

View From the House

Not long after the General Election in September 2010 I was drawn in the ballot for Prime Minister's Questions. My question was to ask the PM to raise the issue, at a summit of world leaders, of the Burmese Opposition leader Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi who won an election in 1990 but was never allowed to take office.

And it is my belief that being involved in society in however small a way, on School Governing bodies or local associations that one can make a difference. So it was a historic and emotional moment on 21 June 2012 to see and hear Daw Suu Kyi in Westminster Hall addressing both Houses and invited guests. A wife and mother who gave up her life in Oxford to engage in the long struggle of the Burmese people towards their goal of ensuring Burma includes people of different ethnic background and for the release of all political prisoners.

In the previous week, I was able to use the end of day Adjournment debate to raise the issue of Women and Science with the Higher Education Minister, David Willetts. I have sent him the results of a Survey by the Biochemical Society which showed the frustrations of women scientists and potential solutions. They said funding for part-time fellowships and flexible working which should not be a bar to progression.

I also asked for clear targets to measure improvements in achieving equality. Other countries such as Germany are investing in Science with the goal of becoming one of the 'world's best three science nations by 2020". The UK could be left behind unless it develops a larger and more diverse STEM workforce . The grant to the UK Resource Centre for Women should be restored so that they can carry on the good work supporting women scientists.

The fallout from the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future continues. I raised the issue of capital funding for Joseph Leckie at Education Questions and have been promised a meeting with a Government Minister. The School has been turned down 3 times for vital funds. I hope the Minister understands the urgent need.

And it was at Treasury Questions last week that the Chancellor revealed the latest U -turn in policy from the Budget. The 3p rise in fuel duty will be put on hold. Hurrah too for the change in policy on Sunday openings at the New Art Gallery.

Valerie Vaz MP

1st July 2012.

