Written submission from Michael Shaw (WHC0069)

I make this submission following email requests from the 50-50 Parliament Team.

I state here at the top that I am a Politics Graduate with a continuing interest in matters Governmental and a schooled interest in Electoral Politics.

I am a middle aged white, university educated, male. Therefore my peers are somewhat over-represented in Parliament. I think that there should be a more equitable distribution of MPS against their gender and social background.

There should be more women in Parliament for many reasons. Among these is fairness. However, fairness and democracy though connected are not the same.

Women offer a potentially different perspective to men. By necessity there is a different view of the world offered by many women to that of men. Even if the women in question come from the same school-university-intern-consultant-MP road map now favoured by both main parties. However, we need to change this and involve women, and men, from across society.

However, I do not believe that Gender politics is necessarily a good thing, in its simplest forms. Positive Discrimination of any kind only achieves limited success. I cannot believe that an act of Parliament passed when I was a child, in 1975, is still not fully empowered. I have grown up in a world where men & women are equal in the eyes of the law, never seeing a distinction myself. Merit should be the only guide. Indeed many of the best and brightest of our youngest MPs are women, who are vocal campaigners for change. These include Stella Creasy and the much missed late Jo Cox. No one from any corner of the House of Commons would decry these two examples of Parliamentarian success.

If Britain is to shed its well-deserved reputation for elites, snobbery, and political non partipation, we need to dismantle and change some of our thought processes, this includes gender. A small step in this direction is to raise the number of women MPs, by legislation, if this is the only way. Informal rules serve the status quo, this needs to be changed.

I believe an increased number of women MPS will help to shift some social currents that lend to men being seen as patriarchs. This grass roots change will take years to become ‘normal’ to some areas of society, but Britain has great history in this social realm. Action to reduce smoking, and drink-driving were considered outlandish, but are now part of the mainstream core.

More women MPs shall also reach and interact with different sub elements of society. We need to stop the decline in electoral participation, or Government becomes illegitimate and fails whatever political stripe is the notional holder of power. If women can help this we should embrace it.
I hope to grow old in a country that recognises all its citizens as important. Women are half of this society. I hope that I can see my grand-daughters generation as automatically considered as the equal of their male peers, and not from childhood exposed to a kind of cosy unwitting second class status. I do not believe that the post war idyll of bourgeois life ever really existed except for Enid Blyton, and that life was hard and unrewarding for many. It need not be in the 21st Century.

More women would help to reach out to different parts of society that politics seems to care about once every five years. Britain is a beacon, a leader in the world, a rich and powerful nation. If we wish to be able to offer our mainly liberal view of the world to others as a model of competence, we need to live what we claim. Our public deserves more women MPs, to raise the cause of women here and abroad!

In short, there are too few women & it’s a national disgrace, we can’t continue with this from a simple emotive level. Are women an integral part of our society? If this is positive then there should be parity.

I am not a Nationalist, yet, would always say I am steeped in the many centuries of progress of the British, their fairness and leadership, a beacon to the world. Why don’t we continue this and take the lead in this area too?

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