

Has Devolution Delivered for Women?

Joyce McMillan & Ruth Fox



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Acknowledgements

Thank you to Lucy Young and Paul Docherty and their team at British Council Scotland and Olga Kelly at British Council Wales for their partnership work on this project. We are also very grateful to Michael Clancy and his team at the Law Society of Scotland for their support and hospitality in hosting the seminar to discuss the issues highlighted in this pamphlet.

Without the support and active participation of a number of academics, community leaders and politicians in our 2009 Festival of Politics debate and the subsequent seminar this project would not have been possible. Particular thanks therefore go to Wendy Alexander MSP, Dr Esther Breitenbach, Professor Alice Brown, Rosemary Butler AM, Professor Nickie Charles, Johann Lamont MSP, Professor Laura McAllister, and Kainde Manji for their presentations at these events.

Finally, for their work on the project and the design and production of this pamphlet, our thanks go to Dr Diana Stirbu, Matt Korris, Virginia Gibbons, Fiona Booth, Emma Megaughin, Kate Egglestone, Clare Huxley and Mona Petre.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors who are happy to invite analysis and discussion of them. They do not represent the views of British Council Scotland.

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Preface

A commitment to equality was firmly established as a key principle when the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales were founded and in the intervening decade both have become international beacons of progress in establishing higher levels of representation for women in politics.

After a decade of devolution, it is now a timely moment to reflect on and celebrate the progress that has been made, but at the same time critically analyse what lessons can be learned for the future from the Scottish and Welsh experience, particularly as the number of female representatives in both legislatures declined at the 2007 elections.

This report has helped enhance our understanding of what has happened in respect of gender equality and politics in recent years in the UK. Through a two-way sharing of information in the future it will allow us to better appreciate how the lessons from the Scottish and Welsh political experience may be relevant to our colleagues internationally and how the experiences of our international contacts might likewise be brought to bear to help the debate about these issues in Scotland and Wales.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Hansard Society's seminal Women at the Top Commission and Joyce McMillan, Chair of the Hansard Society Scotland Working Group, played a pivotal role in the campaign for devolution in Scotland and is a highly respected political commentator. The Hansard Society was therefore the obvious partner to deliver this project and, as this pamphlet demonstrates, it has been a fruitful relationship.

Both our organisations are also grateful for the support provided by the Law Society of Scotland, particularly by Michael Clancy and his staff, in facilitating the seminar associated with this project. Their assistance and kind generosity on the day was invaluable and greatly appreciated.

A lot of progress has been made over the last 10 years but much of it has been highly dependent on the fortunes of the political parties. This report explores what more our political parties and the legislatures need to do to recommit to gender equality in the future and asks challenging questions about how this might be done.

It analyses whether new measures may be needed if equality is to be sustained in the long-term and sets out how these might be delivered and by whom.

We hope that publication of this pamphlet will act as a catalyst to encourage renewed discussion and debate about these critical issues by our politicians, the women's movement and wider civil society, the media and of course the public.

Lucy Young

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Introduction

During the campaign for a Scottish Parliament in the 1990s, one of the most exciting aspects of the growing movement towards devolution lay in the idea that the coming of a new Parliament would bring a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redefine and re-imagine parliamentary democracy, in a form fit for a brand new millennium. At the time, there was a ferment of debate in Scotland around ideas of access and openness, and new kinds of accountability, representation, and power-sharing. And of all the ideas in circulation, perhaps the most energising, for at least half of the population, was the vision of a Parliament in which women, who form more than 50% of the electorate, might be fairly represented at last.

The idea of a statutory 50:50 Parliament – half men, half women, with the balance fixed by law – emerged in the early 1990s from discussions between the Labour Party and the Scottish TUC (STUC), and was fairly rapidly ruled out of consideration, following legal advice that such a Parliament would infringe the law on gender discrimination. But the concept caught the imagination of many in Scotland, nonetheless. There was general agreement that the astonishingly low levels of Scottish female representation at Westminster should not, and could not, be repeated in Edinburgh, if the new Parliament was to be fit for the 21st century. In the general election of 1979, just one woman MP out of 72 had been elected from Scotland to Westminster; and in the 1990s, only 21 women had ever held a Scottish seat there, since women first entered Parliament in 1918.

So by the time of the first election to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the Labour Party in particular had made strong provisions, under the new Additional Member voting system, to ensure gender balance in the parliamentary Labour Party at Holyrood through the 'twinning' of pairs of winnable constituencies between male and female candidates. Other parties, too, were influenced by the mood of the times to pay more attention than usual to gender balance among their candidates; the result, following the election of 1999, was a Parliament that was 37% female, a proportion which increased to 40% after the second Scottish Parliament election in 2003. And in Wales, which had voted for devolution by the most slender of margins in 1997, a similar process of reform in the Labour Party produced a National Assembly with even stronger female representation, rising to 50% in the Assembly elected in 2003.

Since then, though, there has been a downward drift in female representation in both Edinburgh and Cardiff. At the 2007 election, the proportion of women in the Scottish Parliament fell to 33%, below the ‘critical mass’ level of 35% that is thought by many analysts to have a decisive effect on the culture of organisations. The Welsh Assembly is still 47% female; but a backlash against continuing positive measures to promote female candidates, combined with the declining electoral fortunes of the Labour Party, and the imminent retirement of some of the first generation of post-devolution female politicians, has led to confident predictions that after the 2011 elections, as few as 30% of AMs will be female. And a similar pattern of electoral change in Scotland seems almost certain to lead to a further decline in female representation in the Scottish Parliament after 2011.

This therefore seems like an important moment at which to reassess what devolution has meant for the representation of women, how much difference their greater presence in the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales has made to those legislatures, and why a move towards increased female representation which was greeted with such enthusiasm back in 1999, now seems to have stalled, and gone into reverse.

In recent months, the Hansard Society and British Council Scotland have held both a public panel discussion on women’s representation in Parliament – which took place at the Scottish Parliament during the 2009 Festival of Politics – and a seminar and debate on the lessons learned so far, held at the Law Society of Scotland in January 2010. The aim of the seminar in particular was to provide an opportunity for a range of academics, political practitioners, and community leaders from both Scotland and Wales to debate and reflect on the issues and the prospects for the future.

Although not a direct record of those events, this publication seeks to capture the essence of the discussions that took place and where appropriate references individual contributions at the Festival of Politics debate or the seminar, all supplemented by additional research. In the chapters that follow we highlight some of the key questions raised during the discussions; the conclusion then draws the themes together, setting out what we see as the core recommendations for future action.

We raise these questions and set out these recommendations in the hope of encouraging new and old generations of politicians and campaigners, in Scotland, Wales and elsewhere, to turn once again to the vital issues raised by this debate – issues about power, access, fairness and gender which have not gone away, and which present themselves ever more insistently, as we move into the second decade of devolution.

