

They do much for many

By MARY ANN LUMLEY

The Women's Institute has been described as the country woman's college and surely no more apt description of this noted organization could be found anywhere, for since its institution seventy-five years ago, it has opened the door to many heretofore little known opportunities to women who live in rural areas.

Now, it is not only a Canadian organization but has grown to world-wide proportions, and in those far-flung countries across the seven seas, it is known as the Associated Country Women of the World bringing into being a sisterhood of every color and creed.

In Ontario alone, there are thirty thousand women who proudly wear the blue and gold WI pin, quietly boasting of their membership in a group in which all are equal.

On February 12, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute will be observed by members from Ontario, (where the first institute was brought into being at Stoney Creek,) when fourteen hundred women from the province's branches will gather in the Canadian Room of the Royal York Hotel in Toronto for a gala luncheon. Mrs. Olive L. Farquharson who lives in a small village in Essex, England, the president of ACWW, will be the guest speaker. The new president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, Mrs. Harvey Noblitt will be present to meet the guests.

We like the line "How far yon candle throws its feeble light" when we think of the beginning of the Institute, and realize just how far its rays have extended to give light to women in even the dark corners of the world. Its beginning meant a whole new way of life for women in rural areas who had been used to living within the four walls of their home, but in the constitution which was drawn up, a foundation upon which to build was well and truly laid. Through the three quarters of a century that have elapsed since that day, the Institute has shown that to live the eminently useful, happy life, there must be a constant giving and getting for the highest development of one's self and the greatest good to our neighbors.

The motto which is used by WI's reflect its purpose, for in those four words, For Home and Country, is contained a world of meaning. It was chosen at a convention held in Guelph by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, founder of the Institute and Miss Urie Watson who was dean of Macdonald Institute. That was in 1902 and the words were the brain child of Mrs. Laura Rose Stephen, who was first government lecturer and organizer of Women's Institutes.

Speaking at a later time on the motto, Mrs. Stephen imparted the members "Do not stray too far from the first phrase of our motto, For Home, and devote too much time to the second phrase, And Country. The first is the foundation on which we work and under which we have achieved remarkable results. . . . It is not what we get but what we give, and how we pray but how we live that is important. Our actions in our home, in our home community, in our Canadian community and in our world community are a vital force in the shaping of our future destiny."

Women's Institutes offer so much to so many. Closely aligned with the Department of Agriculture and Food in this province, they learn by doing in their myriad short courses and special programs. The members act as teachers in 4-H Homemaking Clubs, which are geared to teach girls from twelve to twenty-six the skills of homemaking. Presently, in Elgin County alone, a host of clubs are getting into action on the 4-H's Spring project, Dairy Fare, which teaches the use of dairy foods in the menu.

WI meetings are full of interest and their programs assume a different aspect each month, as conveners of the various subjects give papers and demonstrations on the topic for that month. There is nothing slapdash or slipshod about them, for they adhere closely to their bylaws and proper procedure is closely followed. Whether one is eighty or eighteen, the gatherings offer a common meeting ground and a chance to work for Home and Country.

They founded well

By MARY ANN LUMLEY

That a man had much to do with the founding of the Women's Institute has been, until recently, a little recognized fact. But in this, the seventy-fifth year of the WI's being, it seems only right that Erland Lee be given credit for his viewpoint and forward thinking in encouraging Adelaide Hoodless to speak to a meeting of wives of Farmer's Institute members.

Mr. Lee had heard Mrs. Hoodless speak on the need for instruction in sewing and the domestic skills at a meeting of the Experimental Union when he was a student at the Ontario Agricultural College and her talk made such an impression on him that he asked her to repeat it.

She made her point so well that "even the hard-boiled men" were convinced. Mrs. Hoodless suggested an organization for women similar to that formed for the men and thirty-five of the women present at the meeting said they would attend the inaugural gathering.

During the week that followed, Mr. and Mrs. Erland Lee were busy people. They visited many homes in the district, endeavouring to arouse the interest of the women and persuading them to attend the meeting. Their efforts bore fruit, for when Mrs. Hoodless arrived at Squire's Hall, Stoney Creek, on the evening of February 19, 1897, she found awaiting her there one hundred and one women and one man. Needless to say, that man was Mr. Lee who acted as chairman for the evening.

The address which Mrs. Hoodless gave was practical as well as inspirational. She pointed out that if the men felt the need of an organization, and it enabled them to grow better crops and produce better livestock, then an institute for the women would be equally helpful in their work.

Indeed, she declared, it was much more necessary, since women's work, homecraft and mothercraft was much more important than that of the men, since it concerned the home and care of the loved ones who lived in it.

The women attending realized the importance and responsibility of their duty as homemakers. They decided to organize, and shortly afterward, the original name, which was lengthy and tedious, was changed to the Women's Institute of Saltfleet Township and later to Stoney Creek Women's Institute when others were organized in the township.

These pioneer leaders were both sincere in their efforts and practical in their ideas. Looking over the first minute book of the mother institute, this statement is found: In order that we may carry out to better advantage the objects for which the institute was organized, we shall divide them into six divisions or classes, as follows: (1) Domestic economy; (2) Architecture, with special reference to heat, light, sanitation and ventilation; (3) Health, embracing physiology, hygiene, calisthenics and music; (4) Floriculture and horticulture; (5) Music and art; (6) Literature, education, sociology and legislation.

It is highly significant to note how closely these six divisions correspond to the standing committees of the Women's Institutes of today, because that indicates how well the pioneers built the foundation.

The founding of the Women's Institute took place in the Erland Lee home. On their walnut dining table, the constitution and bylaws of the Women's Institute were written by Mrs. Lee in her own handwriting and were sent to Toronto. This elastic constitution provided for the development of this society into an organization of world-wide proportions reflecting the ability, wisdom and vision of those responsible for its framing.

All his life (he died in 1926) Mr. Lee was consulted by officers of the Women's Institute, and many of his ideas and plans were carried out. He never made any effort to have his work acknowledged, but Mrs. Lee always felt that it should be known that without him and his untiring efforts, there never would have been the Women's Institute.

After seventy-five years, can we picture the world without it?

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