grounds or objectives, and I will return to this point later. A look at the record of the UK

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government shows that, for example, it has blocked the draft directive on parental leave, watered down the maternity rights directive and has opted out of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty. However, it does commit itself to equal opportunity programmes, and undoubtedly European legislation and judgements from the European Court of Justice have had an impact on women in Scotland. The shared perception of the necessity of having a channel for women's voices and of ensuring that equal opportunities are on the European agenda led to the setting up of the European Women's Lobby in September 1990.

The Lobby is composed of women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from the member states and European women's NGOs, representing, for example, business and professional women, Catholic women, women in agriculture, medicine, trade unions, or black women in the arts. The Lobby has no party-political affiliation. I think it is important to stress these two aspects of being non-governmental and apolitical as, at the time the Lobby was established, there were some who believed that it should allow political groups to join. I still believe that that would have compromised the Lobby's credibility both in the European Union and with home governments. Others saw no place for the Lobby, arguing that women MEPs were there to represent women's interests. This blinkered perspective ignored the significant under-representation of women among the ranks of MEPs and the marginalisation of equality and women's concerns from the agendas of the main political parties at all levels. One of the Lobby's strengths is that it is independent and provides a means of communication from grassroots women's organisations to the decision-makers in Europe.

As each member state is allocated four seats at the General Assembly of the Lobby, the UK representation comes one each from Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there being an umbrella body in each. This arrangement was not arrived at by accident, but through consultation and negotiation, particularly supported by Scotland and Northern Ireland. I believe our counterparts in England are now fully convinced of the benefits all round. I am the representative elected by Women's Forum Scotland. The Board of the Lobby has a representative from each member state, and I have served in that capacity since 1990 and am currently its Treasurer. The Lobby has developed links with key bodies such as Directorate General V (DG V in the jargon), the European Commission and the Women's Rights Committee, and has established itself as a sound and recognised advocate for women and equality in Europe. The difficulties in achieving this should not be underestimated. A subvention is received from the Parliament which has to be lobbied for annually and allows us to employ a small staff. Differences in

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understanding, in histories, in priorities and in equality objectives compounded by the problem of language all made for obstacles which had to be overcome by a Board of 20 women, undertaking this responsibility in their own time, in addition to many other commitments. Progress has been great; it only looks small in relation to the scale of the task we set ourselves.

One of the main themes of the Lobby has been women and decision-making, both a priority of its members and one of the main strands of the European Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities. The Lobby made the case for greater female representation in both the elections to the European Parliament and the appointment of new Commissioners. A quarter of MEPs elected in 1994 are women, as are 5 out of 21 Commissioners recently appointed, representing an increase, but still a long way from parity. The Lobby has also highlighted those who are particularly marginalised in present structures by commissioning a report written by black and migrant women - *Confronting the Fortress* - which has now been published by the European Parliament. Time does not permit me to develop further the position of black women in Europe but I am glad to report that there are now 2 black women on the Board. Nor can I make more than this passing reference to another priority for the Lobby - violence against women - that most blatant exercise of power over women.

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What has been women's experience in Scotland, and what we they contributed to the debate? There have only been 24 women MPs representing Scottish constituencies, in total, since women were admitted to Westminster. That is 24 altogether in almost 80 years. Helen Liddel's election in the seat previously held by the late John Smith broke the previous record of 5 in one Parliament, raising the number to 6 women among 72 Scottish MPs; this increased to 7 when Roseanna Cunningham was elected for Perth and Kinross in the by-election in May 1995. Although there are slightly more women in regional and district councils, and in the new shadow authorities, at around 20%, it is nowhere near parity, and women are also significantly under-represented in public appointments. Yet I see grounds for real optimism, largely on the basis of the discussion around a Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Constitutional Convention showed a commendable sensitivity to the need to include a women's dimension by inviting predecessor bodies of the Women's Forum's to nominate a representative. The lack of women in the political and decision-making processes is reinforced when one notes that only some 10% of the representatives in the Convention are female. However, those women who had been striving to shape the agenda of existing

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institutions have had an influence nonetheless. For example, the women's committee of the STUC has played a leading role, and put forward the original proposition for a Scottish Parliament with equal representation for women and men, or the 50:50 option as it is known for short.