Part I. Changing Numbers: Women’s Representation in Scotland and Wales

A history of inequality: the road to devolution

Between 1918 and 1992 only 21 women were elected to Westminster by voters in Scotland. In 1979, the year Britain secured a female Prime Minister, only one woman was elected out of 72 Scottish constituencies – Labour’s Maria Fyfe for the Glasgow Maryhill constituency – leading some to dub the Scottish Labour Group ‘49 Men and Maria’. There was no critical mass of female representation at any level, and in some quarters dislike of Margaret Thatcher took the form of a backlash against all female politicians.

The situation improved a little in the 1990s: five women were elected in 1992, and 12 in 1997 only for the number to slip back to nine women at the 2005 general election. In Wales it was little different. In the 20th century only 12 women were elected to Westminster and even after All Women Shortlists (AWS) were introduced by Labour for the 1997 general election only four female MPs were returned to the new Parliament.

As Professor Alice Brown suggested during our seminar, prior to 1999 many women in Scotland and Wales were still living in a political culture where women often built their political careers on the backs of male relatives, whose work they continued. Women were under-represented and marginalised, and often dismissed by men as ‘less interested’ in political office; when in fact they were simply being excluded.

The campaign for devolution, and the debate that surrounded it, thus provided an important space in which gender equality campaigners could pursue a more progressive agenda of equality of opportunity, building on the existing work of the women’s movements in both countries.

In the campaign for the Scottish Parliament there was great excitement at the thought of building a new political ‘House’; at creating a new institution that would not perpetuate old inequalities but would be more representative and inclusive than Westminster. A significant alliance of women’s campaign groups such as the

STUC Women's Committee, Engender and the Women's Co-ordination Group worked together to commission objective evidence about how best to achieve equal representation. They co-ordinated their efforts to promote the goal of a 50:50 gender parity claim, engaging with the Scottish Constitutional Convention and the Scottish Civic Assembly to push the gender balance issue high up the devolution debate agenda. And though the Convention, Scotland's principal constitutional debating forum prior to devolution, had only 10% women's representation, this small percentage 'stung female activists into action' and they proved to be strategically influential representatives.¹ Together, the constituent parts of the women's movement, through networks of conferences and community meetings, built a committed and energetic alliance around three core goals: justice in women's representation; a new and different political culture; and a new agenda in politics.

In contrast, whereas the Scots were well prepared for devolution, with a plan in place that had been partly drafted by Scottish civil society, in Wales there was little preparation at all. Prior to 1997 there was no obvious venue or forum for discussions in Welsh civil society about devolution never mind the role of gender equality. However, though lacking a formal mechanism such as that provided by the Scottish Constitutional Convention, the Welsh women's movement did nonetheless prove instrumental in articulating demands for women in the devolution settlement, particularly through the efforts of groups such as Merched y Wawr, a Welsh alternative to the Women's Institute, and Welsh Women's Aid.

In Edinburgh the first impulse was that the new Parliament should be a 50:50 legislative body with equal representation enshrined in law. That idea had to be abandoned when advice was received that such a system would be 'illegal' as it would infringe the law on gender discrimination. Amendments to both the Scotland and Wales Bills to facilitate the use of positive action measures were rejected by the Government, fearing it would be in breach of international human rights obligations. As a consequence, though a commitment to equality was firmly enshrined as a key principle when the Parliament was founded, and a commitment to equal opportunities likewise became a key Assembly principle, actual responsibility for ensuring equal representation in both legislatures remained with the political parties.

¹ M. Russell, F Mackay & L. McAllister, 'Women's Representation in the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales: Party Dynamics for Achieving Critical Mass', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002, p.52.

Electoral progress 1999-2007

It was, in the words of the late journalist and writer Sue Innes, 'quietly thrilling' to see a Scottish Parliament with so many women in it – thrilling in a way that statistics can never be. The 48 women (37.2% of the total number of MSPs) elected to the Scottish Parliament in May 1999 represented – at a stroke – twice as many female politicians as had ever sat for Scottish seats in the Westminster Parliament. In Wales the picture was even better with 40% of the Welsh Assembly seats won by women.

In neither of the two legislatures did gender balance happen by accident. The electoral success of women in both legislatures was intertwined with the electoral success of the Labour Party at the dawn of devolution, especially in Scotland, as it was Labour that led the way in introducing positive action measures to increase the number of women candidates in winnable seats.

In both Scotland and Wales the Labour Party used 'twinning', pairing up constituency seats on the basis of 'proximity' and 'winnability', with a male and female candidate selected for each pair of seats. This approach delivered the same outcome as an All Women Shortlist but without excluding men from the selection process.

In Wales Plaid Cymru adopted a different positive action method, initiating a policy of prioritising women on regional list seats. This entailed the alternate positioning of male and female candidates on regional lists with women guaranteed first and third place on each of the five regional lists.²

The other parties did not use positive action measures and suffered accordingly (with the exception of the Liberal Democrats, who more by accident than design ended up with 50% of their members of the Welsh Assembly being women).

For the 2003 elections the Labour Party did not utilise twinning. It contended that the policy had only been intended for use in the first set of elections, and preferred instead to rely on incumbency in constituency seats and to prioritise the placement of women candidates in those regional list seats that it had the best chance of winning. Similarly, the Welsh Labour Party also abandoned twinning, in

² P. Chaney (2002), 'Women and the Post-Devolution Equality Agenda in Wales', paper presented to the Gender Research Forum, Women and Equality Unit, Cabinet Office, 11 February 2002, p. 5, <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/inclusive-governance/women%20and%20the%20post-devolution%20equality%20agenda%20in%20wales,%20paul%20chaney.pdf>, accessed 11 May 2010.

favour of All Women Shortlists in constituency seats, as it became the first party to take advantage of the new provisions contained in the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002.³ Plaid Cymru also tinkered with its approach, this time placing women in the top two places on each of its regional lists.

Nonetheless, the 2003 results built on the success of the first elections, particularly in Wales where the National Assembly made history as the first legislature in the world with fully equal representation of women when it reached the 50% barrier. As Professor Laura McAllister remarked during our seminar, it was a strange feeling indeed to find that Wales was 'even better than Sweden' in this field. In Scotland too the number of women representatives also increased to 39.5% with the change largely accounted for by the number of women elected by the smaller parties, specifically the Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens.

