



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 155th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 24 January 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. EVATT

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
(CEDAW/C/5/Add.52 and Amends.1-4)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Denham (United Kingdom) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Mrs. DENHAM (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on 7 April 1986 and had submitted its initial report in May 1987. Ratification had also been extended to four of the Territories for which the United Kingdom was internationally responsible - the Isle of Man, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the British Virgin Islands, and the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and South Sandwich - whose initial reports were also before the Committee.

3. In accordance with article 18 of the Convention and the Committee's guidelines, the initial report described the framework within which the Convention was being implemented and gave specific information on how its provisions had been put into practice. The report attempted to provide a comprehensive survey of the position of women in the United Kingdom, both in law and in practice. That underlined the importance which her country attached to the rights set forth in the Convention, to which it continued to subscribe fully. Her Government, in formulating policy in the fields covered by the Committee, was very conscious of its international treaty obligations and of the rights embodied in the Convention.

4. There had been many developments in the United Kingdom since the initial report has been submitted and she would bring the Committee up to date on some of the main areas of progress.

5. Every Government department was concerned with policies affecting women. The main forum for co-ordinating their work and developing inter-departmental initiatives was the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues, chaired by the minister of the Home Office with special responsibility for equal opportunities. Its membership comprised ministers with policy responsibilities for issues of special concern to women, such as health, employment and education.

6. The Group had reviewed Government policy in areas covered by the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and had published the results in April 1987; it had also supervised the preparation of her country's initial report. The Group gave ministers the opportunity to examine and discuss women's issues and to co-ordinate the Government's response in such priority areas as child care, public appointments and domestic violence, in a way that would not otherwise be possible.

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7. The Group had also prepared model instructions which were the basis for anti-discrimination guidelines issued by departments, so that the impact of all policy proposals upon women was fully understood. That process was being reinforced by special seminars for senior staff at the Civil Service College and also in departmental training and was an example of how the Group built on experience and disseminated positive practices throughout the Government.
8. Another body, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), had been established under the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. Its duties were to work towards the elimination of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally, to keep under review the operation of the 1975 Act and of the Equal Pay Act of 1970, and to draw up and submit proposals for amending them.
9. EOC also had the power to conduct a formal investigation for any purpose connected with its statutory duties. As a result of such an investigation, it might issue a legally enforceable non-discrimination notice requiring the organization concerned to comply with the law. It could also help individuals to bring legal action and could take legal action itself in some circumstances, such as cases of persistent discrimination.
10. EOC did promotional and educational work, giving advice to employers and employees, trade unions and professional bodies, and central and local government. It could provide grants for independent research or educational activities and for the organization of conferences. Its own research services produced a wide range of publications each year. It had a full-time chairperson supported by a part-time deputy and 12 part-time Commissioners, who were responsible for discharging their statutory duties. The Commission's budget for 1989-1990 was £3.8 million. The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland had similar powers and duties.
11. She also wished to pay tribute to the role which non-governmental organizations in the United Kingdom played in the consultative process that contributed to Government policy-making. The Government welcomed and valued its contacts with organizations concerned with the status of women in the United Kingdom.
12. The Women's National Commission, set up in 1969, acted as an advisory committee for channelling women's views to government departments and other public bodies. Fifty women's organizations from throughout the United Kingdom were represented on it. It was chaired jointly by a representative elected by Commission members and a minister nominated by the Prime Minister. That minister also represented it in the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues. The Commission and other women's organizations took a keen interest in the Government's progress in implementing the Convention and the Forward-looking Strategies. In recognition of that interest, and in view of the importance which the Government attached to maintaining good relations with those organizations and taking account of their views, she would be reporting back to the Commission and other women's organizations on her appearance before the Committee at a forthcoming seminar.

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13. The United Kingdom was fully committed to equality between women and men in the work place. It recognized the important contribution which women made to the economy and since its report had been prepared, public, employer and media interest in women's employment and in measures to help women return to work had increased markedly. There had been a number of encouraging practical developments. The first requirement for equality was a job and the Government had helped create an economic climate in which business could flourish and thus provide more jobs and opportunities. More and more women were taking advantage of the new job opportunities available to them as a result of continuing economic growth.

14. Since 1983, over 1.8 million women had entered the labour force; 18 per cent more women were working full-time and 23 per cent more were working part-time. One in four self-employed persons were women, as compared with fewer than one in five 10 years earlier.

15. Women were also acquiring better educational and vocational qualifications and entering areas traditionally dominated by men. Half the students in medicine, dentistry and other health services were now women. Since 1980, the number of women in accounting and also in town planning had doubled; in surveying it had quadrupled and in banking and insurance it had increased by one third. Female unemployment remained lower than male unemployment and had fallen steadily since August 1986. In April 1989, women's average hourly pay (excluding overtime) had reached its highest level ever in relation to men's - 76 per cent.

16. Women had still not achieved complete equality in employment, however. There were still far too few women in top jobs, but changes in the labour market, particularly a decline in the number of 16- to 19-year-olds entering that market (a decline projected at 1 million between 1983 and 1993) were expected to open up lasting new opportunities for women. By the end of the century, women were expected to account for 90 per cent of the total increase in the size of the work force.

17. The Government continued to encourage the provision of training to help women who wished to return to work, to enter areas traditionally dominated by men or to overcome past inequalities. It had just launched a major campaign in conjunction with the British Broadcasting Corporation and local radio stations to publicize training assistance for women returning to the work place. The fully funded Training Agency had many programmes of special interest to women, including some single-sex courses, part-time and flexible time training, and open learning. Single parents attending training courses could receive up to £50 a week per child towards child care under the Employment Training Programme.

