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**CARD OF MEMBERSHIP.**

*(Designed by Muirhead Bone.)*

The Women's Co-operative Guild is a self-governing organisation, numbering at December, 1926, **57,874 members**, who work through Co-operation for the welfare of the people.

12 OCT 1928

# THE WOMAN *with* THE BASKET

THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE GUILD

1883—1927

*"Of Whole Heart Cometh Hope"*

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dep

*By*

CATHERINE WEBB

MANCHESTER :

Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works.

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## FOREWORD.

**I**T is a great pleasure to respond to the kind wish of the Central Committee of the Women's Co-operative Guild that, as their former General Secretary for thirty-two years, I should send a greeting to the 57,825 Guildswomen of to-day. And associated with me in writing these words, as all Guildswomen would rightly expect, is the former Assistant Secretary, Miss Lilian Harris. For very many years she has contributed to Guild work, whether concerned with the policy or administration, to an extent known fully only to myself.

The Guild has been fortunate in having for its historian one who was among the earliest members to be enrolled. Ever since 1883, Miss Catherine Webb has never ceased to give valuable service to the Guild, and in writing this book has added yet another claim to the gratitude of Guildswomen. Out of a mass of details, she has skilfully drawn a picture of the life of the Guild which will be an abiding stimulus to further adventure on the part of present and future members, and an encouragement to all reformers.

When I think of this republic of women I find myself thinking first, of all those individual heroines of the home whose friendship and hospitality I have had for so many years—mill workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire, teachers, wives of engineers, miners, railwaymen, Store employees, agricultural and general labourers. What poignant, pithy, spirited letters they wrote! How vividly they expressed experiences which sometimes dated back to the bad old times, when the lowness of adult wages and the conditions of wage-earning children were almost at their worst! No characteristic of Guildswomen has been more general than their determination

that their children should have chances denied to themselves.

Then I am led on to think of a Guild Congress, with its amazing sea of faces marked by hard work and responsibility, but full of vitality and humour as their delight in a joke or a racy dialect speech showed. Here was a company of women whose words embodied a knowledge of life to the bone, giving reality and weight to everything they said. "It seemed," wrote a visitor in 1916, "as if the working-women of England were gathered together and become articulate. Working-women were addressing working-women about the questions which interest them, and not to have shared their experiences seemed for the first time, perhaps, to set a woman, or even a man, apart in a way that was curiously humiliating. Certainly no middle-class woman could speak with anything like the knowledge and conviction with which these women spoke on one subject after another." It was at these ever-memorable Congresses that the spirit, strength, and unity of the Guild made themselves felt, calling out hitherto only half-conscious powers, heartening all for the difficulties ahead, making individuals proud of the results of their united action. A leading Guildswoman wrote: "It was a revelation. My spirit felt here is the opportunity I had always been seeking but never put into words. I had longings and aspirations and a vague idea of power within myself which had never had an opportunity of realisation. I felt as I imagine a war-horse must feel when he hears the beat of the drums."

It is natural to ask, in looking back, what is the outstanding fact which will be associated with a movement meaning so much to so many women. Clearly it is the emergence of the married working-woman from national obscurity into a position of national importance.

In the past, a heavy curtain had, on marriage, fallen on the woman's life, and the nation felt no responsibility

for her personal welfare or for the conditions under which she performed her great tasks. Without money of her own, with no right even to her housekeeping savings, without adequate protection against a husband's possible cruelty, with no legal position as a mother, with the conditions of maternity totally neglected, married women in the home had existed apart, voiceless and unseen.

It might well have been thought a hopeless task for a class of women who "never know when their day's work's done," and on whom personal claims are insistent, ceaseless, and irresistible, to organise and educate themselves and undertake public work and responsibilities. But the miracle has been accomplished, and who can say that the Guild has not justified its existence, and that a great and hitherto untapped source of strength has not been added to national life?

And the significant point is that the married woman first emerged and joined hands with her sisters as a *Co-operator*. Co-operation provided her, as the *wage-spender*, with a common economic basis for organisation, just as Trade Unionism united men because of their common interest of *wage-earning*. Within the Co-operative Movement the women have gradually built up their own organisation, and, in doing so, they not only faced the prejudices which confront all pioneers, but overcame their inexperience of working democratically together. From early days the Guild had to meet many of the problems common to all democracies. Perhaps the chief of these in any large body is how to keep the rank and file alert and interested, and not a mere flock of unthinking sheep. The training given by the Guild starts from the point of view that Guildswomen have common interests as *members of a Movement*, and that the education needed is in the ideas and facts which will make their movement most effective; while the success in arousing enthusiasm and energy is due to combining appropriate action with education.

How working-women made their voices heard and with what results is shown in this book. The principal contribution of the Guild to the life of married women has been in changing the whole attitude of the nation towards Maternity. Sentimental expressions of admiration, jocose remarks, and want of care and research by the medical profession are giving place to a recognition of the needs of mothers. Though much remains to be done, the foundations have been laid of a dignified and comprehensive national service of help, which is alleviating the sufferings and privations of women and making the lives of children healthier and happier.

Naturally, too, seeing that the Guild consisted almost entirely of married working-women, it was the first to put forward a practical demand for their own enfranchisement, and, in spite of the view that to ask for votes for wives would wreck the suffrage cause, the Guild's proposal for including them was the one to be finally adopted though the Guild by then was advocating adult suffrage.

In the Co-operative Movement, the effect of the Guild has been to give women their right place in the picture. The power of their revolutionary weapon—the market basket—has been made clear. Women have been transformed from buyers, ignorant of the economic results of their acts, into intelligent Co-operators, conscious that they can undermine Capitalism, and making good their right to share in the control of the Movement.

Undoubtedly, the recognition of the woman's part as the typical consumer has helped to give the Movement a deeper consciousness of its vital function as representing the consumers of the nation. It is from this standpoint that Co-operators have begun to take part in politics. Every other interest, including that of the producers, is represented in Parliament; with the appearance of the Co-operative Party, the interests of the public as consumers are at last beginning to receive



fuller national consideration. The Guild strongly supported Co-operative politics, and saw that it was through the Co-operative Party, in close alliance with Trade Union and Labour forces, that working-women could get the best value for their votes.

In looking ahead, we see that the future holds both obvious pitfalls and inspiring opportunities. Age, size, and success produce many dangers and make a severe strain on those qualities which should be the essence of a society built on fellowship. While maintaining its place as a married women's movement, the Guild will have to guard against becoming conservative and getting into grooves. It will surmount these dangers if Guildswomen choose for responsible posts those who are alive to present-day problems and hopes, who welcome and seek to apply new ideas, and who have given evidence of solid work. Nor must it be forgotten that leaders can be only the reflection of the rank and file, and that the people, as is often said, get the leaders they deserve. So what is needed is open-mindedness everywhere, the "whole heart whence cometh hope," and the finest individual action directed, not to personal ends, but to the welfare of the Guild.

Stamped with these characteristics, the Guild will remain a pioneer force, pregnant with possibilities, proof against stagnation, capable of rising to the work before it. Reforms in married women's lives are still far from complete, and the part women must play in Co-operation and in the new social order is not yet fully worked out or assured. They are more and more being relied on to further Co-operative progress, and through the Guild they have the power to propose and press for new developments and to make their contribution to the solution of the new and urgent Co-operative problems.

It is through the Guild, also, that Co-operative women can take their place as an organised force in the whole Labour Movement, thus helping to establish the Co-

operative Commonwealth, where there will be "equal fellowship for women and men in the Home, the Store, the Workshop, and the State."

And the future is not concerned only with national problems. The causes of International Co-operation and Peace are causes which will call forth the highest endeavour of the Guild. A strong international spirit is showing itself amongst Guildswomen. They have supported with enthusiasm the formation of the International Co-operative Women's Guild, to which response has already been made by women from over 20 countries, with the result that, throughout the world, women's importance in Co-operation is being more widely understood. At the same time the English Guild has taken a keen interest in forwarding international co-operative trade, destined in time to lead to an Economic League of Peoples, and making commerce a bond of friendship instead of a cause of jealous rivalry.

To Co-operators, looking forward to the creation of a family of nations, War is a denial of their faith, a condition of the past which must be abolished like slavery. Guildswomen have taken their stand. Before them lies the magnificent task of stimulating the growing conviction that we must turn our backs completely on War, and devote our whole energies to making Peace a reality and Co-operation the rule of life.

MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.

*August, 1927.*

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

**" In Books lies the soul of the whole Past Time :  
the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body  
and material substance of it has altogether vanished  
like a dream."**

—CARLYLE, *Heroes and Hero-worship*.

**T**HIS little book is destined to contain as much of the story of the English Women's Co-operative Guild as can be compressed into its all too few pages. Over forty years of active social organisation are here recorded.

The task is no light one for the writer, or for the reader. The writer has had to sort out, and try to present in right perspective, an overwhelming mass of material, all in some degree interesting and important ; to select, therefrom, the threads with which to weave a coherent picture of past endeavour, in order that a later generation of guildswomen may learn how the organisation they love so well came into being ; how it grew, and towards what goal its pioneer workers aimed.

The readers' task will be to forgive the many omissions which the smallness of my compass demanded, and the severe condensation of detail which could not be avoided. If these may be forgiven, the reader will, I hope, find the golden threads in the pattern which carry forward the spirit and ideals of Guild life throughout the years—"the articulate audible voice of the Past."

The story of the Guild has been twice told up to a certain date. In a "*Short History*" of the first ten years, written by myself, and published in 1895, and again in a longer volume, *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, written by Miss Llewelyn Davies, and published in 1904. Some extracts from these two records, which tell of the birth, childhood, and youth of the Guild, will help to introduce the story of rapid expansion in numbers, service, and responsibility which followed the "Coming of Age" in 1904.

Throughout these pages I have endeavoured to focus attention upon the Guild as a living, thinking, acting entity, rather than gathering its history round the names and personalities of its individual leaders. To do otherwise would, indeed, be to take a wrong point of view altogether of an organisation so democratically founded and so co-operative in its essence.

