

## HOME AND COUNTRY

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## "HOME AND COUNTRY"

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Women's Institute Members.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

"SINCERELY AND  
AFFECTIONATELY YOURS"

Most of us thoroughly understand and appreciate the happy relationship which exists between the Federated Women's Institutes Branch and Home Economics Service of the Ontario Department of Agriculture but for those who have recently joined our ranks and for those who may not have fully understood we briefly review historical facts which have led to the formation of each and explain the present relationship.

Back in 1897 when the first Women's Institute was organized a request was sent to the Minister of Agriculture for support and assistance. This support was gladly given, at first in the form of grants and then later government lecturers were appointed to speak to Women's Institutes and to help in their organization. Down through the years this assistance has increased and as the Women's Institutes have grown in number and responsibility, so also have the services from the Department of Agriculture increased and improved.

Growing out of requests from the Women's Institutes of Ontario the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service, as we now know it, has been established. The present function of this Branch of the Department of Agriculture is to promote the work of the Women's Institutes of Ontario and to provide an extension service in Home Economics for all rural women and girls of the province.



## DOVER W.I., ENGLAND, ADOPTED BY PORT DOVER W.I.

Members of Dover Women's Institute, England are shown opening boxes sent to them by Port Dover Women's Institute, Norfolk County, Woodhouse, Marburg and Lake Shore Women's Institutes helped Port Dover with a special campaign. As a result a shipment of one ton of food was sent to the Women's Institute of Dover, Kent Co., England. These women in turn undertook its distribution. In addition to this large shipment Port Dover Institute is sending a 20-pound parcel of food every month. Evidence of the gratefulness with which the food is received is seen in the many letters which arrive continuously, expressing the heartfelt appreciation of the recipients.

This Branch is therefore "Sincerely and Affectionately Yours".

At their beginning the Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes acted as Superintendent of Women's Institutes and in 1899 under the Superintendent Miss Laura Rose was appointed first government lecturer and organizer of Women's Institutes. Gradually more staff were added and more Institutes grew into being.

In 1901 ladies were invited to one session of the Experimental Union at Guelph held for Farmers' Institute members. This was so popular that in arranging for the 1902 Experimental Union a whole day was planned for the women. Thus the first Women's Institute convention came into being. Twenty-four Institutes were represented with a total attendance of 66. In 1903 the women's meetings were held in the then new Macdonald Institute, O.A.C. and 116 women from 53 Institutes gathered from centres as far distant as Elgin in the west and Lennox in the east. The movement grew by leaps and bounds. In 1910 the convention was moved to Toronto and in 1914 the numbers had increased so that it was considered wise to divide the province into 3 conventions areas: London, Toronto and Ottawa.

It has always been the practice of the Department to consult with leading officers and lecturers when deciding upon policy. When only one convention was held this matter was simple. With three conventions a certain loss in Provincial unity was the natural result. Hence in 1914 a Provincial Advisory Committee was appointed to help co-ordinate the work of the Institutes. These women acted in a consultative capacity to the Superintendent and the Department. In 1916 a further step forward was taken when 17 representatives were elected, one for each of the then 17 sub-divisions in the province. These women met with Mrs. William Todd of Orillia as first chairman.

As an outgrowth of this advisory committee our first provincial board was formed and The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (F.W.I.O.) came into being by formal resolution on February 7, 1919. Later in the same month the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (F.W.I.C.) was organized.

Convention areas divided and re-divided in order to take care of the increasing numbers of Women's Institute members. By 1933 the 13 present convention areas were established.

As the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario have developed and expanded, so also have the services from the department kept pace.

Mr. George Putnam became Superintendent in 1904. At this time there was a small staff of government

speakers. Under Mr. Putnam an excellent staff of women lecturers and organizers was built up to assist in the rapid development which was taking place in the Women's Institute movement. These lecturers brought inspiration and comfort as well as valuable information on subjects of interest and help to rural homemakers.

