



50/50 Event

Saturday 7th February

**Hilton Grosvenor Hotel,
Glasgow**

The 50/50 campaign for equal representation was one of the key features of the devolution campaign in Scotland. The commitment of women from across all aspects of civic life - trade unionists, churches, women's organisations and individuals - led to the election of 37% of women as MSPs in the first Scottish Parliament in 1999. Since then, representation has fallen to 33%, and is even less in Local Authorities and for Scottish MPs in the UK Parliament.

The SWC welcomes the proposals in the Smith Commission to devolve the power to legislate for gender quotas on public boards. However it is vital that equality of representation is required across the spectrum of political and public life. This must be done alongside measures which support and assist women into positions of power.

Agnes Tolmie
Chair, SWC

Introduction

This event was organised to raise awareness of the 50/50 equal representation campaign as well as to explore the achievements of women in political and public life.

Women attending were addressed by a variety of speakers who spoke about their experiences of the 50/50 campaign, and how the push for equal representation has shaped them as women in political and public life. This was followed by a question and answer session. Women attending were also encouraged to give contributions from the floor.



Agnes Tolmie, SWC Chair

Agnes is Chair of the SWC and has been an active campaigner in the women's movement for over thirty years. These campaigns include equal pay and women's representation in political and public life. During the 1990's Agnes was involved with a coalition of women in Scotland for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. She campaigned with the STUC Women's Committee for the 50/50 gender balance within the new Scottish Parliament. She was an active anti-apartheid campaigner and visited South Africa with the first all women delegation, which was a joint ACTSA/STUC delegation.

Agnes is a member of the STUC Women's Committee. She was Chair of the STUC Women's Committee on three occasions. Agnes is past President of the STUC. She was the recipient of the STUC Women's Meritorious Award in 2012 and TUC Gold Badge for Service to Women in 2013. Agnes is a National Executive member of Unite the Union and member of the Unite Women's Committee, a member of the UNI Global Union World Executive Board and their World Women's Committee.

"In 1989 the STUC Women's Committee set out the foundation for gender equality and new politics in Scotland, in its response to the Women's Issues Group of the Scottish Constitutional Convention. Among the calls made for a Scottish Parliament, which included family friendly hours and childcare arrangements, was the radical proposal for equal numbers of women and men as elected representatives. The 50/50 campaign emerged as one of the most significant principles of fairness, justice and equality in the devolution debate.

Women from various political parties, trade unions, and wider civic society all played a significant role in the campaign.

It was a compelling, colourful and well supported campaign, which led to the election of 37% women to the first Scottish Parliament in 1999. Scotland had one of the highest numbers of women in any legislative chamber in the world, and equal opportunities were adopted as one of the key principles of that Parliament. Since then, however, rather than more representation, we have seen fewer women elected in political and public life.

Women make up more than half of the population of Scotland, but when it comes to representation, we only make up 36% of public boards, less than 35% of MSPs and 24% of councillors.

The appointment of Scotland's first female First Minister is a welcome one, as is her commitment to women's representation through her appointment of 50% women to her Cabinet. The Scottish Government's programme for government also provides the opportunity for a lot of dialogue on gender equality and the SWC is looking forward to engaging in conversations as that progresses.

The referendum campaign has seen a groundswell of women, from a variety of different backgrounds, becoming involved with and actively engaged in politics. The SWC hopes that this momentum will continue and that these women will be supported and encouraged to become more involved in political and public life.

Today's event will look at the 50/50 campaign from its inception and how it influenced women's involvement in politics. We will also hear how the 50/50 campaign is moving forward and how more women can become involved. We want this event to be as interactive as possible and welcome contributions and questions from the floor following the speakers presentations. There are boards at the back with pictures, papers and articles documenting the campaign through the years, and I would encourage you to have a look at these. There is also the opportunity to have your say about what women want and what women need in order to make 50/50 representation a reality."



Angela Constance MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

Angela Constance was born, raised and educated in West Lothian. Prior to 2007 she worked as a social worker and mental health officer and was a local councillor in Livingston. She has been a Member of the Scottish Parliament since May 2007, first for the Livingston constituency and now for the Almond Valley constituency.

Angela has served as Minister for Youth Employment and Cabinet Secretary for Training Youth and Women's Employment. She was appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in November 2014. She is married with one child.

“The SWC bring together such fantastic women from across the country and give such great opportunities to listen to and learn what women are doing to make their communities better places for us all to live in. To me, that is the point of the work we are doing to ensure that women have 50/50 representation in the places where decisions are being made about them and their families. As we all know, if women are missing from that process then the results of the decision-making are poorer for it and in many cases it's women who suffer. As the saying goes, if you're not at the table then you're on the menu!

It's therefore right that we use opportunities such as this morning to take stock of what has been achieved, and what more needs to be done. Especially as we continue to process the amazing year that just ended and the long-term impacts it's had on the engagement and empowerment of women, and move into another crucial period, with the forthcoming UK and Scottish elections. We're right to ask where will women's voices be in the debates that are to be had in the lead-up to May and then in 2016 for the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections? And how many women will be standing for political office at local or national level?

Here in Scotland, women are represented in local and national politics and make a huge contribution. We all know that women's involvement in politics raises the profile of the women's agenda – and in turn this may encourage more women to vote. But we know that there are significant barriers to women's participation in political life which can only be overcome by tackling a culture which remains largely male-dominated.

