

**National Library Lecture**  
**1<sup>st</sup> November 2019**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a 'start' on my political memoir by delivering the Welsh Political Archive Annual Lecture.

I say 'making a start' because I realise that I can only touch the surface of a fairly long career.

The date became a bit of an anxiety with 'no deal' civil contingencies taking precedence for this week but events have moved at such a pace so tonight I have a breathing space to be with you. I hope you'll forgive me for not turning my lecture into an observation on the current political state we are in, but much of what I will say will chime in with the challenges we face

This evening I would like to touch on key aspects of my political experience over the past 20 years of devolution of which I have been a Minister for 19. This will reflect on the ways I have sought to bring my principles and values to bear in the roles I have played.

I reflect on these questions as one of the women in the Yes for Wales Campaign who made the case for devolution for a new kind of politics for our nation.

But I want to start by shedding some light on my origins and life history marked by an adult lifetime of political action and commitment.

When asked by school students visiting the Senedd why I became an Assembly Member I usually say I had known from an early age that I wanted to 'change the world' and that rings a bell with many of them especially now, as they engage with their own concerns about the environment and social issues.

I have been involved in politics with a small 'p' from an early age influenced by my childhood experience in post colonial Africa when we packed our trunks as a family and set sail for Uganda. My father was taking up a new post at Makerere University in Kampala training the doctors for the newly independent nation. And I went to a Government school in Kenya.

I soon became aware of 'government and politics in developing countries' with the aftermath of the colonial era in Kenya which instilled in me a hatred of racism. After school, my time at at Kent University, the London School of Economics and then working work in Lambeth's Blackfriars Settlement in the early 70's led me into the women's liberation and anti apartheid movements.

I felt at home and soon found the opportunity to return to Wales as a community worker in the early 70's in the valleys, Pillgwenlly in Newport and on to opening the first Women's Aid refuge in Wales. This led to a series of posts: Coordinator of Welsh

Women's Aid, Director of TPAS (Wales) promoting tenant participation, and Coordinator of Chwarae Teg promoting the role of women in the workforce. Alongside this was my growing role in Welsh Labour politics.

I describe myself as a Welsh returner because of my family connections, Nain and Taid Jones and holidays in north and south Wales and the strong allegiance to Wales that fostered. I was my Taid's cariad bach and he was the Welsh-speaking socialist Anglican priest in Surrey.

I regard all of this life experience (including 12 years as councillor serving the Riverside ward of South Glamorgan County Council) as an essential part of my political journey leading to the roles I have been fortunate to hold over the past 20 years.

I have also been interested in the roots of my radicalism and my commitment to Wales where I have lived for most of my life. If I took a DNA ancestry test little English would be found.

Both my parents were descended from, Welsh pioneers and radical thinkers. I know we all have interesting 'Who do you think you are' histories but I hope you will find mine of interest.

I was encouraged at the launch of Black History month with the time we spent honouring our ancestors. There was a powerful tribute to the ancestors of the Windrush Elders led by Cliff de Pass. We were called to remember our ancestors, their sacrifices and their legacies.

He also encouraged us to breathe in hope and optimism and breathe out hate and fear in memory of our ancestors. Hate Crime Awareness Week in mid October gave stark statistics with Wales seeing a rise in reported hate crime by 17% over the past year particularly race hate crime. The message of that week was 'Spread Love not Hate' and I believe my ancestors would subscribe to that.

My late father was Michael Stewart Rees Hutt: Stewart reflecting that his mother came from a Scottish family, the Pecks of Helensborough and Rees his father's family background. His eighteenth century ancestor was the Welsh radical Reverend Morgan John Rees. My father heard about this distant ancestor -when he discovered a letter written by his grandmother to his mother on his birth in 1922. Commenting on my father's forenames - Michael Stewart Rees she wrote,

*'I like the names very much English, Scotch and Welsh. ..[my son's] great great great grandfather Rev Morgan John Rhys was very much a celebrity - a man far in advance of this age, He translated the bible into other languages 12 years before the British and Foreign Bible Society took over his work, first started Sunday schools in Wales then went over to America ....I am telling you all of this so that you may know it is a name to be proud of...'*

Morgan John Rees is a fascinating figure who interested, among others, the historian Professor Gwyn Alf Williams. Gwyn Alf was interested to learn about my family history when I was already becoming known as a women's rights campaigner, Greenham Common and Cardiff People's Paper activist.

