

Geerda Van Beekhoff

MRS. GEERDA VAN BEEKHOFF, President of A.C.W.W., who will be the Ontario Women's Institutes' guest at Guelph on June 20, lives in the Netherlands in a village called Kerk Avezaath, in the Betuwe, the district that lies between the Rhine and the Waal, a lovely fertile land, full of apple and cherry orchards. Her husband belongs to one of the oldest farming families in the Betuwe, and he is a Burgomaster and Count of the Dykes, an ancient title bestowed by the Queen, and a very responsible job since he and his board of landowners are responsible for the strength of the dykes and the height of the water-table in his district. He is a "Knight of the Order of Oranje-Nassau," an honour bestowed on him for his work for the rural cause in the province of Gelderland. They have one son, Diederik, aged twenty, who looks very like his mother, and theirs is a very happy home.

Mrs. van Beekhoff is the daughter of a clergyman and her education includes nurses' training. She has been an active member of her Society, the Nederlandse Bond van Plattelandsvrouwen, ever since she married; she became its president in 1952. She has always been deeply interested in international affairs and has been to every A.C.W.W. Conference since the meeting in Amsterdam in 1947. She represented her Society on the Executive Committee of A.C.W.W. from 1957 to 1959. She was elected World President at the Ninth Triennial Conference in Edinburgh and re-elected unopposed for a further three years at the Tenth Triennial Conference in Melbourne, Australia, October 1962. She has travelled widely and speaks English, French and German as well as her mother tongue. She has courage, integrity and a delightful sense of humour, and has many friends all over the world.

Her first big assignment was to represent A.C.W.W. at a meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, which called together representatives of non-governmental organizations to discuss plans for the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. So great was her success that she was asked to serve on the Advisory Committee and was, and is, the only woman to do so. She has been invited to read a paper at the World Food Congress in Washington, D.C. in June this year. This Congress is timed to take place at the mid-point of the five-year Freedom from Hunger Campaign and it is a great honour both to Mrs. van Beekhoff and to A.C.W.W. that she has been invited. After the



Mrs. Geerda van Beekhoff, The Netherlands, President Associated Country Women of the World.

Congress she will visit Member Societies in Canada.

In February 1961 Mrs. van Beekhoff undertook an extensive tour of Africa, visiting Uganda, Kenya, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, South West Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Later in that year she visited all our Member Societies in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. During all these travels she spoke to thousands of women. Everywhere the fact that she is a homemaker who shares and understands the concern of all wives and mothers for their families and homes, gives her a sympathetic understanding of their problems and projects.

The Tenth Triennial Conference of A.C.W.W. was held in Melbourne, Australia, in October 1963 and before and after the Conference, Mrs. van Beekhoff travelled for seven weeks in all the States of Australia. She also visited New Zealand and toured both islands for two weeks.

To be president of an international organization such as A.C.W.W. is a responsible and sometimes an exhausting job, but Geerda van Beekhoff accepts her responsibilities and finds her work rewarding. Her colleagues in A.C.W.W. find her a delightful person to work with and for and are devoted to her. A.C.W.W. feels the work is safe in her hands.