

Podcast Transcript



Gender Equalities at Work – Trade Unions in the Film and Television Industry

Frances: Hello, I'm Frances Galt, and I'm a Research Fellow on the Gender Equalities at Work project, based at the University of the West of England. I work alongside Hazel Conley on the Equal Pay strand of the project, and I'm currently focusing on equal pay disputes in the 1960s and '70s, so looking at the sort of earlier decades covered by the project's remit.

My previous research is on women's trade union activism in the British film and television industries. For this research, I combined archival research with oral history to examine the relationship between women workers and trade unions in three iterations of the technicians' union; The Association of Cine-Technicians, The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, and the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union, between 1933 and 2017. I recently published this research in a book with the Bristol University Press, and the title of that book is *Women's Activism Behind the Screens: Trade Unions and Gender Inequality in the British Film and Television Industries*.

Sarah: My name's Sarah Boston. I've sort of got three strands to my career, one of which was a documentary film-maker, through most of my sort of productive life, a certain amount of teaching documentary film-making, but also writing. And one of the key things that I have written is a history of women workers in the trade union movement, starting in the early 19th century, with updated and updated editions, ending up in 2010. But also, I was also one of the people who was very involved in women's activism in the union in ACTT, the

Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, during the period which Frances covers in her book, so I'm a major oral history contributor to that book.

Frances: Yeah. And so, today we're going to sort of focus on the 1970s and 1980s, and campaigns that emerged in the trade union movement, specifically the ACTT in this period. So in the context of sort of the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement and New Left, the introduction of equality legislation, an upsurge in industrial militancy, and the intensification of global protest movements during the '70s, women activists challenged gender discrimination in both the industry and the union, and in 1973, a Committee on Equality was established to investigate gender discrimination, which produced the publication, the Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries report, which Sarah was involved in campaigning for and in producing.

I thought we'd first maybe turn to equal pay, which is something that is kind of interesting in terms of the British Film and Television Industry, because they have sort of...are perhaps a little different from a lot of areas of British industry. For instance, the British film industry had equal pay in all its agreement from the 1930s, and this is something that the union repeatedly references throughout its history, sort of in the '50s and '60s when equal pay is a big campaigning priority within the wider Labour movement, articles besides that the ACTT has already achieved it, and therefore it is not a demand that they sort of need to pursue, that they have already achieved gender equality essentially.

But in the 1970s, this is revealed to sort of be untrue. Basically the Patterns report reveals that only 25% of women workers were covered by equal pay agreements in any real sense by the 1970s, and this is because women were segregated into certain areas of employment particularly the continuity supervisor and production secretary and ITV production assistants. And these ideas that equal pay had been achieved were really challenged at the 1973 Annual Conference, where we get, for instance, Maxine Baker, who was a researcher at the BBC, stating, "There's nothing so wonderful about a policy that says women senior engineers will receive exactly the same money as men on the same grade, if there aren't any women senior engineers in the first place." And Jenny Wilkes, who worked at Thames Euston, used the data analogy, saying, you know, "Having equal pay without equal opportunities is like having the right to get married without having access to any fellas," which I kind of love, and think it's a great sort of analogy.

And Sarah, you yourself wrote articles in this time period sort of challenging the ACTT's stance on equal pay, and I wondered if you wanted to talk a little about that?

Sarah: Well, I think the real push to that 1973 conference came from...mostly from women who were in ITV, worked in ITV, the Independent Television companies, and a few working...the London Women's Film Group, which I was partly involved with. Women were just so frustrated that the union kept blocking applications to become camera, to get into sound, get into dubbing, getting into editing. You had to apply to the craft area – so if you wanted to be a camerawoman, you had to apply to the camera section, and somehow, because it was a closed shop, you had to have a ticket to work, you had to have a job to get a ticket. It was sort of, like, catch-22, but somehow young blokes crossed that, managed to get past that catch-22, because they knew someone, some bloke would support them. And women were just being knocked back, knocked back, knocked back, and there was huge anger. And the point made at that conference – it's fine having equal pay, if you can't have the job...