Nevertheless, leadership and personality have been at the service of the Guild throughout all its career. Every Branch has a record of its pioneer workers and its leaders who stand out in some sort of prominence. Year by year some name comes to the front and is linked with some useful proposal or action of influence. The Guild is very proud of its members who have attained offices of responsibility within the Movement, and in honourable citizenship outside; but it also glories in its large and growing company of united rank and file members, on whom its real value to Co-operation rests.

The present History was to have brought the story up to the year 1921, when after 32 years' voluntary service as General Secretary, Miss Margaret Llewelyn Davies retired. With her, retired also Miss Lilian Harris, her devoted friend and Assistant Secretary, who shared with her the labour of the years, and the love and admiration of the Guild. This seemed a fitting period at which to pause and look back.

Unfortunately, the work has been hindered in its execution until now (1927), and I have added, therefore, a brief account of the succeeding six years—extremely important ones from the point of view of organisation.

I do not pretend that the story is critically, or even impartially told. All the essential facts are drawn from documents which have passed the test of acceptance at annual meetings or conferences, but I have *loved* the Guild throughout its forty-two years of life, and I cannot do other than try to make all who read these pages see it, as I see it, a strong, sane force in the social betterment of working women.

*June, 1927.*

C. W.



**ALICE S. ACLAND.**

**First Secretary, 1883-4 ; First President, 1884-5 ; Editor,  
Women's Pages of the "Co-operative News," 1883-6.**



MARY LAWRENSON.  
Co-Founder, 1883, and General Secretary, 1885-9.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BEGINNINGS.

"How great a matter a little fire kindleth."

—James III., 5.

**H**APPILY, we may liken the story of the Guild's beginnings to a spark set to a little pile of drift-wood, heaped together by some unrecognised agency.

How quickly the little fire lit up, how bright it grew, and how its warmth has cheered the lives of thousands of working women is a tale worth being "thrice told."

The spark was laid in 1883 by Mrs. Arthur Dyke Acland, the wife of Mr. Arthur Dyke Acland,\* well known for his great services to the cause of education. Moving about with her husband amongst the workers in the North of England, and meeting many co-operative leaders and their wives, Mrs. Acland became deeply impressed, not only with the value of Co-operation, but with the marvellous capacity of the women in their own homes, and she felt that they ought to have larger opportunities for self-expression in other directions.

Mrs. Acland rightly thought that she saw in Co-operation an open door to wider opportunities for women.

The Co-operative Movement is founded upon a membership of consumers; and women, who naturally have the purchasing power in normal households, have never been wholly excluded from membership. Certain restrictions, such as admitting only one member of a family—either husband or wife—to membership some-

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\* Mr. Acland later became Sir Arthur Dyke Acland, and his death in 1926 was deeply regretted by educationists and co-operators alike.

times shut out the woman, but otherwise the Movement recognises no sex distinctions in its general rules and practice. The social and economic inequalities between men and women, which up to a very recent period existed as part of our social system, hindered women from taking full advantage of the equal opportunities which the Co-operative Movement gave to its members.

Mrs. Acland went straight to the heart of the matter in her first appeal to the women members, saying :—

“ What are men always urged to do when there is a meeting held at any place to encourage or to start co-operative institutions? Come! Help! Vote! Criticise! Act! What are women urged to do? Come and *Buy!* That is the limit of the special work pointed out to us women. We can be independent members of our store, but we are only asked to come and ‘buy’ . . . In this matter of co-operation why should not we women do more than we do? Surely, without departing from our own sphere, and without trying to undertake work which can be better done by men, there is more for us women to do than to spend money. Spend our money at our own store we must, that is a matter of course; but our duty does not end here, nor our duty to our fellow creatures. To come and ‘buy’ is all we can be asked to do; but cannot we go further ourselves? Why should not we have our meetings, our readings, our discussions? ”\*

This appeal came about in the following happy way. Amongst the notable leaders of the movement whose friendship Mrs. Acland had gained was Samuel Bamford, editor of the *Co-operative News* (the organ of the Co-operative Movement), with whose cordial sympathy a column of the *News* was thrown open to women and christened the “ Woman’s Corner.”

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\**Short History*, page 10.



Mrs. Acland was appointed editor, and on January 6th, 1883, she opened the column with the spirited appeal just quoted, and thus set the spark to the waiting tinder.

The debt which the Guild owes to the Co-operative Press and its editors will be fully revealed as our history proceeds, but at the moment it is my purpose simply to trace the early beginnings of the Guild as the little bursts of enthusiasm sparkled up in the "Corner" which co-operative women instantly adopted for their own.\*

Following on the suggestive opening made by Mrs. Acland, came two letters, one from Eleanor H. J. Allen—afterwards Mrs. Redfern—rejoicing in the establishment of the "Corner," and another from S. Newman, Norwich, in which she voices the hitherto *unspoken feelings* of countless thousands of working-class housewives in the '80's.

"Women want more changes than they have now; they want taking away from the cares of home for a time, and I think there ought to be meetings held at the store expressly for women . . . so that we could converse together on co-operation. Men hold meetings; why not women? I think that would be a nice change for us women, and at the same time we might be doing a little good. In fact, I think there ought to be women on store committees."

For those who are able to look back to these distant days, what a picture do these few words recall of the dull drab lives of working women, whose only defence against contamination with the sordidness of coarse misery was to "keep themselves to themselves," and absorb their whole energies in a constant round of household duties! But it will be seen that there is more in this longing cry than a desire for "change."

"At the same time we might be doing a little good," wrote Mrs. Newman; and in these words we get the key-

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\* The story is drawn from the two early histories, the pages of the *News* and from other sources.

note of the national organisation of co-operative women which was to come into being during the next few weeks.

On February 10th there appeared a letter signed "M. L., Woolwich," saying "If only Mrs. Acland and a few others would form a Central Board and draw up a plan which we might all follow, mothers' meetings ought to be successful."

"The suggestion in this letter was promptly seized upon by Mrs. Acland, who immediately invited practical ideas as to the formation of a Women's League for the Spread of Co-operation, its name, rules, and objects. Three weeks went by and "M. L." again appeared with a list of practical suggestions for forming a league, with a Central Board and Local Committees, subscriptions, &c., and asking Mrs. Acland to be President. To this, on March 10th, Mrs. Acland replied, offering to act as a 'centre' for correspondents willing to join the League; and we find, in a carefully arranged record of 'M. L.s.' against the date, April 15th, 1883, these words: 'We now number seven.'"\*

The seven pioneer members were Mrs. Acland, Mrs. Lawrenson ("M. L." of Woolwich), Mrs. Baker, also of Woolwich, Miss Greenwood (Rochdale), Mrs. Andrews, and two women from Aberdare of whose names I can find no record.

The League received its formal inauguration at a meeting of women called together on the occasion of the Co-operative Congress held at Edinburgh in June, 1883, when "the numbers of the League swelled from 14 to 50, and many present volunteered to become local

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\**Short History*, pages 11-12.

NOTE.—It is pleasant to record that Mrs. Lawrenson is still an active member of her branch at Woolwich, and still builds castles in the air. Her colleagues have recently accorded her the honour of the Freedom of the Branch, with other tokens of the esteem and affection in which she is held.

secretaries *pro tem.*, and went back to their various localities to press on the work of making branches."

At this meeting a subscription of sixpence per member was decided upon, and the following "objects" of the League were set out in the first circular issued in its name.

1. To spread a knowledge of the advantages of Co-operation.
2. To stimulate amongst those who know its advantages a greater interest in the principles of Co-operation.
3. To keep alive in ourselves, our neighbours, and especially in the rising generation, a more earnest appreciation of the value of Co-operation to ourselves, to our children, and to the nation.
4. To improve the conditions of women all over the country.

In speaking to this meeting Mrs. Acland said:—

"Our part in Co-operation is to be the sunbeams, the encouragers. Above all things our influence must be quiet; our motto 'Study to be quiet and do your own business.'"\*

On another occasion she said: "First and foremost we must be practical."

Lest these two statements should seem to be conflicting, it is well to remember that, as Lady Acland tells us in a recent interview:—

"The women who were fighting for the rights of women (in 1883) were sometimes strange in their personal appearance. Co-operative menfolks were fearful that I intended to lead their wives and daughters to adopt similar styles of dress and speech. So I had to walk with the most wary caution.

"People charged me with stirring up unrest and discontent amongst the women, but one knows now

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\**Co-operative News*, June, 1883, page 505.

that one only voices the unrest—the desire for a wider outlook—that was rising in the minds of all women.”†

We can trace this attitude of rational and dignified independence, combined with organising capacity and ideals, in the conduct of Guild leaders throughout the whole of its history. These characteristics have enabled the Guild to win its way into the place of honour it holds to-day.

On September 17th, 1883, Hebden Bridge Branch was formed, with 40 members present, and Mrs. Helliwell as Secretary. In November, Rochdale Branch was inaugurated with 14 members, and Miss Greenwood as Secretary; and in December, Woolwich Branch, with Mrs. Lawrenson as its Secretary, started with 22 members. Early in the next year (1884) came the establishment of Norwood Branch, with Mrs. B. Jones as its Secretary; Coventry, with Miss Shufflebotham; and Chelsea. In February, 1884, Hebden Bridge held its first public tea and meeting, attended by 200 people.

In the report she read Mrs. Helliwell says:—

“The number on our books is 60. We have had five monthly meetings. Two papers have been read by members of the League on ‘Co-operation, and how to improve it.’ Two meetings were taken up in discussing Drapery and other things. A good number were in favour of cheaper goods to meet the wants of the poorer classes, who were obliged to go elsewhere to get them. A deputation of three members was appointed to see the Drapery Committee, and suggest such alteration as might be necessary for doing a good trade.”\*

Even at its inception the League was national in intent, and the formation of a Central Fund and a Central Committee had already been mooted. Owing

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†*Woman's Outlook*, December, 1921.

