

Officers' Conference

Timbrell praises Women's Institutes

At the 35th Annual Officers' Conference at the University of Waterloo in May, Minister of Agriculture and Food Dennis Timbrell addressed the FWIO members on the opening evening. Here are some of his remarks.

It is always a pleasure for me to speak to the officers of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. It gives me the opportunity to thank you for your hard work and devotion to farm and family life.

In these times of change and uncertainty, it is heartening to see your organization's tireless efforts to better family life.

I think it is appropriate that we meet during the month of May. This month, as you know, has been proclaimed by the premier as family unity month.

Our government has proclaimed this month to salute the meaningful contributions the family makes to the province.

But I don't have to explain the importance of the family to you. For almost a century you've dedicated hours of time and energy to the families of Ontario.

From your beginnings - when 101 women and one man formed your organization in Stoney Creek - you have advocated the importance of a strong family unit. Almost a century later that commitment remains. We see it reflected in your on-going programs to help women acquire sound homemaking and leadership skills.

The theme of this year's family unity month is - invest time in your family. That's an idea your group has upheld for more than 85 years. You've taken family unity month and made it a year-long commitment.

In these unsettling times, the need

for your stability is most important. Stability depends on the preservation of tradition and respect for family life. That is why we fully support your work to preserve our heritage in the Tweedsmuir Histories. Without your tireless efforts, the histories of Ontario's local communities would most certainly be lost.

I am told your work will be on display as part of the local celebration of Ontario's bicentennial in 1984. Your group is undertaking another large scale project for the celebrations. I look forward to seeing the large quilted wall hanging being planned.

Your dedication and efforts to the people of this province are appreciated, believe you me. Through our long association, my ministry has come to rely on you.

We rely on you as leaders and sponsors of the 4-H homemaking and agricultural clubs. And we're proud that the enrolment in those programs is the highest in Canada.

We also relied on you to support the rural seminars for vital people - R.S.V.P. - held throughout the province during the past few months. Again you came through with flying colors. I'm told we had double the turn-out expected - about 3,500 people - and nearly half of the participants were your members!

We initiated the 27 workshops to give leadership training to rural organizations like yours since we believe you provide an invaluable service. And that is why I would like to reaffirm today my ministry's on-going commitment to your work.

You are no doubt aware of the significant organizational changes that have taken place in my ministry. As you know, the Rural Organizations and Services Branch now represents the interests of the rural

communities.

We have re-organized and restructured better to meet the changing needs of the Ontario agricultural industry. We must not only keep pace, we cannot afford to fall behind.

The agriculture and food business of this province is an \$11 billion a year industry. It is vital to be as modern and up-to-date as the people we serve or we can't serve them well. I want to assure you today that our changes are geared to help and to strengthen our association. My ministry will continue to meet your needs and assist in the important task you undertake.

Later this year, we are establishing a "Wise Money Management" short course that will deal with many financial aspects of management, like cash flow and credit. But it will go on from there to include such items as life and property insurance. Yes, together, my ministry and your organization will meet the challenge of providing a better life for Ontario's rural people.

Rural life in Ontario has undergone many changes during the past few years. The rural woman's traditional responsibilities - raising children, a spouse's needs, bookkeeping, daily chores and general operation of the farm - a full order alone - are even broader. Today, the wife's role goes far beyond the farmhouse walls. Her role as an equal partner is now absolutely essential to maintaining a strong family-run business. Better farms managed by better-educated farmers means putting more emphasis on the role of the farm wife. It is up to us to be ready with answers and special educational programs like farm business management and agricultural economics.