There are other proposals emanating from women's organisations. These include Parliament operating on a normal working day and late-night sittings being the exception to the rule; and that holidays should coincide with school holidays. These ideas would allow MPs to have some kind of family life. As it is recognised that those who work irregular shifts are prone to stress, fatigue and lack of concentration, these provisions might well enhance the quality of decision-making of both men and women. Dependant-care allowances should be provided, not only for representatives but also for those who might be called to give evidence to a committee. Greater use should be made of committee structures rather than plenary sessions and Parliament made more accessible by using other locations, as appropriate to the business. These may not seem very revolutionary, nor are they necessarily 'women's' demands (with the possible exception of dependant care), but they are none the worse for that.

In terms of a gender-equal Parliament, I should say that we would not have reached where we have in the campaign without the significant support of many men. However, the men have followed where the women have led. I do not believe that this proposal would have come forward from men or the organisations they substantially control had women not put it on the agenda and battled to keep it there. The fact that it got into the public arena of the Constitutional Convention and gained support is a mark of the long and tedious years women have spent arguing the equal opportunities case within organisations and political parties. As an issue, equal opportunities has moved ahead: it is now not only respectable but has become part of the required language of politicians and others. The practice and the implementation are more problematic, and the support built around this proposal has brought equality into uncomfortably close proximity for some.

Various objections and obstacles were raised. 'Where will we get these women?' men asked. When it was pointed out to them that there were many women in all political parties, they would counter with 'but they have no experience' - to which the answer could only be 'why not?'. 'The electorate won't vote for women'; Engender's 1994 **Gender Audit** provides evidence to the contrary. 'Women should get there on merit'; using this criterion would at least have novelty in its favour. I wonder whether we should, therefore, on the basis of equity, carry forward our campaign with the slogan 'we demand

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to have as many mediocre women as there are mediocre men as candidates.' Clearly merit should come into consideration, but who is determining what is meritorious, what qualities are to be prized, what experiences are relevant? What kind of support, training and guidance do candidates require to reach the standard, and who determines access to these? Hitherto, in all political parties, the answer, again, is men, resulting in women being ignored or under-rated.

Some attempted to play off one 'interest group' against another, saying, 'if these provisions are made for women, what about black and ethnic minority people in Scotland and people with disabilities, they'll be wanting the same'. To be clear, women are not a minority group. We are 52% of the population. Like the other 48%, we come in all shapes, sizes, colours and with differing abilities and needs. Of course a Scottish Parliament which has at its core equality of its citizens, and is based on equity and justice, must give attention to the representation of all groups in society, particularly those that have tended to be marginalised in the past and present. Had the case for women's representation not been so vigorously fought I doubt these concerns would have troubled the more cynical proponents of this argument. Moreover, there is research evidence from other countries that women achieving positions of power are more likely to be sensitive to marginalised groups and make efforts to include the excluded. The assumption underlying the argument above is that democracy is finite, there is only a certain quantum of democracy, and if we (also implicit is an assumption about who has the power to distribute democracy) give more of this finite amount to you, then there will be less available for that other group. These assumptions are fallacious. Democracy is a continuum which can be expanded and elaborated. Arguing that increasing democracy diminishes it for others is a contradiction in terms. What is finite in representative democracies is the number of decision-making positions. And here it is the case that if more seats are given to your group then there will be fewer seats for my group. So this is an argument about power not democracy.

