

TO STOP THE HORROR OF HOUSE FIRES—Over and over again, women in their Institute meetings have discussed the horror of children, and sometimes whole families, being burned to death in their homes. This year a resolution from some branch, district and convention area came to the provincial board asking that, through *Home and Country*, we urge every Institute in the province "to include in one programme during the year the study and discussion of fire prevention and the saving of lives when such fires occur in the home, working whenever possible in co-operation with the local fire department."

We are very happy to pass along this recommendation. And as a starter for the "study and discussion" suggested, we have in this issue, under the title "Fires Can Be Prevented" a set of rules from the Fire Marshal's office.

But is it enough to educate only Institute members on how to prevent fires? Many of the mothers of children burned to death in their homes do not belong to an Institute. Couldn't the Institutes launch a campaign of education that would reach far beyond their own membership and that would waken men, women and older children, too, to a sense of responsibility in keeping their homes safe from fire?

What causes fires? Someone leaves matches where small children can get them to play with. Someone pours coal-oil in the stove to start the fire. Someone sets a pan of hot ashes on the back porch where the wind fans the smouldering coals into a flame. Someone drops sparks from a pipe or cigarette on a bed or upholstered furniture. Someone wearing fleecy cotton or rayon clothing gets too close to a gas flame. Someone uses an inflammable cleaning fluid in a room with an open fire or sets up friction by "scrubbing" the clothes to be cleaned in the fluid. (Some years ago a couple in Toronto undertook to clean their window drapes in gasoline in the washing machine! The explosion that followed killed them both, blew the house apart and destroyed part of the house next door.)

We might go on endlessly about stove-pipes stuck through shingled roofs, overloaded electric wiring, rubbish heaps or oily rags just ready to take fire from spontaneous combustion.

The important thing is that *everyone* should know about these dangers. Occasionally we hear about a local Fire Chief speaking at an Institute meeting, but couldn't we arrange open meetings where everyone in the community could hear the Fire Chief and see films and demonstrations on fire prevention? We can publish the Fire Marshal's advice in *Home and Country* but only a small part of the community see *Home and Country*. Could we get our local newspapers to take up the cause of fire prevention and get everyone thinking about it? Could we use our influence to have someone from the local fire department talk to the school children?

Only as more people become informed about fire risks, and more careful to prevent fires, can we reduce the loss of property, the grief and suffering, the maiming and death caused by fires in homes. There's no doubt that these horrors could be reduced greatly if the Women's Institutes of Ontario were to take education in fire prevention, or perhaps the whole question of safety in the home, as a major project for their work this year.

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