

HOME and COUNTRY

Published by
The Ontario Women's Institutes at Toronto, Ontario

Volume 5

FALL, 1939

Number 4

The Triennial Conference Associated Country Women of the World



SCANDINAVIAN DELEGATES

On a bright May morning I found myself waving goodbye to a bit of Ontario on the New York pier, as the "Queen Mary" slowly and majestically left the New York harbour. Immediately I realized I was bound for an international conference with 340 delegates from the United States and Canada. What an eager group we were—many of us on our first sea voyage—anxious to do the right thing and interested in our cabin mates, delegates from east, west, north and south, and in every nook and corner of the ship. Soon Nebraska or Ohio were talking to New Brunswick; Ontario to Kentucky, Wisconsin or Vermont; and so our international conference had really started. On board, Americans and Canadians attended special meetings arranged by Miss Grace E. Frysinger of Washington, D.C., Vice-President for North America. Here we became better acquainted, learned more about our respective countries, considered some of the customs of our host country and made final plans for the conference.

In five short days land was sighted and soon we were docking at Southampton and entraining for London. How eagerly we scanned the landscape for those English hedges, green fields, thatched roofs, beautiful gardens and cattle pasturing in fields! And just at midnight with moon overhead we were on London Bridge with the Houses of Parliament and City of London before us.

What a joy on registration to be greeted by some of the 1936 Washington Conference visitors to Ontario—Mrs. Watt, Mrs. Drage, Lady Eleanor Cole, Mrs. Russell, Miss Franks and Mrs. Alexander,—with their kindly enquiries for Ontario friends and pleasant recollections of their visit.

32 Nations Convene

Central Hall, Westminster, and streets leading up to it took on a very festive appearance as women from 32 countries, many in native costume, arrived at the conference. Gay colourful costumes with characteristic ornaments and head dress mingled with smart modern clothes—Latvian women with striped peasant skirts, exquisitely embroidered white linen blouses, amber beads, heavy "Sakta" (flannel cape) and most elaborate crystal and silver embroidered crowns; a Yugoslavian in peasant garb wearing a yulik (a cloak), a family heirloom a century old, embroidered in real gold and silver; delegates from Calcutta charming in their gorgeous silk sari; the Scandinavians with simple costumes with



MRS. ALFRED WATT, O.B.E., President, opening the Triennial Conference of the A.C.W.W., London, England, May 30, 1939.

traditional embroidery and ornaments according to country and district within that country, garments of handwoven wool or linen material and always most beautiful; the Germans in simple peasant style of dress in a lovely blue; the Estonians with colourful costumes with long full skirts, ornate pennants and long necklaces. Amidst hum of conversation in many languages, with order and precision, the delegates were given allotted places in readiness for the trumpet note proclaiming the opening of the Triennial Conference of The Associated Country Women of the World. Miss Marie New, native daughter of New Zealand and a well-known London actress, dramatically presented the Prologue—The Epic of the Country Woman—written by Margaret Stanley-Wrench. Our Ontario Mrs. Alfred Watt, now resident in London, President of the Associated Country Women of the World, in three languages, French, German and English, declared that the Congress was open. She said "We are here from the ends of the earth, different in race, creed and national loyalties, but united in our common purpose to help one another. What we say and what we do will affect homes and homemakers in all the world's countryside."

It was a memorable afternoon with official welcomes from His Majesty's government and from Lady Dennam, Chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes of England and Wales; and greetings from official delegates each speaking her own language and wearing national costume.

Mrs. Watt struck a note of optimism and progress in her presidential address. Membership and new societies had increased since the Washington conference, horizons had widened, respect and tolerance for others were more and more recognized, and country women of the world were seeking that leadership and education which will make them more intelligent homemakers and citizens. World friendship had increased through the Association as thousands of local organizations, institutes and home bureaus had communicated with similar bodies in other countries. "This means", she said, "that no one need

ever be without a friend in another land. She has but to extend a hand". World changes—the widening of human knowledge, economic problems and adjustments, applied science in homes and on farms—must be recognized by country women. Her résumé of her world tour thrilled us with pride in the accomplishments of organizations in various countries, making us feel at the same time the tremendous importance of the individual member's contribution to the whole national movement. Mrs. Watt commended them on solving race problems, on the intelligent promotion of improved methods in agriculture, on their capacity for world leadership, and paid special tribute to trained minds of Norway, culture in Sweden, and to Denmark and New Zealand, the best organized agricultural countries.

On every occasion one heard gratitude expressed for peace and earnest searching for means of maintaining peace. "Not alone by peace programmes but also in the hearts and everyday life, in homes, in associations in the country and in the world. This will bring up a generation with a peace outlook—this spirit lies in every human soul if you want to use it."

"Women interested in world affairs are a factor, and a new one, everywhere making for peace. Our co-operation in world affairs, whether it be as country women, as journalists, as politicians, as writers or as preachers, will make, and does make everywhere I hope, for kindliness of feeling, for justice, for a determination that our fellow men and women in every country who have the same needs as ourselves shall be given equal chances of satisfying them. For we know that the ordinary life of the ordinary people is the same everywhere, that it is true of everyone, whether he comes from the east or the west, the north or the south, that, in the words of Rudyard Kipling:

'His Gods are as his faith opine
His prayers are all the world's
—and mine.'

Films of work of country women—"Motherhood in Wales", "Vegetable Storage and Preservation of Food in



LATVIAN DELEGATES

Germany", "Work of Marthas in Finland", "Life in Netherlands"—reports on administration of Health Services in Rural Areas by Latvia, Ireland, Tasmania and the United States, made us realize again how akin we are the world over. While our needs, problems and interests vary with traditions, climate, customs and economic conditions and all must solve their particular problems according to these circumstances, what country women are doing in other countries and how they do it, is always of first interest to us. From them we may see our own needs more clearly, find ways and means of meeting them and, what is tremendously important, we are gaining an understanding of their way of living and developing appreciation, respect, tolerance and admiration for them.

Division of labour in Sweden may mean lightening the burden of women's work in the field where in the past, according to tradition linked with religion, women sowed the grain to assure a good crop. There, as in other European countries, men were employed at one time in forest, on sea, and elsewhere and women of necessity assumed responsibility for farm work. Now many of these countries are desirous of lessening women's work in the field and are interested with countrywomen throughout the world in improving working conditions in the home. Scandinavian countries and American alike are working to extend electrical services in the farm house. Sweden is now establishing community washing machines and making them available in certain centres by means of truck service or by permanent location in one central place. Common problems, common interests and similar procedures were noted throughout the discussions on such practical topics as Family Co-operation, Education Services in Rural Districts, Training and Work of Organization Workers and Planning for Leisure.

Goals of the Association

Dr. Ruby Green Smith of the United States gave an interpretation of the goals of the Associated Country Women of the World in the following concrete form:

To promote international understanding and respect through friendships; to create mutual appreciation of the varied talents and achievements of people of every nation, recognizing that each of their contributions to civilization adds to earth's charm and beauty and should be preserved and cultivated.

To share with the women of other
(Continued col. 2, page 3)