Another challenge thrown at proponents of 50:50 is 'well, Ms X is totally opposed to it, she agrees with us that it's demeaning for women to get special treatment. It's only you feminists who are pushing this'. There seems to be an almost magical belief that if one member of the group in question can be found who disagrees then the argument is invalidated. Speaking from my trade union experience, I know that many of the several hundred women who attend the STUC Women's Conference consider feminism as anathema and use 'feminist' as a term of criticism, but they have consistently and overwhelmingly voted for 50:50 and argued for it within their own unions.

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Although not all political parties are members of the Constitutional Convention, the informal contacts with women across the political spectrum undertaken by the Women's Co-ordination Group (an ad-hoc body which came together to carry forward the campaign for women's representation) shows that equality and the access to decision-making positions within political parties is of concern, at least to women, even if there may be divergence over how to rectify the inequalities. Increasingly women are mobilising across parties, as are women outwith political structures, for example, from member organisations of Women's Forum Scotland, and are coming together, building a coalition of support for equal representation across the board.

When the Scottish Constitutional Commission reported its views on arrangements for a Scottish Parliament to the Constitutional Convention in autumn 1994, many of us were dismayed that equal representation was not to be statutory requirement. Yet at the meeting of the Constitutional Convention in December 1994, under-reported or ignored though this was, every key speaker referred to equal representation, and in the open debate which followed more speakers chose to address this issue than any other, preponderantly favouring 50:50. Not all did however; some accepted the principle of equal representation but believed that it would come in its own time. At the present rate of change a gender-equal Parliament should be along in a couple of centuries. One male MP suggested that if anyone required convincing that political parties had to be constrained in order to ensure delivery of the principle then the process of the selections for the new shadow local authorities would bear examining. If a voluntary approach were sufficient for parties to follow through commitments to equality then it should be evidenced there, for what are entirely new entities. And yet the outcome in terms of the proportion of women among the new councillors is almost exactly the same as on the old Regions and Districts.

In concluding this section, the possibility of rearguard action against the principle or, more likely, the delivery of equal representation should never be discounted: the desire to hang on to power is a strong impetus. Nevertheless, I do believe that this process has significantly advanced the issue of equality. It has revealed the potential that increasing equality has of heralding an opportunity for dynamic and challenging change. Political parties and practices will have to change profoundly to answer these new conditions. Nor will the impact be confined to a Scottish Parliament; the spin-off is already manifesting itself in many ways, even simply in how '50:50' has entered the vocabulary. It embodies an important contribution that Scotland can make to the wider debate on democracy.

EMPLOYMENT

As in politics so at work, women are excluded from decision-making positions. Their employment is characterised by being low status, poorly paid, precarious and peripheral. Even where women get access to higher, more qualified positions, they are confined by stereotypes and segregated into certain sectors of the labour market, a fact remarked on in the recent EOC report **Targeting Potential Discrimination** (Millward 1995, pp.6-15). Scottish research published in 1992 shows that 46% of women work in public administration and other services and 24% in distribution, hotels, catering and repairs. In 1989 in Scotland women held only 20% of managerial jobs. Segregation starts early and subject choice at school remains very stereotyped, with girls significantly under-represented in physics, engineering and technical subjects, which has consequences for their subsequent educational and labour-market destinations. Notwithstanding their better qualifications on leaving school, girls' aspirations are lower; for example, they are more likely than boys to opt for non-university further education.

Even within sectors of employment, women tend to be concentrated in certain areas. An illustration of this is that, in trade unions, female officers are more likely to hold a remit for equality, education, law or health and safety than be an industrial officer. Previous subject choice in education inevitably leads to women lecturing in universities in arts and social sciences rather than in engineering. It is instructive to look too at what women do in these jobs. Women lecturers tend to take on more pastoral work than their male counterparts. Women in management are more likely to be in personnel or PR than in production. And back in politics, European figures show that women MEPs take on more committees than men but they tend to be concentrated in social policy, health, education, co-operation and development than in the budgetary, economic, agricultural or transport committees. Which is more valued, which has greater status - pastoral work or research publications, social policy or economic policy?

