

2020.06.30

18 Deputy M. Tadier of the Representative of the Jersey Community Relations Trust regarding measures to achieve a more diverse States Assembly: (OQ.184/2020)

Thank you for your consideration in that. I was thinking along the same lines. Has the Jersey Community Relations Trust considered proposing the introduction of quotas to increase the number of women elected as Members of the States Assembly? If not, what other measures have been considered to achieve a more diverse Assembly?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet (Representative, Jersey Community Relations Trust):

I thank Deputy Tadier for the question. This issue had not been specifically considered by J.C.R.T. but the trust has done lots of work in this area, beginning in 2014, I think, when the trust took on some work that had initially been initiated by the Deputy of Grouville. This centred on workshops for women, and I must stress it was for all women of any political colour or background, any women who had an interest in standing for election, and included how to plan an effective campaign, building confidence in speaking to the electorate and developing a working knowledge of the States Assembly. Notably, we did at that time - although I say "we", I was not the representative at the time - but the trust at that time did open up the seminars to members of other minorities, for example, the Polish and Portuguese community. In 2018, the programme was renewed and J.C.R.T. took part with Women in Politics to host a seminar with Sophie Walker, who was the founding leader of the Women's Equality Party. There are other events such as drop-ins with sitting politicians to discuss topical issues. We did reach out to all of the sitting women Members and many of them did get involved. We held a mock hustings and again that was open to any women at all. This work will continue and a plan is already being developed for the 2022 election by J.C.R.T., in conjunction with Women in Politics.

4.18.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I appreciate it is the good work that Women in Politics do and it must be so difficult, given the fact that they are not a party themselves, to know which women to promote and where their politics come from, but that notwithstanding, does the Member agree with me that without any kind of structural change in our electoral system, if we just rely on education and public goodwill, it could take centuries before we have parity? Therefore, does the Member agree with me that there is an opportunity when looking at electoral reform that we build equality into the system so that half of the seats that are contested can be only won by women and the other half can only be won by men?

[11:45]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I must stress that the work done by J.C.R.T. and Women in Politics does not and did not promote any particular women, but was neutral and accessible to all women in an equal way, so all women who wanted to stand for election and wanted to access that support. But yes, we did have a discussion about this yesterday and we touched on the electoral system, and I think it is fair to say that the trustees present, there was some agreement that reform of our electoral system is needed because the current system is indeed a barrier to having a diverse Assembly which adequately represents the population, so that large districts would be infinitely better. Can the Deputy just repeat the other part of the question, please?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Essentially to do with structuring the seats in an election so that half of the seats would be available for somebody who identifies as a woman and the other half for somebody who identifies as a man.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We did talk about this and we spoke about how this could be done far more easily by the U.K., which does have a party system, and that is because the parties in the U.K. are the gatekeepers, in a sense. But we do have gatekeepers in a similar way in Jersey. We of course have one political party, but the other gatekeepers are all of us, States Members generally. This is something that Professor Sarah Childs raised in her *Good Parliament Report*. One of the things that the trustees wanted all Members to do was to take this work upon themselves and if they are mentoring people and looking towards the next election, which we all know that that happens, but then the trust urges all States Members, current and past, and anybody who is in a position to mentor somebody for these roles to look for diversity and seek out people who are perhaps a bit different to yourselves and to try to take that on as individuals and as a body, the States Assembly, to increase that diversity in that way.