

Between The Lines



Dear Women's Institute members:

By the time you read this, our family will have grown by two grandchildren, and our lives enriched by their presence. As our families grow I cannot help but think how much our concerns in the W.I. will affect their future. We urge our members to support the International project of Water and Sanitation. Your donations will be presented by F.W.I.O. at the national convention in London, Ontario next June. Our interest in safe water is local as well as international. It is something we cannot do without and is perhaps the most precious resource we have.

Other concerns that will affect our children and which we are addressing are acid rain, pornography and the exploitation of young people, and the nuclear world we are living in. Each of these concerns us all, and if some of us are free from the pressures of raising our own families, then we can use our energies to work for a world community in which these threats to future generations can be lessened.

I would like to remind you that the United Nations has designated 1985 as the International Youth Year, and has established three themes — participation, development and peace.

Because I know you would search for a way in which you could be involved, I will share with you some information from the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. "Emphasis needs to be placed on increasing the quality of opportunities for young people for meaningful participation in the development of society. Participation without total involvement is meaningless — they need to be part of the formulation and implementation of projects and their evaluation. International co-operation and international peace are major concerns of young people." The report urges youth and other groups in society to combine their energies and work toward improving the quality of life in the community.

Participation means that a person is potentially able to judge and decide on matters that concern his/her life and has the opportunity to do so. Development incorporates two major aspects. The growth of the total personality of the individual and the total development at local and national levels. Peace is the essential pre-requisite for development. The potential of young people in securing peace should be recognized and encouraged.

A role we of the Federated Women's Institutes could play in the program would be to focus on the concerns and the role of young women in development, and indeed it is a role we have been playing since our inception. We should encourage youth and youth-related organizations to develop and strengthen ties with other organizations with a view to comparing and evaluating their ideas and information and to exchange useful information.

The document "Focus on Youth" prepared by the Honourable Celine Hervieux-Payette, Minister of State for Youth in the former Trudeau government, states, "Youth are looking for an identity as valuable, contributing members of society; they want adults to give them responsibility but make them accountable for their decisions." From this document I have assembled some ideas and information to share with you.

Youth in Canada face two of life's most important transitions. From school to work and from dependence to independence. Many young people are living with their parents longer in a family situation and continue in

a family situation by starting families of their own. Many times these young families face economic hardships by being in low income classes. These parents are looking for child care arrangements, flexible working hours for both parents, family income support, and early childhood education.

Canadian youth identified two needs. Better opportunities to contribute to society and their own betterment through meaningful and fulfilling work, and an identity as valuable members of society by being given responsibility and being held responsible for their decisions.

We can help by providing activities to overcome youth alienation. However we must let them be part of the planning, decision-making and evaluation process. So let's encourage their participation in community programs. Socializing is an important activity of youth. Leisure activities, voluntary service, part-time learning all contribute to the development of a personality. Youth are energetic, generally physically fit and healthy. As they mature there is a transition from being learners of an adult culture to being participants.

One area we can become involved in is self-help programs. Housing needs, budgeting, financial planning, encouraging environmental education and ecological issues are some we have experience in. Encourage participation in the social institutions of our society and in community planning.

As we look to 1985 let us be aware of the Youth Opportunity Fund. Can we be innovative and create rural-oriented employment opportunities for youth interested in the agriculture sector? Can we expand work exchanges domestically and internationally?

And, finally, secure a copy of "Focus on Youth" from the Minister of State for Youth, and study it. Promote a poster contest for Youth Year, or a photograph contest, or a dance or art festival. Remembering to encourage your youth to participate in the planning and decision making process of the project. Your expertise and their enthusiasm working together should bring excitement and challenge to 1985. Good Luck and my best wishes.

Sincerely
Charlotte Johnson