

Between the Lines

Dear Women's Institute members;

The committee formed to study the structure of the Women's Institutes has been meeting under the guidance of Mrs. Verna Maluske, Past-President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

It has assessed and discussed the results of the fall questionnaire. We appreciate the fact that it may have come at an inconvenient time, but such is the nature of questionnaires. Information needs to be gathered for a specific time and purpose, and often the timing interferes with the organized, and orderly day-by-day routines. I know, however, that you realized the importance of the mandate of this committee and cooperated with them. I thank you for your efforts, and especially those who took the time to make comments at the end of the questionnaire.

To those who queried the structure of the committee, I would like to say that it is made up of W.I. members from across Ontario. Names were submitted by your board directors, and from these, willing members were chosen to sit on the committee. The decision to study the structure came as a direct result of several letters I received from members very soon after my election.

Some comments were made on the question regarding fees. Our annual fee is not specifically stated in the handbook. It has remained the same for many years, and is a foregone conclusion that it remain the same. Why? Has your branch considered that it may not be sufficient to meet the demands of a modern day organization? At the provincial level we are asked to respond to and support ventures that will provide leadership and guidance and will help to better equip rural people to meet the challenges in today's world better. The day is at hand when F.W.I.O. as the voice of 25,000 rural women will need more finances at its disposal.

Can we be too structured? Is parliamentary procedure a deterrent? Through the years I have heard time and time again that women who have been trained in Womens' Institutes

make good chairmen. A chairman versed in good parliamentary procedure can keep a meeting moving along, and can dispose of business deftly and satisfactorily. It is not that we can do without good parliamentary procedure, but that we keep our business portion of a meeting to a time schedule. Some dissatisfaction as to timing of district and area meetings was expressed. Each member is also a member of a district and area. As such you have the right to an opinion at those levels. Have you discussed the timing of meetings, and considered any options. Maybe there are others out there who feel as you do.

There were some comments about resolutions. The wording came under fire. Could resolutions be as effective worded in a more modern way. Are they as effective as they should be, or is there a more direct way of presenting them? Would you like to be better informed about how to present a brief? Your Board Director has information that our National President Mrs. Noblitt gave her at our 1984 annual meeting and her points were included in the Winter 1985 issue of Home & Country.

Our purpose is to identify needs in the community and take action on those needs. Adelaide Hoodless and Erland Lee saw the need for women to become organized and that organization led to developments in safe food preparation, better home health practices, school health programs and many community activities that made rural Ontario communities better places in which to live.

What are today's needs? Are they the same as they were years ago? Is there a need for us to address among other things, the question of family violence, of child abuse, of the safe use of chemicals on our farms? Are we recognizing the need for child care in rural areas? Is financial planning different for our young families starting up as compared to our seniors living on restricted incomes? Can we supply information to anyone in need of it? You have great organizational powers. How about

organizing seminars and workshops on any one or more of these topics, so that people in your communities can be given the information they so urgently need. Or will you develop a support system for those needing moral help. Perhaps a questionnaire circulated among your members and neighbours who are not members can help you find out what your organization can be doing to meet the challenges in today's world.

One branch suggested that young people enjoy sports. Our society is fitness oriented. Have you considered speakers or demonstrations of fitness programs? We never become too old to be physically and mentally fit.

I would like to commend the convenor of Family and Consumer Affairs for Hamilton Area, Mrs. George Powell, who has organized a seminar on family violence for her area. I wish her success in her venture, and hope that it will be an incentive to others.

Nipissing District have had two successful seminars. This March the seminar was titled Women - Growing in the 80's, and was held at the Pinewood Park Motor Inn at North Bay. Topics for discussion were Money Matters, with a speaker from an investment company; Don't just stand there...do something, with Janet Horner of OMAF; Travellers Beware, with a representative from a travel agency; and Colours and Styles with a consultant from Colours, North Bay.

These are the type of activities we can reach out to the community with and which are relevant to the needs of today's women. How many more such workshops and seminars are Women's Institutes around Ontario holding? At our annual meetings this year will we be reporting many more? I hope so. Perhaps by meeting the needs of women in our communities we will encourage membership, and continue to be a vital part of Ontario rural life.

for Home and Country,
Sincerely,
Charlotte Johnson