

# HOME and COUNTRY

Published by

The Ontario Women's Institutes at Toronto 2, Ontario

Volume 15

SUMMER, 1949

Numbers 1 & 2

## OVER 600 WOMEN ASSEMBLE AT FIRST F.W.I.O. OFFICERS' CONFERENCE

Opening a new era in Women's Institute history the first F.W.I.O. Officers' Conference held at the O.A.C., Guelph, May 5 and 6, proved to be a huge success.

Area chairmen and secretaries, branch and district presidents and secretaries along with provincial board members assembled from every county and district in the Province to participate in what we hope will become an annual Officers' Conference.

The weather was ideal, the College grounds gorgeous in their spring greenery and blossoms and the O.A.C. welcome so hospitable that all conditions, both tangible and intangible, contributed toward the fulfillment of two profitable and glorious days which should provide inspiration and food for thought for Institute women for some time to come.

A friendly informal atmosphere was created the first evening when, as guests of the College, a reception was held in the College cafeteria. Mrs. J. R. Fitcher, president; Miss Anna P. Lewis, director; Mrs. R. G. Purcell, Mrs. Arthur Hudson and Mrs. Arthur Hamilton, regional vice-presidents; Mrs. Chas. Robertson, Guelph area chairman and Mrs. John H. McCulloch, F.W.I.O. secretary-treasurer received at the door. Board members served and the room buzzed with happy, cordial conversation.

The conference was under way Thursday morning by 9.30 with Mrs. J. R. Fitcher, provincial president, in the chair. In her opening remarks Mrs. Fitcher pointed out that in this, the first conference of the Women's Institute, officers had come together to pool suggestions and to work out new ideas for programmes. She invited constructive criticism and reminded delegates of their obligation to take home the group ideas to branches, districts and convention areas.

Miss Anna P. Lewis, Director, brought greetings from the Women's Institute Branch and told of the first provincial meeting of the Women's Institute which had been held in the O.A.C. back in 1902. She assured the officers that they had the full support of the Women's Institute Branch in their new project, concluding with "May this Conference be only a beginning".

The F.W.I.O. Board in session was a programme feature. Two subjects were discussed by the Board, "The Ontario Women's Institute Scholarships" and "The Women's Institute Summer Holiday at Guelph".

Dr. W. R. Reek, president of the Ontario Agricultural College, welcomed the officers of the Women's Institutes and stated it was a good idea for the college, which specializes in agriculture, and the Women's Institutes to draw closer together. He expressed the hope that all such conferences of the Women's Institutes would be held at the O.A.C. Dr. Reek invited the members to spend "one day or two days or a week" when participating in the Women's Institute Summer Holiday.

Miss Anna P. Lewis brought the major changes in the Hand Book to the attention of the meeting.

Miss Dorothy Lindsley, Associate Director of Macdonald Institute, spoke on the Home Economics Courses at Macdonald Institute. Only the one year course had functioned following the war but last year students were registered for the four year degree course. Miss Lindsley explained the various courses and mentioned that there are many extra-curricular activities which round out the girl's education. Primarily though, girls are



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trained for homemaking. Miss Lindsley invited the officers to inspect Macdonald Institute.

### Planning Necessary

Miss Helen McKercher, Home Economics Supervisor, Women's Institute Branch, presented "A Procedure for Planning Your Institute Programmes". Miss McKercher said that, ever since the Women's Institute was organized, one of its major responsibilities has been that of helping people become more effective members of homes and families. "This is a big problem for all", said Miss McKercher. "Whether officers or members you feel a need for help because you are asking for ideas and suggestions for programmes. This afternoon I wish to try to help you see how you can manage this problem in your local branch—to try to help you see why your programmes must be yours and to suggest a procedure for you to carry out."

"Having a complete plan for your meetings is just as important as the blue print is to the builder. A programme is more than a jumble of things to do—it is the result of careful thinking, selecting, discarding and combining both the content and the method of producing a balanced, adequate, educational effort to assist rural people to advance their level of living."

"The first step in planning a sound programme is for you to make a careful analysis of your own local situation. What is your membership, who are they, what are their interests, needs and problems? Do not be satisfied by basing judgments on opinions—find the facts and face them. The next step is to find ways and means of meeting your objectives through your meetings. Everything you do is a part, a device or a tool to do the job. At the end of 1949 you want to be able to look at what you did. Did you accomplish what you set out to do? Were the results up to expectations? Is it security to your officers to know they are really getting results?"