Although we've made significant steps forward, especially in the leadership of our political parties and with Nicola Sturgeon as our first female First Minister, we still have a long way to go to reach a gender balance, with the level of women's representation as members of our political institutions providing simple but effective evidence of this.

Women make up nearly 52% of the population. Yet as the recent Sex And Power In Britain 2014 report showed, only 35% of our MSPs are women and at council level less than 25% our councilors are female.

Although the current Scottish Parliament level of 35% female MSPs falls short of where we want to be, at Westminster the figure is only 22%. This is, in part, attributable to the more proportional electoral method used in Scottish Parliament elections ('Additional Member System'). An electoral system which is more proportional and which allows political parties to put forward 'List' candidates gives greater opportunities for parties to promote female candidates. This is a step forward. But there is no room for complacency and, as we see what happened with the previous 50/50 campaign, there is a need to be vigilant about not losing ground here and this is why further work to address gender inequality remains important.

Strategies to increase the number of women being selected and standing for election may help address this issue. Individual political parties will have their own views of positive action with regard to candidate selection. More broadly, there are initiatives available to help encourage women both as activists and members of political parties such as: training, internships, mentoring and women-targeted membership drives. We must encourage all such initiatives. And clearly, all political parties have a role to play. That's why my party is pleased to participate in the new cross party group of MSP's that have called for quotas for political appointments to ensure a 50/50 gender balance in the Scottish Parliament.

As we know political parties currently can enact time limited special provisions, allowing them to shortlist candidates to rectify gender imbalances and it's helpful that this campaign raises awareness of this and what else can be done around selection processes. By modernising the culture and practices of our organisations the political parties can encourage the inclusion of women both as members and activists and help remove barriers to women's participation. This doesn't necessarily mean complex or expensive structural changes. Sometimes it just requires a little thought around how to make engagement more accessible. For example, some Dutch political parties have introduced positive initiatives such as organising branch meetings at times and locations suitable to women members - and then providing childcare facilities on site.

The broader political institutions – such as this Scottish Parliament – also have a part to play making the political environment more accessible to women. For example, not only does our Parliament offer childcare facilities to Members and officials but the crèche facility is equally available to members of the public visiting Holyrood. This arrangement benefits parents who wish to visit their MSP and can be of particular value to women, who generally bear the bulk of childcare responsibilities. A simple facility like this can actually make the difference between a woman having the opportunity to express her views in person, or otherwise being excluded from the democratic process.

The way political issues are reported in the news media is perhaps another area where the prevailing culture needs to be modernised to better engage with the issues of importance to women. This was an issue that came to the fore during the referendum. While women are, of course, equally affected by issues such as taxation, house prices and interest rates, the news media tends to treat some other issues as being of secondary importance. Were they to give an equally strong focus to reporting on issues such as health, education and accessible transport this might better engage female voters.

We in the Scottish Government also have a wider ambition that our public and corporate institutions also properly reflect the communities they serve, which we know will contribute to moving us towards the Scotland we wish to see. For example, we know that when boards have the widest access to talent available they have improved board governance, decision making and performance. That's why the First Minister included in this year's Programme for Government a commitment encouraging the public, private and third sector to set a voluntary target for gender balance on their boards of 50/50 by 2020, by signing up to the Partnership for Change.

The Scottish Cabinet is also leading by example by having 50/50 gender balance. Evidence shows that increasing boardroom diversity encourages new and innovative thinking, maximises the use of talent, leads to better business decisions which ultimately benefits our economy. We recognise that the commitment to 50/50 by 2020 is ambitious and may be challenging for some organisations and sectors, however we are committed to creating a Scotland which is amongst the world leaders in diversity, making best use of all our talent and with sustainable economic growth.

Organisations/individuals are being invited to sign our Partnership for Change commitment to help deliver a fairer, more equal and prosperous Scotland. We are targeting businesses with a significant presence in Scotland and with a sitting board committed to working towards gender balance. This overall commitment sits within the framework of the Scottish Business Pledge, which was also announced in this year's Programme for Government.

We are interested in exploring ways to overcome barriers to progression and what is required to build the talent pipeline in Scotland, as we know without women willing to apply for these posts we can't redress the imbalance.

We can offer support, through our and our partner's targeted work to get more board-ready women applying for positions and linking them in to businesses or public bodies who want to access their talent. We will be officially launching the 50/50 by 2020 commitment shortly and we hope you will support the work!

As you know there would be further opportunities to make interventions if equality legislation was our responsibility. We believe that it is right that our Parliament has access to all the levers of change to address inequalities that Scots face.

However, the Smith Commission concluded that the Equality Act 2010 would remain reserved to the UK Government but did concede that powers to introduce gender quotas in respect of public bodies in Scotland could be transferred to the Scottish Parliament. The UK Government published draft clauses in response to the Smith Commission on 22 January and the Scottish Government is working towards shaping these to allow them to do what was intended.

We know that not all women want a life in politics but do want to have a bigger say in what's happening in their local community. That's why we've been working through our Community Empowerment Bill to enable communities to be more involved in the design and delivery of services and to have a stronger voice in decisions that affect them. The Bill will, amongst other things, provide new mechanisms for community bodies, including women's groups, to bring forward suggestions to improve services, and to take over public sector land or buildings, and to have a proper hearing for their proposals.

We also want to help the women that came together last year around both campaigns, many who had never been politically active previously to maintain their engagement. That's why we will be continuing to fund the Scottish Women's Convention and other organisations that ensure that we hear from women from across the country.

