

Reflections from ROS

with Joyce Canning

(Rural Organizations and Services)

Once again, as I prepare this winter message, area conventions are in my mind. I thought I would share with you what, for me, were some of the highlights from 1984. It is good to see some different ideas being tried.

At Trent Valley Area and Grey-Bruce Area, discussion groups with feedback were held. This took approximately 1-1/2 hrs. and involved everybody. Some excellent ideas were brought forward. In Grey-Bruce the groups focussed on questions around the branch, district, area and provincial level. In Trent Valley the questions were more general in nature, e.g., What do I expect from a board meeting? Do we need conveners? What changes do we need in their role at each level?

Another exciting aspect of the Trent Valley area meeting for me was the answers given by District Presidents to the roll call "changes in W.I. programming that would better serve today's women." I would like to share parts of some of their answers with all of you.

"Women's Institute members must *REACH OUT*, invite newcomers to meetings (more than once), be flexible with meeting times, welcome little folk to your meetings."

"We must get back to *BASICS* — help our communities — find out what interests our members — gear our meetings to the needs of today's women."

"Abuse of women and children is a much talked about issue today. Could W.I. offer basic seminars on understanding ourselves and loving ourselves to enable us to reach out and love our sisters? Our society reflects the youth syndrome. Can we handle growing old? Are we afraid of death? What does divorce mean? Falling in love? Can marriage and a career be managed without total exhaustion? W.I. meetings offer the opportunity for women to broach the problems and talk about them."

"Recently we held a membership drive in our local branch. Sixteen new

faces appeared at this meeting to hear a social worker speak on stress and stress related problems. Each young lady was given a program and her name and telephone number were recorded with the telephone committee. Sell your branch and what it is doing and in turn sell F.W.I.O. so that more people will know what is going on and new members will be interested in coming in."

"Women's Institute members must be aware of the issues facing today's women of all ages. We must incorporate current issues as program topics, study issues more fully and make resolutions on these issues to bring about change for our families."

At some area conventions innovative approaches to convener's reports are being taken also. Displays are set up on a theme, oral presentations focus on ideas for future programming rather than what has been happening in the past year. Written reports are available to delegates,

sometimes at a small fee to cover cost of printing.

At one area convention a very stimulating, impromptu discussion was held on scholarships. The Women's Institutes have approximately \$50,000 invested in scholarships. Do you know what they are, how recipients are chosen and what the guidelines are?

Board Directors play varying roles at area meetings across the province. At one, the three women involved gave an excellent presentation on the structure of the W.I. using a tree and its branches as a visual aid.

It's true that area conventions are primarily business meetings but don't discount the opportunity that is available to educate the members and provide an avenue for information exchange. Keep an open mind as you plan those area conventions for 1985 and don't forget your Rural Organization Specialist is there to help. Give her/him a call.

