

ASSOCIATED COUNTRYWOMEN OF THE WORLD MEET IN AMSTERDAM

In September 1947 five hundred and fifty country women, representing a membership of five million women from twenty-six countries throughout the world, met at Hotel Krasnopolski in Amsterdam to attend the first post-war conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

From Canada eight of the nine provinces were represented by twenty-one delegates. These were practical minded thinking women, the mothers and homemakers of the world who met with one great objective before them—to bend every effort toward world understanding and world peace. These women had tasted war and knew what lack of world understanding had meant. They knew how war had affected the homes and families of the nations. Several of those in attendance had spent time in concentration camps, most had suffered losses but all came with courage, faith and high hope that the country women of the world, working together, can do much toward establishing world unity.

Two basic principles were held in common by all members:

1. That no peaceful future can exist for the world in general unless national and international law is based on the idea of Spiritual Power. Without this basic faith, truth ceases to have value and the fundamental virtues of justice and mercy lose all meaning.

2. That no one generation can own the earth. Each is but a trustee for the generations to follow. It is our duty to discharge our trusteeship so that our soil may be handed on to our children in at least as good condition as we found it.

Church Service

The conference started out on a high plane with an international church service on Sunday night. No matter what her race, colour, creed or politics each woman uttered a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving that once more our country women of the world could meet. To hear the Lord's Prayer sung in the various languages was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Bonds of friendship, understanding and sympathy were materially and spiritually strengthened. This spirit of unity permeated the whole conference. These women of various nations worked together as easily and as naturally as they would in their home groups and learned that good fellowship is the same in any tongue. This world needs a sense of neighbourliness and this conference encouraged and developed neighbourliness.

This was a working conference. Policies laid down and plans made proved that these women were women of action. A specific, practical program was mapped out whereby each individual country woman back home could take positive action toward building a better world. Agriculture, food and nutrition, health, housing, education and social welfare came under discussion. Plans were made for close co-operation with the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations appeal for children.

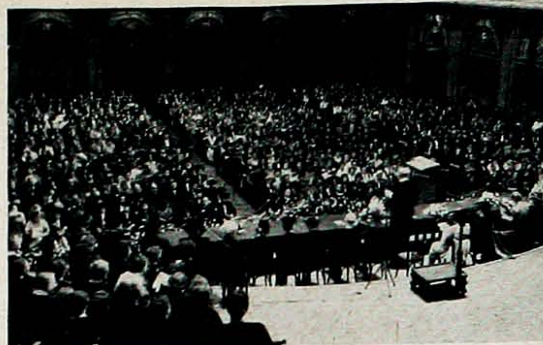
Letter friendships were encouraged as well as friendly exchange of visits between country women of the various nations. Mrs. Charles Russell, now chairman of the executive A.C.W.W., in speaking of the importance of pen friends in other lands stated: "Good relationships between countries can only come from human relationships and not cold economics and impersonal press reports."

A study of the country woman's day was suggested and plans were made for the compilation of an international cook book.

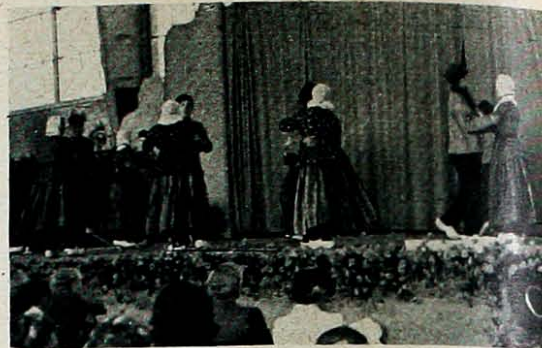
A.C.W.W. Goals

Uppermost in the minds of these women as they discussed world problems and their solution stood the goals of the organization:

"To cultivate international understanding and friendship; to create appreciation of talents and achievements of the People in all countries;



Opening Day at Conference in Amsterdam with Netherlands Minister of Agriculture Manshold Bringing Greeting.



Scene from Pageant "The Netherlands as Host"—A typical Dutch dance from Friesland.



In beautiful pageant form the Dutch women told of the growth of the Country Woman's Association in Holland, also about the beautiful country itself, its dark times and in the final scene "The Future Calls" youth (pictured above) is shown rolling up its sleeves



THE NETHERLANDS AS HOST

and carrying trowel and mortar ready to rebuild Holland after the war. The flags of the nations represented in the A.C.W.W. bring the pageant to a close.—"We country women hold out our hands to all women wherever they may live."

to study their varied contributions to culture, and to the beauty and wealth of One World.

