

**National Federation of WIs (NFWI) Annual Meeting
Bournemouth International Centre
Wednesday 5th June 2019**

Delegate Report

The sun shone in Bournemouth as WI members from across England and Wales arrived at the conference centre. NFWI Chair, Lynne Stubbings, opened the meeting and the 4,000 strong audience gave a rousing rendition of Jerusalem. I am always moved when I sing Jerusalem but joining this number of women was special and I will remember it for a long time.

As delegates would be voting on resolutions, Returning Officers and Tellers were appointed and seconded. The majority of the members present approved the appointments. Next was the Adoption of Standing Orders, the majority of members were in favour.

Chair's Address

Lynne Stubbings gave her opening address where she reflected on another busy year for the WI. The Alliance with Bowls Development had attracted 1,200 members to the first six week programme and 400 WIs had signed up to the Walking Netball programme. Lynne also highlighted the work continuing to be done on past resolutions. She remarked how fantastic it had been to see Susie, Jenny and Lisa from Selby Swans on BBC Breakfast promoting the End Plastic Soup campaign. Whilst in Bournemouth Lynne and her colleagues from the NFWI Executive had been photographed on the beach with the End Plastic Soup logo made out of non-recyclable plastic. Next Lynne introduced Melissa Green, the new NFWI General Secretary.

Finally Lynne summarised the two resolutions which delegates would be asked to vote on later in the meeting: A call against the decline in local bus services and don't fear the smear.

Hon. Treasurer's Statement

Julia Roberts gave a report on what she described as 'a good financial year' for the NFWI (to 30/9/2018). Key details of the report are as follows:

Total consolidated income for the year decreased 1.8% to £7.5m. Total consolidated expenditure decreased by 0.3% TO £7.34m. Net income for the year was £0.57m after investment gains and total funds for the year-end were £10.54m.

Income from charitable activities included membership subscriptions of £2.41m, an increase of 0.84% and Denman fees of £2.5m, a decrease of 3.8% due to fewer bookings on courses and events.

The WI trading subsidiary WI Enterprises Ltd had an income of £1.6m from advertising commission and other sales.

Denman had a total income of £3.048m and £3.135m expenditure, leaving a net deficit of £37k.

More information on the NFWI 2017-2018 accounts can be found on the NFWI website.

Next was a video about WI Climate Ambassadors as part of an appeal for more members to train for this role. The video demonstrated how ambassadors have the potential to make a real difference and to 'deliver a strong message'. Anyone interested in the role should email pa@ngei.org.uk

Resolution 1

The Chair then introduced the discussion on the first resolution 'a call against the decline in local bus services', setting out strict guidelines on how proceedings would take place.

I was pleased to see Jackie Howsham (Burniston and Cloughton WI, North Yorkshire East Federation) the proposer, take to the stage to give a brief resume of the resolution.

The resolution was seconded by Valerie Stevens from Devon Federation who called for the WI to demonstrate to local authorities that buses are still needed.

Darren Shirley from The Campaign for Better Transport (which has a Save Our Buses campaign) talked in favour of the resolution. He spoke of councils facing drastic cuts reducing funding to transport whereas the NHS was increasing funding to patient transport services to make up for the loss of bus services. Bus fares, he said, had seen an average 45% increase in recent years. Darren asserted that bus service cuts were at odds with calls for action on climate change due to more people being faced with using cars and taxis. He called for more responsive services such as Dial-a-Ride.

Paul Buchanan, a travel economist, spoke against the resolution. He argued that transport is continually changing and that increasing urbanisation has seen a trend against buses. Further he said that bus de-regulation had only worked for one year but had become a 'complete mess' due to competition for bus routes and private sector monopolies. Paul felt that the way forward will be shared taxis and driver-less taxis.

Several members from the audience asked questions and talked in favour, and against, the resolution as follows:

- a member who begrudged her taxes being used to fund bus services
- someone whose relative had a two hour bus journey to and from work
- the dilemma faced by local authorities having to juggle funding for much needed services, e.g. social care over bus services

Delegates were then asked to cast votes as instructed by their WI and those they were representing by submitting voting cards for or against the resolution.

I voted for this resolution on behalf of the four WIs I was representing.

Guest Speaker

The Chair introduced the first speaker, Lord Bradley of Withington who is Chairman of Care Not Custody. I learned that the Care Not Custody campaign began following a 2009 WI resolution. The original aim of the campaign was to divert offenders suffering mental ill health and learning disabilities away from custody to more appropriate services. It has now expanded to provide services for women offenders. Hearing about some of the campaign's successes was very inspiring. For example there is now a Government strategy for women offenders and a 92% geographical coverage of the diversion service. Lord Bradley said there was still work to be done in ensuring continued and growing investment for mental health and learning disability services.