\**Short History*, page 12.

to the indisposition of Mrs. Acland no meeting was held at Derby Congress in 1884, but a short report of the year's work was published in June, in the Women's Corner of the *News*, in which it was stated that the total membership, including associates, numbered 235, and the Income of the Central Fund amounted to £3. 10s. 9d.

In August, Woolwich Branch published its first balance sheet, and in September, Wallsend and Battersea Branches, the latter with myself as Secretary, were established.

During this year Mrs. Acland resigned the Secretaryship owing to ill-health, and became the first President of the League, having first, by correspondence through the "Corner," gathered round her a Central Committee as follows: Miss Allen, General Secretary; Miss Greenwood, Vice-President; Miss Shufflebotham, Treasurer; Mrs. Helliwell, Mrs. Lawrenson, and Mrs. B. Jones, Committee.

Thus was the new working women's organisation launched.

It may be said, that to the initiation of an association so completely novel as that of the Guild in 1884—novel not only to co-operators, but to the world in general—active and passive opposition was to be expected.

It had to meet and overcome a good deal of tacit opposition from husbands, societies' officials, and committees. Men who had themselves hitherto carried all the responsibility of public and social organisation were a little dubious as to the possible results of women's active "interference" in the management of concerns over which they had ruled so long.

It was the fashion in those days for men to think, and to say, that the "woman's place is at home." This opinion found expression in remarks such as "Let my wife stay at home and wash my moleskin trousers," and even less polite phrases. The men of 1884 echoed

the dicta of "public opinion" in opposition to women's entrance into public life, just as men of 1927 voice the public opinion growing to-day, that "Women are needed in every rank of social service."

As our history proceeds, it will evolve, I think, that co-operative working women played a large part in bringing about this change of opinion.

Since the change is so complete, however, there is little need to dwell upon obstacles which no longer appear to offer insurmountable difficulties; although it must be confessed that there still lingers, even at the time of writing, certain masculine preferences and prejudices which hinder, if they do not actually prevent women from reaching equality of opportunity, and of responsibility in the movement—as in public life generally.

It is a happier task to record the fact that encouragement and support were freely offered even in the earliest days, by men of weight in the movement, and by fathers and husbands of the pioneer workers.

Mrs. Lawrenson tells how, from her father and his "earnest minded friends," she learnt "to ponder the 'why' of poverty and distress, and of injustice and weakness, and to build castles in the air."\*

Edward Vansittart Neale, the honoured Secretary of the Co-operative Union, encouraged Miss Allen, then working under him in the office of the Union at Manchester, to become the first General Secretary of the League. Mrs. Lawrenson received a letter from him, dated September 18th, 1886, in which he says: "I am much pleased to do anything to further the action of an institution so valuable as the Women's Co-operative Guild actually is—still more as it promises to become." †

Mr. Abraham Greenwood, of Rochdale, one of the pioneers of educational work in Rochdale, an "original

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\**The Women's Co-operative Guild*, page 17.

†*Ibid*, page 18.

member" of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and its first chairman, was one of the first to give encouragement to the new organisation. He warmly supported his daughter in her leadership of the Rochdale Branch. It was Miss Greenwood who suggested, when the general rules were under consideration in August, 1884, that the name should be changed from "League" to the more happily expressive "Guild."

Mr. Benjamin Jones gave to his wife unstinted encouragement and support, as did my own father to myself, in every step of the organising work which fell to our share in those early years.

Not the least of the difficulties encountered in those early days, however, came from the women themselves. Most of them were pathetically ignorant of business methods, or of any ideas of co-operation beyond criticising the cost of goods, and appreciating the "divi."

"They had little conception of what the guild was for, except as an adjunct to the management committee, who, when arranging Penny Bank teas, relied on the work of the women."\*

In the minutes of Battersea Branch, November 27th, 1884, it is recorded that a tea was held at which Mrs. Lawrenson, representing Woolwich; Mrs. B. Jones and Mrs. White, representing Norwood; and Mrs. Glover, from Chelsea, gave reports of their branches.

"Woolwich had already been useful to the Society in drawing new shareholders, and in bringing about a better understanding concerning the price of many things sold at the shops. They had also been instrumental in starting French and singing classes, which were doing well."

"Norwood had much to contend with, the members being few in numbers and many of them lacking in interest. One great drawback to their progress being that the people generally are very

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\*Recollections of two old members of Reigate Branch.

dependent on 'charity,' which is at all times opposed to 'self-help.'"

"Chelsea branch suggested art needlework classes in order to draw in the young women."

Difficulties occurred, too, in finding occupations to fill out the time of meetings.

"There being no other business to transact, Mrs. S. read Mrs. Acland's New Year's address to Co-operative Women, and the rest of the evening was spent in conversation on general subjects."†

The formative years of a social institution are like the formative years of a child's life, of deepest interest to his parents, but of little interest to the world at large until the child begins to show the qualities of which he is made. Teething troubles, little colics, bumps and bruises are the common lot of babyhood. So, too, the ups and downs of branch histories in the early days were common to all, and need not detain us long. My chief concern is to trace the beginnings of efforts at constructive policies, progressive activities, and co-operative and civic services, which make the Guild what it is to-day.

It has been said that it is the habit of the English, when attempting reforms, to gather up the best things of the past and adapt them to progressive necessities, rather than by sudden revolution to change the order of their social life at one great sweep.

With few models of women's organisations to copy from except the Church and Chapel Mothers' Meeting, and of the Co-operative Union for co-operative organisation, the branches at first proceeded to adapt what seemed best suited to their needs from these models.

"Some of the members suggested that it would be a good plan to devote part of the evening to reading a nice book, and the meeting readily fell in with this idea."\*

†Old Minute Book, January 1st, 1885.

\*Old Minute Book, May 21st, 1885.



"Help-in-need" Funds were instituted. Money was allocated for buying materials for making up useful garments. Red flannel petticoats were not despised!

"Woolwich Branch reports that 'steps are being taken to form a club for the benefit of sick members of this branch.'"\*

"It was proposed to undertake to procure Letters of admission to Hospitals and Convalescent Homes from ladies and gentlemen who had them to spare."†

Coal clubs, clothing clubs, sick visitors, maternity bags, were almost immediately established by the branches. These imitative activities soon, however, ceased to satisfy the progressive ideas of the leaders. Mrs. Lawrenson had from the outset urged the encouragement of definite co-operative class study, especially amongst the young. Inspired by her enthusiasm, children's classes were established in connection with Educational Committees of Societies, with guild members as leaders and teachers, and Mrs. Lawrenson herself became one of the first women to be elected on to an Educational Committee (for Woolwich in 1885). In 1886 we find the Educational Committee of the S. Section of the Co-operative Union requesting the Guild to assist in teaching children the ABC of Co-operation.

A "Co-operative Agency for Female Labour" was organised at Battersea in October, 1884; foreshadowing "Home Helps." Proposals for the establishment of Co-operative Workshops for girls and women engaged the interest of the Guild generally, and of Mrs. Lawrenson in particular, and propaganda on behalf of productions made in co-operative workshops on profit-sharing lines was engaged in.

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\**News*, October 4th, 1884, page 896.

†*Old Minute Book*, Battersea Branch, October 16th, 1884.

This note signifies the early beginning of the movement towards convalescent care for sick co-operators which is now an established feature of co-operative social service.—*See* page 156.

Meanwhile the organisation of the Guild as a National association was moving forward. Miss Allen held the general secretaryship for one year, and in 1885 Mrs. Lawrenson was elected in her stead. "The identification of Mrs. Lawrenson with the 'M. L.' of Woolwich, whose letter to the 'Corner' two years before had set the Guild ball rolling, had long been an open secret. We find her now ready and willing to take upon herself, as general secretary, the chief work of keeping the ball rolling on its road *uphill*, towards the plain of recognised usefulness that her enthusiastic aspirations longed that it should reach."\*

Progress at this time was continuous and gratifying, if not of the remarkably rapid growth noticeable in later years, when the Guild became an accepted factor in the Co-operative Movement.

General rules and model branch rules were under discussion in 1885, and at the suggestion of Mrs. Benjamin Jones, the first conference of the Guild took place at Hooper Square, Leman Street, on April 15th, 1886, when the organisation of the branches into districts came under consideration. "Miss Webb was in the chair and there were over seventy women present."†

The annual meeting of 1886, held at Plymouth,‡ "was a brilliant success, nearly 300 women being present, one of the results being the formation of the Plymouth Branch."\*

Seventeen branches, with between 500 and 600 members were reported to this meeting, and recognition of the potential value of the Guild as an auxiliary co-operative organisation was made by the Co-operative Union by a grant of £10.¶

\**Short History*, page 16.

†*Ibid.*

\**Ibid.*

‡Up to the year 1892 the annual meetings were always held in connection with the Co-operative Union Congress.

¶ See Appendix IX.

General and branch model rules were adopted, and papers on "Guild Organisation" by Mrs. Acland, and "Drapery Departments" by Mrs. B. Jones, were discussed.

During the year 1886 Mrs. Acland's health gave some anxiety, and compelled her to retire from the presidency. Mrs. B. Jones was elected to this office and held it until 1892, when the adoption of a new rule, limiting service on the central committee to three years, occasioned her retirement.

In November, 1886, at a conference held at Battersea, the formation of a Children's Club was discussed, and afterwards organised under the superintendence of Miss Sharland, through the medium of the Children's Page of the *Co-operative News*.

The annual meeting of 1887 was held at Carlisle, when a splendid advance to 29 branches and 1,400 members was reported and the central organisation flourished on an income of £21. 3s. 2½d. (including the grant of £10 above mentioned) and an expenditure of £11. 10s. 8d. Three district conferences (the first) had been held during the year at Battersea, South London, and Woolwich, when papers were read by Mrs. Lawrenson on "Elementary Education" and on "Pains and Gains in Guild Work," and a paper by Mrs. Worlidge, of Woolwich, on "Work for Women."

