

The Country Homemakers

The National Council

Conducted by Mary P. McCallum

AT a time when the whole system of titles and special honors (for distinguished service, as an excuse) is under review and has turned out to be very much in national disfavor, a questionnaire sent out by the convener of the special committee on constitution of the National Council of Women, drops a bomb in the camp of the organized women of Canada. The constitution of the National Council has long been in need of overhauling and revision. At the last annual meeting a special committee was formed to deal with the constitution and present a report at the next annual meeting. In pursuit of its duties the special committee on constitution has sent out a questionnaire of 22 queries dealing with possible changes. Some of the changes are commendable. Others had been better left unsaid. At a time when the whole nation is getting away from superfluous perfunctories and down to a real working basis, one who is in a measure familiar with the National Council constitution cannot but think that the special committee on constitution should at least take cognizance of the signs of the times—and do likewise.

Among other things—and we regret that we have only the sense of the question instead of the exact words—the societies affiliated are asked if they are in favor of having honorary vice-presidents, such honorary officers to be those women who have at some time rendered distinguished service to the National Council. The query is followed by others relating to the number of such, the number of elected vice-presidents in the event of honorary vice-presidents, and whether or not such honorary vice-presidents should or should not have the privilege of voting. The National Council of Women of Canada claims to be the clearing house for all the organized women of Canada. To fulfil that function to the limit of its ability it must be a democratic, work-a-day, practical body, cleared of all superfluous, and possible red tape officers. Isn't there a danger that those deserving of some mark of recognition for service rendered may through age or other disability be unfitted for work on the executive committee? To be sure, since the term of office of such proposed officials is for life, there probably may come a day when they can not render the service on the executive committee which that body naturally should receive, and which the women of Canada certainly expect. To establish such honorary vice-presidents with terms of office for life is certainly not in accord with the future best interests of any organization. The query distinctly suggests that such proposed honorary officers shall be the appointees of the executive. This means that in the case of a division a small majority of the executive committee may make such appointments within the required number as will greatly solidify any action it may contemplate, and increase the numerical strength of that majority. Such a loop-hole may be a dangerous weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous executive committee. There is no use deluding ourselves by thinking women will not stoop to such practices, for we are as yet untried. We are at the beginning of our political careers, and our duty to ourselves and to those who follow is to safeguard against possible unprincipled circumstances.

But to come back to titles. The National Council of Women is what we may call a "state within a state" and is a complete governing body within itself. Distinguished service has been the excuse for the title system in Canada. We all know what abuse the system has suffered, how the ability to pay for a title has been paraded as service to one's nation, and all the other despicable abuses. If the National Council after our national experiences decides on making distinguished service, such distinguished service to be judged by the executive committee—the basis of an honorary vice-presidency, to which is attached all the privileges of council and executive committee except the

ballot, is it not possible that this too may suffer abuse?

If it is decided that the executive committee is not large enough, then let there be an additional number of elected vice-presidents. It is certainly not in the interests of a democracy to have honorary officers with wide powers for life, not to have such officers the appointees of any executive committee. All officers of the Council should be properly elected by the Council in annual meeting and so be as representative as possible. If there is a woman who is pre-eminently fitted for a place on the executive committee then the executive committee may safely leave her election in the hands of the whole Council. It usually takes cognizance of such sterling persons.

Should it be deemed expedient by the women of Canada to honor in some way those valiant souls who have given superior service to the cause of womanhood, and have grown old in their service, then let some honorary place be found for them to which is attached no wide powers or influence. Then to secure such recognition one must have come up through the ranks by the regular channels. Perhaps to follow the precedent of colleges or churches would be as commendable as any. For instance, vice-presidents might be retired from active service and given the title "vice-president emeritus."

In passing, it may be mentioned that the Council has already a number of honorary vice-presidents, the wife of the prime minister of Canada, the wife of the leader of the opposition and the wives of the lieutenant-governors. These women receive such honor, not for anything which they have been able to render to the cause of women in Canada, but because their husbands are in positions of trust in the nation. As for giving such newly proposed honorary vice-presidents the privilege of franchise the whole idea is unthinkable. Why can the Council not make them complete and profitable to the whole womanhood of Canada instead of establishing and extending an unworthy precedent.

