

ORIGIN, ACTIVITIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES IN ONTARIO

By George A. Putnam, Superintendent, Toronto

In addressing the World Disarmament Conference, President Harding's message to civilization was: "We are met for a service to mankind. In all simplicity, in all honesty and all honor, there may be written here the avowals of a world conscience refined by the consuming fires of war and made more sensitive by the anxious aftermath." These words will be classed among the most important historic utterances for all time to come; but let us consider for a moment what the leaders of the nations met for,—to determine upon a policy of ceasing to destroy and ceasing to kill. The task which lies before the Women's Institutes, and which has been their objective for many years,—conservation of life and service to humanity, in the home, in the community, and in the Nation—is a still more important responsibility. To cease to kill, and to determine not to destroy is but one step removed from barbarity, while the task of the Women's Institutes is the highest ideal of organized civilization.

Many lands now look to Ontario women as the leaders in co-operative effort, in attaining the high objectives which have been set for the Women's Institutes. The 19th of February next will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the organization of the first Women's Institute, Ontario's gift to Motherhood and humanity.

In the eighties, some few years after the Agricultural College and Experimental Farm had been established at Guelph, the Government were seeking a means whereby publicity could be given the excellent work undertaken at that institution; so the officials made a generous offer to the farmers whereby lecturers would be sent to them to give information on farming. The organizations formed in the various counties to co-operate in carrying on this work were known as Farmers' Institutes. Our legislators and our educators did not offer a similar service to the women, for their duties consisted only in caring for human beings. The clothing, the housing, the feeding of the boys and girls, men and women, did not directly increase the monetary returns, therefore, were not considered as a responsibility of the Government. The women were permitted to attend the meetings planned for the farmers, for they had been doing their bit and were desirous of getting information bearing upon better-making, fruit-keeping, poultry raising, small fruit growing, etc., work that women can do, and in the great majority of cases do so well. I am not sure that these side lines in charge of the women on the farm have not wiped out the mortgage in many cases. The mothers and daughters were recognized as valuable helpers from a monetary standpoint, but the work and responsibilities of women in the home have never been adequately appreciated even as an economic factor in the development of agriculture.

In some of the things considered at the Farmers' Institute meetings resulted in a group of women in Saltfleet township, Wentworth county, asking themselves why they should not form an organization for the discussion of their own particular responsibilities and their own work. When the suggestion was made at a Farmers' Institute meeting held on February 19th, 1897, to which the women had been specially invited, there was no hesitation in organizing a Women's Institute, and the men were most anxious to assist in whatever way they could. The objects of Women's Institutes as set forth at that time were: "The dissemination of knowledge relating to domestic economy, including household architecture, with special attention to home sanitation; a better understanding of the economic and hygienic value of foods, clothing and fuels; a more scientific care and training of children with a view to raising the general standard of health and moral of our people." This was added to in later years, as follows:—"or the carrying on of any line of work, which has for its objects the uplifting of the home, or the betterment of conditions surrounding community life." The motto of Ontario Women's Institutes is "For Home and Country."

We cannot overestimate the importance of the fact that from the beginning the Women's Institute followed a most effective method,—the utilization of local talent and resources at nearly all of their meetings, and secured specialists through the Department of Agriculture and from other sources for occasional meetings. The system of giving assistance to those who made an honest effort to help themselves was a wise provision on the part of the Government in offering assistance to the Women's Institutes.

The Institute was purely a home-makers' organization, but it was not long before the women of vision and earnestness saw that they had a community responsibility and opportunity as well as that relating to their own homes. There was another branch of housekeeping, community housekeeping, which needed their attention. The readiness with which the practical, efficient, experienced women of Ontario deal with problems of common interest, with unnecessary frills eliminated, is an example of efficiency which I do not see duplicated; and my own eyes are opened upon eighteen years'

experience in co-operating with men's and women's organizations, is that women have the greater capability for organizing the resources of a community, planning work, and effectively carrying out the plans made.

We have in Ontario an organization embracing at the present time nine hundred and thirty branches, with about twenty-nine thousand members, which is recognized by those in close touch with their activities as a most forceful factor in the development of the individual, in making for home efficiency, introducing co-operative methods, establishing high standards for community activities, and providing facilities for education, amusement and social intercourse.

In addition to the public and high schools and colleges for equipping the rising generation for the responsibilities of later life, we also have our schools for adults,—the Women's Institutes, a very broad, a very elastic and a very effective institution, which is something more than a teacher of facts to girls and women. It is an organization through which tested methods are given the best of practical application under varying conditions by those who have everyday responsibility in the home and in the community. It is something more than an academic and technical school. It is a propagandist, an administrator, and a safeguard of soundness in community activities.