In 1888 the Guild met at Dewsbury Congress, when several notable steps forward were reported. Miss Amy Sharp, of Rugby, a member of the central committee, and the editor of the Women's Corner of the *News*, had been elected to the Coventry District Committee of the Union, or as guildswomen then called it "the men's committee." The Southern Sectional Board had resolved that the Guild should stand on a footing with "other auxiliary bodies," and representatives had been invited to join the newly-formed Educational Council of the Section.

Miss Holyoake, the daughter of George Jacob Holyoake, had carried a report of the Guild to the French Co-operative Congress at Tours, thus opening the door to that wider international co-operation amongst women of all lands.\*

Conferences at Marylebone and Penge brought out local branch members, Mrs. Longman and Mrs. Bowman, as paper readers, while at the annual meeting we find Marylebone branch had sent its secretary to read a paper on branch work.

This is the first recorded public appearance of a name soon to become a "household word" amongst co-operators—Margaret Llewelyn Davies, the daughter of the Rev. John Llewelyn Davies, then Rector of Christ Church, Marylebone, and one of the band of Christian Socialists whose ideals had helped so largely to shape the spirit, if not the actual organisation, of modern Co-operation.

The financial year, 1889, ends with the annual meeting at Ipswich Congress, when 51 branches and between 1,700 and 1,800 members were recorded, only seven branches being in the North of England. The year is memorable for several events.

The Educational Committee of the Union offered to assist the Guild in forming children's classes; several district associations invited the attendance of Guild branch representatives at conferences. Burnley branch received a grant from the educational committee of the Society. Mrs. Lawrenson spoke on the Guild at a meeting of the Southern Sectional Board and the District Secretaries, and the Union published a paper on "The Co-operative Movement," written by Miss Ll. Davies.

These are not really such minor events as they appear in recitation, but were solid indications that the women's organisation was winning its way in the

estimation of the movement. Two Sectional Secretaries were appointed—Miss E. A. Tournier, of Chelsea, for the Southern, and Miss McGowran (Coventry) for the Midland Section.

Two conferences were held during the year. At one of these Miss Davies, who had been elected to the Central Committee in 1888, began to show her capacity for organisation by making suggestions for the winter's work, and the Guild was brought into touch with a sister organisation of working women, the recently-formed Women's Trade Union Association, by an address from Miss Clementina Black.

“ ‘ We are all buyers,’ said Miss Black, ‘ and it is to our interest to buy our goods as cheap as we honestly can. But it is not to our interest to buy goods cheap by giving low wages to those who produce them.’ ”\*

The mutual understanding thus set up between the Guild as a body of consumers and the representatives of the workers has become woven into the tenets of the Guild, as succeeding chapters will demonstrate.

This year, 1889, also brought an important change in the administration of the Guild, in the retirement of Mrs. Lawrenson from the General Secretaryship.

“ The withdrawal of a valuable official who has had a controlling influence in an association from its very beginning is always a matter of anxious moment to its members. Many were the expressions of regret which found their way into the ‘ Corner ’ when the fact became known that the burden and strain of keeping in line so rapidly growing an organisation, combined with absorbing home duties, was getting beyond Mrs. Lawrenson's physical powers.

“ The branches combined to present Mrs. Lawrenson with a writing desk, fitted with silver inkstand

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\**The Women's Co-operative Guild*, page 120.

and pen, in recognition of her four years' services as General Secretary."\*

The acceptance by Margaret Llewelyn Davies of the Hon. General Secretaryship, as her successor, was an early milestone in the history of the Guild.

A *Winter Circular* was first issued to the branches in the autumn of 1889, and from it we may gather that the new general secretary had before her a very definite ideal as to the functions of the central committee in relation to the branches. The Central Committee could "offer suggestions" and "advise," but not dictate. Branches were reminded of the objects of the Guild: "There is a tendency," says the circular, "among some branches to allow the meetings to descend into mere sewing classes. It should be remembered that the Guild was started with the object of promoting Co-operation, and that this can only be done by members earnestly endeavouring first to educate themselves, and then to educate others. We strongly advise branch committees always to have a definite programme drawn up, fixing beforehand what should take place at the weekly or fortnightly meetings."

Then followed suggestions for readings, lectures, and various activities. The books suggested for reading were *Laws of Everyday Life* and *The Citizen Reader*, both by Arnold Forster; *Ways and Means in a Devonshire Village*, by Miss Sharland; *The Making of the Home*, by Mrs. Barnett; and *Health in the House*, by Mrs. Buckton.

It may be said that with these simple text books, hundreds of working women prepared themselves for useful and even prominently successful service to the communities in which they lived.

The Guild year 1890-91 was chiefly occupied in consolidating the organisation, extending its machinery, and initiating the rapidly-increasing branches in the

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\**Short History*, page 17.



Mrs. M. LAWRENSC  
(Woolwich).



The Late Miss GREENWOOD  
*Vice-President* (Rochdale).



The Late  
Mrs. B. JONES  
(Norwood).



Mrs. ACLAND. *President.*



Miss SHUFFLEBOTHAM  
(now Mrs. Trotman),  
*Treasurer* (Coventry).



Miss ALLEN (now Mrs. Redfearn),  
*General Secretary* (Manchester).



The Late  
Mrs. HELLIWELL  
(Hebden Bridge).

FIRST CENTRAL COMMITTEE, 1884.



MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.  
General Secretary, 1889-1921.



northern areas. Two more sections were mapped out, the North-Western, with Mrs. Brown (Burnley) as secretary, and the Western Section, with Mrs. Adams (Plymouth) as secretary. A small exhibit of co-operative productions, to be lent round to branches, was got together, and a Guild brooch designed and eagerly bought. The annual report given at Lincoln was printed with the Central Board's Report to Congress, and chronicled the rapid growth of branches and membership.

The first conference held in the North-Western Section brought into prominence another of the pioneer workers to whom the Guild owes much. Miss Sarah Reddish had been president of her branch at Bolton since its inception in 1886, and was elected to the Central Committee in 1889. Her first contribution to the literature of the Guild was a paper on Guild work read at the conference above mentioned.

In the summary of facts recorded in the Guild archives it is noted, in red ink, that at the Glasgow annual meeting, 1890, *men* were invited for the *first* time.

Mr. William (now Sir William) Maxwell spoke at the meeting, and Mrs. Lindsey, of Glasgow, also spoke and pioneered the inauguration of the Scottish Women's Guild.

This year also brought into prominence, and in the year following on to the Central Committee another devoted worker, Miss Mary Spooner, secretary of Hammersmith branch.

The organisation of the Guild owes much of its efficiency to her long service as Secretary to the Southern Section. The success of the Joint Anti-Credit Campaign\* was largely owing to her initiative and practical detailed work. Her keen interest in all that the Branches were

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\* Page 83.

doing, and her liveliness and energy, made her a welcome and stimulating organiser. Her two papers on the Co-operative Store were most valuable in helping Guildswomen to understand their responsibilities as Store members.

Miss Spooner was interested in the idea of a Co-operative Orphanage, an idea which had been mooted from time to time since 1875, when a proposal for the establishment of a National Industrial Orphanage was discussed at the Co-operative Congress of that year.

Miss Spooner and Miss Tournier were appointed to a committee for forwarding the Orphanage scheme in 1891. The scheme never materialised, but still "floats in the air" of co-operative thought to the present day.

This year (1891) was fruitful of many progressive suggestions directed towards improving the lot of women. Clothing Clubs, Help-in-Need Funds, Outing Funds, Christmas Clubs, Slate Clubs, were all started with the idea of helping members to get ahead of their chronic financial difficulties. It was even suggested that a Benefit Club, or Superannuation Fund for all co-operative members should be started. The seed of Mothers' and Widows' Pensions and Old-Age Pensions were implanted in the minds of co-operative women by discussions about the hardships of working-class lives.

In 1892 the Guild met at Rochdale and set itself the task of concluding its first decade of life with 100 branches and 5,000 members. It also undertook the first labour campaign, an effort to carry the message of co-operation to the organised trades unionists and their wives,\*

The first object was triumphantly realised, and the decade ends with 137 branches, 6,412 members, and income of £452. 3s. 2d., including £50 from the Co-opera-

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\* See Chapter VIII.

tive Union, and a donation from "A Friend," the mother of Miss Llewelyn Davies, of £100 to establish an Organiser's Fund. Twenty-nine branches are receiving grants from their societies, and 65 Guild members are serving on educational committees and 15 on management committees.

The event was celebrated at a "Festival" held in Manchester, a joyous occasion which deserves fuller description than the space at my disposal will allow.† References to the Festival will be found in other chapters, but I cannot, perhaps, better conclude this brief outline of the history of the first ten years than by quoting some sentences from the spirited address delivered by Miss Tournier at this Festival.

Her theme was "Our Structure and Faith."

"We are a collection of women who believe the world would get on much better if the privileges and blessings, both of material and intellectual life were more equally distributed. In this we do not differ from the great mass of people who have hearts in them. . . . I am sorry to say that the idea entertained by most women we meet outside our Guild, as to what we are about, is some sort of vague notion that we are a parcel of very unsentimental females, engaged in getting our tea and sugar a bit cheaper than other people. This is a deplorable mistake. There is no religion in the mere price of tea, and we claim that our cause is full of religion."

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†The change from those days is strikingly illustrated by the fact that for a considerable number of the delegates it was the first time they had left home since their marriage 20 or 30 years before.

## CHAPTER II.

### PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATION.

"We have a form of government which, because in the administration it hath respect not to the few but to the multitude, is called a democracy, wherein neither class nor rank are considered in election to public offices, but each man is preferred according to his virtue or to the esteem in which he is held for some special excellence: nor is anyone put back because of the obscurity of his person, so long as he can do service to the commonwealth."

—FUNERAL ORATION BY PERICLES.

