

Into the 80's

Where are we going as a Women's Institute organization?

Unlike most business enterprises, a voluntary organization cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

It becomes difficult to assess and evaluate the achievements of the Women's Institute or any volunteer group, if dollars are the prime requisite. And yet, there is no doubt that the concern for money needed to run the volunteer organization gains a higher priority with each year of operation. We now must look at ourselves in a dual role, a volunteer group as well as a business organization. Always aware, that money is a "means" not an "end".

The Women's Institute relies heavily on the volunteer members to provide directives, especially through programing, through projects and because of resolutions, to voice an opinion to government and industry.

Also, because of our unique position, we receive strong support from the Home Economics Branch, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Under the direction of the local Home Economists, leadership skills are taught to the W I's and community leaders who in turn teach women and girls in their areas. This type of working together expands the thinking of a volunteer, providing a vehicle for learning through the wide variety of available courses.

The hand and glove situation will become more significant as we enter the next decade. It is becoming even more apparent that the volunteer must hold on with a bull-dog tenacity to keep this segment of society strong. As a volunteer organization we need the Home Economics Branch assisting the volunteers to discover more effective ways of handling new ideas, providing the participants with a positive self image, reinforcing the effectiveness of volunteerism and its worth.

WHAT IS THE IMAGE OF THE W I?

If there is a strong image, the public will attend the meetings, offering their services and providing input into the programs. If programs are not meeting the needs of the public, there will be little or no participation by the members or community.

If there is a good image in the community, W I will become effective and make the difference. Public realtions, effective programing, competent leadership will provide for the basis of a strong organization. A poor image can be attributed to indifference, domination or apathy. Making a commitment is essential, fulfilling that commitment is the answer to success.

If we are to be image builders, then what type of programs do members and the community expect to support and participate in?

As W I members we must decide where our future lies. Do we speak on behalf of the homemaker? Do we continue to speak out in support of the continuing strengthening of the family unit? Do we speak as a voice of Agriculture? Do we have a voice at all? Who are we? If we are anybody, we'd better tell somebody or nobody will know anything about the Women's Institute. Which direction will the W I members take?

Taking a look at ourselves every three years through the eyes of the Constitution Committee affords a periodical review of the aims and objectives of the organization. Where necessary, short and longer term objectives should be redefined to meet the changing needs, conditions and requirements. New priorities should be established from time to time. Because of these fast changing times the needs and reasons for existence to-day may not necessarily be adequate in to-morrow's world.

Women belong to the Women's Institute for two reasons - to accomplish something and to derive personal satisfaction.

It becomes increasingly necessary, to provide opportunities for growth and training and yet allow members the freedom to try out things, to develop new skills and to gain experience which will be useful in the future.

Our to-morrows will only remain meaningful if we have a purpose for existing to-day.

Margaret Zoeller

