

# Associated Country Women of the World

*Editor's Note: In our last issue we had a brief account of the history of A.C.W.W. Here we have excerpts from an article by Mrs. John Bell, General Secretary of A.C.W.W. telling more about the present activities and objectives of the organization. The complete article was published in "Home and Country," London, the official organ of A.C.W.W.*

**T**HE Associated Country Women of the World is the only international organization representing a section of the world's people which otherwise would have no concerted voice — the rural women. It links together 113 countrywomen's societies in twenty-four different countries, and represents between five and six million countrywomen. The societies belonging to A.C.W.W. range from large national organizations with over a million members to small groups with only a few hundred.

It is true that "the farmers' appearance on the international stage has come slowly". It is all the more remarkable that rural women were able to form an international organization, joining together women of many diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds as long ago as 1929. The organization has steadily grown and flourished since; and it managed not only to survive but to put out new growths during the difficult war years.

The aims of A.C.W.W. are threefold: to promote international good will, friendship and understanding between the countrywomen of the world; to raise the standard of living of rural women all over the world; and to further international relations and to be a voice for countrywomen in international affairs.

Many women in home and village are actively concerned with the production of the staple foodstuffs on which the people of the world depend for their very existence. Yet sometimes the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies seem something very far removed from their daily lives. A.C.W.W. works to see that this is not necessarily so; to see that through her own organization the voice of the countrywoman can be heard in the council chambers of the world. A.C.W.W. is one of the non-governmental organizations which have been granted consultative status with the Food and Agriculture Organization (F. A. O.), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). A.C.W.W. has an observer at United Nations headquarters in New York, and members of A.C.W.W. attend conferences of the specialized agencies all over the world.

In addition to items of interest about the United Nations appearing in the news sheet "The Countrywoman" from month to month, it is laid down that at least two special supplements a year must be devoted to work of the United Nations.

But this is still fostering international relations on a large and somewhat remote plane. An equally important part of A.C.W.W.'s work consists of helping the individual members to get to know one another: the organization feels this is one of the most important ways of promoting international relations. This is one organization that has never lost touch with the rank and file — the individual is considered a real person, not a remote unit. The chief job of the Central Office is to solve the problems and answer the questions of the individual.

Not every countrywoman and homemaker can leave her home and country to see the world, but every member of the Constituent Societies of A.C.W.W. can have the world brought to her doorstep if she wishes. Some of the ways in which this is done are, by letter friends — introducing individual members in different countries to each other by post, which has resulted in the widening of horizons of almost 17,000 members. By exchange programmes — helping groups of members literally to exchange a day's programme with clubs or institutes in other countries. This is one of the most intimate and interesting ways of learning international relations. By personal introductions — to the individual countrywoman, the A.C.W.W. can be a passport to friendship all over the world.

Meeting and corresponding with women who live and work in "far-away places with strange-sounding names" is one of the duties of the Extension Sub-Committee, whose terms of reference call for it to "consider all means of extending the work and membership of A.C.W.W." Recently the committee has had much pride and pleasure in recommending for admission a Constituent Society, the All-Pakistan Women's Association.

At the moment, this committee is busy preparing for a Round Table on Extension to be held at the Toronto Conference. Plans are being made to have at the Conference a number of women from areas where women are not yet fully organized. In addition to representatives from countries where societies are already members of A.C.W.W., such as India, Pakistan and Ceylon, it is hoped to have women from Egypt, the Lebanon, Indonesia and Japan.