And I personally, I was a researcher and I applied to be upgraded to be a director, having directed one half-hour film, a documentary for Granada Television, and I just kept being blocked, blocked, blocked. And I think Jenny Wilkes, who you mentioned, from Thames Television, was in the same position. So there was mounting anger from us. And also, it was a generational thing; we were kind of these post-war generation of women who mostly had had either university education, had been to arts schools, who had expectations, you know, we expected a better deal. And the person blocking us for that deal was the union.

Frances: Yeah. And I think in the sort of '60s and early '70s, was sort of emerging opportunities in film and television as well, with the expansion of independent television, would that be right?

Sarah: That's absolutely true. I mean, independent television, I think came into being in 1956, with a huge increase in jobs. And I think one of the things you point out, interestingly, in your book, which is the class division within the union. There was laboratories which did film processing, which was an awful, ghastly job for women, and often working at night, who very much were working class base. And so there wasn't often much mutual understanding between us middle class women who were in television, who had degrees and were expecting all sorts of things, and the women in the labs; all they wanted was slightly better pay and slightly better holidays and slightly better conditions. So that was very...so it's interesting within the union, you have these two very different sections.

Frances: Yeah. And this is something, like you said, that I argue in my book, like, that there is this sort of class divide, which shapes the demands that are put forward from each group. So really, the demands to address sort of equal pay and gender discrimination are coming

from women in TV and in freelance, pushing to have access to these jobs, to have access to training facilities, to be able to sort of combine work with motherhood, so demanding sort of childcare facilities. Whereas in the film laboratories, they're seeing a period of recession in the 1960s and into the 1970s, and like you said, are really therefore making demands about pay and conditions and things, and aren't really interested in pursuing these other demands. And really, there's, you know, there's a wonderful quote from a very critical man in one of these...in a film clip – I can't quite remember the name of the documentary, but it's an Open University documentary, and he is talking about how if you get childcare facilities, the pay rates will be reduced. So you get this real sense of the hostility, both from men, but also within this context of a decline in industry in the laboratories.

I wanted to return to something you mentioned, Sarah, about the London Women's Film Group, because looking through the journals and reading around it, the London Women's Film Group appears to have quite a significant role in the establishment of the Committee on Equality, and the demand for the Patterns report. Members from the London Women's Film Group – which I believe includes Jenny Wilkes – they wrote a letter into the journal, sort of demanding action on gender discrimination.

They produced a statement in 1976, I which they sort of make a claim for their role in it – so they say, you know, that they were already in the union, and I think that's important, the sort of trade union members who are also part of the London Women's Film Group, and that they began raising the issue of gender discrimination, and eventually the union formed a so-called antidiscrimination committee, which was later called the Committee on Equality. And that's sort of me paraphrasing there, the 1976 statement. And then they discuss in this statement that they established a Women's Caucus independent of this committee to put forward the demands at the Annual Conference. So they seem to play kind of this key role in advancing demands, and you mentioned that you were a member of the London Women's Film Group.

Sarah: I, well, my memory is...you put too much stress on the role they play. There was a lot of interrelation between a lot of the women who were part of the London Women's Film Group, or who were part of the union, who were part of...you know. But I certainly wouldn't give them the credit you do. I mean, they certainly were active women, but that's just, you know, history, and people have a different kind of interpretation of roles people play. And I don't know about this caucus – we certainly had meetings before the '73 Conference. We

worked out who would move motions, who would second them, you know, which motion would be asking for what, and also trying to get some men to support the motions, because we knew that. But I mean, all I can say is I don't quite agree with that weight put on their role. Maybe that's...they wish to claim that weight; I wouldn't, I think a whole group of women in and out of that group would claim a sort of important role in that.

Frances: Yeah, perhaps, because a lot of the evidence comes from people who were members and things, so perhaps it is, like you said, that they wish to claim that weight. I think they just do play, or you get a sense that external feminist allies are important to women's activism within the union, and that they were one of the key...