Various initiatives have been suggested to redress the balance, and the situation is changing; women are gradually moving into management in non-traditional sectors. But, Savage (1992) argues, women have moved into positions of high expertise but not into positions of power or authority. He instances banks, where the increasing number of women in managerial positions has been accompanied by restructuring which has relocated the centres of power. Decision-making has shifted from an omnipotent branch manager to a small number of centres where senior posts are still mainly held by men.

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The main reason for women not having male employment profiles is the biological imperative of childbearing. I would refer you back to earlier comments about women being defined in domesticity and their relationship with the labour market. Previously, women who achieved high positions very often had an employment profile similar to that of a man's. They either had no children or they moved into those positions when childcare responsibilities had passed. Men by contrast might have had children, but this had no noticeable impact on their progress at work.

There have been several interesting cases in respect of childcare which I hope will illustrate some of these points. A few months ago a young woman who held an extremely powerful job in Coca Cola in the UK announced that she was to leave her job to devote her energies to her baby, prompting an item on childcare on BBC 2's 'Newsnight'. Yet there is nothing so unusual about women being at home caring for children; this was remarkable only because the woman in question was a top executive and might have been expected to give her career greatest priority. The real news would have been if a man were giving up such a job for childcare.

Before that, the contested custody of a child in the United States was reported in the UK. The mother held an extremely high-flying job, demanding frequent absences from home and exceptionally long hours; the father was a college lecturer. The man was granted custody. I have to say that I disagree with those women in America who argued that denial of custody was clearly punishment for being a woman who had achieved such a high level job. Had the roles conformed to the norm, and the man had had her job, custody would probably have been granted to the mother, and the event would have been entirely unremarkable. Rather she was punished for trying to reconcile the irreconcilable - being a woman, having a top job and a child. The focus should have been on challenging the raft of assumptions that underpin holding down a high-level job - that there are other people (usually women) to care and to facilitate the top executive (usually male) to do the job; these assumptions deny shared family responsibility.

There has, rightly, been a great deal of attention paid to the question of childcare and how the lack of it impacts on women and their capacity to participate in the labour market. That perspective is widening to encompass elder care or dependant care. Indubitably, the provision of reliable, affordable, flexibly available childcare is essential to enabling women to engage not only in paid employment but also in other spheres of activity. However, if we make that our sole aim, while it would be a worthy one, I contend that the job would be only half done. It would leave unchallenged the

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assumption that women are the carers and that men are the workers and would not substantially advance the discussion on the reconciliation of work and family life. If we are talking about equality between men and women, then both elements, male and female, must come into consideration. This should not be construed as suggesting that the provision of childcare should be abandoned; it is where this objective is located in the overall strategy that is my point.

But is this what women really want? Women now constitute more than half of all employees in Scotland - 50.5% in 1994 - and 45% of them are in part-time employment (**Employment Gazette**, October 1994). The labour market is changing towards increasing flexibility, more part-time working, with a casualised workforce. The Equal Opportunities Commission estimates that the majority of the new jobs to emerge in the immediate future are likely to be part-time and taken by women, while full-time jobs, of the kind usually done by men, will disappear. It cautions women to beware of relying on men's employment to sustain them. According to UK figures drawn from the 1993-94 Labour Force Survey, 92% of mothers of children aged under 16 who worked part-time did not want a full-time job. In its report to the United Nations World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in September this year, the UK Government encourages such flexible working arrangements for women and men as they '[help] the individual to reconcile career and family responsibilities'.

