

Extension Services — Rural Women's University

And How the Local Institute Helps

A FEW YEARS AGO it could be said that the Extension Services of the Ontario Women's Institute Branch offered the rural homemaker every training that a city woman could get at a technical school. With the cultural subjects that have been added in the last few years, our extension services today give the rural woman something in the nature of a University education. And the Department and the local Institute both have a part in bringing this education to the people.

The curriculum is pretty well known to Institute women. It includes Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, Home Crafts, Home Furnishings, Health Education, Psychology for the Homemaker, Citizenship and Cultural Activities, and Women's Institute Procedures—how to conduct meetings, how to be a good officer, an effective speaker—in general how to be a good club woman. Then there is a fairly broad course of study for Girl's Homemaking Clubs in Food, Clothing, House Furnishings, Hospitality, Gardening and Citizenship—citizenship being the theme of the club unit "The Club Girl Stands On Guard."

While the Women's Institute Branch with its staff of nearly forty field workers carries the responsibility of keeping its extension services on a high standard of usefulness and interest, these services, however good they may be, count for nothing until they reach the rural homemaker. This is where the local Institute meets the need, advertising the service, reaching out to bring to the classes every possible woman who might benefit from them. Incidentally, some Institutes have to be reminded that the services of the Institute Branch are not for Institute members only but for all rural women. And how the Department does appreciate it when the local Institute women go out into the highways and the byways and across the railroad tracks and bring in the "underprivileged" women, and the busy young mothers, the women just arrived from another country and women from groups other than the Institute!

Sometimes this organization work is done amazingly well. A teacher of Home Craft tells of setting out for a course at Rocklyn in Grey County. It was raining hard and the fog was so heavy that she had to get out of her car to look for the church that was to be her land mark at a corner. When she arrived at Rocklyn a class of seventy-five

women, representing seven Institutes were waiting for her! And they had brought with them a great array of articles for display and study—beautiful old quilts, coverlets and rugs, christening robes, hair wreaths and other family treasures. (The same teacher recalls a course in a city on a beautiful day with only twelve women out.) Elora Road held an evening class in a rural school. The teacher had difficulty finding the place in the dark—she thinks there's a lot to be said for "the lighted school house"—but there were fifty-two women there. At the same time, extension workers have been known to arrive at the meeting place and find the door locked. Occasionally an Institute has forgotten about the course until the instructor arrives. And, incredible as it may seem, one teacher tells of having ten women come to a class and not one of them except the secretary knew what the subject was to be. A president reports applying in July for a course in October. Everyone was enthusiastic and the enrolment was good. When the day came for the course half the women stayed at home to make pickles. And, said the president, "There's no pickle you can't leave for a day."

Such things are exceptions to the rule. The Health instructor reports a course at Phillipsville in North Leeds where the Institute officers met her at the bus and twenty-two women took the course although eighteen is about the maximum for a demonstration course of this type. This teacher was impressed, too, when she arrived at Colborne in East Northumberland and found a class of fifteen women waiting with all the equipment ready including flowers because they felt "there should be flowers in a sick room."

Our extension staff, and the Institutes, too, are anxious that young mothers with a lot of homemaking responsibilities should have the benefit of whatever homemaking instruction there is to offer. The problem is what to do about the children while the mother attends the course. Sometimes the mothers bring the children with them. At a course on Children's Clothing at Purple Grove in South Bruce there were fourteen young mothers and one grandmother. The fourteen mothers had thirty-two children. They couldn't have thirty-two children at the class so the older women of the community took care of them. In a Home Craft Workshop Class there were two sisters. There is a choice of crafts and