

## AN ENGLISH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE VISITOR SPEAKS TO ONTARIO INSTITUTE MEMBERS

Canada has always been a country for which I have had the desire to visit sometime during my life and, ever since joining the Women's Institute in England, I have hoped that this desire would be fulfilled. Because in England and Wales, Institute members are ever grateful for the vision and pioneer work of the Charter Members of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute in Ontario in the year 1897. This most certainly laid the firm foundation of a great movement and so made it possible for Women's Institutes to be brought to England and Wales in 1915 by Mrs. Alfred Watt, who had been Secretary of the Advisory Board of the Women's Institute of the British Columbia

In spite of the background of crisis during two major Wars, the National Federation of Women's Institutes in England and Wales has grown and expanded in size, strength and popularity. At present there are approximately 7,000 Women's Institutes with a membership of over 380,000 and they are making every endeavour to carry out their aim "To improve the conditions of rural life" and are mindful also of the Institute motto "For Home and Country". The result is a common bond of fellowship which unites countrywomen not only in their own village, County or Nation but Internationally as well. For example, the memorable occasion of the Triennial Conference of the Associated Countrywomen of the World held at Amsterdam in September last year. I was very delighted to have the opportunity of meeting the members of the Canadian delegation at this interesting and important Conference. The Women's Institutes in England and Wales, in their efforts to further International peace and understanding, have recently entertained ten German countrywomen. These visitors have been studying the Institute organization at Monthly Meetings, etc., have visited English farms, schools, creches and similar examples of country life and have been learning the way of our true democratic principles. Fifteen County Federations made arrangements to entertain these visitors, Middlesex Federation made the sights of London, etc. part of their program. I recall the words of one speaker during the Conference at Amsterdam who, urging us to work for the Peace we all so earnestly desire, expressed the hope that even if set-backs prevented us from sowing the seeds of the Peace or to seeing results in our lifetime, we could pledge ourselves to fertilize the soil as a worthy preparation for those seeds. In England, therefore, we trust that the visit of this German delegation will be a small contribution to this great duty.

English Institute members enjoy, too, the pen-friend scheme which links them with members overseas and this also adds to the interest of their meetings. Still taking their minds across the ocean, English members are playing an important part in the Women's Home Industries, Ltd. This is a Company registered with the objects of exporting to Canada and the United States home-made articles to earn dollars for Britain and to giving work to those who are not able to leave their homes but who would like to use their skill to add to production. Knitted garments of all types, chair seats, stools, rugs, etc. are some of the articles being made and a high standard of work is set. Members are keen to have this opportunity to help their Country and also to do the hand-craft work so traditionally significant of them.

Just now, Institute members in England and Wales are enthusiastic about the realization of their new venture, the opening of their own Women's Institute College, named Denman College, after Lady Denman, first Chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes in England. For over twenty-five years, Lady Denman kept before members the essential principles of democratic procedure, and by her clear brain and courageous



The largest gathering of Kent Women's Institute members ever assembled in Kent County convened at Glen Gordon Manor overlooking Lake Erie to greet Mrs. Ida Braine, Vice Pres. of the Totteridge W.I., Hertfordshire, Eng. Mrs. Braine also visited Institutes in Simcoe, York, Wentworth, Norfolk, Elgin, Essex, Wellington, Hastings and Glengarry counties.

leadership enabled them to lay a sound foundation for the extraordinary expansion of the movement and its many developments. The College will be residential and specialized courses will be arranged in all branches of Women's Institute work. A pleasant, friendly country house built of Cotswold stone has been chosen for the College and it is situated on the edge of a Berkshire village, near to Abingdon on the Thames and about nine miles from Oxford. The project was the result of a resolution passed at an Annual General Meeting held in the Royal Albert Hall about two years ago. Finances have been helped by a generous grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and Institutes all over England and Wales are supporting this new chapter in their history by special money-raising efforts. Counties have made themselves responsible for the furnishing of various rooms and around our countryside handlooms are weaving curtains, quilts are being stitched, linen embroidered, rugs made, rush-mats plaited, to bring as much beauty and skill to the College as is possible in these days of austerity. There are many members who have even sacrificed a half of one of their clothing coupons to help with the purchase of material! Sincere gratitude has been expressed for the generous gifts from Canada of a flow of parcels containing sheets and pillowcases. This intimate interest and practical help from Institutes so far away makes us realize how closely linked we are, and is tremendously encouraging. The first Warden of the College is to be Miss Elizabeth Christmas, who has been a General Organizer of the National Federation until recently, and is known personally to many thousands of members including many in Canada during her visit here a few years ago. This welcome appointment will play an important part in which, I feel sure, through our Denman College, will become an historic contribution to carrying out our aim of improving the conditions of rural life.