18. Employers were becoming increasingly aware of the need to make their recruitment, training and overall employment policies attractive to women. The Government actively encouraged that approach and, as a major employer, set an example with a positive policy involving increased opportunities for part-time work, career breaks for staff who wished to take time off to care for young children or elderly relatives, assistance with child care arrangements, improved

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maternity leave provisions, and the introduction of paternity leave. Already, 236 senior civil servants were working part-time. A small but growing number of firms were taking similar steps.

19. The Government realized that family responsibilities could be a particular barrier to women who wished to return to work and pursue a career, that women suffered the disadvantages of interrupted careers and that, on returning to work, women might have to take less demanding, lower-grade work. The Ministerial Group had therefore given priority to co-ordinating the work already done on child care within individual Government departments. In April 1989, it had developed a "five-point plan" on child care covering: improvements in the registration and enforcement arrangements for day nurseries, child minders and play groups; further encouragement to employers to use the tax reliefs available for providing child care facilities; guidance to local education authorities and schools encouraging the use of school premises for after-school and holiday schemes; further start-up support for the voluntary sector; and the desirability of a voluntary accreditation scheme to provide information about the availability and quality of child care facilities.

20. The first four points had already been implemented and work was in progress on the fifth. Employers were already demonstrating growing interest in providing employees with child care. Some were opening crèches for employees' children and others were helping their employees by giving them financial assistance or "child care vouchers".

21. The Government remained committed to improvements in the area of women's health. Women's health had been specifically identified as part of the responsibilities of a minister at the Department of Health since 1986. Ministers met regularly with representatives from the National Council of Women and affiliated organizations to discuss women's health issues, and took the opportunity to meet individual women's organizations. The Department of Health was represented on the women's health forum of the Health Education Authority (HEA).

22. On 10 June 1988, a full day's debate on women's health had been held in the House of Commons. The Department of Health had also organized a conference, "Promoting Women's Health", in London on 22 June 1988, at which a number of eminent speakers had addressed a wide range of women's health issues. The Department was also currently funding over 30 voluntary organizations and charities concerned with women's health and welfare, such as the Maternity Alliance, the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign and Women's Health Concern.

23. In addition to general health services for both sexes, certain services were needed to meet the specific needs of women. The United Kingdom had been the first country in the European Community to launch a nation-wide breast cancer screening programme and a comprehensive cervical cancer screening service. Both services were based on computerized call and recall and had comprehensive back-up facilities for diagnosis, treatment, counselling and after-care.

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24. The Government remained extremely concerned about the threat of AIDS to women as well as men in the United Kingdom. By the end of October 1989, 109 cases of AIDS in women had been reported. By the end of September 1989, 1,201 reports of women who were HIV positive had been received. The Department of Health had provided funding to local health authorities for AIDS co-ordinators, whose functions included liaison with local voluntary and statutory organizations with a view to developing a policy and a joint strategy for HIV prevention. That task included identifying gaps in provisions for specific groups, including women. The Department had also funded Positively Women, a voluntary organization for women who were HIV positive.

25. The Health Education Authority (HEA) had assumed responsibility for the Government's nation-wide AIDS public education campaign in October 1987. It promoted programmes aimed at the general population and at specific groups in society in order to increase awareness of the dangers of HIV infection and AIDS and of how people could protect themselves. Women were identified as a key group and the Authority had developed materials specifically aimed at young, sexually active women. It had supported the development of a Women's Health Network which included a data base, a directory of women's health initiatives, the identification of training needs in relation to HIV and AIDS health promotion work, pilot projects targeted at youth groups, women's organizations, and further education for women.

26. Increasing drug abuse among women, including pregnant women and women with young children, was a matter of growing concern. That trend had been highlighted in the Government's response to a report from the Social Services Select Committee, presented to Parliament in December 1985. Injecting drugs with shared equipment had been the major cause of known AIDS infection among women in the United Kingdom.

27. In some cases, the infection has been passed on to those women's babies. The Government had issued guidelines to health authorities in 1986 on the development of drug abuse services, and there was now some improvement in that area. Clinics had been set up in cities such as Glasgow and Birmingham. The Government was encouraging increased co-operation among the various agencies that provided services for women drug abusers. The Department of Health had sponsored a conference on parents who abused drugs and would be holding a seminar in 1990 on the needs of women substance abusers.

28. The Department had also been providing funds to the voluntary organization Drugs Alcohol Women Nationally (DAWN) to undertake a survey of the needs of women drug abusers and problem drinkers and to produce a directory of the corresponding services. The Government realized that there was a particular problem with the fact that minor tranquillizers were so often prescribed for women, a situation which could lead to dependence. Many of the advice and counselling services for drug abusers also offered help to those dependent on tranquillizers. Many of those services had been established with start-up grants from the Government or with funds made available to health authorities specifically for the development of such services. The Department was providing funding to MIND, the leading voluntary organization in the mental health field, to establish a national directory of

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services for tranquillizer dependents and the production of up-to-date publicity material.

29. The Government recognized that smoking was a major cause of preventable illness and death in the United Kingdom. Lung cancer deaths among women had been increasing in recent years and specific measures aimed at women smokers had therefore been taken. The HEA pregnancy book gave advice on giving up smoking and a recently announced campaign, to be run jointly by the Department of Health and HEA, would try to counter the alarming trend of smoking among teenage girls. The current voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry on advertising and promotion prohibited advertising in magazines a third or more of whose readers were young women. One of six health warnings, which must by law be printed on cigarette packets and related advertising, drew attention to the damage which smoking during pregnancy could do to an unborn baby.

30. Family planning services continued to be available nationally, free of charge, under the National Health Service (NHS). Voluntary agencies complemented the NHS services. People were free to choose their sources of family planning advice.

31. Comprehensive maternity services were also available under NHS, ranging from pre-natal care to care and support for mothers and new babies within the community. Services were available free of charge and organized on a local basis. The Government attached great importance to the availability of early and regular pre-natal care and advice for all pregnant women. HEA had produced a number of publications giving advice to women about pregnancy, childbirth and infant care, including a pregnancy book, first published in 1986, that was issued to all first-time expectant mothers.

