

The Director Writes...

On February 8th I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Exhibition, in Ottawa, entitled "For Home and Country 1897-1982", organized by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. The exhibition, held in the foyer of City Hall, was prepared to commemorate the 85th Anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute. It was most interesting to view the memorabilia, momentos, photographs and documents, depicting major events of all the Provinces, including FWIO, FWIC and ACWW.

The Federal Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Eugene Whelan, offered his congratulations to the organizers of the exhibition. Since FWIC represented over 50,000 women across Canada (28,000 from Ontario), the Minister felt that the organization probably contributed a great deal to national unity. He knew that in many provinces they were the spokeswomen for rural issues. He was happy to learn that in some provinces WI members were attempting to promote the role of the producer to the urban consumer. WI members must initiate dialogue with urban consumers and thus, help the farmers. I hope that FWIO will take on this very necessary task in Ontario. Urbanites need to know not only how agriculture affects them, but they also need to know about the problems facing farmers today.

It was with dismay I heard Mr. Whelan say that he would like to have more women represented on agricultural agencies and boards. From time to time he had asked women to sit on various national committees, only to be turned down. The Rural Women's Study, in which FWIO members participated, indicated that many rural women apparently prefer to engage in maintenance chores in their local communities rather than participate at the decision-making level. I think this is most unfortunate. While keeping the history of the community up-to-date, collecting money on behalf of local social and health services, providing prizes and minor scholarships for high school students, and cater-

ing to various rural groups, are all very commendable endeavours, women need to become involved much more in decision-making. After all, women often form more than half the population in the rural communities, simply because they have a longer life expectancy than men. If fundamental changes are ever to be made in the policy-making processes affecting the family and the community, women must become involved.

Mrs. Hoodless had a great respect for and commitment to family and community life. In times of high levels of inflation, high interest rates, and high unemployment, the need for commitment to family and community is as great, if not greater than it was eighty-five years ago. Today, the traditional institutions, including the WI, must become more sensitive and responsive to the needs of rural people. The time has come for WI members to stop preaching to the converted and to start reaching out to those who don't hold the same beliefs. Members must start joining forces with other groups in their communities to work for the common good. A serious, concerted effort to strengthen and enhance rural life needs to be made. FWIO should begin to prepare a good case for the improvement of the rural women's lot, for the betterment of family life, and for the preservation of a strong agricultural base in this province.

FWIO has a wonderful opportunity to rekindle the flame Mrs. Hoodless ignited in 1897. It is my sincere wish that the organization starts to revitalize all of its activities from branch level upward, in order that it begins to grow again. The theme for the 85th Anniversary celebration in August is: "From a Flicker to a Flame." I hope that WI members will accept the challenge of working even harder for Home and Country. And, also, that the work of FWIO will flourish, in order that a beacon may be lit by 1997.

Molly McPhee



At the 50th Anniversary luncheon of the **ELORA WI, WELLINGTON CENTRE DISTRICT**, a copy of the Branch history, prepared by Mrs. E. Kraft was given to all members and guests. L-r, Cutting the birthday cake is Charter Member, Miss Ida Cromar with Past Presidents, Mrs. W. Young, Mrs. L. Kells, Mrs. D. Batcock, Mrs. L. Dobberthein, Mrs. L. Stauffer, Mrs. C. Allan, Mrs. C. Rogers and Mrs. G. Piercey.