

I am the Regional Director of Ontario East. My job is to be a liaison between the 9 clubs in our region and our provincial and national boards.

We are one of the 3 charter members of GWI, once called IFUW founded in 1919. We share 98 years of spirited and informed advocacy involving the dedication of many Canadian women on an international level. Many members at the grassroots level are unaware of these connections.

I am here today to give you some of the background on a move by the national board to change our constitution in order to cut our ties with our international partners, once called IFUW, now GWI.

This was tried last June at our national AGM. A 2/3 majority is required to change the constitution. 55% voted to leave, so the attempt failed. The same proposal is on the floor again for our coming AGM in Richmond, B.C. in June.

Of the 9 clubs in our region, 7 have indicated that they want to stay with GWI, one club is staying neutral, and one is virulently against. By the way, all but one club in our region, have INCREASED their memberships this year!!

Some Background

GWI realized and stated at the 2014 Istanbul Triennial that they needed a financial boost to be truly relevant. So the GWI president, Catherine Bell, was given a mandate to use the GWI RESERVE FUNDS to increase their effectiveness. We voted for this!

Catherine Bell was a bold and innovative leader. She used the reserve funds to get the very best staff for the GWI office, spending much of her own money in the process. Great strides were being made in bringing GWI up to date in the electronic age, offering webinars, and making connections with international organizations such as the Brookings Institute, Boston University for interns and the Clinton Foundation. As well as increasing our presence on the world stage, we were supporting teacher training and schooling for girls, particularly in Africa.

Despite making us a more sophisticated and effective organization, this spending did not sit well with our national board. In truth, there was a clash of personalities between our then president, Doris Mae Olton, international liaison Cheryl Hayles, and Catherine Bell.

In a closed and fraught process, Cheryl was again elected as our international liaison. Interestingly, she put her name forward to be the President of GWI, the organization she stands against!!

Catherine completed her term as GWI president, and the new GWI president, voted in at the CapeTown Triennial in August, is Geeta Desai, from Graduate Women -USA.

Persistent demands have been made by our national board, to the point of harassment, regarding GWI finances. Although GWI carries no debt, Geeta, and Catherine Bell before her,

have spent countless hours giving detailed, written responses to Canada's endless questions. Canada is the largest contributor of the over 60 countries in GWI. Without Canada paying its fair share, and we do pay a reduced fee, we will kill this organization to which we gave birth.

GWI hasn't had a dues increase since 2004 - 13 years. No question, this has been a mistake. On the other hand, since 2004, CFUW has raised national dues 5 times, almost doubling the amount from \$37 to \$70 today.

At the Triennial in Capetown, the vote was passed to increase each member's GWI dues by 9 Swiss francs, or about \$12.50 Cdn this year, and 5 Swiss francs, or about \$7 in each of the next 2 years. Australia and New Zealand, seeing the need, immediately sent their GWI dues, including the increase!

In contrast, CFUW hired a lawyer for \$8000, to see if we could avoid paying at all. We were strongly advised to pay.

In the meantime, in December, the feelings at our national board were so raw, and accusations so pointed, that our new president, Karen Dunnett resigned, as did Brenda Robertson, our VP Advocacy.

We have an interim president, Grace Howlett, a well-respected longtime member of CFUW from St. John's Nfld. Grace immediately paid half of our delinquent dues, and the remainder before the March 31st deadline. Unfortunately, the Board immediately replaced the two members who resigned in December, with persons who are against our participation in GWI.

Some small clubs aren't focused on what we can do in a wider world, representing women from over 60 countries who don't have a voice, and whom we work with and assist through GWI. Together we are stronger.

CFUW is NOT asking, as a first world country
"What can we do to help?"
Instead, it is asking
"What's in it for us?"

We don't all have to be working at solutions beyond our borders, but we should be proud to be part of an organization, some of whose members DO.

What Should We Do?

We should vote for a fee increase, and we should reach out to our friends in other clubs to stay the course.

Mary Partington