Sarah: I think the thing is, they're in London and they were a group. I mean, I joined them briefly, because we had no access to training, so to learn to use a 16mm camera, to do some sound, to do some editing, to sort of empower myself. I'd shot some of *The Amazing Equal Pay Show* with the group. But they were a group, whereas most of the other women, like Jenny Wilkes, like the people up in Granada, were very isolated, so they couldn't come together as one voice; they could join us. And we didn't have the internet, we didn't have mobile phones, we didn't have, you know, we had landline phones, which were very useful. But I think the thing is, the London Women's Film Group was a group, which could speak as a group, but you know...whereas a lot of the other women were isolated round the network, you know, and couldn't...but they were very, very important, latterly, particularly, the women from Granada Television, but, yes...

Frances: Yeah, and so, I was thinking we could talk a bit about sort of the influence as well of the time period. So we've sort of touched on external feminist allies, but something that seems important to the demands advancing in the union is this emergence of sort of feminist politics and revolutionary politics in the '60s and '70s. So you have sort of the Women's Liberation Movement and the New Left, the introduction of equality legislation in 1970 and then 1975, and an upsurge in industrial militancy, so there's a lot of strikes going on throughout British industry in this period – perhaps most famously the sort of miners' strikes in '72 and in '74. And then the intensification of global protest movements, so the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in the sort of summer of '68, and things like that. How much do you think that played a role in your demand for change or to challenge gender discrimination in the film and television industries?

Sarah: I think it played a huge role. I mean, the late '60s/early '70s were a kind of dynamic time, you know, you were down there in Grosvenor Square demonstrating against the Vietnam

War, or there was Paris and riots and, you know, there was feminism, there was women's...the...I wasn't at it, but the first Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin College in 19...I think it was '70. You know, the whole thing was...books were coming out, you know, there was women consciousness raising, there was anti-apartheid, there was the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, there was the Rolling Stones, there was... You know, the whole time was buzzing – intellectually, politically, socially. You know, we had the pill, we were the first generation who had the pill, you know, we had some more control over our fertility. These were all things that were happening in the late '60s and early '70s, and the women's sort of activism was part of that.

I think the trade union activism was largely...the rate of strikes were getting more and more and more. But largely, they were very male-dominated. I mean, all the unions were male-dominated, you know, so to get a voice within a union for women was quite a struggle.

Frances: Yeah. And so, in 1973, the women in the ACTT demanded an investigation into discrimination, which then produced the *Patterns of Discrimination* report. And as you've mentioned, this is sort of in a male-dominated trade union, in which you do see sort of challenges and hostility towards some of the demands of the report. And we can sort of return to that, but I just wanted to first talk a little about the *Patterns* report itself. So it was conducted by Sarah Benton, who was appointed as the researcher in 1973, and was a feminist activist who'd conducted research on the Labour movement, specifically the shop stewards movement in Sheffield in the '20s. And the committee adopted sort of collaborative working practices, so it used sort of...politically, a questionnaire to gather the data, but you can see from the sort of minutes and the material, the physical material that survived, you can see sort of collaborative working in the way that the documents are edited, and in the way the meetings record sort of the findings and how they're discussed.

And the *Patterns* report itself illuminated the widespread gender inequality within the film and television industries by quantifying women's experiences of discrimination. And it divided its analysis into eight sections, and these sections included things like blatant discrimination in the application process, the undervaluing of women's work, and a lack of training opportunities, the job structure in the industry. So we see that sort of, as we said about equal pay, you know, there is also sort of dead-end career tracks for women where they're confined to sort of the lower end of the pay scale, and the inadequacy of legislation.