So what of those of us who argue for childcare, who argue for women being able to enter work on an equal basis? Are we the ones who have got it wrong? Are we the ones forcing women into another stereotype, reducing the esteem and value placed on women in our society? First, whatever the reason, whether from simple choice or economic necessity, the number of mothers in paid employment has been increasing, from 37% of mothers of children under 5 in 1984 to 52% in 1993. Second, I believe that, if appropriate and affordable childcare were available, some of that 92% might have a different view. I would contend that women's preferences in this matter are not constant. A woman who wants to remain at home caring for her very young baby or only work a few hours a week while her child is under 2 may have a different wish regarding employment when her child is 5. Does anyone ever ask women these questions? Certainly, in a survey conducted in Strathclyde in 1988, only 24% of non-working mothers said they would prefer to stay in the home if suitable childcare were available which allowed them to work or study. We are discussing the power to make choices; we have to accept that those choices may differ widely and vary through time.

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Such choices do not take place within a vacuum. The executive who earns twice the average annual wage for one and a half days a month spent determining the remuneration of other exceptionally highly paid men is a part-time worker of a sort. He is light years away from the female part-time cleaner, balancing two or three jobs which may still pay her less than the national insurance threshold and therefore still exclude her from contributory benefits, such as a pension, while juggling childcare with relatives and neighbours. The Coca Cola executive mentioned above, I surmise, has sufficient income to maintain herself and her child. Her choice is viewed quite differently from the young single mother, who, lacking childcare and qualifications, or finding that the only employment available does not pay enough for her to maintain herself and her child and pay for childcare, has no choice but to remain in the home.

I would have more confidence in the present Government's commitment to finding resolutions to the reconciliation of working and family life if it had not consistently blocked the European directive on parental leave. Parental leave presents a conundrum insofar as experience shows that, in some countries where there is substantial provision for parental leave, men, still, on the whole, do not take up the option fully. I would suggest that the reason for this is that if men were to exclude themselves from the workplace for substantial periods of time then they would suffer the same penalties as women for having an interrupted employment history. If men act like women they may be treated as women. However, problems of this nature should not excuse the state shirking its responsibilities for providing support for the upbringing of the next generation. Individual choice, yes, but there has to be an infrastructure, which the individual cannot provide, within which to exercise choice.

Although part-time working is seen to be part of the future flexible labour market, the interaction between flexibility of this sort which suits the employer and caring responsibilities becomes increasingly problematic. A survey reported in the **Equal Opportunities Review** in 1994 remarks on the increase in shift working and the particular problems faced by shift workers in making childcare arrangements, especially in, for example, the health service where little or no notice of shift changes is common. In retail, where women predominate, the phenomenon of 'zero hours contracts' is increasing. Under this arrangement the employer can require the employee to work any number of hours from zero upwards at a moment's notice. How can secure caring arrangements be made on that basis? In several industries there is a move to different working time arrangements such as the 9-day fortnight or annualised hours, where longer or shorter hours are worked at different times

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of the year according to the needs of the industry. These take no account of normal weekends or school holidays; how then do those people employed on this basis make their contribution to the care of the family; how easy is it to make caring arrangements to fit such patterns? Data extracted from the Labour Force Survey confirms that fathers in the UK work longer hours than in any other Member State of the European Union. The flexibility demanded is very one-sided.

The reconciliation of work and family life is likely to continue to be a theme of the European Fourth Action Programme. There needs to be a significant shift in the balance and interaction between work and family. The real contradictions and conflicting pressures in work and family life must be addressed. This will entail re-assessing the expectations and social context of work. For example, we need to rethink what is full-time and what is part-time work.

In other ways the changing labour market is apparently becoming more woman-friendly. Women, it can be argued, have the skills that are going to be increasingly in demand - adaptability, consensus building, communication, negotiation, persuasion, building up trust. In an industrial framework where employers are moving towards managing the human resource, they are looking for those who can interact with human beings. While it will make a welcome change to see women's skills being recognised, the change does not necessarily mean the bright new tomorrow is about to dawn. I foresee several problems. One is that we have heard this before. Women's manual dexterity and concentration means that they predominate in microprocessor assembly; but they do not figure largely in neurosurgery. We know women are not more stupid than men, so there must be an alternative explanation as to why they did not achieve the qualifications and training required to be a neurosurgeon in the same numbers as men. Even now in Scottish schools, using the same basic equipment, girls are preparing to become keyboard operators and boys to become computer programmers.

