

Editorial

How do you assess the benefits of attending a conference of the Associated Country Women of the World?

Mrs. Raymond Sayre, a former A.C.W.W. president addressing an Educational Seminar at the Oslo conference, commenting on the statement, "What A.C.W.W. does through conferences" said, "They inform, they stimulate, they activate and they inspire."

Mrs. Sayre continued, "An A.C.W.W. conference does what governments can't do. They provide person to person contact. They give us the opportunity to know each other's faces and to visit each other's homes; to evaluate our own efforts to find out where we are and to determine future policy."

These simple pertinent words of a wise and experienced woman express some of the thinking of those who attended the conference.

In the first days after returning home from such a trip it is difficult for most of us to sort out our thoughts, for each day brought a new pleasure, a new stimulation, a new insight. Now that we have settled down to everyday existence we have time to sort out our thoughts and savour in retrospect the pleasures and to try to soberly assess what this experience has done to us as persons.

Norway Day, the opening day of the conference! What a thrill when the flags of all of the countries represented there were brought in to the great hall at Blindern University! We were proud and so conscious of the Canadian maple leaf! It was there, we were there, and we as Ontario Women's Institute members were a part of this world wide and tremendously influential organization. There was stimulation, there was inspiration!

As for information, there were great amounts of it presented to us on every facet of the work of A.C.W.W. Certainly there was too much for us to assimilate in the time that we had. Copies of the reports and speeches were available and the reading of them will enable us to re-feel the excitement of the setting in which they were presented along with a clearer understanding of the content.

But the most important effect on the delegate will be the impact of getting to know delegates from other countries. In the sessions, in the dining rooms, in the residences, we were all together, women of many races, creeds and cultures. We learned to like each other as persons and accept the differences with tolerance and understanding.

The conference tours were experiences in adult education. Norway is no longer far away. Being entertained in the delightful Norwegian homes by those gracious, handsome Norwegian people (and this applies to other countries in which there were tours), brought us new friends and sometimes a mind stretching adventure in establishing communications.

The impact of the conference on the thinking of those who attended will be according to the personality of the individual. And there will be lingering influences of varying degrees. The faces, voices, actions of those they were in contact with will remain as vivid images. When we read of disasters in Pakistan or Malaysia or India or Ireland, thoughts will automatically turn to an individual whom we have met. Sympathy, understanding and concern will develop in our thinking for that person. This concern will probably spread to our families and others. It will be like a pebble dropped in a pool of water with ever widening circles. Here will come activation, some of slight importance, some having far flung effects.

A simple effect of the conference will surely be a better understanding of this international organization to which we all belong. At the conference, enthusiasm was high. Some of this enthusiasm and understanding must have returned with the delegates and will be passed on through the hundreds of pictures, pamphlets, speeches, souvenirs, etc. brought back.

Miss Isvan of Turkey, the liaison person between the Ontario Women's Institutes and our Nazmiye Salman, whose education has been furthered by our organization, was formerly a name at the end of a letter. Now that name conjures a person, charming, capable, knowledgeable. Her pictures showed us the type of home in which Nazmiye Salman grew up, and pointed up the need for assistance for her and others like her and what the future effects of her training will be on her village. This was a side benefit of personal interest to the Ontario members. Other adventures in understanding were experienced.

Attendance at this conference, pleasant as it was for those who were there, brought with it an obligation and that is to share with the people in our branches the inspiration, information and stimulation which we were privileged to enjoy.

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