One other matter relating to the National Council could well be altered. That is in regard to patrons. Here the title system with all its most disgusting practices runs rampant. The executive committee may say to a person of whom it approves, "We will make you a patron of this distinguished Council if you will pay us annually the sum of \$10, or we will make you a life patron if you will give us the sum of \$100. For this you may take part in all discussions and deliberations, but you may not vote." The National Council at first did well out of this retail business in titles. But last year the treasurer had occasion in making her annual report to express regret that the war greatly interfered with this revenue from titles, many saying when they received their annual reminder that there were so many other places where they preferred to put their money. This practice may extend into the local councils. There the executive committee, when funds are getting low, may say to the wealthy woman in town, "We will make you a life patron of this local council if you will give us \$50. The constitution, we regret to say, omits to specify whether or not you may vote. We judge from the fact that patrons of the National Council may not vote that you may not either. However, we may agree to print your name on all documents beside those of the executive committee. We know you are ambitious to be prominent in women's work in this town and we feel that you will not regret the expenditure of \$50 for the honor and prominence we are able to confer on you."

Those interests that are not our Western interests are going to wake up one of these days and realize that women have votes. They have commanded the situation in days gone by and recent activities would lead us to believe that they have their eyes to the future to still further strengthen their interests. The stage is all set and the door is wide open for them to reach their tentacles into the camp of organized women through the National Council. It is just a matter of time until they see their opportunity. We may expect any of these days to see that list of patrons increasing in number at a terrific rate. To swing a situation it is not always necessary to have a ballot, indeed not always advisable. A persuasive tongue can perform wonders. Our patrons are admitted to all the privileges of Council except that of voting. If the National Council one day finds itself in the hands of the autocratic interests in Canada it can only blame itself for constitutionally making the opportunity. It cannot be in the best interests of the womanhood of Canada to permit the present constitution to remain.

Anyway, isn't it time that women for ever and ever banished these medieval and patronage evils from their organizations? Can women ever reach that stage of purity in national affairs which they said they would if they continue to cling with increasing tenacity to those outgrown customs of patronage? We think not. And further, we believe that unless the National Council reorganizes itself on more democratic lines and eliminates the red tape, it cannot survive the democratic renaissance now taking place. We look to the clear-thinking women to change the old order when it comes up for discussion at the annual meeting at Brantford in June.

Alberta's Health Nurses

Alberta has now four public health nurses. They are: Miss Bessie Bargent, Miss E. Mand Davidson, Miss Gladys Thurston, and Miss Elizabeth Clark. Alberta has a new department of health under the provincial secretary's department. It stands to Alberta's health department's credit that within a very few months it was able to get the Municipal Hospital Act into workable shape and to have four public health nurses in the field. With such a beginning Alberta people have reason to look for very much in the future. The United Farm Women of Alberta must feel gratified that one by one the things they are working for are being placed on the statute books and are becoming a reality. What wouldn't wider organization accomplish? The attention of Alberta women is directed to an important announcement on the farm women's club page regarding these public health nurses, from Mrs. Parly. Please don't lay aside your Guide until you read it and comply with her suggestion.

Girls Receive B.S.A. Degree

Two Canadian girls this year received their degree of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. They graduated from Macdonald College, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, in affiliation with McGill University. The girls are Miss Margaret Newton of Beaneville, Quebec, and Miss Pearl Clayton Stanford of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Canada has had other women agricultural students at her agricultural colleges, but these are her first two students to receive the B.S.A. degree. Agriculture is what we may call a "new old" profession for women. Sociologists tell us that women were the first tillers of the soil. But of recent centuries men have been the agriculturists in Anglo-Saxon countries. It is said that in Denmark there are more women engaged in agricultural pursuits than in all the other industries and professions together. There is a complete system of agricultural education for women in Denmark. The war is having the effect of bringing women in our own country to a realization that there is a place in agricultural occupations for women. And women are needed in agriculture. Several conventions of women realizing this need have asked for short courses in agriculture for women to fit them for it. Notable among these conventions were the Women's War Conference at Ottawa and the Women Grain Growers of Manitoba. They do not despair of its ultimate achievement. We look for leadership in this new old profession from our first two graduates in agriculture.



Farmerette.
Official Farmerette Costume designed by the Department of Agriculture for Ontario.



The End of the Day's Work
Ontario Girls enrolled in the Short Course in Agriculture in the Ontario Agricultural School at Guelph, unhitching their team after the day's work.