

Pamphlet

mittee for discussion. The findings of committees come as recommendations to the Council Executive and no action may be taken without the approval of the majority. The responsibility is thus shared by all the members.

The committees almost always meet in a special room in the W.M.S. office. In this office are found the exceedingly clever and helpful staff; the Editor of the *Glad Tidings*, the Publications Secretary and the five girls who keep the books, type the letters, file the documents, parcel and send out the books, and leaflets, make up the mailing list of *Glad Tidings'* subscribers, and attend to the thousand and one details of running a business. It is a business this W.M.S. work, and a big one. Think of receiving and expending about \$190,000 a year, accounting for every cent, allotting it fairly, and making each go as far as possible. Think of all the writing that is done throughout the whole Society, the reports, the *Glad Tidings*, the study books and the helpful leaflets, the compiling of the Annual Report, and the arrangements for printing the material issued by the Society. Think of all the letters that must be written throughout the whole Society, of the planning for the meetings, of the making up and shipping of all the parcels and bales. You will realize that it is a **big business**. Then clothe all who share in the management with flesh and blood and personality—the members of the Council Executive, the Executive officers throughout all the branches, the office staff, the workers supported by the Society in Canada and overseas and you will have the living lovable earnest women who make the W.M.S. wheels go round.

## Our Fragile Hearts

SOME time ago, at a meeting of missionary leaders, the thing which impressed a visitor with a sense of dismay was the number of references to the fragility of heart which seemed to prevail among the group of workers whom those leaders represented.

"She ought to be asked to do that piece of work differently—but it would break her heart to be criticized." "That woman is usurping the work of another department, but her heart would be broken if we told her so." "Yes, we know that phase of the work is no longer advisable, and should be brought to an end; but the woman who is in charge of it has never done any other kind of work or taken an interest in anything else, and we can't break her heart by taking it from her." Even the acceptance of an invitation to hold a convention in a certain place was urged "because those people's hearts would be broken if we refused."

What is the matter with our hearts? Are they really as fragile as

all this? Do hearts, like bones, grow brittle with the passing years, and snap at the slightest shock, and refuse to knit again? Seriously, is there not something wrong with our work, if what it brings us after years of service is a heart so sensitive that everybody has to be afraid of breaking it and driving us out of the Master's service, by telling us honestly what is best for the work we are supposed to love?

Let us try to get down to the bottom of these fragile hearts of ours, and ask ourselves what is really the deepest feeling that dwells there. Is it love for the Lord's work? If it is, we should be thinking first of the needs of that work, the way in which He can best be served. Then the thing that is best for the work would be the thing that would give us joy, and not pain, even though it meant changing our way of working to meet the requirements of a changing time, or even giving it over altogether into other hands than ours. If not, then is it really the work we love, or is it our own pleasure in doing it?

These are searching questions, and may not be comfortable ones to ask ourselves; but every servant of Christ must ask them some time or other, and be judged by the answer. We are falling short if we cannot answer as we ought. The least in the Kingdom of God is supposed to be greater than John the Baptist; yet he met this test, when he said of his Successor, "He must increase, but I must decrease." We are less than the least in the Kingdom if we cannot say as much. The work, the wonderful glorious work, must be our passion, not our own doing of it in our own particular way. If the work is truly first with us, our hearts will not be broken so easily; we can see the workers pass, even ourselves, while the work goes on triumphantly down the ages. Surely it would be far greater grief to any of us to reach the life beyond, and there discover that the work had ever suffered or been hindered because of our fragile hearts!

The personal element in the work of Christ's Kingdom will always be a large one. The work will always come close to the hearts of His true workers, and become a thing of vital import to them. But we have no right to strew the King's Highway with the broken glass of our personal feelings and ambitions. A prayer that all of us might pray with profit would be, "Harden my heart against myself; make Thy work first with me!"  
—*Christian Observer*.

THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY (W.M.S.)  
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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## How the W.M.S. Wheels Go Round

*This paper was read at St. Andrew's Church Auxiliary, Toronto, by Mrs. D. D. Calvin, and is printed at the special request of the Editorial Committee.*

I HAVE chosen the title, "How the W.M.S. Wheels Go Round", not to give you any elaborate simile of the Women's Missionary Society (W.M.S.) as a machine, for I know nothing of mechanics, but rather to suggest that between the individual members and their interest and givings at one end, and the actual work supported by the Society at the other there must be some system of management—some machinery in other words—or all would be in confusion. I confess that before I had a share in its workings I knew very little about this machinery.

