



HOUSE OF LORDS

Revised transcript of evidence taken before

The Select Committee on Communications

Inquiry on

WOMEN IN NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS BROADCASTING

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 42 - 68

TUESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2014

3.15 pm

Witnesses: Penny Marshall, Cathy Newman and Miriam O'Reilly

Ed Vaizey MP and Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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Members present

Lord Best (Chairman)
 Lord Clement-Jones
 Baroness Deech
 Baroness Fookes
 Baroness Hanham
 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill
 Lord Horam
 Bishop of Norwich
 Lord Razzall
 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury

Examination of Witnesses

Penny Marshall, Cathy Newman and Miriam O'Reilly

Q42 The Chairman: Welcome to the three of you. Thank you very much for joining us. We are absolutely delighted that you were all able to give up time to come here. We are in this very grand room, not least because there are special cameras all around and this will be televised. You are extremely used to these things, so it is not intimidating for you, but you will be on the record. I am going to ask my colleagues to declare any interests they have before they ask any questions. I will just start the ball rolling and ask each of you in turn if you would just introduce yourselves for the record and then if you wish to make an opening statement we would be very pleased to hear that to start us off. Miriam, if we can start with you that would be great.

Miriam O'Reilly: My name is Miriam O'Reilly. I worked for the BBC for over 25 years. I was 23 when I joined the corporation. I worked as a news reporter and then a news producer. Over my career I worked across the BBC in television and in radio. I was trained by the BBC at the Langham, when it was a training centre, and there a talent for presenting was spotted and so, as well as producer/reporter, I became a presenter. During my time I presented programmes like "Woman's Hour", "File on 4", "Costing the Earth" and many standalone documentaries for Radio 4, and so had quite a lot of experience right across the BBC.

I did want to make just a very short statement, if I can. In 2011, when I won a landmark case against the BBC for ageism, it had taken two years to fight that case. Up until 2009, when the programme I was working for, "Countryfile", dropped me when it moved to prime time, I was in great demand across the BBC. It was only when I was dropped from "Countryfile" and began to raise this issue of ageism within the corporation that the other programmes that I used to present were withdrawn from me. They were withdrawn quickly, over a matter of a couple of months. I went to a tribunal and I won unanimously, but the three tribunal judges also found that the BBC had victimised me for speaking out about ageism. I am a strong woman and I do not like the idea of being victimised, not least by the BBC, but that is what they found after cross-examination and looking at the evidence.

The reason I raise that is that today I want to include in my evidence the experience of presenters, reporters and producers in news and current affairs at the BBC now who do not

have a voice due to their contracts or because older women who have been forced out have had to sign confidentiality agreements. If it is agreeable, when I give my evidence I would like also to inform you of their experience. I have it written down here, so I will not be ad-libbing it. This will be as it was told to me, if that is agreeable.

The Chairman: That will be helpful. Thank you for that. Cathy, please.

Cathy Newman: I am Cathy Newman. I present “Channel 4 News”. I have been on “Channel 4 News” for nearly nine years. Before that, I spent about a decade on Fleet Street, latterly at the *Financial Times*. I would like to begin by thanking the Committee for shining a spotlight on what I think is an important issue.

My opening remarks start when I was a teenager and I first thought about a career as a TV reporter. I can only remember one female role model for reporters and that was Kate Adie. By the time I joined “Channel 4 News” nearly nine years ago there were many more, not least Elinor Goodman, who was the first female political editor at “Channel 4 News”. I was appointed the first female co-presenter at “Channel 4 News” three years ago now and I think it is fair to say that women are the linchpin of the “Channel 4 News” newsroom. I think I am right in saying that 55% of senior management are women but I would be the first to admit that more needs to be done, especially in the area of female experts—the experts we put on screen are about four men to every woman and clearly that is not good enough.

The other area where I think we all need to do more work is in women over 50, because we have prominent women over 50 on screen but there is nowhere near enough. I have turned 40 and I fully expect to have a lifetime ahead of me in the broadcasting industry, not quite stretching into infinity, but Jon Snow, my wonderful co-presenter, is 67, John Humphrys is 71 and David Dimbleby is 76. I have every confidence that I will still be in the studio—not sure what studio, but I will still be in the studio—when I am 76, wrinkles and all.

I suppose I am optimistic about the future because of the opportunities that I have been given at Channel 4, because I do not just present. I have led big investigations—for example, into the harassment allegations against Lord Rennard. I have done big interviews: an exclusive interview with Sayeeda Warsi when she left the Government; and exclusive interviews with William Hague and Angelina Jolie in the Congo. I feel that I have been privileged to be given the opportunities that perhaps had been denied women in previous generations and I am grateful to answer any questions today.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Cathy. Penny Marshall?

Penny Marshall: Good afternoon, Committee. I am Penny Marshall. I am one of the rare breed of women in television who is over 50 and proud of it. I am a reporter and I will just say a little bit about that in my opening statement because I am different. For those people who are not completely familiar with television, it is quite an important distinction to make from presenting.

I spent the majority of my professional life at ITN working for ITV News, where I was a graduate trainee. At the moment I think I should share with you that I am not working in a newsroom. I am currently undergoing medical treatment for breast cancer. The prognosis is very good, but I am not currently in situ. The BBC, who were going to employ me, are being extremely understanding about my circumstances, very supportive, but the situation at the moment is fluid. I do not want to say anything more about that.

As well as working on news bulletins, I have written and presented current affairs programmes. I have also worked as a freelancer, which is something I think this Committee should think about when they are thinking about women. I think my relevance to you in this investigation and the reason I wanted to come here, even in my circumstances, is that I am one of so few women who have lasted. I am kind of the last woman standing. Of the 60 year-olds before me, two, sadly, have died of cancer, one resigned and one became a novelist. We are the first group to make it through. There is a handful of us. We have done very well, but I think it is important to make sure that there is retention and systems in place so that the very talented women coming up behind us and the men, who largely still run the newsrooms, who want to make sure they stay know exactly what is needed to make that possible and do not guess at it and seize at opportunities when an exception comes through, but have the data in place and the facts to know what is needed to retain women in their 30s and 40s so they can enjoy this wonderful job into their 50s and 60s and 70s.

Q43 The Chairman: Thank you very much, all three of you, for that. The opening question you have already partly answered, which is: where are you coming from on this issue of women in broadcasting news and current affairs? I think I can focus it a bit more to say: what changes have you detected, if any, over the last few years? Are things in a state of change or not? That is quite an important question for us, perhaps starting with you, Miriam.

Miriam O'Reilly: Like Cathy, I expected to continue to work at the BBC. I was 51 when it imploded, but when I won my ageism case against the BBC, the Director-General at the time, Mark Thompson, said it was a turning point for older women and it was a wake-up call for the industry as a whole.

The reason I went forward was that many fine women had been side-lined or treated in such a way that they felt they wanted to leave. When I spoke to these women I would say, "Why don't you fight it?" They would say to me, "Well, actually, the only thing that I have is my reputation", and the standard excuse from an employer who wants to get rid of someone is, "We're not ageist; we're not sexist; we're not racist; you're just not good enough", and they did not want that to happen to them. They wanted to leave with their head held high.

I have been speaking to a news producer in BBC News for over 20 years who says that, although the current situation is changing in current affairs, in factual and learning, in news there is very little change within the BBC in terms of presenters. They say more opportunities are being offered to younger women producers and presenters, but little effort is still being made to retain or advance older women. To push on in the industry you have to be willing to move around news outlets and not stop still for too long and this militates against women who have caring responsibilities, who may value predictable shift patterns. If you have a good network of personal support it is easier. If you have a two-income household and are able to pay for childcare at odd hours then it is easier for women to stay on.

In BBC News you have to be available 24/7, including nights. Women wanting to push through cannot contest overnight working, even when their children are very young. This can mean paying for childcare to start at, say, 5.00 in the morning, and switching to late shifts means finishing at 1.00 am. You can always say no and find other friendlier patterns, but the risk is that your career gets parked and opportunities to develop dry up. This is one view from a producer, as I say, of over 20 years' experience at the BBC at the moment to describe the current situation facing women.

Cathy Newman: I just wanted to pick up on that final point because it seems to me, when we are talking about the work/life balance and how that puts off women in the industry, there is no doubt that the hours can be very antisocial, as they are in Westminster. I do not think that women should have a monopoly on worrying about work/life balance. If more men worried about work/life balance then more women would be free to do these exciting jobs with antisocial hours. I am very lucky that I have a husband who has no problem saying the “F” word, and by that I mean the “feminist” word. He will pick up the kids and do the cooking and the shopping and I am lucky for that, but I wish more men were around like him because then perhaps more women would be able to stay in the industry.