And the *Patterns* report provided an extensive list of recommendations, which included the demands for a minimum of 26 weeks' paid maternity leave, the provision of childcare

facilities within the workplace and at union meetings, and the formalisation of the committee's position within the union. And the response was really positive to this, you know, where it was described as, "By far the most comprehensive and informed report to have been produced within the trade union movement so far," by Claire Johnston in 1975, and it was described by Benton as, "The beginning of the practical fight for women's rights." And later on, Coote and Campbell described it as, "A classic reference point for feminists and trade unionists, as well as a valuable bargaining counter for women in the ACTT." And I think, Sarah, you discussed it in a similar way in your book, that this is sort of a key turning point in the trade union movement, and particularly in the ACTT, that this report is extensive and that it's significant because it was being done, rather than necessarily its findings. What would you like to add?

Sarah: Well, first and foremost, we wanted, because so many men in the union kept saying, "Well, there isn't really discrimination, we all get equal pay." So we wanted the ammunition to say, "Yes, there is discrimination." And Sarah's report is just fantastic, you know, it just showed discrimination in every area, in every level, and in the union in its own employment policies. So yes, it fulfilled that role. I still think, I don't think any other union has ever done such a detailed analysis of the employment of its members, you know, their educational qualifications, their salaries, their career progression or lack of it. I mean, I haven't come across a report since, in my research for my book, that is as detailed and well argued. Yes, it stands as a document, which I fear if it was done again today, there wouldn't be huge changes; that's the sad thing.

Frances: Yeah, and I was thinking about that in terms of things like the recent equal pay cases in the BBC, such as Samira Ahmed's case, and things like the #MeToo movement really do show this sort of endemic gender discrimination which has sort of continued and still exists in today's industry.

Sarah: I think that's true. I mean, what's interesting over the years is – I was just reading a report I saw in the paper the other day about sexual harassment. I mean, we suffered it, but we kind of didn't feel it was an issue we could even speak about, you know. I mean, it was rife, and it's still rife. So there are a whole load of issues, and it doesn't really deal with race at all, black people, I mean, there are a huge....you know, gay people, I mean, disability, there's huge gaps in it really. But what's good is it did start looking at the disadvantages, the discriminations of a section within the union, and I think we were, you know, right ahead of many, many unions in challenging that.

Frances: Yeah. And do you remember sort of the process of working on it, what it was like in those sort of two years when the research was being done?

Sarah: I'm sorry, I don't, you know. I know we did a bit of help and we fed in a bit, but I think the vast majority of the research was done by Sarah, Sarah Benton.

Frances: Yeah.

Sarah: I think we just added bits or helped a bit, but I don't... Well, my memory – which could be wrong, because memories often are wrong, you know, we didn't, the committee didn't do a huge amount helping.

Frances: Yeah. And so, like you said, the *Patterns* report was this sort of, like, great achievement and it really did sort of very sort of thoroughly reveal the inequalities with the industry around the issue of gender. But there was also...a few years later, I think it's in 1981, we have Gillian Skirrow commenting that it's sort of regrettably up to date, that not much has changed by 1981. And as we said, perhaps not much has really changed by today either.

And this was sort of, in my research, I identified three key reasons for this, and of course, Sarah, you can sort of let me know what you think about these reasons. But the three reasons were: there was limited engagement with the report from the union's rank and file – so one sort of key example which really highlights this is this shop steward called Brian Hibbert at Thames TV Teddington, claims that members weren't interested in reading the report because they were concerned with tackling immediate issues relating to actual problems. And there was, you know, kind of limited engagement in the fact that shops wouldn't read and discuss the report, that there was a lot of avoidance, I suppose might be the best word, of bringing this onto the agenda, which really speaks to this idea that women's issues are marginal within the trade union, that they're not sort of central issues, that this report isn't addressing sort of to these members, isn't addressing this sort of central problems. And I take, you know, from the terms, for instance, like, "Immediate issues," and, "Actual problems," I think its language is very revealing in that sense. The second reason is that male union officials were hostile to the report, and to negotiating around women's demands.