But if anyone believed that the gender battle had been won, an indication of the fragility of these advancements came with the 2007 elections when the success of women candidates in the devolved legislatures suffered its first setback.⁴

In Scotland the number of women elected declined to 33.3% or 43 out of 129 seats. The current SNP group of 47 members contains only 12 women (25.5%); the Labour group contains 23 out of 46 women (50%); the Conservative group has five out of 17 women (29.4%); and the Liberal Democrat group of 16 has only two women (12.5%).⁵

The decline can largely be explained by the electoral success of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), which gained seats from the Labour Party. But unlike Labour, the SNP did not adopt positive action measures and consequently their group contained lower numbers of women than had the larger Labour group prior to the election. This situation was exacerbated by the Labour Party's decision to dilute its previously strong stance on positive action and equality guarantees.⁶ On constituency lists, Labour chose from a 'gender balanced' list, proposing 44% of women candidates while on the regional lists only one of the

³ For further information see, S. Childs, J. Lovenduski & R. Campbell (2005), *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics* (London: Hansard Society), pp.27-29 & 43-45.

⁴ See F. Mackay & M. Kenny, 'Women's Representation in the 2007 Scottish Parliament: Temporary Setback or Return to the Norm?', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 60, Summer 2007, p.80.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

eight top positions was held by a woman. None of the other parties used firm positive action measures and, overall, the number of women candidates decreased to 36.1%.

In Wales, women won 46.7% or 28 out of the 60 Assembly seats in 2007. Interestingly, they scored better on constituency lists, winning 21 out of the 40 seats, than on regional lists where just seven out of 20 seats were taken by women. As in Scotland the number of female candidates declined: of 197 constituency candidates, 141 (72%) were men and 56 (28%) were women.⁷

2011 elections: back to square one?

Professor Laura McAllister reports that the Institute of Welsh Affairs have cautiously predicted that at the next Assembly elections the number of women elected will fall to just 19 or a little over 30% of the seats. Both the Labour Party in Wales and Plaid Cymru have retreated from previous strong positions on gender balance. Five Labour women members of the National Assembly are standing down in 2011 and at least three and possibly all five are likely to be replaced by male candidates. Most of the women selected for 2011 are not in winnable seats.

In Scotland, a similar decline is expected. The lower levels of female representation are now broadly due to the SNP's improved electoral performance paralleled by Labour's electoral decline and the crushing of the smaller parties, particularly the Scottish Socialist Party. Historically, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP have not been subject to the same pressure to take positive action on women's representation that Labour has been. Unless this changes, then the prospects for women's representation in the Scottish Parliament are unlikely to improve significantly in the near future.

Boom and bust: what can be done?

The case for gender equality gained ground as the devolution campaign unfolded in the 1990s because the levels of female representation were so dire that they were indefensible. As Wendy Alexander noted during our seminar, though

⁷ The Electoral Commission (2007), *The National Assembly for Wales elections 2007: facts and figures* (London: Electoral Commission), p.7, http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/electoral_commission_pdf_file/0010/13204/NAW-Booklet-Eng-Final_26957-19970__E__N__S__W__.pdf, accessed 11 May 2010.

Labour's devolution architect in Scotland, Donald Dewar, was 'no great feminist', as a social liberal he could see that the level of women's representation was grotesquely low and represented an injustice that had to be addressed. Put bluntly, many political leaders were simply embarrassed into action.

However, over the course of the decade success has drained momentum from the gender equality debate. The very scale of the progress made in improving women's representation has to some extent broken the alliance between committed feminists and those moderate social reformers which had helped to bring it about. Many moderate supporters, of both sexes, simply assumed after 1999 that the job was done and they would not need to address the issue again. That has proven to be a complacent and unrealistic stance. The securing of gender equality, like devolution itself, is a process not an event.

There has been an over-reliance on the 'incumbency overhang' from the first devolution elections that has helped feed some of the complacency. The election of that first generation of AMs and MSPs was perceived to have addressed the gender balance problem and this first generation of women politicians was left to carry the banner of equality into the future. However, a decade on, many of that generation of representatives are looking towards retirement from frontline politics and it is not clear that there is a second generation waiting in the wings that are empowered within their parties to follow them. The backlash against positive action now rife in all the political parties risks leading to a constant process of 'boom and bust' in female representation.

Although devolution has provided more structural opportunities for women to achieve elected office and the proportional electoral system in Scotland and Wales has favoured the election of women compared to First Past The Post at Westminster, it remains clear that sustaining success in numerical terms is heavily dependent on each individual party's commitment to gender equality. If equal representation of women is to be achieved then special measures are needed: parity is a party choice.

But there remains within parties a stubborn insistence that selection has to be 'on merit', as if men were naturally more competent than women, and no incompetent men had ever been selected in the past. As Professor Laura McAllister highlighted during our discussions, there has never been a genuine meritocracy in political selections – there has always been a preference for something within the system – and we should resist any idea that we have moved into a 'post positive action' phase. There remains endemic positive discrimination towards men that has yet to be fully unpicked.

In the public domain and within the parties themselves there needs to be a re-assessment of what 'merit' means in terms of political selections. The current culture of merit is very male oriented: how well you do in debate; how combative and inquisitorial you are. But are these the most important skills we require in our political leaders? There needs to be a recalibration of thinking about what makes both a good candidate and a good parliamentarian in the context of a more strategic consideration of the role and function of MSPs and AMs in the future. The debate about ethics and expenses at Westminster offers an opportunity to reopen discussion about the profile and skill set of a good candidate, and how the job of an elected representative is therefore defined. This in turn creates space to put the question of gender back on the political agenda.

In responding to the backlash against special measures there are perhaps lessons to be learned by all the political parties from the way in which Labour in particular implemented them in Scotland and Wales. Their embrace of special measures was relatively easy to achieve in preparing for elections to a new legislature with no incumbency factor. In subsequent elections however, the process proved to be more fraught, particularly so in Wales where, with just 60 seats available, competition is naturally fierce.

In 2005 former Labour Assembly member Peter Law stood as an independent at the general election in protest at the decision to impose an All Women Shortlist on the Blaenau Gwent constituency. Campaigning on an explicit anti-All Women Shortlist ticket, he overturned a safe Labour majority of 19,000 to win the seat with a swing of 49%. His case powerfully illustrated how fragile the progress in gender representation can be when dissenting voices shake a party's commitment to positive action or cost parties electoral and political capital. In Scotland the process was rather calmer, influenced perhaps to a large degree by the fact that party members were presented with several candidate choices, on a gender balanced basis, rather than one choice which was restricted to a woman only.⁸

The broken link between feminists and social reformers, and the backlash against special measures both point forcibly to the need to build alliances with men in politics in order to sustain the political gains that have been made. As Joyce McMillan made clear at the conclusion of the Festival of Politics debate, there is no future for a movement for gender equality that does not include men. Either

⁸ It should be noted, however, that twinning cannot be applied in by-elections and therefore an alternative strategy for the selection of women in by-elections is required.

the aim is a better work-life balance for both sexes or an acceptance of the traditional view that public life is and should be male-dominated; men's support is needed for progress to be made in giving both sexes greater choice about how they balance public and private commitments.