To address the earlier question, I suppose I am slightly more positive that things are changing, but I would acknowledge that the figures—and I know you have figures coming out of your ears—can be quite depressing. If you look at our figures, 38% onscreen staff are female. Clearly that could be better but, if you look at those women, we have Lindsey Hilsum, who is a most fantastic international editor, Jackie Long, social affairs editor—both of those two over 50 by the way—and Kylie Morris, Washington correspondent. If you look at the management team, 55% of the senior management team are women. That includes our deputy editor, Shaminder Nahal, our foreign editor, Nevine Mabro, and head of film fund, Louise Turner. We have some fantastic women in the newsroom, so I feel optimistic.

When I started my career in newspapers I was the only woman around to the extent that, when I was at the *Financial Times*, I lost count of the number of times I was asked to do the photocopying because people just assumed because I was a woman I must be a secretary. I do not feel that anymore at all. I am optimistic that things have changed quite a lot in the 20 years I have been in journalism and that they will change more.

Penny Marshall: In the current position the numbers are not very good. The facts are not encouraging. Numerically, women are at a distinct disadvantage if you look at all the reporting statistics from all the major channels. If you look at the number of reporters coming in, usually they are hiring more men than women. I am a lecturer at City University—that is one of the things I do as well—and there are plenty of talented women. I do not know what the issue is there. That bothers me. I would be fairly certain there is a wage gap, too, between senior men and senior women but I have never seen any data on that. I wish we could.

Awareness, though, is much better. It is now a real issue. People care about it. People are addressing this. Within the industry, I would say there is a desire to change it. We joke about being an older woman in the right place at the right time. There is a sense that this is now our time because people realise that if we do not deliver to our audience news that represents everybody then the audience is being let down. Has it changed? Yes, enormously, although not enough. I see a new breed of women coming up behind me who are not as deferential to men as I was taught to be. My mother did not quite say, “Do not be a trouble to men, Penny”, but it was that sense. Not many of my contemporaries from school went on to have careers, so the women in their 50s are already a smaller group. The women coming up behind me are not.

I am wildly encouraged by the women who choose to remain child-free and by the women who have children and who have househusbands, of which I know two or three very successful couples and the women are very successfully working. I think wider societal changes will play into women’s advancement in the newsroom. However, I think newsrooms

were created by men, largely for men. We have inherited that situation and it is going to take a long time to turn around the ethos and attitudes and we need to do more structurally than we are.

Q44 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Can I ask at the beginning a rather basic question? I do not want to spend too much time on this but it is a fundamental question we have been grappling with in our various hearings. I want to focus on reporters in news and current affairs. What are your views on why there are fewer women? In particular, is there a shortage of supply, for some of the reasons you indicated about women who have family commitments and so on, but also the extent that there are cultural problems in choosing women?

Penny Marshall: Perhaps I should answer. I am a reporter, full on. I do not present. I do not do any studio work. I am out and about. My hair is a mess. I am analysing. I am writing. I am researching. It is a very different job. I think there are not enough because the qualities needed for reporting when I was growing up were not qualities that were encouraged in girls: grit, determination, competitiveness, bossiness, competence. It still looks an easy job, so it tends to attract people who think it might be. It is an artifice. We are not glamorous. We are usually freezing. We have usually spent at least 13 hours panicking to produce two minutes of fluent coverage. It is not an easy job and I think, because it is on television and it is a bit glamorous sometimes, we give the impression it is easier than it is and so people do not stay the course.

The dropout rate is huge when women have children. Some of that is to do with society's expectations of women. Some of that is to do with the culture of a newsroom where giving it all is everything and saying, "Actually, could I not do this one?" is unacceptable. There is a tremendous "got to be there, got to do it" ethos that is very difficult to cope with if you want to be with your children. That does not have to be just women, but it has largely in my lifetime affected women. It is changing.

I think the rise of freelancers, which is an issue, means that women who do have children have much less support when they have to make critical decisions about whether they return and how long they take off, so they kind of disappear. I would like to see more work done on where they go and why. Of the 30 women who started with me, there are five left. It is not good, is it? They did start with hopes. I think we need data to find out what is going wrong.

Miriam O'Reilly: I would agree with that. I would like to know why women leave. They do. Like Penny, I started with a large group of women and they have all gone but many of the men that I started with are still there. I think women have that grit and they have that determination when they start and I do not think that they are pushed into softer roles because they are women. I think the choice comes if they decide to have a family because it is a very difficult environment for a woman who wants quality time with her children as well as getting the most out of her job.

I think that in newsrooms it is very male oriented. I think there is a tendency to look to men because they can get up and go straightaway and so there is this idea that they are, therefore, more available. There is an issue with this, certainly within the BBC. I have been told by producers that it means men have more live OB experience because they get up and go, which puts them in good stead the next time an overseas deployment is made. It is

natural for editors to go with known experience and known availability, but the effect is that the men with this experience can command higher pay within a newsroom and this builds over time so that men get more opportunities, higher pay, and better final salary or career average pensions. I would like to know what happens to the women. Where do they go and why do they go? We need the data on why so few women push through to high-profile roles as reporters.

Cathy Newman: All I would add is that I think men want quality time with their children, too. I do not see why there is this onus on the woman doing the 9.00 am to 5.00 pm job or the woman being the main carer. Women are always asked about how they will balance their work and life. I just think men should be asked that as well and we need to effect that kind of cultural change—you, the Committee, are doing your part in trying to change the culture by shining a spotlight on some of the problems that women have faced. I think the crucial thing is to get men thinking about work/life balance, too. Increasingly, my generation of men and women share the childcare responsibilities and that can only be good in terms of women getting the promotions and making the work/life balance work.

I would also say, when we are talking the gritty jobs, you cannot get much grittier than Lindsey Hilsum standing in Aleppo or Gaza dodging bullets. Alex Crawford from Sky was the first one in there, as far as I know, to cover the Ebola story when there were lots of male colleagues who were holding back. She did not have any qualms about getting stuck in. On a slightly different level, Siobhan Kennedy is our business correspondent. She deals with gritty, complex issues. I was a business reporter for years. I was a political correspondent for a decade. I do not think there is any sense in which women are shoved into the softer roles. Again, we need more data, do we not?

Q45 Baroness Deech: I just wanted to inject a comment. I have spent quite a lot of time looking at exactly the same problem in women in law and women in medicine and you get exactly the same dropout rates. I do not know which is worse. Absolutely you are right, but there is one element where I think women have to help other women, which is that it is still perfectly acceptable to drop out. The newspapers lean on you. A good mother stays at home. Women are still not expected to keep themselves, necessarily, and if they have married a husband who can afford to keep them it must be very nice to stay at home. I think the women who have stayed the course, like you and like some of us around this table, have a certain duty to encourage the others to do the same. I have never done it, but I imagine it must be jolly nice in comfortable circumstances to drop out and stay at home and society does not expect you to go to work.

Cathy Newman: I think I would go mad if I stayed at home.

Baroness Deech: Yes, I would, too, but a lot of women do not feel like that. The ones who do want to stay at home, unfortunately, rather undermine the others.

Miriam O'Reilly: Of the women that I have worked with at the BBC, I would say the majority want to stay in their jobs. It is a minority of women that want to leave and I do not personally know any who wanted to leave. They wanted to have their job, but they also wanted to have a family life as well. The difficulty is if they do not have that support, if they do not have a partner who can help them to keep that job, but I do not think I have met one in my whole career.

Cathy Newman: But I agree with you about spreading the word. I do a lot of mentoring of girls. I have done the Women of the World mentoring and I go around schools talking to girls to say what an exciting job it is, what an exciting career and, by the way, I have two kids and that is great too. I have these dual roles. I agree with you that we do need to spread the word and say more about how doable it is.

Penny Marshall: I would also like to add that I have a family and I have spent 20 years bringing them up. Since my first was born 20 years ago, I have spent nine years on gap years bringing them up and all other years have been part time, and I am one of the most senior broadcasters. Now, that was at ITV News and what they did, with huge imagination and investment, was give me five years off, but they allowed me to do five weeks a year reporting, minimum. I brought up my children as I wanted to, which was my choice. Every woman has their own choice; every man has their own choice. I wanted to be at home with them, but I stayed in the hot seat. What that meant was at the end when I wanted to come back I was not terrified of getting back on the express train. It was a very imaginative scheme and I would like to see, for men and women who choose to have gaps, that opportunity. I also have been offered three-day-a-week work by ITV that has sustained me and let me have the sort of family life I want as well.

The women and men coming up behind me may not wish to put as much premium on family life as I did. I realise I am a product of my generation to a certain extent, but it has worked very well for me and I say to young women coming up, "It is not a race. You are going to be working, because of the pension situation, until you are 75. You do not have to worry if you take four or five years out if that is what you want". I think employers could do much more to encourage women to come back. The women who did not come back now look at me and they are very jealous because their children have gone and they are 50 and they have so much to offer and they do not feel there is a way back.

