

ADRIAN WAITE

29th December 2019

Ms. Emily Atherton,
Editor,
Cumberland & Westmorland Herald,
14 King Street,
Penrith,
Cumbria.
CA11 7AH.

Sent by email to: emilya@cwherald.com

Dear Ms. Atherton,

Unrepresentative Political Parties

There seems to be widespread agreement that our political parties do not represent our interests and that they are led by inappropriate people – but perhaps the fault lies with the voters and not with the politicians and political activists.

According to the House of Commons library, there are now 512,000 members of the Labour Party, 180,000 members of the Conservative Party and 107,000 members of the Liberal-Democrats – a total of 799,000 people in membership of the main United Kingdom political parties. However, this is fewer than in the past. In the early 1950s there were three million members of the Conservative Party while the Labour Party had a million individual members and six million members affiliated through trade unions and other organisations. The Liberal Party had about 200,000 members. So, whereas in the 1950s almost a third of the electorate were members of a political party, the figure is now only 1.7%.

It appears that this decline in political participation has allowed unrepresentative groups to gain significant influence. 'Momentum' has organised within the Labour Party to secure the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader and to change the political direction of the party. Similarly, the political direction of the Conservative Party has changed. It took only 92,000 Conservative members to elect Boris Johnson as their leader and even fewer to de-select Rory Stewart as their candidate for Penrith & the Border. It took only 50,000 Liberal-Democrat members to elect Jo Swinson as their leader.

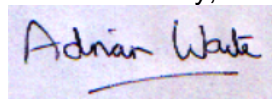
If we could return to a situation where a significant proportion of the electorate joined their favoured political party rather than just voting for them; those parties would be likely to become more broadly based and representative; they would be likely to connect more with the electorate; they would probably adopt more practical policies and they would probably choose more appropriate people to lead them.

I think we have ended up in the situation that we are in, not because of the actions of the few but because of the inaction of the many. including me.

So, I have decided to join the Liberal-Democrats.

I would urge all readers to join whichever of the political parties they feel closest to and play their part in mending our broken political system. A functioning democracy needs more than one party that is 'fit for purpose'.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Waite