**H**ALF the difficulties that men and women make for themselves in conducting a propagandist organisation, are due to an imperfect understanding of the principles which underlie the common action to be taken.

"The principle underlying the whole organisation of the Guild, from top to bottom, is that of *democratic self-government*. . . . 'The great point to me,' says a Lancashire mother, formerly a mill worker, 'is that we are so democratic; no patronage, but all to take their share in the government.'"\*

This root principle has been always so well understood that it has "secured freedom of initiative and sense of responsibility" in the rank and file of the members, and "enabled them to bring both initiative and knowledge to the control of policy"; to draw up for the organisation a "charter of rights and duties—and make it not only a recognised power in the Co-operative Movement, but a distinct motor in the movements of the day."†

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\**The Women's Co-operative Guild*, page 35.

†"Store Life." A paper by C. W., read at Manchester Festival, 1893.

How this principle was inculcated as a method of self-discipline in the Guild is indicated in the following quotation :—

“ We have noticed a tendency among some branches to devote a good deal of time and money in special charitable directions, such as maternity bags, free breakfasts, free teas, help for poorer members, &c. ; all these show such excellent feeling that it seems hard to warn branches that such methods have not always been found beneficial. We would urge that much discriminating care be used, remembering that we have to look, not only to the *intention*, but to the *result* of our actions.”\*

The completeness with which this perfect recognition of individual responsibility was arrived at, quite early in the history of the Guild, was voiced by Mrs. Benjamin Jones in her address as one of the Presidents at the Manchester Festival, with which the preceding chapter ended. “ We want to be trained,” said Mrs. Jones, “ not only to understand when things are wrong how we may right them, but to go about it in a business-like way.”

The Twelfth Annual Report (1895) shows “ that the Guild has been striking its roots deeper, and spreading its branches wider. Many indications of progress along the lines we have laid down for ourselves will be found. The programmes of the branch meetings show a more alert educated spirit : there is a growing self-reliance in the actions of the new district committees, and a similar development is seen in the number of our members standing for Poor-Law Guardians.”

Individual independence of action, however, soon reached well-defined limits when loyalty in co-operative trading was involved. “ One of our northern members remarked, ‘ It is as much as one’s life is worth (as a

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\*Annual Report, 1891-92.

Guild member) to be seen going past the co-op. for any mortal thing.'"

The year 1896-97 is "one of quiet, steady growth . . . signs of health are to be seen on all sides . . . in sturdy local independence, in vigorous united work, and in loyalty to the centre. The organisation is proving itself admirably adapted for carrying-out the co-operative motto, 'Each for all and all for each' . . . we seem to have struck a satisfactory balance between central and local government. . . . We believe the chief work of the Central Committee is so to advise and stimulate, as to encourage branches to be self-supporting; while we believe that the health of every branch depends on realising its place and work in the whole Guild."\*

It is the well-poised balance between central and local government which gives its great effectiveness to the Guild. Each branch possesses the autonomy necessary to vigorous local life. But every branch feels itself also a part of the national organisation, powerful to work for reforms, the strongest and the weakest supporting each other. A branch agitating for a school clinic in its own town was not working alone. Its sister branches in other towns were also making the same demands.

So we find a spirit being created in the country which would insist on clinics everywhere. The success of one branch cheered on all the others.

The Central Committee did not fear to tackle unpopular subjects because new (for example: Co-operation and the Poor; a Minimum Wage Standard for Co-operative Employees; Women's Suffrage; Divorce Law Reform).† A recommendation from the Central Committee on courageous and progressive lines

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\*Annual Report, 1896-97.

†See Chapter XIII.

won free and ardent support from the rank and file. The secret of this was that the Central Committee kept in closest touch with the branches. The circulars sent out two or three times a year, were often stirring calls to action, reminding the branches of the "high adventure" they were undertaking, and stimulating them to immediate action.

The sectional and district conferences maintained their high level as good training grounds for discussion of the newest and most important subjects before the Guild. The rank-and-file members learned there to express considered views on the policies brought forward.

The Annual Report for 1907 marks the conclusion of twenty-five years, and in an introductory survey of the work accomplished, the outlines of the main principles on which the Guild was founded are reiterated, and it was noted that during the past five years the "increase in number both of branches and members nearly doubled that of the previous five years," and the "meaning and strength of the Guild had come to be better understood."

"Our aim is . . . to be a force contributing to Co-operative progress by direct and active work in combination with other bodies in the movement. We believe this progress to lie along certain lines of reform and expansion, making for . . . equality of men and women, and the collective welfare of the members. We have grouped together a number of questions as 'special reforms advocated by the Guild.'

"These are Cash Trading, Adult (open) Membership, Abolition of Entrance Fees, Extension of Co-operation to the Poor, Minimum Wage for Women Employees, and Co-operative Health Departments.

"The other main idea connected with the Guild is that it should voice the needs and rights of women, especially of married working women. The question

of wives' savings, of the economically dependent position and curtailed opportunities of married women, of their right to work on municipal bodies, and, above all, their need of the parliamentary vote—these questions form part of the very essence of our work, and show the Guild as the champion of a class which has now found organised expression for itself."

This point of view was also indicated in the beautiful card of membership, adopted in 1908. (*See Frontispiece.*) Designed by the well-known artist, Mr. Muirhead Bone, the figure of the woman in homely working dress standing at the door of her home, looking over the factories that have shaped our present-day working-class life, to a dawn that shall usher in a new social order, lends an ideal dignity to the purpose of the Guild, described below the figure as "A self-governing organisation of women, who work through Co-operation for the welfare of the people, seeking freedom for their own progress, and the Equal Fellowship of men and women in the home, the store, the factory, and the state."

In the statement of aims quoted above we may trace a trend towards specialising the Guild—and to a certain extent narrowing its objective—which had been slowly making itself noticeable, as the self-education of the members brought more clearly into prominence the needs of married working women as a section of the nation whose importance in the scheme of social life, and co-operative activity, had been too long overlooked.

As an auxiliary to the co-operative movement, the Guild naturally attracted into its ranks a preponderance of housewives, who, as the chief purchasers, had a special part to play in advancing the success of the co-operative society.

This primary object of association was, as we have already seen in Chapter I, speedily enlarged in practice. The feeling that the organisation of the Guild gave



special scope to its members as a body of "married working women," was in the minds of its leaders long before it found expression in the survey above quoted. In her inaugural address to the Annual Meeting at Sunderland, in 1897, Mrs. Bury\* said of co-operation: "It had a tendency to complete men and women as citizens; (2) to guard the family; (3) to unite and harmonise the state." Of the Guild she said those who were in its service "got a wider view—swam in a broader stream." The late Thomas Blandford, always a sympathetic supporter of the Guild, wrote: "The moralisation of the purchaser is one of the needs of the co-operative movement, and the Women's Guild are doing no small part towards it."†

It is upon the foundation of the responsibility of the purchaser that the Guild has exercised its greatest influence within the movement itself, while it is from the standpoint of the married working women's organisation that its chief contribution to the national life has been made.

The foregoing broad outline of the main principles which animated the Guild will be more clearly defined as we observe the course of its activities. In concluding this chapter I propose to sketch, as briefly as may be, the machinery of the organisation which has been moulded upon and around these fundamental principles of association.

The W.C.G. began, as we have already seen (Chapter I), with a small band of enthusiasts scattered about the country, who quickly drew together, in their various localities, groups of seven or more members to form branches of a national organisation. Associate members

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\*Mrs. Bury, of Darwen, was one of the most vigorous and outspoken leaders of her time. She served for four terms on the C.C., and was President for the years 1896, 1904, and 1908.

†*Labour Co-partnership*, Vol. 1, page 48; 1894.

were also accepted on payment of a small fee. A set of rules for the guidance of the national body, and model rules for the assistance of the branches, were decided upon at the first annual meeting in 1885.

Branch government is purely autonomous, but the branches gladly accepted the model rules, which have been revised from time to time as experience suggested, reserving only the power to make slight variations in the number of committee members, amount of local subscriptions, times of meeting, and other details suitable to local circumstances. The General Rules regulate the organisation as a national whole, and have needed much moulding into shape, and frequent amendment as the years brought progressive growth and enlargement of scope.

The hammering out of a constitution for and by a body of women almost entirely ignorant of business phraseology, as most women were forty years ago, and equally unacquainted with procedure in public affairs, was a task of no small difficulty.

Amendments to rules have been responsible for a "certain liveliness" at more annual meetings and congresses than any other topic of discussion; and it has not infrequently fallen to my lot to help pilot changes of rules through Congresses which seemed capable of reaching the maximum of muddled misunderstanding. Rarely has a new rule, or an amendment to a rule been accepted without close scrutiny and discussion, or without frequent ringing of the president's bell.

Many of the amendments arose from the changed conditions due to the growth of the Guild, *e.g.*, the establishment of sectional councils. Others are of wider interest as illustrating problems belonging to the general development of democracy. Among these, the relation between the official bodies of the Co-operative Move-

ment and a rank-and-file organisation like the Guild, has been one of the most important problems in the life of the Guild, and is fully dealt with elsewhere.\* But an early attempt to solve it is connected with the subject of Rules.

By 1893, the Guild had outgrown the simple rules originally drafted, and among the proposals made for revision was an instruction to the Central Committee to prepare the rules for registration under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act. It was thought that this would give the Guild a more definite status in the movement, as it could then become a member of the Co-operative Union, and of the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

The draft was drawn up with the valuable assistance of Mr. J. J. Dent,† and contained 61 rules and 13 bye-laws.

At the annual meeting that year (the first held apart from the Co-operative Congress, and with two whole days of business meetings) the rules, as drafted, were accepted after a strenuous two hours' consideration, and "there was much applause when the last rule was reached"!

When, however, further enquiries were made as to the conditions of registration, it was found that the supposed advantages were outweighed by possible disadvantages to a propagandist body like the Guild, and by the cumbersome machinery required. At the 1894 Congress, therefore, the formal rules required for registration were dropped, and the proposal has not since been revived.

