



The President's Corner

Mrs. Harvey Noblitt,
President the Feder-
ated Women's Insti-
tutes of Ontario.

As I come to you for the first time in the President's Corner, I would like to thank you all most sincerely for your support and for your messages of congratulations and good wishes on my election. I am proud, happy, and honoured, yet humbled to have been chosen President of such a fine organization. We have an enviable tradition to uphold. Our past presidents have given us excellent and unselfish leadership, for which we are very grateful. With your wonderful co-operation I feel confident that we can carry the torch high and work together harmoniously and effectively for Home and Country.

As I write, I look out over broad fields of untrodden snow, white and beautiful. How like the bright new year that spreads before us, challenging us to make of it what we will! I think of a verse my mother often quoted us as children, and yet one that is applicable not only to life but to each new year:

"Isn't it strange that princes and kings,
And clowns who caper in sawdust rings,
And common folk like you and me
Are builders for eternity?
To each is given a bag of tools,
A shapeless mass and a book of rules,
And each must make, ere life has flown,
A stumbling block or a stepping stone."

In this our 75th Anniversary year you in your Branches, Districts and Areas, as well as in the Province are all making, or have made preparations to celebrate. You will be asking, "To celebrate what?" and be looking back over the years as far as you have records, and evaluating your accomplishments. You will have reason to be proud of those years, I am sure. It will be very difficult to really assess the value of your Women's Institute work because so much of it is in intangible things. How much has each individual learned through her association with her Branch? How much has she gained through friendships made? How much better is her appreciation of life because of it? Could she have served her

community as well alone? Could she have had a voice in changing those things she felt could be improved in any better way than through the projects of her Women's Institute or through its resolutions? We could go on asking many questions like this without really being able to give answers.

We can see many tangible accomplishments too. Recently, I drove past a fine old hall that was built by a Women's Institute many years ago in that town and is still serving it well. The same day I entered another village to the welcome sign put there by the Women's Institute of that area and bid farewell, and invited to come again by a similar sign at the other end of the village. Countless libraries around the province are stocked with books donated by Women's Institute members, and nearly every hospital in the rural centres bear plaques in tribute to donations from Women's Institute groups. These and many others attest to the integral part Women's Institutes have played in the life of the rural community.

However, success and accomplishments in the past do not guarantee a continuation of these in the future. What are our plans for the years ahead? Where lie our strengths, where our weaknesses? These will differ from Area to Area and we will want to assess them and in the light of that assessment decide on a positive approach to our future progress. In the overall picture, however, I believe that one thing is clear: We must make a real effort to increase our membership. If we plan well-conducted, interesting and productive meetings and do interesting, worthwhile things as a result, I think any woman would want to be one of us. Let us each make a very special effort to get one more member for our Branch this year. Perhaps we could start by inviting a prospective member to our anniversary celebration where she can see for herself the type of things we do.

How about planning to organize a Junior Institute in your community this year? You might be surprised how many girls would be interested in joining if they could be shown the value to be derived from such an organization. There are nine very enthusiastic Junior Institutes in Ontario, and their fine activities speak of the interest of these young women.

As you plan your meetings for the coming year with the interests of your members in mind, try to make each meeting an educational, happy and rewarding experience for everyone and involve as many of the members as possible. It will be a challenge to plan meetings to keep abreast of the times and yet to keep within the framework of the organization.