Up to 1927, I had held no office except that of Corresponding Secretary for a brief period in either of the two Auxiliaries to which I had belonged. I had heard such terms as Presbyterials, Provincials, Supply Secretary, allocations and candidates, but was very vague about what they stood for. Then I was asked, and agreed, to become a member of the Council Executive, after being warned that it would mean a good deal of work but would be very interesting. I knew, of course, as all W.M.S. women know, that no remuneration was attached to the post of any Secretary on the Council Executive; the work is its own reward. I well remember coming back from my first meeting—the usual Tuesday morning three-hour session in Knox College Board Room—and lying down for the whole afternoon, quite exhausted by the effort to understand what it had all been about. So many wheels had been turning that morning that I was quite confused. Later on I was given a wheel to turn myself—and before long I realized that the whole machinery was outlined in the Constitution of the Society. You will find this rather alarming document printed at the end of any Annual Report up to 1931 when, for the sake of economy, it was omitted for the first time, and since, printed separately.

Part of the Constitution deals with the formation of the Society—Provincials, Presbyterials and different branches of the Society—Auxiliaries, Young Women's Auxiliaries, Girls' Organizations, Mission Bands, and their relation one to another, together with rules for the forwarding of reports, money and supplies—but I leave all that aside and come to the Council.

The Council is the administrative body of the Society. It is made up of the 35 members of the Council Executive (6 of whom are the Provincial Presidents) 5 other members from each of the 6 Provincial

Societies—and the Presidents of the 41 Presbyterials making a total of 106 members. It will be readily seen that as the homes of the members of Council are scattered from Quebec to British Columbia, there cannot be frequent meetings of the Council. At first it met once a year, just before the date set for the General Assembly and, since 1929, only once in two or three years, because of the great expense of bringing the members for the four day sessions. Since 1925, the full Council has met in Saskatoon, Windsor, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. Three times the Council Executive, slightly enlarged by the addition of one member from each Provincial Society, had met in Toronto to do the work of the Council, and this year the Council is to meet in Montreal but with reduced Provincial and Council Executive representation.

When the Council or the Enlarged Council Executive meets, it receives the annual reports of the Secretaries of the Council Executive, gives instructions, plans new work and, last but not least, decides what sum of money may be asked for from the Society for the coming year. Then the members go home and the Council Executive is left to see that the wishes of the Council are carried out.

But what is this Council Executive, you will ask. It is made up of 35 members of whom 6 are the Provincial Presidents. The remaining 29 are chosen from the W.M.S. members living in Toronto, or so close to it that they can attend not only the weekly meetings but numerous committee meetings as well. Only very rarely can the distant Provincial Presidents attend the meetings, but all receive from time to time statements of the completed business from the Council Executive minutes.

There is another function of the Council Executive that must be mentioned: the link between the Church's General Board of Missions and the Council. As a matter of fact, the Council Executive, although nominated by the Council, is actually elected by the General Assembly, as one of its standing Committees and the Society's work must therefore be reported each year to the General Assembly. At the present time seven members of the Council Executive are members of the General Board of Missions, three of these act on the Executive of the Board of Missions, and one on the Sub-executive. This close connection between the W.M.S. Council and the General Board of Missions is very necessary because to the Women's Missionary Society is entrusted much of the work among women and children in the mission fields of the Church.

Now let me take you to a meeting of the Council Executive—on a Tuesday morning at ten o'clock. It is held in the Board Room at Knox College, a long panelled room, with a finely carved stone fire place on one side and casement windows at either end. Down the centre runs a long and handsome table around which fourteen huge leather cushioned chairs are placed. Other large chairs and two benches form an outer line of seats and from the walls above the panelling six revered old Professors look down from their gilt frames. The President sits at the