And in Sarah Benton's interview for my research, she described the workers as actions of brotherhood, and she applies this to cameramen, particularly in saying, you know, that they wouldn't advance women, they wouldn't say, "Oh, my sister wants a job as a cameraperson, you should put her forwards," they sort of wouldn't try to change that sort

of way to working, the working practices. And she says, you know, that they had negotiating practices that they'd set up in a perfectly amicable way to get more money, and they didn't want to challenge those relationships by talking about creches as well, and what they surmise is silly stuff. And I think you too, Sarah, in the interview, discussed them sort of being unwilling to talk about when you met in the pub and they'd sort of make it clear to you that they weren't interested in talking about those demands.

And the third issue is, or the third reason for this sort of inertia is that the Committee on Equality was detached from the formal union structure, so it had no way to officially put forward motions, and had to use sort of alternative routes. And these alternative routes relied on women being elected into positions within the union hierarchy, and because of the sort of gender discrimination and labour segregation in the workforce, this meant that women were in very few positions, and these routes were sort of very narrow. I mean, does that chime with your experiences? Is there anything...?

Sarah: Yes, that's true. Sorry, I'm trying to...the three points, going from the last one, the Committee on Equality had no power, and that's been a problem in lots of unions where women have committees, groups, sections, whatever. Unless they have power within the union, unless they can put up motions, you know, they're talking shops for women. They're useful, because women can meet, they can plan, they can plot, they can do things, but unless they have any power within the union, and the Committee on Equality basically had no power. I think secondly, there were two or three groups of men in the union who...well, most of the men in the union just weren't interested in any of the women's demands. Yes, they were secondary, you know, unions are there for wages and conditions, and this bloomin' wanting childcare and things like that, maternity leave, that was all...you know, not the business of trade unions. So there was just a lot of disinterest really, from a lot of the men.

The strength we had was the general secretary, Alan Sapper, supported us all the way, and Roy Lockett, the journal editor and researcher, we had him. But the rest of the men, the union organisers, with one or two exceptions, they were all basically pretty hostile, I think, I feel they just were.... You know, they were all male. The only woman in head office was Alan Sapper's assistant, secretary, you know.

Thirdly, there was another sort of fairly small but politically very active group who had been the Socialist Labour League, which became the Worker's Revolutionary Party, and they absolutely – and the International Marxist Group and all those other kind of groups, they

all saw women's...women, feminism, women's demands as diversionary, because the real warfare was class warfare, and that come the revolution, women would get equality, but meanwhile, they could make the tea. So you had these three sort of different groups, but overall, I think the majority was just the men weren't interested, they weren't going to discuss it at their union meetings, they weren't going to pass round *Patterns* report, or even, you know, it was just... And they were, you know, they were, what, 80% of the union, so, you know...

Frances: Yeah, and you mentioned, I just wanted to sort of follow up on the...you mentioned the International Marxist Group and the, sorry, I forgot what it was called for a second, the Worker's....

Sarah: The Workers' Rev...well, it became the WRP, it was the SLL, Socialist Labour, something, then it became the WRP, Workers' Revolution. And they were quite a kind of politically assertive group within the union, they were a small group, but they made a lot of noise.

Frances: Yeah. And did they speak against it, or was there sort of...was there still sort of apathy and disinterest that they showed, or was there...?

Sarah: Well, I think that they didn't, unfortunately, somehow, we created a climate that's, for instance, at the Annual Conference or whatever, they wouldn't have got up and sort of actively said, "Well, this is all diversionary and we're not going to support it." I think we saw they realised that they couldn't get away with that publicly. But they didn't support it and I think there were one or two letters in the...I think Irving Teitelbaum wrote something, you know, "We shouldn't be putting our energies and time into supporting these women." But that was...I mean, that was very much all those left...those sort of left-wing groups, not the Communists, they were a slightly different lot. The Communists claimed they had equality, but that was a bit of a myth, but the other ones, the really kind of, yes...sort of politically active groups round then, it was, you know, it was diversionary, that was...the revolution was class warfare.

