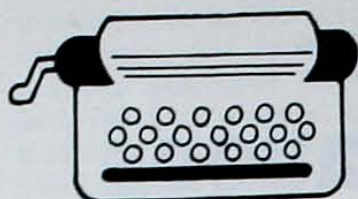


Letters to the Editor



Dear Home & Country:

I do enjoy my Home and Country, and I particularly enjoyed the spring issue with your editorial on computers. As you can see from this effort I have just recently acquired a computer and am trying to master word processing, particularly so that I can write both fiction and non-fiction on it, and edit without having to copy the whole thing over again.

This past winter I visited in Kenya, where my sister and her husband were living for a year. While I was there for the month of December I kept hearing stories of the wonderful work being done by the East African Women's League. I did not get to a meeting for that is holiday time there for schools and organizations, but just before I left, I did get in on a work session on posters which must be made up in Swahili for the schools as inoculation sessions were held each week. I felt that the East African Women's League was much like our Institutes would have been like in their earliest days and was very impressed. However, most of the women that I had met were, like my sister, very new members, and had no idea if the league was a sister organization. When I returned I began to investigate, but no one at the local or district level was able to answer my question. However, Gertrude Noble, who is our local representative to the provincial board, was able to affirm the relationship.

Is there any way in which the story of the very important work being done in Kenya could be told in our Ontario publication?

**Mrs. A. M. Audet
Palmerston**

Editor's note: I will look into this story. It sounds interesting.

Editor's Note: This letter was sent to the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on behalf of all members of Bruce South District WI and is reproduced in Home and Country so that all WI members could read the rebuttal.

Sheila Hannon's coverage of the Officers' Conference of the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario (6 May, 1983) is questioned by members of the Bruce South District, Federated Women's Institute of Ontario. Hannon devoted a third of her article to the opinions of leaders of three other associations regarding the F.W.I.O. None of these persons attended the conference. Two had impromptu telephone interviews and the third made her quote in 1981. Where is the relevancy? Not one of them has ever been a F.W.I.O. member, nor has any one of them worked with "The Institute" over a prolonged period. All have spoken to F.W.I.O. groups but otherwise have had little association with our society. One had consulted with a provincial executive officer.

Each of the three is a specialist in her own organization: Gisele Ireland, Concerned Farm Women, Bruce and Grey Co. - interested in "financial problems of the farmer"; Gerry Fortune, Federation of Agriculture, Huron County - deals with "gut issues in agriculture" and Valerie Bolton, Women Today, Huron County - fostering "women's self help and advocacy groups". If Hannon had researched she would know that the F.W.I.O. (F.W.I.C. and A.C.W.W.) has a much broader scope of interest than has any one of these more insular societies.

At home the Women's Institute has helped shape many improvements: libraries in rural centres and schools, doctors and nurses in schools, music training in schools, flashing lights on school buses, safety devices on machinery, ingredient listings on food packages and the painted centre line on paved roads.

The F.W.I.O. and F.W.I.C. have fought pornography for many years and it is only now that other groups and politicians have recognized that the degradation of women and children is corrupting our society. For some time we have been working toward other social reforms affecting women: equal pay for equal work, equal pensions, an end to sexual harassment, sexual abuse and child

abduction. The F.W.I.O. works quietly but steadily to keep these issues before the politicians thus laying the foundation for reform. Perhaps we will have to become more visible and vocal to gain more recognition and clout.

The Institute is changing, albeit slowly. This past Officers' Conference has been an impetus to accelerate change. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food under Ken Knox, Director, Rural Organizations and Services Branch and Joyce Canning, Rural Organizations Coordinator is providing direction and support. Perhaps we are still seen as tea-drinking, quilt-making homebodies, but is that not an elite image? Tea drinking is universal; quilt making is an art recognized by select galleries and patrons of the arts, and even the Hon. Judy Erola discovered that the homebody image is not one to be put down.

Our membership is becoming older as is our society. Older does not mean useless. Most great achievements in history, philosophy, science, statecraft and the arts are made by persons between 40 and 70, when one has knowledge, understanding, wisdom and discernment. It is hoped that useless members are a minority and realize their error. It is no doubt true some of us make up our minds and close them with a one way zipper, but this is not a trait unique to the old.

Many years ago a Royal Bank of Canada publication read, "We do ourselves an injury by killing part of our minds when we reject contradiction, refuse to hear the other side of the story of oppose opinions without learning facts".

Hannon has moved us to research and assess the work of the F.W.I.O. contact each of the three persons quoted in the article, and move out of our "rut" to voice our views. Thus her article has merit despite its ambiguity. Perhaps next year she'll delve into the background of the F.W.I.O., F.W.I.C. and A.C.W.W. to discover just how advantageous the associations are to persons young and old, rural and urban, Ontarian, Canadian, and foreign.

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