The backlash against special measures also points to the need to consider moving beyond parties as the guarantor of equal representation in the future. Is it not simply too important an issue to be entrusted to political parties and the vicissitudes of the political pendulum? There is now a strong case for looking again at the option of legally enforced female quotas for the legislatures. The debate about constitutional or electoral law guarantees needs to be re-opened. To this end it was suggested by some during our seminar that Scotland and Wales might perhaps model the experience of Westminster and establish a cross-party inquiry similar to the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation.

Finally, there also needs to be an honest appraisal of the role of the women's movement over the last 10 years. Why and how did the momentum of the movement built up during the devolution campaign drain away and what can be done to address it? How can the generational divide in the women's movement now be bridged? As Professor Alice Brown acknowledged during our seminar, the alliance that drove the equal representation campaign in the 1990s is not evident in the younger generation. The women's movement won a platform to drive the issue of equal representation forward and it is legitimate to now ask how well it has been used and whether it can be recaptured.

Following the achievement of devolution and the success of the first elections in 1999, the women's movement lost energy and focus; insufficient attention was given to organising for the continuing political process that would follow the elections. Partly it was the natural conclusion of a long and successful campaign: people thought their goals had been achieved and consequently they moved onto other interests and focused their time and efforts in other directions. Many of the strategically influential women in the campaign also moved from important voluntary, public sector and trade union positions closely associated with the women's movement into either full-time electoral politics, or in some cases to public appointments. The women's movement has always had informal leadership structures. But these changes raise questions about whether an important and unintended consequence of the achievement of devolution and the transition to a new form of representation was the creation of a 'capacity deficit' at the women's organisation and third sector levels, as a result of the loss of important leadership figures.

As a consequence of the transition of some women into other roles, the relationships and alliances within the women's movement were institutionalised: these have undoubtedly proven to be beneficial relationships but they are time limited and as with the elected representatives it is not clear what will follow when the current incumbents have all moved on. There are therefore understandable concerns about the continuity of contacts and the sustainability of achievements in the future.

Progress on gender issues always needed a progressive campaigning alliance and the small but cohesive group of women involved in the 1990s had to take a very practical, instrumental approach to achieving change. The vision of making a difference and achieving a radically better kind of politics was crucial in energising the campaign. Something similar is, in our view, needed again. As Joyce McMillan stressed during the Festival of Politics debate, sisterhood is a powerful force and women need to rediscover the art of supporting each other and helping younger women to enter public life.

In the run-up to devolution, Engender had the idea of setting up a Women's Centre close to the Scottish Parliament to support the work of women in the Parliament. Reflecting on the idea during our seminar, Professor Alice Brown suggested that had it come to fruition then perhaps it might have provided a focus for new campaigning alliances post-devolution. It is an idea worth reviving.

If a new campaigning alliance for equal representation is to be established then the current pattern of women's organisations and trends in women's representation need to be mapped in both Scotland and Wales and the information used to mobilise support and establish a new set of focused objectives for the movement in the next decade of devolution.

Careful thought also needs to be given to how to engage and mobilise young women in the campaign. Many of the current generation of young women believe they will be treated equally with men, and that they will receive a fair hearing in seeking to fulfil their ambitions. This may be a noble sentiment but it is not one that reflects reality in the opinion of Kainde Manji of the National Union of Students in Scotland: 'Equality cannot be achieved by just asserting it and hoping for the best' she concluded at our seminar. But for the new generation of young women emerging from our universities and colleges 'feminism' has become a dirty word. Whereas their mothers and grandmothers had clear battles to fight against obvious forms of discrimination, the problems faced by women today are more subtle and less clear. Sexism is harder to detect, more sophisticated and

more insidious and obvious political inequality still remains. Indeed, this can be readily discerned on campuses across the country where, although women dominate the student population, still only 15% of sabbatical student officers are women. As Lorna Kettles of the Scottish Women's Convention suggested during our seminar, while women no longer face the barriers up to and beyond the point of graduation that once they did, nevertheless they still face barriers later in life – the pay gap, the glass ceiling and the old boys' network remain.

Students are not apathetic or uninterested: they care about many political issues including equal representation. The attendance of several generations of women, including many young people, marching alongside each other in Edinburgh in the 2009 Gude Cause demonstration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the great Votes For Women March of 1909 is testimony to that. But young women (like many young men) are alienated by conventional party politics and the way they organise is different from the traditional forms of community and political organisation utilised by women's groups in years past: attendance at meetings is out; online mobilisation through Facebook (such as the demonstration that was organised against 'lads' mags' in the newsagents at Queen Street station in Edinburgh) is more the norm.

But even if young women are engaged in the campaign, they don't necessarily share the same strategic outlook on the gender equality problem as older women. For example, as was clear at the Festival of Politics debate, there are a number of young women who do not support special measures to encourage female representation. So how far should any new campaign be prepared to go in encouraging and enabling young women to overcome the barriers, old and new? Will it accept that a greater number of women in politics will bring greater diversity among them, and a wide range of views and styles, including, for example, those women elected under positive measures who do not actually support them?

Other challenging tactical and strategic questions for any new gender equality campaign also arise. Should the focus of the campaign be on, in Wendy Alexander's description, 'the leaders or the laggards'? In order to maintain momentum it's important that Labour and Plaid Cymru reassert their commitment to special measures; but should the focus also start falling more heavily on those that lag behind – the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, and the Conservatives? Do we need to re-energise those who are already committed, or do we need to convert the diehards? Where should the concentration of effort fall

or is such a distinction actually a false choice because progress will not be made with one without the other? Should any campaign aim primarily to improve numerical representation or should it focus more on changing the culture of politics (for more on this see part 2)? In short, do we just want parity, or do we still want a 'new politics' as well? How much effort is it worth putting into party selection processes, for example in local government, and amongst local memberships, when the political parties are now, given declining membership levels, so hollowed out? Should the focus shift elsewhere rather than risk re-asserting dependence on the parties to achieve equal representation?

Part 2. Changing Politics, Changing Culture: Women at Work in the Devolved Legislatures and Civil Society

The large numbers of women elected in the devolved legislatures has translated naturally into a large number of important offices being held by women.

In Scotland, Wendy Alexander led the Scottish Labour Party between September 2007 and June 2008; Annabel Goldie has led the Scottish Conservatives since 2005, and Nicola Sturgeon has served as Deputy Leader of the SNP since 2004. Marlyn Glen set up the Scottish Women's Committee and Trish Godman took on the role of Deputy Presiding Officer in the second Parliament. In the first two terms committee convenorship was gender balanced though, reflecting the decline in the number of female MSPs, the number of women convenors has decreased since 2007 – only six out of 15 members of the Convenors Group are currently women.⁹ At the executive level, between 35% and 40% of women held ministerial positions in the first two terms but currently there are only five women in the SNP led minority government's 18-member enlarged cabinet.

