

For Homemaking Information

What Do You Read? Listen to? Watch for?

By Diana Ferris

The survey findings in this article have been abstracted and condensed from the 8th progress report of the "Special Study of Ontario Farm Homes and Homemakers." Copies of this and other progress reports from the socio-economic study jointly undertaken in 1959 by the Ontario Department of Agriculture and the Canada Department of Agriculture may be obtained on request from 20 Spadina Road, Toronto 4, Ontario.

AS WE WERE SAYING last issue, every single one of the 352 farm homes we visited in Ontario had mass media sources available. Not only that: 6 out of 10 of them owned radios and TV sets and bought farm press publications and also subscribed to non-farm magazines and newspapers. Nearly 3 out of 10 of them had all of the above media, but one—most often it was a TV set that was missing. Nearly one out of 10 of them had three media sources—most often TV sets and magazines were missing; while a very few had but two mass media to choose between—these few homes all had the farm press, plus one other means.

The Printed Page

To look then at these various information sources in turn: What kinds of "helpful" homemaking information do farm women look for on the PRINTED PAGE?

Most of all, *textile and clothing* articles, they said; next often, *nutrition and food* stories. What kinds of fabric topics? Oh, patterns, dressmaking hints, the care of synthetic fabrics, general mending and sewing tips and fashion advice were some of the things they specifically mentioned. And what kinds of food topics? Oh, information about food preparation, meal planning, new recipes and the preserving and storing of food—to name but a few.

Something else: It was found that textile and clothing information was more often sought in the pages of the non-farm press, while food and nutrition topics were most often read in the farm press. Maybe this just means that farm papers carry more stories on food, while the non farm-press prints more articles on fabrics, or it may imply preference.

Another trend noted was that although farm families bought more newspapers than magazines, homemakers used magazines more than

newspapers for homemaking information. But we weren't trying to do a survey for any particular media; we just wanted to know, in general, about sources and subjects of information of concern to the rural woman.

And so from the answers farm women gave us we were able to compile the following most-to-least-mentioned subjects of interest found in printed media when a-hunting homemaking news and views: 1. textile and clothing articles, 2. nutrition and food stories, 3. general homemaking hints, 4. home furnishing topics, 5. information on crafts and hobbies, 6. gardening news, 7. home management ideas, 8. discussions on family relationships, 9. housing information, 10. health articles, 11. "general background reading" type stories, 12. flower arrangement suggestions, 13. association and club activities, 14. advertisements, 15. grooming tips.

Leaflets, pamphlets and brochures were an additional printed media source used by about half of the farm women interviewed. And their interests were practically identical to the above list. In other words, when farm women took the time to sit down and write away for information they again most of all wanted assistance with fabrics and foods (except that foods headed the pamphlet interest list rather than textiles) and they again wanted least assistance about grooming matters. And the order of interest was just about the same between, with home furnishing information being a little more popular.

Radio

What about the kinds of "helpful" homemaking information farm women listened to on RADIO? They told us they heard assorted ("spot", "feature" and "commentator"—but mostly the latter) *household hint* shows most often.

Their answers then turned up the fact that next in importance to household hints shows, farm programs were considered to contain "helpful" homemaking information!

Television

When it came to TELEVISION, *women's shows*, which were third in importance to farm women on radio, headed their preference lists as sources of homemaking information. Apparently, on a combined sight and sound media, women wanted to be entertained