I will touch briefly on a few other aspects of the current industrial situation where women may be at a disadvantage. Often linked with human resource management and achieving quality is employee involvement, where employees are enjoined to care about the process and the company performance.

Commitment is expressed, for example, by being flexible or working extra hours, being prepared to 'do what it takes' for the good of the company. Needless to say, women find it much harder to be the 'company man'. Because their responsibilities stretch beyond work to the home, they cannot so

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readily respond to these sort of demands. They are therefore seen, very often erroneously, as being unreliable and lacking in commitment. This can be particularly harmful when, as is often the case, this attribute is included implicitly or explicitly in appraisal systems, many of which are linked to performance pay or to promotion. As line managers usually carry out appraisal, it should be noted that most women will be appraised by men. What are perceived as women's skills are often under-valued, and in self-appraisal women may tend to under-rate themselves. We are back to who assesses merit or value and on what criteria.

Another characteristic of the future workplace is that, unlike the past, it will be ever-changing. There are inherent dangers here for women who break their employment for maternity, particularly for any longer than the minimum, unless there are provisions made to enable them to be brought up to speed on their return. Unless programmes of this sort are provided as the norm and men too are positively encouraged to use them, men will not take advantage of any improved provision of parental or family leave.

There is also a danger that women again get trapped by the stereotype. It has been argued that in a gender-equal Scottish parliament, decision-making will be transformed by women's less confrontational and more consensual approach. I do believe that processes of decision-making will benefit from a greater concentration on problem-solving rather than the point-scoring which characterises much of the adversarial style. However, sometimes 'women's' skills are presented with a degree of confining cosiness that I find disturbing. Preferring to avoid confrontation does not mean being unable to confront the issue. Disdaining adversarial or aggressive techniques does not imply being unable to make hard decisions and take responsibility for them. Expressing care, thoughtfulness and understanding does not preclude exercising rational intelligence and expressing the outcomes with clarity.

Skills can be learned. Men can learn all the above, and there is a danger that once they have and, for example, human resource management is brought into the mainstream of line management, women will have surrendered not only an area of competence but also one of the few areas of female representation in management - personnel. If women are to share their skills in these areas, then it must be fair shares and men must share their areas of authority and power.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, what will be women's place in Scotland and Europe in the foreseeable future? Despite the cautionary notes I have sounded, I do believe that there are opportunities for women to gain access to more decision-making positions in employment. Recognition that women do have important and different skills and experiences to bring should signal a step forward in the way of thinking in employment, provided that women insist on the value of their contribution and that, in sharing their expertise, they receive concomitant reward. As women enter the decision-making process in greater numbers, it will inevitably lead to change in how and what is done, even if not all of those who enter those echelons are like-minded about women's role. Nevertheless, achieving a 'critical mass' will make change unavoidable. So, although it is not all about the numbers of women, numbers are still important. The shifts in perception that the influx of women will bring should also make some of the damaging aspects of our employment-culture more readily visible - the machismo, the discrimination, the harassment, the stress-related absenteeism.

Why do people work? One central reason is to provide for themselves and for those dependent on them, and so work is an expression of responsibility to self and others. We need to re-negotiate the employment contract with this fundamental point in mind. The new contract must enable individuals, both female and male, to reconcile two key elements of their lives - family and work. Let us review what should constitute full-time work; let us review what should be a pattern of working life. We are frequently reminded that in tomorrow's workplace we will need constant up-dating of skills and information. That, to me, would seem to fit aptly with what used to be called life-long learning. A working life which allows for periods of training and self-development, in which there is the opportunity for sabbaticals (why should these be the preserve of academics?), where periods of dependant care can be accommodated, with a flexible retirement age - these would constitute a more congenial environment for all, and would reset the balance to afford some flexibility at the discretion of the employee. And these can be discussed without being gender-specific.

