

Federated Women's Institutes

An address by Mrs. Dayton at the recent Women's Institute Convention held in Winnipeg

AS YOU all know, the union or federation of the Women's Institutes of Canada was consummated in this city last February.

The first convention was held in November last, in the city of Toronto. Every province in the Dominion was represented—from one to four delegates being present. Many splendid personalities were there, among them the beloved President, Judge Emily Murphy (Janey Canuck) the first woman judge in the British Empire.

It was an historical meeting, and showed the tremendous growth of the woman's institute movement, starting as it did in Stoney Creek, Ont., twenty-five years ago; now covering every province in the Dominion, with a membership of over 100,000. Not only this, but it has penetrated into the most remote parts of the Mother Country, where it has 1400 branches—introduced there by Mrs. A. T. Watt, a Canadian woman. Before the war the Minister of Agriculture for Belgium visited Canada and carried back the woman's institute idea to that country, where it has met with great success.

Unlimited Possibilities

This federation opens unlimited possibilities in the uniting of women. We have not only accomplished the federation of the Canadian provinces, but have gone a step further and formed an alliance with the Federated Women's Institutes of Great Britain—of which Queen Mary is one of the presidents and Mrs. Lloyd George is also a president of the Institute in her own home town in Wales, and it is expected that soon an International Federation will be established which will include France, Belgium, and the United States—our Allies in the Great War.

The Widening of our Horizon

You will see how this extension will bring us, who live in the most remote places, into touch with all that is best in women's work—not only in Canada, but in the world.

Important to Immigration

You can easily understand that in the one important matter of immigration how much this means to our country. The people, especially the women, coming from the old lands, when they have known women's institutes, will feel at home amid a warmth of welcome from the women's institutes of this country. This will pave the way for good feeling, happier homes, and make for permanent occupation—so greatly to be desired in our rural communities. A country rises no higher than its womanhood, and I know of no organization which is doing so much toward this end.

Not Confined to One Special Work

It was an intensely interesting Convention in that it did not confine itself to one special line of work. It was representative of women from rural districts—from towns, from cities—all working together on a non-sectarian—non-racial—non-partisan basis for the welfare of the whole people, not for any one class of the people—and herein lies its strength.

And ladies, we are organized on non-sectarian, non-political lines—not because any government says we must but because we have proven that we can do more effectual work for the good of the whole people, and do it more unitedly by working along the lines that have proven so successful in the past. In this way we are free to help shape the policy of any government for women's welfare. This has been done many times, and not many years past was very noticeable in this province, for whether we have High Protectionist or Low Tariff people in power we will find human nature much the same.

Things To Be Worked For

It was decided to promote a very wide publicity campaign. Institute members everywhere are urged to adopt "It Pays to Advertise" as their slogan for the

coming year. No province needs it more than our own, and don't let your reports get old.

The National Federation asks that a Publicity Convenor be appointed in each province to glean material and photographs of the activities of the work of most general interest, and forward the same to Mrs. J. F. Price, National Publicity Convenor, Calgary. Also use all the space possible in your provincial and local papers.

Co-operation With Overseas Settlement Committee

To co-operate in the work of the Overseas Settlement Board of following up settlers, by calling upon new arrivals and inviting them to share in the social life of the community, Mrs. Charles Robson, our national convenor on immigration, was appointed to represent the National Federation on the Canadian Council of Immigration for Household Service.

Objects of Federation

The objects of the federation as outlined by the President, Judge Emily Murphy, are—

- (1) To co-ordinate the work of the Women's Institutes throughout the Dominion.
- (2) To act as a clearing house for the activities of the various federated organizations.
- (3) To raise the standard of home-making—woman's most important occupation.
- (4) To assist in developing agriculture.
- (5) To promote educational, moral, social, and economic measures.
- (6) To encourage co-operation and community effort.
- (7) To initiate nation-wide campaigns in the interest of health, school betterment, co-operation in production and

conservation, civic improvement, wholesome entertainment, libraries, etc.

The constitution provides that the presidency shall alternate between Eastern and Western Canada. City institutes should co-operate most closely with the country institutes. Calgary and Edmonton are good examples of city institutes that do this.

