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To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family - submission

Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family

Submission from Dr Catherine Hakim, London School of Economics

My submission to the committee concerns all three terms of reference.

1. My own empirical research, and my reviews of research by other scholars working on modern societies, lead to the following broad conclusions.
2. Undoubtedly, there are huge changes in the workforce, and in society at large, resulting from the equal opportunities revolution of the early 1970s. For the first time in history, women now have genuine choices to make regarding the balance between paid work and family work. We now have a whole generation of women who have entered adult life, and the workforce, in this new scenario.
3. However young women's choices have changed little as a result of the new opportunities. Young men's choices have changed even less, as yet. The research evidence is that we now have two distinct types of worker (or career) in the labour market:
 - people who are totally work-centred (the popular notion of careerist). Many of these women remain single or childless. Only around 20% of working women compared to about half of men fall into this category, so men predominate in this group.
 - people who seek a balance, across the lifecycle, between paid work and family work or other activities - adaptives in the terminology of preference theory. Between one-quarter and half of men in modern societies prefer this arrangement, if available. Over two-thirds of women choose this arrangement, so women predominate in this group.
4. Many current problems in social policy are due to black/white zero-sum game thinking: either social and employment policy are based on the work-centred career model, or policy is based exclusively on the second model. In reality, one-size-fits-all policies are too rigid and do not work. Moreover, people now expect and demand greater choice in their lives.
5. There are already examples of social policies that are sufficiently open-ended and neutral to offer benefits to people in both types of career, as well as to people who want to be full-time homemakers and parents. One example is the hugely successful homecare allowance in Finland, Norway, France and Germany. Employers' policies can also be

diversified, as illustrated by 'cafeteria benefits' and 'flexible benefits'. New, flexible work-life balance arrangements for time off paid work (paid or unpaid) and reduced hours are also important. As regards fiscal policy, income-splitting for tax purposes significantly raises the rewards to full-time homemakers, and generally raises fertility levels. These examples are discussed more fully in chapter 8 of Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century, and more briefly in the Family Matters article (pdf file attached).

6. Policies to eliminate sex discrimination in the labour market, and to introduce greater equality of opportunity for all, have now resulted in an exclusive focus on the working women and her needs. The needs of the full-time mother without a paid job have been overlooked, and the status of the full-time homemaker has fallen, in relative terms. The sharp decline in fertility in modern societies (after the contraceptive revolution) is due to the fact that the terms and conditions (social and economic) for women in employment have improved greatly, while the terms and conditions for full-time homemakers have fallen sharply. Policies to raise fertility need to address this imbalance in social policy.

The evidence and arguments to support these conclusions are set out more fully in the following publications:

Hakim, C. (2000) *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Hakim, C. (2003) *Models of the Family in Modern Societies: Ideals and Realities*, Aldershot: Ashgate. Hakim, C. (2004) *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Diversity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*, London: Glasshouse Press.

Hakim C (2003) 'A new approach to explaining fertility patterns: preference theory', *Population and Development Review*, 29: 349-74. (pdf file attached) Hakim, C (2003) 'Competing family models, competing social policies', *Family Matters*, May 2003. (pdf file attached)

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