Baroness Deech: Is not the answer in part that there must be, hopefully, employer-subsidised or somehow helped childcare, flexi working, part-time working, and special programmes to get people back in, which is what they are trying in medicine?

Penny Marshall: All the former is happening, but I think there should be more getting women back in. It is like if you stop, people think: "She has stopped". I know plenty of women in their 50s who have brought up their kids, who were journalists 10 years ago, who would be great but they are just not in the picture.

Cathy Newman: Also getting the men to do their share of the childcare, washing, cooking, and so on.

Baroness Deech: We should be so lucky.

Q46 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill: The three different organisations that you have worked from, they all seem to have slightly different cultures and attitudes. Do you feel that women are encouraged into or discouraged from certain roles within news and current affairs? For example, are women encouraged to be presenters rather than reporters, like Penny, because there is an assumption that being on the road is an unsuitable job for a woman, particularly if they have caring responsibilities? All three of you have had different experiences. I would be interested in all of them.

Miriam O'Reilly: I have never experienced at the BBC the women being encouraged to do presenter roles because it is a softer option. What I have seen is women fighting for the

same opportunities that are given to men. That happens a lot and it is possibly that men have louder voices, I do not know. You do get some women who do have loud voices. I did not mean to point towards you there, but you do get strong women who can fight their corner for an overseas trip. I find that usually the loudest voice, the most confident voice, is heard. That does tend to be men and in a male environment, and it is predominantly a male environment, heads turn towards the male. If it is short notice and a woman has a family and she does not have that cover then many cannot go at a moment's notice, but I do not think women are pigeonholed, certainly not at the beginning of their careers anyway.

Cathy Newman: I do not think gender has ever been a factor in any of the jobs I have been offered on TV and I certainly would not see my presenting role as a soft option. I am haring up and down the country at all sorts of antisocial hours meeting contacts, talking to people, getting stories. I have done many investigations, most recently on PFI projects. That involved me getting up at the crack of dawn to go and research the story in Birmingham. As I said in my opening remarks, I do lots of big interviews. I just do not see it as a sort of sitting in the comfy, warm studio reading out words. I agree with you there is not a sort of pigeonholing, although you may have taken evidence from other people suggesting the contrary.

Penny Marshall: No, I do not think management encourage women. I think people want things from their lives. They make work/life balance choices and they try to make their work fit. A lot of women work at Westminster, or want to, after they have had children, and men, too, I would say, because you do not work Fridays and, because there is recess, you have a long summer holiday, and it is quite predictable work. It is nothing to do with how easy a job is. It is to do with what your personal circumstances are and what fits the work/life balance that you want. Management are dying for women, for this to work. They just do not have the data to know how to do it.

Q47 Baroness Hanham: You have probably answered this in a way, but do you think having children and family commitments delays promotion or prevents it from happening, in particular within the news and current affairs? I think you have all drifted across this, but just very directly: do you think this has an effect?

Miriam O'Reilly: With a lot of women that I worked with who have children, you would not know it, many of them in news. You would not know that they had children or that they had to go early for something or they wanted to go to the Christmas play or whatever. I used to be quite surprised if someone talked about their children. Looking back, perhaps women felt that it would make them vulnerable to talk about their children in this predominantly male environment. It is quite interesting that you raise that and, for me, certainly I have some experience that women are more male than the men in news to get on.

Baroness Hanham: You have to be more thrusting and keep quiet that you have children and a dog at home that has to be looked after.

Miriam O'Reilly: In my experience I have seen that but, yes, women have to work longer. They have to work harder than men. They have to be up for everything. They cannot show any sign of vulnerability or say, "Actually I cannot do that because I have a parent/teacher evening tonight". There were women, of course, who did that but with those strong women who wanted to progress their careers you would not get that sense.

Q48 Baroness Hanham: Cathy, you must have experienced this somewhere along the line if you have children. What happened when one of them got measles?

Cathy Newman: My eldest daughter was ill at one point and had to have some quite extensive hospital treatment. I have to say, I was wholly supported in taking the odd hour off here and there, any time that I wanted. I did not want to take more time off because I wanted to try to keep everything normal for the family. I think I am right in saying seven women have had babies at Channel 4 just this year and we are a very small team, so that counts. My colleagues and anybody who is watching this will know that I am constantly going on about my kids, so I do not feel the need to hide that I am a mum. I got my biggest promotion to the presenting job after I had my second child, so it was not like having children held me back. One of our most senior women, Jackie Long, who is social affairs editor, has five children and she is like a total dynamo in the office. Again, I think the work/life balance is entirely possible and I think being a mum gives the women in the office a different perspective. It is great to have women who are mums and women who are not mums to have that cross-section of opinion and views.

Baroness Hanham: What you are saying suggests that none of you takes what might be called maternity leave. Is it sort of one week off and back to work?

Cathy Newman: No. I took six months off for each child. Given that I am the main breadwinner, I could not afford to take more time off than that. I am not sure I would have wanted to take more than six months, just because I am a total news junkie and I would feel a bit out of the loop. In fact when I had the second baby it was during the expenses scandal and I remember, without sounding like a total girly swot, calling the boss and saying, "Do you want me to come in?" because it was such an exciting story. I felt a bit torn about that, but I am very glad I did end up taking the full six months off.

Miriam O'Reilly: I took two months off for both children.

Baroness Hanham: Well, there you are. That is probably what you were entitled to.

Penny Marshall: I took huge amounts of time off and, again, a problem that 50 year-old women are having, and men if they had the caring responsibilities, is that a lot of women my age who have made it are now caring for their elderly parents. Again, my experience with ITV News is that they gave me two or three months off when I was caring for my dying mother. I think people are extremely good in newsrooms about crises. We crisis-manage. That is what we do as a living. The Twin Towers comes down, everybody drops everything and goes. That is how people behave and they respond to that by behaving the same way when you have a crisis. It is not a bureaucratic administrative place. There is lots of give and take.

Q49 Baroness Fookes: You have obviously all been extremely successful. Did your careers progress smoothly upwards or were there sticking points? When did your careers take off?

Miriam O'Reilly: For me, it just before I was 40 because I went freelance so I could spend more time with my daughter. I was a single parent with my son and I was not able to take the time that I wanted. When my daughter came along, I did have a partner to help me a lot, but my daughter needed me more. I went freelance at that time, but that was good because I was able to strike that balance and be there with the family and still work. When my daughter was very settled at school, I went back to work and I could concentrate on it. From my late 30s up until I was in my early 50s I was able to travel the world for the BBC. That is when I won most of my awards for the BBC because I was able to concentrate on my job. The sticking point came when I hit my 50s. I was a rare breed. A cameraman said to me on

my 51st birthday, “I have never worked with a 51 year-old woman before”. That is absolutely true.

Baroness Fookes: He did not embrace this experience?

Miriam O'Reilly: I thought he should get out more, but there were not many women in their 50s. By that time I was working on “Countryfile”, but most of the women that I worked with were producers. They were working at Radio 4 and many of them had flexi-time and so on. In terms of presenting and reporting, yes, it was late 30s up until 50s, but I was unusual at that point then within the BBC to be a presenter still at 51.

Cathy Newman: I think you get used, as a woman in the media, to not taking any crap, if that is not unparliamentary. I remember when I was at the *FT* I found out that a colleague who was in a junior reporting job to me, but he was the same age as me, was getting paid £10,000 more than me. I was quite young and £10,000 is a lot of money. I confronted the then news editor who said to me, “You do not have a family or a mortgage. What do you need the money for?” My jaw kind of hit the floor and, needless to say, I got the pay rise pretty damn quick.

I think you face all sorts of barriers that you have to be quite robust in overcoming and some of those barriers are external as well. To quote the Facebook boss, Sheryl Sandberg, you can lean in all you like at work and speak out at meetings and so on, and make sure your voice is heard, but you also have to battle a bit to get taken seriously outside the office. Again, when I was at the *FT* I was media correspondent and I lined up a big interview with a European broadcaster, CLT-UFA. The boss came across reception to greet me and he had obviously been expecting a bloke in a pinstripe suit and he said, “No, there must be some mistake. I am meeting the *Financial Times*”. I pulled myself up to my full five foot nothing and said, “I am the *Financial Times*”. I think you get quite used to being fairly forthright, but if you are you can progress.

Penny Marshall: I have had three distinct phases before children. I was a foreign correspondent; a very productive, very adventurous, very exciting time seeing a lot of history being made. Then I took five years off, which was not a productive time, when I had small children. Then I had another very productive time consolidating as a domestic reporter, another period of time off, and then, finally, another time consolidating. My story is gaps, which I would advocate, but everybody is different.

Q50 Baroness Fookes: You have all spoken about the toughness of the newsroom and its being slightly macho. Is there any way of changing that?

