

CORNWALL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

MINUTES OF SPRING COUNTDOWN – EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD AT 11.00am ON TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2011 AT THE HALL FOR CORNWALL, TRURO

OPENING OF MEETING: The meeting opened with the singing of *Jerusalem*. The County Chairman, Mrs Yvonne Toms, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES OF 2010 ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING: The minutes of the 2010 Annual Council meeting were adopted. Proposed by Mrs P Bryant, Budock WI. Seconded Mrs D Shotten, St Germans WI.

INTRODUCTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND WI ADVISERS: Mrs Yvonne Toms introduced each member of the Executive Committee and each WI Adviser.

RESOLUTIONS SESSION

Mrs Kathy Reed, Membership Support Sub-committee Chairman, took the chair for this part of the meeting. She introduced Mrs Kaye Wadey, WI Adviser and Resolutions Adviser.

UPDATE ON MANDATES AND CAMPAIGNS

Mrs Kaye Wadey gave an update on ongoing campaigns:

COOL. Ongoing discussions.

Farmgate Milk Prices and Violence against Women. To get involved in the campaigns and for up to date information members were advised to visit the WI website.

Mrs Kaye Wadey also explained the resolution process, from a member seeing a need, writing a resolution and sending it to NFWI to the shortlist of six to ten published in *WI Life* and voted on by members.

2011 AGM: Voting procedures and notices were given by Mrs Nan Collier, AGM Co-ordinator.

2011 NATIONAL RESOLUTION: Proposed Mega Farms

This meeting abhors the practice of factory farming particularly large animals such as pigs and cows and urges HM Government to ensure planning permission is not granted for such projects.

Ms Pat Thomas from Compassion in World Farming, started by pointing out that a mega farm is a large factory farm with concrete buildings and large numbers of animals treated as a commodity. It is a complex issue involving the animal's welfare and freedom to behave naturally. Ms Thomas wanted to dispel the notion that campaigners were all vegetarian. Practises that are bad for animal welfare are bad for the environment. Factory farms use lots of pesticides, and have a high impact on the surrounding area. It is a damaged and flawed system that has been around since the 1960 but has not succeeded in its aim to feed the world. What she felt we need is robust breeds and the ethos 'turn grass into what we can eat'.

Mr Michael Hart from Small Family Farm Alliance, has visited mega farms in America and Hungary. These farms can consist of 35,000 – 40,000 pigs and 25,000 – 30,000 cows. Farmers cannot dictate the price they receive for their produce, whether they have a small family farm or a large mega farm, and all are finding it difficult to earn a living wage. Mr Hart feels that we do not need mega farms to feed the world. Family farms are not always small, are more diverse and therefore protect the environment. Mega farms only grow what the animals on them need to eat and so encourage monoculture, which could be a threat to food security. Lessons should be learnt from the foot and mouth epidemic ten years ago. In his experience he feels that the question of slurry disposal has not been adequately covered.

Mr Andrew Butler, Senior Food & Farming Adviser, NFU in the South-West, pointed out that development was nothing new in farming and change has always been resisted. Farmers try to use the best system. In this country we grow grass easily, but animals are still housed in winter. The housing is well ventilated with access to food and density is regulated. Milk production in the UK has hardly changed in recent years, despite the fact that the number of herds have declined, but at the same time consumption has increased so that now only 50% of Cheddar cheese is produced using British milk.

Mr Mark Oliver, a local dairy farmer, runs his farm with his father. They have no interest in turning their farm into a mega farm, but explained that the same basic principles apply whether you run a small or large farm. A happy, healthy cow produces more milk. Because a farm looks quaint does not mean that animals are well treated. Large farms employ full time vets, are able to invest in research and smaller farmers go to the bigger units to learn the latest 'best practice'. He urged the meeting to "go after cruel not big".

A question and answer session followed. Amongst questions asked were:

Q. *With so many animals how can illness be spotted?*

A. Mr Oliver/Mr Butler—There are more employees on site to spot disease, large units employ a full time vet.

Mr Hart—more likely that a computer will register that milk yield has gone down. What is needed is more skilled employees.

Q. *How much British food is exported to third world countries?*

A. Mr Oliver – Britain not self-sufficient in food, and is therefore a net importer of food. We only export a small amount of food to third world countries.

Mr Hart – If we could feed ourselves the third world would be better able to feed itself.

Q. *Could methane from farms be used to create energy?*

A. Mr Butler - A digester had been included in the one planning application submitted so far in Britain.

Ms Thomas – California is no longer issuing permits for digesters because of problems with air quality.

NATIONAL RESOLUTION: The closure of Local Libraries

This meeting urges HM Government to maintain support for local libraries, as an essential local educational and information resource.

