

A LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE F.W.I.O.

Since my retirement on October 7, 1975, as Minister of Agriculture and Food for Ontario, I have received many letters from various branches of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario expressing warm appreciation for my interest in Women's Institutes during my term as Minister, wishing me well in retirement and expressing best wishes for improved health.

I have been deeply touched by the warmth and sincerity expressed. I want all members of the Women's Institutes of Ontario to know that I enjoyed working with you for the betterment of all Ontario.

Your initiative and dedication to the cause of human betterment continues to be an inspiration to everyone. Being intensely interested in such matters myself it was easy for me to identify with you in your many useful activities.

It is my hope your influence will continue to spread, that your membership will grow and above all that the high ideals of Women's Institutes may always be held aloft for all to see and follow.

Again thank you for your letters and for the opportunity I had to work with you prior to my retirement which I am enjoying as my health gradually improves.

With my very best wishes and warmest personal regards to everyone of you.

Wm. A. Stewart



Mrs. Martha Durling — 102 years old.

The East Oxford Branch catered to a dinner for Mrs. Durling and her family on her 100th birthday and sponsored a tea and open house. Since then the Branch have remembered her on Mother's Day as well as her 101st and 102nd birthday with a birthday dinner and flowers.

AS OTHERS SEE US

Editor's Note. Miss Marion Duke, Editor of the Listowel Banner attended the Guelph Area Convention in Atwood last Fall, following the Convention this editorial appeared in the paper.

KEEPING PACE WITH THE TIMES Marion Duke — Editor

Women's organizations as a whole tend to maintain a low profile, but over the years none have carried a more conservative image than the venerable Women's Institutes.

Traditionally a rural organization, to the outsider at least, the WI has appeared to be little more than an afternoon get-together for farm wives. What the women actually did at their meetings seemed something of a mystery, but whatever it was, it always appeared to be secondary to the fun and games portion of the programme.

After attending the Guelph Area WI convention in Atwood early this month, however, we can assure you that apple pie-checked apron image of the WI is downright misleading.

These women know where it's at and WI units are as vital a force in their communities today as when they were first formed over half a century ago.

Today, along with their valuable Tweedsmuir History Books, WI branches are concerned with such issues as pay for farm wives, the Bail Reform Act, patient care in hospital and the relationship between the patient and the doctor and television violence.

All of these issues were discussed and discussed intelligently — in the form of resolutions before the convention. And it was a pleasure to see that any kind of age barrier was non-existent. Young women in their twenties mixed and chatted easily with women twice and three times their age.

Besides their concern for current conditions, we learned WI branches also contribute substantial amounts of money to organizations dedicated to improving education and nutrition in the world and to assisting those with eyesight difficulties.

Quite apart from the worthwhile business conducted by the women at the convention, it was extremely pleasant to walk into a convention hall holding over 350 delegates and not find the room filled with smoke and to hear a programme uncluttered with the all-too-familiar off-color jokes.

At another women's meeting we attended earlier this fall, the only man present at the gathering, Rev. Les Grant of Listowel, repeated a phrase we'd heard somewhere this year.

"From Adam's rib to Women's Lib, baby you've come a long way."

That "baby" bit is condescending, but the message is there and organizations like the Women's Institute have got it loud and clear.

The Scugog Island Women's Institute heard an interesting presentation by guest speaker Mrs. Judy MacColl, children's librarian at the Scugog Public Library. Our Librarians have access to all parts of the country through the Central Ontario Region Library system and any books not carried by the local library can be obtained upon request within a few days.