In Wales, it has become a custom that women hold nearly half or more than half of the cabinet positions. Throughout the second term of the Assembly for instance there were five women ministers in a cabinet of nine. A number of female AMs have held key portfolios – some for an extensive period of time – in the Welsh Assembly Government: Edwina Hart served as Finance and Local Government minister in the first term, whilst June Hutt served as Minister for Health and Social Services from 1999-2005 before being appointed Minister for Assembly Business and Chief Whip. In the Assembly's second term, the business managers of all parties were women and in the current term a number of women hold strategically prominent positions: Rosemary Butler, for example, serves as Deputy Presiding Officer and Kirsty Williams in 2009 became the first female leader of a political party in Wales when she secured the leadership of the Liberal Democrats.

⁹ Scottish Parliament (2010), Committees, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/index.htm>, accessed 11 May 2010.

The soft under-belly of inequality

The progress made in the national political sphere in terms of more equal gender representation in the last decade has not, however, cascaded down to other areas of society, politically or otherwise. There remains, as Professor Laura McAllister described it, 'a soft under-belly of inequality'.

In Scotland the number of female local councillors has declined. 2007 saw a dramatic drop in the number of women candidates at the local level. This was particularly disappointing given that the proportional STV system was introduced for the local elections in part to try and make local government more representative. In 2003, 27.7% of candidates in Scottish local elections were women but by 2007 this figure had declined to 22.5%.¹⁰ Although this drop in the number of women candidates only resulted in a very slight decline in the number of women councillors that were elected – from 269 (21.8%) to 263 (21.6%)¹¹ – it is a significant concern that gender equality remains a distant goal at the local political level.

There are, however, interesting disparities between the parties in terms of their record in getting women elected at the local level. The Liberal Democrats, who have the lowest percentage of female MSPs, have the largest number of female councillors: 33% of their representatives are women. The SNP has also had an increasing number of women elected at the local level but has not matched these achievements at the national level. In contrast, Labour which has done most to secure higher levels of female representation at the national level has declining levels of female councillors. The success of women in Scottish local elections is also very sporadic geographically. For example, in Aberdeen and East Dunbartonshire, 33% of councillors are women, whereas in Inverclyde it is just 5%.¹² In light of these variances, much more research is required to explore the role of women in local government and their pathways into politics.

¹⁰ Electoral Reform Society (2007), *Local Authority Elections in Scotland: Report and Analysis* (London: Electoral Reform Society), p.58, <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloads/Scottishlocalgovernmentreport.pdf>, accessed 11 May 2010.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.57.

¹² E. Breitenbach & F. Wasoff (2007), *A Gender Audit of Statistics Comparing the Position of Women and Men in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive), p.34, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/172901/0048232.pdf>, accessed 11 May 2010.

Beyond politics the gender disparities in Scotland remain stark. The employment gender gap has decreased but pay parity continues to be a challenge. In 2005 there was a 12% disparity in hourly earnings between men and women. There was also a 19% disparity in weekly earnings; 23% of Scottish workers were low paid but 31% of female Scottish workers were low paid.¹³

The number of women at the top of professional and public life is also starkly unequal. In 2007 only 34% of Scottish Executive sponsored public appointments were women.¹⁴ In 2007, 19% of local council leaders and 13% of local authority chief executives were women.¹⁵ In 2005, women constituted 59% of secondary school teachers but only 21% of secondary heads.¹⁶ And in 2006 only 6% of the Senators of the College of Justice and 14% of the Sheriffs were women.¹⁷

Thus, despite the role of the Scottish Parliament in providing an arena for women to articulate their views and advance policies to improve the lives of women across Scotland, the gender gap in pay and professional job allocation still remains. Further reversals in the number of female representatives in the Scottish Parliament may lead to a negation of policies that have not yet been fully entrenched.

In Wales, as in Scotland, there remains a problem with gender balanced representation beyond the National Assembly. As Professor McAllister described it, 'the blank slate of 1999 was very important for women's representation but it is not resonating in the rest of Welsh society and politics'.

The number of women in local government, for example, continues to be low: the number of women elected to serve at the local council level was just 22% in 1999,¹⁸ and a decade later has risen only marginally to 25%.¹⁹ In the professions, 79% of all NHS staff in Wales are women but 77% of the NHS Trust chief executives are men; 73% of all staff in local authorities are women but 79% of

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.vii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.vi.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.46.

¹⁸ M. Russell, F. Mackay & L. McAllister, 'Women's Representation in the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Wales: Party Dynamics for Achieving Critical Mass', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 8 (2), Summer 2002, p.52.

¹⁹ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009), *Who Runs Wales? 2009: The Road to Equality for Women* (London: Equality and Human Rights Commission), p.3.

chief executives are men; 74% of teachers are women but 84% of secondary heads and further education leaders are men; and all the university vice-chancellors in Wales are male.²⁰

The 'glass ceiling' still remains in place and gender parity in the Welsh Assembly has thus far had only a limited effect on wider society.

A 'new politics': better than Westminster?

One of the core objectives of the devolution campaigners was that the new legislatures should embody a 'new politics' and as such be demonstrably different from Westminster in terms of culture and behaviour: they should be more consensual, less confrontational, and embrace an organisational commitment to equal opportunities.

As Rosemary Butler, Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly described it at our Festival of Politics debate, it was 'a privilege' to be involved in the creation of a Welsh legislature with a completely clean slate, committed to a new culture that was feminised, adopted family-friendly working practices, and embraced principles of equality from the outset.

In both countries, mainstream equal opportunities agendas have been 'institutionalised' through the creation of an Equal Opportunities Committee in the legislature and an equality unit within the executive.²¹ In Wales, resources have been made available for the advancement of equality issues and the National Assembly civil service has been given equality training.²² In Scotland, Margaret Curran, Minister for Communities between 2003 and 2004, also set up the Strategic Group on Women²³ and there has been experimentation with 'equality champions', as a means of mainstreaming the equality agenda.²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²¹ E. Breitenbach, 'Developments in Gender Equality Policies in Scotland since Devolution', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 56, Summer 2006, p.10. For an analysis of equal opportunities in the Scottish Parliament specifically, see F. Mackay, 'Travelling the Distance? Equal Opportunities and the Scottish Parliament' in C. Jeffery & J. Mitchell (eds) (2009), *The Scottish Parliament 1999-2009: The First Decade* (Luath Press Ltd/Hansard Society: Edinburgh), pp.49-55.

²² P. Chaney, F. Mackay, & L. McAllister (2007), *Women, Politics, and Constitutional Change: The First Years of the National Assembly for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 164-165.

