

MRS. DUTT SAYS FAREWELL AS A.C.W.W. PRESIDENT

These last few days many of my fellow members have asked me how do I feel now that my term as President is coming to an end?

It has been difficult to answer them as I have such mixed feelings. For the last twelve years my life was built around A.C.W.W. My personal life had to be adjusted to A.C.W.W. and extension work, meetings and conferences. Now that central point is gone so, naturally, there will be a vacuum for some time to come. On the other hand, there is a tremendous feeling of relief, as there is a great responsibility attached to this high office and that responsibility is now over.

Life is like a book divided into chapters, some day, some time, one has to close a chapter and open another, and one does that with both joy and sorrow. The end of a term of an A.C.W.W. President is like a closing of a chapter of life.

This wonderful chapter in my life opened six years back in Dublin and I was full of apprehension looking at the tremendous task ahead. Today, when I look back, as I come down the mountain path from the summit, I find these years have been the most meaningful years of my life, when the distant became near, and as I travelled from country to country representing this great international organization, no door was shut. I came in close contact with women of many nations and came to know the great human heart which is full of compassion and love. This has also been the difficult years of my life. As a mother, wife and daughter, many a time I had to face conflict between my loyalty to family and A.C.W.W. duties. Those were difficult mental struggles, when I was all alone and had to make decisions where no one could help. Many a time during national festivals the birthdays of my son and husband, and even on my 25th wedding anniversary, I was far away from home and family. But again, when I think back, I feel all such personal heartaches have been worthwhile for the ideal that A.C.W.W. represents. Every A.C.W.W. President with a family has to make this personal sacrifice but it is worthwhile.

I could not have done this work without the encouragement and the wholehearted cooperation of my husband, my son and my late

mother. I could not have borne this great responsibility without the tremendous cooperation of my dear colleagues of the two terms as your President. We worked as a perfect team. I could not have done this work without the understanding help of all the Chairmen and members of Standing Committees and the office staff. Mrs. Stella Bell, our past General Secretary, and our present General Secretary, Miss Elizabeth O'Kelly, have been my constant source of help. My special thanks are due to Mrs. Couldrey, our Extension Secretary. Last of all, our members round the world. To each one of you I am grateful for your understanding and friendship. I have lived in many of your lovely homes, I have met your families, I cannot thank you enough for your love and cooperation during my Presidentship of A.C.W.W. I can only tell you in the end that I have received much more than I have been able to give. I have a great treasure store of memories which you have helped build up. No matter where I am I shall always be able to look back to the past, these happy years with A.C.W.W. which will always be mine.

The role of an A.C.W.W. President is like the role of a boatman, steering his boat in a never ending river. The course runs through mist and sunshine and as a boatman you feel happy and relieved when you steer the boat safely to its temporary destination. This is the feeling I have today.

A new day is about to begin in the life of A.C.W.W. under new leadership and the sun sets on the day that is about to be over. There is a tremendous task ahead. A.C.W.W. has grown through the years beyond recognition. It plays a significant part in building up a future for the generations to come through education and training of mothers and homemakers, through bringing them together by building bridges of mutual respect and understanding.

Let us never lose sight of the ideals on which this great work is based. Each one of us, whether we hold office or not has to keep on working, each in our own corner of the world of A.C.W.W. where the sun never sets.

My debt to A.C.W.W., and to you, the members, is unlimited. Through the six years as President, I have learned to look upon the world affairs with a much wider perspective and I say it with all humility.

In many countries I was told that I should go back to see how they develop in a few years' time and my answer has always been that "it will not be me, but someone from A.C.W.W. will come to see how you have progressed, because Presidents go and Presidents come but A.C.W.W. goes on forever."