

EDITORIAL

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY — Celebrating our sixtieth anniversary we cannot fail to be reminded of what we owe to the women who have gone before us: the founders of the Women's Institute movement who laid down objectives that we can never outgrow — the welfare of the home and the community, and all the Institute women who through the years have held fast to these objectives, cleverly and soundly adapting them to meet the needs of the changing times.

The early Women's Institutes were pioneers in a programme of adult education as unique as it was vital — the study of making good homes. That it has lasted for sixty years says a lot to its credit. Two logical reasons for its success might be that it had to do with something vital to most women — the home and the family; and that the women shared their knowledge and their thinking — a good precedent for our present day discussion groups and panels. Further, the Institutes wanted professional help in their programme. They asked the Government for courses by trained personnel in foods and cooking, sewing and home nursing and in 1912 they got them — which was the beginning of the Home Economics Extension Services we have today. When the Department set up 4-H Homemaking Clubs for girls the Institutes were right there to supply the local leaders — surely a sound way to work for better homes in the future.

All along the way Women's Institutes at their best have used vision and common sense to deal with the problems of the times as they affect the home and the family. Perhaps there has never been more need for this vision and resourcefulness than there is today. How can we deal with a force like television to make it a benefit rather than a detriment to children and family life? In an age when gadgets seem to count for more than graciousness, how can we preserve or create the intangibles that give a character and sweetness to family living? There's scope here for the best minds we have in our members.

In their community work the early Institutes brought companionship and friendliness to many an isolated woman. We haven't many isolated women in Ontario today but we all need the something that comes from belonging to a group with dependable loyalties and warm good will. Is it possible we may lose the dynamic necessary for any achievement if we neglect the little social doings that meant so much in an earlier day?

The best of our branches, in their concern for the community seem to have been guided by the simple standard of good neighboring. They also did some pioneer work from which we are reaping the benefit today. For instance they pioneered medical school inspection and the teaching of music in schools — getting the work done through their own efforts until the Government saw that it was time to take it over. Perhaps the same results will come from what the Institutes are doing now for the education of retarded children. Women of vision will see other needs in the years ahead and Institutes will continue to crusade for good causes.

In the first world war the Institutes had a record performance of Red Cross work. Red Cross work was done in the second war, too. But out of the experience of two wars women began to think more about the causes of war and their own responsibilities as world citizens. Now the Institutes follow the work of United Nations and many of them have some part in it. They have sent help to Greece and Korea and Ceylon and Hungary. But all the time the Institute that is alive and effective cares for the smaller beloved community at home, just as the pioneer Institutes did, just as the best Institutes have done through the years since. All the time the Institute that attracts women and holds them takes thought for the home and the family, doing what it can to keep alive the spark of goodness, truth and beauty in a materialistic world.

Ethel Chapman