

Editorial

"What was good enough for my father is good enough for my son." This worn-out old saying may arise from a nostalgic feeling for the past or it may be an indication of a stubborn resistance to change and provide a feeble excuse to avoid coming face to face with changes. We heard this saying many times in Ontario when the movement to close "the little red school houses" was being promoted. No matter what are the private thoughts of individuals we now recognize that the school system as represented by the country one-room schools, was doomed and could not adequately provide the education for young people growing up in this very modern era.

Alvin Toffler in his book "Future Shock" says, "Western society for the past 300 years has been caught up in a fire storm of change. This storm far from abating, now appears to be gathering force. Change sweeps through the highly industrialized countries with waves of ever accelerating speed and unprecedented impact. It spawns in its wake all sorts of curious flora — from psychedelic churches, 'free universities' to science cities in the Arctic and wife swap clubs in California."

We who have been members of the Women's Institutes for a number of years have seen tremendous changes in our own lifetime. We talk about the good old days and it is fun to recreate the atmosphere of a hundred years ago in Anniversary celebrations, but who could honestly say that we would want to go back to living conditions as they were, even 25 years ago. What, no television, no comfortable motor cars, no supermarkets and electric appliances, no airplanes for rapid transportation! A few hours of being without electricity are hard to endure.

Let's face it, we don't want to go back to the good old days.

All right! If we want these modern technological changes which make our living easier and which will get more sophisticated since technologists and scientists in all fields are working hard to develop ideas for new things, then we must accept that changes in life styles, in thinking and attitudes are going to occur and some of these changes we are not going to like.

Toffler says, "The acceleration of change does not merely buffet industries or nations. It is a concrete force that reaches deep into our personal lives, compels us to act out new roles and confronts us with the danger of a new and powerfully upsetting disease," a disease named by Toffler, "Future Shock."

Toffler also says, "Unless intelligent steps are taken to cope with the disease millions of human beings will find themselves increasingly disoriented, progressively incompetent to deal rationally with their environments. The malaise, mass neurosis, irrationality and free-floating violence is already apparent in contemporary life are merely a foretaste of what may lie ahead unless we come to understand and treat this disease."

And what has all this to do with those of us who belong to one of the largest women's organization in the world — to an organization dedicated (a) to help women acquire sound and approved homemaking skills (b) to help develop better informed, happier and more useful citizens.

With all this change, as yet no substitute has been found for a healthy home background for developing good citizens, though some have proposed other means, some of which have actually been tried. The parents, often the mother, are the people who must plan and establish the homes for the children they bear and are expected to care for. The homemaking skills mentioned in the objectives of the Women's Institute do not just mean the skills of cooking, sewing, laundering, etc. It means skill in creating a healthy home atmosphere, skill in understanding young people, it means making the supreme effort of understanding that rapidly changing world into which young people will emerge from the home environment.

And the Women's Institute? "What was good enough for our mothers" is not good enough for our daughters. Old programs, old formats must be examined and some, maybe many, should be discarded. Each branch has a responsibility to its members, to the women in the community, to the whole community, to provide programs that will help to stimulate thinking, to look forward, to understand, to anticipate future needs.

Now is the time with a carefully prepared new Handbook suggesting excellent programs that must be promoted by our Convenors and their committees.

In our birthday celebrations we are honouring our past members and this is right; but let's not get away from the fact we are going to have to live in a strange new, perhaps shocking, world and we'd better prepare for it.

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