Women contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of our nation, as they do globally, every day. Therefore as I'm sure you agree, it is unacceptable that any woman is held back, discriminated against or prevented from contributing as they would wish to do in any sphere of their life, be that politically, socially or economically. We can change this. We in the Scottish Government are committed to making progress and I'm sure we can learn from each other on how we approach tackling inequality. It is vital that we debate and discuss women's representation, but it is even more vital that we act."



Jane McKay

Jane McKay is a retired mother of two, Anna and Ian, and gran to three, Jamie, Nicola and Robbie. Jane is a former member of the T&G union's Women's committee, both at Scottish and National level, and is also a past member of STUC Women's Committee. She was on the National Executive of her Union (now UNITE) and represented it on the STUC General Council for several years. Jane has also served on the General Council of the TUC. She has always taken an interest and participated in women's issues both here and abroad.

"I have been fortunate to have known many women who have made a difference to the lives of women in Scotland - and I am particularly pleased that some of you are here today, including former members of the STUC Women's Committee. During my working life I've worked with countless women committed to achieving equality and fairness, both here, other parts of the UK and across the globe.

I would like to pay a special tribute to one woman who was our anchor throughout the years of campaigning - Ronnie McDonald, former STUC Assistant Secretary, who has now retired. It is no easy task to sustain a campaign for some 8 years, having to jump all the hurdles put in your way and come out the other end more determined than before that the cause of 50/50 is a just one. Ronnie did that.

As Agnes said it has been a quarter of a century since the STUC Women's Committee first proposed gender equality representation for a Scottish Parliament. 50/50 was a truly bold proposal for its time and I believe we must thank those women trade unionists for their vision, and for their innovative and inventive campaign over the eight years it took to secure agreement for a gender pack for a Scottish Parliament.

The campaign encapsulated the mood of women and (eventually) many men that the Scottish Parliament should be different, its basic assertion being based on equality, fairness and social justice. Its underlying premise was about the status of women, and it was that simple issue which was at the heart of our campaign – women are equal.

I should of course say that the STUCs Women's Committee wasn't alone in wanting to ensure better gender balance. We wanted to work with, and harness all the energy of women from difference political parties and all walks of life who would support the campaign for 50/50. This led to the establishment of the Scottish Women's Co-ordinating Group. That organisation became a further catalyst in our campaign for equality.

But the struggle for equality for women in the economic, social and political life of Scotland emerged long before the campaign for a Scottish Parliament. Trade unions were fundamental to securing change. A century before the women's committee's proposal that women should take their rightful place as equals in the political decision making of our country, women workers at the Bryant and May Match Factory went on strike to end their appalling working conditions and pitiful wages. That action at that time, by women trade unionists, helped to influence the political and social landscape.

This was followed by other inspiring examples by trade union women in the workplace and their communities, e.g. The women of rolls Royce in 1943, where the inspectress won equal pay. However if I was to pinpoint a pivotal time in my working lifetime, then I would say it was the feminisation of the trade union movement from the 60s, but particularly in the 80s, when women successfully mobilised their unions to campaign on issues which were important to them. When women argued that childcare was an economic issue, when women argued for maternity rights and when women demanded equality.

In the 70s, the trade union movement was completely male dominated in leadership and its membership was predominately male. Women's membership was increasing, however, particularly in the public sector. The increase in the number of women trade unionists was the hook for the STUC Women's Committee to seek to influence the trade union agenda for women's rights. In the late 70s and early 80s, we conducted three major surveys of trade unions, and as such we helped to change the face of trade unionism to a softer one, crucially one driven by the need to change women's role in society. As a consequence of those strategic surveys, we paved the way for more women to become active in their union, and for more women hold positions of influence. It was in 1982, only thirty three years ago, that the STUC first introduced positive action for women in their key decision making body, their General Council. Two seats were reserved for women on the General Council. Now it's gender balanced, and we've never looked back!! There are now more women than men on the General Council.

We campaigned for many key universal rights – employment rights, free school meals, rights for part time workers, free nursery education, access to higher education, paid maternity leave, pension rights and the minimum wage. We campaigned against violence against women and children and employment discrimination against pregnant women. We also campaigned for rape crisis centres in support of a woman's right to choose. All of these campaigns have a history of sisterhood and solidarity. The women's committee worked in tandem with other organisations on many of these key issues affecting women.

I remember the work initiated by the women's committee in giving women in Scotland the opportunity to have a real say in the UN International Treaty on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1981.

In that work we developed links with women from churches, rural institutions, academia, voluntary sector, political parties, students, the media and local authorities. We were able to organise local meetings across Scotland, gather their views and put forward a consensual, strategic view from women in Scotland to that major UN Treaty. This type of consultation was the precursor to our campaign for 50/50. It was strategic, it was open and it was inclusive.

The campaign for gender equality in our Scottish Parliament was driven by women. As I have already said, visionary and imaginative women who held meetings, who prepared pamphlets and briefing papers, who commissioned a whole series of 50/50 badges, organised press adverts - and who even had a 50/50 song.

“50/50, easy peasy, half for him and half for measy.”

That song became the rallying call for all of us campaigning for gender equality. It turned out that the campaign wasn't so easy peasy, but it was a campaign based on the simple premise that women are equal to men, and our daughters are equal to our sons.

