

With the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada

The Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia report a milestone in their history. A lively "Let's Talk It Over" discussion followed an executive meeting of the Digby District W.I. The topic was racial discrimination and prejudice, with particular emphasis on the negro-white relationship. The consensus of opinion was that despite the publicity that seems to indicate otherwise, the Negro is not discriminated against as much as he was a few years ago. Publicity is good if it leads to realization of needs, but the type that leads to racial hatred and bloody rioting can only harm the cause of the Negro. Changes will come, but must come slowly, built on a firm foundation of goodwill and understanding. There must be a change of attitudes and we can help by giving friendship and moral support. Education is the key — Governments can help by making laws against discrimination; against prejudice they are helpless.

"That doesn't sound like anything very new or startling, does it?" the report goes on to say, "but wait — The Women's Institutes taking part in this discussion were from three Branches: Bear River, which is English speaking; Meteghan River-Lower Saulnierville, which is French; and Acaciaville, the only Negro Women's Institute in Canada. Where else," the writer continues, "could you find three such groups in one small district? Though the French and English Institutes have always worked together in complete harmony and friendship, they are now proud to say that the inclusion of the Acaciaville W.I. has brought to all a new understanding and liking for the Negro. We meet and talk, agree or disagree, simply as Women's Institute members — and friends," concludes the report written by Mrs. Thelma Buckler, District Secretary. Another pertinent note is the fact the District President is from the Acaciaville W.I.

All nationalities and creeds are found in the Women's Institute, not only in Canada but around the world, but as this is the only Negro W.I. in this country, the Nova Scotia W.I. may well be proud of this milestone in their history; a practical application of the theme of this year on Human Rights.

A FINISHED PROJECT

The Women's Institute at Discovery, Northwest Territories, a community 800 miles north of Edmonton finished its centennial project, a quilt bearing six hundred signatures of former residents. Proceeds from the sale of the quilt will be used to help a girl living in Hong Kong whom the group has adopted.

The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada is the only **National** women's organization that speaks for rural women, claims the Brief presented to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada at the hearing in Ottawa October 2, 1968. Out of its membership of 62,000 a high percentage is composed of women who work with their husbands in the production of food. For this reason special emphasis was placed on the position of the farm wife.

The Brief went on to say that in many instances the wife has to be in the labour force taking the place of unavailable male farm labour. Here she finds herself without the privilege of remuneration. In addition to the usual household responsibility of the home, the farm wife has to be much more. She is expected to be the bookkeeper of a complex and highly skilled industry, a gardener, chauffeur; to assist with harvesting of crops; drive the farm tractor, and help with many other farm duties because of this lack of farm labour. "And what do farm wives receive in recompense for their role in this multitude of professions?" asks the Brief. "Are they paid a wage commensurate with their labours? If so, are husbands allowed to claim this as legitimate farm expense? Do their husbands get a fair exemption for them? Not at all! Seemingly, the farm wife has not the status of a business partner."

The Brief enlarged on the three specific topics as indicated by the Commission: Marriage, Divorce and the Domicile of Married Women; Women in the Labour Force; Taxation as it pertains to Married Women. It outlined relevant resolutions that have been submitted from time to time on such topics as Health Certificates prior to Marriage; Amendment Criminal Code to make sale and use of Contraceptives legal; Establishment of Family Planning Centres; Legalized Abortion under stringent controls; Extension of Grounds for Divorce; Maintenance in Case of Desertion.

Other recommendations pertained to Minimum Age of Marriage; Consent for Medical Operations — either parent, not just father as in some provinces; Ownership of Property — law allows husband to barely sustain his wife if he so wishes; Increased Exemption of Income Tax (\$2,000); Exemption for household help — why should man be able to claim exemption for household help when there are dependent children where a woman cannot? Pension Benefits and Succession Duties — in the event of a wife dying a man retains his full pension. If he dies first, his widow receives a