



## BETWEEN THE LINES

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The ACWW Triennial Conference is history. It was an exciting experience and I appreciated that I had such an enthusiastic group of Ontario Members attending with me. Personally I feel that each of us could not help but come home inspired with a vision to see the possibilities in people of all countries not for what they are, but for what they might become. Over and above all feelings we may have from this successful Conference, I think we must be more grateful for the opportunities we have that others do not, and make a firm resolve that we can help them to help themselves in many ways.

It is true that the Members who attend from developing countries are those who have had opportunities that not all have had in their particular country. But they are sincere in their efforts. Since they have learned there is a better way of life, in which their fellow citizens can share, they want to press on with courage to work towards improving conditions.

No matter how effective ACWW's efforts are, they cannot go into a country and just say you need, or we are going to teach you to read and write. Customs are of long standing and maybe a woman's role in that country is such that education is considered totally unnecessary. Of 49% of Ethiopian women who live in rural areas, less than 1% can read or write. A survey a few years ago showed that in Columbia 41.3% of rural population over the age of 15 had never gone to school. As our World President, Dame Raigh Roe, said "Our Membership in ACWW has grown and we have so many Members with varying backgrounds that we have to try harder than ever to be understanding one of the other."

We are told that in many areas men are not the principle farmers. In Japan with a population of 112 million people, 19% of population are engaged in farming and of that 19%, 65% are women. The husbands are working somewhere else and they have full responsibility with the husband often not home for three months at a time. Through ACWW we have been able to go in to many countries and do things that have surprised governments who could not or did not attempt change in the right way. For instance, in Liberia they brought in experts to improve rice growing. They paid men three days' wages to learn improved techniques

ignoring the fact that it is the women who farm.

The Women's Institute has always realized the effectiveness of everyday home and work settings as places to learn. So they continue to help others use informal resources in their immediate surroundings. There even has been a suggestion that maybe we should have a kind of project similar to Cuso with women recruited on the basis of their skills for service in other countries. We have to remember that every stage of human progress from the first stone hatchet of the cave man to the latest model flying machine of the '80's was an idea.

It was at the Conference in Edinburgh in 1959 that the idea of a theme for Conferences was introduced. As one reviews themes of Conferences since then, they really are saying what our International organization is all about—each Member caring, reaching out and extending the hand of friendship to share knowledge and experiences. Differences challenge our ideas and encourage us to progress together.

Today too many people are looking for something for nothing. There will always be someone to give them nothing for something too. Or indeed for those people, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. But that was not the basic idea of our founders whose unselfish theme might have been said to be "Others". Who is there who has not found that if they help others to find courage anew, their own lives will be richer and happier too through self-fulfillment?

Instead of apathy and prevailing negativism, we need that positiveness of Christopher Columbus who was convinced that new worlds there were for the discoverer who did not give up in defeat. So many make material possessions the goal in their lives and think they have no time for an Institute meeting. If we continue to interpret and teach improvement in the quality of life and its relationship by caring and communicating, that public relations will brush off on them too.

Robert Browning said: "The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's, Is not to fancy that were fair in life, provided it could be; But finding first what may be, then find out how to make it fair." It is not the mountains ahead which wear you out as you strive for new goals, it is the grain of sand in your shoe or the doubts that you harbour. Only together can we master the future.

I can scarcely believe that my three years as your President are drawing to a close. Words fail me to express my sincere thanks, for you have been so kind and thoughtful to me in countless ways. The pleasure has been mine in meeting you, a Membership of which I am proud, at every level or through letters, phone and even telegrams. Your kindnesses have been surmounted only by your working together and caring, not seeking headlines, but doing wonders towards overcoming one of the greatest horrors of our world, indifference and disregard for others. That's living the aims of W. I. May you have inspiration unlimited to continue to pass on these unselfish benefits. Thank you for enriching my life with your many accomplishments and for those happy rays of sunshine extended to me. Let us go forward to future heights and I wish for your new President the same happy, rewarding experiences.

*Florence Diamond*