



Norfolk Federation of WIs

Charity Number: 227411

WI OPINION PIECE for early September 2019

Elizabeth Barker, Chair of PA Committee, Norfolk Federation WI

Resolving to do better!

So, here we are again at the beginning of September and schools and colleges are returning to start another academic year! It hardly seems a moment since the euphoria of the “end of term” with the holidays seemingly stretching endlessly ahead. Straight-away though, the shops started to bombard us with “Back to School” essentials like uniform! I must admit that one thing which I loved when I was at school was the preparation for the new academic year. It was perhaps rather sad but I loved the new pencils and pencil case, the pristine exercise books waiting for me to write in them – unfortunately, my rather untidy handwriting rather spoiled them. Then, there were all the resolves for the new year and determination to “do better”.

Later, as a teacher the new year was full of targets for us and our pupils and many ideas as to how we could attain these goals, It would seem that we always want to aim to improve ourselves, those around us and, often, society in general and the WI have been making resolutions for over a hundred years. One of my fellow trustees on the Norfolk Federation Board of Trustees, Maggie Gallop, has been looking through our archives and has found some interesting entries. Back in the early 1930s St. Faith’s WI wanted to start an “Anti-litter league” and “after some discussion, it was agreed to recommend that the Institute should not form an Anti-Litter League as such, but should do as much propaganda as possible in the direction of clearing litter”. Apparently, Snettisham WI had already started a campaign. So, Norfolk did not pursue this nationally but in June 1954 a national WI resolution was passed which led to all our campaigns about not dropping litter.

I think many students would like an idea from the early 1940s when “this meeting considers that an enquiry should be made into the amount of homework allotted to each child in large public-private schools, and deplores the fact that many children are studying from 6pm to 9pm every evening after a full day of 8 hours at school”. The 1940s were a decade dominated by war but in 1943 the Norfolk Federation had a resolution passed nationally “That this meeting, while appreciating the progress which has been made in the School Meals Scheme, notes that there are still many schools without canteens and urges: 1) Local Education Authorities to accelerate their arrangements (which should not be dependent on voluntary effort) so that all schools may be served. 2) Parents to take full advantage of such a provision where it exists”. Of course, at that time school canteens may have been of minor importance to many people but the ideas are still relevant today in a time of cuts for different reasons.

In that year, 1943, Norfolk was also concerned about mass unemployment and had a resolution passed nationally assuring “the Government of its willing cooperation in accepting necessary hardships”. Norfolk WI has always been aware of national issues and has had 8 resolutions taken on as national campaigns. Some are still very important, particularly the “Care not Custody” campaign and the “No smoking in public places” which both originated in Norfolk. The sentiment behind some of the resolutions is still relevant. In 1985 Surlingham WI put forward a resolution urging the government “to take steps now to reduce the emission of sulphur and nitrogen oxides from power stations in order to reduce acid rain”. The WI is still campaigning on environmental issues, particularly with the “End Plastic Soup” campaign, even if we are not now concentrating on acid rain.



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So, as we return to school and work after the summer break, we make resolutions for the year ahead. In the WI we are also making resolutions and will soon start to consider our possible resolutions for the year ahead. Time to start thinking!

Contact us at fedsec@norfolkwi.org.uk