



Some of the members of Huntingdon-Chateaugay County Institutes called together to meet Elizabeth Christmas, General Organizer, Women's Institutes of England and Wales. Miss Christmas is seen in exact centre, front row, on her left, Mrs. D. F. Orr, County President; right, Mrs. W. C. Smallman, Provincial President.

## Quebec Honors British Visitor

ONE of the nicest experiences this writer has had in some time was when she accompanied Elizabeth Christmas, general organizer of the Women's Institutes of England and Wales, to Huntingdon, and to Sherbrooke, Quebec, for the meetings called in her honor.

The 16 mile drive from Sherbrooke to the home of Mrs. Florence Drummond, president of Belvedere Institute, was climaxed when Miss Christmas was made a member of Belvedere Institute and the W.I. pin presented to her.

Speaking of the work of the organization in Britain, Miss Christmas, interspersing her informal talk with humorous little true stories, brought the Women's Institutes of her own country vividly to mind in the friendly, closely packed livingroom where the Canadian W.I. members listened with sympathy and admiration.

In Sherbrooke next day several hundred members of Sherbrooke

County Women's Institutes gathered again to give her a warm welcome.

Here Miss Christmas was presented with a life membership pin in the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, by Mrs. G. F. W. Kuhring, Federated Corresponding Secretary, (in the absence of Mrs. Dow) who in turn received from Miss Christmas the gift books and handicraft exhibit described on page 40. A personal gift of silk stockings, very acceptable in view of Britain's clothes rationing, was given Miss Christmas from the Institute members.

In describing some of the important aspects of W.I. work, Miss Christmas recalled that the organization is an educational one, aimed at developing the talents of individual members. "It is not so much the influence on a group but what it does to the individual that really counts," she said, and told an amusing little story which struck a responsive chord in the hearts of her listeners. In Dorset a 75-year-old woman whose husband had been disabled had brought up eight children, earning the family living by taking in the village washing. When her family was grown she began to take an interest in Institute work and finally was badgered into accepting a part in an Institute play (part of the drama program of the British W.I.) The play was presented finally at the County Festival and won the cup. Another year this same group won the cup again and was chosen out of eight Institutes to go up to London to demonstrate Institute talent.

Said the old lady to Miss Christmas: "You know, Miss, they don't think of me now as the village washerwoman, but as the member who had the leading part in the play that went to London!"

Miss Christmas emphasized that being essentially a democratic organization, Institute members meet on an equal footing. Queen Elizabeth is not an Honorary President, but a President of Sandringham Institute and works at it. "We try to give every member the opportunity of serving the Institute—as officers, on committees, etc. In order to make our work fair we have not only a secret ballot but also we have written nominations, feeling as we do that nominations by word of mouth make it difficult to get more than one nomination. In this way we receive the real wish of the members."

"We have been developing small discussion groups consisting of not more than eight or nine women to a group. One month we might have a discussion on Housing, if, say our speaker at the next meeting is to be an architect. After the discussion the leader sums up the ideas expressed and thus intelligent preparation is made against the next meeting."

"Peace is not just an absence of war," Miss Christmas declared.

"We, as individuals must try to concern ourselves internationally." She spoke of the great international organization, the Associated Countrywomen of the World with which the Institutes are affiliated, saying, "If we try to think internationally—really do something about it, we shall be laying the foundations of peace."

Also described were the plans for rebuilding the damaged areas, some of which will naturally have to wait until the war with Japan is over. In addition a whole new plan for education is under way by which equality of opportunity according to ability will be made possible. Ten thousand teachers a year will need to be trained for the next three years. There is also a plan to raise the school leaving age to 15 and 16, and for the 16 to 18 age group compulsory schooling at least one day a week (or whatever hours can best be managed). The plan depends on teachers, buildings and the speed with which it can be put into effect.

Mrs. Roswell Thomson of Abbotsford, representing the Provincial Board, introduced Miss Christmas and Mrs. Abercrombie expressed the thanks of the members. Miss Doris Cillis presided.

At Huntingdon, Miss Christmas told the members of the Huntingdon-Chateaugay County of the deep affection and profound gratitude British Institutes feel for Canada. She spoke of the Institutes in wartime as being the "centre of sanity" represented by our homes. British W.I. members have had one of the toughest jobs of all in wartime... necessity has made us better cooks, partly because of training given through the Institutes in cooking vegetables. Also described was the basket making project taught in W.I. basketmaking centres. The baskets were made from Honey-suckle, Wisteria, dogwood, willow, etc.

"We at home in Britain are prepared to see rationing go on for some time yet... the need of Europe is infinitely greater now."

Miss Christmas felt that the Institute's greatest contribution had been in giving women confidence in order to be of service to the community—giving every W.I. member an opportunity for developing her personality.

Appreciation for the generous gifts sent from Canadian Institutes was movingly expressed and their variety enumerated as given in detail in the story on page 40 and Miss Christmas spoke too of the kindness and hospitality afforded airforce men in the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme, and the "wonderful Canadian way of welcoming war brides."

Mrs. D. F. Orr, county president, was in charge of the meeting. Also present was Mrs. W. C. Smallman, provincial president.

Miss Christmas was the guest of honor at a luncheon prior to the meeting.

## Quebec County Institutes Hold Annual Meeting

THE 21st annual convention of the Chateaugay-Huntingdon Counties Women's Institutes was held recently at Howick with Mrs. D. F. Orr, county president, presiding.

The secretary's report showed a membership of 195 distributed among seven branches.

Among other activities reported were filling ditty bags, Red Cross work, and community projects, together with hospital contributions and support of beds in same.

The afternoon session was addressed by Mr. John Clark, chief inspector Soldiers' Settlement and Veterans' Land Act, who spoke of the provisions made for returned men to settle on farms. The matter was of great interest to a gathering of rural women.

Miss Verron representing the Blue Cross Hospital Plan, explained very fully the benefits to be derived from participation in this scheme.

By Mrs. S. D. Cunningham

Resolutions covered a number of subjects including price control, which the members felt should be continued. Rationing, which must be continued to fairly distribute food. One resolution asked that allegedly immoral magazines to be prevented from appearing on newsstands and requested refusal of entry to Canada of same.

Another resolution asks all Women's Institute members to help war brides arriving in this country, doing everything in their power to make them happy in Canada. The officers' were re-elected with the exception of one convener.

Miss Evelyn Walker, newly appointed demonstrator, spoke on "A Mother's Role in Vocational Guidance." Mrs. Rosewell Thompson, of Abbotsford, represented the Provincial Board and asked for support of the projects sponsored by Women's Institutes in Quebec.

