Written submission from Dr Deirdre Marrable (WHC0043)

I write as a private individual, and a member of the most under represented majorities in the UK.

“Nearly 100 years on since the first female MP took their seat in the House of Commons we have seen just 451 female MPs elected. There are more men in the House of Commons now than the total number of women MPs ever elected. We need to see proper diversity in public life – an important part of this is making sure the House of Commons is representative of the nation at large. Encouraging women into politics is an important first step but much more could and should be done to improve the retention of women MPs. If the number of seats in the House is reduced we need to ensure that it is not at the expense of a representative, modern Parliament. Our new inquiry will build on the work of The Good Parliament report and explore issues surrounding female representation in the House of Commons.”

What more needs to be said?

Why equality for women in Parliament? – the list is endless but here are a few reasons:

1. Without us there would be no men!
2. We make up more than 50% of the population and yet have 30% of the representation and this may well fall! This is intolerable, unjust, unfair and unsustainable.
3. We pay enormous amounts of tax and yet have very little say over how it is spent
4. We are a highly educated, versatile, conscientious, and adaptable workforce, excluded from the decision making processes that govern our working lives.
5. Democracy is badly served when the political machine is not able to utilize the best of the whole population because it is ignoring half of the population.
6. Our worldview is generally peaceful, considerate, caring and we make a perfect foil for the male interpretation of life.
7. We are human beings who have a right to have their voices heard just as much as men do.
8. Our biological imperative to produce children (more men – men should be more grateful) means that the current working practices in Parliament exclude all but the most determined women. It is also just plain mad, and should be revised to a sensible and sane working environment for the sake of all who work in politics and who support our democracy.
9. More women would also mean more representation from the minorities that suffer from under representation, simply because there would be a wider pool to select from for each of these groups.

I do not believe in positive selection but the working practices, of the House of Commons must be reformed to make it more attractive to women as well as the disabled. These reforms include:
1. Working normal office hours, the House can sit from 9am to 5pm. MP’s expenses ensure that all MP’s can live within sensible commuting range of the house- most of the rest of the population do!

2. The working week is split so that MP’s can visit here surgeries on a Friday – this will encourage those that have to travel long distances since there working week would include travel back to their homes.

3. The House should not break for such long periods. MP’s should only have the same holidays as the norm for the rest of the population.

4. Time working in the constituency could be more readily found if recesses were much shorter.

5. Good quality child care should be provided in the House and at any time of the day or night for when debates do run on.

6. The atmosphere and conduct of debates needs to be more conducive to free expression without fear of derision and bullying.

7. The appalling spectacle of Prime Ministers Question Time should be Chaired and managed properly. The baying and howling clearly demonstrates that the men in the house are simply not fit to govern us anyway. This childish behaviour should be stamped out and I am afraid if this speaker cannot or will not do it he should go. The rules for debates are all clear and under NOLAN principles where polite sensible debate are a fundamental tenant of political life, most current MP’s should not be serving anyway! Controlling this debacle would go a long way to bringing back respect for politicians, in the whole British community. For most women it is a total turn off, only those with more testosterone than is normal seem to thrive in such an environment.

8. Better protection from harassment and trolling for women MP’s is a must and to date this aspect of public life for women has been singularly missed by our security agencies. This would also help those from other minorities who also suffer more than most from abuse and hate.

Thank you for reading my submission.

September 2016