

Generational Differences

I was wondering what to do to bring some of the women interested in WILPF together again. I opened the pages of the Worthing newspaper and lo and behold, on the front page, was Worthing's new sensation, Hazel Rennie, who had just returned from Greenham Common. I thought I'd better get this woman to come to our meeting. The person to phone was Sybil, who could link everything, so she got me Hazel's number and that's how I met Hazel, who has been a dear friend ever since.

Hazel came along as the star turn to another evening meeting. We all agreed we wanted to carry on and be part of the WILPF branch in Worthing, so that's where it all began.

The main issue then seemed to be that the ones who met on an afternoon who were retired wanted to carry on meeting in the afternoon, whereas most of the other women either wanted to meet in the evening, when they had got a babysitter, or they wanted to fit it in with children and sandwiches in between playgroup pickups at lunch time.

So we muddled a long in that way, but it wasn't long before I realised that what was happening was that the representation system through the branch wasn't really available to us younger or more active women because we were meeting separately as a young branch of WILPF.

Now, Sybil obviously realised this too, and encouraged somebody to go along to an Exec meeting in London. After a while I probably declared myself willing, but it was not a fulfilling experience. I went to a room in the office, which was very gloomy and dark. There was a high table of women, very well dressed, with glasses of water, who ran everything. Everyone else was fairly silent, and I was too scared to speak, so I never went again and just got on with it.

So that really is the problem when older groups 'allow' younger or more active groups to become part of them. They're not always allowing sufficient representation, and even when it is allowed, it is not in a form that the next generation can deal with.