Since the Scotland Act of 1998, women's representation in the Scottish Parliament has declined. An incredible 37.2% were elected in the 1999 election, but only 34.8% in the 2011 election. Sadly no legislative measures have been introduced to promote women's representation. We know that women's representation in our key political institutions isn't going to miraculously increase without political intervention.

The political parties have different thinking about how to improve women's representation in our political life. Encouragingly, a group of cross party MSPs called on Lord Smith to include legal quotas to ensure 50/50 representation for women in his constitutional recommendations. It would be remiss of me not to mention and welcome the decision by the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and her appointment of a 50/50 gender based cabinet in the Scottish Government.

But it is now time not just to support legislation for political quotas for women, but to demand it. Should that be our challenge to the political parties in the General Election Campaign? Should this be made an issue that we can all, again, rally round. And while we're at it, let's challenge all prospective MPs and MSPs to sign up to a Charter for Equality of Representation for women in the Scottish Parliament.

As you can see from the grey hair, the wrinkles, the slow walk and the need to write every word down, I have more years behind me - than I have in front of me. To achieve gender equality in Scotland, let's demand legislation. For our young women of today. For our daughters. And for our granddaughters.”

Johann Lamont MSP

Johann Lamont is the Scottish Labour and Co-operative member for the Scottish Parliament constituency of Glasgow Pollok. She was first elected as the MSP for Glasgow Pollok in 1999. Johann served as Leader of the Scottish Labour Party from December 2011 – October 2014 and as Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party from September 2008 – December 2011. She was Deputy Minister for Communities from October 2004 – November 2006 and Deputy Minister for Justice from November 2006 – May 2007.

Born in Glasgow in 1957, into a Gaelic speaking family from Tiree, Johann attended Woodside Secondary School. She obtained MA (Hons) at the University of Glasgow and a Post Grad teaching qualification at Jordanhill College of Education. She also gained a Certificate of Guidance at Strathclyde University. Prior to being elected, Johann worked as a classroom teacher for 20 years.

“It is a great privilege to be here with the women on the top table and the sisters in the audience. I would like to start by saying that Jane McKay loomed very large in my life as a young woman coming into politics. First of all she was a trade unionist that didn't have a beer belly which was, in the day, unusual. She was also a woman who was so passionate and strong in raising the issues of importance to women. Jane always had the perfect combination of political passion and delivering in practical terms, harrying people to create opportunities and actually wanting to make a difference. It's wonderful to have the opportunity to be here with you today. I also want to congratulate Angela Constance on her position – it is a critical role, with great opportunity to drive further opportunities for women in education.

I think that the SWC talking about 50/50 representation gives us the opportunity both to reflect on what has happened and to grow on that energy to take things forward. Young women here live in a different world with different challenges to those that I faced, but there are some pretty fundamental things that have stayed the same. I am inspired by the number of young women who are coming through and who want to talk about these issues and make a real difference.

Today I want to talk about what happened round the 50/50 campaign and how women, trade union women in particular, drove it forward and gave others the opportunity across all political parties and from no parties to participate. There was a huge battle going on throughout the 80's in the Labour Party and in other parties to drive on the question of women's representation. The catalyst for many of us to really do something was in 1987. Labour, in Scotland, returned 50 MPs to Westminster - 49 men and Maria Fyfe in a red frock. We knew, no matter how indomitable and how passionate Maria was, that simply wasn't right. That was not a reflection of the abilities and talent of women across Scotland.

Maria Fyfe has often told the story about when she was a councillor and was involved in looking at ways to recruit more women apprentices. A male colleague could not understand how a woman could be an apprentice in construction, where she would have to go out on the building site at 7 in the morning. His reason for this was:

“How would she make sure her man had his breakfast before she set off for work?”

This shows the recognition that there was a long battle ahead and that women’s representation was necessary if we were going to tackle these broader issues. This was during the time that our communities were changing. Last year we celebrated the creation of Glasgow Women’s Aid more than 40 years ago. We now Government fund this service to do a job which in those days was not even recognised as a job that needed to be done. It wasn’t a civil servant, no matter how wonderful they are, who sat in St Andrews House and thought ‘we need to find a way of making women safe if they are fleeing violence in their own home’. Women did that.

Last week I was party to the celebration of the creation of the Jeely Piece club, which is 40 years old this year. That is an organisation which recognised that if women want to have a chance, then they need to have good childcare, children need somewhere to play, and the state was not providing childcare in the way women need it. That organisation was established and women drove that change. I think political parties simply caught up with that sort of community driven approach, the identification of a political problem and an insistence that they would change.

There was also a realisation within the trade union movement that this was happening. It wasn’t enough simply to talk about terms and conditions, but actually to understand what was happening structurally to women in terms of employment. We now have a minimum wage, but we need to remember that it was women who led the campaign for a minimum wage, which was resisted by some in the trade union movement. There was a recognition that if you’re going to understand women’s lives, then you have to understand why their jobs are lower paid.

I also think it’s important to realise that other drivers were happening around women’s representation. For example, I remember a good friend of mine who raised the issue of child sexual abuse within the Labour party. The response to this was ‘what’s that got to do with politics’. We now know what it’s got to do with politics, but in those days these issues, which were happening in our communities, weren’t being politicised or talked about by anybody. We recognise that change has come because of the bravery of women. We were told that these things ‘were not the stuff of politics’, but in fact what we realised was they had to be the stuff of politics if we were going to change the lives of women and create greater equality. We had to recognise that if you wanted to change the stuff of politics, we need women at the centre of it.