Miss McKercher concluded with this summary of suggestions: (1) Allow the group to plan together—share decisions. (2) Base programme on interests and needs. (3) Set up definite objectives. Write them down so that they are clear to all. (4) Draw on local talent and resources as well as talent from outside. (5) Build for progress in obtaining objectives. (6) Consider the needs of the individual members. (7) Stick to quality.

Mrs. J. E. Houck, Brampton, presented "Snags and Snails in our Institute Work". She stated, "We are fifty years old now and are adult and mature. We have a big membership but have not grown as we should have. We are, in the main, prosperous rural women. Could we not include others—possibly the wife of the tenant or the wife of the man who works in the city and lives in the country? Any woman who is interested in things rural should be welcome in our organization. Our main reason for organization was education; we are not primarily a money-making organization and we must not make this our major concern. We should appreciate our Co-operative Programmes. 'Living Together in the Family' is a splendid course which we need at the present time", Mrs. Houck spoke of lack of co-operative effort in the public life of our province. "How many Institutes", she asked, "Are working for Sunday Observance law enforcement, fair play to minority groups, higher pay for teachers and more education for rural boys and girls. You who have given service realize that you have grown with the job. Let us go back home realizing that the things we have learned are going to be a help to the members of our organization."

### Discussion Groups

In order to further discuss programme planning the conference members broke up into groups. The BRANCH OFFICERS discussion group, led by F.W.I.O. Board Members discussed: 1. Are you planning an all round programme? 2. Does each standing committee warrant a monthly programme? 3. Does your programme include interest needs of young members? 4. Do you plan good times?

The DISTRICT OFFICERS group under the guidance of the F.W.I.O. regional vice presidents used as a basis of their discussion these questions:

1. Were you satisfied with your last district annual? 2. How might it be improved? 3. Should Institutes in a district have projects in common? 4. Do you favour district meetings other than the annual meeting?

The CONVENTION AREA OFFICERS discussed: 1. Did you enjoy last year's convention? What feature contributed most to your enjoyment? 2. What new features could be introduced this year? 3. Should area chairmen visit district annuals? 4. What emphasis should be placed on panel

discussions, outside speakers and recreation at conventions?

The convention area officers under the leadership of Mrs. J. E. Houck thought it was not advisable or practical, under present financial conditions, for the convention area chairmen to visit the district annuals. The official visitors are the Board director and the Women's Institute Branch representative.

Being able to hear adds to the success of the convention. Public address systems are a necessity in most areas. Areas differ in choice of meeting place. Some find it more practical to move from one centre to another, others find a central location essential. Finances must be placed on a sound basis with branches contributing a convention area fee adequate to meet the needs of the area. Grants are often available from the city or municipality, as well as the Department. Engage outstanding speakers well in advance and introduce the best music possible. Make the convention a special treat for our women. The best is none too good. Games and recreation relieve the monotony of listening and taking notes. Better understanding between rural and urban women can be fostered by inviting other women's groups to visit an Institute gathering.

It was recommended that all areas revise their by-laws to meet the requirements of the new Hand Book.

Publicity is very important. The press should be notified well in advance of the meeting and a cordial invitation extended to attend. Suitable tables should be provided at the front of the hall and complimentary tickets given for banquets or luncheons.

Panel discussions, outside speakers and recreation all have an important place in convention programmes. Variety is needed but throughout the whole a central theme should predominate.

### District Officers

District officers divided into three groups and were led by Mrs. R. G. Purcell, Mrs. Arthur Hamilton and Mrs. Arthur Hudson. In answering the question, "Were you satisfied with your last district annual?" most officers could suggest desirable improvements. These improvements included:

1. Shorten the standing committee reports. 2. Avoid lengthy address of welcome. The reply to this could be very short or even omitted altogether. 3. Encourage branch Institutes to thoroughly discuss the Co-operative Programme before the Board of Directors' meeting is held. A preliminary discussion of the Co-operative Programme at the Board of Directors' meeting will make for a more intelligent choice at the district annual. 4. District secretaries might ring a warning bell when any speaker continues beyond her allotted time. Never allow more than ten minutes for a convener's report. 5. Only the reports of the president, secretary, treasurer and conveners are necessary. Separate branch reports are obsolete. If a roll call by branches is desired the outstanding accomplishments of her Institute during the past year. 6. Community singing with action songs are essential. If time permits try to introduce a short play or skit. It adds zest and relish to the district annual. Displays always add interest. 7. Remember, the district annual is an Institute business meeting. There is no time for outside speakers. Introduce these speakers at convention. 8. The Department speaker and the Board Director.

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