

Farewell To a Good Citizen

It was with great regret that we heard the news of the death of Mrs. E. E. Morton of Vegreville, Alberta. How many Alberta women must feel a sense of loss at her passing, and not only women in Alberta, but in many provinces of Canada. For some of us, our last glimpse of Mrs. Morton was at the recent conference of the Associated Country Women of the World in Toronto. Ill she was and blind, but her mind was clear and her spirit strong. She had clung to life that she might attend one more international meeting of the movement to which she had given many years of service.

Thirty years had passed between the time when Mrs. Morton became a member of the local Women's Institute in Vegreville and September, 1950, when she headed the Canadian delegation to the A.C.W.W. triennial in Copenhagen.

After serving as secretary and president of her own Institute, she became a district director, then provincial vice-president and convener of war work. The Alberta Women's Institutes had then chosen as their particular project assistance to the boys of the Merchant Marine. Mrs. Morton worked unceasingly. It was said that in three months she lined and put together 46 jerkins. Other Vegreville members bound them and put on the tape.

As she worked she thought. She wrote to the A.W.I. members: "It is not enough to make quilts, jerkins and knit; we must, by observing uncomplainingly the ration laws, see that they have ample supplies. We must read and study world conditions, so that we will be prepared for the supreme struggle against selfish nationalism when the peace comes. All this is part of our war effort."

With the end of the war in sight, she asked Alberta women to turn their thoughts to reconstruction problems and the return of young

people from the forces. She asked them to consider the employment possibilities, the opportunities for study and recreation, in their own districts.

Clothing for war victims came to her from all across Alberta and how many parcels she packed to go overseas. "Welcome the families from the old lands," she wrote. "The displaced persons need special kindness for they have suffered much. Try to make your goodwill practical and see they are given a chance to learn English. Get a pocket book on Basic English and it will help you as teachers and them as scholars."

By this time she had become president of the A.W.I. and vice-president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. In 1947 she went to the A.C.W.W. conference at Amsterdam as Alberta representative and three years later as F.W.I.C. president, she headed the Canadian delegation to Copenhagen.

I heard her speak to the Manitoba Women's Institutes when she returned to Canada that fall. She pointed out that the individual was the foundation of that great organization, the Associated Country Women of the World. She put searching questions: "Are you free from racial prejudice in your community?" "How many women in your community have never been asked to join the Institute?"

She reminded her audience that two-thirds of the people in the world never went to bed with full stomachs. You can't talk peace and co-operation to hungry people, she warned. So she asked them to study conservation and the problems of food.

Then she was thinking of basic English, not only as a help to newcomers coming to this country, but as a way of bridging the gap of language differences. She asked Institutes to send textbooks to other countries.

It saddens one to think that this woman who valued books so highly and worked so hard for libraries in Alberta should have lost her sight during the last years of her life.



MRS. E. E. MORTON

Mrs. Morton believed that regional libraries were a very necessary service for rural people but while waiting and working for them she turned her home into a distribution centre for sending out second-hand books to W.I. rural libraries.

"When I realized I was going blind I felt as if I was facing an abyss," she said. "I became completely depressed. Then one day just before Christmas a man came to the door. He had driven all the way from Edmonton, 70 miles over glare ice, to see me. He came from the Canadian Institute for the Blind and he made me realize that what I had thought a tragedy was only a handicap."

She told of discovering talking books and of the Chinese lads whom she had taught English and who now came to read to her.

When she was in Toronto at the A.C.W.W. she spoke to delegates attending the meeting of the Canadian Council for the Blind and urged them to spread the good news about services for the blind. She was still trying to serve.

Surely those last dark, difficult months must have been brightened by many happy memories of a busy, useful life.—R.D.