

# Lots of potential in WI

The Women's Institute's future challenges are bright and as great as are its potentials. It is the only women's group with a membership of nine million homemakers from 60 diversified countries working in one accord — the betterment of life. Consider the influential power behind such a sisterhood, sharing, caring and seeking to understand each and the other's circumstances. What a potential lies within this membership!

Such potential challenges the Women's Institute of the future, both to continue in its wise co-founders' footsteps, yet ever-changing to meet the needs of modern society. The needs of homemakers were never greater, as technology transforms our living, and women are coming out of domestication into public life.

Then, there are Third World countries to consider, how can we help them to help themselves? We are doing a good job. Can we do better? "Good, better, best, never let it rest, till good is better and better is best." This is an expression worthy of thought.

It was Winston Churchill who said we must be careful not to return to the stone age on the wings of science. In this changing society, of the haves and have nots, the future will hold an even greater

need for the Women's Institute to continue in its listening, seeking role — providing understanding social contact, and supporting. And all while promoting the humanities and encouraging home and family ties in peaceful co-existence.

The greatest potential of the Women's Institute is its members, for they will determine its future. To some, the Women's Institute is thought of as a group of inexpensive but excellent caterers and community spirited, tea drinking fundraisers — a group of retired do-gooders. This in itself is a good image, but it is not complete, nor does it attract youth. Our Women's Institute members are faced

**Guest  
Editorial  
Ethelda Boa**



with the challenge of creating and projecting a new image, vivacious and factual, one that tells of our structure and potential, as well as our immeasurable achievements. The image will attract newlyweds, young mothers and wage-earning homemakers to increase our membership and likewise our potential.

As we continue in our changing role, we are challenged to sell our wares, so to speak. The Women's Institute is assisted by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food which provides educational courses of current interest through its rural organizations specialists with expertise. But we must promote Women's Institute, informing the public and sometimes ourselves of our structure and its possibilities. Members who have found the Women's Institute a source of help and inspiration could, and should, be enthusiastic enough to 'hoot' a little for their organization. Tell acquaintances there is no need to feel blue and sometimes lonely too, the thing to do, is to swing high with the W.I. Our magazines and editorials make excellent informative reading material. Have we placed them in libraries, hospitals and waiting rooms? Do we pass them along to our neighbours and friends? When we plan our programs, do we include a little interest especially for our non-members? Then, do we advertise the program, speaker or project well in advance so people can plan to attend? Do we extend a warm welcome personally? And with the spirit of a cheerleader add a slogan like, 'Be in the knowing, to the Women's Institute start going!'

Public relations is a vital challenge of the future. The fact is that many younger women are meeting to hear speakers and learn about today's issues, quite unaware that a membership in the Women's Institute holds the key to much broader opportuni-

ties. Women's Institute members are privileged to be able to present issues that will be heard at all levels of government. Our members should sense the challenge individually and collectively, to reach out and work hand in hand with other groups so they will have opportunities to enlighten and attract these vibrant activists.

And then there is the challenge of adjustments to the needs of the community. Timing, and providing easy ways for young mothers and homemakers to be able to attend the Women's Institute workshops and to hear speakers on worthwhile interests is important. A new attitude and atmosphere is needed where fellowship and coffee can be enjoyed briefly prior to the program session and apart from the time-consuming business. Perhaps in certain situations babysitters could be provided. Let it be known that the Women's Institute has a welcome mat out to everyone, that it is a means through which one can learn, participate and promote their opinions. Those who are free to volunteer their time could be assigned to carry out administrative duties. With just a little reorganizing, the Women's Institute would take on a new prospective.

Members of the Women's Institute and its associate societies of the world, we are the spokes in the wheel of our destiny. May God grant that we will care enough to meet our future challenges with fortitude. Let us take every opportunity to improve the quality of life for one and all — for homes and countries.

**Ethelda Boa is a member of Look-out Bay Women's Institute, Prescott District. She is currently secretary-treasurer of the district and has served as president and PRO at the district level.**

