WI told to embrace change

By Mary MacArthur
Camrose bureau

Marion Brown stood at the front of the convention hall and asked the women if they could remember when they were afraid to eat food cooked in a microwave oven.

Then the Alberta Women's Institutes' convener on agriculture education asked how they feel today about biotechnology and genetically altered food.

Agriculture is changing, the world is changing and Brown challenged the women to find out as much as they can about the changing world to help them face the upcoming changes to the WI.

The Challenge of Change was the theme of the two-day AWI convention in Camrose.

Keynote speaker Morris Flewwelling said the women may feel overwhelmed with changes facing their organization established in 1909, but change is nothing new.

In the past 50 years homes have gone from rotary telephones to computers and the in-ternet. Hospitals and libraries, once established by Women's Institutes to help the community, are being run by government-appointed boards and the rural economy is tied to global happenings.

"The WI has been an engine on the train in many areas of social change," said Flewwelling, adding that the organization must continue its community work.

"At no time in our history have we needed people like you more."

With an aging membership and a structure that hasn't changed much since it was established, Flewwelling challenged the women to adopt change within their organization.

> *"You have to change the WI to remain strong, relevant and vital."*
>
> **—Morris Flewwelling, speaker**

"You may have to change the WI in order to remain strong, relevant and vital. You may have to change your structure.

"You need an organization that is responsive, athletic and loving."

President Doris Northey of Red Deer echoed Flewwelling's remarks that change is necessary.

"We will move forward. We will have regrets, but we will move forward."

WP photo by Mary MacArthur

Delegates at the Alberta Women's Institutes meeting in Camrose were told to change with the times.