

W.I. Donates Picture



The West Lorne W.I. ladies visited the Four Counties Hospital, Newbury to visit the palliative care room to view the picture they had donated. This was part of the Feb. 4th, 1992 meeting.

Farm women tackle rural issues in PEI

**Yvonne
Wettlaufer**



The opportunity to discuss and take action on key issues facing today's farm families was what drew WI member Hilde Morden and some 300 other Canadian women to Charlottetown, PEI in November.

Hilde, vice-president of Clachan WI and secretary-treasurer of West Elgin District, was one of Ontario's 10 voting delegates at the National Farm Women's Conference.

In all, there were nearly 60 Ontario women at the conference, representing such various organizations as Women for the Support of Agriculture, Women for the Survival of Agriculture, Concerned Farm Women, National Farmer's Union and also the Uni-Farm Women's Group from Alberta. According to Hilde, the goals of the conference were as follows:

- 1) to establish a network of farm women from across Canada;
- 2) to initiate a change in the financial situation for family farms through networking, lobbying and education of farm women; and
- 3) to create an awareness among farmers, consumers and governments of the importance of Canada's agricultural industry.

Guest speakers, including the Honorable John Wise, Gisele Ireland, Brigid Pyke, Dianne Harkin, Elaine Driver, addressed these areas. After group discussions and presentations, the delegates voted on key issues and a list of recommendations was drafted to be forwarded to various government officials including the Prime Minister, Provincial Premiers, and all Ministers of Agriculture.

The participants of the National Farm Women's Conference recommended that action be taken on:

- 1) Farm credit/debt issues:
 - establish immediate debt moratorium
 - re-enact farmers creditors arrangements legislation
 - change farm credit policies to lower interest rates and make more money available



Hilde Morden

- establish debt review boards of farmers and financial experts
- 2) Establishment of fair prices of commodities
- 3) Opposition to free trade
- 4) Education for farm women and farmers, consumers, media, bankers, government officials, etc.

The delegates have decided to form a national network among farm women to improve communications across the country by means of a newsletter.

These were, indeed, three very productive days and a fantastic opportunity to get an insight into similar concerns in other provinces. Hilde feels self-esteem and confidence are

built in this type of participation and has seen a great deal of leadership developing among the women over the past five years.

The learning experience is most valuable, however. "It is extremely important that women attend these events so that there is a better understanding among the farm commodity groups as to what the crises are," Hilde states.

She believes the opposition of free trade and education of the consumer are the main concerns related to the farm crisis today and it's women like those who attended this conference who will play a major role in bringing financial security back to the family farm. Saskatchewan has offered to play host for the National Farm Women's Conference to be held in 1988.

Hilde has been an FWIO member for more than 20 years. She also makes appearances as a freelance public speaker. She and her husband farm a 450-acre farrow to finish operation near Rodney, Ontario, assisted by their son and daughter-in-law.

Yvonne Wettlaufer, an employee of the ROS Branch in Guelph, is a regular contributor to OMAF publications.

Hilde Morden participates in free trade seminar at Guelph

"How farm and rural families would be affected by free trade", was the topic of a seminar for a capacity crowd, organized by Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, at Guelph recently.

Keynote speaker, farm economist Dr. Larry Martin from the University of Guelph, stated some Canadian agricultural sectors would gain, such as livestock and meat producers. How-

ever, dairy and poultry producers would lose.

As an immigrant from the USA, Dr. Martin rejects importing negative aspects of the American culture.

Representatives from, fruit and vegetable growers, corn, soybean, pork wheat, milk and egg marketing boards, plus the Cattlemen's Ass'n., discussed how free trade would affect their commodities. Consensus seemed to be not free trade, but freer trade with all negotiations taking place on a level playing field with both sides being equal. Everyone realised if free trade comes adjustments will have to be made.

A panel discussion featuring Murray Stewart from Canada Packers, Renie Long, President Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers, Hilde Morden, 2nd Vice President London Area Women's Institutes, a farmer's wife and mother, Stan Young, Co-ordinator Agricultural Extension University of Guelph, and Brenda McIntosh from Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Hilde Morden summed up participant's feelings when she stated that as wife and mother her greatest concern is to protect our food production and that Canada must not lose the ability to make its own decisions.

After group discussions among all participants the overall feeling was that we need freer trade with all the negotiations taking place on a level playing field.

Results from this seminar will be sent to the federal government, as to the feelings of the rural and farm women of Ontario on free trade.

This seminar organized by the Women's Institutes shows the care and concern Women's Institutes have for those who live in rural Ontario.

Women's Institutes - Serving a need!

"Without vision the people perish." Certainly the idea put forth in 1897 had vision, it was also practical, forthright and a brave venture. Those who caught the vision could not have known how far reaching the organization, to be known as the Women's Institute, could be in the influence toward better homemaking and good citizenship.

On February 19, 1897, the first formal organization of a Women's Institute took place in Saltfleet Township, Wentworth County, through the combined efforts of Erland Lee and his wife Janet with the encouragement of Adelaide Hoodless. The branch was originally known as the Stoney Creek Women's Institute. From there the organization has spread throughout the world. The Women's Institute own the

Erland Lee Museum Home which is open to the public.