I recently revisited his book *The Search for Beulah Land* with its frontispiece describing his account of Morgan John Rhys 'who rode the length of the American Republic, fought for a black church in Georgia and for Indian identity on the Ohio, to create a new, free Wales in the West.'

I've inherited the pamphlet which is also lodged here in the National Library about Morgan John Rees who died in 1804 in Pennsylvania. In 1899 John T Griffith described him as "The Welsh Baptist Hero of Civil and Religious Liberty of the 18th century." He said

That was on my father's side.

My mother's father was the son of the Blind Minister a native of Deiniolen the Rev T. Henry Jones as described in his obituary. Mr Jones was a Quarry worker in Dinorwic who became a Congregational Minister training at Bala Bangor College and my childhood stories were of Taid Jones leading his flock to the United States for a better life at the turn of the 19th century where he lived with his wife Hannah for 12 years raising a family of 4 before he returned to Wales to become minister of the Zion Congregational Church in Holywell.

I was proud to play my part in the opening of the new hospitals in Porthmadog and Holywell in the early days of my role as Health and Social Services Minister and to remember his birthplace and keep these memories alive with my mother and her cousins.

So that's where I come from with strong Welsh roots although I've never managed to shift my Surrey accent where I spent my early years! But accents don't matter here in Wales as we welcome refugees and EU citizens and embrace the history of the Windrush elders, who have made Wales their home.

I now want to turn to my time as a Welsh Labour Minister. There have been many opportunities to reflect on the impact of devolution over the past year. I contributed to a Institute for Government report on the experiences of 13 former Cabinet Ministers from Scotland and Wales drawing lessons from 20 years of Scottish and Welsh government.

The IFG stated that they hoped the report would inform politicians and future ministers about the experiences of the ministers who had collectively served 93 years in Cabinet including three First Ministers, three Deputy First Ministers and former Finance Health

and Education Ministers.

My experience is somewhat unusual in having served as a minister in the Welsh government for every year but one. I certainly didn't set out to become a 'career minister' when I put myself forward to be selected for election to the Assembly in 1999 for the Vale of Glamorgan constituency. I was surprised and delighted to be appointed as Minister for Health and Social Services by the then First Secretary Alun Michael. But I knew that this was a 'poisoned chalice' particularly due to the incoming Labour Government's commitment in 1997 to keep the previous Tory Spending plans. The Welsh NHS Budget then stood at £1.9bn, a quarter of its current figure, and I was under siege from day one until Gordon Brown's injection of funding in 2000 started to make a difference.

Striving to meet waiting times targets, promote public health, address health inequalities and invest in our health estate was a challenge and I survived a 'confidence vote' in the early years of devolution (over waiting times) and warned that 'my record' would impact on my electoral chances.

But it was not all heavy going and I was proud to be the Minister responsible for taking the legislation through via Westminster to appoint the UK's first Children's Commissioner, to close the long stay 'mental handicap' hospitals in Wales, to oversee a publicly funded hospital building programme, to fund the health and social care coordinators in the third sector, to appoint Professor Peter Townsend to review our funding formula through a health inequalities lens and initiate a Welsh Refugees Doctors Scheme with Refugee champion Aled Edwards.

And I did hold my seat in the next Assembly elections in 2003 and then in subsequent elections, although in 2007 only after 4 nerve-racking recounts taking us through to 6am and a majority of 83. .

