

## MARY WRIGHT DISCOVERS IMPORTANT POINTS IN LEADING A DISCUSSION

Donald was as good as his word. He arrived home on his Christmas vacation with a class room note book and a couple of books on how to develop discussions. But Christmas week was very busy with a heavy schedule of festive entertainments. Both Donald and his Aunt Mary thought that every one in the community was giving a party. However, one morning, even though they were both a little dull from lack of sleep, Donald brought his materials and he and Mary spread them out on the living room table for investigation.

They each found interesting reading and when either one of them found a statement which applied to the problem of leading discussions at an Institute meeting they interrupted each other without much consideration.

After an hour or more of work, Mary took off her glasses and laid them on the top of an open book.

"I should like to spend a lot of time on this, Donald", proclaimed Mary. "How necessary it is for a chairman to understand the logical sequences of a discussion! That first step is so important—the definition of the problem to be discussed. So many times a group wanders about with a sort of futile chatter not realizing that a decision should be reached on a specific question. It is the business of the discussion leader to question the group until the problem has been clarified in everyone's mind".

"Yes", replied Donald, "it is the business of the leader to first deal with the situation and its problem. The group engaged in discussion must find out what factors in the situation are important and which ones must be taken into consideration. The discussion leader should conclude this first step by making a summary in a very simple and direct manner".

"I am not just sure what should happen next", puzzled Mary.

"The group must think out what to do", replied Donald. "They must examine all the possibilities. What are possible courses of action and what are reasons for each course suggested. In discussing these possibilities, it will be discovered that there are certain common agreements. There will be agreements in regard to both facts and opinions".

"Yes", interrupted Mary, "the discussion leader must see which contributions are facts and which are opinions, and somehow lead the group to see this clearly, too".

"The discussion leader must also realize where the group has reached an agreement. As soon as agreement on one possibility has been reached, the discussion should move on to uninvestigated possibilities", replied Donald.

"I have never seen a group yet", answered Mary, "that doesn't find differences. They will differ in regard to matters of facts as well as on matters of opinions or points of view".

"Well in such cases", said Donald, with rather a superior air, "these differences must be explored. What are the data on differences in regard to facts? This might show the group that facts are not accessible at that meeting and that someone will have to be appointed to find out the facts. If it is found that these facts (at present unknown) are important in solving the problem, the discussion should be adjourned and not concluded until these facts are available".

"If we only realized the importance of getting the facts before we tried to solve a problem, we would save ourselves a lot of futile blundering", sighed Mary. "Do you know, Donald, I envy you this opportunity".

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## News Flashes From the Branches

**Bentpath, Lambton Co.**—Organized a young peoples' club as a part of their recreational programme. Weekly entertainments were given, the Institute furnishing refreshments for the entire group.

**Oil Springs, Lambton Co.**—Is preparing a book to be called "Chronicles of Oil Springs". The source of material has been approved by the authorities of Western University.

**Pakenham, Lanark Co.**—Is sponsoring a Little Theatre Guild which interests the young people of the community and also plans to keep one day in the year as Women's Institute Community Day.

**MacDonald's Corners, Lanark Co.**—Encouraged by this branch, the children of three schools collected thousands of caterpillar tents and destroyed them.

**Seely's Bay, Leeds Co.**—Has a committee which visits the schools and secures closer co-operation between parents and teachers.

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portunity you have been having in your class of rural education. I can see your mind has been focussed on important factors in our life's experience. You have started to think out some of these things a good thirty years ahead of me".

"But I can't see you lagging, Aunt Mary", laughed Donald. "Now like a good chairman, I am going to bring you back to the question under consideration. When the differences as to facts have been investigated, the differences of points of view must be aired, and then a decision must be made as to what to do. The facts and opinions which are reasons for this decision will be obvious".

"And then I suppose", said Mary, "Plans for action should be made".

"Yes", replied Donald, "after finding out what to do the group must decide how to do it. This will be a consideration of ways and means of putting the decision into effect".

"I have a little black book", confided Mary, "that I keep just for my own satisfaction. Now help me with some notes which will assist me if I should ever lead a discussion".

Donald and his Aunt Mary worked until the lights had to be turned on. And these items were tabulated on the back page of the note book.

1. The discussion leader should make everyone feel at ease and happy that they are in the group.
2. The members of the discussion group should look at each others' faces rather than at their backs.
3. The leader should know how to listen and encourage contributions and not embarrass anyone.
4. The chairman should see:
  - (a) That all issues are clearly defined and understood.
  - (b) That important factors are recognized.
  - (c) That possibilities of what to do are stated.
  - (d) That points of agreements are recognized.
  - (e) That disagreements are understood.
  - (f) That necessary data in regard to facts are secured as far as possible.
  - (g) That progress is summarized from time to time particularly at transition points.
5. The chairman should keep her own emotions out of the situation. She should not speak every time a member takes part. She should not prod too much.
6. The chairman must hold discussion to the point. She should make her summaries a reflection of the exact state of affairs in the discussion and not an opportunity to inject her own opinions.

Both Donald and Mary read the notes over slowly. Then Donald looked up quickly and said:

"Well, Aunt Mary, I should like to be on hand the next time you lead a discussion".

