

Editorial

Sisterhood of ACWW is important today

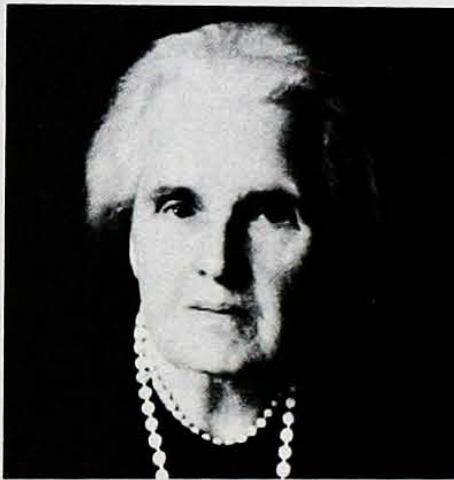
Exactly 50 years ago, in the first issue of Home and Country, Mrs. Alfred Watt, the founder of Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), wrote about the success of the organization in its first three years of existence and the important role played by all sister societies belonging to ACWW. It is interesting to reflect on her thoughts in this issue of Home and Country since a large portion of it is devoted to the 17th Triennial Conference of ACWW held in Vancouver earlier this year. Here are some of her comments.

The (upcoming) Stockholm Conference will end our first three years of trial and there we shall review our position, take stock of our assets, consider a constitution and plan our activities, including how we, as countrywomen, can help to lift the depression that hangs over the world's countryside.

I believe the reason for our success is we have found exactly the way countrywomen and homemakers in all countries can work happily together. I believe that we have evolved a new conception in international relationship.

How is this so? In my own opinion an important reason is that we have embodied in a larger way the principles which have made countrywomen's and homemakers' societies so universally commendable and important in many countries. These are entire independence of each constituent and local body; perfect equality of each society within the larger body; equality of privilege and equality of responsibility; and the realization of the essential part played by mutual understanding, help and friendliness.

I would like next to emphasize what seems to me to be almost our keynote, namely, that our policy, perhaps at first unconsciously, has been not to build up a big central organization, but to strengthen in every way open to us the development of each of our societies in its own country. I look forward to the time when the stronger will be increasingly able to help the weaker sisters in practical, as well as sympathetic friendship.



Mrs. Alfred Watt, in 1933, was elected as the first president of ACWW and was re-elected to that office until her resignation in 1947. Born in 1867 in Collingwood, Mrs. Watt was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Toronto where she obtained a Master of Arts degree. She moved to British Columbia with her husband and there was active in organizing Women's Institute groups. Later she moved to England and during World War I began to form WI's there. In recognition of her success in founding the WI in Britain, King George V conferred the Order of the British Empire upon Mrs. Watt.



Mrs. Watt's words, as well as the ACWW reports ahead in this magazine, serve as a reminder of the connection between ACWW and Women's Institute members in Ontario. I have been surprised on several occasions to discover WI members do not know they belong to the international organization ACWW. Perhaps then, some do not realize the responsibility to sister societies which Mrs. Watt explains.

It is easy to become isolated from the outside world. Often, one sees his or her own problems as the biggest, the worst, the only; and yet one only has to look around to notice the problems of others. It is hard to stay abreast of Ontario news, let alone Canadian news and then international situations, you're saying, and that is why it is so important for each and every WI member in Ontario to keep their finger on the pulse of ACWW.

In Ontario, we enjoy a comfortable standard of living and we forget about the plight of others, because we are incensed about the price of gas, or high mortgage rates, or low wage increases, or high inflation. Did you know reforestation is an international concern being pursued by ACWW? You will after you've read this magazine. I didn't and was amazed to read the cutting down of trees in some countries for fuel and housing will cause many problems unless those areas are replanted with trees.

Being informed about world problems and what ACWW plans to do about them can only make Ontario WI members stronger in their effort to support ACWW and its member societies. We all know that singularly an educated opinion is worth much more than an ignorant statement, multiplied by 26,000, it is worth even more.