I want to say something about the challenge of being a Labour AM and Minister in one of the most marginal seats in Wales with a Tory MP for nearly a decade. The Vale of Glamorgan didn't vote for devolution in 1997 and on the day of the first Assembly election in 1999 the local government elections were also taking place. That night Labour lost control of the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The following day we arrived for my count and thought a win would be unlikely. However I won, thanks to strong support from Barry voters but I knew I was going to have work hard to convince my constituents that it was worth having the Assembly and an Assembly Member who was going to work flat out to gain their trust and respect. I have to thank my family for their support, moving to Barry within a year of my election and making it our home and sharing me with my constituents!

As a constituency member, it is very important to me to work with all the sections of the community. Canvassing over the past 20 years has been interesting because there is a new column in the canvass sheets for 'Jane Hutt Tories' and I still get the - 'well I can vote for Jane and the Tories on the list' but this takes an enormous toll on my dedicated staff

and volunteers who work tirelessly on my behalf. I know this is reflected in other marginal seats held by Labour women in Wales including Julie Morgan in Cardiff North and Ann Jones in Vale of Clwyd.

I finished as health Minister in 2005 and went on to various other Ministerial posts including Education and, Finance and I want now to look at three of four aspects where the paths we have taken in Wales have been distinctive.

When former Prime Minister of Australia Barry born Julia Gillard came to Wales recently she joined our Labour AMs group meeting and reflected on her tough time as the Labour PM but said 'every day you have the opportunity to govern is precious.' How right she is.

With devolution I also saw the opportunity to play my part in developing a participatory democracy grounded in the engagement and experience of the people of Wales particularly those without a strong voice or power. The opportunities for developing a more participatory democracy were recognized during the 'Yes for Wales' campaign.

Being a Minister over the past 20 years has given me the chance to keep driving these aspirations into action .We still have a long way to go but the adoption of a co-production approach has taken root in the development of policy and legislation. Achieving 'cross government action to deliver meaningful policies' has also been a goal and surprisingly difficult to achieve.

One example of this approach underpinned the 'Action for Disability: The Right to Independent Living' new Welsh Government Framework and Action Plan I launched last month. The Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People hosted this Launch and I was delighted to announce that part of our Action Plan included the development of the Coalition's proposals for the piloting of a 'scores on the doors' system to rate disabled access which could possibly be extended to tourism businesses if successful. This came about as a result of a petition presented to the Assembly by disabled people.

In 2013 our previous 'Framework for Action on Independent Living' came out of a campaign and petition leading to the development and adoption of a cross government national set of policies for independent living. It clearly needed to be updated and we have been challenged about the need to strengthen our commitment to the social model of disability and to take action across the Welsh Government with our partners in local government , health boards, third sector and businesses to speak up and be counted with disabled people.

In my foreword to the new Framework I made the point that the need for this action is even more urgent with the impact of the past 10 years of austerity and welfare reform causing well evidenced untold harm to disabled people counteracting the move towards independent living.

So I was able to say at the launch that I was pleased to be back holding a ministerial position with responsibility for equalities to once again commit the government to action with the powers we have to make a difference and to be held to account for it. Also to have the opportunity to restate our backing the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the strengthening of equality and human rights in Wales in the face of the threat of Brexit.

But this is also time to question what we have achieved and consider whether the powers we have gained in the past decade can really make a step change in the lives of disabled people?

We have new opportunities to engage and involve people in the development and implementation of policy with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 as well as the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan.

I am particularly pleased to be responsible for the Well-Being of Future Generations legislation as I believe this can make a major difference to the way we work. This includes the need to have regard to the balance between short term and longer term needs, to involve people with an interest in achieving the well being goals, to take a preventative approach to policy making and more collaborative joined up way of working in line with the sustainable development principle.

All this should make a difference on how we plan and deliver services.

We are being tested on the efficacy of this pioneering legislation which is being regarded with great interest across the world. And Lord John Bird is now introducing legislation in England to follow our example.

I want to turn now to the issue of coalition and cross-party working. The IFG Report draws out the opportunities we have had in this era of devolution to 'govern' in a different way to Westminster due to a number of factors including 'governing without a single-party majority' due in part to proportional representation. The report recognizes that this means Scottish and Welsh ministers have had to negotiate and form alliances with members of other parties to pass legislation and Budgets, and even survive in office.'

