

"Hiiii! Is the tea ready?" How many times did we hear that familiar voice coming from the partly-opened door of our office at 20 Spadina Road! But we knew it wasn't really the tea, but the fellowship of a few moments of relaxation with a few goodies for good measure, that attracted Miss McKercher. But it was always Women's Institute that occupied the conversation—plans and dreams fulfilled and those still in the making. Many of the things that we are so proud of today came about as a seemingly wild suggestion over the teacups.

And there was another phrase that sometimes entered into the discussion: "But is that good enough—really?"

I believe that in this phrase lies Miss Helen McKercher's philosophy towards Women's Institutes, and indeed, towards life in general. Only top quality is good enough for Women's Institutes. If a job is worth doing at all, it is worth doing to the very best of one's ability. The goals are high. The standards must be met. No second-rate performance is acceptable. Striving for perfection herself, she expects her co-workers to also put forth their best efforts. Miss McKercher has worked untiringly for the women of rural Ontario to bring them the advantages already available to their urban sisters, encouraging them to develop their own talents and abilities, inspiring them to set their sights high and strive to reach their objectives, and providing the services to help them to accomplish their goals.

Her cheery smile and pleasant personality permeated our office throughout my term as Provincial Secretary-treasurer. During the eight Officers' Conferences for which I was Secretary-treasurer, her advice and assistance was invaluable. Always ready with a good suggestion when we seemed to hit a snag, always willing to provide assistance if that idea was out of our reach, she played an outstanding and vital role in all of our projects and undertakings. Now, as I complete my term as Provincial Board Director, it is so apparent that the admiration and respect for her shown by members of successive Provincial Boards has grown deeper and deeper.

Her sphere of influence, however, extends far beyond these limits, and she is well-known and highly thought of provincially, nationally and beyond. Everywhere she travels the comment is the same: "Isn't she wonderful!" She has the gift of making friends wherever she goes and of inspiring people to reach for and achieve goals they never dreamed possible. The quality of life for Women's Institute members and their families everywhere has been enriched, thanks to her untiring efforts.

And so regretfully we must say "au revoir" to this kind and generous friend who has become such an important part of our lives. But she will never be forgotten by the many thousands whose paths she has crossed.

"There is nothing too good to wish you,
But this wish I hope may come true,
That all of the sunbeams you've scattered,
Reflected, may shine back on you."

Ilda Holder

The years 1961-1964 and 1965-1971 stand out as being among my most interesting and educational years. It was during this period that I had the privilege of serving on the Provincial Board of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. I remember the dedication of those serving on the Provincial Board and the loyal support of the thirty thousand members. I also remember that it was here I had the opportunity to become acquainted with Miss Helen McKercher, Director of the Home Economics Branch, Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Her wise counselling and assistance given in numerous ways was greatly appreciated.

As I write these lines, I would like to share some of my memories. One day while travelling by train to a meeting in Guelph I found that the person seated beside me was from Seaforth. Since Miss McKercher's home was, at that time, in the Seaforth area, I mentioned that perhaps she knew her. "Oh, yes," she said, "I know Helen. She is a very fine person. She has her father's wit and her mother's charm." It was an excellent description of our Miss McKercher.

How well I remember the Spring Board meeting of 1967. It was during this meeting that we received word that a large increase in numbers would be attending the reception following the National Convention, which was being held in Guelph. The reception was to honour Mrs. Dutt, President of The Associated Country Women of the World and Mrs. Matheson, President of The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. The increase in attendance meant that a change in plans was needed. Miss McKercher quietly said that if she could be excused she would see what she could do about the necessary changes. Within the hour she returned saying that everything had been arranged to handle the larger crowd. She had the ability to get things done. She was always ready and willing to assist every president.

Miss McKercher has always shown great concern for others. An example of such concern was shown as we were returning from an Area Convention in Northern Ontario. In the distance we saw a car go into the ditch. We could see that cars were passing without stopping. This was not the case with Miss McKercher. When we reached the car in trouble, she stopped, went to the car and asked the driver if she could be of assistance. This has been a part of her life . . . helping others.

I enjoyed attending the 14 Area Conventions each fall. Here, I had the opportunity to meet and talk to the members. At one such meeting a lady told me that her family always knew when she had been to a convention. She went on to say that for weeks following the convention her favourite comment was, "Miss McKercher said . . .". She continued by saying, "she gives us such good, down-to-earth, worthwhile information."

What more can one say but to add that it has indeed been a pleasure to work and travel with her and to be able to say, "I consider Miss Helen McKercher a true friend, to myself, and to the members of the Women's Institute."

Eileen Small