


PLAIN TALK




Who are we?

What is that organization known as the Women's Institute?

One of our most critical weaknesses is that while we know what we are, others don't. We are not communicating to others why we are different and what we are about. It should not be a membership secret.


We are different!



We are a membership organization with world-wide links. Yet, reading the 'News and Views' report from the recent ACWW conference in Kenya, the international organization made the same statement. "No one knows who we are or what we do."

What is our next step?


We know the pioneers of the Women's Institute attended the meetings for a three-fold purpose - to conduct the business, to learn something and to visit over a cup of tea. Those three things built the organization into what it is today.



What about tomorrow?


Membership — Why can't we get our friends and neighbours to come to the Women's Institute? No longer does the woman of the house need extras; the days are already filled with meetings and more meetings. Yet why can the present-day members find time to attend and the "they's" are too busy?

What is the big difference?




Let's hope we're not marching under the banner of the past. Women's Institutes have accomplished so much and made life easier for the women of rural Ontario, but let us pause and assess the situation today. We must push on and formulate the kind of goals we desire for our future.

It is easy enough to articulate goals and design a plan of action. However, it is the implementation that is most difficult.



Working through the levels, either from the branch to provincial or downward, the communication link can become too time consuming. Are some of our best ideas, resolutions, lost in the shuffle of time and reaching obsolescence because of a system?


Do we take enough time to emphasize the value of the Women's Institute, the potential that such an organization has for the social and economic life of the province?



Good programming is one of our most precious assets. The other day, while talking to an institute friend, she told a story about her branch which is indicative of the situation in many branches. "One of our very best members never misses a meeting as long as we produce good sound programs, but as soon as our meetings become social, this member is too busy to attend."

You get the message, don't you? If programs are relevant and topical, there will be good attendance.

The 70's have focused on population, on hunger, on ecology, on women - all of these have converged on our dependence on each other for the sake of the whole.



This focus gives Women's Institutes new goals to strive for, new horizons to scan; but remember, there is nothing more important than the development and strengthening of human resources.

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