This has become a key feature of my ministerial roles from 2007 onwards. The summer of 2007 was a fraught time. Labour lost ground in the May Assembly elections and although the largest party we did not have the seats to continue to govern on our own. There were serious discussions across the other three parties about forming an alternative Rainbow Coalition administration, and it was unclear who was going to form the next government. The Rainbow discussions failed in the end. I won't forget that moment when Rhodri Morgan asked me, in his words, 'to strike at a moment of weakness in the Rainbow Alliance with only a few days to spare before the witching

hour of 31 May'. So I put his name down for First Minister and he made it back to Cardiff from a Wales TUC meeting North Wales for what was an unopposed vote.

It was then that the possibility emerged of a coalition between Labour and Plaid Cymru, something which hitherto would have been regarded as inconceivable. I was asked by Rhodri Morgan to take the Labour lead as Business Minister and work with my Plaid Cymru opposite number Jocelyn Davies AM to craft a Joint Manifesto to be considered by our two political parties. As Rhodri said in his Memoir 'They both liked each other and there was a bond of trust, and obviously no macho posturing. I couldn't have guaranteed no macho posturing if it had been me and Ieuan [Wyn Jones, the Plaid leader].'

Trusted personal relationships were fundamental to the extensive and sometimes difficult negotiations which Jocelyn and I led – the current sorry saga in Westminster shows what happens when trust has broken down. The consultations then extended outwards to our AMs and party members leading up to the Special Conferences held by both parties to consider the proposition that a Labour led 'One Wales Coalition Government' should be endorsed.

The drama of those days may pale into insignificance compared with Brexit in Westminster but it was intense for us at the time as Rhodri's Memoir reveals.

The stress on him was immense with deep opposition to an alliance with 'the nats' from many comrades. During this time we both had to make the case for coalition to colleagues in Westminster and I got a roasting in Westminster from those who were concerned about this prospect.

However, Rhodri Morgan's popular and established leadership won the day at the Welsh Labour Special Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> July where robust debate took place but support was secured from delegates from across Wales and we governed on this basis for the next 4 years.

But the battle to secure the coalition took its toll. The following Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July I was sitting in the Celtic Manor before a Finance Ministers Quadrilateral was due to take place and a call came for me to leave. The call came from his chief of staff Lawrence Conway.

Rhodri was in hospital and within a few days I was making a statement to the press about his health. When asked him how much I should say, as usual he wanted me to tell the truth and praise the UHW cardiac team with his angioplasty (stents) successfully in place. Rhodri was soon back in Cathays Park appointing his ministers and obeying his doctors instructions for rest and rehabilitation.

On July 10<sup>th</sup> I was standing in for him at an event at the Ffoshas Race Course near Llanelli when a call came for me to get back to nominate Ieuan Wyn Jones to be Deputy First Minister that afternoon. Quick discussion with Les the FM's driver who didn't think

we'd make it back in time. Word went round and a helicopter offered by one of the race course supporters and off I went on one of the most terrifying journeys of my life as we hedge-hopped to Cardiff Bay helipad to rush into the chamber to nominate Ieuan. The following day Ieuan was representing Wales at the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the third battle of Ypres in 1918 and on to the British Irish Council in Stormont. We were in government together and Jocelyn, Elin Jones and I were all ministers.

Nine years later, in 2016, we had to develop another form of inter-party agreement when there was a tie for the election of First Minister between Leanne Wood from Plaid and Carwyn Jones from Labour. This led to the signing of a Compact with Plaid Cymru in support of his successful nomination on May 18<sup>th</sup>. I was reappointed by Carwyn as Leader of the House and Chief Whip and oversaw the development and implementation of that Compact which included some legislative, budget and policy agreements including progressing a Bill to stop the reasonable punishment of children now being taken through the Assembly by Julie Morgan a long term campaigner for this change and now the Minister in charge of the Bill.