32. The Government was eager to increase the numbers of female medical staff, both in the interests of women who chose to make a career in that field and in recognition of the fact that it could be very important for some women, such as those from some ethnic minorities, to have access to treatment by female medical staff. The proportion of female medical students had risen steadily to almost 50 per cent and that would be reflected increasingly in the proportion of women doctors.

33. The current distribution of female medical staff was extremely uneven between the different medical services. The Department of Health had commissioned research into the barriers that prevented women from achieving the levels of which they were capable. Some steps had been taken. An initiative called "Achieving a Balance", introduced in 1987, should help to eliminate career bottle-necks. Part-time training was now available at the senior registrar grade and might be extended to other grades. Guidelines on equal opportunities in appointment procedures were to be issued shortly and a working party on women in medicine would soon make recommendations on all issues affecting women doctors.

34. The Ministerial Group had also recently been considering the issue of domestic violence in the context of a Home Office research study on the subject and a report

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from the Women's National Commission. The Group had done further work in July 1989 on the use of criminal and civil law and the response to domestic violence by the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts; on how Social Services Departments and health services could give more effective help to victims of domestic violence; on guidance and materials currently available to schools in that area; and on the role of personal and social education in helping to prevent domestic violence.

35. In education, the Government had maintained its clear commitment to the need to promote equal opportunities in schools and to encourage girls in those areas of the curriculum where they had not participated fully in the past. The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 provided the legislative framework for such efforts. Responsibility for education was shared by the central Government, local education authorities and the teaching professions. The Government's oversight of the system was largely exercised through important specific functions relating, for example, to teacher supply and training and the inspection of schools. Recent education legislation had added to the duties of the central Government but primary responsibility for the administration of schools lay with individual local education authorities and schools.

36. Section 1 of the Education Reform Act of 1988 made the Secretaries of State for Education for England and Wales responsible for ensuring that the curriculum of publicly funded schools prepared young people for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The guidelines issued to schools by the Department of Education and Science made it clear that schools should ensure that their programmes of work-related activities were free of both overt and covert stereotyping and should pay particular attention to equal opportunities.

37. The Secretaries of State for Education for Wales and Scotland were empowered to intervene directly in cases where they judged that discrimination, other than that relating to employment, had occurred in most publicly funded educational institutions.

38. While curriculum developments in individual schools remained largely a matter for local decision, the introduction of the Education Reform Act established a framework for equality in the provision of education. Girls would be following the same broad and balanced curriculum as boys, up to the age of 16. Any current sex discrimination and stereotyping in subject choice would thus be eliminated. Both boys and girls would study science, technology and a modern foreign language up to the age of 16. Through the Act's emphasis on the preparation of pupils for adult and working life, the teaching of cross-curricular themes, such as personal and social education, would be included in the whole curriculum for boys and girls up to the age of 16. That would focus attention on issues such as sex discrimination and stereotyping and encourage positive changes in attitude.

39. Local education authorities and schools themselves had also taken equal opportunity initiatives. Some had appointed full-time advisers while others had designated teacher advisers or teacher co-ordinators to work full-time in that

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area. Others had advisers, often women, who were asked to take responsibility for equal opportunities in addition to their subject responsibilities.

40. The three major centrally funded initiatives aimed at preparing schoolchildren for working life had emphasized the need to avoid sex stereotyping in courses and teaching materials. Equality of opportunity was integral to the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), which now extended to every education authority in the country and supported and supplemented the objectives of the national curriculum in making the curriculum for 14- to 18-year-olds more relevant to adult and working life. Government-funded programmes supporting the use of micro-computers in schools had also stressed the development of courses and teaching materials that avoided stereotyping, and the new City Technology Colleges were required to provide equal opportunities for boys and girls as a condition of funding, by selecting pupils in accordance with objective admissions criteria irrespective of their sex. As a result, more girls were expected to take up science, engineering and technological subjects and more parents to encourage their daughters to follow such careers.

41. Examination results showed that there had been some improvements in reducing sex stereotyping in schools and in girls' examination performance. Over the past 10 years, there had been a steady growth in the proportion of girls who took chemistry at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level: about one in four in 1988 as compared with one in six in 1979. In 1988, one in every five girls had taken physics, as compared with one in every eight in 1979. Overall, girls had achieved greater examination success than boys at the GCSE and equivalent levels. The proportion attaining grades A-D in five or more subjects, for example, was consistently higher than that for boys. Boys were proportionately more successful than girls in attaining three or more "A" levels, but the gap had narrowed in recent years.

42. The Government also had priorities in further and higher education that should be beneficial to women, particularly mature students with domestic responsibilities. Those included improving the provision of guidance and information about educational opportunities; encouraging more flexible forms of education, such as open learning schemes, that tried to meet the needs and circumstances of individual students; and increasing the participation rate among women and others who were underrepresented. Women accounted for nearly 75 per cent of enrolments at local authority adult education centres.

43. Turning to the country's social security scheme, she said that it had originally been designed to provide basic maintenance benefits tailored to the presumed circumstances of the individual, according to sex, age and marital status. It had therefore overtly treated women and men differently and had included a special set of provisions for married women. The past 20 years had seen extensive changes in the scheme, which had moved away from a system of protection for married women based largely on rights derived from their husbands' contributions to one where women were increasingly building up their own rights to contributory benefits and had gained access to non-contributory benefits on the

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same terms as men. In so far as differences remained, they favoured women in that they recognized the needs of the many older women who had not contributed in the past and who relied on their husbands' contribution records for protection in old age, and the needs of those who had planned their lives around the current female pension age. Those differences would probably become redundant in the longer term, but the Government had made it clear that total and immediate implementation of a draft directive proposed by the European Commission to eliminate all remaining differences of treatment would be impracticable and undesirable.

