

'You are such a generous lot'

Women's institute members told to use influence

ST. MARYS — Canadian members of women's institutes were thanked Sunday for their love and donations to people in developing nations.

Ziny Westebring-Muller of the Netherlands, president of the Associated Country Women of the World, thanked Canadian women "from the bottom of my heart" during a reception and tea in her honor.

The silver-haired leader of the nine-million-member association reported on the worldwide work of associated member groups. "You have no idea how much influence and power you have, but you have to use it," she told more than 300 members of women's institutes in the London and Southwestern Ontario areas.

"We owe so much to Canada. You are such a generous lot of people."

Westebring-Muller appealed to the women for their continued support

of the world organization. She discussed some of the projects it has undertaken in developing nations, including training courses in child care, nutrition, hygiene and home economics for young women in African villages, providing sewing machines to help native women earn income and sponsoring home management courses for wives of blind farmers who are given plots of land by the women's organization.

"It's no use sending complicated combines to South Africa because the plots are too small," she said. "It's better to send small tools for the women."

Women, who comprise 70 per cent of the world's population, do the hard work in the fields in developing countries, such as those in Africa. Westebring-Muller noted that men in African countries may plough fields

with cattle but leave the rest of the work to women.

African husbands may have four or five wives who often have to earn their own income because they aren't provided with money from their husbands, she said.

In an interview, Westebring-Muller said development aid sent by governments to needy nations often "gets stuck at the government level and doesn't reach the poor."

For this reason, she said, financial and other aid provided by women's groups worldwide is channelled through member groups of Associated Country Women of the World to make certain it reaches the needy.

She said she didn't know the total dollar value of aid provided by her association's member groups, although it is in "the hundreds of thousands of dollars." At least 30 devel-

oping countries are provided with funds and help, she said.

Since arriving on the weekend for an eight-day Canadian visit, Westebring-Muller has been staying with Janet Hiepleh of RR 2, Springfield, president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

Westebring-Muller, who has been travelling on official duties since February, is to speak Thursday in Toronto during ceremonies marking the 85th anniversary of the founding of the women's institute movement.

About 1,700 women are expected to attend the event sponsored by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, which has 27,000 members as well as members of the junior women's institutes.

Hiepleh said women's institutes form the largest rural organization in the country. As non-political, non-

sectarian and non-racial organizations, women's institutes are devoted to improving community and home life.

As part of her current tour, Westebring-Muller will attend a national

convention of women's groups in Columbus, Ohio, Aug. 14 to 19. In addition to Dutch and English, she speaks French, German and Italian, as well as understanding Afrikaans, Spanish and Swedish.



Ziny Westebring-Muller, president of the Associated Country Women of the World, spoke to more than 300 members of Southwestern Ontario women's institutes in St. Marys on Saturday.