Cathy Newman: I would say our newsroom is not particularly macho. Newspaper newsrooms, I would say, probably are, but 55% of our senior management are women. The deputy editor is a woman. The foreign editor is a woman. The head of the film fund is a woman. I do not feel our newsroom is particularly macho.

Miriam O'Reilly: I think, in terms of the BBC, it is. I cannot give you the exact numbers, but it is a macho environment. There has to be a culture change, very much. The producers who have been talking to me and the female reporters and presenters also say that there has to be a culture change. How do we do that? That comes down from the top, does it not? That needs intervention from the very top to change attitudes.

Baroness Fookes: Attitudes are always more difficult to change than laws or anything else.

Penny Marshall: I have to disagree slightly with my colleagues. When I say “macho” I do not necessarily mean male. I mean the attributes historically associated with being male, and we are all a bit macho. I include myself as macho. A newsroom manages crises. We are there to react to events over which we have no control. That is the point. We get excited when something huge happens that we were not expecting. Breaking news, we love it; we are weird. You cannot have a breaking news situation and say, “I am sorry, I was going to pick up the cat”, or something. You have to be able to drop it; otherwise you are ineffective in that environment. That means everybody is a bit macho because we are all rushing to get there first. It is highly competitive.

If Jackie Long, my erstwhile competitor when I was at ITV News doing social affairs, got a story before me, I was mortified, as she would have been. We watched each other like a hawk. It is a very competitive business. That is what I mean by being macho. You cannot change that. All you can do is say to people, “You do not have to be like that all the time. Why do you not do it for three days and then have a break, not seven?” That is what I think is the answer. Everybody thinks you have to do it all the time or you will not be taken seriously. It is getting better. I have to say that it is improving, but that is the culture. That is what you are up against. I do not think you can change that. I do not think you can get people in and say, “Actually, I do not think I will go to do that story today because I feel a bit ill”. That is not going to work in a newsroom.

Baroness Fookes: It does not sound like you either, does it?

Q51 Lord Clement-Jones: We touched on this slightly earlier, but last week Fran Unsworth at the BBC used an interesting expression. She said there is a “thinning out” of older women in the corporation. I will just quote what she then went on to say. She said: “Quite a lot of women might rule themselves out of roles because some of them are absolutely full on, time consuming. Some women have told me that it comes at a particular time in their lives when possibly they do not want to commit to that much work. The available pool you are choosing from becomes narrower”. Do you agree with that?

Miriam O'Reilly: Older women at the BBC are being forced out and perhaps that could be what she meant by the “thinning out”.

Lord Clement-Jones: She was talking pretty much in the voluntary sense, was she not?

Miriam O'Reilly: No. Could I read something to you? This is from an older woman who was forced to take redundancy. She fought it for 18 months. I have about six comments from different women who have been forced out. The woman I will start with was in her late 50s. She worked in news and current affairs for most of her career on programmes like “Panorama” and on “Newsnight”. This is the process of the thinning out. She says, “You can tell them about the messages you have been getting from women inside the BBC who tell you they are being ignored as they get older, side-lined, offered broken promises, made to feel unwanted and invisible, not used, and who eventually go quietly, accepting that women over 50 must never show their faces or necks in public; how they internalise the organisation’s disgust at them for being older and absorb these views into a kind of self-loathing. They become depressed and begin to believe that, yes, their bosses are right. They are falsely likened to nanny or schoolmistress, elderly matron or strident old battle-axe and told no one wants to be talked down to by an older woman. The men continue to function as

normal, permitted to be ugly, grizzly, fat, old, and peculiar. They can be naughty, childlike, outspoken, opinionated and rule breaking, but not the women.” That is just one.

Lord Clement-Jones: I am glad I asked the question.

Miriam O'Reilly: I would just like to read a couple of others. Another woman over 50 forced out of the BBC said: “I just got the sense over a year or so that I was no longer considered valuable to the team. They started saying things like, ‘This assignment is going to be a tough one. Sure you are up to it?’ I was fit and had not suddenly lost my ability. I was not getting the same level and quality of work.” Another woman over 50 forced out of the BBC said: “After the way I was treated, leaving feels like a big relief now, but it is also crushing to be pushed out after so many years.” Another woman forced out of the BBC: “You know it is over when the editor starts looking at the pretty young thing next to you, listening to her opinion and ignoring yours.” I will give you one more, another woman over 50 forced out of the BBC: “I kept thinking, ‘If I can just last for one more year in the job my daughter will have finished university and the financial pressure will not be as bad’, but it was not to be. In the end I decided to accept the redundancy. I simply ran out of the will to fight it. I knew if I stayed I would be side-lined. I wanted to go while I could hold my head high.” All these women were in news and current affairs. All were forced out when they did not want to go. They signed confidentiality agreements as part of the pay-off, which means that they cannot speak publicly about the way that they went. In some ways this is what protects an organisation like the BBC. There is no comeback on them then because these confidentiality clauses act as gags.

Lord Clement-Jones: How do you think her perception is so very different from what you are describing as the reality?

Miriam O'Reilly: Is she new to the BBC? I wanted you to hear the voices of those women, because these are the voices that are not heard, and it is because of employment contracts and those confidentiality contracts that prevent them from speaking out. These are women who have gone in the last few years. When Mark Thompson stood up and said—and I was called in Ireland by the UK media—that my case was the turning point for older women in television and a wakeup call for the industry, I was inundated by calls from women saying, “I have just seen Mark Thompson say this and they are forcing me out.” I am 57. One of these women did fight the redundancy. She did take it in the end and she said a couple of weeks later she was called by a producer saying, “Your specialism is in this particular area. We have no one. Can you give us your background and can you give us your contacts? We cannot do it without you”.

Cathy Newman: I would just add to that that it is an absolute scandal there are not more women over 50 in the industry. I have already name-checked Lindsey Hilsum and Jackie Long, but I would add to that Victoria Macdonald, health and social care correspondent, who is over 50. I think Dorothy Byrne, the Channel 4 head of news, who herself is 62, got it about right when she said, “What has happened to all these women over 50? Have they all been murdered or something?” I think it has to change and I am hopeful that in the next 10, 20 or 30 years it will change so that I can fulfil my goal of being 76 and in a TV studio.

Lord Clement-Jones: You do not buy this voluntary point either, that thinning out is a voluntary process?

Cathy Newman: I do not have any direct experience of over-50 women in the industry being forced out, so I cannot comment on that, but obviously those statements sound pretty distressing.

Miriam O'Reilly: These were women who gave statements to Labour's Commission on Older Women when we were looking into broadcasting.

Q52 Baroness Fookes: Could I just come in here. Ought we to be looking at the contracts and what they say? Should confidentiality clauses be banned?

Miriam O'Reilly: I have never signed one. I refused to sign one and that is why I am always speaking out because I have not been tied into one of those. For many women, and for the women here, in relation to their package and the money that they were given when they went, they knew that they would not be able to stay without being side-lined and who wants to do that? These women were on top form. These women had all the time in the world to concentrate on the job and they wanted to be able to do that and to continue, but it is made difficult for you. That particular letter is heartbreaking and if you knew the women who wrote that, who was a household name at the time, she is a very, very strong woman, she was broken down over time to the point where she wanted to go. But these are standard—

Baroness Fookes: That is constructive dismissal, is it not?

Miriam O'Reilly: Or it is persuasion, that if you go you will have quite a nice package to go with and you can do something else?

Q53 Lord Clement-Jones: Could I ask another supplementary in relation to this, because a significant proportion of the audience are women over 50. Does this suggest disdain for that section of the audience as well?

Miriam O'Reilly: I think the broadcasters have said that they did not realise that the audience wanted to watch older women. There is a cultural diversity network report. They did a survey and the people that they surveyed said, "We would like to see older women", because the majority of people who watch television are women in their 50s anyway and they just were not seeing themselves reflected on television. For me, I brought the case for that reason. The BBC tried to pay me off to make me go away, but I had seen so many women lose their jobs that it was very important for me to go to law because I thought it is the only way that we are going to bring about change. I think it is unfortunate I had to throw myself under the horse to do it, but it seemed that was the only way we were going to get broadcasters to wake up to the fact. Fran Unsworth said herself that the BBC helped to highlight this problem that the women were not there and that the audience wanted to see older women. Some progress has been made on that in factual programmes, entertainment and so on, but not in news.

Q54 Baroness Deech: Could it be that the people who make the decisions that lead to women getting forced out are much older men, possibly with much younger wives?

Miriam O'Reilly: After I won my case, many women came to talk to me and to ask my advice and I said to them, "Fight this in your job. Do not leave if you possibly can", but, no, I think it is just young men coming in. There is an older woman there and perhaps he is not used to dealing with an older woman. He might have a mum and an aunty and a gran, but I think

possibly they find it difficult to relate to them and, of course, they can relate to younger women. They do not know what to do or how to behave with an older woman.