44. Specific changes had been made in the scheme as it affected married women. Since April 1977, newly married women and married women re-entering the work force could no longer choose not to contribute for the main benefits in the National Insurance scheme, so that all working women would eventually be covered. The 1975 Social Security Pensions Act protected the entitlement to basic pension of persons unable to work because of domestic responsibilities, such as care of elderly and invalid relatives as well as child care. Differences in the rates of unemployment and sickness benefit for married women had been abolished. Lastly, private occupational schemes were prohibited from discriminating against women in admission to membership.

45. Those changes had all predated the European Commission's first proposals on equal treatment. Some further changes had been made by 1984 to implement the 1979 European Commission directive outlawing differences of treatment in State schemes, except in some specifically defined situations that mainly favoured women.

46. Some of the significant further developments in social security legislation included the provision allowing women to claim for a partner on the same terms as men under the income support scheme, which had replaced the supplementary benefit scheme; the reformed housing benefit scheme; the community charge benefit which, as of April 1990, would offset the cost to low-income families of the new local taxes; the family credit scheme for low-income families, which favoured women to the extent that the benefit was usually paid to the woman, as was the non-income-related child benefit; a severe disablement allowance, which was available to women and men on equal terms, replacing two separate forms of non-contributory invalidity pension; and the invalid care allowance, paid to the caregiver rather than the invalid, which had been made available to married women on the same basis as single women and men in 1986, following a decision of the European Court.

47. Equal treatment in occupational schemes was now a matter of law, with the additional requirement that schemes which "contracted out" of the State earnings-related additional pension must provide widowers' as well as widows' pensions. The State earnings-related additional pension, which was obligatory for employed persons who did not have "contracted out" occupational or personal pensions, made no distinction between women and men, and either spouse could inherit a deceased spouse's pension rights.

48. Turning to the matter of women in the civil service and public appointments, the civil service had adopted a formal programme of action to achieve equality of

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opportunity for women staff in 1984. Progress was monitored annually by the Personnel Management and Equal Opportunities Division of the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service. Two published reports (Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service: Progress Report 1984-1987; and Career Break and Child Care Provisions in the Civil Service, Progress Report 1989) showed the significant progress made in recent years towards achieving greater equality of opportunity for women staff.

49. The Government remained committed to extending the influence of women on advisory and policy-making bodies and, with women's organizations, had taken steps to encourage women to put their names forward for consideration as well as to ensure that more women were actually appointed. The latest figures showed that in April 1989 some 23 per cent of all public appointments had been held by women, as compared with 21.4 per cent in 1988 and 19.1 per cent in 1986. As a result of the "Women into Public Life" campaign organized jointly by the Fawcett Society and the 300 Group with governmental support, 600 names had been submitted to the Public Appointments Office. Several additional initiatives were under consideration.

50. On ratifying the Convention, the United Kingdom had made a number of interpretative reservations and declarations. Those were an indication of how seriously it took its international obligations and it kept them under constant review and was prepared to withdraw them whenever possible.

51. Thus, the United Kingdom had entered a reservation to article 13 in order to allow the income and capital gains tax system to continue in its present form, even though in some respects it did not afford married women equal treatment with men. The initial report before the Committee referred to the proposals put forward in the Government's 1986 Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation to introduce a new system of independent taxation for husbands and wives. The response to the proposals had shown that there was clearly a widespread feeling that married women should be given independence and privacy in their tax affairs. A system of independent taxation of husbands and wives had been enacted by the Finance Act of 1988, to take effect from April 1990. The rule which currently added the income and capital gains of a married woman to those of her husband, and taxed their combined incomes as his, would be abolished and the system of personal tax allowances would be revised. Married women would enjoy the same independence and privacy in their tax affairs as their husbands and all other taxpayers. They would receive their own personal allowances and would be responsible for handling their own tax affairs. A married couple would still be entitled to an extra allowance, because the Government believed that the tax system should continue to recognize marriage.

52. Those changes would enable the United Kingdom to withdraw the major part of its reservation to article 13 when independent taxation took effect in April 1990. After that date, its reservation should state that it reserved the right, notwithstanding the obligations undertaken in article 13 or any other relevant article, to continue to apply the income tax legislation that entitled a man who had his wife living with him during the year of assessment to a deduction from his

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total income of an amount larger than that to which an individual in any other case was entitled. Her Government would take steps to withdraw the redundant parts of its reservation to article 13.

53. Concerning employment legislation, the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts had been extended to offshore employment. The Employment Act of 1989 further freed women from unnecessary restrictions on their employment. Its key provisions were that most legislation that still discriminated between men and women in employment and training was replaced or amended to remove the discrimination. That included the ban on women working underground in mines, which would enable her Government to remove one of its reservations in due course, and some restrictions on their working with machinery in factories. Protection was, however, being retained in some special cases, such as work that, through exposure to radiation or lead, might endanger the health of an unborn child. Under the new Act, women would become eligible to receive statutory redundancy payments up to the same age as their male counterparts, namely 65.

54. There had also been developments in the case law relating to the Equal Pay Acts that were beneficial to women. They included removal of the six months' time-limit on claims under the Act; establishing the importance of analytical job evaluation in equal value cases; the right of a woman claiming equal pay to have each individual term of her contract considered and upgraded to that of her male comparator even if her overall remuneration package was greater than his; and the right of a woman to compare herself with a man, or men, doing work of possibly equal value, even if there was a man, or men, doing the same work as the woman for the same pay. Case law had also shown the value of the Sex Discrimination Act in combating sexual harassment, and considerable sums of money had been awarded as compensation in such cases.

