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# A “Day” is all you get

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**I did not agree with an email doing the rounds asking women voters to vote for all women candidates first. There is no way I would vote for a woman if she were not up to the job. However, I would vote for a woman, rather than a man if they were both good, to redress the balance**

As by deadline time for this edition I will not know who will have won the election. Therefore, I cannot comment on how the winners and the losers have reacted.

What I can, however, guarantee is that we shall again only have a token representation of women in Parliament and the Cabinet.

Speaking during an MLP seminar on the occasion of Women's Day, Dr Alfred Sant said that a Labour government would aim for a minimum of 30 per cent of public appointments and 20 per cent of diplomatic representatives to be women.

Quota systems abroad aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a critical minority of 30 or 40 per cent. So opting for the lesser number looks like not wanting to seem too radical.

And it's too late to have those ratios in Parliament this time round! If the Labour Party really believes in promoting women through quotas, we would have seen more talented women on their list of candidates, and the same goes for the Nationalist Party. A mention one day a year and at election time just does not cut the mustard.

Well, if Dr Sant has won, this will be his chance to prove he means what he said at the Women's Day seminar last week.

But please, let us not have token women in a Labour Party Cabinet. They have to be worth their salt. We do not want a botched quick fix. For women to get to Cabinet level, they need experience. Although the experienced Labour women should note that Cabinet was not mentioned in the quota proposals.

If Sant has not won, an injection of more bright women in decision making posts in the MLP might guarantee a victory next time.

However, what I found really disturbing when reading the item was that although so many women put their heart

and soul into commenting on behaviour at the debacle of a university debate, there was only one comment from a woman accompanying the item on Dr Sant's intention on quotas and it was not impressive.

If only she had stuck to the argument in hand. Unfortunately, most bloggers don't. Rather than questioning Dr Sant's timing and lip service, she found him “disgusting” because he put forward an idea she does not agree with.

I know that blogging is meant to present unrestricted thought, and that is good, but surely it should not degenerate into a vehicle for hurling abuse at people one does not like.

By all means attack an argument, but let not blogging descend into the mire of gutter politics.

“Quotas” is the ‘F’ word (as in feminism not the four letter word), of the 21st century. The idea of quotas has long been misrepresented and women seem to shy away from even discussing it.

The core idea behind quota systems is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few tokens in political life.

Some women with misguided pride look upon quotas as a leg up, or that positions will not be achieved through merit. They are no such things.

Quotas redress an imbalance of power. Try and look back at the opposition the suffragette movement had to get women the vote.

And if you think we have gone far since then, this is what Mary Wollstonecraft had to say about the situation in 1792 in her book *Vindication of the Rights of Women* – “I may excite laughter by dropping a hint, which I mean to pursue some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed, without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of Government.”

As for meritocracy, just take a look around you and look at the

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paucity of talent in decision-making posts in the country. Nepotism among males is rife.

Because it was Women's Day on Saturday, Euronews had a feature on unequal pay for women in Belgium and looked at a bank in Spain where equality was working. However, the feature concluded that despite legislation on equal pay for equal work, women earn 25% less than their male counterparts for doing the same job and that what was presented reflected the European average.

What was amusing and enlightening was the way employers got around the legislation. One example was that floor cleaning women would be given the job description title of a “cleaning lady” while the men doing the same job had the grand title of “surface technician”.

For all those women who think that women can still achieve what they are entitled to through hard work alone, this is the reality of what women are up against, and how much women earn is crucial to equality. Power is about status and money.

Now it was all very well for Dr Sant to say that he backed the idea of having quotas to ensure women are appointed to top positions, just before the election.

What a pity that neither party really paid more than lip service to the idea, otherwise we would have seen far more women's names on the lists of candidates.

Having said that, it still does not mean that just having a woman's name on the list would guarantee election.

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I am so glad that I do not have to face the dilemma of choosing between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

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