

Members told to attract younger followers

By Agnes Bongers

The national conference of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada recently saw over 600 delegates from across the province pass resolutions on pornography and nuclear arms, as well as hear how their membership must attract younger members.

The 10th national conference, held in London, and hosted by Ontario delegates, saw just over 600 women registered for the meeting. Visitors to the four-day conference brought those in attendance to nearly 1,500 on some days.

Ontario organizers said they were pleased with how well the conference operated, taking its participants from general sessions with speakers such as the Associated Country Women of the World president, Ellen McLean, to workshop sessions on various topics, and finally onto the resolutions, where open discussion took place.

In all, eight resolutions were passed. Debate on the motions ranged from nil to almost heated when an emotional discussion broke out on a resolution dealing with nuclear arms limitation. The motion, eventually carried, asked that FWIC petition the federal government to negotiate no further treaties for the testing of nuclear arms on Canadian soil, and to take an active part in promoting nuclear arms limitation. It also asked that the federal government conduct a referendum on nuclear arms, giving citizens an opportunity to vote on banning the weapons on Canadian land.

Some of the WI members argued it was up to those elected into government to make decisions on such matters, and a referendum should not be held. Others felt Canada could not step back from a nuclear arms race.

"We belong to NATO. We have a responsibility," noted a Saskatchewan representative. "As long as we are dealing with people who are not seeking peace ... we have to make sacrifices."

But, in the end, the majority of women held a similar view to a Newfoundland delegate, who said, "we want government to know about our feelings. We want to tell them about peace. It's very important."

With only slightly less controversy was an emergency motion on de-indexing of old age security pensions. The resolution also passed, and asked that FWIC petition the government to reverse its budget decision on pensions and restore full indexing.

A few of the women commented they feel seniors are doing quite well, particularly when compared to young people, and do not require indexing of pensions. Most disagreed with this.

Other resolutions carried include one on Family Law, in which it was requested that present federal jurisdiction on divorce be retained and expanded to include monitoring the enforcement of all custody and maintenance orders; the government should greatly reduce the advertising of beer during prime time hours; FWIC urges the government not to allow parole or mandatory supervision release to sex offenders; and



The new executive of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada was elected at their recent national meeting in London, Ont. The three women in the front row (from left to right) are: Bernice Noblitt, Ontario, past president, Beatrice Reeves, Prince Edward Island, president, and Jennie McInnes, Nova Scotia, president-elect. Standing in the back row are vice-presidents: Jacquie Linde, British Columbia, Bette Ballhorn, Alberta, Kathy Sheldon, Newfoundland, Gwen Parker, Quebec, Roberta Steeves, New Brunswick, Verna Thompson, Saskatchewan, and Eileen Brake, Manitoba.

that all forms of obscene material be restricted from being imported into Canada, and that an All-Canada Standard be established on films and programs.

Despite discussion on topical issues such as these, Women's Institute still finds itself attracting mostly older women, and this problem was addressed by two speakers at the convention.

Associated Country Women of the World president, Ellen McLean, questioned of delegates where ACWW is "going to be 20 years from now if we don't carry our message to younger people."

McLean claimed the problem WI and ACWW are having in failing to attract younger members is a result of organizations having "not told the world enough about ourselves." She said the message of what WI and ACWW are offering has to be brought to younger women.

At the close of the conference, incoming president, Beatrice Reeves, of Prince Edward Island, reiterated McLeans views, noting that WI has got to work harder to attract younger members to keep its organization thriving.



Brighter than bright?

Sid Rose

The trials of doing laundry in the early days of the century were explained at the Lambton Heritage Museum near Grand Bend on Wednesday to delegates taking a break from the annual convention of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada in London. From left, Golda Hawkes and Ruby McClary, both of New Brunswick, and Jean Agnew of York County in Ontario listen as Jake Kopetski, a volunteer guide and mechanic at the museum, explains how a small gasoline engine was used to power a washing machine.