

Water, or Lack of It!



By Anne Dyas

In 1995, the FWIO Board passed a resolution asking the Federal Government to neither construct a dam on James Bay, nor sell Canadian water to the United States.

As we are all aware, a dam was built on James Bay which drastically affected the lives of citizens living in the area. Shall we shortly see our water sold to the United States and other countries with an equally drastic effect on the lives of all Canadians?

Many of you will have received mail recently from the Council of Canadians. Enclosed in this mailing was a reprint of an article that appeared in the July 16, 1999, edition of *Maclean's* magazine and an accompanying letter containing "food for thought" designed to encourage the reader to sign and remit the attached petition to "Save Our Water." These items prompted me to do some independent research to verify whether the information quoted was actually correct. It is.

Do we really need to be concerned? Canada has more available fresh water than any other country in the world. I believe there is room for concern. Water is not a renewable resource. The amount of water we have today is exactly the same amount of water as at the time of this planet's creation over 4 billion years ago. There is no such thing as "new" water.

The removal of large quantities of water from Canada could have unforeseen results: the accumulation of poisonous elements in what water remains; the destruction of plant and animal life as habitats change; and, climate change. Nature abhors a vacuum; something else will fill the space left from removing the water.

Numerous companies are already bottling and selling spring water using underground aquifers at an unprecedented rate. Some springs will survive, the flow in others will slow down and some are already dried up or tainted. This could be your well; your water supply!

Large corporations have applied for government permits to sell enormous quantities of Canadian water each day to foreign countries. The Federal Government has requested a voluntary moratorium on any provincial decisions with regard to the sale of water.

Yes, there is a great need for water in some overseas countries. We read, almost daily, of drought and wish we could help. Do you think exported water would go to where it is most needed, or to the person with the heaviest purse?

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is worded so that exports, once begun, cannot be stopped. In addition, Canadian and American corporations allowed to export water would then have the legal right to buy as much lake water as they wished without restriction. Is this water really ours to sell?

Corporations can and will sue our Government for denial of access to business if they pass a law prohibiting water exports.

Do we want to interfere? If we agree that it is essential to safeguard our water supply for future generations, I believe we must do something. We could protest any threatened water exports. We could express our concerns to our municipal leaders, local newspapers, Members of Parliament and the Provincial Legislature, and ask our friends and neighbours to do likewise. We could work with other like-minded organizations to strengthen their positions. We could, at the very least, sign and return the petition of the Council of Canadians.

We could also do a very human thing, absolutely nothing, until it is too late!

Anne Dyas is the Lobbying Coordinator for the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

Meet President- Elect Dianne Orr



Dianne Orr, a member from the Guelph Area, was elected to the position of President-Elect at the FWIO Annual Meeting last November.

Dianne and her husband Wayne milk registered Holsteins on their 350 acre farm near Conn. The Orrs have two children - Cathy and Steve. Now retired from the health field, Dianne worked as a Registered Nurse for 26 years in Oakville, Fergus and Mount Forest hospitals.

During her 21-year association with the Damascus Branch, Dianne has been active at all levels of the organization - as Branch and District President; Branch Secretary/Treasurer; Branch, District and Area Resolutions Convenor; and, District Tweedsmuir Curator. She served as a Board Director for FWIO from 1995 to 1998. As President-Elect for FWIO Dianne is a member of the Provincial Board. As well, she is a member of the Health Committee.

Beyond the WI, Dianne has been actively involved in and enjoyed teaching young people through the 4-H and Scouting programs in Ontario. For Scouts Canada, she has participated as a Cub Leader, Troop Leader and Training Coordinator for Adults. The fact that the Orr family has hosted seven international exchange students for one year each, attests to the whole family's interest in the growth and development of youth. In addition to youth activities, Dianne is busy with her local church.

And if there is any time to spare, she enjoys crafts and sewing, crossword puzzles and "fighting" with her computer.

Dianne believes that the Women's Institute can address the concerns of all women, rural and urban. "We have the resources to enhance the quality of life," she says, "from teaching and learning basic life skills (i.e. cooking and sewing) to embracing the latest technology."

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