

TO LEARN ABOUT FAMILY LIVING: Canada has an annual national conference on The Family, sponsored by the Governor General and Madame Vanier. This is an exclusive affair for representatives of voluntary organizations, education, welfare and other agencies concerned with the good of the family. It would be impossible at such a conference to accommodate everyone who might like to attend. . . . Last year an international Family Council for Canada and the United States met in Toronto with well known representatives of church and state, education, economics and social welfare taking part in the program. Again attendance had to be limited. . . . In January of this year the Canadian Conference on Aging, definitely a concern of the family, was held in Toronto. The program announced was most intriguing to anyone interested in the problems of old people but it was accompanied by the reminder that "attendance would be by invitation only."

These conferences might remind Institute members of two things: First: Family living is now one of the top-ranking studies for progressive organizations; and second: It has become a privilege to have a part in a conference on family living or even to attend as a listener — a privilege that is not likely ever to be granted to the rank and file of Institute women.

And the irony of it is that the Women's Institutes who introduced the study of family life in this country when they were organized sixty-nine years ago, have fallen by the wayside in a movement that should be a part of their very existence.

What do they do at the big conferences on The Family? They have speeches by authorities in various fields of vital concern to the family. They have panel discussions by men and women with some special knowledge of family problems and possibilities. And they have views "from the floor," the opinions of men and women of common sense and intelligence and a concern for the family, their own families and their neighbours'. Is there anything here that could not be duplicated in a Women's Institute?

Some Institutes are already doing something for education in family life through panels with school teachers on such subjects as Vocational Guidance or "How the home can help the child to make the most of his school life"; or through a discussion with an agricultural representative on Farm Family Partnerships; or even when they have a lawyer speak on Making a Will. Others may have a teacher of a kindergarten or nursery school talk to an audience of young mothers about the guidance of young children. In some communities it may be difficult to find an authority on Money Management but with a good moderator any Institute should be able to select a half-dozen women who could lead a profitable discussion of the subject. There is no doubt that in most Institutes we don't begin to make use of the talents of our own members; don't do enough pooling of the knowledge we have amongst us.

There is the timely question of The Working Mother. This must be handled discreetly so that we don't set ourselves up as judges of one another; but surely we might consider how the mother who works outside her home can plan things so that her family do not suffer because of it. One suggestion for this study might be to set up a standard for a good home, a good family life; and then discuss what a mother can do to reach this standard whether she works outside her home or not.

And there is the whole subject of life for old people and how to prepare for old age — physically, economically, socially and psychologically. There is the study of adolescence in relation to the family. These and other topics point to the possibility of panel discussions led by representatives of the various age groups.

Indeed there is no limit to the fascinating topics that might be included in a study of family living. It couldn't all be covered in one year's programs and anyway we couldn't give every program of the year to it. But we are convinced that there was never more need than there is today for education in family life and that the shrewdness, the sound sense of values and the imagination of Institute women we know, could make such a study as interesting as it is practical.

Ethel Chapman