There was clear evidence that even when men told you that they really cared about equal representation, it got tested a bit when a safe seat came up. We decided we would take that worry away from them, by fighting for women only shortlists at Westminster and I'm pleased to say that's been sustained. At the Scottish Parliament we fought for pairing equal representation in constituencies, because winning hearts and minds is all well and good, but we can't wait forever for people to be persuaded. Sometimes by taking practical action people will begin to understand that it makes sense. I believe that's the way you make real change.

I don't think we should look back at that time with a hazy glow, because it was difficult. In our case it was difficult because we were taking on our own party, in a political context where Margaret Thatcher loomed so large, that the idea of greater women's representation was very often shouted down. I think that's a huge lesson for all of us, particularly post referendum. There has to be a genuine coming together where we can agree. That was the thing that gave the 50/50 campaign its authenticity and confidence. We recognised the importance of the Scottish Parliament because there weren't 'bums on seats' already. It was a new institution and that meant we could be bolder than if there was already a vested interest.

I do regret that we weren't able to make 50/50 representation a legal requirement for all political parties. It would have made the internal battle in parties easier if it has to be done legally. I know that there are women across all of the parties which do not have positive action measures who will have had that battle. A legal requirement would have given them support and I'm very interested in how we would take that forward.

I am optimistic about the capacity of politics to change people's lives. If you had said to us as we started out on our journey, that we would have a First Minister who was a woman, with a 50/50 Cabinet, we probably wouldn't have believed it. Through the campaign, we created a political concept in which, whether there were positive action measures or not, parties had to show that there were women there and let women come forward with their abilities. My Shadow Cabinet was 50/50 but when you haven't got power, you don't get noticed in the same way.

A lot of work that was undertaken at the start of the Parliament, including the establishment of the SWC, the work on domestic abuse etc was not dismantled when another party came into power. I think that's because there was a consensus built around these things being fundamental and I'm glad that's happened. We should be optimistic about our capacity to change lives and to make a difference.

I think also we have to be vigilant. It's an irony that if Labour had done well in 2011 our representation would have probably collapsed, because we no longer had a policy of twinning constituencies. It was only because we had positive action measures in the list system that our group is still 50/50. That's why when I was leader I reinstated twinning in constituency seats and we do that at a Local Government level as well.

Indeed, the most recent reduction in women's representation in the Scottish Parliament can be attributed to the lack of positive action measures within the SNP, where its overwhelming success in 2011 brought in disproportionate numbers of new male MSPs.

The battle is not simply won. Fundamentally, in boardrooms where big decisions are being made, men are dominating. In my experience, the more power you've got, the fewer meetings you go to where there are other women. That's something that we need to move on, because we know our daughters are still more likely to end up caring, more likely to be in low paid jobs, and will still suffer the fear of violence in their homes.

The last thing we need to sustain is sisterhood. Yesterday, the lead report on Reporting Scotland was about how women from faith groups in Scotland are looking to tackle prostitution and trafficking. That's a sisterhood that we should draw on, because these are debates that are beyond simply ourselves. They are shaping the fabric of the political discourse. We should also be careful about what we are arguing about. Argument is important, but where we can agree I genuinely believe we need to find a way of coming together. We had a binary debate in the referendum - what we need now is to consider the broader, deeper issues upon which we can find agreement, sisterhood and solidarity.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate the SWC and all that they do, and all of the women who were involved in the initial 50/50 campaign. We have 50/50 representation but it's what we can do with women's representation, what we can do when we hear women's voices and what we can do when we have a political debate that reaches out beyond parties and beyond those who are in power and have things their own way. The 50/50 campaign is a practical measure, but is also symbolically really important. It talks to a kind of politics that really does make a difference and will make a significant difference to women's lives."



Kezia Dugdale MSP

Kezia Dugdale was born in Aberdeen, and was elected an MSP for the Lothian Region in 2011. She is currently Deputy Leader of the Scottish Labour Party.

After finishing school at Harris Academy in Dundee she studied Law at the University of Aberdeen before completing a Masters in Public Policy at the University of Edinburgh. Upon graduation she start working as a Welfare Officer at the Edinburgh University Students Association and later joined the National Union of Students. Immediately before being elected she worked as an office manager and policy adviser for George Foulkes in the Scottish Parliament.

Kezia is a Scottish Labour Co-operative MSP in the Scottish Parliament. She previously served as Scottish Labour's Shadow Minister for Youth Employment and as Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. Kezia has been selected as the candidate for Edinburgh Eastern, where she's lived for the past decade, for the 2016 Scottish Parliament election.

"I am reminded of the Madeleine Albright quote:

"There's a special place in hell for women who do not help other women"

I think there's a duty on us all to remember that. I see it as my responsibility to make sure I'm reaching out to the women coming after me into elected politics and help them all the way, in the very best traditions of sisterhood.

www.women5050.org is a campaign website and group that I set up just after the referendum with Allison Johnstone, the green MSP for the Lothians. We decided that after such an incredible referendum campaign with really vibrant debate, where women from both sides were making their voices heard about important constitutional issues, that we had an opportunity to consolidate some of that change around how politics was done. We wanted to try and create a space where whether yes or no, we could come together as women and say 'we don't want to go back to that old style of politics'. We want to find new ways of doing things.

I was very grateful to Angela Constance who went out of her way to support the new campaign when she didn't have to, when it might have cost votes in her party's recent party leadership contest and might have caused problems.

