

A Message From Molly McGhee

This will be my last message to you, as the liaison person between your organization and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. In the near future, I will be assuming other duties in the ministry and handing over the old ones to those in the Rural Organizations and Services Branch.

Working with three presidents, attending provincial board and committee meetings, and area conventions has been a profitable experience for me. It has given me a worthwhile insight into the rural mosaic and made me aware of the need for strong rural organizations.

The Women's Institutes were the pioneers of the rural organizations. I hope that every branch will strive to strengthen itself. In her farewell article in the *Federated News*, Emmie Oddie, the retiring president of F.W.I.C. said: "Recruitment is basic to survival." I heartily endorse her view and hope that each and every member will make an effort to bring new people into the organization. Good program planning, with subject matter well-prepared and relevant to the needs of today's women, is essential if newcomers are to be attracted. Ways must be found to create

a more favourable image of the Women's Institutes, to ensure that the work of the dedicated women who struggled for the betterment of life will continue to be built upon and that at the 100th Anniversary in 1997, the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario be in the forefront as one of the most important rural organizations in the province.

At this time I would like to thank all of those members who extended such wonderful hospitality and many kindnesses to me as I travelled across Ontario during the past five years.

Molly McGhee

EDITORIAL

In this issue, the report on resolutions from the FWIC convention in Fredericton, N.B. shows the scope and concerns of Women's Institutes for social conditions and social change. The resolutions also show the WI policy of following through on these matters, of bringing them to the attention of governments — the authorities that can effect change.

But in many cases, for resolutions to have real impact on governments, they need the support and backing of the public. So if you want to bring about change, your message has to reach and influence not only governments but also the groups, the individuals that need convincing or converting.

One way of getting your information into the public eye where it will have a chance to work is through the news media — newspapers, periodicals, radio, television. They have the power that every day sells goods and services, images and ideas.

The power is there and it's for the using, needing only to be tapped. If news media don't know you exist, however, don't know what you are, where you are, your concerns or issues, they can't work for your organization; they can't help your aims or resolutions. They can't give you the publicity that could attract new members; they can't help you publicize your issues or fund-raising events; they can't help you effect change.

Getting the media to work for you involves a delicate combination of circumstance, technique and effort; such

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as, developing a relationship and then nourishing it — with the right information at the right time and in the proper proportions. For the average person, it first involves a switch in viewpoint — from yours, as consumer-reader-listener-viewer; to theirs, as news gatherer-news disseminator-sales agent-motivator.

Try the role change. Listen, watch or read from the media point of view. Notice what they consider news; absorb their view of a human-interest story; recognize their need for immediacy; realize their limitations of time and space; understand their necessity for accuracy, lead time and deadline. With your newly acquired insight, look again at your organization, its aims, works and activities. Newsworthy angles may suddenly spring into focus for you.

A good time to initiate a relationship with the media is when you have a major event in the offing. Contact the station or newspaper and explain how news of your particular event could interest their readers, viewers or listeners. Point out potential human-interest stories, newsworthy items.

If a reporter is sent to cover the event, assign someone to meet her/him at the door. Offer to introduce your co-ordinator or other knowledgeable person who can give a good interview. Provide a background information paper; make available copies of the agenda, reports and speeches and indicate key items.

On a different level, to get your own write-ups or event notices accepted, contact or call on the news editor, or district, rural or farm editor, depending on the medium, and offer to report your meetings and events on a regular basis. Show an example of your work; find out the deadline and commit yourself to meeting it. Let them know you are informed about happenings and people in your community, that you would be glad to act as a contact person for the area. And remember, even a turtle has to stick its neck out to get anywhere.

Women's Institutes with their grassroots membership are in a unique position to provide community leadership, to pinpoint the vital issues in their areas, to encourage dialogue and to initiate action on those issues.

Such an organization could very well start a country-wide ground swell of promotion and respect for the Canadian farmer as a working, primary producer; for the family farm as an independent business operation and a way of life that adds stability to the country and the food supply; for Canadian farm products as just about the best food buy in the world today; for Canadians to buy Canadian.

The country-wide organizational structure is already in place; the example of aggressive social involvement and public service for Women's Institute members has been set by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless; and the justification for it, by design, is in the Institute motto: *For Home and Country*.