The red/green policy accord has been strong over the past 20 years although there are plenty of differences but, for example, our joint commitment to a Welsh Medium Education Strategy during the coalition provided us with a bipartisan opportunity to build bridges leading to the successful expansion of Welsh Medium schools in Wales.

Of course we have also partnered with the Liberal Democrats in coalition in the early days and now with Kirsty Williams appointment as Education Minister in the current Labour-led government.

The ways of working which the One Wales coalition government developed are worth mentioning. The weekly meetings of FM, DFM, Business managers to discuss budget and policy priorities were essential and cabinet committees helped to join up government as well as securing Labour and Plaid ministerial engagement. Relationships developed during this period of government are arguably as strong as relationships with ministers of one's own party because you have got to make them work.

Being in coalition does tend to result in good behaviour in Cabinet to safeguard the partnership struck between two parties with their own clear identities and priorities. Having an eye on the goal 'of staying in power' in order to deliver on manifestos fought for in the ballot box delivers a sense of purpose and unity until the next election period looms and there is a parting of the ways.

Julia Gillard, the former prime minister of Australia, attended an informal Welsh Government cabinet meeting during her recent visit followed by an hour of discussion in the Senedd with Professor Laura McAllister. She was PM during a period of Labour minority rule and spoke positively about the need to negotiate with the opposition and political parties to get her government's policies through in the House of Representatives and the Senate. She said she felt the resulting policy and legislation were better and would be more effective.



She spoke positively about the 'Power of negotiation' in politics. My experience in minority administrations, building and managing coalition politics has been about negotiating to find common ground to move forward with political purpose to achieve our political objectives. This is about developing relationships in order to be able to negotiate with trust and understanding but being clear about the lines between 'roles and relationships'.

These skills are vital for any role within one's own party and I have been Chief Whip over the years for stretches of time when trust and respect have to underpin relationships when every vote counts and one has to be on times an 'enforcer' as well as an enabler'. I am better in the latter role always as my colleagues will probably testify.

So this role of negotiator at many different levels has been a key feature of my role as a Welsh Labour politician and Minister over the past 20 years.

This continued to be important in my six years as Finance Minister, from 2010. For me these years were the most rewarding in my ministerial experience when I sought every means to support Welsh Labour Ministers with our policy priorities as austerity and cuts rained down with the UK Coalition Government taking hold in Westminster.

I did feel a sense of power in June 2010 when I rejected the call from the UK Government to make substantial revenue and capital cuts to our Budget – do you remember the 'emergency budget'? We said no and took the money out of the reserves.

In her manifesto 'Women and Power' Mary Beard said that women still tend to hold portfolios such as health and education but there have been no Chancellors of the Exchequer. In Wales we have had 4 women holding the Finance portfolio.

Following the 2011 Assembly elections, Labour governed on its own as a minority administration which meant that each one of the six budgets I introduced had to be negotiated with Plaid, with Lib Dems and jointly with both parties. Most of those negotiations took place over the summer recesses with Kirsty Williams and Elin Jones as negotiators for their parties and mostly female Welsh Treasury officials as well! I was particularly proud when we reached a point when we could agree two year deals instead of the cliff hanger one year deal. This made a huge difference to the whole of Government in terms of stability and sustainability.

Opening up negotiations we would almost take for granted that we would all want to protect 'Supporting People' grants for services to vulnerable people typically in social housing. There has always been a hugely effective coalition of third sector organizations who could demonstrate the positive impact of SP as a preventative investment helping to sustain essential services such as Women's Aid refuges. Long

since cut and lost in England our SP grants remain a vital feature of local government and allied partners spend, protected after 10 years of austerity in Wales.

For the budget negotiations, we would have a list of schemes and projects, some of which were very local. This can look crude but can be the final hurdle in a negotiation to get your partners in budget making across the line.