Frances: Yeah. And did...so into the 1980s, you get the sort of introduction of women's conferences, and the appointment of an equality officer; do you see that changing? Was the hostility, or did those attitudes remain into the 1980s, I think is what I'm trying to...?

Sarah: I think the kind of...yes, I think some of those, the revolutionary groups seemed to fade away, or get involved in other things. I don't remember them being quite so outspoken. I think the apathy...not the apathy, but the disinterest by most of the men in the union

continued. I think getting a full-time women's officer, Sandra Horne, was a huge move forward, you know. Again, I think we were one of the first, not the first, but one of the first unions to have a full-time paid equality officer. And she struggled a lot, but, I mean, she did continually bring to attention of shops and groups, of conferences, you know, issues to do with women.

Frances: Yeah. So from my research, you can sort of see the significance of these sort of changes within the 1980s, and these are very much prompted by women's frustration with this period in the '70s which we've been discussing about, where you have this hostility and this lack of action, you know, there's no real movement on the key demands of the *Patterns* report, because of this hostility. But you see in the '80s, the establishment of an annual women's conference, and the first one was held in 1981, and you see, like you said, the introduction of Sandra Horne as the equality officer. Again, I think that's 1981/1982.

You get the introduction of equality representatives at local level, so shop level activists with official roles that are really sort of mandated, so they have to have them, each shop has to have them. I think that's into the mid-'80s. And you get a regular column in *Film and Television Technician*, so the union journal, which sort of promotes this activity. And you really see sort of a bit of a shift in terms of women's representation in the union, that they really...that this is creating a network that allows women to advance these demands. And they're making a lot of similar demands to the '70s, so we have sort of demands for childcare, demands for training facilities, demands on these issues that have been sort of consistent throughout the periods of activism. But you also get a lot of new demands, so there's demands around sort of women's health, so, for instance, the women's conference had a cancer screening unit set up outside for a couple of years in a row, and you get demands around sort of sexuality and things like that, and this represents sort of a shift, I think, in what is considered a trade union issue and really trying to expand that remit. Do you remember any of the women's conferences in particular, Sarah?

Sarah: I seem to remember chairing one in a film school, yes. I do remember going to the TUC Women's Conference with Sandra Horne representing the union. I think ACTT was reflecting a bit what was going on in the wider society, I mean, the '80s, you know, there were attacks on the trade union movement and more and more legislation kind of handcuffing really, the trade union movement. But also, I think issues like breast cancer screening were non-threatening for the men, so you could get support or money to, you know, or make arrangements to have a breast screening unit outside a conference, and I

think a few unions did that. And some other issues which weren't threatening to men and their jobs, you could get support for, whereas other issues which they felt were threatening their jobs and their livelihood, possibly, or threatening or causing cost to the union – and of course, throughout the '80s, the union became increasingly strapped for cash. And there was one amazing thing, and I can't remember what date we did it, but we...oh, I can see the video, it was Cue for Change; we pressed the union to pay for a video to be made that could be shown in schools, encouraging girls to become camera operators, sound operators, you know, at every level. And we had two film crews; we had one filming the women filming, you know. And the union paid for that, so I don't know quite when that...the date, sometime in the late '70s, into early '80s, that was made. So we still got some stuff out of the union, but as the ages went on, I think, well, everyone was much more challenged, you know, for jobs and employment and the for the union to assert itself in any way.

Frances: Yeah. And so, you mentioned that, you know, some of the demands would be to, like, challenge men's position. What sort of demands are you meaning when you say that?

Sarah: Well, the demands to go into what the men saw as their key roles, which was cameras, sound, particularly lighting. Because of course, most of the lighting was done by the electrician's union, the ETU. And finally, one woman got a ticket to work with the ETU, because we worked with an all-women film crew, and Nuala, I can't remember her surname, Nuala was the first woman to get a ticket with the ETU, so she could work on a shoot as the electrician. So that was another, yes, step forward.