**Tait's Corners, Middlesex Co.**—Had a helpful paper on the selection and dressing of fowl for table use.

**No. 1 Howland, Manitoulin Island**—Had a surprise contest for Grandmother's Day. The members were required to guess the ingredients of the salad served and the hostess gave prizes to the winners. Each member contributed whatever she wished to a sunshine basket for an invalid. The card and string attached to each gift allowed the patient to choose one each day.

**South Baymouth, Manitoulin Island**—Has a membership of 12. They draw tickets in pairs and each pair plans the programme for a meeting twice a year. The result has been good team work and every member a worker.

**Barrie Island, Manitoulin Island**—Held a Surprise Social at which each person donated a small parcel to be sold by auction. The value of the article was marked on the outside of the parcel and the auctioneer was instructed to sell when the marked price was reached, and no one paid more than the cost or value of the article.

**Belmont, Peterboro Co.**—Started a library by each member donating a book in the month of her birth date. The library is called the Birthday Library.

**Model, Middlesex Co.**—Is encouraging local historical research by sponsoring a competition requiring school pupils between ages of 13-16 years to write an essay relating to authoritative local history.

**Munsey, Middlesex Co.**—Devoted one meeting to the making of scrap books for the Children's War Memorial Hospital. The branch is conducting a lawn and garden competition, in which cleanliness and appearance are special features.

**Restoule, Parry Sound Dist.**—Devoted two meetings to the review of the five day course on Health Education. Each member who attended the course reported some phase of the instruction.

**Kearney, Parry Sound Dist.**—Purchased a book on Canadian Civics, a chapter of which is read and discussed at each meeting.

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nothing but furniture. Then, to add to the pleasure of the event, afternoon tea is served. The refinished furniture of the district is on exhibition this day. The local leaders are present and in evidence so any questions the public may care to ask regarding the work may be answered. At all times during the day questions are welcomed. During the programme period, the various steps of the work are explained to the audience and slides of old furniture are shown. (These slides are used only on District Summary Days on Refinishing of Furniture.)

### Reclaimed Furniture

Candle-holders, boxes, clocks, picture frames, mirror frames, stands, small tables, dining tables, dining suites, chairs, chests of drawers, cupboards, bedsteads, piano benches and stools have been among the articles refinished. Some had been heavily coated with paint or varnish; so much so, in fact, that one leader reported that the transformation seemed almost a miracle. Furniture of fifty, seventy-five, one hundred, and one hundred and fifty years has been given a new lease of life. Some of them came from Ireland, some from England and some were made by the pioneers of our province from wood from their own farms.

Thus our people have not only refinished furniture but also resurrected history in a most interesting manner, with perhaps no conscious effort.

(Contributed by Esther A. Slieter, Housing Instructor, Women's Institute Branch, Department of Agriculture.)

## OVER 100 BRANCHES REFINISHED FURNITURE DIRECTED BY LOCAL LEADERS

Refinishing of old furniture was started by Women's Institutes in 1935-36, when 58 branches in six districts—East Middlesex, Carleton, South Wentworth, Haldimand, East Elgin, and Sarnia Township of West Lambton—sent local leaders to district training schools where a specialist from the Women's Institute Branch of the Department of Agriculture was in charge of the instruction.

This good beginning was followed in the fall of 1936 by 53 leaders attending district training schools in East Lambton, North Oxford, East Durham, North Renfrew, North Lanark, South Norfolk, South Huron and West Middlesex. In the spring of 1937, training schools will be held in Peel, Welland, North Brant and South Perth.

### Leaders' Responsibilities

All the local leaders attended a two day training school conducted by the instructor from the Department. After completing the refinishing process on one piece of furniture at this training school and doing further work in their own homes, the local leaders met groups of women and directed them in the secrets of rehabilitating and refashioning old furniture. Only women with pieces of furniture to refinish may attend these meetings, as the local leader does not give a paper on the subject but actually directs and supervises the processes of refinishing.

At least 140 communities should profit by the work of the local leaders trained in refinishing of furniture in the last two years.

### Home Improvement

Women throughout the province are proudly exhibiting to their friends the results of their labour and enthusiasm. Some of the well designed furniture of the "good old days" is being rescued from the dark corners of the living room, from back bedrooms, attics, garages and one article is known to have been salvaged from the hen house. After face lifting operations and careful follow up treatment, these pieces have gained their self respect and are taking their place in the modern world.

Refinishing of furniture is a truly working project as those who have worked at it have learned. It takes patience, perseverance, enthusiasm, judgment and a most generous supply of both firm and gentle "elbow grease". But from experience and reports we are satisfied it is worth the effort.

### Local Accomplishments

The majority of the branch Institutes participating in this project are still carrying on the work in the group. To date the reports sent to the Department by the local leaders tell us that 247 pieces of furniture have been refinished. In all likelihood others have been done which will be reported later. In fact, we have had rumours of leaders having a second class and perhaps a third from which we have no figures, and there are some leaders who have failed to send in any report or advise the Department of their progress. May we have reports from all local leaders.

The district training schools and the local schools are, of necessity, only for those actually refinishing furniture, but the exhibits of the branch work and the Summary Day of the district are open to all who care to attend. Some of the branch exhibits have been at regular meetings, others at special meetings. As has been planned in several instances, the theme of this whole meeting could well be "Furniture".

The district Summary Day features  
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