Monitoring to establish progress is obviously necessary but has to be properly constructed to be worthwhile. Recall the bank managers: without proper monitoring, the fact that more women are becoming managers but still not reaching the real positions of authority may be overlooked. If equal opportunities are pursued in a piecemeal or haphazard manner, they may be portrayed as add-ons, as special treatment for women who could not

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otherwise make the grade and so can be marginalised if felt threatening. If, however, the work contract is renegotiated, as I have suggested, then equal-opportunities initiatives and strategies such as training, caring provision etc have a transformed and integrated framework in which to operate, enabling both women and men to achieve a more balanced life in respect of their rights and responsibilities. In similar fashion the contracts between the citizen and the state and between individuals have to be re-negotiated. The slogan 'the personal is political' still applies.

In Scotland, there is a basis for moving forward from the groundwork done for the Scottish Parliament, although experience and recent history show that the delivery on principle remains to be hard fought. The case needs to be developed and extended from the Scottish level to local levels and into public life more generally. At present, who is more likely to be able to serve on a public body such as a tribunal or consumer or users council - the male manager, who has substantial control over his working timetable, or a female part-time shift-worker, with childcare responsibilities? Yet they both potentially have something of value to contribute.

At a European level, the Lobby will continue to pursue its programme of monitoring and seeking to influence the content of European Union instruments, and arguing for research and information analyses which reveal women's position. Campaigning on the integration of equality policies into the mainstream, and for an increase in women's representation, will remain key areas of work. The Lobby is proposing two 'Observatories': one on violence against women; the other on equality to record and evaluate outcomes of programmes and strategies. These priorities should be seen in the context of the likely themes of the Fourth Action Programme of Equal Opportunities - citizenship, desegregation of the labour market, reconciliation of employment and family life, accelerating the role of women in decision-making, and evaluation and enforcement. The Fourth Action Programme will be drafted shortly, to be introduced in 1996. The participation of 3 new member states will doubtless lead to interesting developments in this sphere. In addition, the Lobby will continue to emphasise the importance of the Non-Governmental Organisations, which it believes should be recognised as a social partner. The other immediate challenge is the revision of the treaties at the Intergovernmental Conference in 1996. The Lobby suggests that the articles of the current treaties should be reviewed to detect indirect discrimination, that the principle of bringing equal opportunities issues into the mainstream should itself be integrated into the revised treaty, and that the principle of equality should be enshrined on the same basis as subsidiarity. The Lobby has obtained funding from the Commission to develop a project

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on the Construction of Europe, with a view to identifying and inputting perspectives and priorities from women across the Union on how to build a fairer and more equal Europe.

In the conclusions to her study **Women and European Citizenship**, Eliane Vogel-Polsky argues the necessity of organising the European Union on the basis of '*democratie paritaire*', or democratic parity, recognising the equal status of the two components of humanity. She argues that parity can be both a mobilising force and one of the keys to democratising politics, as the lack of equality is a marker of the democratic deficit which exists. I indicated at the outset that I found the concept of '*democratie paritaire*' attractive. If democratic parity can be enshrined in the citizenship of Scotland in its own Parliament and in the European Union we are on the brink of making truly momentous change. Vogel-Polsky concludes by saying (in my translation):

The question which is being posed to our society and Europe is not the woman question but the central question of the absence of legitimacy of current political structures and the non-operability of legal or institutional mechanisms which claim to ensure the guarantee and the protection of the rights and interests of the totality of European citizens.

And this is where considering women's place brings us. It is not only about women, but about men, about families, about individuals and groups, about work, institutions, the state, processes, cultures and perceptions. It is about how we express and deliver democracy and fairness for everyone.

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