But the most significant investments which came out of budget agreements were the initiatives which came out of the relative luxury of 'speed dating' to agree mutually acceptable policy which two or more parties could share in creating. The Integrated Health and Social Care Fund is one such an example. The ICF continues to fill gaps and drives change in the delivery of services through partnership working at local and regional level. We just said to officials – you've got £30m we want to integrate health and social care – no ifs or buts – just do it and we did.

The Budget deals with the Lib Dems led to the support for a Pupil Deprivation Grant which is now the Pupil Development Grant forming a key part of baseline education budgets with our Liberal Democrat Cabinet Minister for Education taking this forward.

Cross party work was also essential to progressing our fiscal and policy powers through the Silk Commission with Welsh Labour, Tory, Plaid and Lib Dem externally appointed membership. So when we received the Silk Commission recommendations, we were able to accept them collectively and make united representations to the UK Government leading to the Government of Wales Act 2014 and the St David's Day Agreement 2015.

The most challenging issue I had to address as Finance Minister was the reform of the Barnett formula – and here negotiations had not only to be with the other Welsh political parties but also a UK Treasury which was very reluctant indeed to even recognise the issue.

This is not the place to go through the ins-and-outs of the workings of the Barnett formula through which an annual block grant is allocated by the Treasury to Wales. Sufficient to say that the unfairness of the formula to Wales had been authoritatively analysed by the Holtham Commission in 2011 whose recommendations were later backed up by the Silk Commission. The prize goal was to secure a funding floor for Wales and a new fiscal framework agreement with the UK Government: the challenge was how to make the Treasury engage and come to the negotiating table at all.

A cross-party approach in the Assembly was essential. In October 2014 a Joint Motion on Devolution tabled by myself, Conservative Paul Davies, Liberal Democrat Aled Roberts and Elin Jones from Plaid called for fair funding 'with the goal of securing a rapid implementation of a funding floor in the Barnett formula and other changes, an essential first step to addressing the underfunding in a way that is consistent with Welsh needs and halts future convergence.

Alongside this, I was pursuing extensive day to day negotiations with Whitehall, through the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander and Secretary of States for Wales, first David Jones and then Stephen Crabbe. So this was another kind of cross-party working. I have looked back at the milestones of those negotiations involving a Welsh Labour Finance Minister, Lib Dem CST and Tory SoS for Wales. But we also had to ensure that the other devolved governments were on side. They had no appetite for radical reform of Barnett and we know how well it has served Scotland so my pragmatic case was for the adjustment of Barnett for Wales via the funding floor in such a way that did not disadvantage them. There was an important role here for the finance ministers quadrilaterals, bringing all the UK finance ministers together, so we had Labour, SNP, DUP, Liberal Democrat and Conservative ministers all round one table. And there were extensive trilateral discussions with my Scotland and Northern Ireland colleagues as we made common cause about tackling austerity. I was the only woman in all these financial arenas until Arlene Foster became DUP Finance Minister in 2015.

Moving the Treasury from polite resistance to constructive negotiation was not easy, we had very few levers apart from persistence and persuasion, but eventually we did move things forward and laid the basis for a new Fiscal Framework Agreement which my successor, Mark Drakeford, was able finally to conclude in 2016.

During this time of UK Government Coalition drastic cuts to our capital budgets I was also keen to develop innovative forms of capital financing including the successful Local Government Borrowing Initiative. This was proposed by Councillor Andrew Morgan (current Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Leader) to enable the Welsh Government to use the prudential borrowing power of local authorities by helping to pay the interest on borrowing for a Wales wide highways improvement programme.

The Housing Bond and Mutual Investment Model were also developed. This is now included in the UN Compendium of People First Public Private Partnerships and used to fund Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools building programme, the final art of the A 465 and a new Velindre Cancer Centre.

There are still outstanding fiscal issues, including the devolution of Air Passenger Duty although the cross party consensus for this still remains in this Assembly backed also by David Davies Tory Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee.

It was welcome to hear the relatively positive responses from Assembly Leaders to the First Minister's recent Oral Statement on Constitutional Policy following his Keir Hardie Lecture.