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\* Chapter XIII.

†Mr. Dent has been one of the stalwart supporters of the Guild from its inception. His mother, and his wife, were members of the first Chelsea branch. Mr. Dent was Labour Correspondent to the Board of Trade from 1893 to 1919.

Another democratic problem which has troubled the Guild, from time to time, is whether a time-limit for service on committees is desirable. In the Guild a time-limit was first introduced in 1888, when a rule was adopted limiting the time during which Central Committee members could be re-elected to three years, with one year's retirement before becoming eligible for re-election.

Gradually a considerable number of branches adopted a similar rule for their committees, and the question was revived and warmly debated at many annual meetings,

"some taking the view that a three years' limit is desirable, so as to leave room for others to come; others believing it a mistake to dispense with good and tried workers."\*

In 1903, at Lincoln Congress, the time-limit was extended to Sectional Councils, and has since been adopted by District Committees, and practically all branches. The question of including secretaries within this rule has been raised at several congresses, but the essential difference between the work of secretaries and committee members has always been recognised as making a time-limit for secretaries unworkable, and they are therefore exempt.

On the other hand, proposals for lengthening the time-limit for councils and committees to five years, or for abolishing it altogether have been proposed and rejected several times. The time-limit for Central Committee was once rescinded, but was reinstated the following year by an overwhelming majority.

An attempt was made in 1910 to retain the services of Council members retired by rule for a further three years as honorary members, but the proposal was lost.

In this ding-dong conflict of opinion may be traced,

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\**The Women's Co-operative Guild*, page 51.

in an interesting way, the working out of democratic ideals by a body without precedents to guide them. The practice of short service on official bodies within the Co-operative Movement was not generally practised; the Co-operative Union had no rule to this effect in the election of central boards or district committees, and only a very limited number of societies had adopted the plan for their management and educational committees.

As we have seen the Guild came finally to the conclusion that the weakness of a constantly changing personnel on the central committee, sectional councils, and district committees, with the subsequent and sometimes total loss of capable workers, was overbalanced by the educational and administrative opportunities given to a larger number of members. Combined with this was the recurring need for the exercise of a democratic choice of leaders on the part of members. A rule which helped to steady the opinions of members was passed in 1903, requiring a two-thirds majority of delegates voting at Congress to secure the passing of any alteration of Rules. On several occasions this rule has prevented Congress from making hasty changes without due consideration of the effects.

Another cause of animated discussions at congresses, which requires brief mention in relation to hammering out the constitution, arose in respect to the payment of "honorariums" in the Guild. By the end of 1907, the number of branches had grown to 452, with 24,005 members, divided into six sections for administrative purposes, each officered by a sectional secretary. At the annual meeting, held at Burton-on-Trent, in June, 1907, the work of the sections was reviewed, and it was acknowledged that the rapid growth then going on made very considerable demands upon the time and pockets of the secretaries.

A scheme was therefore prepared by the Central Committee, and moved at the 1908 Congress by Miss

Llewelyn Davies, for giving up the payment out of central funds of half-fares to delegates attending sectional conferences, hitherto in force, and utilising the economy thus effected to make small honorariums to sectional secretaries.

The proposal did not go through without animated discussion, but eventually a permissive rule was added to the general rules enabling the Central Committee to make such honorariums at their discretion from time to time.

Honorariums varying from £2 to £12. 10s. per annum were paid for the next ten years, when a reversal of the policy was brought about in the following way. At the Congress held at Torquay in June, 1917, a proposal came from one of the branches "That in future all District Secretaries be paid for their work."\*

This proposal brought the Guild up "all standing," as the phrase goes, upon a question of *principle*: whether the Guild should be served by voluntary or paid workers. At the suggestion of the Central Committee, the question was deferred for a year, to give the Guild time thoroughly to consider the whole matter.

The question was made the more important from the fact that the payment of honorariums to branch officials was increasing in the Guild, and that some richer branches were paying fees to Guild speakers, a custom which placed the poorer branches at a disadvantage, some "hesitating to invite speakers because they cannot afford to pay what might be expected."

In the early part of 1918 the question was discussed with great thoroughness throughout the Guild. On the one hand, the very human feeling was expressed that gratitude to individuals who render services to the community should be expressed in some tangible way. Experience, however, had shown to the C.C. and to Miss L. Davies, that there were serious reasons against

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\*35th Annual Report.

honorariums, which are expressed in the following extracts from a trenchant memorandum issued by the Central Committee :—

“ From its earliest days the work of the Guild has been built up on an entirely voluntary basis, and there is little doubt that the present position of the Guild, and the enthusiasm which is characteristic of it, are largely due to this cause. Where there is no monetary advantage to be gained in joining an organisation, those who work for it do so for the love of the cause, . . . Any idea that a person is ‘making something out of it’ is completely undermined.”

“ In dealing with this question we ask you to look at it purely from the point of view of the *welfare of the Guild as a whole*. . . . We are here as Guildswomen to shape and develop our Guild on such lines as will make it the finest women’s organisation in the country.

“ But the greatest argument for maintaining purely voluntary work in the Guild (outside the full-time posts paid at a living wage), is that it is the safest way of kindling and keeping enthusiasm, energy, and life. We need have no fear of the Guild becoming mechanical and dead if the rule of free service is preserved.

“ We must distinguish between full or part-time work at a living wage, and a system of small payments which it is impossible to allocate with fairness. No large organisation, for example, could carry on its work without a paid office staff. There would be no unfairness in such an arrangement, nor would it in any way destroy the spirit of voluntary work in the Guild.”

The question was decided at the 1918 Congress, with 800 delegates present, when the Guild agreed :—

“ That it is of the utmost importance to maintain

the voluntary character of the Guild work, and therefore recommends that all honorariums and fees for guild service should be abolished after a year."

In accordance with this resolution, honorariums to sectional secretaries came to an end in 1919, and the attention of all branches was called to this strong recommendation against all such rewards or fees.

In 1919 a proposal that sectional secretaries should be paid as part-time workers was referred back to the branches. At the same time the Central Committee decided that the time had come for a revision of rules to prepare for the resignation (which, after so many years, could not be long delayed) of the Guild's two chief voluntary officers, the General Secretary, Miss Llewelyn Davies, and the Assistant Secretary, Miss Lilian Harris, whose devoted services had illuminated the truth of the arguments just quoted. Another statement was therefore issued in 1920, setting forth in greater detail the financial aspect in relation to the payment for services, and again emphasizing the principles involved.

To the Congress, held in Manchester in 1921, fell the task of revising the rules in preparation for the retirement of Miss Davies and Miss Harris, and the principle for which they had stood and fought so strenuously was accepted—that services which demanded full-time professional workers should be paid for at full trades union rates, but that services voluntarily undertaken in the other positions in the Guild should be accepted without honorariums.

I must return now to a brief outline of the way in which the Guild grew to its present plan of organisation. From 1883 to 1889, the scattered branches were held together by the Central Committee and the Honorary Secretary, Mrs. Lawrenson, the medium of communication being by correspondence, the annual meeting, and the Women's Corner of the *Co-operative News*. In 1889 the increasingly rapid growth of the membership,





CATHERINE WEBB.

Member from 1884. Author of Guild History of first ten years, also of this volume ; also Secretary of Convalescent Fund from 1905.

and the advent of Miss Llewelyn Davies as the General Secretary, brought the Guild to the next step, the division into sections and districts. The areas chosen for these divisions being that of the Co-operative Union. Two sections, the Midland and the Southern, were organised, and the Southern subdivided into six districts.

In 1890, the North-Western Section and the combined Western and South-Western Sections were established, and in 1892 the Northern Section completed these main divisions until, in 1903, the North-Western Section was sub-divided into the Lancashire and the Yorkshire Sections.

The Western area was sub-divided in 1915 into the Western, and the South-Western Sections, thus completing the seven sections corresponding to the sections of the Co-operative Union. A further sub-division became necessary when, following the retirement of Mrs. Gasson from the secretaryship of the Southern Section (then the largest sectional area, with 223 branches), this section was divided into the South-Eastern, operating north of the Thames, and the Southern, operating south of the Thames.

The increasing number of branches made it necessary also to revise the District boundaries, and in many cases it was found desirable to divide the Union areas into two or three Guild districts.

The period covered by the present record ends in 1927 with 1,227 branches, a live and active body of 57,874 guildswomen effectively organised into eight sectional and 50 district areas, all circulating, like moons and stars, round the centralising and animating forces emanating from the General Secretary and Central Committee.

Other interesting developments in the process of evolution must be noted to complete the picture of the Guild Organisation. In 1894 the formation of sectional

councils was begun, the council members being elected from, and by, the branches in the various sections. Hitherto the sectional secretaries had been volunteers, accepted by the annual meeting, but in 1896 the principle of election by ballot vote was adopted.

From very early days, the members of the Central Committee, Sectional Councils, and District Committees, were expected to act as speakers, and, as will be seen in Chapter III, one of the distinctive features of the Guild organisation was the system adopted to assist these officials in their work, and to co-ordinate their efforts with the whole educational scheme so that the maximum results might be obtained.

The effect of this intensive form of education was soon seen, for in 1907 the members of twenty-seven out of the thirty-eight district committees then established were prepared to speak on the lines worked out. A list of such speakers was first issued in 1909, and in that year 150 district speakers addressed no less than 500 meetings.

In the following year 700 visits were paid by officers to branches, and so strenuous had this work become that in 1917 it was generally agreed, upon the recommendation of the Central Committee, that Guild officials, Central Committee members, Council and District members should refrain from undertaking "outside" work during their term of office. What exactly was meant by "outside" work appears not to have been very clearly defined, except that by this term "was meant work not included in the Guild programme, and did not mean work on co-operative and national committees."

