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'Lib' nothing new to Women's Institutes

By ANDY ROY

OTTAWA (CP) — The women's liberation movement isn't really new, says Mrs. John McLean, president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC).

The institutes achieved federation in 1919, but women started doing things that had to be done long before that, she said in an interview.

It all began when Adelaide Hunter Hoodless of Hamilton lost her 18-month-old son

because she didn't know she should boil raw milk.

The anguished mother, determined to do all she could to help others and bring within reach of all women the education necessary to prevent similar tragedies, began a campaign for household science classes in schools.

From that evolved the idea for a women's institute, established in Stoney Creek, Ont., in February, 1897.

The organization was committed to "improving physical, intellectual and cultural conditions in the home and raising the standard of homemaking," early minutes of their meetings record.

These were rural women and with the help of farm organizations in a predominantly rural Canada the idea spread across the country.

In 1919 delegates from the provinces met in Winnipeg and the result was the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, with the blessing of the federal agriculture department.

Since then women's institutes have reached a national membership of 70,000 and a world-wide fellowship of eight million countrywomen.

Now, with a growing number leaving the farms for urban life, the FWIC membership has levelled off at 57,000.

Mrs. McLean is a 47-year-old mother of three from Eureka, N.S., a Sunday-school teacher, church treasurer, 4-H leader and active in other organizations in Pictou County. She said the institute encourages members to take active part in everything.

"We're criticized by many as being an older women's organization," she said, with some women's liberation groups regarding the institutes as outdated.

"We emphasize the importance of the family in our society. I think the women's institute has been women's lib for a long time, but it doesn't mean we went out and burned our bras and did all these other ridiculous things that they do. We've been fighting for equal rights. . . . It's old hat to us.

"If there's a job to fill, whether it be on a school board, a municipal council or as a member of the legislature, we train our women to be ready to take on any of these positions.

"If there is a need, we fill it."

Mrs. McLean, a soft-spoken, blue-eyed blonde who was elected president at the institutes' triennial convention in Banff last June, has been a member of the organization for more than 20 years.

For the next three years she will divide her time between the family dairy farm, the

FWIC's national office here and visits to provincial organizations.

Among the recent achievements of provincial institutes that Mrs. McLean takes pride in are:

- The Alexandria Solarium and Crippled Children's Hospital in Vancouver.
- Alberta's free radium treatment under the Canadian Cancer Society.
- A New Brunswick home for the aged.
- Mobile facilities of Prince Edward Island's health program, which ensure adequate health protection in outlying areas.
- The Ontario branch's work in Ceylon, Korea and Greece in public health projects.
- Saskatchewan's homemakers' club, which work at improving the standard of living of Indian women.

Lakeside Institute

The March meeting of the Lakeside Women's Institute was held on Wednesday March 6th in the LOL Hall with a good attendance. Mrs. Jas. Kittmer, president, was in the chair and convened a busy and interesting afternoon program.

After the opening exercises the minutes were read and approved, correspondence read and discussed. The date of the short course "Choosing and Using of Fabrics" was confirmed and will be in the United Church. "The Main Dish Makes the Meal" was chosen for the next training course.

Each member is to take a gift to the next meeting to be sent to the Mental Health Centre in Woodstock to be given to the patients at Easter. The Roll Call was answered by showing an article made in Canada and tell where it was made. The motto "Act enthusiastically and you will be enthusiastic" was given by Mrs. Bob Holden. Mrs. Ross McCorquodale convener of Agriculture and Canadian Industries presented the program. Demonstration of Antique Dolls was given by Mrs. Wilkerson, of Harrington who also showed an interesting display of antique buttons. Mrs. Alex Whitaker read a paper on the "Great Outdoors" and "Now it's the age of the spraycan."

Mrs. Ross McCorquodale showed slides of our W. I. events in the past. A poem "My Recipe" was read by Mrs. Alex McCorquodale. Mrs. Jas. Zegers and Mrs. Bob Holden, leaders of the short course "More About Knits" were presented with gifts by the class.

A miscellaneous sale was held and auctioned by Mrs. Allin Stewart and assisted by Mrs. Chas. Holden. The meeting was closed with courtesy remarks by Mrs. Bryant Sutherland and singing of the Queen, after which lunch was served by Mrs. Jared Vining and her committee.