Let us ask and answer a few questions regarding this school from grown-ups:

1. What is the governing body?
2. Who are the teachers?
3. Who are the pupils?
4. What is the curriculum?
5. What are the text books?
6. What are the methods of teaching?

(1) The governing body in the Institute consists of the officers chosen by the members, who should be representative of all homes in the community. Each branch is in absolute control of its own activities, and the branches in a district, sometimes a whole county, sometimes part of a county, join forces for their mutual benefit, and to extend the work to new localities. Consolidation of the branches of a district, also, facilitates their co-operation with the various departments of government service.

(2) Who are the teachers? The teachers consist of not only the members and other local talent, but also persons from outside who have had special training along lines of value to the Institute membership.

The discovery, utilization and development of local talent is one of the strongest features of the work. In addition, the Department of Agriculture, through the "Institutes Branch" furnishes lecturers and demonstrators on most liberal terms to instruct and direct in Domestic Science, in all its branches, Health, Agriculture for Women, etc.

(3) Who are the pupils of this wonderful school? The first to be attracted are the women of responsibility in the home, and it is usually the efficient who are most anxious to gain additional knowledge. Then, we have the young women who are beginning to feel a sense of responsibility which will come to them in later years. Young girls, over fourteen, find that there is much that they can get and give in the Institute. One most pleasing feature and an evidence of the practicality of the program, is that the pupils never graduate. The longer one is identified with Women's Institute work, the wider the vision and the keener the interest, the greater the desire for knowledge and the opportunity for service.

(4) What is the course of study? While in the early days of the organization, food problems, clothing and the general welfare of the family in the home practically covered the field of activity, it was not long until the members recognized the fact that there was community housekeeping as well as the housekeeping and mothering in the individual home. So the program of activity soon included a survey of local resources, needs and possibilities, embracing the schools, libraries, civic improvement, public health, social and recreational opportunities, local relief work, etc. No two branches necessarily follow the same program; so the activities can be made very attractive and helpful, for there is elasticity sufficient to meet the needs, desires and ideals of any body of women. General suggestions are given to all Institutes as to how to proceed in program planning, and information as to what has been accomplished in the most successful Institutes are matter for general knowledge.

(5) What are the text books? The most important text books utilized by all the Institutes is that unwritten book of practical experience. Knowledge gained through practical experience by successful homemakers is much prized by the members. The Institutes, in their sameness, make practical application of information and suggestions, whether in print, or by word of mouth, to the resources, capabilities and possibilities of the individual family and community. The printed text books consist of standard works of recognized worth along a variety of lines, including health, foods, methods of government,—municipal, provincial, and Dominion; the lighter forms of agriculture, parliamentary procedure, and a great variety of topics of interest to women and girls. Not only as housekeepers and homemakers, but as citizens of a democratic country. Reports and bulletins from the various departments of the government, both provincial and Dominion, of interest to women and girls, are furnished the Institutes.

There is no restriction so far as the Department of Agriculture is concerned as to subjects to be considered. The material and practical do not occupy the whole time of the members, for we find them devoting considerable attention to travel, literature, debates, social activities, including entertainment of an instructive, and recreative character; and games are not overlooked.

(6) The methods of teaching are varied. In the early days it was very difficult in many branches to get the members to prepare papers or addresses or to give demonstrations; so exchange of recipes, reading of selections from books, reports, bulletins, etc., with occasional papers by the members and other local talent, and assistance from outside by way of addresses from speakers furnished by the government characterized the work of the Institutes. It was not long, however, until nearly every Institute discovered that it had local talent, both within and without the Institute, with the result that addresses and papers presented at the regular monthly meetings were soon of a high character. The Institutes are now asking for lecturers and demonstrators who have had special training along definite lines; and the demand is increasing, not for single lectures, but for courses of instruction. During the past year we have given in Ontario courses of two weeks in "Home Nursing and First Aid," "Domestic Science," and "Sewing," to 5,844 girls and women at one hundred and fifty-five centres. Many Institutes have libraries of their own, consisting of a number of standard works, and of course, copies of bulletins and leaflets furnished by the provincial and Dominion governments. Travelling libraries are also utilized to a considerable extent and the women of the Institutes are co-operating with the local library boards in providing books of special interest and value to girls and women.