The rank and file members are kept in touch with the whole organisation by:—

- (1) direct communication to the branches from the central office ;

- (2) by visits and addresses from the Central Committee, district and council members ;
- (3) by reports from delegates attending district and sectional conferences ;
- (4) by representation at Congress, where the votes of the delegates, instructed at their branch meetings, finally control the course of the whole Guild.

The woman who joins the Guild in 1927 may well be grateful to the pioneers who laid the foundations of this great democracy of working women, and who, through succeeding years, have overcome the many difficulties in their path, until at the end of a generation of effort they can hand on to a new generation of workers an instrument which, rightly cherished, can make co-operative women a power for the advancement of co-operative ideals in the social order of our national life.

## CHAPTER III.

### EDUCATION.

**"It will never rain roses. . . . If we want more roses, we must plant more rose trees."**

—GEORGE ELIOT.

**"The feeling of the founders of the W.C.G. from the first was that its success depended upon the true education of women, and not upon their mere culture. What we want is real culture, which draws out all the faculties and powers, with a desire to do our part in the salvation of others."**

—Mrs. LAWRENSON, at the Annual Meeting, June, 1893.

**O**UT of the abundance of material which the records of the Guild provide, none throw such an interesting light on the history of this women's movement as the record of self-education upon which its members embarked.

As we have already seen, the earlier branch meetings were conducted something upon the lines of "Mothers' Meetings," which were, in 1884, practically the only form of meetings open to working women. The programme was covered by reading from some "improving" book, and a short talk by a "lady," to which the "mothers" listened dumbly while they sat round sewing.

**"That women of the working class could meet together, conduct business in an orderly and prompt fashion, vote on questions of widespread import, and discuss matters of local interest with readiness and point, without the aid of a leader of more exalted station in life, was at that time a dream to be smiled at."\***

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\**Short History of the W.C.G.*, page 21.

We learn, however, that "the very first monthly meeting of the very first branch was devoted to hearing a paper read (written by a Guild member) on "Co-operation: Its advantages and how to use them." This was followed by what was modestly called "a short conversation" amongst the members present, and was the forerunner of innumerable similar papers and discussions.

The earliest text book used by the Guild was the "Women's Corner" of the *Co-operative News*, in which Mrs. Acland and her assistant editor, Miss Amy Sharp, anticipated, and succeeded in meeting, the rapidly-growing appetite of the guildswomen for knowledge on practical subjects of every-day experience.

Beginning with questions of domestic interest, Mrs. Acland herself contributed many papers on "Health," "Economical Cooking," "Training of Children," leading her readers on to the writing of "Prize Essays." "Every kind of subject was ingeniously thought of and dealt with for many years, and the papers and competitions carefully read and classified."† Mrs. Moxon, of Sheffield, a very early and active Guild member, carried off no less than 31 prizes, and maybe there are still Guild members who cherish the charming certificate designed for "pass" essayists by Miss Alice Thompson, a friend of William Morris and F. Shields.

These domestic subjects were supplemented by citizen questions. As early as January, 1885, articles on "The Municipal Duties of Co-operative Women" were published in the "Corner," and in 1889, the first *Winter Circular* issued by the Central Committee recommended the branches to study Arnold Forster's *Laws of Every-day Life*, and sixteen branches responded that they would study certain chapters of the book with the object of entering for an examination. The annual report for 1889 notes that: "Two branches

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†*The Women's Co-operative Guild*, pp. 109-110.

have had courses of Sick Nursing Lectures, and five branches have had courses of Lectures on Dressmaking. There have also been Classes for French, and Writing and Reading; and single lectures on "Political Economy," "Slöjd Work," "Domestic Economy," "Money," "Rational Dress," "Food," "Clear-starching," "Ironing," "The Skin," "Social Purity," "The Air we Breathe," "Guilds," "Proper Training for Young People," "The Industrial Revolution," and "Co-operation."

A truly comprehensive curriculum for working women in the 'eighties! No marvel that husbands and other male onlookers felt some alarm, and wondered where the Guild was leading their women folk.

In 1891 six branches had essayed the study of balance sheets, urged on by Mrs. Benjamin Jones, the President, who, with her inspired common-sense outlook, said:—

"It is good that women should take part in everything. . . . Many men could not understand a balance sheet, and it was a thing women could learn. They should not try to thrust themselves where they are not wanted, but should remember that at least they could not make greater blunders than some men did."\*

This utterance was made from the chair at a conference held in London on January 26th, 1891, when I was called upon to read a paper on "Qualifications for Store Management Committees."

Looking back I see that I set up a somewhat extravagantly high standard of efficiency for women candidates, and possibly contributed more than a little to the comparatively slow progress of guildswomen towards taking their fair share of the responsibilities of management. After dealing at length with the sort

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\**Women's Corner*, February 14th, 1891.

of duties to be undertaken by a woman committee member the paper wound up as follows :—

“ You will perhaps notice the emphasis conveyed in the words ‘ must ’ and ‘ should. ’ She must have leisure. She should possess some knowledge of terms relating to property. She should have a retentive memory, must possess an equable temper and calm judgment. She must have tact. She must have discretion. She should possess some professional knowledge of the drapery trade. She should understand figures, have justice of mind, and she must be a true co-operator. . . . It is well to remember that co-operators are not playing at shopkeeping, but are engineering before the world the most gigantic movement of the age ; it behoves us to place before us such high ideals that we shall not lightly undertake duties of so public a nature, and displace a man who might embody all these qualifications in addition to his recognised right as a ruler of affairs.”

The last few words are, of course, an echo of the current opinions of pre-franchise days !

In the eleventh annual report (1893-94) it is stated that :—

“ There is a decided improvement in the quality of work done at branch meetings, and in the business-like way in which it is carried on. It is natural that domestic economy subjects should predominate, because women’s lives have hitherto been so confined to the home, and because it is easier to rely on a paid teacher, who conducts the classes, than on themselves. But branches are gradually learning that co-operative and labour matters are what the Guild has primarily in view.”

Ninety-nine branches had in that year held classes in domestic subjects, and three branches had added physical drill to their programmes. The list of lecture



subjects were wider than ever in their range, including Women's Suffrage, then beginning to agitate public opinion with greater force. Free Education, Old-Age Pensions, Sick Benefit Societies, Socialism, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, and other literary subjects were among the matters talked about in the Guild rooms.

A few papers printed for Conferences, and others cut out from the "Women's Corner," neatly bound in brown paper, formed a little lending library of "Popular Papers."

The type of scholarship aimed at by the Guild was that of the famous Mr. Squeers. "W-I-N- win, D-E-R, der, winder, now go and clean it. When they does it then they knows it." As soon as any Guild member felt able to talk about balance sheets, co-operative dividends, or other co-operative subject they were ready to take their part in conferences, or to speak at branch meetings.

In the autumn of 1893, a course of lectures on "The English Citizen, Past and Present," was given by Mr. Graham Wallas, under the joint auspices of the Southern Sectional Board of the Co-operative Union and the University Extension Delegacy. A number of guildswomen attended and two passed the examination at the end of the course. In 1894, one of them ventured forth to give a series of four lectures on (1) The Life and Duties of the Citizen; (2) The Growth of Municipal Life; (3) The Citizen in Poverty and Distress; and (4) The Care of Public Health and the Factory Acts.

The course was planned to follow suggestions made by Mr. Arthur Acland.

The annual report for 1894-95 says:—

"We are pleased to record that the Guild has contributed the first co-operative lecturer on the 'Duties of Citizenship' . . . Miss Webb (C.C.) has lectured in the Midland, North-Western, and Northern Sections. The first course occupied October and November, 1894. Miss Webb made

her headquarters at Nottingham, and gave one lecture each week at Langley Mill, Long Eaton, Sutton, Hucknall Torkard, Nottingham, and Leicester (three), making a total of twenty-three lectures in the month. The second course was delivered at Willington Quay, Walker, Wallsend, and Newcastle."

"None of the societies had before attempted such a series of lectures, and the attendances were very satisfactory."

My own recollection of this ambitious "winder cleaning" is one of keen enjoyment mutually shared by audience and lecturer, in the study of subjects that seemed to open the doors to better conditions for the workers. What little I could tell of the way in which citizenship has grown through the centuries, was more than matched by the knowledge I gained of the lives and kindly natures of Midland and Northern co-operators.

At this time, before the sectional and district organisation was in being, valuable impetus was given to improvement in branch meetings by the appointment of an Organiser in 1893. Miss Sarah Reddish, of Bolton, was appointed for the Northern Areas. Her valuable work was immediately productive of increased membership and activity, particularly in the North-Western and Northern Sections. She held the post for two years, gaining a lasting place in the esteem not only of the Guild, but of the whole movement, to whom her clear, logical, and convincing speech came as a revelation of women's power.

She was followed in 1895 by Miss Mayo, the secretary of the branch at Berry Brow, whose six members made such a bold invasion of the society's quarterly meeting.\* Miss Mayo's vivacious and comradely methods of organising were a joy to branches throughout her reign of between five and six years. Her lively reports transmitted to headquarters were bits of sunshine to

those behind the scenes, even when her experiences were anything but sunshiny. She tells how, on one occasion, she landed from a tram on one side of a flooded area with the stores on the other :—

“ It was late . . . there were no cabs, and the nearest stand a mile away. I inquired for a cart, but they were all gone for the night. At last, after much persuasion, a coke merchant was induced to lend his coster's cart. A pony was produced from an outhouse, an orange box was found for me to sit on, and then, clasping my slides tightly, we started. It was just like going out to sea in a bathing machine. We bumped and splashed over stones and in holes, but at last arrived, and found all the audience on the pavement watching my progress and wondering why I had chosen that route.”

Co-operative education in general was at this time (1895) in very low water, although there was stirring among the advanced thinkers in the movement a desire for a more vigorous policy, born of Arnold Toynbee's “ trumpet call ” to the education of the citizen, delivered before the Co-operative Congress at Oxford in 1882.