It is the duty on everyone in this room to try and challenge the view that we don't need quotas because women should be appointed or elected on merit. If we take party politics out of this and come together as women overall then we will be able to make further progress.

The purpose of women5050.org is to ensure that by 2016 all political parties field 50/50 gender balanced candidate panels. We're urging political parties to think now what their candidacies look like for the elections in 2016. We also want a legal requirement on political parties by 2020. In some ways it's too late to have a new piece of legislation for the 2016 elections, because some candidates are already in place, but it's not too late for 2020.

We've built a network of women across the country who have signed up to the principles of the campaign. Others can do so by going to www.women5050.org and by signing up through that you can get access to a campaign pack and resources.

One thing we did early on was recognise that the debate for more powers was going to continue. We wanted to ensure that gender equality and quotas formed part of that, so women5050.org lobbied the Smith Commission to include an element on gender quotas, particularly for public boards. We also approached other organisations who we knew were going to respond to the Smith Commission and asked them to include commitments to quotas in their submissions. I'm pleased to say we won that argument and those powers are coming. My political party has said today that we would use those powers and legislate for gender quotas on boards.

Why do I support 5050? I genuinely believe we won't be able to drive the cultural change we need to achieve gender equality without having that critical mass of women in positions of power. For me, that's the thing that makes the difference. Other attempts have failed, so we know that quotas are the only thing that will work. If we can embed that principle into public life, then we can embed it into the culture of how politics is done and how policies are made. That won't be something that's done one day in a press release, it will be about how we think and how we act forever more.

The jobs of the future are going to come in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Those are the subjects that children need to be doing at school to be ready for the future, and we know too often that those are the subjects that women are least likely to do. We've got a huge problem around gender stereotyping with those subjects that still exists. One example of that is in the number of women who are doing Modern Apprenticeships in engineering. The last time I looked at the figures, just 3% of starts were women. That's absolutely shocking and we need to re-energise our efforts to change that.

I was recently at a dinner with the Chief Executive of a major energy company. I was talking to him about this agenda and the STEM issue in general, and he was proud to tell me that 24% of the staff in his company were women. I asked about apprenticeships and in that case 7% were women, which is double the national average but still not good enough. He was still very proud of this and went on to tell me all of the things he was doing within the company to increase women's representation. He said how he told the women it was important they felt they could come to work dressed like women, and they shouldn't be afraid to put on their high heels.

This was an example of the concept of two steps forward one step back. This man thinks he's doing really well, yet his proudest moment is telling women to wear heels to work. It shows we have a huge distance still to travel.

Another policy issue I would put to you is the issue of childcare. Again, during the referendum campaign and after it, we saw and are continuing to see childcare right at the top of the political agenda. We have to keep it there and we have to make three cases for that – the economic case, the case around gender equality and the case around child poverty. Women accessing quality flexible, affordable childcare makes a difference. If anyone is looking for a silver bullet in terms of breaking down barriers to poverty and inequality, you don't get much better than childcare.

Can I say to you finally that we have three women now standing up at First Minister's Questions every week and I think that's changing the nature of how things are done. That's a great thing, however it won't always be like that, so I feel a huge responsibility with regards to the legacy that those three women will leave to the Parliament. How do we make sure that in the future, the women that follow will have a better experience than the ones who are already there – what is our legacy going to be? I think it has to be legal quotas, and the enshrinement of 50/50 representation in our laws. We need to put that issue to bed once and for all and let that be our legacy.



Question and Answer Session/Contributions from the Floor

“I would like to make a point about the media. My company is a media company but not in the newspaper sense, we’re designers. It’s important to recognise that the media is not just about papers, it’s about the whole cultural spectrum - the people who make the pictures and write the stories, the TV shows and the plays. I was very interested in the point about how we understand politics through the media, and how the kind of things that the media is interested in affect our understanding of politics. The media has an incredible gender bias. Fields such as science and maths get a bad name for it, but I have had a career in the media and you would not believe how difficult it is. I want to know what practical steps can be taken to reclaim the media so that it covers things we as women are interested in and gives them proper weight, proper debate and a diversity of perspective.”

Maria Fyfe

“I want to tell another story about when I was a Councillor and was Chair of a construction committee, dealing with 3500 of a workforce. I asked why more women weren’t encouraged to come forward to take up apprenticeships and was told ‘but Mrs Fyfe, you don’t realise there’s a great difficulty here which we cannot overcome. We don’t have ladies toilets on building sites’. I remember replying with ‘you’ve a workforce of 3500 that includes joiners, plumbers and electricians, and you’re telling me they can’t build a ladies toilet?’

I would also like to take the opportunity to briefly talk about another woman, who I think deserves a lot of praise for what she did in her time. Mary Barbour led the rent strikes in Glasgow – she fought a campaign against private landlords which got the law in Britain changed. Her campaign forced landlords to put the rents back to pre-war levels. What she did was amazing and we are trying to get a statue of a form of memorial to her based in Govan. More information can be found on the website:

<https://remembermarybarbour.wordpress.com/>”

Angela Constance (AC)

We have to be strong on our issues and what we will do and won’t do in our political lives, as well as what we will and won’t play politics with. Something that always struck me before I was a Parliamentarian was the treatment of women MSPs by the media, specifically when talking about the accents that some women have. For example Cathy Jamieson, who has a braw Ayrshire accent, has been subject to a lot of criticism for the way she speaks. I’m always going to have a West Lothian accent and I believe that politicians should look and sound like the people they represent. In politics you have to find your own voice, your own way and style of communicating and your own words.

