

Delegate's report from the NFWI Annual Meeting in Brighton 11th June 2016

From Ruth Reed, Nunney and District WI
to the following WIs

Cranmore-Strawberry Line, Leigh on Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Nunney and District

President's Address:

She opened the conference with welcomes to all. She said she is proud of the diversity of the WI. (had she looked around the audience?!)

Membership is growing and campaigning issues have gone well. Activities, workshops etc., have moved on to cover a range of skills.

More technology will be used to give members access to information.

A printed annual review will be sent to all groups.

Hon. Treasurer's Statement

Finance was covered through a powerpoint presentation by the treasurer.

Both President and Treasurer outlined and pushed the Denman Appeal and stressed that funds raised will be ring fenced.

Many collections were taken and on the coaches.

Resolution 1: Appropriate Care in hospitals for People with dementia

This refers to patients who are admitted to general wards for other medical conditions.

(I have written up this section in detail as I felt it was very important)

Proposer: "Noisy multi-occupancy wards can cause irreparable damage and stress and a financial strain on the NHS. Carer and family input can lead to quicker recovery and earlier return home with benefits to patient, medical staff, carers and the NHS."

Seconder: "1 in 14 over 65 have dementia; by 2025 over a million; by 2050 over 2 million. Routines and habits are known by family and carers."

Against the motion as it stands: an expert speaker from the Alzheimers Society: He was "supportive of the need for campaigning and action by us, but NOT with this resolution as it stands which is too narrow. It have taken 37 years to bring Dementia out of the shadows and there are still struggles. The WI is well placed to continue this struggle but more is required that what is proposed in this resolution and much of what the resolution proposes is already happening. Parents can already go in for children and this is already extending to Dementia patients. Carer choice not compunction is what we're asking for, and we need you support to change things at all level. The Alzheimers Society is there and ready to give you the information to help your campaign."

Speaker from the floor against the motion as it stands: An NHS nurse for 39 years. She also “wanted us to widen the resolution as it is inadequate and even counter-productive. Is it realistic in the present £22 million back hole in NHS funding with other issues like diabetes on the agenda? Open access will affect staff. Things are happening and we really should talk to the A.S. to work with them, not go off on a tangent of our own. We need to widen our remit which is really only dealing with the symptoms not the causes. We should push for better training in dementia care for NHS nurses which is already happening in many places. We should look at the whole picture not a small part. We are missing an opportunity to campaign for real change.”

Other speakers from the floor against the resolution: It introduces carer compunction. Loved ones experience both guilt and relief when loved ones go into a home. This resolution would prolong the agony for them making them feel they have to go in to make up perceived gaps in the NHS - and what about those without carers? We should be supporting the mandatory which demands support for all disabilities. Carers are exhausted and we should be giving THEM support at home, not expecting them to support the hospital situation. Hospital can and should give them essential respite, not ask them to fill gaps or even police wards.

A GP spoke forcefully against this resolution: “It is too narrow and obliterates the wider question. We need to look at pre-hospital care not what happens in hospital. For examples, we should have early conversations with suffered and their families to increase power of atoner in order to be able to make decisions in advance, as with palliative care. We must not let hospitals off the hook. There is already work going on. This resolution is behind the times. We should work with the A.S. society on their aims, not a new campaign which is wide of the mark.

There were 4 speakers from the floor who supported the resolution. Every one of those spoke emotionally with personal stories.

A speaker from the front table also underlined points for the resolutions.

The resolution was carried by 90% of the votes cast.

.....

Question: If delegates are instructed on how to vote in advance, before hearing the arguments on both sides, there is no chance to listenn to expert speakers before voting. Is this why the vote for remained at more than 90% despite the strong arguments for a wider resolution? Should delegates be given discretion? And should there be opportunity to amend or extend the terms of the resolution. One speaker from the floor was severely reprimanded and cut off before finishing the point when she suggested such a change.

.....

Resolution 2: Avoid food waste: address food poverty:

Proposer: "To cut food waste by a quarter would feed all those in food poverty."

Again there were strong arguments on both sides and again mostly that we are ignoring what is already happening and out of date in our emphasis. It is in fact a failed motion from last year.

Against: It was argued that we should work with what is already happening and look at waste at all stages in the food chain from farms to homes and shops/supermarkets.

The food waste motion was carried by 72%

Guest Speaker 1 - Rona Fairhead, BBC Trust Chairman

She spoke eloquently, informatively and in a fascinating delivery about the changes in the Media world and at the BBC in particular as they adapt to technology and proposed changes by the government.

Guest Speaker 2 - Baroness D'Souza, Speaker of the House of Lords.

This was also fascinating and informative. It was eye-opening to see just what powers the House of Lords can and does wield. She looked at the changes needed to membership, numbers in the House, how members are appointed and how their term of office could be ended. She explained how she has been leading the work on these changes. She said one real positive of the Lords is that there are many real experts representing a wide field and body of knowledge - more so than in the Commons and they can be relied on to look professional at draft legislation. The House of Lords has been and should be independent of political parties but the last years have seen a rise in political appointments. This must be dealt with.

Finale

The AGM ended with the anthems and a kind of "Last Night of the Proms" in honour of the Queen's birthday. Prom favourites were sung. Union Jacks were waved.

A big local band played and the soloist dressed in a Union Jack and a helmet sang Rule Britannia with gusto!!!!