mended or new clothing for refugees and a similar amount of homemade white soap; entertained fellow members from South America; given dinners and parties for senior citi-zens and preschool children; catered on innumerable occasions for local celebrations; sent cards and flowers to sick members and Christmas cards to all older members; made dozen layettes for abandoned babies endless pairs of socks and sweater retarded children; supported two dren. All of this is and has been done in peaceful and happy, not quarrel some, activities

## From Manitoba:

I have been really riled since I read the article "Is the W.I. on the Way Out?" I am a charter member of our W.I. and because it was or ganized in 1922 I expect I can be considered one of the "old ladies However, I resent the statement tha ladies' tea parties." I suppose the members are only too glad to hand over the jobs to the younger mem bers and still continue their efforts to make their Institute really up-to-

As I see it, an Institute cannot render valuable service without an up-and-coming president and execu it is the very best way to kill any

While, at one time, we had about year and they join because they really want to. They're our very best

as treasurer a young mother of four little boys, only two of them in school. She does an excellent job and is always alert to new ideas. She also convenes the Red Cross program. Our secretary is another young mother whose family is not is a bride of 2 years. She has an this is most necessary if you want a healthy Institute

Our Institute raises the allocation for cancer research, children's aid, the blind, and gives donations to many other worthy causes our new programs are excellent and we feel they are a step in the right

And it's difficult to understand to attend a world conference

Women's Institutes could possibly think that the W.L is on its way out. From Alberta:

I, too, have been an Institute member. I was also constituency convener for 2 years for the Stony Plain-Lac Ste. Anne constituency ized during my term. In that period I learned far more about Institute work than I could possibly have learned by just being a member of my local branch. I would suggest that Mrs. Franklin would be able to put her ideas to work if she became more active in Institute programs at a higher level. In my opinion it is far easier to drop out and criticize than to stay with it and work for the things you feel are

Sometimes I have had the feeling that there was a danger of becoming so involved in catering to ban quets, bake sales, bazaars and fund raising projects that we might for get the aims and objectives of the Alberta Women's Institutes. And yet I know that W.I. members can and do learn much about a variety of subjects at their meetings.

Our W.I. members recognize that our most valuable assets are the young people in our communities and this is the reason why we entrophies and co-operation. And ou

at the provincial level. It is so much easier to destroy than it is to build

## And the last word:

Many letters commenting on my It is true that many groups carry on active programs in the present and a few, as in Manitoba, have a future ahead of them.

My point was that all Institutes nust undergo a program of modernization or simply fade from the scene. There are indications that many Institutes are beginning to feel this need for change. In other words in another 10 years the organization will either be quite extinct or prospering in a modernized

and effective direction. - Velma Franklin

Velma Franklin sees the W.I. as an organizacommunities. However, we do en-tion with fewer members, most of them older roll a few more younger women each toomen addicted to "old ladies' tea parties," poor programs (they fail to attract new and younger members, she says) and ineffectual resolutions. She claims there is conflict between members of For the past 2 years, we have had streasurer a young mother of four work together and that the W.I. has failed to develop adequate education programs. She was speaking specifically of her own district in eastern

## Manitoba says no

BUT HOW VALID is Velma Franklin's criticism of the W.I.? And is the W.I. program a as depressing as she suggests? Let's look at Manitoba, for example.

Decreased membership, yes. And the decrease is likely to continue as more families move to towns and cities. And yet, in Manitoba, the decrease has not been nearly as much as might be expected. For example, 40 years ago, in 1927 there were 126 W.I.'s with about 3,500 members; in 1956, 175 W.L's with 4.109 members. By 1966 there were 171 Institutes with some 3,300 nembers. In other words, they had lost some 800 members with almost the same number of Institute groups. Still, is this an unexpected situation with the trend to fewer farms and fore people in towns and cities?

Members may be older. This, too, is almost evitable when one realizes that everyone is living longer, women in particular. For example, our grandmothers, on the average, lived to 41; but our mothers can expect to live to be 76 ost of us can expect to hit 80 while our daughters may just make it to 125. In other words, omen have many more productive and vigorous years after their youngest child starts to school. At the same time, many young farm wives are more actively involved with the farm business, in community life and family interests (swimming dancing, music, 4-H, to mention a few). They may not have time to devote to W.I. until they are free of some of these responsibilities.