Frances: Yeah, and I think there was also that sort of – this is jumping back a bit to the '70s, but that quite famous, well, famous to me because I've been doing this research and things – the front cover where it's, you know, a woman holding a baby and a camera, and it's...

Sarah: I know you can't see it, but I've got it. Well, I mean, the resistance by men to women going into those technical roles, camera, "Oh well, women are weak, you know, they can't carry a camera." That's a 16mm camera... I mean, the retort was, you know, "Well nurses can turn over heavy men, you know," and the famous picture was, one of the famous pictures was...I think it was Diane Tammes, with the camera in one arm and a small child under the other, you know. So yes, they argued that women, you know, all the classic...first of all, "The women wouldn't be strong enough." And of course, carrying a camera is quite heavy, but you know, like learning to carry anything, learning to carry it in a particular way with your body, and sound, and carrying a boom can, you know, can be quite heavy. But also,

you know, "Women would be hysterical," or, you know, "They wouldn't be reliable," or all those other stereotypes about women. And I'd worked for Thames and I did a programme for Thames Schools, directed, and we had...I insisted on an all-women camera crew, and you know, they had to go to the...there's a room where the crews all meet and there were sort of notices up, "Women," or, "Girls," or something, you know, "Please put your cameras here," you know, really kind of patronising, sexist comments from them, to the women who were in the crew. So they faced a lot of...just patronising, nasty sort of put-down stuff.

Frances: Yeah. And I suppose, perhaps just to sort of bring things together, perhaps we can think about sort of how these issues have carried on today. Do you think women...I mean, you've mentioned sort of patronising behaviour and things like that, and inequalities in pay and stuff, how much this is reflected in the future, and how much perhaps we can draw lessons from the 1970s and the *Patterns* report in challenging this? What do you think, Sarah?

Sarah: Well, I think women...one of the things that seemed to happen is some women got into positions of reasonable power, but they didn't support, they pulled the ladder up like Margaret Thatcher, you know. Women have an obligation to support and help other women up that ladder, and sadly, I think that doesn't happen nearly often enough. I think...I mean, what saddens me is still there are battles within the industry, battles, you know, women still don't get the jobs of directing, they don't get the jobs, technical jobs. If you look at the lists of cinematographers at the end of a film, tell me when you see a woman. And the other big battle, which we haven't touched on, was the portrayal of the image of women, because that was one of the things we were very concerned about and campaigned about. And I don't know if it's in the *Patterns*, but it's certainly in some of the stuff we did in the '70s, and we're still fighting this, to get a portrayal, images of women, you know, which aren't deeply sexist.

Frances: Yeah.

Sarah: So the fights go on. And I'm not sure the vehicles through which these fights can now be really carried on.

Frances: Yeah. Because I mean, obviously I think trade unions are still playing a vital role or have the potential to play a vital role in maybe challenging gender discrimination, but obviously, as you've mentioned, they have been significantly weakened by attacks, from the 1980s, from the likes of Thatcher's anti-union legislation, the sort of deregulation of the film and television industries, that has sort of progressively continued with subsequent sort of Tory

governments, that, you know, there hasn't been sort of a relaxation of these anti-union legislation. And so, it really limits what unions are now able to do. But they do still offer that sort of space to activists.

Sarah: Yes, I mean, I'm a trade unionist, you know, I'll go to my grave as a trade unionist; in that sense, I do believe that people have to come together to fight things, that there's been such a cult of individualism, you know, particularly since late Thatcherism. And I think, yes, and unions are bodies which...and of course, the trade union movement is overwhelmingly female now, you know, it's completely reversed from when I entered the trade union movement. And yes, collective action and support, you know, people need support. You can't be out there on your own, you need support of other people - and for women, I think particularly other women. And the unions are bodies, vehicles through which those fights can be taken, but I think it's very difficult at the moment.

Frances: Yeah. Okay, thank you Sarah, It's been great to talk to you today about this, about my research and your experiences in the industry, thank you.

Sarah: Thank you.

[End of transcript]