

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 but-ter-making, bee-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.

Interest in some of the things considered at the Farmers' Institute meetings resulted in a group of women in Saltfleet township, Westworth 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 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 homekeeping, community homekeeping, which needed their attention. The readiness with which the practical, efficient, experienced women of Ontario dealt with problems of common interest, with unnecessary frills eliminated, is an example of efficiency which I have not seen duplicated; and my observation, based 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 recommended methods are given the test of practical application under varying conditions by those who have every-day responsibility in the home and in the community. It is something more than an academic and a technical school. It is a propagandist, an administrator, and a safeguard of sanity 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 practicability of the programs, 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 homekeeping 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 general 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, pestiferous 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 talks, literature, debates, social activities, including entertainment of an instructive, and recreational 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. Traveling 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

not clothed with official authority. Nevertheless, the advice and co-operation of women chosen by the members of an organization representing all classes and interests in the community is being sought more and more in all community undertakings.

Many lines of interest to the whole people are receiving valuable support both in management and contribution from the Women's Institutes. Among these we may mention the securing of travelling libraries for many rural centres, including libraries which were not being utilized, co-operating with local library boards in securing books and periodicals of special value to women, girls and boys of the community; establishing restrooms, civic gardens, athletic fields, skating rinks, etc.

The tactful way in which the leaders in the Institute have discouraged excesses in social life, without being envious, is a compliment to the good judgment of the leaders in community organization.

In the Women's Institutes, we have an organization for the education of the grown-ups and a medium through which many lines of government service can be carried on most effectively. This organization does not ask Government support in securing buildings, equipment or providing local teachers. Full equipment and local assistance are supplied free. Whatever department of the Government or approved organization or institution may wish to co-operate with the people of the rural districts, the women of the Institute are ready to place their machinery at the disposal of the same. Departments of Health, Education and Agriculture are particularly desirous of this co-operation, and much of what they have to offer to the rural districts can be made effective only by co-operation with an organization, and not with the individual.

This women's organization can be made of as much importance and value to the grown-ups as the public schools and colleges are to the youth of the land. The amount spent annually by the Government in grants, literature, lecturers, demonstrators, administration, etc., is less than \$1.00 per member, per year, while the Institutes themselves devote six to seven times the amount of money to the work.

The biggest asset of the Institutes, in so far as national strength and development is concerned, is the spirit of service which it has engendered. Here we have an organization which values very much the assistance received from the Government and is utilizing available funds most effectively. The future success of the work depends chiefly upon an enlarged and more efficient Government service along a variety of lines, and the accepting of greater responsibility on the part of the women of the Institute, in so far as the extension of the work to new centres and stimulating interest in the activities of the Institute in all communities, is concerned.

There is no good reason why the Women's Institute should not be the educator, the administrator, the advisor, and the safeguard of the best interests of the whole people in every community.



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 is 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 much are tomatoes, cauliflowers, 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'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 and death. Not a cake. She meant 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. 16. 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."

The Sunday School Lesson

JANUARY 8TH

Elijah the Tishbite, 1 Kings, 17: 1-16. Golden Text—Matt. 6: 33 (Rev. Ver.).

Time—The reign of Ahab, B.C. 853-875.

Place—The brook Cherith and Zarephath.

Connecting Links—Jeroboam was the first king of Northern Israel. From Jeroboam to Ahab we are struck with the frequent change of dynasty. "Judah seems to have settled on the house of David as its lawful rulers but the principle of legitimacy scarcely obtained in Ephraim." (H. P. Smith). Omri, the father of Ahab, established a new dynasty, and under Omri and Ahab the Kingdom of Israel enjoyed great prosperity. Their names are mentioned in the Assyrian annals, thus showing their fame and power. It was during the reign of Ahab that Elijah prophesied.

I. Elijah and Ahab, 1. "Elijah; whose name meant 'Jehovah is my God' was the first great prophet. Tishbite; a citizen of Tishbe, village in Gilead. Gilead; a region east of the Jordan and opposite the hill country of Ephraim, a district which contributed little to the religious life of Israel. Ahab; king of northern Israel who brought a number of trouble upon himself and Israel by marrying Jezebel, a Phoenician princess. See ch. 16: 29-33. As the Lord liveth; an oath meaning 'in very truth.' Before whom I stand. 'To stand before God' was a conventional expression used by the priests to denote their service to God. Although no priest, Elijah felt that he was serving God. These shall not be dew nor rain; because Ahab, at the instigation of Jezebel, was displacing the worship of Jehovah with that of Baal of Tyre. Jezebel's god. See ch. 16: 31, 32. Palestine is far more dependent upon the rainfall than we are, and when it failed it was always regarded as a punishment from God. In Palestine in some degree compensates for the lack of rain; but even this was to be withheld. God intended in this way to bring Ahab and the people to their senses.

II. Elijah and the Ravens, 2-7. V. 3. Get thee hence; probably from Samaria; the seat of Ahab's government. Hide thyself; because of Ahab's displeasure. The king would have killed thee; because of the lack of rain. The sinner tends always to regard the

one who announces punishment as in some way the one who also sends it. The brook Cherith; one of the many valleys that run into the Jordan. Most of the brooks of Palestine are merely valleys in which the streams run only during the rainy season. This lonely valley, in Elijah's native region, would be a splendid hiding place from the king. Before Jordan; that is on the east side of the Jordan near Jericho has been traditionally regarded as the brook Cherith, but being on the west side of Jordan it could scarcely be the true Cherith.

V. 4. Drink of the brook. Owing to the lack of rainfall, there was no water in the fountains or cisterns. The people of Jerusalem are almost entirely dependent upon the rain-water caught in the cisterns. Ravens. Some commentators think that this word should be translated "Arabs," but this is not at all likely. The brook was to yield drink and the ravens food. The whole point of the narrative is that God's servant would be supernaturally provided with meat and drink.

V. 5. Hid according unto the word of the Lord. Elijah could be careless of all consequences since he obeyed God. Dwelt by the brook Cherith; Ahab and alone with his God. Before whom I stand; that is, before God. Before whom I stand; that is, before God. Before whom I stand; that is, before God.

V. 6. The ravens brought, etc., in their beaks. The writer thought that these winged creatures to look after his prophet.

V. 7. The brook dried up. As pointed out in v. 3, all the brooks of Palestine dry up after the rainfall.

As the straw packs down on the poultry house floor it will not be suitable for scratching litter. Then occasionally add a few forkfuls of fresh straw and fork over the old litter. It will loosen it up and form a better means of hiding the scratch grain.

If the droppings boards are cleaned often the work is much easier. This prevents the hard freezing of the accumulations and makes a healthier house for the hens. Droppings boards may become quite dusty if not cleaned and dust is a carrier of roup and other diseases.

When you isolate a hen because she is not well, it pays to give her the best of care or apply the hatcher. Sometimes there is the tendency to neglect a bird that is placed in the hospital for observation but such a bird will only be a source of infection to others and never will improve if neglected.

It pays to attend the poultry shows even if you only raise poultry for eggs. It is a stimulation to see the fine healthy birds that appear in such shows and visit with their owners. Most of us raise poultry for meat and eggs but the men who show their birds are undoubtedly the best workers for the business and now that show types and egg types are coming closer together I believe that more farmer poultrymen are going to make a try at the prizes.

About the only seed that promises to be abundant next spring is corn.

The wise farmer will not delay in looking over his supply of seed grain.

The ice-house should be put in shape to receive the winter's harvest. A little work in this connection now may save much trouble later on.

As the live stock, including the milk cows, should be turned out in the sheltered barnyard for a few hours each sunny day.

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