There’s a real tyranny in the modern media. Firstly it’s a 24 hour news culture and people are expected to get themselves to e.g. Glasgow and Edinburgh from West Lothian in an hour’s time.

There's also that tyranny of soundbite politics, where you know the news are going to use a 30 second quip, if that, which reduces issues, politics and people's lives to barely a sentence. It is incumbent on us to resist that tyranny. In terms of reclaiming the media, I think that people are voting with their feet, and we're seeing newspaper circulations decrease. I don't take any joy in that because it is people's jobs at the end of the day, but other forms of media are being used more often. Social media can be a very fierce place to be – I never look at Twitter after I've been on TV because it feeds into my inner voice that most women have about what I've done wrong and right.

Johann Lamont (JL)

Women journalists are often very isolated - there's a culture around politics that they find difficult and it will be interesting to explore how these women can be supported. Back in 1999, it wasn't the tabloid newspapers who were making the most derogatory comments about women standing for election, but it was the commentary in the broadsheet papers. Nicola Sturgeon is immaculate in the way she turns out, but I think there's a pressure on her with regards to her appearance which perhaps her predecessor didn't have to contend with.

I think there's a real problem with social media. I'm very tentatively finding my voice, and it seems that there are a lot of people on Twitter who feel it's their life's work to tell you how utterly rubbish you are. I think that is somehow legitimising aggression that will disproportionately affect women, especially those in high profile positions.

It used to be the case that women had to choose between politics and having a career, whereas things are slightly different now. Some of my earliest memories of being elected to the Scottish Parliament are careering down the hill to Waverley station to get home because my kids were young at the time. That meant that I probably missed out on a lot of the 'soft' politics that was going on around the parliament.

Jane McKay (JM)

My own view is that we've never owned the media - it belongs to the press barons, who are men who do not tell the story of women. I would like there to be a paper out there arguing our cause and recognising the issues we face. I also don't think that a person is automatically good at going in front of the press, or having a microphone thrust in their face. That was one of the things that the STUC did during the 50/50 campaign period, they held courses on how to face the media. I think that's maybe something that should be done again to help women.

Kezia Dugdale (KD)

There are no female political journalists writing in Sunday newspapers, so not a word of politics you'll read tomorrow is written by a woman. In terms of daily newspapers I can think of three, who are all excellent journalists but they all write for newspapers which are quite small in the scheme of things.

The most read titles in Scotland have no women writing for them. Why is that an issue? We only have to look at the debate over the last few weeks, small though it was, around whether powers to legislate over abortion should come to the Scottish Parliament. Every bit of coverage I saw around that was men talking and writing about abortion and there's a big issue there which we need to face up to.

What can we do about it? In 2015 we can make our own content in a way we've never been able to before - women can write opinion pieces for newspapers and also generate their own content online through websites, blogs, Twitter etc. There is a duty on us to look at not only who we're communicating with but also who we're amplifying on social media. We need to try to encourage more female voices on Twitter so we can write our own content and promote our own voices.

Comments from the floor

1.

"I'm a journalist, but I don't write about politics. I totally agree that it's really important we get women's voices out there. Political journalism is just one branch of it, and it's really important. The soundbite culture is a nightmare – women are much more interested in the nuances and most issues require much more exploration and discussion than they are given through these soundbites. There are not enough women out there who are confident in front of a camera. We have an obligation to make our voices heard, across the spectrum. I totally support 50/50 representation but it goes wider than that – it's about having our voices heard in a range of issues, whether it's in a women's magazine, or women's hour on radio 4. The media wants to hear your opinions, whatever place in life you have or whatever job you have. We should be out there making sure that women's content is 50% across the board. That's a challenge for all of us."

2.

"Economic issues affecting women in Scotland feed into the workplace, particularly in the public sector, and women in male dominated industries such as my industry, the fire service, within that sector. The number of non-uniform staff within the fire service has been decimated, and the majority of them are women. Jobs have been re-graded (if they do still have a job), and the grades have been dropped so they have less money.

The service is also not recruiting. If you're not recruiting as much, then you have a harder argument as a trade unionist about positive action, because where it already exists it has been eroded, as have the equality departments. This means that the role models in uniform are not there anymore. Where there are fewer women in a male dominated industry, the rights of women are eroded in that industry. I would like to know what can be done by politicians to assist areas like the fire service to maintain women's rights?"

3.

"I'm a trade union rep working in the public sector, predominantly dealing with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. I also sit on the committee which tries to encourage all new staff to take up the opportunity to join Unison. The other job I do is a recruitment adviser for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and I deal with bringing new people into one of the biggest employers in Scotland. I'm identifying more and more that the childcare issue is fundamental for things changing for women. Women are trying to make their way up the ladder and the main stumbling block is that they can't afford to obtain adequate childcare. I'm also do a lot of representation for those women who get themselves into such difficulty trying to balance work and life, childcare, transport etc. A lot of these women actually end up being disciplined in the workplace because of what they're trying to deal with. Childcare is just too expensive and we're losing women, it's a drain from the workforce of women who would diversify into politics, become more active in trade unions etc. Better childcare is key for making things better for women."

