

From a New Branch in the North

Editor's Note: Mrs. Geo. Wilson, F.W.I.C. Public Relations Officer, received this report in a letter from Mrs. John C. Gibson P.R.O. for Discovery Institute in Mackenzie District, one of the new branches in the far North. Mrs. Wilson was so delighted with the report that she would like to share it with Institute members in every province. We quote in part:

HERE AT DISCOVERY, we have just had the third meeting of our Women's Institute, so we are still in the throes of becoming organized. We have, at present, a membership of nineteen, which is some eighty per cent of the ladies living here; but even with our small membership we hope to become a very active branch.

We have already decided on a number of projects—the first and probably most important is the compiling of a Tweedsmuir history of Discovery.

Secondly, we have decided to send all our old magazines to the Hospital in Yellowknife; these will be collected at every meeting. Many of us who have spent time in hospital have found a dearth of reading material, and hope that these will fill some lonely hours for the patients.

We have thought about presenting a "theatrical" and our secretary has written to the University of Alberta extension department with an eye to available one-act plays. I'm sure if we go ahead with this, we will have more fun than the audience! Besides, the admission charged will be welcome in our treasury.

Along the lines of other money-making projects, our field is necessarily limited, due to such a small market. To start things off, however, we have planned a "grab bag" sale, with each member contributing a useful article she has made herself such as an apron or pot holders and each will be sold, sight unseen, for \$1.00. We have also instituted a "birthday box," into which each member, as her birthday rolls around, will deposit a penny for each year—no fair other members counting!

As we have no beauty shop facilities at Discovery, other than the goodness of our neighbors' hearts, all the women who are handy with scissors and home permanents have agreed to charge for their services and turn over the proceeds to the treasury. Our scale of prices is \$2.00 for a permanent (customer providing her own materials), 50c for a haircut, 50c for a shampoo and set, and 25c for a child's haircut.

We are thinking, too, about home baking sales—certainly there are no more interested customers for this type of thing than single fellows living in a bunkhouse!

The availability of films we find interesting, too, particularly those concerning meal-planning, nutrition, safety in the home. When we decide which crafts we will take up, we will want films on them, too.

Perhaps some of the more southerly Institute members would be interested to hear a bit about

life in an isolated settlement such as Discovery. Actually, when you live here, you don't feel isolated at all! We are about 58 air-miles northeast of Yellowknife, accessible by air only. The trip takes about half an hour in bush aircraft, and in case of emergency you can get into hospital just as quickly as you could in a large city.

One thing "southerners" find interesting about the north is our daylight. From the first of June until around the end of July, we don't have any darkness—we are not far enough north for an all-night sun, but many times I have lain in bed and read without a light at midnight! In the winter, of course, it is just the opposite.

We have no stores here, other than the Company Commissary, which caters mostly to men's wear and miners' supplies, but three ladies have started up in business. One has an agency for ready-made dresses, one has a small store in her home, selling wool, yard-goods and all kinds of sewing findings; and the writer has the agency for a well-known cosmetics firm.

With no stores, it is necessary to order almost everything from Yellowknife, or from "outside" via catalogue; or by bothering friends and relatives who live in the city. Once a year, we order a "grubstake"—all canned goods, sugar, baking supplies, soap, etc. to last the year. Meat, fresh vegetables, fruits, butter and eggs are all available through our camp Cookery. We drink powdered milk—often children who are brought up on powdered milk don't like the "funny milk" they are served when "out" on holidays! Many of us bake all our bread and buns, and of course it is impossible to buy cakes or cookies.

Our houses are up-to-date, roomy, comfortable and snug in winter. Many of us have freezers, automatic washers and dryers, and all have lots of cupboard space. Of course the view from our living room windows is one we wouldn't exchange for any city street—rugged hills with tall jack-pines, spruce and birches, gorgeous lakes teeming with fish, beautiful sunrises and sunsets. You may think you've seen the Northern Lights down south, but when you get them in the North, the sky is aflame with them as far as you can see.

We certainly enjoyed Mrs. Hough's visit here last fall. We are grateful to her for getting us interested in the Women's Institute, and hope she is able to visit us again this year.

In Sprucedale Institute a few members formed a "Craft Group" and learned the techniques of plastic foam craft, artificial flowers, toys and Christmas decorations . . . This Institute gave bedding and provisions to a "burned out" family and the secretary reports: "We learned that at the request of an organization assistance can be procured for disaster victims and that wheel chairs and hospital beds will be loaned to those in need." (We presume this assistance comes from the Red Cross but the source was not given in the report.—Ed.)