55. Two further changes in United Kingdom legislation concerned the Family Law Reform Act of 1987, certain provisions of which had come into force on 1 April 1989, and the Children Act of 1989. One of the primary objectives of the Family Law Reform Act of 1987 had been to remove legal discrimination against children born out of wedlock. The Act had also had the effect of eliminating certain disadvantages experienced by the mothers of such children in obtaining maintenance for them from the father. Lastly, under section 2(4) of the Children Act of 1989, the rule of law that a father was the natural guardian of his legitimate child had been abolished.

56. In concluding, she said that the United Kingdom was not complacent about the work that remained to be done. While equality for women in the United Kingdom was fully provided for in law, for many women there was still a long way to go in practice.

57. The CHAIRPERSON expressed appreciation for the comprehensive report before the Committee. The Committee also appreciated the valuable additional information just provided by the United Kingdom representative. In particular, the United Kingdom was to be commended for having consulted with non-governmental women's

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organizations prior to the preparation of the report. She noted that the United Kingdom also intended to consult with such organizations following consideration of the report by the Committee.

58. United Kingdom programmes to encourage women to broaden their educational and career choices were also noteworthy. Moreover, the United Kingdom had rightly identified the issues raised under article 5 of the Convention - traditional attitudes and stereotyping of women - as important issues. Reference had also been made to some excellent programmes on health and on violence against women.

59. She herself had some concerns, particularly about the number and extent of the reservations to articles of the Convention entered by the United Kingdom. She was pleased to note that the United Kingdom reservations to article 13 would, at least in part, be withdrawn. It was hard to tell whether the large number of reservations represented an attempt to interpret the Convention or an attempt to preserve indefinitely the current situation in the United Kingdom. She would appreciate further clarification in that connection. For example, it would be helpful for the Committee to know which of the reservations could at some time be considered for withdrawal and which reservations were intended to be permanent. Furthermore, the United Kingdom had not really provided enough gender-specific statistics to enable the Committee to measure progress under some of the articles of the Convention.

60. Ms. BERNARD said that the United Kingdom Government was to be commended for passing the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act of 1976 and the Family Law Reform Act of 1987. It was also to be commended for establishing the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Ministerial Group on Women's Issues. However, she was concerned at the large number of reservations that had been entered by the United Kingdom to the Convention. It was, of course, heartening that the United Kingdom reservations to article 13 would be largely withdrawn. She would be interested to know what the United Kingdom's intentions were with regard to its other reservations.

61. Overall, the report was informative and she welcomed the information on the British Virgin Islands, the Falkland Islands, the Isle of Man and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The United Kingdom was to be commended for submitting its report so soon after ratification of the Convention.

62. Ms. FORDE said that the statement by the representative of the United Kingdom clearly updated much of the material in the initial report. She too appreciated the fact that the United Kingdom had submitted its report so soon after ratification of the Convention. It was regrettable that the United Kingdom had entered so many reservations to the Convention, and it was to be hoped that the withdrawal of reservations was on the United Kingdom's immediate agenda. The report contained a great deal of useful information and showed evidence of a considerable amount of action. The parts of the report dealing with the Territories for which the United Kingdom was internationally responsible were also enlightening. She assumed that Anguilla and Montserrat were not covered in the report because they were associated States, not dependent Territories.

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63. Ms. CORTI said that a wealth of information had been provided both in the report and in the statement just made by the United Kingdom representative. The statistical information provided was very useful. Moreover, the United Kingdom was to be particularly commended for the part of the report dealing with violence against women. The report showed that the United Kingdom had adopted a considerable amount of relevant legislation and had established many appropriate institutions. However, it did not provide a clear picture of the de facto situation of women in the United Kingdom. With regard to the Equal Opportunities Commission, she wished to know how its members were appointed and why it had been set up within the Home Office. She noted that one of the Commission's functions was to put forward proposals for the amendment of legislation. She would appreciate clarification of the process in question.

64. Ms. WALLA-TCHANGAI said that she welcomed the measures taken by the United Kingdom to achieve equality of men and women. However, she hoped that the many reservations to the Convention entered by the United Kingdom would be given close consideration with a view to their withdrawal. Moreover, she would appreciate having more details about progress in the United Kingdom towards equal pay.

65. Ms. ILIC welcomed the abundance of material provided by the United Kingdom in its report. She was, however, concerned at the large number of United Kingdom reservations to the Convention. She was therefore pleased to note that they would be kept under constant review and would be withdrawn where possible. She would be interested to know whether the United Kingdom Government had entered similar reservations to the corresponding articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. If so, she wished to know whether the content of the reservations to the International Covenant was the same and, if not, why not. She would also welcome information on crimes committed by women, how female criminals were treated, and whether United Kingdom citizens and other United Kingdom residents were given the same treatment.

66. Ms. DIALLO SOUMARE expressed appreciation for the report submitted by the United Kingdom. She hoped that the United Kingdom Government would be able to withdraw its reservations to the Convention, since the United Kingdom had made a major effort to eliminate discrimination against women and served as an example for many developing countries.

67. Ms. ALFONSIN DE FASAN said that she was, of course, speaking as a member of the Committee and not as a representative of Argentina. She also wished to place her remarks in the context of the recently improved relationship between Argentina and the United Kingdom. That improvement had been made possible by the two countries' joint decision to leave aside the issue of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands. The Malvinas Islands should therefore not have been included in the report as part of the territory of the United Kingdom.

68. Having said that, she wished to express her appreciation for the comprehensive report submitted by the United Kingdom Government, which showed that the United Kingdom took the implementation of the Convention seriously. At the same time, she

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(Ms. Alfonsin de Fasan)

noted that discrimination against women still persisted in the United Kingdom in some areas, such as admission to clubs and executive recruitment. The situation of rural women was also a matter of concern.

