



# UK history

- UK Parliament first included local representatives in 1265
- By 1832, only 20% of adult males were legible to vote
- Only men eligible to stand for election



# Progress

- 1867 – the first debate on women's suffrage
- 1918 - women over 30 years old were given the vote and allowed by law to stand for parliament
- The first 3 women MPs to take their seats (1919, 1921 and 1923) took over their husbands' seats
- 1924 – first woman Minister
- 1928 – women over 21 given the vote (same as men)



# More Progress....

- For many years only small numbers of women elected as MPs – between 1 and 6%
- By 1997 there were more MPs called John than all the women who had ever sat in parliament
- In 1997, a record 120 women were elected as MPs, a jump to 19.8%



# The international picture

- nine out of ten members of national parliaments worldwide are male
- women are more than one third of the legislature in only a few nations
- A worldwide review in the early 1990s, by the *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, 22 parties employed gender quotas when selecting candidates for legislative elections; 51 parties used them for elections to internal party posts

# WORLD CLASSIFICATION

<b>Country</b>	<small>Lower or single House</small> <b>Elections</b>	<b>Seats*</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>% W</b>
<b>Rwanda</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48.8</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>47.3</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>42.0</b>
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19.7</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>19.7</b>
<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19.4</b>
<b>Guinea</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19.3</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19.3</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>15.5</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12.2</b>



# Alternative methods

- ‘zipping’: In multimember districts, where election is determined by rank order on the ballot paper, the position of female candidates throughout the party list is regulated to make every third candidate on the ballot paper female
- ‘twinning’: Making selections for two similar ‘winnable’ constituencies together and selecting one man and one woman



# What changed?

- Main push from women in the Labour Party
- History of equality; party most associated with feminism
- Set up Equal Opportunities Commission and passed laws on women's equality - Equal Pay Act 1970; Sex Discrimination Act 1975



# Women key to making the change

- All women short lists
- Passage through conference
- Support from Trade Unions
- Women's Committee in Labour Party





# Key elements of strategy

- Gender disaggregated opinion polling
- All women short lists
- Support women candidates – Emily's List
- Legislative change – positive action allowed



# Gender disaggregated polling

- In 1997, polling of the electorate showed that support among men and women was different.
- Labour party was **less** popular with **women**
- This provided lever for women in the party to argue for more women MPs, and more focus on women's demands
- The key argument was electoral advantage, not women's rights
- This gender divide continues: if only men had voted in the last general election, the Government's majority would have been cut to 23



# All women short lists

- Selection procedures favoured the old boys' network
- Research showed that women were asked inappropriate and sexist questions
- Women stood little chance of selection
- Men were prioritised for safe seats
- Local parties were dominated by men



# Achieving all women short lists

- Women's committee in Labour Party and the Women's Officer put a motion at the party conference and all women short lists were approved
- Between 1993-96, in half the seats where a Labour MP was retiring, and half their 'safe' seats, local parties were required to shortlist only women candidates for selection.
- Local party members could still decide which parliamentary candidate would be adopted in their seat, but the short-list in these constituencies would be restricted to women



# EMILY'S LIST UK

- Financial help for women candidates.
- Between 1993 and 1997 - over £40,000 to 70 women.
- 26 were selected and 14 were elected.
- In 1998 grants extended to the Welsh National Assembly and the European Parliament. £2,900 was given to 8 women. None elected.
- A training event for the Scottish Parliament was sponsored for £1,800.
- In 1999 £2,685 was given to 13 women to Greater London
- Assembly and to Labour's National Parliamentary Panel. 1
- elected to the GLA, 3 were accepted to the Parliamentary Panel.
- In 2000 £3,454 was given to 18 women Parliamentary candidates. 3 selected, none elected. £500 for a training event for Local Government candidates.



# EMILY Grants

- Selection as a candidate for the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the European Parliament and Westminster
- travel expenses
  - dependent care
  - printing
  - photography
  - telephone
  - postage
- Any woman member of the Labour Party who supports the programme and values of the Party and is pro-choice.



# The Law

- ***Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002*** enables political parties to take positive action to reduce inequality in the numbers of men and women
- The Act covers any arrangements made by a registered political party which-
  - (a) regulate the selection of the party's candidates in a relevant election, and
  - (b) are adopted for the purpose of reducing inequality in the numbers of men and women elected as members of the body concerned.
- The Act expires at the end of 2015. At least 3 elections should have taken place for each body in the UK.
- Beyond this, section 3 allows the provisions of the Act to continue in force only by a statutory instrument.



# New Parliaments

- For selection to the new Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, and the Greater London Assembly, Labour used a policy of ‘twinned constituencies’, selecting one man and one woman in each pair of seats.
- In the first elections to these new bodies, women
- Represented 37% of the Scottish Parliament and 40% of the Welsh Assembly
- The Welsh Assembly is responsible for 3 million people and has 60 Members
- Government of Wales Act 1998 includes a statutory duty on equal opportunities





# The strategy in Wales

- key women activists in Wales - local politicians and officers of the equal opportunities commission in Wales, lobbied for "twinning".
- party members vote for one man and one woman, and the constituencies sort out between them which area gets which candidate.
- Policy passed by **0.06 %** at the Welsh Labour party 1997 conference.
- **42%** of Labour's members in the first assembly were women.



# Views of politicians

- *A constituency party **should** choose, but they should choose from five women...they get a real choice, then at the end of the day we would have a female candidate, and that's the situation I think we should have, until such times as we have a good representation of women*
- *People always resent it, because they say you've got a stupid woman doing that instead of an intelligent man. But, frankly, we have so many stupid men at all levels, that I don't see why we shouldn't have a few stupid women.*



# Obstacles: the media

- In the UK, men dominate the media:
  - 78% of newspaper reporters
  - 85% of reporters of politics.
  - 75% of all news stories
  - 82% of stories about the economy
  - 85% of stories about politics;
  - 91% of politicians covered in the news
  - 82% of spokespeople
  - 77% of 'experts'



# Obstacles

*'The problem has never been the electorate voting for women. It's been within the constituency parties and the selection mechanism'*

- Built in majority of men
- Men in safe seats or waiting for safe seats
- Selection panels still mainly male
- Unsocial working hours deter women
- Discrimination continues
- Not all parties support positive action, or use the law



# What have we learned?

- Women must take the lead
- Women need to organise separately within political parties
- Women within parties, trade unions, NGOs, academia and the media must be allies
- Women need resources to get into politics
- Need to analyse and change the mechanisms biased in favour of men in the selection process