

EDITORIAL

CREATIVE HOMEMAKING — In her priceless little book "Gift From the Sea," Anne Morrow Lindberg does some serious searching into what these modern times with their materialism and mechanization in the home, and their demands and pressures outside, are doing to "the balance of a woman's life, her work and her human relationships."

Mrs. Lindberg feels that the gadgets invented to save work for a woman sometimes only make her life more complicated and meaningless. She suggests that the pioneer woman had more creative work to do; that "baking bread, weaving cloth, putting up preserves, teaching and singing to children, must have been far more nourishing than being the family chauffeur or shopping at super-markets or doing housework with mechanical aids."

"How," this writer asks, "can one point to the constant tangle of household chores, errands and fragments of human relationships as a creation? So much of it is automatic that woman herself begins to feel like a telephone exchange or a laundromat."

No doubt we would all agree with Mrs. Lindberg that the answer is not "in putting woman in the home and giving her the broom and the needle again," that most mechanical aids save us time and energy, but that neither is the answer "in dissipating this time and energy in more purposeless occupations . . . more diversions to fill up the void." Probably we would agree, too, that like Anne Lindberg, most women want to carry out their obligations, not only as a woman and a homemaker but also as a citizen and perhaps as an artist in some hobby or avocation of her own.

But the question is still with us: Are we losing our gifts for creative homemaking and our appreciation of its importance? Does modern homemaking offer scope for the mind and the heart and the skills of the most gifted women? Or could a robot take over, with the help of the delicatessen, the baby sitter, the teacher, the librarian, the cubs and scouts and brownies and all the extra-curricular clubs that take so much responsibility for the social processing of the high school youngster?

What is creative homemaking anyway?

It is making a good apple pie.

It is being on hand when children come home from school, to give them a welcome and "a piece" if they're hungry.

It is making a home a place of rest and health and comfort, where the mind can grow and refresh itself, where the feet of children are set in straight paths and goodness is made attractive.

It is putting the family first, not being so worn out with catering and committees that there is no patience left to deal with hurt feelings or unsteady tempers at home, no reserve of spirit to put a bit of gaiety into the family life.

It is teaching children to live, as a bird teaches her nestlings to fly, encouraging them to try their wings, to grow into one responsibility after another, secure in the love always waiting for them at home whether they win or fail.

It is cultivating an interest in the interests of husband and children, as both counsellor and companion.

It is having time for friendliness and hospitality.

It is carrying good homemaking out into the community and the world — wanting for all people what the good homemaker wants for her own family — food, health, happy human relations, peace.

Ah, but here someone says: "If women want these things for the world they have to get out of their homes and work for them." Certainly they do — preferably through one or two groups dedicated to great causes, but not by buzzing around in every organization that wants their help at baking cakes, sewing for bazaars, catering for lodges, staging drives, selling tickets, ringing door bells, putting in an appearance, taking a secret pride in the complaint "I haven't had a day at home all week."

We suggest that creative homemaking is one of the biggest jobs of these times and that if it were made a topic for discussion on Women's Institute programmes next year we would get a wealth of direction from women who are actually doing it.

Ethel Chapman