

## EDITORIAL

**A**DVENTURE IN EDUCATION: Over and over again we are told that the Women's Institute is an educational organization, and of course this is true. From its beginning the Women's Institute has been educating its own members. It did the pioneer work for medical inspection in rural schools and the teaching of music in these schools. Institutes have provided their local schools with about every conceivable piece of equipment that a school board would not buy, from sanitary drinking cups to pianos; in later years they have progressed to the more realistic practice of prevailing on school boards to supply such material things. Institutes are taking an active part in providing specialized education for children who need it, in bringing parents and teachers together at meetings to discuss such things as courses of study and vocational guidance. And at every level, from the local branch to the national organization, Women's Institutes have standing committees at work on education and citizenship.

Now a new challenge has come to us. In the rather serious unemployment of last winter it was significant that while there were few jobs available for unskilled workers, there was an unfilled demand for trained personnel in both the trades and professions. Something else came sharply to the attention of authorities interested in *rural* people: Most of the men in the unskilled labour ranks came originally from farms. With no training for any special line of work they had drifted to the cities to pick up whatever jobs they could find; and when hard times came and men were laid off, they were the first to suffer. Even when times are "good," with machines more and more taking the place of manual labour, the outlook for the man without a vocation is bleak indeed. There was a time when almost any farmer's son could be a farmer but here, too, machines are taking the place of men; and only a few of the boys born on farms have the capital to start farming on their own. Clearly, the answer is education *with emphasis on technical education for the boys who do not intend to go into the professions.*

Speaking at the Ontario Conference on Education last June, Mr. Arthur Pigott, Director of Canadian Association for Adult Education said: "Of every 100 children born in Canada, one third are out of school at the end of Grade VIII. There's nothing but unemployment ahead of these. Another third of the hundred get their Matriculation. Six per cent get to university and sixteen per cent are technically trained. *We have to find a way of educating all of them.*"

And what is the responsibility or opportunity for Women's Institutes in this? Provincial and Federal Governments are co-operating to provide vocational training for rural as well as urban youth. Their plan is to set up technical schools, or at least class rooms, in centres to which rural children can be brought in school buses just as they are brought to high school — in most places high schools and technical schools will be in the same town. The Federal Government will pay seventy-five per cent of the cost of this new education, so with the provincial grant the cost will not be heavy for either the students or the municipality. The big problem will be to get both prospective students and their parents to appreciate the urgency of the situation. This is where the Institutes can help. They can have discussions in their meetings with an authority on hand to answer questions. To reach the whole community they can organize public meetings. Perhaps this could be done best in co-operation with their district representative from Community Programs, the Adult Section of the Ontario Department of Education, bringing in speakers who know the whole story. Briefly, the Institutes can take this opportunity to create a new appreciation of education, especially among people who have never cared much about it before.

Perhaps, too, as individuals, we can help some boy to consider what he wants for his own life and the place of education in his plans. Most of us want a job at work we like and that gives us scope to use whatever abilities we have; such jobs are beyond our reach if we are not trained for them. We want security and enough money to live on; and most young people look forward to having a home of their own; but we have no assurance of steady employment or adequate salary if we have no skilled work to offer. The boy who leaves school to take a job so he can buy a car and entertain a girl, may find, five or ten years later, that he is still earning little more than when he quit school; and if he wants to marry, this isn't enough to support a home.

Of course it is vastly unfair to education to appraise it only from the economic angle; but in view of what unemployment does to a man, and to his family, perhaps the economic need just now is the most urgent. At the same time a technical school course gives the student a good deal of general education, with the discipline of mathematics, the culture of English and the opening of many doors to richer, happier living.

*Ethel Chapman*