So much for the Institute as a school of real worth to the girls and women of responsibility. The number of girls who must look to the Institute for educational opportunities after they leave the public school will remain greatly in excess of those from the rural districts who can attend high school and colleges. It becomes the responsibility of the whole people to see that the service is efficient and adequate.

The Institute an Advisor and Administrator.

While the Institute is an important factor as an educator and developer of talent, it has also come to be something more, an advisor and administrator in a variety of undertakings. True, these advisors and administrators have no legal standing and are

EFFICIENT FARMING

Hints on Ordering Plants and Seeds. Many persons leave the ordering of plants and seeds until very shortly before they are needed in the spring, with the result that there are frequent disappointments, as either the variety desired is sold out or there is not time to test the germinating power of the seed received, before planting time, and if, after it is sown, few plants come up there may not be time to re-sow and obtain a good crop. The early planting of most varieties is important if the best results are to be obtained. It is wise, therefore, to plan one's garden several months ahead and to order early. Catalogues from the most reliable seed and nursery firms, which are usually available in January, should be obtained in good time and the order sent off without delay.

The best is none too good for one's home garden, hence, when planning what to be ordered, lists of best fruits, flowers, and vegetables should be consulted. This information can be obtained through the Experimental Farms.

There is a great difference in the strains of the same varieties of vegetables and flowers, and usually seed of the best strains is more expensive than where careful selection has not been made, but the small difference between the cost will be compensated many times over by the superiority of the crop. This higher priced seed does not refer to novelties, which may be only old varieties under new names or new sorts which are not as good as the older ones. The testing of novelties should be left largely to the Experimental Stations. Some of the vegetables where good strains count most are tomatoes, cauliflower, and onions, but there is a great difference in the strains or selections of other kinds as well. This applies to flower seeds also, and it is very annoying when one has ordered seed of phlox, verbenas, aster, or some other annual of a certain color, to have a mixed lot when the plants come into bloom. It is desirable to mark "no substitution" on the order one sends as sometimes seedsmen will substitute other sorts for those ordered, which the buyer does not want. This substitution is not so important in the case of vegetables and flower seeds unless one is growing these on a large scale, as it only affects one year's operations, but when one is dealing with fruit trees which may remain alive through the greater part of one's life, it is very important not to have inferior sorts substituted for good ones.

Rotations and Their Value. It is better to receive trees and plants a little too early than late, as provision can usually be made for putting them in a cellar for a few days if necessary before the ground is ready for them. When ordering, it is a good plan to ask for delivery of trees at the earliest date that one is likely to be able to plant as it is very unsatisfactory to receive trees, shrubs, or herbaceous perennials when spring is far advanced. This applies particularly to roses, many of which fail to grow when received late in the

provided for, the widow is to make provision for another.

V. 10. Gathering of sticks. Fuel is a scarce article in Palestine. When a tree is chopped down even the roots are dug up and used for fuel. Grass was generally used for this purpose. (See Matt. 6: 30.)

V. 12. The widow's was a pitiful case. She had enough in the house for only one more meal. She was gathering fuel to cook that last meal for herself and her son, then starvation set in. She meant that she had nothing ready to eat. The meal had not been baked into a cake. Bread in the east is baked in the shape and size of our cakes.

V. 13. Fear not; since the whole matter was at God's command. Make me, etc., a severe test both of her generosity and her faith.

V. 14. Just as Elijah was supernaturally provided for by the ravens, so now he was supernaturally supplied out of the widow's meagre store.

V. 15. The barrel of meal wasted not. The writer does not satisfy our curiosity as to how this was done. He considered it a miracle and beyond our understanding. He emphasizes, too, that "the barrel" would have been empty by nightfall if the meal had been used only for the woman and her son.

Application. There have been some pretty dark periods in the world's history, but there has never been a time when God did not have some brave standard-bearers. Elijah, in the days of Ahab; John the Baptist when Judaism was dying; Martin Luther when the thick clouds of superstition had overspread all Christendom; John Wesley in the most parched period of the religious history of England, and brave John Knox in the hour of Scotland's need. All great prophets have appeared when they were most urgently needed. Messengers of God will find good ground in unexpected places. So Elijah found in the case of the widow of Zarephath; so Jesus found in the case of the woman of Samaria; so Peter found in the case of Cornelius and a similar surprise awaited Philip when he approached the Ethiopian eunuch. God never sends laborers where there is no harvest to gather and we may be sure that even, "The Isles wait for His law."

