

Towards ACWW 2001

By Mary Janes

SOME REMINDERS

Registration: See the January-March, 2000, issue of *The Countrywoman* for registration forms and details about ACWW's Triennial Conference in Hamilton in 2001.

Pre-conference Workshop Fund: Check page 6 of the Winter 1999-2000 issue of *Home & Country* if you or your Branch wish to assist women from developing countries to attend the pre-conference workshops and the full conference. Make your cheque payable to FWIO, with a memo stating "pre-conference workshops."

Special Branch Mailing: Look for ACWW information in a Branch mailing from FWIO. The material is suitable for use at a display or a program for ACWW Day on April 29.

ACWW Display: Don't forget the ACWW 2001 display provided to each Area Secretary in the fall of 1999. Use it at your workshops, meetings and other WI events.

Quilt Blocks: Note that ACWW 2001 is offering two opportunities for quilters. If you missed the March 1, 2000, deadline for the quilt competition sponsored by Thunder Bay District, you may still send quilt blocks to Donna Russett, Chair of Displays & Sales, at RR 3, Stirling ON K0K 3E0. These blocks will be for sale at the Craft Sales table during the conference.

IDD Campaign Donations: Ongoing until June 2001 is the Twifu Rural Youth &

Women Concern in Ghana campaign against Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD). At the Triennial Conference in South Africa, Canada Area agreed to support a \$5000 ACWW project during the 1998-2001 triennium. Iodine deficiency is a major problem in developing countries, affecting pregnant mothers and causing miscarriages, stillbirth and mental retardation. To prevent IDD, tiny amounts of iodine must be consumed regularly. But food grown in iodine-poor soil does not provide sufficient dietary iodine. The most common tools in the fight against IDD are iodized salt and iodized oil supplements. These cost only 5 cents per person annually. Your donations may be sent to FWIO, marked "Twifu IDD Project".

Mary Janes is the Public Relations Director for the Ontario Coordinating Committee planning the ACWW 2001 Conference. She is a member of Warwick WI, Lambton North.

Focus on Canada Area

The 9 million members of ACWW, living in 71 countries, are divided into 9 geographic areas for administration purposes. In this issue the focus is on the Canada Area, whose President Elizabeth Rushton lives in Alberta.

Historical Perspective

- The Canada Area of ACWW is made up of 14 Category 1 societies, 2 Category 2 societies, 3 Category 4a) societies and approximately 750 individual and life members. The 11 provincial and national Women's Institute organizations, National Farmers' Union, Women of Uniform and Cercles des Fermières de Québec have a total membership of 82,000 (1997 ACWW statistics).
- Canada has been actively involved in ACWW since its inception in 1929. The first ACWW President, Madge Watt, who was a WI member in Ontario and British Columbia before she moved to England, suggested an international organization of rural women several years before it became reality. Watt served as President from 1933 to 1947.
- In 1932, the International Peace Garden on the Manitoba-North Dakota border was created to commemorate a century of peace. The Canadian Women's Institutes continue to be involved in its upkeep today.
- A highlight of ACWW's history in Canada is the one and only closing of the Peace Bridge (Fort Erie/Buffalo) to vehicular traffic in 1936



when a delegation of ACWW members participated in a "pilgrimage of friendship," as they walked across the bridge to unveil a bronze plaque dedicated to the rural women of the continent.

- The Canada Area was formed in 1950, one of the 7 ACWW Areas. The first Vice-President was Mrs. E. E. Morton.
- By the time of the Toronto ACWW Triennial Conference in 1953, ACWW had Consultative Status with the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Operational Status with the United Nations Organization for Education, Science & Culture UNESCO).
- At the 1983 ACWW Triennial in Vancouver, Dr. Ellen McLean of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia was elected as ACWW President for her first term.

1999 Canada Area Conferences

"Volunteers make Visions a Reality" was the theme for both ACWW conferences held in Canada in 1999.

In October, the Women's Institutes of Prince Edward Island (PEI) hosted over 150 delegates from 8 ACWW societies in Cornwall, PEI. An additional 40 delegates were stranded in a bus at the ferry dock in Newfoundland when hurricane winds prevented the ferry from crossing the Cabot Strait.

Guest speaker Elizabeth Rushton, ACWW Area President for Canada, noted that "if you focus on the needs of others, happiness will find you; if you search for happiness, it will elude you."

A motion concerning the need for thorough long-term testing of genetically modified foods (GMOs) and the need for monitoring the effects of GMOs on both human and animal health was discussed and carried. Delegates to the Western Area Conference supported the GMO motion from the Eastern Conference and chose a committee to research background material to present at the Triennial Conference in Hamilton. They also passed a resolution to encourage scientists to intensify their research on the prevention of malaria and to encourage medical professionals to learn more about the symptoms and side effects of this disease.

November found 50 ACWW members from 9 Canadian societies gathered in Saskatoon to discuss a variety of topics, including balancing work and family, building farm and city links and ACWW's place as a volunteer organization in the new millennium.