



The President's Corner

Mrs. Harvey Noblitt, President the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

Dear W.I. Members:

"Time has come", the walrus said, "to talk of many things" . . .

Time! To the sick and the ailing and to those with little challenge, time may seem long, but to the vast majority of people it is a commodity in very short supply these days.

In our busy lives with schedules to meet and numerous tasks to perform, we feel that the days drive on relentlessly and we fail to accomplish the things we would like. It is difficult to visit sick friends, there is too little time to listen to our children's stories or to their problems, not enough time to cook nutritious foods, sometimes no time to go to church and seldom time to just sit and appreciate God's gifts of nature and all the blessings in life.

In our Branches we find we have too little time for all we would like to accomplish. At District Annuals not enough time to hear conveners' reports in full, not enough time to talk and fraternize, and not enough time to discuss current concerns.

But time is not a concern of our generation only, for in Chaucer's time he wrote, "The life so short, the craft so long to learn." Time is our great gift and our use of it determines the direction our lives will take. Yet we often waste the precious golden moments. William Penn has said, "that time is what we want the most, but alas what we use the worst!"

Mary Stewart in her Collect advises us to take time for all things. "Oh", we comfort ourselves, "she wrote that in a different day from ours." True. Yet people in her day who desired to fill their lives with worthwhile activities must have been just as busy as we and they laboured under many more difficulties. Surely Mary Stewart assumed what we must all accept, that "all things" are the carefully selected priorities in the use of our time.

We are all conscious in Women's Institute of trying to accomplish the most worthwhile things. In establishing our priorities we would be wise to review our objectives asking, "What things are we doing that are fulfilling our objectives, what things are not? What could we eliminate that is of little value? Are our meetings well planned so no time is lost over business yet everyone is given a chance to express their opinion? Is there something that could be left for more committees to work on through the month? Are there practices that are outmoded? Let us look, for example, at mottoes. Is a motto an important part of our meeting? Do we elaborate on it, discuss it and enjoy it?

Does it give information? If so, we may feel time spent on it is worthwhile, if not, we may wish to discard it.

We must be careful, I believe, when we are trying to save time to retain the essential arts. For example, I notice in reading District Annual reports that conveners' reports are often mimeographed and copies given to delegates, but do we at the same time permit the convener time to give the highlights of her report, give her suggestions and recommendations and answer any questions? This exercise gives her, and those who ask the questions, confidence in expressing themselves before others; an art in itself.

Time for me, too, has been very short and all too quickly it has brought me to near the end of my term as President. At the next Board meeting in January a new President will be elected. My three years have been extremely enjoyable and a real learning experience. Tennyson, in "Ulysses", said:

"I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
Forever and for ever when I move. . . ."

So, I am the richer for the privilege you have given me and I am deeply grateful to you all. But my pleasures and rewards would be minimal if I could not look back and feel that the Women's Institute had progressed during those three years.

In November 1971 when I was elected President, we were all looking forward to celebrating our 75th anniversary in 1972 and besides our Provincial celebration, we were all planning special events in our Branches, Districts and Areas. Steps were in progress to buy the Erland Lee Home and to build an apartment, make repairs and restore it to its historical period. (By the end of 1974, 10,000 people would visit it). It was a big project that would require the co-operation and effort of all. Hence it seemed expedient at that time to devote our main energies to these projects in particular, and at the same time to work at increasing our membership and at keeping our organization strong, enthusiastic and healthy. Working diligently, 239 of our 1290 Branches have increased their membership by 20% in two years. We now have more than half the membership of the Federated Women's Institute of Canada, ours being 30,775 and the combined membership of the other provinces 23,829.

Everywhere there is increased enthusiasm. We see it in continued interest in Officers' Conference and increased interest in current social issues, crafts, writing, drama, Home Economics Courses, 4H leadership, community projects and in providing hospitality to visiting groups from other Provinces and other lands. These accomplishments have been possible because of the combined efforts and splendid co-operation of everyone — the Executive, the Provincial Board Directors and all the membership, each member doing her part to the best of her ability. This is the way it has always been with Women's Institutes and I know it will continue to be so with the next President and her successors. Much has been done but there is so much still to do; so many exciting challenges in these swiftly moving times. Let us continue to make the most of them.

Now I say farewell and a warm "thank you" to all.
Bernice B. Noblitt