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SURRENDER AND VICTORY

Soon after war was declared against Germany, the neighbors went to the county town to bid good-bye to the first contingent of boys that flocked to the colors. There were perhaps a hundred recruits, all from the county and all for the most part strangers to one another.

A large crowd of friends had gathered to see them off. In the bandstand in the little park by the courthouse were some of the officials of the village and the county and a lieutenant from the camp to which the boys were going. The minister talked for a few minutes; then the county judge spoke briefly. Many handkerchiefs came slowly to tear-dimmed eyes as he referred to the high ideals we are so proud to hold and what it sometimes costs us to be true to them.

Then the lieutenant told the boys what they might look forward to in camp. "You will find comfortable quarters," he said, "good, nourishing food and plenty of it, pleasant companionship, the best of opportunity for development and advancement, hard work at a strict discipline. Everything in the army is done under orders, and orders are always obeyed. We are going across to win the war. But the first and most important thing that you will learn is unquestioning obedience."

The meeting broke up with many songs and cheers. The troop train pulled out, and the boys had gone off to camp with victory in their hearts.

A few of them came back from France, and they brought victory with them—victory over Germany. But there was another victory that they brought—a victory they had gained at camp, not through fighting, but through surrendering! The words of the lieutenant were true. We usually think of victory as meaning the surrender of the defeated army, but victory always comes to that army which has first surrendered itself through obedience to its commander.

And if our captain is the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, it is the same. The life that wins is not the life that persistently pushes itself forward, but the life that forgets itself in complete surrender to the will of God.

HOOPS

To the average farmer who raises only a few hogs a strong light comes or two comes, in mighty bundles, to the breeder who raises pure-bred hogs to sell for breeding purposes they are an absolute necessity. He is called upon to send hogs all over the country by express, and express companies are not much interested in hogs unless they are securely crated. We learned long ago that we must build them strong. We also learned that considerable in the way of express charges could be saved if we built them light. To build them strong enough to be safe and with no excess weight, that has been the problem. We have used many kinds of material. White pine, basswood, spruce and elm have been the most satisfactory. White pine is rather expensive at present, elm is inclined to warp badly. We are using at present basswood and spruce almost exclusively. They are soft but strong and tough, do not split easily or splinter, and they are light.

Village Boys as

In the North of England the oldest of English customs are still faithfully observed of the quietest in that boys who call themselves "village boys." At Christmas time a little play that is called "The Boy in the Wood" is acted. There are three chief characters, the boy, the girl, and the man. The boy is a village boy, the girl is a village girl, and the man is a village man. The play is acted in a village hall, and the boys and girls are dressed in their own clothes. The play is a very interesting one, and it is well worth seeing.

Winter Flowering Bulbs.

Given a good basement and abundant window space in the living or spare rooms of an ordinary home, where the indoor temperature is not permitted to register more than six degrees of frost at any time, and it is possible to have bulb bloom from December until springtime. So says the superintendent of the Dominion Experimental Station at Vancouver, B.C., in a bulletin on "Bulb and Bulb Bloom" recently issued at Ottawa, has exhaustively gone into his subject. It is well to count on Roman hyacinths and Paper White narcissus and Freesia, he says, to supply indoor bloom up to the end of January. After February 1, the Dutch hyacinths, and early varieties of narcissus should be relied upon. All that is needed are some bulbs of a good variety, firm and of good size, flower pots, pans or boxes, some fine garden loam, sand, well decayed manure, and a little industry and intelligence. Lists of desirable varieties of hyacinths, tulips, narcissus, lilies, and other bulbous plants for indoor and outdoor culture are given in the bulletin along with instructions as to the methods that should be pursued. In districts of intense cold outdoor plantings should be done in September and be well protected. The bulletin also contains particulars as to fertilizing, harvesting, curing and storing over winter, besides giving information on the way bulbs may be propagated.

If the underground water pipes between the house and other buildings froze up last winter insure against a repetition of the trouble by protecting same with straw, earth or manure at once.

Young fruit trees should be protected against girdling by mice and rabbits. A strip of building paper 18 inches wide wrapped about the trunk will serve the purpose, but galvanized wire cylinders are the best.

Soap has been in existence for many years. It is twice as good as the soap of today.

A Hat Store

In his eagerness to see the voyage between the island of Hawaii, Mr. X. who tells about his adventures, learned too far over his hat.

After arriving at the island to take him to a hat store, Mr. X. asked, "What do you mean by a hat store?"

"What do you mean by a hat store?" Mr. X. asked. "I mean a store where you can buy a hat."

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