69. Ms. TALLAWY noted with interest that non-governmental organizations had been consulted prior to the preparation of the report. She would welcome more information on the way in which the various government departments involved had contributed to the preparation of the report. She wondered, for example, how the departments' contributions had been co-ordinated and how progress had been monitored and evaluated. With regard to the United Kingdom's reservations to the Convention, she was concerned about their scope and their significance. It was also a matter of concern that United Kingdom legislation prevailed over the provisions of the Convention. She noted that the United Kingdom understood the main purpose of the Convention to be the "reduction" of discrimination against women. It must be emphasized that the Convention referred to the "elimination" of discrimination. She also noted that the United Kingdom reserved the right to regard the provisions of a number of legislative acts as constituting appropriate measures for the practical realization of the objectives of the Convention in the social and economic circumstances of the United Kingdom, and to continue to apply those provisions accordingly, and that that reservation would apply equally to any future measures. If the legislative acts in question were in keeping with the aims of the Convention, she did not understand why they needed to be mentioned in a reservation. Moreover, she would be grateful for a clarification of the United Kingdom's position on "the affairs of religious denominations". In so far as statistical data were concerned, it would have been preferable to include such information under the discussion of individual articles. Moreover, the statistical data provided were not broken down by sex and were rather hard to understand.

70. Ms. AKAMATSU said that she had been shocked at the number of reservations entered by the Government of the United Kingdom to the Convention and wondered what kind of debate had taken place on them. Nevertheless, she was pleased that the Government intended to withdraw a number of those reservations; she wished to know the nature of each reservation to be withdrawn. She also wished to know whether the reservation concerning the peerage system had been the object of much criticism by women.

71. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS said that she had examined the seven reservations made by the Government of the United Kingdom carefully and, in many cases, had found it difficult to determine whether a reservation was a reservation per se or whether it was merely an explanation of how a given article of the Convention differed from United Kingdom practice. Reservation (c) pertaining to article 1 (CEDAW/C/5/Add.52, p. 5) suggested a fear on the part of the Government that the Convention might call into question its right to self-determination with respect to succession to the Throne and to customary law. International law was not coercive in that regard, however, and could only make recommendations. Perhaps the United Kingdom was ascribing too much significance to some of the provisions of the Convention, and that might account for the large number of reservations.

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72. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that she was particularly concerned at the phrasing of the United Kingdom reservation to article 2 of the Convention. She could not comprehend how "overriding considerations of economic policy" could take precedence over the obligation to eliminate discrimination against women, and requested an explanation in that regard. She commended the efforts made by the United Kingdom to ensure equality in the area of education, and wished to know whether any studies had been conducted to evaluate the impact of legislation and other regulations in that area.

73. It was an interesting idea to appoint a number of ministers responsible for women's issues in the various government departments, and she wished to know whether those ministers had been given the necessary support staff. If there were not enough support staff, the ministers would not be duly informed of new developments and ideas. The appointment of a Government minister to represent the Women's National Commission could lead to conflict in cases where the opinions of the Commission differed from that of the minister.

74. In preparing its report, the United Kingdom Government had solicited comments from the Equal Opportunities Commission. Since she could not find the Commission's comments anywhere in the report, she wished to know whether the Commission had expressed any criticism of the report.

75. With regard to training courses for civil service staff, she wished to know whether such staff were being trained only in matters of non-discrimination with respect to personnel policy in the civil service, or whether they were being trained about the issue of non-discrimination per se. Were civil servants being trained to be alert to the different effects of non-discriminatory legislation on men and women?

76. Ms. OESER said that she was pleased that the Government of the United Kingdom had discussed its report with some 85 women's organizations. The Government had entered an unusually large number of reservations to the Convention, and she was glad that it intended to keep those reservations under constant review with the intention of withdrawing them as soon as possible. Nevertheless, she hoped that the United Kingdom representative would explain why her Government had considered it necessary to make so many reservations.

77. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said she was pleased that the United Kingdom Government had laid particular emphasis on the areas of employment and education. She had been surprised to learn that the Department of Education and a number of other departments had supported women's rights with such enthusiasm, and the Committee should consider thanking them in some way. With regard to some of the programmes, proposals and positive action initiated by the Equal Opportunities Commission, she did not see any mention of the role which mass women's organizations played in such efforts.

78. She regretted the fact that the United Kingdom Government had deemed it necessary to make so many reservations. The reservation concerning article 2 of the Convention seemed to make equality dependent on the health of the economy. She

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(Ms. Laiou-Antoniou)

also had the impression that the Equal Opportunities Commission did not have the necessary decentralized machinery to promote equality in the remoter areas of the United Kingdom, and she requested additional information on the adequacy of the decentralized system in the United Kingdom. She would also welcome further information on the staff and structure of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

79. In the reports concerning the Isle of Man, the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Falkland Islands, she had read of thousands of women living under very discriminatory conditions. On the Isle of Man, for example, women could be dismissed from work if they became pregnant and in the Turks and Caicos Islands, women received only half their salary when they took maternity leave. In all the Crown Territories, women could not receive a tertiary education unless they went to the United Kingdom. There was no special legislation to safeguard women's rights in those Territories and there was no way for women to claim their rights in a visible and effective way. Medical care was highly insufficient, especially in the Falkland Islands. In general, it seemed that the Convention did not apply in the Crown Territories and she hoped that the representative of the United Kingdom would make some comments in that regard.

80. The United Kingdom Government did not seem particularly concerned that, while 43 per cent of all women participated in the labour force, half of them were engaged in part-time work and women earned only 76 per cent of what men earned; 91 per cent of all people working part-time in the United Kingdom were women. It appeared that that situation would perpetuate discrepancies between the incomes of men and women and that women would continue to be poorer than men.

81. The limited allocation of funds to social welfare seemed to affect women much more than men. She wondered whether, in general, the United Kingdom's social welfare budget was shrinking.