head of the table facing the door, while the Editor of the *Glad Tidings*, who takes copious notes, sits at the other end. On the President's right sits the Recording Secretary taking down the business. Next to her is the Treasurer, and then the Secretaries for India, Chinese in Canada, and Hospitals and Presbyterian Residences. On the Editor's right sits the Candidate Secretary. Farther up the table are the Supply Secretary, and Home Helpers' Secretary. At the President's left is the Corresponding Secretary. Custom rather than precedence seems to have allotted all the seats. Some find the benches more comfortable than the deep-seated chairs, or friends like to sit together. A chair near the President, but not at the table is reserved for visitors and sometimes when visitors are numerous an extra bench has to be hurriedly brought in from the corridor. Many members knit during the meetings, put down special points in note books, pass along little notes, exchange understanding glances but always there is an atmosphere of interest in the business in hand and dignity and order are always maintained. An honored visitor is welcomed and bidden good-bye by the members rising to their feet. Sometimes the visitor is a missionary home on furlough, a distinguished minister of the Church, a new worker about to be sent out, or someone coming with a plea for assistance from the Society for some special piece of Missionary or philanthropic work.

The meeting opens with devotions taken by various members in turn; a hymn is sung, without accompaniment, the Bible is read and prayers are offered. Requests to be excused are reported from the members who cannot be present, and then the work of the day begins with reading of the minutes. These are listened to very attentively, and here at once one realizes that the Council Executive is very conscious of its responsibility. The President has a copy of the minutes as well as the Recording Secretary who reads them. Phrases are carefully considered and when necessary corrected before the minutes are declared approved and signed. They are then filed away in the W.M.S. office and are also indexed.

There is, of course, a strict order of procedure, starting with the business arising out of the minutes. This often takes the form of the report of a committee, or the answer to a letter which a Secretary has been asked to write, or the verbal report of an interview. The business of the Treasurer comes next. The payment of all bills presented must be voted upon and, once a month, a financial statement is given. The Corresponding Secretary deals with the letters she has received. After that, individual Secretaries bring up any business they may have. When this has been settled or referred to the proper committee for investigation to be reported back for decision at a later meeting, there may be time to hear interesting letters read aloud, or to listen to the impressions of the delegate appointed to some special missionary gathering—perhaps an interdenominational lunch at which some distinguished missionary

leader has been speaking. Then there are announcements, and dates set for committee meetings before the members prepare to go home, but not before a short prayer brings the meeting to a close.

Once or twice a year, usually at the time of reading reports, there has to be an afternoon session following an adjournment sufficiently long for the members to get lunch in one of the nearby tea rooms. An amusing incident took place during one of these afternoon sessions. The President had jokingly threatened "shooting at dawn" for any secretary whose report was not ready for the next meeting. At that instant there came a sound of gunfire close at hand. It took a moment for the startled hearers to realize that it was the usual salute being fired in Queen's Park to mark the prorogation of the Legislature. There are red letter days when the Council Executive in accepting the estimates for the coming year or in hearing how much money came in during the previous year gets a vision of all the work supported by the Society and of the forty-one thousand members who have contributed to its funds. There are sad days when the death of a faithful worker is reported or when the members stand to hear an "In Memoriam" minute read; and there are glad days when a new missionary or deaconess is accepted for service in some special field, welcomed and dedicated to the work.

I spoke earlier of being given a wheel to turn. By that I meant that the management of one section of the Council Executive's work was given to me and that I became Secretary for that section. Inside the cover of any copy of *Glad Tidings* you will find the names of the Council Executive members and the sections, or wheels, or departments for which each one is responsible. The duties of the Secretaries vary slightly but all conduct the correspondence of their departments. Some have workers to write to in the various mission fields or W.M.S. Institutions, and have all kinds of arrangements to make for these workers. Others correspond with the Provincial Executive Secretaries, and some whose departments come under the heading, Organization, are also responsible for a page in each number of the *Glad Tidings*—such work as Young Women's, Girls' Work and Mission Bands. The Candidate Secretary receives and writes countless letters all dealing with the engagement of new workers, and I cannot even imagine all the duties that fall to the lot of the President and Treasurer or how they ever find time for them all. Every Secretary must write an annual report about her own department which is read to the Council Executive, presented to the Council, accepted by it and is finally printed in the Annual Report of the Society. The Council Executive must also hear the reports that come in from the National and Overseas workers and from the Secretaries on the Provincial Societies. Reports bulk very large in the year's work.

All this work would be quite too difficult and responsible for anyone to undertake were there not definite instructions laid down for the conducting of the work or were it not possible to bring each problem to a com-