Mark Drakeford is proposing 'a fundamental recasting of the way in which sovereignty is conceptualised in the UK with the relationships between four governments based on a partnership of equals in a spirit of mutual respect and fair funding across the four UK nations.'

This was a welcome and refreshing set of policy proposals with the First Minister reminding us in his statement that Brexit poses a fundamental threat to the governance of the UK with no evidence of any serious thinking on this by the UK Government and failure of the PM to convene a meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council since he took office.

I left the Finance post after the 2016 Assembly elections and have played more of a supportive role in government since, (apart from a year on the backbenches) now working out of the First Minister's office and handling a wide range of issues from equal opportunities to crime and justice now of pivotal importance with the publication of the Thomas Commission's report last week 'Justice in Wales for the People of Wales.'

There is another lecture on the role of women in the devolution story of the past 20 years which I have played a part. Last year Llwydd Elin Jones spoke here of the roles and contribution of women over the past 20 years in her lunchtime lecture and I believe our role has been fundamental.

I have already made comment on relevant issues from the Yes for Wales campaign with the expectations that the Assembly would be fully representative of the Welsh population with the achievement of 50:50 gender balance in 2003 - but there is no question - I wouldn't be here if we hadn't adopted the positive action Welsh Labour twinning plan in 1998.

With our constituencies twinned throughout Wales selecting a male and female candidate we secured a breakthrough in electoral representation in the new National Assembly for Wales in 1999.

Having served as a County Councillor for 12 years I never progressed further than being vice chair of a policy committee and women were in the minority as they still are in local government.

Many of us who went from local government to stand for the Assembly campaigned for change in the Yes for Wales campaign.

In June 1997 at the Temple of Peace a meeting was held including myself, Julie Morgan, Eluned Morgan, Jill Evans, Helen Mary Jones, Jenny Randerson and Val Feld. We published a Statement 'It's women's turn to say Yes for Wales' and it is interesting to highlight some of the key points made:

- Bringing under democratic control services that matter to women such as housing, health and further education,
- Ensuring development of other key areas such as social services, education and childcare..
- Bringing decision-making closer to home so that women with family responsibilities can participate,
- Helping partnerships to tackle poverty and low pay and to build prosperity.

The Cross party nature of the meeting was important and many of us were working/campaigns in different spheres such as the EOC, Welsh Women's Aid and Greenham Common action.

I am glad the Women's Archive has secured a lottery grant to capture the papers and voices of the women in Welsh politics during the 20 years of devolution in their project 'Setting the record straight'.

Researchers can follow Paul Chaney, Fiona Mackay and Laura Mcallister in their early analysis of the impact of women in devolution 'Women, politics and constitutional change.'(2007)

I looked back at my personal comments recorded in the book as follows:

"assessing the impact on women of devolution I turn to impact on public services - we should be judged on whether we have improved health and health inequalities in education, giving priority to tackling Domestic violence and the pay gap. We must inspire women in every walk of Welsh life to speak up and get involved. Our big challenge now is to act to bring BAME women into the process out of the wings and onto the stage. Only then will he made use of this once in a lifetime opportunity." I could have written that today as I work with BAME advisors and officials and the Wales Race Forum to make that a reality.

The MeToo Campaign and appalling toxicity of social media are new challenges for women in politics, driving many women out of politics, as we have seen in the 2019 Westminster election.

In conclusion, I hope I have provided some useful insights into a ministerial career over the past 20 years, provoked some memories of 'events' in the government of Wales as we have moved forward with new powers and opportunities negotiated within and between political parties and governments.

This is just a start to my personal story. We have challenges ahead - Brexit, Climate Change, redressing the impact of austerity, taking forward the Justice Commission but mostly we need to encourage and support our young people, enfranchised soon to vote as 16 and 17 year olds to take forward the story of devolution in this century to create a fairer, greener and more prosperous Wales.

Diolch yn Fawr

Jane Hutt AM

1<sup>st</sup> November 2019