82. Ms. UKEJE said that the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 sought not only to ensure de jure equality but also to encourage de facto equality. She believed that if that Act, as well as the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act and the Employment Act were strictly implemented, it would be seen that many of the reservations entered by the United Kingdom were unnecessary. She hoped that the United Kingdom would have withdrawn all of its reservations by the time it submitted its second periodic report.

83. Ms. GONZALEZ-MARTINEZ associated herself with earlier statements about the large number of reservations, and also endorsed the comments made by Ms. Ilić with respect to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Kingdom continued to use the offensive and demeaning word "illegitimate" to describe children born out of wedlock. In many countries, that term had been deleted from the record. She wished to know what was the descriptive term applied to children whose mothers were not accompanied by the father when registration took place. She also wished to know how many refugee women were living in the United Kingdom.

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(Ms. Gonzalez-Martinez)

84. The initial report on the British Virgin Islands estimated that the population of that Territory was about 14,000 and that average per capita income was \$6,000 per annum. Tourism, construction and banking and finance were the main activities in the British Virgin Islands. No information had been provided about per capita income on the Isle of Man, however, although it was approximately three times larger than the Virgin Islands, had a population of 65,000 and was also experiencing rapid growth in its financial sector. She hoped that the United Kingdom representative would explain why there had been such rapid growth in the financial sector and banking services in the Virgin Islands and on the Isle of Man, and that she would provide information about the amount of United Kingdom investment in those Territories.

85. Ms. SINEGIORGIS said that while the Government of the United Kingdom was to be commended for its prompt submission of an excellent report, she was concerned at the number of reservations which the United Kingdom had made and hoped that those reservations would be withdrawn by the time the United Kingdom submitted its second periodic report.

86. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to consider the report with respect to specific articles of the Convention.

Article 2

87. Ms. BERNARD said that, according to the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, anyone who considered that he or she had been the victim of unlawful discrimination had a right to direct access to the courts or to an industrial tribunal. She wished to know how many cases had been heard by the courts or by industrial tribunals since the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act, and whether many women had resorted to that remedy.

88. Ms. NOVIKOVA wished to know what authorities, in addition to the Equal Opportunities Commission, were responsible for applying appropriate sanctions in cases of non-compliance with legislation forbidding discrimination against women, and how individual women could make use of and enjoy such rights.

89. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the Ministerial Group on women's issues had the role of co-ordinating and commenting on current policy proposals as they were submitted to the Cabinet.

Article 4

90. Ms. NOVIKOVA said that, as had been previously recommended in the Committee, temporary special measures designed to accelerate *de facto* equality should be applied more broadly. There was still progress to be made regarding the number of women at the political decision-making level and she wondered what the Government's attitude was towards that issue.

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Article 5

91. Ms. FORDE said that despite public outcry and a barrage of legislation dealing with obscene publications and related matters, the popular press in the United Kingdom still published "pin-up" photographs regularly in their pages. She wondered whether serious consideration had been given to widening the scope of the Obscene Publication Acts to include publication of material which was degrading and insulting. She also wished to know whether the discussions currently going on between the Advertising Standards Authority and the Women's Media Action Group had resulted in the drawing up of a non-sexist advertising code.

92. Ms. CORTI said that, according to the report, the portrayal of women in the media generally reflected the patterns and attitudes of society at large. Unfortunately, prevailing attitudes in the United Kingdom, as in many other European countries, were degrading to women. She therefore wished to know whether the Equal Opportunities Commission was taking any steps to eliminate those attitudes.

93. While the United Kingdom had a substantial body of legislation dealing with pornography, she wondered whether, in a democracy, legislation was sufficient to solve the problem. Experience had shown that laws were not enough: constant monitoring and follow-up by law enforcement agencies and other bodies was necessary. She had not noticed any mention in the report of how such agencies were being used to combat the various forms of pornography.

94. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that, according to the report, there had been an increase in the number of women in broadcasting and journalism. She would appreciate specific figures on the number of women appointed to senior positions in those fields. The report also stated that the media were portraying males and females in broader, less stereotyped roles and she wished to know whether a specific agency was responsible for monitoring that trend. She would appreciate more information on the negotiations currently taking place between the Advertising Standards Authority and the Women's Media Action Group. Was there an existing code with respect to how women were portrayed in advertising and what were the demands of the Women's Media Action Group? She also wished to know whether job advertisements in newspapers were monitored and whether any cases of discriminatory advertising had been brought to court.

95. Ms. ESCOBAR said that she too was concerned at the large number of reservations to the Convention made by the United Kingdom.

96. Having had a women Prime Minister for several years now, the United Kingdom was unique among the countries of the world. She wondered whether that situation had had a significant influence on anti-discriminatory practices and on relations between men and women.

97. With respect to the Obscene Publication Acts of 1959, she would appreciate a definition of the terms "depravation" and "corruption". Specifically, which body established the criteria defining those terms?

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98. Ms. NOVIKOVA asked whether any sociological studies had been carried out in the United Kingdom to measure changes in public attitudes towards the roles of the sexes. Such data could provide feedback on the effectiveness of particular Government anti-discrimination policies.

Article 6

99. Ms. FORDE asked whether British researchers had investigated the relationship between prostitution and the spread of HIV infection. With respect to the issue of rape, she recalled that a decision in one such case had aroused controversy because it had been assumed that if the man had had reasonable grounds for believing that the woman had consented to sexual intercourse, he might then escape legal sanctions for rape. Section 1 (2) of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 1976 appeared to institutionalize that logic and she wondered whether there had been any pressure from women's organizations to rethink that legislation. While there was a mandatory maximum sentence for persons found guilty of sexual offences, the report made no mention of a mandatory minimum sentence - was legislation to that effect being considered? She wished to know whether rape victims received follow-up support from government agencies. Lastly, she would like to know whether the issues she had just mentioned had been included in the recent review carried out by the Criminal Law Revision Committee.

