

## EDITORIAL

**SIXTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY:** At an anniversary we usually look back to our beginnings and forward to our future with, perhaps, a closer look at the more important concerns of the present. When the occasion is the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Women's Institute, we might ask whether the plans made by our founders sixty-five years ago are outdated or whether there is such "a hint of eternity" in them that they may be the reason for our organization's endurance and growth while other movements, just as promising in the beginning, have fallen by the wayside.

We might have a thought, too, for the imagination and wisdom of the women who, over the years, have kept the original plans always in mind, adapting and reshaping them to meet the needs of the changing times.

When the Women's Institute came into being at Stoney Creek sixty-five years ago, its first objective was to help women to be good homemakers. Members exchanged ideas, studied from such literature as they could find, had an occasional lecturer from outside, then asked the government for professional help which started home economics extension service as we have it today. Occasionally someone will suggest that with all our modern labor savers and prepared foods there's nothing for women to learn about managing a home. Others believe that making a home may be more complicated now than it has ever been. What about feeding the family for health in an age of processed foods? What about knowing how to care for our expensive home equipment? When high pressure selling is out to get every dollar we have, is there something for a woman to learn about managing money? Most significant of all, with so many undesirable influences bearing in on family life, isn't human relations about the most important thing in a women's education? . . . Take the home out of the Institute program and you'll still have some sort of organization but it won't be a Women's Institute.

The next purpose of the new organization was "to develop leaders." And how the women in the early days talked about the "local talent" blossoming forth in their Institutes! Quiet women speaking out in meetings amazed their friends — something that has been going on ever since. Institute members have a rare opportunity to practise public speaking, to become confident club women, to do local leader teaching in their groups. Better still — and mostly as a result of their own programs, many of them grow into leaders in thought and action. They become fired with a cause — better recreation facilities for young people; education for retarded children; befriending — and I mean really being a friend to — old folk in County Homes, patients in mental hospitals, young people in reform schools; technical assistance for underdeveloped countries. Perhaps sixty-five years ago no one could foresee the lengths to which leadership training would go in the Institutes, but the foundation was laid for it, just the same.

Another purpose of the Women's Institute from the beginning was "to develop a more abundant community life." So they have provided, or helped to provide libraries, playgrounds, skating rinks, community centres; have sponsored drama groups, joined film councils and put on regular community movies; have chaperoned dances for teenagers, welcomed New Canadians and arranged social affairs to make their communities friendly places. Occasionally through an appeal or protest to municipal authorities they have secured some benefit or protection for all their people.

After two world wars, Institute women began to see that their community had broadened to take in the whole world and their sympathy quickened for people in less fortunate places. During the past ten years the Women's Institutes of Ontario sent a tractor to a village in Greece where all the men had been killed and women were trying to farm the land; they sent sewing machines to Korea and equipment for home training centres to Ceylon. This year they are "adopting" children in need in the farthest corners of the world; and their latest undertaking is to raise a \$50,000 scholarship fund to train home economists to work with F.A.O. in underdeveloped countries. How Adelaide Hoodless would have rejoiced if she could have foreseen this sixty-five years ago!

Certainly the Women's Institutes have an up-to-the-minute program for their sixty-fifth anniversary year — and it's all within the framework of the Constitution laid down sixty-five years ago. We predict that the same pattern will be sufficient for whatever the needs may be in another sixty-five years. There's "a hint of eternity" in it.

*Ethel Chapman*