

Sask. WI is shaking up its image

By Verna Thompson

Another organization entered the Crow Rate debate when the Saskatchewan Women's Institute at its annual meeting passed an emergency resolution calling for the federal government to leave the Crow Rate unchanged.

The emergency resolution was passed by a narrow majority during the organization's 72nd annual convention held in early June at the University of Regina campus.

Another emergency resolution passed at the meeting called for the provincial government to make seat belts mandatory in school and highway transportation buses in the province.

More than 220 delegates attended the convention at which president Ivy McVicar of Prairie River, Sask., in her opening address told delegates that when Adelaide Hoodless founded the women's institute movement in 1897, she 'opened a window on the world.'

Now, McVicar said, we in Saskatchewan must open the window

wider and go through and become more active in our community and the world community 'even if that involves shaking up our image and is controversial.'

The SWI is at a crossroads, she told the delegates, as over the next few months the organization will be taking-steps to become financially independent and, for the first time, to hire an executive secretary.

Addressing the delegates on the topic of 'Agriculture and Canadian Industry,' Cheryl Van Blaricom and Barbara Cox who work for Saskatchewan Agriculture promoting and marketing *Saskatchewan's Own* products, called for more producer and consumer feedback and support for their efforts to promote Saskatchewan agriculture products.

Larry Brandt of the Saskatchewan Safety Council announced the inauguration of a family farm safety course to include parents and children, especially teenagers. Machinery safety, power lines, chemical use and first aid would be some of the topics covered.

He said the final course content should be set by January and asked the SWI to assist in promoting the courses and to select the site for the first one.

Huntley Schaller, executive director of Mental Health, Saskatchewan told the delegates that 30 years ago, Saskatchewan was in the forefront of innovative mental health treatment. This is no longer so, he said, and steps are being taken to try to recover that leadership position.

Tanya Olson of the Native Women's Association in Regina reminded the delegates that we should "treat all people as individuals whatever their color or race." Both whites and Indians have to come to terms with this, she said.

In the international relations segment of the program, Polish immigrant Andrei Kostecki challenged the SWI members to urge the Canadian government as a signator of the Helsinki Agreement to exert pressure on the Polish military government to stop the persecution of innocent Polish women.

Speaking at the annual banquet, Saskatchewan Minister of Revenue, Supply and Services, the Hon. Joan Duncan, urged more women to take part in local boards and government.

Indicative of the broad-based interests of Women's Institute members, other resolutions called for increased grain shipment from the port of Churchill and retention of item pricing in stores. The federal government was called on to retain jurisdiction over divorce legislation. The provincial government was asked to provide a nutritionist in each of Saskatchewan's 10 health regions and appoint home economists in each of the six agriculture regions.

Municipalities were urged to post no smoking signs in all public buildings and to encourage their enforcement.

In the area of education, the SWI moved to actively advocate family life programs in the schools and in-service training for teachers as well as the establishment of local school advisory committees to

study the educational objectives and programs of schools in a community.

A further resolution called for the organization to continue to assume leadership in promoting producer/consumer dialogue and awareness.

Finally, the delegates passed a motion naming Erland Lee co-founder with Adelaide Hoodless of the women's institute movement in Canada.

SWI donates over \$25,000

Saskatchewan Women's Institute branches last year made donations to a great variety of community organizations totalling at least \$25,000, Sylvia Robinson, executive secretary of the SWI, told delegates to the 72nd annual meeting.

"It must be noted that this does not include donations of time, handicrafts or food. It also excludes contributions of branches which did not specify amounts on their annual report forms."

One half of the branches reported they have a continuing involvement with youth groups, Robinson said.

"4-H was the most popular recipient of this attention, but branches also lent assistance to Camp Easter Seal, other camps, band associations, schools, music festivals, Brownies and scholarship funds.

"As well as monetary support, members served lunches, acted as leaders and donated trophies."

Other community service occupied a significant amount of time, including care of cemeteries, halls and parks, volunteer service to libraries, baby clinics and senior citizens services.

"Perhaps most important is the investment branches made in keeping their communities alive, whether through commemorative cairns or donations to needy persons in the community."

Robinson reported a membership in SWI of 1910 as of January 1, "only a five per cent decrease from last year."

"The decline in membership witnessed for many years seems, through members diligent efforts, to be tapering off," she said.