The W.I. organization provides rural women with the opportunity to broaden the scope of their knowledge and abilities through participation in meetings organized by the local branch.

W.I.'s in Ontario for many years have helped women improve their homes and communities. Working for the good of all, regardless of creed, race or political beliefs, they have flourished in almost every community in Ontario.

Special educational sessions are organized at district, area,

and provincial levels to encourage women to expand their outlook and learn to extend their influence as a motivating force in today's world. Such an example is the upcoming Community Outreach Seminar to be held on February 28th at Southwold School. W.I. members are encouraged to take a public stand on the broader issues of the day through resolutions and briefs.

The W.I. provides a vehicle and an environment to challenge women who seek self improvement and personal enrichment. They belong to a network that connects Branches to Districts, to Areas to Provincial, National and International organizations.

Within the London Area there are 114 branches in 10 Districts, who are active in many, leading and financing 4-H clubs, holding adult leadership courses through OMAF, having up-to-date speakers at their meetings, looking after the needs of their community, through donations of money, time and enthusiasm. Oxford County have initiated the Butler project to provide all schools in Ontario and hopefully Canada with a series of pictures of farm animals, the Tweedsmuir Histories provide an up-to-date and accurate history of the community lot by lot, a valuable source of information. The Elgin Pioneer Museum and the Southwold Earthworks are there because W.I. had a vision. The scholarship project provides much-needed funds to students to complete post-secondary education. The list is much longer.

An unjustified criticism levelled at the W.I. is that it is not meeting the needs of the younger member. One fact is correct in that those who join remain for many years because they believe in the vision. However, each branch makes up their own program to suit the needs of their own community. There are many young women joining W.I. because they see what it has accomplished in the past and what it will accomplish in the future. Maybe the younger members are not in all the executive offices at all levels but they are there. As young parents they will in time take a more active role. After all, the motto of W.I. is "For Home and Country". The training and skills learned at the meetings are applicable to any woman at any walk of life.

The W.I. is very active as they work to assist network of all the rural Women's Organizations in Ontario. Their magazine Home and Country is available to any woman and is used to promote all rural organizations not just Women's Institutes. When the first Farm Women Network Newsletter was printed it was distributed through all W.I. branches with

copies of Home and Country.

When the W.I. had their Free Trade Seminar, all rural organizations were invited. However, not all bothered to attend. As a vehicle to network the rural women in Ontario, the W.I. is an organization that quietly, without fanfare, is doing just that.

If you are interested in finding out more about W.I. or the nearest W.I., contact your nearest Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF).

Women urge AIDS tests for would-be immigrants

By Howard Burns
London Free Press

ST. MARYS — A rural-based women's group has jumped into the AIDS debate.

Voting delegates of the 3,000-member London Area Women's Institute decided Friday to press the federal government for mandatory AIDS testing on would-be immigrants.

But the group didn't urge Ottawa to deny entry to those who test positive.

Delegates at the St. Marys Community Centre voted in favor of a

resolution by a member chapter from south Oxford County "strongly urging" the government to "screen" all prospective immigrants to see if they have been exposed to the AIDS virus.

The convention was for members from Middlesex, Oxford, Perth, Huron and Elgin counties.

The blood testing was supported by delegates as one way to better track AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and possibly slow its spread in Canada.

The AIDS resolution will be forwarded to the umbrella, 24,000-member Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario for backing at a

November meeting in Toronto.

Margaret Dale of RR 4, Woodstock, a member of the sponsoring Oxford chapter, said the issue of what to do with prospective immigrants deemed to be carriers would be left in the hands of federal health department officials.

The delegates, she said, were interested only in urging the government to determine if immigrants have been exposed to the virus as they prepare to enter Canada.

Such a screening policy might help prevent the spread of AIDS in Canada and ensure prospective immigrants get whatever treatment or counselling they need. Diagnosed AIDS patients don't qualify as landed immigrants to Canada.

But there isn't a formal system for testing newcomers to determine if they have been exposed to the virus that causes AIDS.

Federal doctors, however, now look for symptoms of exposure to AIDS and have the power to order individual tests.

The U.S. has decided to adopt mandatory testing of immigration applicants as of Dec. 1.

Margaret Munro of Ottawa, president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, said she supports the concept of mandatory AIDS screening.

She said the resolution is the first on AIDS to come from a women's institute convention in Ontario.



JANETTE FISHER AMUSED RAY PECK-
ham and the audience at Sunday night's
Silver Memories program at WESS when
they sang "Dearie, do you remember?"
while accompanied by Mrs. Ruth Mistele in
the left background. The program marked

the 25th anniversary of West Lorne Kiwanis
Club's Talent Show. The Fisher-Peckham
duo performed on the original program. Ray
also acted as Master of Ceremonies for
Sunday evening's program.

Mercury-Sun photo

25th Anniversary
of
West Lorne Kiwanis Club's Talent Show



WEST LORNE KIWANIS CLUB CHARTER
member, Wilf Johnston, had the honour of
cutting the 35th anniversary cake at ladies'
night in the Anglican Church hall recently,

while new President Bill Graham held it.
Wilf is the only charter member continuing
to attend.