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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am Professor of Journalism Studies at Sheffield University. From 1975-93 I was Editor of The Observer, Britain's oldest Sunday newspaper, becoming Chief Executive of the company in 1992. In 1988 we were approached by a young lady called Kimia Zabihyan, who could then have been no more than 25 years old, with a proposal that the newspaper should form a film company with her in charge. Despite her youth, we were sufficiently impressed by her enthusiasm, resolve and knowledge of the film and television documentary business to take a risk on her. We never regretted it.

From the start she demonstrated a remarkable capacity to initiate and develop stories, to raise finance, select and manage production teams, make the films and persuade the broadcasting channels to show them. The point of attaching the film company to an established newspaper was to utilise the talents and creative ideas of the editorial staff and Kimia showed excellent personal skills in persuading the journalists to work with her.

Over the next few years she made a number of films with which the company was proud to be associated and which attracted a good deal of media attention. She tackled controversial issues with originality, daring and conviction, establishing a strong personal reputation in the field. Her creative impact was felt in all aspects of writing and production, down to the smallest detail. The company was effectively her own achievement.

I have no hesitation in commending Ms Zabihyan as a remarkable film-maker of rare talent, energy and originality.