Cathy Newman: If you look at the senior management, a lot of women are in the ascendant: Dorothy Byrne, older woman, 62, is head of news at Channel 4; Jay Hunt, chief creative officer; and at the BBC—I hope I am not getting my facts wrong—apart from Fran Unsworth I think the controllers of BBC One to Four are all women, are they not? So I am not sure that stacks up.

Penny Marshall: My experience in a narrow newsroom is very different from Miriam's, I have to say.

Lord Clement-Jones: You think it is more voluntary.

Penny Marshall: I think it is voluntary. There are hardly any of us left to be forced out. There are only three women at ITV News who are over 50 and they are very keen to keep all of them. As I say, I do not want to go into details of where I am at the moment but I have had nothing but support to try to keep me in the workplace. I am not saying it has not happened, but in the newsrooms that I have worked in I have never seen a woman over 50 forced out in that way. I have seen many drop who could have done with greater support, but not dropped out. I do not know whether we are in different—

Lord Clement-Jones: People have had more control over their own career in that sense.

Miriam O'Reilly: I would really like to see some exit data to ask women why they are leaving. Are they demoralised? Have they been undermined? Have they been side-lined? But these are genuine experiences of real women and their lives, over 50 at the BBC.

The Chairman: We have to go a little bit faster now as we head for the last nine minutes or so.

Q55 Lord Razzall: I need to declare a non-financial interest, which is that my daughter was, for 12 years, working as a colleague of Cathy at "Channel 4 News" and is now working for BBC "Newsnight". I think I need to declare that. How much of what you have all said she would agree with I will find out later. We might speed up a bit because I think this is only for Miriam. I think you may have answered my first question: how do you feel that attitudes in the industry have changed since your ageism case? I think you were effectively saying that they had not, but perhaps you could expand on that.

Miriam O'Reilly: Not in news, but I think that they have in other programmes. I have seen the changes myself and they are very welcome. There is no doubt that the BBC has changed. They said they were going to change and they have changed. I am not saying that just because I risked everything to fight this case. I would not like to think that what I did was a failure—

Lord Razzall: No, I thought you said that Mark Thompson had made a speech and then a lot of people came along and said he was paying lip-service to that.

Miriam O'Reilly: These are women in news, but we have seen a change. There are more women in entertainment programmes and factual documentaries. At prime time we are seeing far more older women now than we did before.

Lord Razzall: A more personal question to you: how do you feel that the BBC has treated you after the case, and the industry?

Miriam O'Reilly: Well, I am not working in broadcasting anymore.

Lord Razzall: Do you think it is because of the case?

Miriam O'Reilly: I went back to the BBC on a three-year contract and in the first year I was not given the programmes that the BBC was contracted to give me. I was supposed to do a number of Radio 4 programmes but they did not materialise. I was not given a pass. I was not given a computer log-in. I was side-lined onto a religious programme on the World Service, but I was never given work equal to what I was doing before. Certainly, when the contract was not fulfilled, the executive who negotiated it told me he had forgotten to tell producers I was available. He has since denied saying that, but I was never able to get an answer to that question: if he did not forget, why did the BBC not fulfil its contract with me? During that time I was still outspoken about inequality and ageism within the corporation and currently the NUJ, with Michelle Stanistreet who is the secretary general, is looking into claims from BBC staff that I have been blacklisted by the corporation because I have continued to be outspoken.

Lord Razzall: A one-word answer to my question would be "badly".

Miriam O'Reilly: Sadly, yes. They do say publicly they want to work with me, but privately the phone does not ring.

Q56 Baroness Deech: Is it the case, and perhaps you have indicated that it is, that topics like politics and the Government and economy and science are dominated by male reporters, while women, even though they are being shown on screen and reporting, do the softer subjects like entertainment, social, fashion and that kind of thing?

Cathy Newman: I do not see that, particularly not in "Channel 4 News". I keep on mentioning Lindsey Hilsum, but also Siobhan Kennedy, business correspondent. Having covered politics and business, I have never thought, "I will go into a nice soft subject and report on celebrities", or whatever. I have just never felt any pressure for that and I have not felt any female colleagues experiencing that pressure either. I am lucky that my job gives me the opportunity to range across big interviews and big investigations. However, I suppose the only thing I would say is across the industry there are many more of the heavyweight interviewers who are men: John Humphrys, David Dimbleby, Andrew Neil, to name but a few. I think that is changing, but probably not fast enough. They are all excellent, by the way, but there are lots of excellent women too.

Miriam O'Reilly: I was heartened over the summer to see the number of women covering the high-profile stories of the day, the reporting on those, and I just wish it was more consistent. There was possibly a month over the summer and I said, "Gosh, yes, that is fantastic; older women reporting on the big stories of the day", but it has to be more consistent. It sort of drops off then. I would like to see that maintained and I would like to see an older woman reading the news. I know Fiona Bruce is now 50 and Mary Nightingale at ITN is over 50, but there has to be a big change. The day I will put the flags out is the day when I see a much older woman reading news at prime time, not just on the news channel. We saw Julia Somerville do a couple of news programmes, the main news bulletins I think at weekends, but then she went back to the news channel. It is very rare to see that older woman reading the news.

Baroness Deech: Or conducting the pre-general election big debates between the party leaders.

Miriam O'Reilly: Yes.

Baroness Deech: Everybody has a role.

Q57 Lord Horam: Do you think that broadcasters should set quotas publicly? What changed things in Parliament was, of course, women-only shortlists. That changed things. Until then, there was improvement but nothing changed. If you need to jump-start things, do you not need to do something much more positive than you are doing now?

Miriam O'Reilly: I would not agree with a quota. I do not think it would work and I think it would build resentment in the newsroom. I would like to see older women being nurtured and supported more and, in fact, the BBC says it is doing that now with the women who are coming forward, but I do not think quotas would work.

Lord Horam: Tony Hall set a target, for example, for breakfast radio, did he not, of 50% women?

Miriam O'Reilly: He wants to bring more women and more experts in.

Lord Horam: I am thinking of that. You do not like that?

Miriam O'Reilly: But that is just thinking about it. Usually as a producer—and I was possibly guilty of this myself—when you have a deadline, you want someone who can just come quickly and deliver and it just seemed to be more men historically that were in those roles.

Lord Horam: You would not go for targets?

Miriam O'Reilly: I would certainly go and make sure that we have more experts who are women, because there are wonderful women out there with a lot to say and as much to say as any man on any given subject. We have those female experts there and I think it is great.

Lord Horam: The problem is that, if you do that, if you do not be specific, things will improve but very slowly. The data we have suggests it would be years before there is anything significant in terms of the numbers of reporters, for example.

Miriam O'Reilly: Yes. When you were talking about quotas I was thinking about quotas in terms of reporters or presenters within the BBC. I think that would be very difficult in a working environment. I would like to see them supported and nurtured, as I said.

Lord Horam: Cathy and Penny, do you agree with that?

Cathy Newman: Yes, I agree with that. I think the most important thing is to shine a spotlight and to keep banging on about it. I am always banging on about women in politics on my *Telegraph* blog, for example, so I think the Committee is doing a great job to keep this issue in the spotlight.

Lord Horam: But you know that, unless you nag and nag and nag and follow up and follow up and follow up, nothing will happen.

Miriam O'Reilly: Nothing. You have to keep—

Lord Horam: We will produce a report and it will be discussed for five minutes, then nothing will happen.

Cathy Newman: But the problem with targets is that, if you set targets for women experts or targets for women in the newsroom or whatever, there will always be a suspicion among colleagues and among the women themselves that they are the token woman and they are

not there because of their ability. That has been the reservation about all-women shortlists as well.

Lord Horam: I think they are over that in the House of Commons. I do not think women are treated as being—

Cathy Newman: But some of the women who were initially selected on all-women shortlists did get a bit of a rough ride for that reason.

Lord Horam: Yes. There is always a problem to begin with, but eventually there are just a lot more women there and that is the end of the story.

Cathy Newman: But I think things are changing. For example, we have signed up to the broadcast pledge to get more women experts. That is not a hard quota, but it is a commitment. We should do better because the ratio is not good enough and we will have to redouble our efforts. It is hard to persuade women to come on the programme sometimes. They think they are going to get duffed up, but I think the culture is changing there as well, because I think the audience does not necessarily want—

Q58 Lord Horam: I think you said, Miriam, did you not, that there were lots of women out there who could be used but are not being used?

Penny Marshall: I said that.

Lord Horam: You said that?

Miriam O'Reilly: Yes, and I absolutely agree.

Lord Horam: Could you not have some sort of target that brought them in?

Penny Marshall: You could, but the job is not that easy. One of the reasons why David Dimbleby and the other chaps are so extremely good at it is they have 10,000 hours of broadcasting. Like in *Outliers*, Michael Gladwell's book, they are experts.