Ann Jones thanked Lord Bradley for respecting the original WI resolution and she called for a WI to be formed in every women's prison.

Next in the proceedings was the awarding of various WI prizes, including the Lady Denman Cup competition which had attracted 136 entries.

Federations wishing to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Members of three Federations, North Yorkshire East, Suffolk West and Warwickshire had voted in favour of them changing to CIO status. The majority of members voted in favour of the Federations becoming CIOs.

Announcement of the NFWI Board 2019-2021

Following the recent elections the new NFWI Trustees were introduced. I was pleased to discover that Maureen Hancock, a member of a WI in Leeds had been elected. I feel it is important for WIs in the north of the country to be represented.

Resolution 2:

Lynne Stubbings then introduced the discussion on the second resolution, Don't Fear the Smear. The proposer of the resolution spoke passionately about her concern that the number of women attending routine cervical screening continues to fall despite the number of lives screening saves annually. Some of the points she made are as follows:

- 1.2 million women failed to attend for routine screening in 2017-18. This will result in an increase in women being diagnosed with cervical cancer; around 50% in some age groups.
- The government campaign in early 2019 only ran for 8 weeks
- Vaccination is no guarantee against developing cervical cancer as there are 10 different strains of Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Several barriers to women failing to be screened were highlighted: these included embarrassment, concerns about test results, lack of awareness of risk and inconvenient appointment times.

Rob Music of Jo's Cancer Trust spoke in favour of the resolution. He talked about the complexity of reasons for non-engagement and the need to seek to understand these in order to reverse the decline. I found the statistics that two women die each day from cervical cancer and that it is the most common cause of death for women under 35 and that it is responsible for 70% of deaths in women over 50 really shocking.

To ensure balance in the debate a WI member spoke against the resolution. Reasons included:

- Public Health England have had a campaign in early 2019 which was backed by cancer charities
- The cause is already well publicised with two weeks annually given to it
- Self-sampling swab kits and home urine tests being trialled for future use. These could be a means of engaging with hard to reach women
- 50 testing labs have been reduced to 9 at the same time as the 2019 campaign. I found this really shocking!

Questions and comments were taken from the audience. These included:

- A member spoke movingly of seeing three of her friends die of cervical cancer in their 70s called for there to be no upper age limit on screening. She questioned why the resolution did not include mention of this
- The cost of private screening for those over the current age limit can be circa £800
- A member who had had a hysterectomy many years ago has repeatedly asked medical professionals if she needed to be screened. No one seems able to give her an answer.
- Another member who had recently recalled following screening felt that enough was being done to raise awareness of screening without the resolution going forward

As with the first resolution, delegates were then asked to cast votes.

I voted for this resolution on behalf of the four WIs I was representing.

Guest Speaker

The next speaker was Maggie Philbin OBE, who is CEO of TeenTech. Maggie began by showing us a picture of her late father who in retirement had been involved with his local WI. She then reflected on how she got her first break in TV on SwopShop. She later joined Tomorrow's World, which she described as totally male-orientated and sexist, where she introduced viewers to the first mobile phone (which was the size of a brick) and fax machine (who remembers those). Maggie said that TeenTech had been intended as a one-off school technology event but in 10 years has grown into an award-winning organisation with the aim of encouraging young people in disadvantaged areas into science, technology and engineering. The organisation does this using engaging programmes and an award scheme which appeals to young people. I found Maggie's talk very interesting and inspiring and was impressed to hear about the difference TeenTech has made to many young people's lives. Maggie ended her talk with an idea about collaborating with young

people on WI campaigns. I thought this was an inspired idea and judging by the audience reaction so did many more members! Maggie was very complementary about the work done by the WI and suggested that the audience should give themselves a round of applause.

For more information on TeenTech visit www.teentech.com

Resolution voting

The result of the resolution voting were as follows:

A call against the decline in local bus services – **for** 5,729 (96%), **against** 262 - resolution carried

Don't fear the smear **for** 5,788 (97%), **against** - 194 resolution carried

Chair's Closing Remarks

Lynne Stubbings thanked everyone for attending and introduced two photo-montages accompanied by 'Here Come the Girls'. This got many toes tapping! It was inspiring to see the variety of work and campaigns WIs had been involved with during the last year. I was particularly pleased to see a picture of Lisa, Susie and Jennie from Selby Swans on the BBC Breakfast sofa.

It was a real honour to be a conference delegate and to represent not only Selby Swans WI but Cawood WI, HMF Pinafores and Thorpe Willoughby WI.

Glynis Rushby, Secretary Selby Swans WI