

The President's Corner



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President F.W.I.O.

PRIVILEGE brings duty and members of this organization enjoy privileges not to be had by many other women's groups; so it follows that you are expected to undertake certain duties and responsibilities in return and you will only have in return in so far as you give.

Living as we do in a land where men and women are free to choose, where there is religious liberty, political choice, freedom to work as one desires whether with hands or mind, we sometimes become indolent toward the responsibilities which are also ours. We lose pride in achievement. We need to remember that what we do is left as a record for others to observe and assess.

As women we have a special duty over against our families, the community and beyond. We need to be individuals who are not afraid to speak and act with courage in defence of those things which we value in a democratic country with its freedoms.

And freedom does not mean that things are to be "free and easy." It does mean that we may be free to think things out for ourselves, that we may make our own decisions. But our thinking should not be bound by prejudice and ignorance; and if we are to be the opposite of ignorant, then we must make an effort to become informed, to get facts so that we can make up our own minds; and we must strive to understand other people and their problems. We must not make sweeping judgments; and we may not say that we do not care for the welfare of other people, for the answer of John Donne, the 15th century poet, is the final answer of all time: "No man is an island, Entire of itself."

You can, as an individual, speak out when others remain silent; you can go on working when others become indolent and indifferent; you can give life big meanings when others demean it; you can say love when others say hate. But to do these things we must be courageous people, filled with enthusiasm for the things we have to do. These are fabulous times in which we live. These are days when we see great luxury on one side and, though we may

like to close our eyes to it, great poverty on the other side—poverty, ignorance, prejudice which sometimes reaches fanaticism. All of these do exist and we, here in this free land of ours, think it not our business. We are so involved with the tenets of status in suburbia that we have no time for the large problems of the world.

In an interview with one of our leading women journalists recently, she made the statement that women's organizations tend to go along doing the same things in the same way and then wonder why the press and radio do not recognize their efforts. We must be a little better if we are going to stand for something real and worthwhile in our communities. Another woman reporter remarked that "of course we know the Women's Institute is in the community. They have been there for many years in some cases, but they are accepted as background." Now, that may be good, but let's make an effort to move out of the scenery onto the stage and be a part of the cast involved in the play. Certainly it's going to take some effort, some special thinking on our part (think of all that potential brain power and put it to work) and perhaps an all-out revision of our thinking; but let's try it. Let's say, "We can; we will!"

Aristotle, the great philosopher, said "We must decide what is possible and what is becoming." Strange statement, is it not, until we take it apart and examine it?

Many things are possible for us often, but are they truly the things we ought to be doing? Do we always bear in mind the objects of this organization—to help women acquire sound and approved practices for greater home efficiency; to help discover, stimulate and develop leaders; to help develop a more abundant way of life in our communities and a deeper appreciation of things near at hand; to develop better, happier and more useful citizens.

These are indeed days when we must decide what is becoming. Critical times are with us at this moment, and perhaps even the survival of freedom and civilization is at stake. We must be informed people. We must make an effort to understand other people and their problems at home and abroad, and your organization offers this to you if you will but take advantage of all that it can give to you. These are days for taking a firm stand, and how can we do this if we are not capable of forming an opinion? And we must not confuse firmness with stubbornness. We need strength and humility together so that we, with all our good life, are not guilty of arrogance. And we need, above all, to get rid of our prejudices at home so that we may carry on the work to be done through our organization abroad.

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