AC

Childcare has to be at the centre of our thinking. It's probably the single biggest issue that affects most women – I say that with some caution as I know that not all women have children. While it's at the core of our campaigns, I am conscious that it has to be seen as something other than just a woman's issue, although it is predominantly a women's issue. It's crucial to our economy, and actually good quality early learning is better for children overall. It is hugely expensive and quite often those who work in childcare are poorly paid, and they're poorly paid women.

Childcare has expanded to 3-4 year olds and some vulnerable two year olds who now receive 16 hours per week/600 hours per year. By 2020 the Scottish Government intends to increase that to 30 hours per week over the primary school year. I am however conscious there is still along way to go. I want choice for women. I'm not about corralling every mother into the workplace, it should be about choice, but very few women actually have that choice in reality. They either feel they have to work to make ends meet, or they're inhibited from working because of the cost of childcare.

There's also a debate about providers, specifically the difference between Local Authority provision and private provision. There are campaigns at the moment in Glasgow and West Lothian around the way that childcare is delivered. In many cases it can't be accessed because there's no wrap-around care. I am under no illusions that there is some way to go. All of my political life I've believed in universal childcare and will continue to campaign for that. It has to be at the core, and we have to get across that while this is a massive issue for most women, it collectively effects everybody.

JL

I remember when my kids were young, I was entitled to a place in a nursery which I couldn't use because the timings were no use to me, so there is some way to go if that still hasn't changed.

Our politics has become a bit degraded and we're all to blame for this – as politicians we will fight about what to do with the fire service, police etc, but we're not actually listening to what's happening on the ground. For example if there aren't as many part time places at college then that's going to affect women, so we need to open ourselves up to the work that Ailsa McKay did and look at the consequences of budgets.

As politicians, we're told that we're supposed to avoid answering direct questions and talk about something else to distract. That means that the political discourse has been damaged as a result. Nicola Sturgeon is a nice person and I'm a nice person, however we went on a debate together and it was one of the most horrible things I've been involved in. That's what the political culture has created. We are two perfectly sensible, intelligent women, but that doesn't reflect how the debate was reported or how it was carried out. What was interesting was these kind of debates happened throughout the referendum campaign but they were never described as hysterical unless women were involved. It boiled down to two women arguing and three men sitting in another studio on a comfy couch telling everyone how rubbish it was. It reflected the kind of way in which people think politics should be argued, which was horrible. We all now need to take a big deep breath, calm down and try to challenge that political culture.

JM

I want to thank the sisters for continuing to work for their trade unions. I remember when the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) attended their first STUC Women's Conference. That was a big step forward and I am glad they are still represented there.

KD

If you look at the composition of NHS Boards, only 28% are women, which takes us back to our central point as to why we're here. If we were able to change that, then there would be a greater duty on employers like the NHS to provide childcare services within their organisations. The same goes for all companies and all employers. If you look at what happens in Scandinavia or in central European countries like Germany, there's a much bigger onus and pressure on employers to provide quality childcare. That's something we don't really talk very much about in the UK.

We also can't lose sight of the issue of women in education. If you look at the employment stats for women, you're far more likely to be employed as a woman with a child if you have a degree. The last time I looked that figure was 81%, and it falls to 50% if the highest qualification level is a general standard grade. If we're talking about encouraging women back to work, we also have to talk about the skills they have to access work, otherwise we're going to ask them to return to low paid, low skilled jobs and that does nobody any good. Let's have a really positive debate around childcare but let's make sure that education goes with it too.

Comments from the Floor

“We’ve heard a lot about childcare but we do also need to look at the situation for carers. I think it’s fantastic that we’re offering support for women with childcare responsibilities to come to events like this, and I’m fortunate that the person I care for can be left himself however as time goes on that might not always be the case. Those of us who are carers have a lot of experience of the sharp end of the health service and have a lot of good ideas about how we can contribute.”

JL

I want to end by saying that if politics was more than just the formal part of politicians shouting at each other we would all be in a better place. My observation is that there have been lots of really positive changes but one of the things we have to guard against is the idea that politics is for men, and that politics is about smart alec comments. It’s not, it’s about making a difference to women’s lives. Often that’s about caring, and the pressures faced by carers, which is probably the most hidden scandal. Actually one of the problems is we’ve lost the connection between supporting people to do what they can do and people having to pay to get things. My surgery is full of people talking about their care packages reducing, and I can see the stress that puts on families. The carers movement is very powerful and really important.

AC

I still don’t think of myself as a ‘politician’. I think of myself as a mother, I do think of myself as a constituency MSP, which I see as something quite distinct from being a politician, and I still think of myself as a social worker which was my career before. We should never see politics as something for other folk and we certainly shouldn’t see it as the exclusive reserve of men. So much was achieved with the establishment of the Scottish Parliament but sadly it has faded. Women’s participation, involvement and representation not just in politics but in all aspects of civil and social life is firmly back on the agenda and we need to make sure that remains at centre stage.

I am always struck by the parents and carers who come to my surgery, the folk who have to fight for everything they get when it should be theirs by right. I think that’s particularly true of carers. People care because they want to, but it’s not without it’s costs and burdens. We shouldn’t have any rose tinted glasses about the impact that it can place on individuals, and especially women. On more than one occasion I’ve heard grandparents at the school gates describing themselves as the backbone of the economy and there is something about recognising not just the needs of working women/parents but also grandparents. Women, like my mother, who have worked all their years, by and large in low paid work, with heavy caring burdens which take a toll on their own health. One of the things she does now is help me care for my own son so we have to recognise that kind of contribution to society overall.



