

November 1975.

WVS/WRVS ASSOCIATION

Members' Newsletter No. 3

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN OF WRVS

I am sure you will be interested to know that our Annual Conference, which this year took place at Warwick, was very successful. We were able to arrange for the fullest possible participation in discussion of all those attending and, as a result, I think we were able to formulate some reasonable conclusions.

First of all, because of the economic situation in the country, there is no possibility of additional money for new work. Nevertheless, it was quite clear that by careful planning and deployment of existing resources, both material and human, we could continue our work throughout the country.

There is no doubt that the needs of the future are tending to develop most urgently around the plight of children and young families generally. We have derived considerable benefit during the past few months from the efforts to present to the public our work in recycling clothing, especially for children and young people.

This has helped to establish WRVS as a service still fitted to make an increasing contribution in dealing with this problem.

Yet another aspect of our work which is expanding is the provision of the machinery to enable other organisations to participate in social projects of various kinds. Women's Institutes and Townswomen's Guilds have used our services in this way.

Townswomen's Guilds joined with us on October 14th to organise a Conference on the subject of Violence in the Community - the Family at Risk. This was a great success. Over one hundred Voluntary Organisations were represented.

The various organisational changes which had to be made as a result of Local Government reorganisation have been very largely absorbed although not without difficulty in some areas.

I am deeply concerned by the feeling of remoteness from the centre which local communities tend to feel in respect of local authorities and in conjunction with the Regional Administrators we shall be giving practical consideration to any amendments which may be necessary within WRVS to help to alleviate such feelings.

I must add that we had excellent speakers at the Conference and the whole atmosphere was one of vigour, cheerfulness and enterprise and left me with no doubt whatever but that WRVS will weather the various difficulties which lie ahead and emerge, if anything, stronger than before.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The WRVS Annual Conference held at Warwick University was unanimously voted one of the most successful and enjoyable. The spacious assembly rooms gave plenty of opportunity for members to meet and talk to each other.

The syndicate discussions reviewed the machinery structure of WRVS following reorganisation. The general consensus of opinion was that the present machinery was functioning well but that during the coming year, counties would welcome more contact with Headquarters staff.

After dinner on the first evening, films from the WVS/WRVS Archives were shown, which gave great pleasure, a certain amount of laughter at the old-fashioned uniform and clothing, but a stirring of pride in what had been done in the past and of intense loyalty to the Service. It is hoped to find opportunities to show some of the older films at meetings of the Association.

A special feature of the first morning was an absorbing talk by Miss Margaret A. Clayton, Head of the Voluntary Services Unit, who spelled out her responsibilities of co-ordinating Government Departments' approach to voluntary organisations with particular relation to WRVS. She amused us with a favourite prayer which reminded her of WRVS practicality and heart:

"Lord, keep us from being like porridge,
Slow to boil and hard to stir;
And make us more like cornflakes,
Always prepared and ready to serve."

Mr. W. Harbert, Director of Social Services, Avon, gave a challenging but sometimes sombre account of Social Service Departments, with personal social services growing faster than the economy as a whole. He spoke about the change in reaction to welfare rights - the former applicants were now clients. Although the number of social workers had doubled in two years, the demands were greater and inevitably there was more criticism from individuals and groups.

Mr. Harbert gave a warning that it might be necessary to cut down some part of the services and sent a shiver down some WRVS spines by mentioning holidays, concessionary fares, even Meals on Wheels.

Mr. John Profumo was the main outside speaker and gave a fascinating account of a number of Welfare projects undertaken at Toynbee Hall.

WRVS ADVISORY COUNCIL - SPECIAL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 14th, 1975

During this year the quarterly meetings of the Advisory Council were geared to one subject, that of "Families at Risk".

There were two sessions of the Council dealing with different aspects of the subject, followed by a day conference held jointly with the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds; to examine the problem in greater depth and to determine how voluntary help could be used to the best advantage.

One hundred Voluntary Organisations were represented at this Conference and, after hearing the speakers all of whom were expert in their side of the matter, they were left in no doubt that there was enormous scope for the use of volunteers, provided they had been thoroughly briefed and realised that their role should be that of a family friend to whom they could turn in their trouble, and who would give them moral support on a purely personal basis without any axe to grind. There was also a supportive role for volunteers working with the social service departments of local authorities.

NEWS OF REGIONAL MEETINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION

South East Region - Miss Barnard, Regional representative, reports:-

A very happy gathering of 30 Association Members from Kent, Surrey and Sussex took place at the Regional Office in Tunbridge Wells on 12th August. The specially invited guests were County Organisers and Deputies, and the great success of the reunion was due to the Regional Administrator and twelve members of the Regional staff, who made all the arrangements for the party, both in the garden (it was a very hot day) and in the delightfully cool Conference Room, where we enjoyed "snacks" (provided by five Association members) and ice cream. We started the reunion in the garden with sherry and ended there with a cup of coffee.

was an entirely informal gathering with old friendships renewed - "I never expected to meet you again!" one elderly member was heard saying to another from a different part of the County - and news exchanged.

The highlight was the delightful short talk given by the R.A. after lunch, bringing Association members up to date with WRVS news and projects.

