

Carolyn Fairbairn

Whiny Feminist of the Month



[Campaign for Merit in Business](#) presents a **Whiny Feminist of the Month** award to Carolyn Fairbairn, the first female director-general of the [CBI](#), the business lobby group. Ruth Sunderland, Associate City Editor of the *Daily Mail*, in an [interview](#) with Ms Fairbairn, described her as a ‘director’ of Lloyds Bank and the FTSE100 outsourcing group Capita. She was only a *non-executive director* of the organizations.

The CBI has a disgraceful track record of seeking the advancement of women in business. In 2012 the [Anti-Feminism League](#) presented [Toady awards](#) to John Cridland (director-general) and Neil Carberry (director of employment and skills), recognizing their support for increasing female representation on boards, despite the mounting [evidence](#) of a causal link between that direction of travel, and financial decline.

In selecting Carolyn Fairbairn as director-general, the CBI have picked a whiner. It serves them right, I suppose. Her whine is that tired old conspiracy theory, that women miss out on promotion opportunities because, if they’re mothers, they ‘skip boozy dinners’. The claim insults male executives, suggest they cannot distinguish between individuals on the basis of merit, rather than their sociability, alcohol-fuelled or otherwise. It’s a female projection of women’s in-group preference. The whiner in full flow:

‘Here at the CBI I have said, “let’s have a look at other ways of doing things – can we have early evening events where we have a nice glass of wine and a nice presentation and then we all go home?” A lot of men would just like to go home as well.’ [Do the other men have a choice in the matter, I wonder?]

Cambridge graduate Mrs Fairbairn described the difficulties faced by women executives as they rise to senior positions in their forties.

‘A lot of women do brilliantly in their twenties and thirties and my observation is when they get into their forties and right up towards the top of their professions – and this includes some of my close friends – they have actually looked at it and they have thought, “I don’t really want to do this”,’ she said.

‘It is very hard. It becomes quite lonely at the top. It becomes more isolated and your networks and connections and friendships in business life really start to matter.’

What she’s clearly articulating is that most female executives aren’t prepared to endure the stresses and strains associated with the most senior executive positions, and freely choose alternative options, as the Canadian psychologist [Susan Pinker](#) explained in [The Sexual Paradox](#) (2009). Ms Fairbairn is now a member of [The Whine Club](#). There she’ll be able to enjoy a nice whine, with her nice presentations.