

"A World to Share"

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This is the theme of the fourteenth Triennial Conference to be held by the ASSOCIATED COUNTRY WOMEN OF THE WORLD in October, 1974 in Perth, Australia. Every member of a Women's Institute in Ontario is a member of ACWW and so is concerned in this Conference. She may not be lucky enough to be going to Australia herself to attend the Conference, but she will be represented there by her FWIO and FWIC delegates and by the Officers of ACWW who work for her at the international level.

The WI's of Ontario, with their proud history of the pioneer part they played in the creation of this world-wide team of women, have associated themselves with the members of sister organizations of Country Women all round the World to work together and to help each other to win a better life for themselves, their families, and for all humankind. Because of the work of ACWW and of its member societies there are children who can see who would otherwise have been blind; there are women who can read and write who would have been illiterate; there are babies who had enough protein when they were weaned to save them from getting kwashiokor; there are families that have learned to budget their instalment buying commitments so that they have not fallen hopelessly into debt; there are women who have learned the delight of designing their own handicrafts instead of simply copying commercial patterns; there are remote villages that are no longer isolated; there are communities that have for the first time a clean water supply; there are people who have come to understand something of the problems other people face and to feel for them sympathy and friendship in place of suspicion and fear . . . The list could go on and on of the myriad small, personal changes that add up to the beginnings of a quiet revolution in family life, in child care, in educational opportunity, in the quality of the environment, in creative activity, and in international relations. It is only a beginning, but working together and helping each other we can go on to build a better life everywhere if we have the courage, the imagination, and the determination.

And determination is needed to find the time, to devote the thought and effort, and to mobilize the material means that are needed for our work with our far-flung neighbours. The organization of a conference of hundreds of women takes exhaustive, detailed and intelligent planning, as well as a lot of hard, patient work. Arranging a tour for a President or Vice-President means, not only covering travel costs, but also minute care in working out a complex itinerary with due regard to programmes and hospitality arranged by scattered hostesses. Representation at United Nations' meetings that are of concern to our members means detailed study of a mass of documents and careful briefing of our representatives so that they may be fully aware of our member societies' views and activities and needs in relation to the problems to be discussed. Each of these facets of our work in ACWW and, of course, our work on major ACWW projects,

such as SAVE SIGHT, is possible only if we maintain a foundation of persistent and often humdrum work at the local and national levels among our member societies and in London at the central Office and in the Committees, Council, and Conference.

To keep our London Office going, as the centre that links us together and the instrument we use in carrying on our international work, we have to have office premises and staff — which never grow as quickly as the work grows — and a group of dedicated volunteers. There are difficulties in finding adequate personnel; costs go up with rapid inflation, there are shortages of office supplies — a thousand problems that call for organizing ability of a high order and a great deal of steady, exacting work. ACWW can continue to exist and to carry on the great work it is doing only if we can find enough woman-power to do that work and sufficient funds to make it possible.

This means that we need women here in Ontario — and everywhere else in the world where there are member societies — who are prepared to spend time and effort and thought and money in co-operating with their colleagues on all the six continents. Our office, with its devoted staff; the General Purposes Committee and Standing Committees that do so much hard work in London; our Officers and Council Representatives; our Conference Delegates; and our UN Representatives are all part of the pattern of our work as a world-wide team, which makes it possible for WI members here in Ontario to work with women in Lesotho (where the FWIC landrover carries the friendship of Canadians to scattered villages, with women, in Turkey (FWIO trained a young girl in midwifery), in Colombia, in Ceylon, and in many other countries.

But to keep in touch with our team-mates all over the world means unremitting work and regular and expanding financial contributions. Funds are needed to keep the office in London going; to pay for continually rising postal and travel bills; and to send our spokeswomen to UNESCO in Paris, FAO in Rome, UNICEF in New York, ECOSOC in Geneva, and other important UN gatherings, such as the World Population Conference recently held in Bucharest. All this is essential expense incurred in ACWW's day-to-day work, quite apart from special projects — which could not be undertaken nor carried out without the basic organization of ACWW — projects such as the current SAVE SIGHT campaign, the village training centres (many called after Canadian provinces) in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), the child care centre in Colombia, or the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship scheme. The more useful our work proves itself to be the greater grow the costs in time, energy, and money!

It is "Pennies for Friendship" (and more than pennies, for those of us that have the means to give more) that makes all this possible. Dues paid by member societies are kept to a minimum; we know that in many countries the women have little enough income to feed their children properly, let alone money to spare for a