²³ E. Breitenbach, 'Developments in Gender Equality Policies in Scotland since Devolution', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 56, Summer 2006, p.15.

²⁴ L. McAllister & D. S. Stirbu, 'Opportunities for Gender Innovations in a New Political Space', *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 1 (5), 2007, pp.11-18.

The extent to which the work of the National Assembly actually meets the ideals its members aspire to is a matter for debate. In respect of family-friendly hours, for example, Rosemary Butler reported that her own husband was fond of asking whose family she was being friendly to this week, since it certainly wasn't her own! However, as Professor Nickie Charles stressed, the commitment to family-friendly policies was symbolically important even if, in practice, its impact was marginal; for Assembly staff, if not for the AMs, it helped to create a completely different atmosphere within the organisation.

In terms of political culture the National Assembly also benefited, ironically, from the limited powers that were devolved to it. As Professor Laura McAllister reported at our seminar, the lack of full legislative powers seems to have created more space for experimentation, giving the Assembly greater freedom to develop a system that is genuinely different from Westminster.

Above all, however, as Rosemary Butler articulated during the Festival of Politics debate, the presence of so many women in the National Assembly has influenced 'what we talk about, prioritise, and do; and how we do it'. She shared the view of Johann Lamont in Edinburgh that women representatives were particularly inclined to focus on what they learned in their constituencies and try to bring those concerns to the Parliament or Assembly. Constituents sometimes said to them, 'you're not like a politician, because you listen'.

In Scotland provision for family-friendly hours, recognition of school holidays in relation to the legislative sitting timetable, and purpose built crèche provision have all played a role in establishing a different culture within the Parliament. However, in the view of most observers and many MSPs themselves, over the course of the last decade the culture of work in the chamber and in committees has not lived up to the hopes and aspirations that many had for it at the outset. As Professor James Mitchell of Strathclyde University has concluded, the Scottish system has assimilated very rapidly into the Westminster model.²⁵ It's a conclusion that Johann Lamont's observations support: in her view since 1999 party discipline at Holyrood has become stronger with less scope for individual MSPs to express themselves.

A number of attendees at the Festival of Politics debate and the subsequent seminar recorded their disappointment that the old adversarial and party-bound style of politics had reasserted itself with a vengeance at Holyrood, not least through the

²⁵ J. Mitchell, 'The Narcissism of Small Differences: Scotland and Westminster', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp.98-116.

traditional yah-boo politics of First Minister's Questions, and through fierce party whipping of backbench MSPs. This macho point-scoring culture is perceived to be repellent to many women who are otherwise interested in policy and politics. Cultural change is vital, but in Edinburgh at least, it is a revolution that has barely begun. Those who care about equal representation for women therefore need to renew their commitment to creating a new political culture for a new age, and continue to develop and campaign for ideas as to how this can be achieved.

Policy and women's representation

In terms of policy outputs, the large presence of women in both legislatures has facilitated debates on issues such as domestic violence, childcare and social justice.

In Scotland, there have been several policy initiatives touching on gender related issues. A strategy on domestic abuse, for example, was identified in the first term as 'the most concrete gain for a women's agenda', consisting of improvements in service provision, new legislation (The Protection from Abuse Act (Scotland) 2001), and new prevention and education initiatives.²⁶ The Scottish Parliament has also acted to improve childcare provision and provide more resources for the rehabilitation of women offenders.

But is there a link between the large number of women in the legislatures and the number of occasions when these women have 'acted for women': when numerical or 'descriptive' representation has translated into 'substantive' results?²⁷

In Scotland, a number of women MSPs have been heavily identified with specific policies of particular (though not necessarily unique) interest to women. Susan Deacon, for example, has been an advocate for sexual health and children's health; Cathy Jamieson has had a particular concentration on matrimonial law; Cathie Cragie has focused much effort on tackling housing repossessions; and Pauline McNeil has done much to address the needs of women prisoners. Across the political spectrum, MSPs recognise Mary Scanlon's work in the health policy area, and Roseanna Cunningham's focus on women's justice.

²⁶ See S. Childs, J. Lovenduski & R. Campbell (2005), *Women at the Top 2005: Changing Numbers, Changing Politics* (London: Hansard Society), pp. 62-63 and E. Breitenbach, 'Developments in Gender Equality Policies in Scotland since Devolution', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 56, Summer 2006, p.14.

²⁷ See L. McAllister & D. S. Stirbu, 'Opportunities for Gender Innovations in a New Political Space', *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 1 (5), 2007, pp.11-18.

Specific research addressing the link between representation and its results is only available in relation to the first two terms of the National Assembly for Wales and it suggests that female AMs were very active in raising issues of concern for women.²⁸ Female AMs were found to be responsible for raising ‘childcare’ 61.8% of the times it was debated; for raising ‘domestic violence’ 74.2% of the time; ‘equal pay’ 65.4% of the time; and ‘equality’ on 51.1% of the occasions it was discussed.²⁹

Many of these debates resulted in tangible policy outputs. In education policy equality has become a central theme through changes to personal and social education lessons and moves to end gender-segregation.³⁰ Measures such as the awarding of grants to teachers to promote equal opportunities within schools and longer maternity leave for teachers have been introduced. Cervical cancer screening has been comprehensively provided. In local government a ‘new ethical framework’ to enshrine equal opportunities has been introduced, as has equal opportunities as a performance indicator. Women fleeing domestic violence have been made a housing priority and local councils have been obligated by the National Assembly to provide more childcare places.³¹

The importance of strategically placed women in delivering policy change in both legislatures, with the support of women’s groups in civil society is also evident. In Wales, for example, Jane Hutt, Minister for Health and Social Services in the first term, worked closely with Welsh Women’s Aid, of which she had been a founding member, to draft policies in the field of domestic violence.³² Women AMs also worked with the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales on the Close the Pay Gap campaign. Research suggests that women AMs are more likely to involve women’s, children’s, and community organisations in the work of the Assembly, whereas men tend to focus on trade unions, and on energy and environmental groups. Professor Laura McAllister reported that the Assembly is now perceived

²⁸ Similar research is not available in relation to the Scottish Parliament – it would be valuable if such research were commissioned and made available in order to map the impact of women in the Parliament.

²⁹ P. Chaney, F. Mackay, & L. McAllister (2007), *Women, Politics, and Constitutional Change: The First Years of the National Assembly for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), p. 88.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.171.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.174-177.

³² *Ibid.*, p.307.

to focus much more on issues of equality and matters of importance to women than any other institution in Wales. The women members have become equality champions. As a consequence, the drive to increase the powers of the National Assembly now commands greater support from women than men.

