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The 1926 4-H Short Course

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Women's Institute in England and Wales

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THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

The 1926 4-H Short Course

The Woman's Institute Movement in England and Wales

MISS ETHEL NIGHTINGALE of London, England

The Farm Women of Iowa may be interested to know a little about the Movement and its constitution. Women's Institutes were formed in England and Wales, known as the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

Women's Institutes are clubs, the members of which are women, both married and single, living in parishes or villages with a population of not more than four thousand inhabitants. Thus, Women's Institutes are to be found in tiny hamlets, little country towns or serving a district with a scattered farm population.

The members meet monthly, during the afternoon or evening, in Village or Parish or Institute Halls, or even in the schools or homes of some of them. The program, which is usually made a month or six weeks in advance, consists of a little business, a lecture or demonstration, a cup of tea and a bun, and games in which every member, old or young, can take part.

The movement was started with the help of the government in the stress of war-time, in 1915, to give country women an opportunity to cooperate for the purpose of producing, harvesting, and conserving food, but when the war ended, it was found that the institutes had so taken hold in the countryside that no one wanted them to die. Besides doing the work for which they were originally started, they had found time to organize classes in a great variety of subjects and had undertaken a good deal of community work.

In 1917, two years after the first institute had been started, a National Federation was formed and, in 1919, the government realizing the place institutes were taking in rural life, agreed to give to the federation an annual grant, in diminishing quantities, on condition that the movement became self-supporting in a given time. This the federation has accomplished, for next year ought to see the movement clear of government aid.

There are now 3,400 Women's Institutes in England and Wales, with a membership of nearly 250,000 women and girls. During the ten years of its existence, the movement has worked out for itself a constitution and rules for the individual institutes and for County and National Federations. The movement is democratic, non-sectarian and non-partisan political, and its fundamental aim is to improve and develop conditions of rural life. It aims to have as members every woman and girl living in the district, and no institute is ever formed unless a certain number of women, representative of all sections of the community, attend and become members at the inaugural meeting. The annual fee is ten shillings (50c), for everything is thought of in terms of the poorest member. No member is ever asked to pay the money to the institute, every member is expected to give service and to help to raise, by united effort, such funds as are needed each year to carry out the aims and objects of the institute and to help to support the County and National Federations. Institutes are formed only by trained county volunteer organizers, who help the institutes and their committees to organize themselves on sound lines.

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1. Demonstrations and series of classes in canning, cooking, poultry and beekeeping, gardening, dairy work and other agricultural and horticultural subjects.

2. Demonstrations and series of classes in domestic science subjects, in various handcrafts such as skin curing, glove making, embroidery, leather work, basketry, etc.

3. Lectures, debates or study circles in subjects such as local history, local government, travel, etc.

4. Dramatic, musical and folk-dancing societies and dancing classes.

5. Community work, such as obtaining for the village or group of two or three villages, a village nurse, setting up a village library, building a village hall, arranging for the collection and destruction of rubbish, looking after the old people or disabled soldiers, taking care of the war memorial, etc.


The County Federations, through their elected committees, administer county and local funds, arrange the work of the voluntary organizers, arrange annual or biennial Craft Exhibitions, organize County Musical or Dramatic Competitions and Festivals, arrange tours of special interest, hold quarterly meetings, every three or four years, publish a national and local almanac Mrs. Frances Sims, head of the Textiles and Clothing Department of Iowa State College, said in her talk on clothing that the modern dress is the nearest to the ideal dress that we have had for some time. The dress of the English girl, it is narrow in line but relieved by fullness so that it is comfortable; it has soft lines unbroken by stays and bustles. The modern style and material. The advantages of federation are more and more realized by the County Federations and by the individual institute.

The family album introduced

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