What of program? Programs in the latter 1920's covered such subjects as libraries, club rooms, child welfare, health, feeding a family, kitchen planning. In the mid-1940's, W.I.'s were agitating for health and dental clinics, looking into new and remodeled housing, particularly kitchens, and searching for safe methods of pre-serving food. But they put their major effort such war service projects as knitting h

By 1949 they'd seen the need for leaders back in rural communities and so they launched their first leadership school, with most of the program devoted to the W.I. itself, program planning, duties of members and officers, tory and structure of annual meetings. Last year, while they had retained some of the original program content (meeting management, for example) they had added programs on family on effective communication and national standard of living. ceramics. In the years between they'd been in

Now, they have a completely new program, W.I. centennial project to "make the brain child of Betty Collyer Burwell, former Canada lovelier" has caught the director of women's services for the Manitoba Canada lovelier" has caught the imagination of almost every branch. Department of Agriculture, MWI President, Mrs. My suggestion to Mrs. Franklin E. V. Fulton, Birtle, Man., and Dr. J. E. Nesbitt, is this: If you feel that you have head of Nesbitt Educational Enterprises. Betty progressive ideas to offer, work at knew, and the Manitoba W.I. board knew, that a higher level of the W.I., perhaps every organization needs to assess its program and, where necessary, give it a new sense of purpose to meet changing conditions and so they nunched a new "know yourself" kind of program.

The program raised a few eyebrows in the beginning if for no other reason recommended reading list which included such recommended reading ist which included such controversial best sellers as Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique," Simmone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex," and Phyllis McGinleys, "Six-pence in Her Shoe." It's difficult to believe that programs using these books as reference m could be "gloomy" or evolve into "old ladies' tea parties."

The program encourages members to read, think and discuss themselves as women, and their roles as individuals, wives and mothers. It was designed to encourage each woman (in other words, each W.I. member) to think about herself as an individual, to determine her goals in life, her abilities and her need to ask herself

if she has found and is using ner skills to the extent that she could be. And the thinking behind it rests on the premise that with a better understanding of herself as a woman, a W.I.
member will be better able to meet the responsibilities and challenges she encounters in family

The program does not, repeat, does not suggest that women should get out and do more outside the home because this is strictly a matter for personal decision. However, it does point out that for some women a husband, a home and a family provide a completely satisfying life. Yet, women in this category also need to use their abilities to the best advantage, to develop their abilities to do an even better job as wives and mothers. Some women, it is pointed out, need more than husband, home and family. They need other challenges which may be found in work ing in organizations and community affairs or by a job (full time or part time) outside the hon

While it is much too soon to know whether or not the program will give the W.I. the impetus it needs if it is to move forward with the times. Betty Burwell feels it is a step in the right direction. Seventy-five per cent of Manitoba members feel the same way because they're already using the new program

The program varies from year to year. In 1966, for example, programs were supplied for February, March, April, October and November meetings. Members were asked to bring a friend or oup of friends. And they can have 3-hour background and technique workshops at any point where 20 women can attend at a maximum cost of \$2 per person plus the cost of the hall.

From January to April program topics were "Know Yourself," "Women as Individuals," "The Role of Women as Wives" and "The Role of Women as Mothers." In September they moved on to the role of women in the community and how they can help to get things done. And they have a completely new program for 1967. Mem-bers themselves can, and do suggest topics.

Returning to Velma Franklin's comment on the conflict between different age groups, has hood of conflict if the groups try to find the kind of common meeting ground to be found in the new Manitoba program. And is this program not the "adult education program" that Velma Franklin finds lacking in her own area?

Will it be successful? Only time, and the amount of effort put into it by those who participate will tell.

What of her criticism of ineffectual resolutions? Quick study does tend to confirm her comments. However, are strongly worded resolutions the role of Women's Institutes? Look at their objectives: to improve the individual home in country and town; to advance the interests of the community along all the lines which lead to better living; to stimulate an interest in our

Then look at what they have done to measure volved in safety programs, in the centennial up to these objectives. You see it in their clean-up campaign to make their countryside support of community libraries, picnic areas, 4-H, lovelier, sponsored 4-H clubs, gathered com-community improvement, crafts (both new and munity histories, contributed traditional quilt de- traditional), their painstaking efforts to record munity histories, contributed controlled developed Canada's history. It is difficult to believe that the interest in a wide range of handierate.

"public-spirited family" Mrs. Franklin mentions could accomplish such things independently.

This is not to say that there aren't opportunities for improvement in the overall W.I. program. There are. But, in Manitoba, members have at least made a start. By holding on to that part of their program which is good and addithe new and stimulating, there's hope that the W.I.'s will move on to greater accomplishments for themselves and their communities.-E.F.