Ms Maureen Twose, Outreach & Reader Development Officer, gave a history of the library service in Cornwall, from the first to be opened in 1800 in Penzance to the present day. There is, and will continue to be, a statutory obligation for councils to provide a library service. Libraries have changed, they now not only providing books, but free internet access, etc. Ms Twose informed delegates that any members of the library can access their on-line facilities 24 hours a day. Examples were given of people who benefited from being able to study for qualifications to improve job prospects, make new friendships and find support during difficult episodes in their lives. A library is the natural place to visit for information on council services and local schools.

Cllr Joan Symons, Cabinet Member for Customer First & Culture, Cornwall Council, was pleased to be able to tell the meeting that there would be no library closures in Cornwall, although opening hours would have to be cut. In the present climate savings would have to be made and so books were being bought in partnership with Devon. Some libraries would also provide services currently provided by One-Stop shops for Revenue & Benefits and Birth & Death registration.

A question and answer session followed.

Q. Could libraries benefit from better promotion?

A. Unfortunately there was no budget for promoting the service.

LOCAL RESOLUTION: Cheque Payments

This meeting urges the Payments Council to abandon the plans to phase out payment made by cheques.

Proposer: Mrs Jane Dover, Truro WI, told the meeting that the first cheque was issued in 1659 and at its peak in 1990 four billion were written per day. Now most transactions were by card but still 3.5 million cheques are written each day. The Payments Council would like the cheque phased out by 2018, but if no workable alternative can be found by 2016 it will stay. The alternatives proposed at the moment are pay-points in supermarkets, payment by mobile phone, a 'paper-based' alternative or a Chaps/BACS system. Not all organisations, schools or small businesses have the resources to fund the technology necessary for payment by card. Schools and charities rely on payment by cheque, so it will affect children and the over sixties most. The cheque system is safe, charities can take the option for two signatures, and payment can be stopped if necessary.

Seconder: Mrs Caroline Cudmore, Ladock WI.

Mrs Liz Anderson, WI adviser, gave a vote of thanks to the speakers and the Membership Support Sub-committee Chairman.

Notices were given by sub-committee chairmen.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12.55pm and reconvened at 2.15pm.

Mrs Yvonne Toms announced the result of the local resolution vote: 144 in favour (unanimous).

Chy Noweth an Conteth car park update: Mrs Yvonne Toms announced that approximately £10,000 had been donated to the car park so far, but as the cost would be approximately £40,000 the Executive Committee felt it prudent to postpone the project. Winners of the fundraising competition were Luxulyan and Lanilivery WI, with St Dominic WI as runners-up.

GUEST SPEAKER: Mr Andy Secombe – Growing up with the Goons. Mr Secombe's talk covered the development of the Goon Show, which Harry Secombe had described as the most fun of his career. From the first meeting of Harry and Spike Milligan on a hillside in North Africa during the Second World War, to the sad death of Harry following his second stroke, the audience was treated to hilarious anecdotes of the life of the children of Peter Sellers, Michael Bentine, Spike Milligan and of course Harry Secombe. The Goons all started their individual stage careers at the Windmill Theatre as comedic interludes between the main shows; they would meet at Grafton's Pub and improvise, and the Goon Show was born. When Andy Secombe was nearly ten years old he was taken to see a Goon Show; it was then that he realized that his dad was a "professional idiot"! Although Harry did not mind being approached by fans, there was an occasion when at an airport, he was trying to hide behind a newspaper and a lady came up to him in a determined manner, but at the last minute had a change of mind and said to him "I'm sorry, I thought you were Harry Secombe". As she disappeared, Harry turned to his daughter, Jennifer, and said "I thought I was too". Being the child of a celebrity, and having a famous name can bring unwelcome attention. Andy Secombe was always being asked to sing a song or tell a joke: he found the famous Goon 'raspberry' came in handy as he made a hasty exit. Harry Secombe had learnt Italian during the war, and spoke it fluently, with a Neapolitan accent. This made him a great hit with waiters in Italian restaurants, especially because of his habit of bursting into song after a good meal. The Goon children feel that they have been left a great legacy by their fathers. Michael Bentine's sense of humour and observation, Spike Milligan's deep and interesting appreciation of life, Peter Sellers' films and Harry Secombe's ability to look at the world and laugh, no matter how dark things seem.

Ms Julia Havard gave a vote of thanks to Mr Andy Secombe for his most entertaining talk.

200+ Club Draw: 1st prize, Mrs G Keeble, Praze-an-Beeble WI; 2nd prize - St Neot WI; 3rd prize St Columb Minor WI.

The Raffle took place, with Mr Andy Secombe drawing the tickets. Yvonne Toms thanked everyone present for their very generous support.

Mrs Rosemary Slee, Chairman of the Home Economics and Craft Sub-committee, thanked the County Chairman, Mrs Yvonne Toms, for an enjoyable day, and looked forward to seeing her and her cycle helmet on the sponsored cycle ride in May.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm with the singing of the **National Anthem**.