

EDITORIAL

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES AND HOME ECONOMICS: The Women's Institute is the only organization I know that was founded for the betterment of the home and family life; and sometimes I am amazed at the sound and imaginative ways Institutes have found to live up to this purpose. Homemakers have shared their views and demonstrated their special skills to help each other. They have brought professional help to the community in courses and training schools. They have given a magnificent service in leading girls' homemaking clubs; have had panels on child guidance with teachers and psychologists. Even the organization's world-wide interests seem to have the welfare of the family at heart—sewing machines for Korea, home demonstration equipment for Ceylon, adult education for Indian and Eskimo women in the North, scholarships for workers in the Freedom from Hunger Crusade; "adoptions" in the Save the Children campaign. All of these projects have a basis of home economics; and practically all involve the work of home economists.

But the profession of home economics has its detractors here and there. There are educationists who would relegate it to technical schools or limit it to food science, taking away the humanities concerned with human thought and human relations. There are the Betty Friedans who would pour it down the drain completely because they think an interest in the home is just a woman's escape from competition with men in the world outside. And there may be women who believe that with modern equipment and processed food, a home can pretty well run itself.

I believe home economics is more needed today than ever before.

If anyone thinks we have outgrown the practical skills of homemaking, I submit that good meals and a comfortable home do a lot to create a good family life.

Home economics deals with family financing. With modern high pressure selling and the popular appeal of status symbols, surely there was never a time when women needed to know so much about managing money.

Home economics includes child study and how a child's family life gives direction to the whole of his life. With so many groups now competing for a child's time and interest, parents seem to have an added responsibility to make the family mean what it should mean to children.

In these days of the changing role of women from homemaker to both homemaker and, or, income earner, sound home economics will see that the family does not suffer from the change—indeed that under right conditions it may benefit from it.

As a profession, home economics is steadily broadening its field. If we believe with Dorothy Canfield that "home economics is the study of the art of living", we may be ready to agree that some homes of the future might be happier, that some forms of delinquency might be prevented, if every child in the public school years, boys as well as girls, could have some home economics training in human relations and in the use of money. Only last month we had this statement from the Canadian Welfare Council:

"One of these days social welfare is going to tell the hospitals and high schools to move over. It is going to start competing for home economists.

"Social welfare is becoming a business under responsible management with a sharp eye on the results of its investments. What is the good of new low-cost housing if the families who move in have no idea how to keep house? What is the good of job training for a youth if he and his young wife are clueless consumers? What is the good of all the clinics, camps and clubs if boys and girls are badly fed at home? Nobody sees more clearly than the home economist that poor nutrition means poor health and poor job performance whether the job is at the plant or at home or school.

"This is why Home Economists are needed, out in the community on the health and welfare team along with doctors, nurses, town planners, social workers and the rest. This is why it is vitally important that far larger numbers of Home Economists be trained in order to play their part in this era of Canada's great educational and industrial expansion."

Why do we put all this before members of Women's Institutes? Because the welfare of the home is one of their own fields; because they are interested in useful, interesting careers for girls; and because, if they believe in home economics education, they may find ways of supporting and promoting it in their local schools, in community extension work, or, if the opportunity offers, at the level of the university.

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