

Hope For The Future

Co-Operation—a willing effort on both sides!

Leadership—leaders and followers share the same goals and needs!

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of the Disabled.

ACWW, the International organization, plays an important role as an N.G.O. at the United Nations. Our local communities can be a starting place toward the fulfillment of the U N proclamation.

The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario Board Directors have agreed to co-operate, and proposed the theme, **THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE WORKING TOWARD "BARRIER-FREE COMMUNITIES" FOR DISABLED PERSONS ACROSS ONTARIO.**

All Branches have received this challenge and hopefully every Branch will appoint a Committee to assess their own communities for needed change.

The Women's Institutes have proved their worth over the last eight decades through their responsible attitudes toward community betterment. Life has been enhanced in rural Ontario communities through the unrelenting drive for higher standards for the family.

The W. I. now have a rare opportunity to prove their leadership abilities to become a strong force by encouraging the citizens to work together as a group to help those "special people" become an integral part of community life.

If we accept this project, it will help the Women's Institute come to grips with related community needs. Working together, participating in meetings and through decision making, members will be contributing their talents toward a most rewarding effort.

This is a chance for the W. I. to continue to show their concern for the needs in the community that have gone unnoticed for so long. This can prove a new motivation for the members—strong leadership demands co-operation rather than demanding obedience. The attitude the W. I. wield can make the difference. This is a mammoth size project, don't throw up your hands and say "it's too big a job", the first step is the most important!

The essential task will be to arrange—to organize—to devise methods—to contact key people—so that together, the citizens can achieve their own goals best, by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives.

In some cases the W. I. will take a hold and actually carry a project through, but in many instances a joint effort will be essential. Teamwork will become a 'must'. The role of the W. I., just might be in developing this teamwork, remembering the main objective should be people participation. Use the expertise of not only the membership but those in the community who might have some special knowledge or talents.

This project will take hard work and lots of patience and dedication, with the ability to see priorities.

Through this kind of an effort the Women's Institute members can be bridge-builders—encouraging everyone to have respect for all individuals—alerting all to the differences. The key factor will be, everyone in the community working toward the best interests of the "whole" community.

During the next few months it will become your job to increase public awareness, identifying problems or concerns. Your local newspaper Editor can be a real help, aim for a feature story.

It will be essential to develop a rapport with the handicapped themselves, opening up lines of communication, between the W. I. and the residents.

As long as people are seen as being treated unequally, the tendency to see them as unequal will continue.

Let's make a start in 1981 in extending a helping hand toward 'Barrier-Free Communities For Disabled Persons Across Ontario'.

Margaret Zoeller