Lord Horam: But if you brought some of these women back, they would soon accumulate all that if they—

Penny Marshall: They would. They should be encouraged to come back, but you cannot just click a finger and have a target that we can solve it in a year. I think you would have to stagger it. The problem with it at the moment is it is all a bit guesswork and anecdotal.

Lord Horam: You need some hard data.

Penny Marshall: We need to collect data.

Lord Horam: Who could do that, Ofcom?

Penny Marshall: Ofcom. They used to.

Lord Horam: Hard data?

Penny Marshall: Hard data that tells a story. Data now is king. You can get data on everything.

Lord Horam: Annual reviews.

Penny Marshall: When people are leaving; who is hiring whom; how many freelancers there are. We cannot have this discussion anecdotally. We need to have it with hard data and then we need to set either official targets, and I am not quite as convinced as the other two that

that is a bad idea, or we need unofficial targets and we need to hold the broadcasters accountable. That is my view.

Miriam O'Reilly: One of the things that frustrates me is—and I have to talk about the BBC because obviously I have only worked for the BBC—when I hear the BBC saying, “We are reaching out toward women”, but the older women are there. They do not have to reach that far. It should not take as long as it is taking. They are now talking about bringing the women on who are already in broadcasting. They should not just do that. They should not have got rid of so many older women anyway, but they did and we cannot change that, but they could bring older women back far more quickly than they are saying is possible.

The Chairman: We do not have time for our final question from the Bishop of Norwich, but we are going to have it anyway, Bishop. If you could use that as a moment perhaps to pick up on anything that you have not said but you would like us to hear, do please take that opportunity.

Q59 Bishop of Norwich: There was just one thing. You have spoken about experts, which I was going to ask about. Do you think there is a difference between reporters and presenters and off-screen employees in news and current affairs? Is the picture better in terms of the employment of women off-screen?

Miriam O'Reilly: From what I understand from what I have been told, no, it is not.

Cathy Newman: For us it is about the same: 38% of on-screen staff are female and 39% off-screen and clearly we still need to improve on both of those figures.

Bishop of Norwich: Do you think that is part of a cultural thing in wider society? It is very difficult to use the Church of England as an example.

Cathy Newman: Women bishops though.

Bishop of Norwich: Women bishops, but one of the intriguing things, of course, about that was that 97% of the male bishops voted in favour. Once you add women in the mix, quite a lot of women voted against. The culture is not quite as straightforward in terms of women supporting women as one would expect.

Miriam O'Reilly: You see, that is why I am so delighted that you are here today. We could change it by changing television, because television has a massive influence on society, on how we think. It shapes opinion. It can dictate which prejudices are acceptable and which are not, which was the reason why I brought this case, because if we do not have older women, for example, as role models on television, in prominent roles, it is as if they are invisible in society. If we put them on TV, it sends a message to society that, yes, there are older women who are contributing in a tremendous way. You talked about cultural changes in society. I would suggest that, if we start with television, we can bring about those cultural changes in society.

Cathy Newman: I think it is important to look to the next generation as well. I go around lots of girls' schools saying, “This is what my job entails and it is great fun and you should try it”, and I think it is important to give girls the confidence to think that they can do the heavyweight jobs. They can be the David Dimbleby of the future and be there at 76 in the studio.

The Chairman: A final word, Penny.

Penny Marshall: I think it is a very good time to be a woman over 50, because the awareness is very high that for a very long time the system has been unfair, but my final word is let us not guess at getting it right. Let us collect data, study it and take it very seriously because if we do not represent a huge number of women it is society's loss.

The Chairman: Terrific. Thank you, all three of you, for a fantastic session. That was really helpful to us. If we had rounds of applause you would get one, but we do not.

Examination of Witnesses

Ed Vaizey MP, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, and **Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP**, Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities

Q60 The Chairman: Welcome, Nicky, if I may, and Ed, if I may. Thank you very much for joining us. We have had a very lively session prior to your arrival and now we are very honoured that we have two Ministers to grill. We probably will not need a full hour, so if you have other pressing engagements do not panic. We believe we will get through ahead of time. We are being televised and so it would be very helpful if we began by you saying who you are, for the record, and giving us an opening statement, if you would wish to do that, before we get into our questions. Over to you. Who would prefer to go first?

Ed Vaizey: I think seniority goes first, Lord Best.

Nicky Morgan: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the invitation to be here. I am Nicky Morgan, the Minister for Women and Equalities and obviously Secretary of State for Education, but it is in the former capacity that I am very much here today. Let me just turn to my statement. I am very pleased to be here to address the Select Committee this afternoon and I begin by commending this Committee for focusing this inquiry into women in the broadcasting industry, especially as broadcast media forms such an important part of the creative industry sector in the UK economy. It provides approximately 132,000 jobs and £12.3 billion in revenue from television, with a further £1.2 billion from radio.

Our Government has placed supporting women to get into work as a top priority. We want women to be able to fulfil their potential, work in a diverse range of industries and fully utilise their qualifications, skills and experience to progress into senior roles. We have also taken steps to better support returning to work when women choose to do that. Under this Government, we have more women in work than ever before. We have almost eliminated the full-time pay gap for women under 40 and we are working with business leaders to increase the numbers of women on the boards of our top companies. We now have no all-male boards in the FTSE 100 and we are on track to achieve our 25% target in 2015 without recourse to quotas, which is something I think we may return to in the questioning.

We are also taking action with public bodies. We are modernising recruitment practices to attract a more diverse field of candidates. The boards of our public bodies need to be managed by the best people. We can only be confident that we are appointing the most talented individuals if we can be confident that the appointment process is as open and accessible to all as is possible. We are making progress. There has been an increase in the proportion of women taking up public appointments from 37% in 2012-13 to 39% in 2013-14.

That said, we are certainly not complacent and, as well as our Think, Act, Report initiative—I think we will come back to that in evidence—which we want to encourage all companies to sign up to, to look at gender equality in their workplaces, we have taken a wide range of other measures to support women and their families, including tax-free childcare, flexible working, shared parental leave, free early education for three and four year-olds and extending free early learning places to the most disadvantaged two year-olds.

It was only a few decades ago that broadcasters would not allow women to be radio newsreaders as their voices were deemed “not quite right”. How far we have come. The broadcasting industry plays such an important role in influencing and challenging the social

norms we see around us every day, so having more women in visible positions would be more likely to provide positive role models for current and future generations. I would like to say that broadcasting is a great place for women to work in, both in front of and behind the scenes, and offers a huge range of interesting careers, some of which I am sure we will touch on this afternoon.

Ed Vaizey: Thank you very much for inviting me to be here, Lord Best. I will do my best to answer the Committee's questions. You will be delighted to know that I have not conferred with the Secretary of State, nor vice versa. So you may get divisions, splits, different answers, depending on what questions you ask, but both of us, I am sure, will answer your questions genuinely. I think this is a very important issue because, as the Secretary of the State indicated, the Government is taking action across the whole piece in terms of business and getting better representation of women, but I think that we all understand that broadcasting is particularly high profile because still, even in the age of the smart phone and the tablet, broadcast programmes come into the living room. People look to broadcasting in order to see role models.

In terms of the diversity work I have been doing with broadcasters and people who are perhaps frustrated at the lack of progress, a lot of people say, "Television programmes and so on are the record of our contemporary society". If you were to look back at programmes being broadcast now in 20 or 30 years' time, you should be asking yourself the question, "Do these programmes accurately reflect the make-up of our society?" Of course, that includes obviously the prominent representation of women. It is a very important subject and I very much look forward to answering your questions with the Secretary of State.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Let us begin with you, Lord Sherbourne.

Q61 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Can I direct this question to the Secretary of State?

Everybody we have talked to, not surprisingly, agrees about the importance of this and the importance of getting a much better balance in broadcasting, both those who are in front of the camera or the microphone and those behind. Almost nobody has mentioned the role of Government, whether Government has a specific role in improving the situation in broadcasting. Do you think there is a role for Government?

Nicky Morgan: Ed is going to talk about the actual legislative framework that applies to the media industry, because he is obviously close to that. I think the role of Government, whether we are talking about broadcasting or women in Parliament or in the science sector or anywhere else, is to highlight the issues, to perhaps talk about initiatives such as Think, Act, Report, and to look at the barriers that stop women or parents or others juggling care responsibilities from combining work with those responsibilities to see whether there are specific policies in terms of making life easier, whether it is affordable childcare or whether it is legislating for shared parental leave.

I am not entirely convinced that it is either for Government to interfere or to comment on particular sectors, other than to highlight some inconsistencies and to encourage greater transparency. I certainly think, from looking at the evidence that the Committee has seen and from preparing for this hearing, we have a very well-developed media industry in this country, broadcasting and the creative industries. I think that they are more than capable of identifying both the issues, but then also coming up with action, rather than Government dictating. I am also instinctively against setting quotas. I prefer a voluntary approach that I

think does yield results and, more importantly, it yields longer-term cultural changes, which is what this whole area needs.