The next reunion has already been planned to take place in Horsham in 1976.

And, last but not least, the 35p a head charged to members covered all our costs.

The next Reunion for Association members in South East Region will take place in Horsham on Wednesday, 17th March 1976, from 12 noon to 3.30 p.m. Further details will be sent to members who write to the Regional Representative, Miss J. Barnard, O.B.E., Glebe House, Goudhurst, Cranbrook, Kent.

South West Region -

A Reunion was held at the Regional Office 209 Redland Road, Bristol, on Thursday, 30th October. A report will be included in the next Association Newsletter.

North West Region - Mrs. Georgeson, Regional representative sent the following report:-

We held our first 'get together' last Thursday 9th October, from 11.45 a.m. to 2 p.m. We had 30 acceptances, but 2 cancellations came by post the day before and 2 on the actual day. The weather turned out to be appalling, with dense fog. We had difficulty travelling from Macclesfield to Leicester and wondered at one or two points if we should continue. As a result of the weather there were further cancellations by 'phone, and finally we had 18 attending. Nevertheless, we had an extremely successful time together, of both past and present active members. We prepared a buffet luncheon and the tables looked attractive, with serviettes in our colours of red and green.

After the 'chatter' and lunch, when there was an exchanging of experiences and ideas, I gave the welcome and a short talk, after which we had a brief business session, when it was decided to hold the next reunion in Spring of 1976, when the weather is likely to be better.

Miss Hardy, our Regional Administrator, said a few words. It was a time of rich fellowship, with a renewing of old acquaintances and making of new friends.

Mrs. Georgeson also told us of the many letters of appreciation she had received from members of the Association and quotes as follows from a letter sent by a member who could not attend the reunion - "Thank you for your letter probably you have little idea how greatly the fact of your WVS/WRVS Association is appreciated, and is indeed a beacon of comforting contact for all, particularly the elderly, so thank you VERY MUCH INDEED."

WRVS CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The WRVS contribution to International Women's year is 'to redouble its effort to create stylish clothes and recycle outdated garments'. Projects during the year have shown that women of all ages, including the

housebound, are participating, some by means of sewing packs issued to them or by knitting squares; Community Industry, schools and other sewing groups have been given an impetus to create imaginative and worthwhile work.

A Children's Fashion Show held at HQ in February this year attracted a great deal of interest from the Press and glossy magazines; clothing projects were featured together with attractive photographs in many journals varying from Country Life to the Whitehaven News.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has now suggested that 'recycling' and collection of clothes should be included in their syllabus for Community Service or in connection with the 'Work with the WRVS' syllabus or for practical service at the Gold stage.

All the Regions and Scotland are organising Regional/County Fashion Shows with resultant Press and Radio coverage.

WVS/WRVS ARCHIVES

Members may like to know that at WRVS Headquarters in the Archives Department there are now many items of historical interest, as well as reports and letters of importance.

The members of the Department would be delighted to show them to any members of the Association who would care to see them.

It is possible that some Association members may hold letters or reports of their own which are of lasting interest, and WVS/WRVS Association would be very glad to have them if they can be spared.

OBITUARIES

Miss Sylvia Vachell C.B.E. - WVS Administrator for Wales 1942-1966

The recent death, after prolonged suffering of Sylvia Vachell, although saddening her many friends and colleagues, has recalled for them the years of personal service and selfless effort which made her an admired and much loved leader during the last war. Sylvia came to WVS with experience and understanding of social problems gained from her work in the Girl Guide Movement and the Personal Service League. A dedicated patriot, she loved her country and the Guide Promise to do her best to serve her King and Country was translated into practical purpose in her WVS work, when in 1938 she became County Organiser for Glamorgan.

She had gained much knowledge of the misery of people in need and this was invaluable when dealing sympathetically with evacuees, the victims of air-raids, Services Welfare and the many other problems affecting a country at war.

In 1942 when Sylvia became Administrator for Wales, she showed that she was wise, indefatigable and discerning in all her dealings, a perfectionist in everything. Her love of Wales was always genuine, unsullied by narrow nationalism, and this helped her to unite conflicting creeds and political beliefs into one cause for the common weal.

After the war, in the confusion of re-adjustment, Sylvia strongly supported the conviction that WVS still had a part to play in achieving order out of the prevailing chaos. She worked untiringly to put over the new WVS policy and her example revived the flagging spirits of many who felt that they had already done their utmost.

In spite of failing health she carried on until her retirement in 1966, and received the C.B.E. in 1959. Sylvia's last years were marred by growing frailty and disability but, to the end, her courage and independence showed the strength of character which was so apparent throughout her life of service.

M.G.

Mrs. Beryl Scollick, M.B.E.

We are very sorry to report the death of one of our first members, Mrs. Beryl Scollick, known to her many friends in Region 6 as 'Barlie'. Mrs. Scollick joined the Reading Regional Staff in March 1945, when she was appointed as Regional Training Organiser, and later as Regional Organiser.

All members visiting the Regional Office will remember the welcome they always received and the wonderful buffet lunches prepared by Mrs. Scollick.

We would like to extend our deepest sympathy to Miss Bertran and Dame Mary Tyrwhitt with whom she shared a home.

K.H.