

## HOME ECONOMICS BRANCH Miss Molly McGhee, Director.

The Women's Institute came into being because Mrs. Hoodless saw the need for an organization in Ontario that would improve the life of rural women.

The original purpose of the WI was to be the mouthpiece for rural women. Overburdened farm women required assistance and they looked to the newly formed Women's Institute for help. The question now arises, in recent years, has the organization lost sight of its rural background?

When the WI's received legislative recognition under the amended Agriculture and Arts Act in 1902 it stated, quote, "The formation of WI's for the purpose of improving rural home life, and of imparting information in regard to women's work upon the farm, shall be permitted under this Act."

Today, you still receive financial support and services from the Ministry under this Act. The only reason you receive this support is that you are supposed to be the official voice of farm women in Ontario. Can you truthfully say that you do represent farm women adequately today?



**GUESTS** attending Minister's Dinner L-r, Mrs. Elmer Duffield, Officers' Conference Secretary-Treasurer; Mrs. Robt. B. Weber, Erland Lee (Museum) Home, Secretary-Treasurer; Mrs. H. L. Noblitt, FWIC President-elect; Mrs. Wm. G. Miller, Chairman, Erland Lee (Museum) Home; Mrs. Owen Hawkins, representative to Agricultural Hall of Fame Association.



**FWIO CONVENERS**, L-r, Mrs. Maurice Jenkins, Education and Cultural Activities; Mrs. K. C. Angus, Citizenship and World Affairs; Mrs. John Brown, Public Relations Officer; Mrs. Clarence Diamond, Resolutions; Mrs. Elgin Belrose, Family and Consumer Affairs; Mrs. Fred Howe, Curator.

Over the past five years, as a provincial board, what have you done for agriculture and the farm women? If you, as a board, were called upon tomorrow to put on a program province-wide to explain the producer's plight to non-rural consumers, could you do this within a month or so? I pose these questions, because you may be expected to do much more than you have done in the recent past, if you are to receive government funding.

Tradition and procedures are very important if an organization is to remain strong; but how they are perceived by outsiders affects every organization. It determines how it is seen by others. Do they consider it an alive, dynamic, growing organization?

A further question was asked, why aren't FWIO asked to represent rural Ontario on various boards or cultural exchanges? Have you forfeited your right to represent rural women in Ontario, due to inactivity in recent years?

Today, every branch of government is fighting for its very existence. Home Economics is no exception. We must justify every part of every program for which we are responsible. As an example, if you want us to put on a leadership workshop, you may have to guarantee that a certain number will attend, and that a certain number will come to the Summary Day. In short, we are going to have to offer more services to all of the rural public, with less staff and budget. This means we must be flexible, imaginative and much more innovative than we have ever been in the past, to ensure there is no waste. When money is allocated in this Ministry, farm assistance and agricultural production programs will, I am certain, take priority over everything else.

In December, Home Economics Branch will have duplicated all the forms and information from the Home Economics Branch and Women's Institute for all Branches, Districts and Areas in the Province to enable them to carry on their immediate business for 1982. Heavy duty brown envelopes have been used for this mailing to every secretary — one legal size and the other ordinary size, third class mail. A first class mailing has also gone out. **ALL SECRETARIES NOTE** — if you have not received three envelopes by the end of January, write to 801 Bay St.

Miss McGhee urges District and Area Treasurers to assume the responsibility of mailing financial statements into the Home Economics Branch on time. **DISTRICT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS** cut-off date **JULY 5**, AND **DECEMBER 1** for the **AREAS**. All statements must be in before an application can be made to treasury.

If you are to assume your rightful place as the organization which can speak with authority on behalf of rural women, what needs to be done? Miss McGhee suggests that you need to have a series of provincial programs prepared and circulated to all branches. You need the help of knowledgeable people to assist you. It is hoped you will take a serious look at enlarging the role of your Area and Provincial Conveners as well. Finally, how long can you continue to keep your fees so low, without other means of financial support? Surely the time has come to instruct the finance committee to re-examine the fee structure? Also, the 10 cent assessment fee for the Erland Lee Home, less than one cent per month, is not going to be sufficient. Perhaps the time has come when you need an all-inclusive fee to cover all the expenditures of the organization.

You have a formidable task ahead. "I hope you will make wise deliberations and decisions this week, so that FWIO will again become the voice of rural women in Ontario."