

Women's Secretary's Report

An Inspiration for the United Farm Women of Alberta by their Secretary,
Mrs. Leona R. Barritt

It gives me great pleasure to submit to you my report as secretary for the year 1916. The associations with the various clubs have been extremely pleasant ones, and many of my correspondents seem personal friends.

I have been much gratified with the regularity of the reports, generally speaking. A very few, after writing once, have dropped out of my ken, but great credit is due the majority of the secretaries, who, with little leisure, took the trouble to write excellent reports. Time and again my heart has been cheered and the day made brighter and my work lighter by the good news that some club was proving a real blessing to its members and the community, socially and educationally; and when I got inquiries, as I did almost every week, regarding the legal status of the women of this province in some connection, my heart said "Amen," for at last it looked as if women were beginning to think.

Encouragements and Disappointments

Now, in looking over the reports that have recently come in, I am struck with the small average attendance in many places compared with the total membership. In only one place was the average attendance greater than the list of members. The reasons given are long distances apart, cold and broken weather, small children, and in some cases ignorance of the real objects of the U.F.W.A. and general lack of interest. With the three former I can sympathize, but with the latter—well, I'll come to that later.

Listen to this:—

What is your total paid up membership? 15. What is your average attendance? 6. About what proportion of the total number of women in your district who could make it possible to attend are interested in the U.F.W.A.? A minority. How much money did your club raise during the year for the following purposes: Red Cross, Belgian Relief and Patriotic Fund? \$59. What other work have you done for the Red Cross (sewing, knitting, etc.)? Nothing. What nationality are your members principally? British and American. What subjects have you taken up at your meetings? None. What special effort have you made to interest your young people? None. What are the chief difficulties you find in carrying on your work successfully? Lack of interest.

And this:—

About what proportion of the total number of women in your district who could make it possible to attend are interested in the U.F.W.A.? Twenty per cent. How much money did your club raise during the year for the following purposes: Red Cross, Belgian Relief and Patriotic Fund? None. What other work have you done for the Red Cross (sewing, knitting, etc.)? Nothing. What nationality are your members principally? Canadian. What subjects have you taken up at your meetings? No regular program—caking and preserving. What special effort have you made to interest your young people? None.

Contrast with these Namaka with a membership of 18 raising \$1,703 for Red Cross and making 500 garments; Hiddellva's raising between \$300 and \$400 and sewing and knitting continually; Sunnyvale with a membership of 23, representing five sparsely-settled school districts, contributing \$180; Loverna, with all its women interested, and that all, 11 only, raising \$174 by a chicken supper. I could mention many more—Fairdome Valley, Rathwell, McCafferty, Alix—in fact, in just a few lines I must say that the two first quoted are unique. Surprising amounts of money have been raised and sacrifice in time and labor is evident in almost every report. In many cases where there is no separate U.F.A. Red Cross branch our members have joined the nearest one and contribute to it. Besides some of the clubs are keeping a Belgian family, some contributing each month a stated sum toward Belgian relief and some others supporting a prisoner of war.

Increased Membership

In respect to our growth, the number of our clubs have more than doubled since last year. We have now fifty active, and when Patriotic work ceases to bring

women together we expect to see a great increase in the number of our clubs. To this end we look for assistance to our men's locals, who are only now waking to the fact that their utmost is only one-half the potentiality of this movement; we supply the other.

In regard to subjects discussed I am glad to see such topics as Pure Food, Citizenship, Legal Status of Women in Canada, Teaching Nature's Truths to Children, and such well-correlated subjects under Home Nursing as Invalid Cookery, First Aid and Children's Accidents and Children's Diseases. Gardening, both flower and vegetable, and the raising of poultry have had their share of attention also.

Prepare Six Months Ahead

As we have elsewhere insisted, try to prepare a program for at least six months ahead. Miss Montgomery's "Study Outlines," of which you will hear later, will be invaluable to you in suggested topics. But I should advise some play too, so don't neglect your occasional purely social afternoon and your joint meeting with the U.F.A. Try to get in touch with national and international woman movements thru such a club magazine as the Woman's Century, the organ of the Canadian National Council of Women. Our principle of co-operation must extend, if it is to be effective, beyond the bounds of our own province and be linked up with women's efforts the world over. Your provincial organization has already made a step in this direction.

As far as possible try to hold your meetings in some centre, and have as many districts represented in your club as you conveniently can. This increased membership gives added interest and helps overcome any little frictions that exist locally. It also gives a greater variety of talent to choose from. Get outside speakers occasionally and share them with your men's union. You will be surprised how much the little touch of the outside world of affairs will help you both.

Interest in Young People

A pleasing feature of the year's work has been the interest shown by many of the clubs in the young people. This year we hope for closer co-operation with the Department of Agriculture in regard to boys' and girls' clubs and with the Department of Education in regard to school fairs and field day sports. A beginning was made last year and from it we expect much. In this connection a very gratifying report has come from Rathwell-McLeod. The U.F.A. and U.F.W. together purchased tennis and croquet sets for the young people and had the grounds open for play each evening in the summer. Besides, the older people made a point of meeting with them once a week, which was wholesome for both. Now follow that up with an open-air skating rink in winter, and take the trouble to have some good hot coffee and sandwiches occasionally and a song or two before they disband and you'll be doing a work which angels cannot.

Rest-rooms have been established in various centres during the year, and commendable work has been done in that respect by our women. As time goes on we hope to see one wherever women must drive to do shopping or otherwise meet for business.

Woman's Responsibility

Now, ladies, one thing I want you to know is that our work is arousing interest in Conservative Eastern Canada. The day the Woman Grain Growers of Saskatchewan came together and organized as part of the farmers' movement was an epoch making day in the records of feminine effort. I am sorry that we cannot claim precedence, but it was the sense of the same need that led us to investigate their work, with the result that we have the United Farm Women of Alberta today, and British Columbia is following. Never has such an opportunity been presented to the women of any country as to the newly-enfranchised women of this, the newest province of the Dominion. God pity the woman so dull of intellect who can see only in this farm woman movement the desire to escape from home for a few hours fortnightly or monthly in order to see her



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Mr. J. Brandon, Ayr, Ont., writes as follows:

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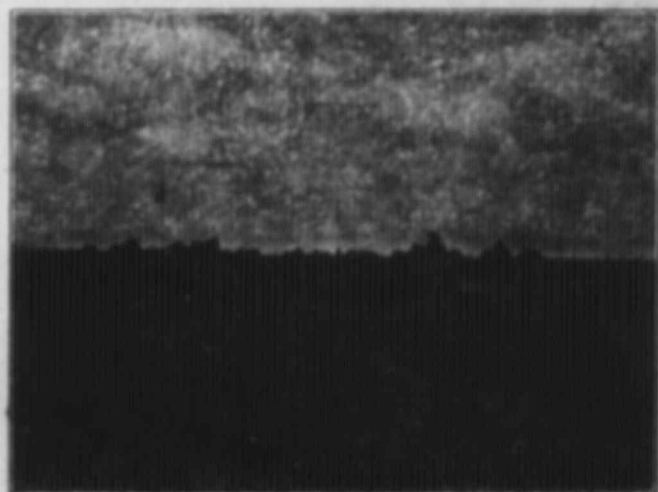
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