By 1910 there was a desire on the part of rural women for teachers trained as specialists and qualified to demonstrate the arts of foods and cookery, clothing and other Home Economics topics. By 1912-13 educational short courses were taken right into the rural communities in order that women and girls who could not leave their homes might benefit therefrom. During the war years these courses proved invaluable in helping the women with their war effort. Ninety courses were conducted the winter of the great influenza epidemic (1918) and doctors were most grateful for the exceptional assistance and co-operation given from those women who had taken the home nursing training.

These services to the Women's Institutes continued to follow the pattern set forth by the original planning committee in 1911 with advantage being taken of all advances in the various fields in which instruction was given. In the fall of 1934 a new forward step was taken when Miss Bess McDermand, a qualified Home Economist, became Superintendent of Women's Institutes. Ever since that time a University graduate in the field of Home Economics has held this position. As well as superintending the work of the Women's Institutes of Ontario the Superintendent has from that time to the present also directed a Home Economics extension service for the women and girls of the province. Under Miss McDermand's guidance and through the co-operation of the Women's Institutes the Co-operative Program in Home Economics was established. With alterations and adjustments made to meet the needs of the times, this program is still in use today. During the war years under the able guidance of Miss Mary Clarke it became expedient to discontinue local leader training schools because of transportation difficulties. In post war years these have been revived and the program has been considerably broadened to include greater variety in Home Crafts, Home Furnishings and Psychology for the Homemaker.

Methods have changed during the 52 years of Institute work, as professional training has developed and scientific knowledge has advanced. The objectives outlined at the time of the inception of Institutes can be met more adequately now than in 1897, but the basic aims are the same. The

aims as set forth today are as follows:

1. To help women acquire sound and approved practices for greater home efficiency.
2. To discover, stimulate and train leaders.
3. To develop a more abundant life in our rural communities and a deeper appreciation of the things near at hand.
4. To develop better, happier and more useful citizens.

For many years the Superintendent of Women's Institutes was also Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes and in very early days this work was all carried on as an off-shoot of one of the other divisions of the Department of Agriculture. As the work became more complicated, the Women's Institutes expanded and staff increased, the "Institutes Branch" was established. By 1921 we find "The Women's Institute Branch" appearing in the Minister's Report. In 1946 the title was again changed to "Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service". This change was made to more fully explain the dual function of the Branch, namely, to promote the work of the Women's Institutes of Ontario and to provide a Home Economics extension service for all rural women and girls of the province. At the same time the title of Superintendent was changed to that of Director.

The Provincial Board Directors of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, elected by Women's Institute members, meet twice a year to outline the policy of the Ontario Women's Institutes. It is the Board Directors who carry the vote and hence make the decisions when matters of policy are determined. The Board Directors elect the Provincial President. Hence the Provincial President is the elected head of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

The Director, Women's Institute Branch and Home Economic Service is a member of the provincial board, acts as advisor and counsellor to the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario and its board of directors and as liaison between the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario and the Department of Agriculture.

The purpose of the Provincial Board of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario is (1) To co-ordinate the work of the Women's Institutes of Ontario, (2) To unite the province and provide official representation in the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, the Associated Country Women of the World and other organizations, (3) To express the views of the local Institutes on all matters of provincial or national importance within the scope of Women's Institutes work and responsibility, (4) To co-operate with the Ontario Department of Agriculture to improve educational, social and economic conditions in the province.

Through the years the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario and the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service of the Ontario Department of Agriculture have grown and developed together, each helping the other, yet in this mutual assistance each has kept its individual identity.

From the above explanation it can be clearly seen that the work of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario is "Democracy at Work." The Board Directors, elected by Women's Institute members themselves, meet in session to determine the policies of the organization. After these policies are determined it is one of the services of the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service to help put these policies into effect. In addition the Women's Branch also provides an extension service in Home Economics education for all women and girls of rural Ontario.

It is because of the rural women and girls of this province that the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service has been established and it is for you that we function. We are, therefore, "Sincerely and Affectionately Yours,"

Anna P. Lewis, Director.