Many participants at our seminar agreed that there has been much better access to government for women’s lobbying groups in Scotland since 1999, and as a consequence there have been improved funding streams, with significant help in building capacity, for example on domestic violence. However, with the exception of this issue, the impact of external organisations on legislation is difficult to measure. Though Professor Esther Breitenbach argued that external organisations have provided MSPs with strong practical grounding on women’s issues, she was concerned that there might now be a growing gap between organisations that feel themselves included in government consultation circles and those that feel excluded. A number of participants also expressed concern about the discernible shift in policy focus from gender equality to gender neutrality and the impact this was having in certain areas of policy, particularly the tackling of domestic violence. The new combined equalities approach reduced the emphasis on women’s issues. While gender mainstreaming is also a good idea in principle, in practice it has often not worked: there is concern that it has contributed to the invisibility of the women’s agenda. As a consequence, there is still no real substitute for external organisations forming alliances with MSPs and administrators to push forward effective policy initiatives.

The role and responsibility of the media

When it comes to the achievements of women MSPs and AMs since 1999, Wendy Alexander noted during our seminar the striking differences between a measure that is deemed controversial and one that is actually important. Controversial measures attract headlines and media coverage; but some of the Scottish Parliament’s most important legislation, in terms of the impact on people’s lives, has been almost completely non-controversial. There is, as a consequence, a tension between the visibility of parliamentary work and its importance and the extent to which the work of women representatives is really reported.

Beyond this, the media itself actually contributes to making politics less attractive to women as a career path. As Wendy Alexander related based on her own experience, the 24/7 news culture puts tremendous pressure on politicians to be

‘always on’, in a way that sharpens the conflict between a political career and family responsibilities. That sharpening inevitably bears hardest on women, particularly those with young children. There is also always pressure for an instant rather than a reflective response. This repels almost all women and many more thoughtful men. The idea of politics as a theatre of controversy, where the only interest lies in conflict and in who emerges from it, effectively precludes serious consideration and coverage of politicians, particularly women, who work through consensus. There is a pervasive politics of personal destruction at play in the media, where leadership figures are built up, and then pulled down as savagely as possible. Many women do not wish to take part in politics of this kind. A culture of spin before substance exists, whereas women often prefer the more substantive, unglamorous politics of social service and community improvement. And finally, there is the new ‘blog culture’ which subjects all politicians to streams of vituperative and often highly personalised anonymous comment, much of it from men.

A number of participants at our seminar recalled that in Scotland in the early years after 1999 women MSPs had to endure a torrent of hostile coverage, finding themselves dismissed as stupid and inarticulate if they did not adopt a traditional point-scoring style, with others simply criticised for their looks or their dress. The media situation in Wales is little different. In Professor Laura McAllister’s view the problems caused by the ‘immature media’ should not be underestimated. She reported during the seminar that, for example, they have responded to the party leadership of Kirsty Williams in an extraordinarily sexist way, with unpleasant comments about her looks and clothes that would not be levelled at a male party leader.

When it behaves in such a way the media has a corrosive impact on politics, but also on the willingness of women to participate in such a ‘macho’, ‘gladiatorial’ environment. Given the power of the media however, is there a solution? Wendy Alexander drew attention at our seminar to the 2008 report by Sir Anthony King regarding the BBC’s coverage of the devolved institutions. There is a strong case for establishing a new ‘King Report’ inquiry to explore the issues of gender and the media in politics. It could look at how conventional judgements about newsworthiness may discriminate against women politicians and their work, given that women often prefer to work in a less confrontational and more consensus building way.

Conclusion

The debate on women’s representation in politics is obviously a continuing one, which takes place in the context of a constantly changing society. But it’s clear that, when asking the question, ‘Has devolution delivered for women?’ there are a number of core themes, ideas and recommendations that emerge and which might therefore form the basis for further research, debate and campaigning as we embark on the second decade of devolution.

1. The idea that the ‘battle has been won’ on women’s equal representation is a myth, and should be challenged. Women’s continuing heavier commitment to domestic and family responsibilities, despite recent social change, means that without constant and sustained positive action, supported across the political spectrum, their representation in public life will always tend to drift back to pre-1999 levels.
2. Equal representation achieved through voluntary action by political parties, as in 1999, is fragile, and is vulnerable both to change within key parties which have adopted positive action measures in the past, and to the shifting balance of power between parties. The Labour Party fully adopted positive action in 1999, most other parties did not; therefore any electoral shift away from the Labour Party has significant unintended consequences for women’s representation.
3. There is therefore a case for reopening the debate about whether equal representation of women should be guaranteed by constitutional and electoral law, rather than purely by action within parties which, given declining membership levels, are ‘hollowed-out’ organisations in some areas.
4. Women in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly have had a measurable effect on the political agenda in both countries, and on the way in which business is done. But they still suffer from the relative ‘invisibility’ of the kind of important but non-controversial social legislation on which many women representatives tend to work. Broadly speaking, many women politicians prefer to work with consensus; the political media prioritise controversy, conflict and confrontation.

5. Despite the gains made over the last decade, there are counter-forces that are making a political career increasingly unattractive to many women. 24/7 media, still largely male-dominated at decision-making level, increasingly demand that politicians be 'always on' and permanently available, in ways that make a political career ever more incompatible with family life. There is also a growing media obsession with politics as a 'theatre of conflict and personal destruction'; and women politicians are often subjected to extraordinary levels of sexist comment on their weight, appearance etc.
6. A case can therefore be made for a new 'King Report' – along the lines of Sir Anthony King's Report on the BBC's coverage of new devolved institutions – on gender and the media in politics, and on how current assumptions about newsworthiness affect perceptions of women politicians and their work.
7. Women also need to seize the opportunity offered by the current debate around Westminster expenses, and the collapse of faith in politics and politicians, to reopen a serious debate about what we want from our elected representatives, what the job description is, how we define a 'successful' politician, and how we change the culture that led to the present breakdown in the relationship between people and politicians.
8. For all the reasons mentioned above, the idea of 'family-friendly working' has not had the impact on the lives of professional politicians for which some had hoped. However, it is perceived as symbolically important in creating a different atmosphere around parliamentary institutions, and a recognition that the demands of family life should be acknowledged. It is also of great practical importance to parliamentary staff.
9. There has been some change of culture towards a 'new politics', in terms of less confrontational and less party-bound ways of working. However, there is a growing perception that many in Scotland, in particular, are disappointed by an increasing reversion to Westminster-style confrontational politics, point-scoring, and mindless adversarialism, with strong whipping systems for backbenchers, and a system that rewards conformity and party discipline over independent thought. The debate on how to avoid this needs to be reopened.
10. Local government represents a vital dimension of politics in its own right, and a route into politics for many women; yet there is very little research into the position of women in local government, particularly since the introduction of proportional representation in Scottish local elections. In Wales, there is substantial evidence that cultural changes at the National Assembly are not being reflected or supported at local government level, with strong implications for women's future representation at national level.
11. There is now a strongly perceived backlash against the women's rights agenda in many areas, including opposition to positive action. This backlash needs to be challenged. Despite the wishful thinking and warm words of many parties there is no evidence that serious progress towards gender equality can be achieved without positive action, given the huge extent of the historic bias towards male candidates and representatives.
12. Research is needed into whether the mainstreaming of gender equality work, and the move to a 'combined equalities' approach, is working well, or has contributed to the current relative 'invisibility' of these issues.
13. There is a generation gap in the perception of gender issues, partly because the forms of sexism encountered by young women are more sophisticated and less direct than in previous generations, partly because of the greater individualism of a generation which tends to regard professional challenges as personal rather than political issues, and partly because young women today typically do not encounter systematic gender discrimination until they have children – i.e. at a later stage in life than previous generations. There is a need for structures and institutions which enable dialogue among women across generations – such as the Women's Centre close to the Scottish Parliament which was envisaged in 1999 – and the building of alliances around key areas of continuing discrimination and under-representation.
14. Finally, it is clear that the dramatic increase in women's representation at the end of the 1990s was achieved only through strong, well-organised campaigning across a range of parties and organisations. Now it may be time to start rebuilding these alliances, within Scotland and Wales, across the UK, and internationally; and to develop new ways of campaigning on the vital issues, for new times.

