A Revolution in Women's Institute Work

Their Annual Convention Devoted Principally to a Discussion of Patriotic Work

OVER $200,000, or an average of over $7.00 per member, has been contributed in cash and goods for patriotic purposes by the Women's Institutes of Ontario since the outbreak of the war. Such was the statement of Superintendent Geo. H. Putnam at the annual convention of the Women's Institutes which met on November 10, 11 and 12 in the new Technical School, Toronto. Rural social service, the normal work of the organization, was not altogether lost sight of, but for the most part the discussions at the convention turned upon the great work which the farm women of the province are doing in contributing to the relief and comfort of Canada's soldier boys in the hospitals, the trenches and the training camps.

Superintendent Putnam, in his report, after touching on the work that had been done by the Institutes throughout the province, and citing in particular what had been accomplished by some of the branches, drew attention to the great asset that Ontario has had in a province-wide organization which could immediately be turned to patriotic purposes when the outbreak of the war occurred. The war, however, would end, and already the question is arising of what would be offered to women and girls to take the place of the great activity they are at present displaying in patriotic endeavor. The speaker's answer to his own question was that the responsibilities of war conditions would make them all the stronger to cope with the educational, social and community problems of their districts when peace again returns. The leaders in philanthropy and social service are looking more and more to the women of the Institutes to assist them in the great work of rural social betterment, and there appears to be no other organization in Canada through which local resources and needs may be mastered as well as through Women's Institutes. Mr. Putnam also announced that the Department of Agriculture was prepared to cooperate with the Institutes in giving instruction in the lighter forms of agriculture—dairying, poultry raising, beekeeping, etc., if they desire it.

President Creelman on Rural Leadership

That the rural problem is not how to deal with rural deterioration or degeneracy, but to inculcate the new viewpoint from which the real possibilities and satisfactions of country life could be realized was the contention of President Creelman, of O.A.C., who gave the first educational address for the convention. The conditions of the farmer were not as bad as they were painted, and if they believed all that was said about them in some quarters they would spend half their time on the mourners' bench. The farmer has neglected the social element, has lived too much to himself, when he should control markets and politics. In bringing their husbands and brothers to a realization of the influence they might wield in these fields was a work in which the members of Women's Institutes could well expend themselves.

The presentation of district reports revealed the novel methods that have been devised by some of these branches for raising money for patriotic purposes. The Port Credit Institute ran a jitney service from the station to the Golf Links, the cars being provided and run by members. One day the fare box contained five fifty dollar bills, and in all $750 was realized from this source alone. A tea garden in which refreshments to automobilists were served netted another $500 in the three months it was run.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake branch supplied the soldiers in the camp hospital with flowers and home-made delicacies, as well as supplementing the necessary supplies for Red Cross work. They raised a total of $3,255 for all purposes. The Ayr Institute dried 800 pounds of apples for the Belgians, and Alliston is working for a motor ambulance. Mrs. W. Buchanan, Ravenna, a very humorous and pleasing speaker, reported that two small towns in Grey county had contributed 1,140 pairs of hand-knit socks and considerable money.

Social Life in Rural Ontario

Mrs. Brethour, Burford, Ontario, claimed that the social life in rural districts depended upon the home life, and strongly dissented from the view sometimes taken that the men are altogether to blame for the hard condition with which some of the women folk have to put up. She believed that if women would demand things, they would get them. Mrs. Brethour claimed that the Institute was doing a great deal toward undenominationalizing rural districts, and suggested that this influence might be increased by having advisory boards to include women from all the churches. Mrs. Hunter, Brampton, a pleasing and forceful speaker, was thoroughly convinced that the greatest need of rural districts is the development of social life and advocated, among other things, a return to the old fashioned literary society, singing school and spelling match. She also laid stress upon the training of girls in the art of mothercraft.

Shall Girls' Institutes be Established?

Miss E. J. Guest, Belleville, a specialist in work among girls, strongly favored the establishm nt of Girls' Institutes, claiming that girls do not attend the Women's Institutes in large numbers, and that they have special needs which demand separate training. Especially should they receive assistance in preparing for work as homemakers and scientific mothers. Mrs. Parsons, of Cochrane, gave it as her experience that the girls are anxiously waiting for an organization of their own. She had met with encouraging success on Manitoulin Island in establishing Girls' Clubs. Mr. Putnam, although claiming that the Department was ready to adopt what the best women of the organization deliberately planned and recommended, requested the delegates to remember that it might not be wise to make so definite a segregation of women and girls. In some places the girls were the life of the local branches, and although there might be a need for a special organization for them in some districts, for the most part it seemed to him to be best to have the mothers and girls working together. It is the intention of Mr. Putnam to call a conference of the best workers to consider the matter of the establishment of Girls' Institutes.

Resolutions favoring the closing of all stores at six o'clock, the establishment of short courses in domestic science for girls somewhat after the manner of the short courses now being held for boys and one calling attention to the needs of the establishment of Girls' Institutes were passed by the convention.

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"P.B.W." to "H.E.B."

(*Continued from page 14*)

dairy farm and extend their business, will consider if needing extra help, whether they will reap some profit over the wages paid out. Will readers of Farm and Dairy blame them?

With the genuine grievances of the working classes I have sympathy. Most of us now have a sort of social conscience. We would back up the efforts of a Labor Minister to secure better conditions for labor, and guard the rights of the individual consumer against the encroachments of the big interests. But we will not support schemes which seem built on economic fallacies. If those two brothers fail in their undertaking, the loss is mainly theirs. If the municipality of the government takes over industries, and runs them without regard to business principles, municipal and national insolvency will result, entailing untold suffering on the whole community. I believe economic history records such a case in France under a minister named Colbert, in the seventeenth century.

To-day the snow falls on some of my crops, still unharvested. Labor, who promised to help yesterday (a fine day) probably went hunting. But I must cheer up, with "Mignonette," "Thistle" and "H. E. B." The future may bring conscription, but it may be agricultural and industrial, and the war, which is nationalizing this and that, may turn us all into Socialists without our knowing it.—Percival B. Walmsley.

Utility Contest

FOR the best letter received from Our Women Folk, telling us what convenience in their homes they find most useful, and how they happened to obtain it, we are offering a year's renewal subscription to Farm and Dairy and a good, practical cook book. For every letter that we publish in this contest, a year's subscription will be offered to Farm and Dairy. Tell us what you have on the farm that is most useful to you. It may help someone else to get the same thing. All letters must reach us by Dec. 15 when the contest will close.

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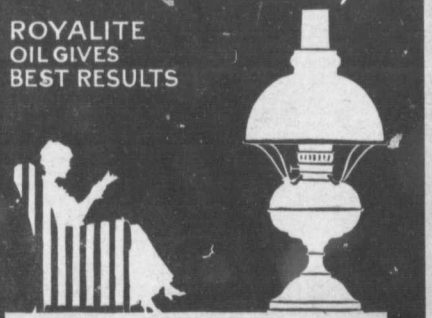
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