100. Ms. CORTI said that United Kingdom legislation aimed at controlling the effects of prostitution did not deal directly with prostitutes themselves and with the economic causes of the problem. The United Kingdom representative had said that certain centres or organizations for the control of prostitution were being replaced by other agencies. Clarification of that matter would be appreciated. While she commended the fact that a Sexual Offences Act existed, she supported the statement by the previous speaker concerning section 1 (2) of the 1976 Act. She would also appreciate further information on the composition of juries hearing cases under that section. With regard to unreported rape, she wondered whether an organization such as a women's rights group could become a civil party in such a case. Her own country had legislation along those lines. She supported the legislation concerning domestic violence and wished to know whether there had been instances in which women had refused to report a rape or bring action in cases of sexual offences committed within the family.

101. Ms. WALLA-TCHANGAI said that with regard to the law penalizing individuals who lived off the earnings of prostitutes, she wished to know exactly who those individuals were and what penalties they risked.

102. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING asked whether the Government of the United Kingdom was aware of the recent increase in video cassettes available in Europe, many of which depicted violence against women and children. Was the Government taking any measures in that field?

103. She wished to know whether trafficking in women from developing countries existed in the United Kingdom and, if so, what efforts the Government had made in that area.

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(Ms. Schöpp-Schilling)

104. She would appreciate any statistics regarding the number, if any, of HIV infected prostitutes. Furthermore, had the Government considered setting up training programmes to guide prostitutes into other professions?

105. She wished to know whether the special programmes to train police in handling family violence against women formed part of the normal curriculum for law enforcement officers.

106. She would appreciate information on the recommendations made by the Criminal Law Revision Committee. Specifically, what were those recommendations and had they been implemented?

107. Ms. ESCOBAR said that she would appreciate some statistics on the situation in the British Virgin Islands with respect to rape. Since British law penalized those who lived off the earnings of prostitutes, she wished to know whether that legislation would apply to the husband of a prostitute.

108. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said it appeared from the report that there were a very large number of prostitutes in the United Kingdom. She wished to know whether any special programmes were envisaged to deal with that situation. The high incidence of rape also seemed to point to a serious social problem and she wondered whether consideration was being given to changing current legislation in that area. According to the report, of the total number of males indicted for rape in 1985, only half had been found guilty. She would appreciate an explanation of those figures.

109. Ms. PILATAXI DE ARENAS said that the increase in the number of cases of rape in England and Wales was alarming, although some of that increase could be attributed to wider reporting of the offence. In any event, the report made no mention of judicial proceedings with respect to sexual offences. She would appreciate more information regarding the guidelines on rape which had been issued by the Home Office in Scotland.

110. With respect to the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 1976, it was not clear why the question of consent to sexual intercourse had been incorporated into that legislation. If consent had been given, a sexual offence would, by definition, not exist.

111. Any act of sexual intercourse between children under the age of 14 should not be considered as rape. At the same time, there should be a special agency to ensure that a female child involved in such a case received follow-up treatment.

Article 7

112. Ms. CORTI asked why the report devoted only one paragraph to the issue of women's representation in Parliament. She wondered whether women's organizations in the United Kingdom were active in supporting female candidates for election.

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(Ms. Corti)

113. Discrimination against women still existed in the civil service in the United Kingdom. There was only a very small percentage of women in the upper ranks of that service. While the Government had taken some measures to rectify the situation, more positive action was required.

114. Ms. GUAN MINQIAN said she shared the concerns of other Committee members regarding the large number of reservations made by the United Kingdom.

115. By comparison with other countries, the United Kingdom had a very low percentage of women in Parliament. She would like to know the exact percentage of women ministers and what steps the Government was taking to eliminate discrimination in political life.

116. Ms. BERNARD wished to know the percentage of women judges and magistrates in the British judiciary. With respect to the British Virgin Islands, how many women were Permanent Secretaries and heads of department? Also, what were the possibilities for women in terms of upward mobility in the Government and private sectors in the United Kingdom?

117. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that certain political parties were implementing a policy of affirmative action for women candidates. She would like more information about those parties and about the results of their efforts.

118. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that British women's lack of participation in public life was deplorable. Did the Government have any plans to institute a quota system or other measures to increase women's participation in public life?

119. Ms. UKEJE said that under the Sexual Discrimination Act of 1975, certain civil service posts had been restricted to men. She would like some clarification of that point. She agreed with the previous speaker that the low level of participation by women in public life was a discouraging sign. She also wished to know whether a review had been made of the new appraisal system for civil service promotion. She would appreciate more information on the efforts of the Women's National Commission to assist women in obtaining public appointments.

120. Ms. TALLAWY said she was pleased that the regulation forcing married women to resign from the diplomatic service had been eliminated in 1972. She would appreciate clarification with regard to the joint posting of married diplomats. Specifically, were they posted to the same embassies and did they enjoy separate or combined rights? Also, more information would be welcome on efforts to increase the awareness of foreign service officers with regard to personnel policy.

121. Ms. GUAN MINQIAN requested more specific figures on the number of women serving in international organizations. What was the ratio between men and women?

122. Ms. ILIĆ asked for more information on the special unpaid leave granted to the spouse in cases where a couple was posted abroad. Was that unpaid leave used mainly by women? Could the period of the special unpaid leave be counted for promotion purposes and for other benefits provided to international civil servants?

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123. Ms. BERNARD asked whether efforts were being made to encourage women to join the diplomatic service, since the current number of female diplomats was rather low. Also, what were the possibilities of advancement for women in the diplomatic service?

124. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING requested clarification with regard to the manner in which the work of a diplomat's wife was recognized.

125. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked how many times the special unpaid leave for spouses could be used.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.