Appendix 1: Election Results 1999-2007

Scottish Parliament	1999*		2003**		2007***	
	No. of women	% of women	No. of women	% of women	No. of women	% of women
Scottish Labour Party	28	50%	28	56%	23	50%
Scottish National Party	15	42.9%	9	30%	12	25.5%
Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party	3	16.7%	4	22.2%	5	29.4%
Scottish Liberal Democrats	2	11.8%	2	11.8%	2	12.5%
Scottish Socialist Party	0	0%	4	66.7%	0	0%
Scottish Green Party	0	0%	2	28.6%	0	0%
Independent / Other	0	0%	2	50%	1	100%
TOTAL (of 129 MSPs)	48	37.2%	51	39.5%	43	33.3%

NOTES

* Dorothy Grace-Elder resigned from the Scottish National Party (SNP) on 1 May 2002 and Margo MacDonald was expelled from the SNP on 28 January 2003. Both sat as Independents until the end of the parliament. The Parliament's gender composition was therefore unchanged.

** SNP MSP Margaret Ewing died in March 2006. Richard Lochhead MSP resigned from SNP regional list (replaced by Maureen Watt) to successfully fight the subsequent by-election. Mary Scanlon MSP resigned from the Conservative regional list (replaced by David Petrie) to fight the by-election. Rosemary Byrne resigned from the Scottish Socialist Party in September 2006 and joined Solidarity. The Parliament's gender composition changed to 79 men and 50 women.

*** SNP MSP Stefan Tymkewycz resigned in August 2007 and was replaced by Shirley-Anne Somerville. SNP MSP Bashir Ahmad died in February 2009 and was replaced by Anne McLaughlin. The Parliament's gender composition changed to 84 men and 45 women.

Source: Scottish Parliament statistics, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/corporate/anrep-accts/index.htm#sps>

National Assembly for Wales	1999*		2003**		2007	
	No. of women	% of women	No. of women	% of women	No. of women	% of women
Labour	15	53.6%	19	63.3%	16	61.5%
Plaid Cymru	6	35.3%	6	50%	7	46.7%
Conservative	0	0%	2	18.2%	1	8.3%
Liberal Democrat	3	50%	3	50%	3	50%
Independent / Other	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
TOTAL (of 60 AMs)	24	40%	30	50%	28	46.7%

NOTES

* Following the resignation of Labour AM Alun Michael in May 2000, Delyth Evans took over his seat. The Assembly's gender composition changed to 35 men and 25 women.

** Peter Law was elected as Labour but sat as an Independent from May 2005. Following his death and the subsequent by-election in July 2006, his widow Trish Law sat as an Independent. The Assembly's gender composition changed to 29 men and 31 women.

Source: National Assembly for Wales, 2007 Election results (updated), <http://www.assemblywales.org/07-069.pdf>

Appendix 2: Seminar Attendees – 25 January 2010

Farah Adams	Solicitor, Adams Law, Law Society of Scotland Council & Convenor of the Equality & Diversity Committee
Wendy Alexander MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament for Paisley North; Labour Party leader, Scotland, 2007-08
Lewis Baston	Director of Research, Electoral Reform Society
Fiona Booth	Chief Executive, Hansard Society
Dr Esther Breitenbach	ESRC Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh
Professor Alice Brown	Former Scottish Public Services Ombudsman & Vice-Principal University of Edinburgh
Professor Nickie Charles	Professor & Director of the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender, University of Warwick
Dr Ruth Fox	Director, Parliament & Government Programme, Hansard Society
Lily Greenan	Chief Executive, Scottish Women's Aid
Ann Henderson	Assistant Secretary, Policy & Campaigns, Scottish TUC
Alison Jeffrey	Governance Programme, British Council Scotland
Niki Kandirikirira	Executive Director, Engender
Lorna Kettles	Development Assistant, Scottish Women's Convention
Johann Lamont MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Pollok; Deputy Leader, Scottish Labour Party Group
Kainde Manji	Women's Officer, National Union of Students Scotland
Professor Laura McAllister	Professor of Governance, University of Liverpool; Member, Parliamentary Services Advisory Board, National Assembly for Wales Commission
Joyce McMillan	Political Commentator, The Scotsman; Chair, Hansard Society Scotland Working Group
Emma Megaughin	Projects Manager, Hansard Society Scotland
Catherine Muir	British Council Scotland
Jemma Neville	Scottish Human Rights Commission
Angela O'Hagan	Equalities and Human Rights Commission Scotland Committee; Convenor, Scottish Women's Budget Group
Kate Robinson	Community Engagement Officer, Electoral Reform Society Scotland
Dr Diana Stirbu	Researcher, Parliament & Government Programme, Hansard Society
Agnes Tolmie	Chair, Scottish Women's Convention
Dejan Vanjek	Official, Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina (on secondment at the Scottish Human Rights Commission)
Lucy Young	Senior Adviser, Governance, British Council Scotland

A commitment to equality was firmly established as a key principle when the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales were founded a decade ago. In the intervening years both have become international beacons of progress in establishing higher levels of representation for women in politics. But at the 2007 elections there was a decline in the number of women elected to both legislatures and there are fears that the situation will worsen at the 2011 elections. This report analyses whether new measures may be needed to recommit to gender equality and asks challenging questions about how this might be done.

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ISBN: 978 0900432 54 5