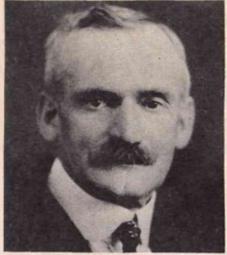




Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless,  
Co-Founder



Mrs. E. D.  
Smith, first  
President



Mr. Erland  
Lee,  
Co-Founder



Mrs. Chas.  
Macoun, first  
FWIO  
Secretary



Mrs. Wm.  
Todd, first  
FWIO  
President

## Women's Institutes Eighty-Five Years Later

February 19, 1897 was a day that made history. One hundred and one women and one man, Mr. Lee, were the newsmakers at the turn of the century.

February 19, 1982, will mark the 85th Anniversary of the founding of the first Women's Institute in the world.

The family was the core-reason for founding Women's Institutes, and remains so, to this day.

Women's Institute members for the last 85 years have stood by the concept of strengthening the family unit and encouraged women to go beyond their homes and farms to help one another think as individuals.

The formation of local branches quickly snow-balled in Ontario and it wasn't long before the work spread into other Provinces in the Dominion. Men have played an important role in the Women's Institute, especially, in the first thirty years. Although it is questionable if any WI members would have enjoyed the benefits of the organization over the last 85 years without the support of their husbands.

In Ontario, back as far as 1896, Mr. Erland Lee heard Adelaide Hoodless speak, and herein lies the key to the formation of Women's Institutes. Just as the family unit, back at the turn of the century, depended on the mother and father for guidance, the Women's Institute would not have been organized without a woman (Adelaide Hoodless), who had a desire to tell the community about her problem and concern, and a gentleman (Erland Lee), who recognized the importance of the situation and encouraged a gathering of women, where she would have a receptive audience.

In our 85th year, Ontario WI's are encouraging members of FWIC and the Constituent Societies belonging to that group, to recognize and accept the fact, that the first WI in the world had co-founders, Mrs. Hoodless and Erland Lee. This will be on the agenda at the 1982 National Convention and Ontario members are hopeful bias will not shade the decision.

With the formation of Branches throughout Canada, it was inevitable that the Women's Institutes were destined for overseas. The Ontario born and educated Madge Robertson, moved to British Columbia, married Alfred Watt, and became a dedicated member of the Metchosin WI. After his death, she and her sons moved to England just before World War I. After war was declared, Mrs. Watt could see that rural women, if organized, could play an important part in planting garden plots from which the vegetables could feed the local residents. With the assistance of two influential men, a WI was organized in Flanfair, Wales, in 1915.

The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario have spear-headed projects, such as, assuming ownership of the Erland Lee (Museum) Home, where history was made when the original Constitution was written. Thousands of dollars have been invested in the educational projects for the youth, not only in Ontario, but overseas, too. Assisting women in third-world countries has been beyond question, an important facet of the WI work, where strong support was given, along with other Constituent Societies, to the Associated Country Women of the World, projects.

Now in 1982, where do we stand as an organization in our community? History will record, in the beginning, the WI and the Church, were the organizational strengths in rural areas of Ontario. Today, we compete with a host of other local organizations, as well as leisure-time activities, such as we've never experienced before. Our role has become more difficult, so it becomes much more important to define our goals and objectives.

We cherish the past, but we cannot live on previous accomplishments. All those important roles we have played over the past 85 years were not in vain. However, in the 1980's, our reasons for being, our objectives for existence, must be motivated toward the needs of the present-day woman.

A re-thinking of direction and a re-defining of structure may be the answer.

*Margaret Zoeller*

## Early Years of FWIC

By 1913, Women's Institute members in all the Provinces in the Dominion felt the need to federate and have some type of continuity, including better communication within the nine Provinces. (Since that time, Newfoundland and Labrador have become the 10th Province.)

In the beginning, Saskatchewan's organization was known as "Homemakers" and Newfoundland were "Jubilee Guilds". However, by 1970 all organizations became known as Women's Institutes.

It has been recorded that Miss Mary MacIsaac, Superintendent, of the Women's Institutes in Alberta, was a prime mover in promoting federation of the provincial units.

During the war years, all the WI's worked with enthusiasm for a common purpose and it became evident that such an energetic body should direct those energies into co-ordinating their efforts throughout the Dominion.

Leaders in every Province felt an urge to work as a single federation, and yet hold onto their own provincial identity.

Here in Ontario, Mr. George Putnam, Women's Institutes' Superintendent, told the delegates at the Central Convention for Ontario that "a meeting of representatives of Women's Institutes and similar organizations throughout the Dominion has been called for Winnipeg in mid-February, with a view to formulating plans for closer co-operation among all, and it is expected that the basis of a permanent national organization will be decided upon at that meeting."

On February 13, 1919, thirteen women and one man, Mr. Putnam, met in Winnipeg. Miss MacIsaac was appointed chairman, and the following resolution was presented. "That the delegates, here assembled, from the Homemakers' Clubs, The Home Economics Societies, and the Women's Institutes, do federate themselves into a national organization. The name to be decided upon, after hearing the report of the committee on Constitution." Later, the announcement was made by Mr. Putnam, stating the or-

ganization would be known as the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

At this meeting, Judge Emily Murphy was elected President, Mrs. Wm. Todd, first Vice-President and Miss Eliza Campbell, Treasurer.

The first official FWIC meeting was held February 15, 1919, with the elected officers in charge and one of the items on the agenda was to set up the following Convenerships: Public Health and Child Welfare; Household Economics; Education and Better Schools; Immigration; Publicity and Legislation.

The original objectives decided on in 1919 were:

1. To co-ordinate the provincial units through a system of conveners, national, provincial and local.
2. To raise the standard of homemaking.
3. To act as a clearing house for the activities of provincial units.
4. To develop agriculture to meet the food needs of the race.
5. To promote educational, moral, social and economic measures in accordance with the objects of the Federation.
6. To encourage co-operation in community efforts.
7. To initiate nationwide campaigns in accordance with the objects of the Federation.

It is of interest to compare to-day's Purposes and Objectives that form part of the present-day format.

1. To co-ordinate programs of the Units.
2. To provide a medium of intercommunication among the Units.
3. To promote an appreciation of rural living.
4. To develop better informed, more responsible citizens, through the study of issues of National and International importance.
5. To initiate nation-wide programs in accordance with the objects of the Federation.