It is the intention of the Federation to push the community hall movement in every district where an institute exists, and to leave no stone unturned that the rural women of Canada shall have not only telephones, medical inspection of all schools, rural postal deliveries, free hospitals and free libraries—but community halls where lectures, music and moving pictures of the best kind may be enjoyed; and these we may have for the whole of Canada if we are united.

The Ontario government gives dollar for dollar with institutes for this work. Apart from making the farm safe, pleasant and profitable, the women's institute has the supreme opportunity of Canadianizing the foreign people who have settled in rural districts. This work cannot be done from town but can only be carried out by the English speaking in the districts.

The Committees

On health, home economics, agriculture, immigration, legislation, publicity, current events, and institute technique, and we want this convention to appoint a member to each of the three committees, such member to become convenor in her own province.

Education—including better schools—is given a prominent place in our work, first and foremost we are urged to interest our women in school problems, and to see that she gets a place on the School Boards. The institutes from one end of the Dominion to the other should make this part of their campaign "well equipped schools, kept in sanitary condition." "Healthy normal children, which calls for proper feeding and care." "School sections so organized that we can afford to engage capable teachers and retain them." The Municipal School Boards may help.

Health

Dr. Margaret Patterson, our national convenor of Public Health and Child

Welfare, said that not only the value of life—but of health—is coming to be a national asset. The health of our nation is in the hands of its women, therefore many of them have struggled bravely almost alone. Now we are to have a united effort to save the child, and this has been brought about by the organization of women.

It is entirely due to the effort of organized women of Canada—as represented in the National Council of Women—that to-day we have a Federal Department of Health, including Child Welfare Bureau.

As individuals we may have very fine ideals, but except we are able to influence others to see them we can never accomplish much. By united effort the War was won, and the war we are waging against ignorance, disease—yea, even death, can only be won by our united effort. This we have in our Federation, which I most earnestly ask you to support and strengthen. To my mind it is the highest kind of wisdom to do so. You can realize this when you remember that in all your work you will have the Women's Institutes of Canada to support your efforts—not only for your province, but for your community. It is the expressed intention of the Federation to help strengthen the work where it is weak. In this we have the commendation and support of Dr. Tolmie, Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion, whom we interviewed, and whose wife is a most enthusiastic worker in British Columbia.

The new Premier of Ontario—Premier Drury—in speaking to the Ontario Federation said: "I know well the work of the Women's Institutes, and I can assure you that our government will stand behind you for all that is best in your work for the betterment of all conditions, particularly that of Child Welfare—because no matter how we put it, the most important product of this country, or any other country, is the children."

A delegation was appointed (of which I had the honor to be a member) to meet the Acting Prime Minister, Hon. Mr. Doherty, and lay the following resolutions before him:

- (1) We asked for a uniform divorce law throughout the Dominion—fair to both rich and poor alike.
- (2) That salaries of husbands guilty of desertion shall be paid to the families they have deserted.
- (3) That Railway Companies provide suitable accommodation for women travelling with young children—also for the sick.
- (4) That the question re the age of consent thrown out by the Senate last year—be this year reintroduced.
- (5) That the law re the sale of narcotics be enforced. Judge Murphy finds in her experience that many young girls are lured from their homes and seduced by this means.
- (6) That when naturalization is granted that the occasion be marked by an appropriate ceremony, preferably as near Dominion Day as possible.

Other Resolutions

Protecting the bird life of Canada.
The placing of whole wheat flour on the market.
Inspecting the sources of our milk supplies. (It was found in various parts of the country that impure milk was a fertile cause of the spreading of epidemics.)
We are asking for one version of our National Anthem "O, Canada" and it was suggested that another verse be added expressing our thankfulness to Almighty God for the many gifts he has bestowed on us in this land.

NOTHING ALARMING

A grocer who lost his German assistant when the war broke out engaged in his place a small boy. Two or three days later the grocer was very much surprised to find the following mysterious words chalked on a biscuit box: "Puff, puff—draw up—puff—draw up, draw up."

He began to worry lest his late assistant had been a spy, but the new clerk allayed his fears.

"It's all right, sir," said the boy. "Don't worry. That's only the Marseillaise on the harmonica."



Wash Day in our house.