

Advocacy Report

By Ruth Kennedy

Summer seems to be a slow time for the governments, as well as for the Women's Institute Branches. To date, no reply has been received from either level of government on the three emergency resolutions in regard to the beef industry. I have written to the new Minister of Agriculture Andy Mitchell concerning this catastrophic situation.

In May, I had an interesting visit to the Grenville District Annual where the process of creating resolutions was discussed. With new governments in place at both the provincial and federal levels, it may be a good time to get our suggestions in the form of resolutions to them.

The following nine resolutions were reworked from the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) resolutions and recommendations passed at the meeting in Hobart, Tasmania, in March 2004.

- That FWIO request the Federal Government to urge the World Health Organization to investigate the manufacture and distribution of HIV/AIDS drugs, so that they are made available at a reasonable cost to those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Note: Speaking at the International AIDS Conference in July, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General said, "Asia is in danger of following Africa into a spiral of death and despair" and the virus is "spreading at an alarming rate."

- That FWIO request the Federal Government to instruct their United Nations Representative to urge the UN (in line with Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), its governments and regional bodies to ensure without delay the phasing out of the production, use and marketing of harmful man-made

chemicals, which have the potential to build up in the body, disrupt hormonal systems or persist in the environment.

Note: Tens of thousands of chemicals are manufactured, used and released into the environment every day. Some of these chemicals are particularly persistent, meaning they remain in the environment for a long time and do not break down. As well, they bioaccumulate, meaning they build up in the body. Others cause endocrine disruption, meaning they interfere with hormone systems. Such chemicals have been found to contaminate the environment, wildlife, our own bodies, babies and breast milk. Over 300 manmade chemicals have been found in human bodies. Currently, consumers have no right to know about the chemicals present in products and no assurances can be given that toxic chemicals are not present in everyday items.

- That FWIO urge the Federal Government and the UN, through our UN Representative, to give serious consideration to the impact of war and conflict on innocent women and children, and to ensure that all other means of reconciliation are exhausted before resorting to war.

Note: The products of war are death, famine, rape, disease and illness, poverty and ruined lives. It is essential that we do everything in our power to work toward building bridges and promoting tolerance and understanding among the people of the world.

- That FWIO urge the Federal Government to put in place legislation to combat the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and, particularly, children, and penalize those engaged in this worldwide business.

Note: The use of women and girls for prostitution via trafficking networks has become a major focus of internationally organized crime and is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative criminal businesses in the world, third only to drugs and illegal weapons.

Justice Minister Cotler said that an estimated 900,000 women around the

world are captured, transported and forced into the sex trade each year. As well as prostitution, other forms of exploitation occur resulting in slavery-like conditions, illegal adoptions and the multi-million dollar trade in the depiction of child pornography. This is difficult to detect due to the mobility of those involved, as the filming, processing and marketing of child pornography takes place in different countries.

- That FWIO urge the Ontario Ministry of Education to promote peace and security by including a "culture of peace" in education, so that aggression, from bullying to armed conflicts, will be resolved through preventative diplomacy and tolerance.

Note: Tolerance and respect toward others is essential. These are skills that children must learn. It is important to convince those who raise children that these skills must be taught.

- That FWIO urge the Federal Government to encourage international agreements among governments to reduce the conditions that impede the progress of developing countries which need to receive donated equipment, supplies and humanitarian aid.

Note: Donations in the form of food, medical equipment, agricultural supplies and other materials are shipped regularly to developing countries by charitable organizations and groups working in humanitarian aid, but many are delayed, subject to fees or confiscated. Governments must be encouraged to create conditions, which will expedite delivery to the desperately needy.

- That FWIO encourage the Federal Government to demonstrate commitment to the protection and care of legal immigrant women and children, in particular the elderly and disabled, by ensuring that the rights accorded to them are equal to those of the citizens of the adopted country with regard to living and working conditions, employment and remuneration, freedom of movement and social issues.

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