

# The Woman County Agent

*She Brings Science and Household Economics to the Farm Women*

"This is dreadful, and I declare we are not going to live on the farm another year," petulantly complained Mrs. Smith. "Here I've fussed and petted and fed those hens on the best of everything, and they smugly walk about and never think of laying an egg from one week's end to another. Today I have had the third failure with my bread since using the new war flour. And to make matters worse I opened two jars of spoiled corn before I came to a good one. No, John, I have come to the place where the straw has broken the camel's back and mark my words this is our last year on the farm."

"Oh, tut! Molly. You're tired and will be alright in the morning. You know as well as I that the farm is the best place for us and those four sturdy young ones of ours." And John was resuming the reading of his paper, when "Isn't that a car coming up the lane, Molly?"

Sure enough, a little runabout was stopped, panting, at the side of the house. Out stepped the district agricultural representative and with him a plainly dressed wholesome looking young woman. "Good afternoon folks," he said, "let me introduce Miss Thompson, Mrs. Smith and Mr. Smith. Miss Thompson is our newly appointed woman district representative. The government and this district are uniting in paying for Miss Thompson's service as a general all-round moral support and advisor for the farm women in this district. She is here to promote and advance and better the pursuits of farm women just as I try to do for the men. Now, Mrs. Smith, if there is anything that's not going right, from the chimney that won't draw to the problem of feeding a family on nothing at all, Miss Thompson will be glad to help you. That is what she is for. Say, John, had we better have a look at those seed oats?" With that the men departed, leaving the new district agent and Mrs. Smith to develop acquaintance.

"The district representative is introducing me to the people in the district before I begin on my regular work. I am going to try to help farm women in their troubles and difficulties all that I possibly can," pleasantly said Miss Thompson. She was such a wholesome "real" woman that tired, disappointed, little Mrs. Smith unburdened her heavy soul. And the new woman district representative's work had begun.

"Why Mrs. Smith your troubles are not so serious after all. You give your hens too much grain feed, which is very fattening, and you don't make them work for it. Don't give any more than a handful to each hen and scatter it in a light sprinkling of straw. Your hens are living a life of ease and luxury and have degenerated into parasites, never dreaming that they should lay eggs to justify their existence."

"You are not used to the new war flour yet and have not learned that it takes less water than the old white flour. Next week try only two-thirds as much water. As for your corn I know by the look of it you used one of those patent preservative powders which is really not to be compared to ordinary boiling water sterilization."

"Well John," said Mrs. Smith that night, "I think I won't say for sure that this is our last year on the farm. In spite of set-backs, conditions are improving. Miss Thompson has invited me to her office in town on Saturday to give me some new recipes specially tried out by her for that pesky war flour. Isn't it fine that we have her? Some day she is coming back to tell me about my kitchen. She says it has an ideal location and window arrangement but that things are placed in it to give me twice as much work as I should have. She was going to the Riminowski's from here. Perhaps she can help us do something with that Russian family."

But there may be those who do not know about the woman district representative. Manitoba has

now a few of these district agricultural representatives, a man employed by the department of agriculture, to establish himself in the centre of a given district, to devote himself to the work of agriculture in that district, and to be as far as possible at the disposal of the farm people in his district. The woman district representative would occupy a similar position in relation to the farm women. The woman district representative is a graduate of an agricultural college and a specialist in domestic economics. Frequently also she has had training in home nursing. The work of the district agent is wide and varying. In a word they are capable, practical, broad-minded women who win the confidence of every farmer's wife in the district and bring to her the practical scientific knowledge earnestly sought by farm women of this new day.

Those districts in the country to the south of us who have employed the services of women district representatives are loud in their praise of her. Certainly over there the woman county agent has come to stay.

What about the situation in the Canadian West? The extension service department of agriculture in Manitoba has long since been convinced of the value and need of women district representatives. The service does what it can by sending out lecturers and demonstrators from the college to the small town to conduct short courses. These courses last from one day to two weeks in the case of sewing and millinery. But the department is unable because

of shortage of funds and scarcity of workers to establish representatives in district centres with charge over a given district.

## Help for Non-English

Almost half of the population of the West is non-English speaking. A large percentage of the non-English population is living in segregated colonies. They are far away from Canadianizing influence. They want, I believe, in the most cases, to become good Canadian citizens. Their position to date has not been conducive to Canadianization.

Mrs. John McNaughtan, in her presidential address at Regina, gave an interesting glimpse into the hearts of our non-English girls. She said, "A lady recently gave me her experience with some non-English speaking girls. She gathered a class together and tried to interest them in their own folk songs and dances, but without success. Finally one said, 'We Canadian—we want to two-step,' and two-step they did. She led them from the dancing class to a millinery and dressmaking class, in which

way is taken there is an approach to friendship and intimacy with every non-English speaking person. They avoid apparent up-lifters, and the up-lift line of talk. But what can be a more feasible and accessible bond in uniting all Canadian women, all Canadian homes, all Canadian peoples, than the district representative who without fear or favor enters the English home in the same capacity as she enters the non-English.

## Her Achievements Elsewhere

The woman district representative has never been given a trial in this country, so we must do our generalizing from the results she has been able to achieve in the United States. There she is called the county agent. One of the chief functions of the woman district representative is to direct the study of the principles of household economics. Women everywhere are

showing a desire and inclination to be scientific housekeepers and homemakers. This seems to be work which may best be done by forming women into study groups where lessons and demonstrations can be carried on in a systematic manner. Frequently organizations already formed incorporate this phase of work into their general scheme. Women county agents can do many of the things carried on by men. In many places they have helped not only country women but their city sisters by finding markets among city women's clubs for farm produce. They have given instructions on preparing

material for market, the standardization of products and in what the markets demand. Women county agents can give much assistance on the securing of household equipment and in the organization of housework. Women are ready and eager to take up with anything that might help them in their work. They have little opportunity, however, to see real demonstrations of equipment. Women district representatives can interest farm women in this work by giving aid and suggestions along this line. Good dishwashers, pressure cookers, or fireless cookers are things that interest every woman on the farm. The problem of sanitation and sewage disposal, and through this the maintenance of the health and well being of the family are questions that the woman district representative can deal with very effectively. Sanitary cellars and basements, the abatement of fly nuisance, and clean-up campaigns are all matters that the woman district representative can handle. In Blackhawk county, Iowa, where Miss Tura Hawk is county agent, she and the county agricultural agent, Mr. Burger, are bringing to farm families who desire to put in septic tanks the farm engineering expert of the college who shows to a farmer and his neighbors how to instal one. These three are helping to instal water systems in homes, for health's sake and to save the farm woman from drudgery.

The feeding of children, the conservation of the food supply, the care of milk and cream, beef curing, fruit and vegetable canning through women's clubs are other lines. Farm women are anxious to secure information that will help them to simplify their family menus and decrease the labor of food production as well as increase its attractiveness and palatability.

## Links Up Farms and Colleges

The beautification of homes and home grounds constitute an important part of woman district representative work in the United States. Miss Maude Wilson of the University of Nebraska, writing on the woman county agent work, says she can keep herself very busy without doing much special personal work, but this is important. She must become well acquainted with conditions in each home in order to make actual suggestions regarding the equipment and management; and meet and help women who do not join the neighborhood clubs. Sometimes there are women who do not speak English well who are overworked, retiring or very poor. A sympathetic and kindly woman

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Making Dish-Washing a Joy



Electricity Eliminates Blue Monday



The County Agent Advocates the Substitution of Machine-Power for Woman-Power Wherever Possible



## Who She Is

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