Ed Vaizey: The Secretary of State has invited me to come in on the question, even though Lord Sherbourne directed the question at the Secretary of State. Yes, there are clearly some legislative levers. Ofcom is an independent regulator, but clearly its functions are set by Parliament and by statute and it has the ability not only to promote training and equality of opportunity for people providing radio and TV services but also requiring, in particular, the public service broadcasters to promote equality of opportunity.

The BBC framework agreement, as you know from the note that we submitted to this Committee, imposes a similar duty on the BBC executive board and other licence conditions under the Broadcasting Act include the conditions requiring a licence holder to promote equality of opportunity. Ofcom is also undertaking, as we speak, a review of public service broadcasting. This is one of the reviews it undertakes on a regular basis. I think this is the first time in five years they have undertaken such a review and they will be looking, within that, at what the public service broadcasters are doing in this respect.

To answer your specific point about what role the Government has in this, I would echo obviously what the Secretary of State has said. I would add to it perhaps that I have discovered in my position, focusing purely on broadcasting as opposed to the much wider landscape the Secretary of State covers, that the power of convening has some merit. I am invited by people who I think feel frustrated at the rate of progress with broadcasters across the whole diversity agenda to convene meetings and we have had successful meetings where Government has used its influence to bring people into the same room to discuss the issues.

I think Government should be taking an interest, as I think the Secretary of State indicated in terms of her comprehensive overview of what Government is doing in this. Government taking an interest is an important factor. If Government did not talk about this, discuss it, make speeches about it—it may sound a bit trite, but I do believe this strongly—then I think we would not necessarily get the same pace of progress.

Q62 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill: In terms of Government taking an interest, concern has been expressed about the use of freelancers in the broadcast industry and, according to Creative Skillset, nearly a quarter of the workforce in editorial journalism and sport is freelance. Freelancers are not monitored according to gender or diversity under the current systems. As freelancers are such a high proportion of the workforce, should this be remedied and data collected on them in terms of developing career structures particularly for women in the industry?

Ed Vaizey: The answer is yes. Monitoring is very important. Again, on different parts of this debate sometimes the answers sound, as I said earlier, a bit trite when people want big bang answers, but talking about it in Government is very important and monitoring is very important. Sometimes monitoring sounds like an excuse for inaction, but the data is still very poor. The Creative Diversity Network, which is the network created and run by the broadcasters, is now focused on bringing in a robust monitoring system. The important thing behind that is, first of all, that all the broadcasters should have the same metrics so they can be compared one to another and, secondly, it has to be public and transparent. Even if the figures are terrible when they first bring this in, it has to be made public to set a baseline

that we can work on. Clearly, in broadcasting that has to include monitoring of freelancers because freelance work is so prevalent in this industry.

Nicky Morgan: We now have over 250 companies signed up to the Think, Act, Report initiative that I mentioned before, which the Government has launched. Basically, it encourages them and shows them how to monitor gender equality in their workforces. It ranges from very small companies to the very large ones. Interestingly, I thought the Committee might like to know that we have four companies that we would consider to be media companies signed up, including ITV, S4C and Hearst Magazines. That does not define for the companies what workforce is. It is perfectly possible for them to ask questions about freelancers or consultants.

The other point I wanted to make is that, for women or for men too, flexibility in the workplace can be very important. There are various reasons why somebody might not want to be signed up as a full-time employee and freelancing, in the same way as setting up your own company, can offer opportunities for men and women to work flexibly. It is not universally a bad thing, but I would absolutely agree with the Minister's point, which is it is something that companies should ask questions about.

Q63 Bishop of Norwich: The Broadcast Equality and Training Regulator used to monitor equality of opportunity, but Ofcom, of course, closed that down in 2011. I understand that was as a response to DCMS giving notice of a change in Ofcom's statutory duties, and nothing has replaced it since then, especially as the draft Public Bodies Order was withdrawn. Where is that monitoring of equality of opportunity in relation to broadcasting taking place and who has the responsibility for it? It does not seem to be Ofcom any more now that the BETR has been closed down.

Ed Vaizey: Ofcom still maintains some statutory duties, but you are quite right that, given the pressure on public finances in 2010, there were certain areas where Ofcom had to place more emphasis than on others. I would say that the work of Creative Skillset is very important in this respect. Creative Skillset, in terms of being the employer-led training organisation that works with the broadcasters, has put together, for example, a very ambitious programme to promote apprenticeships in broadcasting and the creative industries with more than 400 different companies. Alongside Channel 4 as one of the lead organisations, that would be the organisation that I certainly would turn to in terms of discussing with them whether or not enough women and indeed enough people from different ranges of backgrounds were getting the opportunities to train in broadcasting.

I also think it is important to talk about the role of apprenticeships in creative industries and broadcasting because, of course, one of the things that can reinforce a lack of diversity is the fact that a lot of these companies do rely on unpaid interns, a highly controversial subject in and of itself. Therefore, to provide proper training opportunities for people where they will get rewarded and get qualifications is something that we are very focused on and I am very pleased with what Creative Skillset has come forward with.

Bishop of Norwich: The only thing that is puzzling about that is that is the Government relying on the industry itself to monitor itself, rather than having somebody that would do the monitoring independently of the industry.

Ed Vaizey: As I said earlier in answer to the point about freelancers, the Creative Diversity Network is putting in place robust and independent monitoring in terms of an independent

company. Also, I think that, although Creative Skillset is led by employers, it remains an organisation that is created and effectively answers to the department of business and skills. Therefore, I would not say it was the industry marking its own homework. I think Creative Skillset in fact sparked quite a debate when it published its own diversity employment statistics for the industry about a year ago. It created quite a wide-ranging debate about diversity, so I have every confidence in it in terms of drawing a true and realistic picture of what the training opportunities are.

Q64 Lord Razzall: I suspect I know what you will say as a result of your answer to question 1, but do you think, looking at the role of Government, that there would there be any form of amendment to the Equality Act that could improve the situation in this area?

Ed Vaizey: I am going to hand that to you as the Minister responsible for the Equalities Act.

Nicky Morgan: I think Ed was going to talk about the BBC in relation to the application of the Equality Act. Obviously all public authorities must have regard to the Equality Act.

Lord Razzall: But there is a specific exemption, is there not, for content for the public services broadcasters?

Nicky Morgan: Again, I am happy to defer to the Minister but, in terms of whether there is an exemption for the content, but for the companies themselves in the way that they are subject—

Lord Razzall: I think they are subject to it already, yes.

Nicky Morgan: Yes, absolutely.

Lord Razzall: We did have representations even from people who thought that this was an area where action should be taken. There was not any feeling that the Equality Act should be used here, but I wondered if that was the ministerial view as well.

Nicky Morgan: Since my taking up this role, I have had no representations on that basis.

Ed Vaizey: Nor have I.

Q65 Baroness Fookes: There are very few women aged over 50 in the media, particularly the news part that we are particularly interested in, and we heard some interesting evidence from those who preceded you in those chairs.

Nicky Morgan: Yes, I am sure.

Baroness Fookes: Is there anything that you feel could be done with the Equality Act by amendment or any other way or any encouragement to overcome this?

Nicky Morgan: The Equality Act already protects employees in any business—it goes back to the point about the companies themselves rather than what is on the screens or being broadcast over the radio, so any companies in broadcasting—from discrimination on a number of grounds, which includes age and also sex. It does allow, in that Act, companies to use positive measures to encourage older women to apply for jobs and to address other causes of under-representation of women at various levels.

The Government has set up something called the Women's Business Council, chaired by a fabulous woman called Ruby McGregor-Smith, who is the Chief Executive of Mitie, and she has looked at women's work right the way through the different ages, so in terms of women

getting into roles in companies at that middle tier of management, the pipeline, and then keeping older workers in the workplace as well. Of course we have appointed as an older workers' champion Dr Ros Altmann, who is another powerful advocate.

I think perhaps this goes back to the answer to the first question in a way, which is certainly Government can highlight this as an issue, not just in broadcasting but in other sectors as well, where we see there are not enough women who have stayed in particular professions or sectors, but it is also for the companies themselves. Perhaps we could take a step back. Why is diversity important? Because over 50% of the population are female, and I would strongly suspect that the evidence has shown that a lot of older women take their news and they watch programmes particularly on TV and radio being very popular mediums. The broadcasters themselves, I would have thought, will be thinking about having the right people on screens and broadcasting in order to reflect the audience themselves.

I am not going to disagree with you that there is not a need. I would have been interested to hear the evidence offered by the previous panel that you had in front of you. There is no reason why broadcasters cannot, when they are recruiting, look for older women and it is now for the broadcasters to realise themselves that there is a need or a demand from consumers of the media for older women to be on our screens and in our radio studios.

