



PUBLIC AFFAIRS MEMO

An update from SWFWI Public Affairs Committee

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The WI, a force for change. Together we can make a real difference!

Welcome to the third PA Committee Memo. These memos are ongoing information sheets about the different campaigns on which the WI have a mandate to raise awareness around. We will keep you up to date with any current news on the resolutions via this memo, the Hive and on the SWFWI website (under the resolutions tab) and aim to give you ideas of how to get involved either yourselves or at your own WI.

We hope these memos will make the issues raised a little more relevant to you. This edition focuses on how resolutions have made a lasting change and impact on member's lives.

Resolutions: A Road Well-Travelled

We're all familiar with campaign activities that are set in motion once a resolution receives a mandate from the NFWI Annual Meeting, but what happens to older resolutions? After about two years, a comprehensive review starts, which leads to one of four possible outcomes:

- The campaign remains a national priority
- The campaign continues, but with a lower priority
- The focus alters to perhaps only doing an activity on a particular focused day
- The campaign winds down, but with a watching brief in case it returns in future

It's worth remembering that all campaigns belong to us, and we can keep any of them going locally if it is particularly relevant.

Older Resolutions: Can they Still be Relevant Today?

Yes, absolutely! In more than 100 years of campaigning, the WI has shown it can be a powerful force for good. It all began on 24 October 1918 at the NFWI's second Annual Meeting, where WI members passed the first WI resolution, calling for the provision of a sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses.

This was just the beginning. For more than 100 years, WI members have campaigned on an incredible range of social policy, health, food and agriculture, education, environment and international causes. By exerting their individual and collective influence, WI members have increased public awareness of the issues and brought about important policy changes. Below are a few examples:



Visiting Children in Hospital

In 1953, three years after a WI resolution on allowing family to visit sick children in hospital was passed, less than a quarter of hospitals allowed daily visits. In 1957 the WI sent evidence to the Platt Committee on the Welfare of Children in Hospital. The committee's report, which recommended parents visit sick children as often as possible, is considered highly influential in the development of modern hospital practices. The Covid pandemic has again highlighted how important hospital visiting is to patients of all ages.



Disabled Housewives Pension

When the government introduced a Social Security Bill in 1974 including a disabled persons' pension, the WI put its weight behind an amendment that offered the same benefit to disabled housewives. As a result of this pressure from the WI and other groups, the government conceded in 1975 and introduced a non-contributory pension for disabled housewives. Discrepancies in women's pensions are still being uncovered and addressed today.



Fair Trade

In the early 1990s the NFWI joined with CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft and the World Development Movement to become a founding member of the Fairtrade Foundation. The Fairtrade certification mark is on more than 6000 products – including the UK's top-selling fruit, the banana. As a result, over 1.9 million farmers and workers have been supported in improving their lives and their communities. 17% of the farmers and 47% of the workers supported are women. Certifications are constantly being added, improving lives further – another ongoing success.



Care not Custody

In June 2008, the NFWI passed a resolution calling for an end to the inappropriate detention of people with mental health problems, after the son of a Norfolk WI member tragically took his own life while in custody. In partnership with the Prison Reform Trust, the Care not Custody campaign aimed to bring an end to the use of prison as a 'default option' for people with mental health needs or learning disabilities. It has succeeded in securing government backing, and a total of £75 million for schemes to ensure that people with mental health problems who come into contact with the criminal justice system get the treatment and support they need. So one WI member, with a personal reason for bringing about change, brought the whole WI family on board to bring lasting changes to help others.

And finally ...



Equal Pay for Equal Work

In 1943, Bures WI in Suffolk West Federation proposed a resolution calling for 'equal pay for equal work'. This campaign followed a debate on equality that had been rising during the years of WWII. Alongside other women's organisations, The WI kept up the momentum for decades, backing Employment Secretary Barbara Castle's Equal Pay Bill of 1970. It is now illegal to pay men more than women for work of equal value - and it all started here in Suffolk West.

If you would like to learn more about the Public Affairs Committee then why not come along to a meeting, we would be pleased to welcome you. Contact gwenwilliams55@googlemail.com for more information.

There are also details about the PA Committee on the [Suffolk West website](#). Click [here](#) or visit the site, click on the Committee tab and scroll down to find us.

With very best wishes to you all,

Gwen Williams (Chair of PA), Annie Phillips (Co-Chair of PA),
Jan McLardy, Val Simpson (ACWW Rep), Lesli Tunbridge (Climate Ambassador),
Danielle Chatten, Maggie Glavin, Jill Newell & Pat Collinson (Climate Ambassador).