Like Canadian Institute members, English members thoroughly enjoy their Institutes and they appreciate both the wealth of interest and the value of education available to them through the attendance at meetings, classes, etc. Their Institute was invaluable to them throughout the War years when every minute of the day was taken up with war work of one kind and another, including the utilization of the surplus fruit of their villages

through the organization of Preservation Centres, and the care of evacuated children from the cities and towns in the danger areas. Austerity is still with the British house-wife, and I would like to take the opportunity of this column to convey to Canadian members, the very sincere thanks and appreciation of my fellow-members at home for the excellent food parcels sent so regularly to them. The contents of these parcels so often relieve the monotony of our diet and also the continual planning of our rations and, what is sometimes even of more help to the house-wife, a saving of valuable food points when shopping. Every endeavour is made to distribute the contents of the parcels as fairly as possible among members and I wish it were possible for Canadians to have the satisfaction of seeing the pleasure when at Institute meetings the goods are distributed either by a lucky ticket or quite frequently by a cake made by a member from ingredients in the parcel. The English members are grateful and appreciative of the time and the planning used on these welcome parcels and also the generosity both in the goods and postage spent in sending them. But, I can assure you that the practical expression of your thoughts of us means much in Britain at the present time and we remember too with gratitude how much we were helped through the war years by the splendid efforts of Canadians. When I return to my Institute work in Hertfordshire, I am going to enjoy telling members during the winter months of my visit to Canada. I sincerely hope that I do not fail in my effort to tell them of the very warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and especially in the homes of Canadian Institute members. Many aspects of the Institute work here have been of special interest to me. The Women's Institute film "Let There Be Light" is a wonderful addition to your Institute archives. I was privileged to see this film of the pageant featured at your 50th Anniversary Celebrations at Guelph last year, and I earnestly hope that it will eventually be possible for Institutes in England and Wales to see this historical film. It would be of much interest to them, I know, and would also be of valuable information to new members.

The splendid work and organization of your Junior Institutes here has attracted me with its important preparation for future years. How stimulating and satisfying this must be to the more senior members in your In-

stitutes here to have the added interest of the Junior Institutes and the knowledge that their own work and ideals will be carried on by future generations. In England the usual age for younger members to join is about sixteen years. Junior Institutes are not part of our Constitution but I believe there are a few isolated examples in some areas.

During my visit here I have learned with interest of the plans for scholarships made possible through the Adelaide Hoodless Fund. This wonderful opportunity open to rural girls will undoubtedly be a great attraction and will be of inestimable value to their future years.

I have also been interested to learn that you have been considering the raising of your Institute subscription. On October 1st our subscription is being increased to 3/6 by a resolution passed at the National Federation Annual General Meeting held at the Royal Albert Hall in April this year. Present day costs and expenditure have compelled us to make this important decision in order to carry out an active programme of Institute work to correspond with the growth of the movement. Our Institute movement is not assisted by the Department of Agriculture as I learn is so here in Ontario.

I also note with interest the limitation of years' service for Institute Officers which you experience here. This is something in England which is not part of our Constitution in quite the same way, but has been discussed recently with the result that at present, it is permissible for Institutes, Counties, etc. to make their own by-laws concerning this.

Another interest during my visit is the excellent work done in the compilation of the Tweedsmuir Village History Books. I congratulate you. What wealth of interest, education and pleasure these books will provide for future generations both in your towns and villages alike. Institutes in England and Wales have recently had an essay contest entitled "This was my Village" and this also proved to be of great value. There are, I know, many villages in England keeping books of their village history.

My tour of the Ontario Women's Institutes is bringing to me countless interests and pleasures as I journey from one county to another. My notes of each day are full of interesting facts and impressions to take back to England in October and looking through I note in particular: the warm welcome I have already mentioned, your large farms with their good quality grain and fine breeds of cattle; choice fruit, tobacco, re-forestation, industries, etc. I shall tell members too of the busy day of your farmers' wives, the grandeur of your great lakes, the clear skies showing to perfection the spruce trees, the long straight roads which are somewhat strange to a visitor coming from a country renowned for its winding roads and country lanes. At home, these things are pictures in our minds of Canada and when seen on a visit here, make one wish to return again. It would be possible for me to add many more delights such as these which will remain a lasting happy memory of my visit to Canada and to Canadian Institute members. All good wishes.

Contributed by Mrs. Ida Braine.

### PRESIDENTS' CORNER

My writing arm and my pen are about worn out and you must be weary of reading as you finish my northern tour, so remarks are confined to just one announcement.

Mr. Sterndale Bennett 5 Austin Terrace, Toronto offers Institutes who have stage accommodation, splendid entertainment and a means of raising money in the winter months. Interest in drama is at a high peak all across Canada. If you are interested contact Mr. Bennett at this address and learn about the offerings of his company and the terms of contract.