Baroness Fookes: But the particular problem that we were looking at was people being eased or squeezed out of jobs who were already in them, as opposed to encouraging older women.

Nicky Morgan: Perhaps that goes back to the point I was saying about thinking about the audience and those who are consuming the news and the programmes that are being broadcast. I perhaps stand to be corrected. I await the deluge on Twitter. We do have already some extremely talented older female broadcasters and I see no reason why they should not carry on for as long as the men do.

Q66 Lord Horam: All the political parties have tried, by various means in the last few years, to get more women into Parliament, to get women into jobs in Government and so forth. Are there any lessons for the broadcasters in what the political parties have tried to do?

Nicky Morgan: I talked at the beginning about cultural change and I think, as a Government, we are certainly not in favour of mandatory quotas or targets.

Lord Horam: You are not in favour of targets?

Nicky Morgan: Sorry, not in favour of mandatory quotas. I am certainly in favour of saying, "We would like to get to—", whether it is 25% of women on boards, but we have not set a specific target for numbers of women in Parliament. I think evidence shows that when you get to 30% of any organisation then being more diverse, that then does begin a change. I think truly, with 50% of the population being female, we will eventually want to get to 50% of the Parliament being female, but we are going to be a little way off that. Certainly schemes like mentoring have helped. I know some parties obviously have adopted all-women shortlists and the EHRC have given some advice on whether you can have all-women shortlists for jobs.

Lord Horam: But you would not go along with that in broadcasting?

Nicky Morgan: I think the EHRC have given advice to say that is not going to be permitted in terms of when you are recruiting. They were particularly looking at recruitment for board

positions, but there is no specific exemption for political parties in relation to all-women shortlists. I think an awful lot of this is about unconscious bias training. It is about mentoring. It is about finding and searching out talent and perhaps goes back to the previous question, which is about keeping women in the workplace and so thinking about, for example, working hours. Obviously the House of Commons has changed its sitting hours in this Parliament, obviously with the introduction of the in-house nursery as well. One of the greatest helps has been perhaps the smallest, which is just giving better advance notice of things like recess dates and sitting dates, which allows people to plan their working lives in a much more systematic way to allow for job responsibilities.

Lord Horam: All that is very good and very admirable but, as some of our interviewers have said, it is going to take a long time if you just rely on that voluntary method. Tony Hall, for example, has said women should be on breakfast television as 50% of its presenters. That sort of target does not appeal to you?

Nicky Morgan: Of course it appeals. I think it was 50% on radio and I think they are at 44%.

Lord Horam: By the end of the year.

Nicky Morgan: That is right. That was local radio presenters. Absolutely, but I think it also is going to be a question then of making sure that there is a pipeline of—and there already are—talented women. How do you then encourage them to apply for the positions? Certainly what we have found again in relation to women on board positions is there has been an awful lot of work done with executive search firms, head-hunters if you like, to allow those who are doing the interviewing to think more widely about the skills that are needed to be on a board. Just because women often have not followed the same career path or the same sort of straight linear path as men does not mean that they do not make excellent candidates for the jobs in question. It is about getting the interviewers to think a little more laterally about the skills they are looking for.

Q67 Lord Horam: On this point, Ed, you said something about the requirement to have good information and data and so on; I think we were talking particularly about freelancers. Does this not make the point that, unless you have a consistent source of information about all of this, it will all be rather empirical and impressionistic and, unless you get that, you will not make any progress?

Ed Vaizey: I think that is right, Lord Horam. I am not sure whether the BBC have signed up to the same set of data that the other commercial broadcasters have done and, if not, they certainly should do. It should read across the BBC, Channel 4, ITV and so on. It should be the same data. That is something I think you might want to look at. That tells you what the snapshot is.

I know from reading the submissions that all the broadcasters have put into this Committee that they have stuffed their submissions full of data. Perhaps there is a debate to be had about whether data becomes an excuse for reality. “33% of our main 5 pm news reporters”, says Channel 4, “are female” but does that give you a qualitative feel for the opportunities that are being given to women in a company like Channel 4? I cannot necessarily answer that question, but that might be worth reflecting on.

As to whether political parties can teach the broadcasters anything, it is a funny old world when people are looking to political parties for advice in the current political climate in which we operate, but I do think there are probably two points that emerge. One is whether

you believe in all-female shortlists or whether you believe in actively engaging with potential candidates. I certainly think that both political parties can hold their heads up, both the main political parties—I am sure the Liberal Democrats can as well, but I do not know them as well—in terms of actively engaging in this and recognising that there may be inbuilt biases in selection processes that discriminate against women and trying to eradicate them, and also understanding that somebody may not think that they are wanted and, therefore, actively engaging to say, “Yes, we would love you to be a candidate”. I think that is an important point to make.

The second thing, and I think the Secretary of State mentioned this in passing, goes back to Government and political parties engaging. I do think it is a real achievement, although sad that it has to be an achievement, that we now have no FTSE 100 companies without a female on the board. I think Government can claim credit for that, in the sense of making a noise about it and holding FTSE 100 companies to account, alongside the media climate. I think more of that, where the Government does at least say, “You need to move faster; we need to see real progress”, is important. I think you see real change and you have seen it with the FTSE 100 companies and it has changed, undoubtedly, for the better.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much. You have been very concise and absolutely to the point and it is helpful.

Ed Vaizey: I was just getting into my stride here. I feel cut off in my prime.

Q68 The Chairman: If there were any final thoughts that you wanted to share with us, anything we have not covered, do please say so.

Nicky Morgan: I think the only point I was going to make was the importance of role models and—perhaps I touched on it earlier—the importance of diversity in any workplace, but particularly in relation to broadcasting where the programmes and the coverage need a female perspective and I think benefit from having a female perspective, and also the importance of the way women are portrayed in the media. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament recently published a report and did talk about the way that women were portrayed in the media. I think they already do, but for the media to realise the responsibility they have in terms of the message they send out—whether they are talking about politics or business careers or science—in showing that women can do these jobs is very important in terms of inspiring the next generation.

Baroness Deech: Could I just ask whether the Government would be prepared to put as much effort into getting this equality of representation on the media as it has done very successfully with the FTSE boards?

Nicky Morgan: I cannot see why we would not be. The progress on the FTSE 100 boards came about because of Lord Davies, who decided that this was the target, working with Government, and also thanks to the work of people like Helena Morrissey who are part of the 30% Club. Perhaps it goes back to my first answer, which was: a lot of this has to come from the industry but absolutely, as Ed has said, what Government can do is to bring people together, to highlight these issues and to push for a transparency. I do think that, whether we are talking about broadcasting or science or academia or the City or anything else, and obviously politics as well, talking about this is very important. I certainly, as the Minister for Women and Equalities—and I am sure that my fellow Equalities Ministers would say this, too—would be more than willing to work, as would DCMS Ministers, I am sure, with the

broadcasting companies on this. But there has to be a real will to make these cultural changes from the industry themselves.

Lord Razzall: But it is an iterative process, is it not?

Nicky Morgan: Absolutely.

Lord Razzall: You quote every FTSE 100 company now having at least one woman director, but there are not many women running FTSE 100 companies.

Nicky Morgan: Absolutely.

Lord Razzall: So the whole process is iterative, is it not?

Nicky Morgan: Absolutely. We have made great progress with the non-executive directors. We still have to do more with executive board positions and absolutely having chief executives as well, but it does show, first, a voluntary process, and secondly, a real focus on this can drive change.

The Chairman: A final word, Minister?

Ed Vaizey: I have been focusing very much on the BME agenda in broadcasting in the last year and a half, but I think the lessons I have learned read across. I think Government must convene, so Government must show that it is interested and actively interested in this issue, and bring together people to discuss it and ask for progress reports. That does not necessarily mean setting up quangos to do it. It just means active Ministers, but they do need an element of support within their department. There needs to be some resource in terms of officials who are committed to this.

Secondly, I do think the data is important. We need to know what the position is so that people can at least start a discussion based on evidence about where the problems are.

Thirdly, a point I have not talked about but again has emerged from my discussions is about training. I think often refuge is taken by saying, "Oh, we have these fantastic programmes". I talked earlier, funnily enough, about apprenticeships for young people. You will find a lot of the training and opportunities are needed when people are in their late 20s and early 30s. That may be where people feel they are coming up against obstacles, glass ceilings, whatever you want to call it, and are not getting the support they need to push on and be encouraged to continue their career. That is when a lot of people fall out and a lot of people are very cosy and say, "We have these fantastic schemes for people leaving university" or whatever, and I think they miss that bit in the middle where people are just about to kick up a gear in their career.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much indeed. I hope our report will be helpful to you when we release it.

Nicky Morgan: I look forward to reading it. Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Thank you for coming.