"To maintain the highest ideals of home life; to share growing knowledge of home-making at its best; to place service above comfort; to let loyalty to high purposes silence discordant notes; to be discouraged, never; to let international neighbourliness supplant hatreds.

"To so guide children that their minds may be clear, their spirits happy, their characters generous, and their good will so genuine that Peace on Earth, for which the People yearn, will come to pass.

"To pledge allegiance to righteousness in relations between countries; and to help build a better civilization, through fidelity to the United Nations, with abiding faith in its promise of more abundant life for all Peoples."

Recommended Study

A statement drawn up by the Nederlandschen Bond van Plattelandsvrouwen (Netherlands Women's Institutes) was recommended for study by the A.C.W.W.. We quote from the statement:

"The furtherance of world peace should be a principal preoccupation of the women of the world. It could be obtained if all farm women would:

1. Take an active interest in peace movements and all connected work for the peaceful settlement of disputes.
2. Co-operate in distributing fairly the available food all over the world.
3. Influence education, also by means of the films, the radio and the press.
4. Encourage women to take a more active part in the public life of the country and thus on world affairs.
5. Urge the general use of a world language such as Esperanto.
6. Encourage the international exchange of correspondence between all classes of the community, both adults and children.

Dutch Day

On Dutch Day four thousand Dutch members, dressed in their traditional costumes, welcomed and entertained the delegates. During the pageant "The Netherlands as Host" the birth and life of the Netherlands Associa-

tion was pictured. The scene "Dark Times" was most impressive. With moist eyes we listened as the commentator, a Dutch mother, read the line, "Dark times have welded together the hearts of our mothers with the hearts of other mothers whose sons were lost. We pray that these might be the last sacrifices".

Canadian Reception

Our report could not be complete without mention being made of the wonderful reception afforded the Canadian delegates by the Dutch people. The help of our Canadian soldiers will never be forgotten. When Mrs. Dow brought greetings from Canada the applause was magnificent. One American lady nearby asked a Dutch lady, "Why is the applause so great every time Canada is mentioned?" With tears still glistening in her eyes the Dutch lady answered "Ah! We shall never forget them! They were our liberators!"

And may we add, the Canadian delegates will never forget the warmth and kindness shown us by our Netherlands neighbours.

To work hand-in-hand with such women as were in attendance at this conference was both stimulating and inspiring. Just the fact of being there, of establishing lasting friendships, of talking over little intimate personal and homey things, of learning about the way other folk live, what they do back in their home communities and how their problems are our problems—all this made the conference of priceless value. Truly we could see "When we understand people better we shall understand nations better".

As day after day we watched these women assemble, dressed in the gay traditional costumes of their respective nations—the costumes of Ceylon, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Palestine and many others we could see the pride each woman held for her own country yet each was so willing to direct that pride in proper channels in order to unselfishly work toward world understanding and world peace.

As we watched we recalled the

quaint and wholesome welcome tendered the delegates by the president of the Netherlands Association:

"Why do all country women take so much trouble to meet at national and international congresses? Couldn't it be because there we feel like standing before an open window after every day's worries. From here we see our task clearly lying before us. And, if we look further still, we see our fatherland and its possibilities as a part of the big community which we call the world.

"While we stand before our open window and while a fresh wind is blowing over our hair, we consider our place in this big community, we discern our mission and our ideals.

"Those ideals are the same, wherever we live. We want to help and support our husbands, we want to offer our children a happy youth, so that they can enter the world of tomorrow with a healthy and strong body and mind and we want to back up those who are in need of help, encouragement or information. Together we want to give the very best we can. Then we know we are creatures placed on this our earth by the Providence, each with her own mission.

"When the congress is over, we turn away from our open window, and with new strength we go back to that world with the most earnest intention to do our utmost to make that world happier".

The action taken by this conference and the deep and lasting friendships made between these women of the twenty-three nations represented cannot help but strengthen international bonds of understanding and sympathy. Friendships at the conference will spread and more and more women will have a personal and intimate interest in women and their families in other countries.

When women throughout the world work together unselfishly for the good of human kind their influence can be a mighty force for world peace.