Miss Llewelyn Davies, at the Guild annual meeting held in Burnley in 1895, submitted a paper on “ Suggested Reforms in Co-operative Education.” In this paper she set out a scheme for the creation of a vigorous central body, partly composed of men and women educational experts, and partly of co-operators who would know the needs of the workers. Sketching the possible work such a composite committee would engage in, Miss Davies foreshadowed the Co-operative College, now an accomplished fact, saying, “ There seems no reason why, in time, out of all these favourable conditions, a National School of Industrial Science might not be developed. . . . Co-operation will be doing its complete work for the nation in training its members as citizens.”\*

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\**Suggested Reforms in Co-operative Education*, by M. LL.D.

Miss Davies's paper was considered by the Central Board, and discussed at numerous conferences of the Union, meeting with the favourable approval of the late Mr. J. C. Gray (then general secretary of the Co-operative Union) but not that of the United Board, who considered the proposal "too complicated to be carried to a practical issue."†

Nevertheless, good seed was sown, for in 1896, at the Woolwich Congress of the Union, a committee of inquiry into the educational position in the movement was set up, of which Miss Llewelyn Davies was a member. From this time there was a rapidly increasing interest, both national and local, in educational ideas and policies within the movement. This growing interest was undoubtedly fanned into a glow of enthusiasm by the lively appetite of the Women's Guild for all forms of practical information. One of the results of the Inquiry Committees' Report was that the Guild became entitled to a representative on the Central Educational Committee.

Reviewing the educational work of the twenty-one years (1895-1916) following the reading of her paper, Miss Davies was able to say :—

"The Guild can, in fact, claim considerable share in the resuscitation of co-operative education. . . . Its efforts were directed mainly to arousing the interest of the general body of members, and not only of students to whom class work appealed."\*

From now onward we see the guiding hand of Miss Davies in turning the attention of guildswomen more and more definitely towards specialised studies in practical social reforms, and gently, but persistently, pushing into the background the popular domestic subjects and occupations. The Report for 1896 says : "Domestic Economy classes continue to hold popu-

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†Annual Report, 1895-6.

\*A Review of Twenty-one Years' Work, 1895-1916. Page 9.

larity, but our members are more and more realising that the first object of our Guild 'the study and practice of co-operation and other methods of social reform' is still more important. . . . Among subjects dealing with social reforms outside the movement, the poor-law has held first place."

In this year nearly 100 branch members had prepared papers on various social subjects, and 25 others had read papers at conferences or at branch meetings other than their own.

From this point the steps forward were more rapid and sure. The report for 1897 records as the "most striking feature" of the year's work, the growing recognition of the Guild throughout the movement, and the openings afforded for men and women to join in common work. Representation from the Guild was invited on to most of the Educational Committees' Associations of the Union, and subjects for winter circulars were jointly arranged.

The Central Committee prepared a set of questions for examination of Guild members, the prize being a free journey to the annual meeting at Derby. The questions were certainly "twisters," but the examination day was preceded by reading parties, and special meetings for study, the result being that 32 papers of excellent quality were sent in. It is recorded that one member was:—

"changing her house and had an invalid mother to nurse just at the time when the papers had to go in. But undaunted, she sent her household to bed early on the night of January 30th (the papers were due on January 31st), sat up till daybreak working at her paper, and took it to the post at 6 a.m. She then went to bed for a few hours, and appeared at her post at a district committee in the afternoon."\*

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\*Annual Report, 1897.

One has a suspicion that quite a number of present day members would have to sit up all night to answer the following question :—

“ Mrs. Stickinthemud says : ‘ I won’t join your stores (1) because the butter is bad ; (2) because I like to have a china pot given me with my tea ; (3) because they won’t let me go on credit ; (4) because at my shop however late I go, there’s always a girl waiting to serve me ; (5) because I don’t believe in them women’s rights and votings as I hear goes on : and (6) because I like what I’m used to, and don’t want any of your new-fangled ideas. What was good enough for my parents is good enough for me. There ! How would you answer her ? ”

The National Health Society was beginning its useful work in stirring up public opinion on the all-important social matter of public hygiene, and a series of lectures on Public Health Laws was delivered by Miss Alice Ravenhill during 1897–98, the first organised attempt, it is believed, to give popular instruction on this subject. Audiences of 100 to 500 attended the lectures, which were followed up by lectures on the “ Housing of the Working Classes ” by Dr. Bowmaker, author of a book on this subject. These two topics of social interest have never since been absent from Guild programmes as questions of practical study and public agitation.

In the following year, 1898, “ Housing ” was taken up as the subject of special study, and the *Manchester Guardian* remarked : “ The members of the Women’s Guild are evidently not afraid of attacking tough subjects. . . . So far as we know, the Guild is the only body which makes an organised attempt to promote among working people a systematic study of the problems which most closely concern their interests.”\*

Essay competitions were substituted for question

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\*Quoted in Annual Report for 1898.

examinations, the special study for the year being the subject of the essay, the lucky prize-winner in 1901 gaining a trip to the Paris Exhibition!

From this time onwards an increasing number of branches and members took up, in conjunction with the educational committees of their societies, the classes for the study of co-operation, industrial history, and economics, organised by the Educational Committee of the Union. A register of the attendances at these classes falls out of the annual report after a few years, the Guild having established a system of education upon lines of their own practical ideals, leaving it to the choice of the individual Guild member to take up the more academic courses of study under the Union's curriculum. The Report for 1907 states:—

“To carry out the aims we have set ourselves, we see the necessity of special training for our officials, as well as keeping the general level of our member's education as high as possible. This year we have made new efforts, with the view in our minds of the Guild serving more and more as a sort of training college in which the duties of officials should be taught, and where the more enterprising of our members should have help and chances of understanding more thoroughly the progressive ideas of the work of the Guild.”

This system was based on the needs of Guildswomen as members of an organisation, and began with the training of branch officials, “Classes for Presidents and Secretaries” being first held in 1907. Since then the scope of these classes has extended to cover many problems which arise from time to time in democratic organisations, and special schools for training Sectional Council and District Committee members have been added. Pamphlets on “Business-like ways for Branch Meetings,” and on the work of secretaries, councils, and committees have been published from time to time and

form the text-books for these classes. These schools and classes are now a regular part of Guild organisation.

The Central Educational Committee of the Co-operative Union assisted this project by establishing classes for women speakers. The earliest was taken by Miss Reddish in 1911, and in 1912 classes were held in seven centres. The total attendance was 408 members from about 80 branches. The teachers were Miss Reddish, Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Unsworth, Mrs. Cottrell, Mrs. Brown, and Miss Tournier. The warm thanks of the Guild were expressed to the Central Educational Committee for these classes. A course of lectures in the "art of teaching" was attended by a number of members, and the effect of the classes was to bring out the desire on the part of Guild members for a more systematic education than had previously been attempted.

An important part of the scheme was to give certain promising members a special training to enable them to serve as "Guides" for members' classes and two-day schools. In 1913 twelve courses for Guides were arranged by the Central Educational Committee in different centres and were attended by 601 members, and some 46 members' classes were also held.

In 1914 the outbreak of war, while it made an almost immediate call for public service upon the trained intelligence of guildswomen, was never allowed to interfere with the educational activities of the Guild. Guides' courses, members' classes, schools, and special studies all went on, but by 1916, experience had brought about a considerable change in the method adopted. The new method was begun in 1913, when a two-days' school in each section, and a central four-days' school for the teachers of Guides' courses was held for the first time.

It soon became evident that this system of short period schools, which could be arranged in a large number of centres within reach of many more members,



was more appropriate to the needs and circumstances of guild members than the usual system of extended studies running through a whole winter session. This held good quite apart from the immediate difficulty of travelling under war conditions. The concentrated form of education possible in these short spells of "schooling" proved a great stimulus to interest, enthusiasm, and fellowship.

In 1916, 30 one-day or two-day schools were held in 26 districts, the attendance at each school varying from 30 to 80 students. It is reported that about 1,700 members from 300 branches attended schools in the winter of 1916-17, when the perils, anxieties, and restrictions of the war were at their height.

The adoption of this system was hastened by a difference of opinion between the Central Educational Committee and the Guild Central Committee as to the methods to be adopted in the Guides' Courses. In 1915, the C.E.C. refused to accept the syllabus which the Guild, in accordance with custom, had prepared, and instead, revised the scheme of classes on more academic lines, omitting the recommendations for practical action, and cutting out a subject considered by the Guild as of supreme importance, namely, the study of International Relations.

Now, the Guild system of education is part of the plan on which the whole structure of the organisation has been developed, and these alterations would undoubtedly have interfered with its usefulness. The Guild's work as a pioneer in thought and action, would have been blocked without full freedom in the choice of subjects and method which seemed to it to combine the fundamental purpose of education translated into action.

In a Memorandum on Adult Women's Education, sent by Miss Llewelyn Davies in 1922, to the Board of Education Sub-Committee, the reasons for the Guild's



**ELEANOR BARTON, J.P.**  
President, 1914. Appointed Assistant-Secretary 1921



AMY SHARP.  
1886-1889.



ROSALIND NASH.  
1889-1904.



ANNIE BAMFORD TOMLINSON.  
Since 1904 ; Editor, "Woman's Outlook" since 1919.

Members of the Guild who edited the Women's Pages of the  
"Co-operative News," which Lady Acland also edited for a time.

special methods are so well set out that they throw a valuable light on the history of the Guild, as the following quotation shows :—

“ In considering the education wanted by the great class of married working women (and indeed of the adult rank and file of the workers generally) it will be seen that the whole circumstances of their lives and the foundations on which present-day society rests makes a ‘ student’s ’ form of education entirely unsuitable. Adult working women are occupied with the upkeep of the home, if not also in wage earning, and they belong to the class that consciously or unconsciously stands for the reconstruction of society. The majority will never be ‘ students ’ closely following up particular branches of study and desiring knowledge purely for its own sake.

“ . . . The kind of education which these adult women need is not of an intensive, neutral, and university type. It should proceed from what is concrete and affecting their every-day life as married women, co-operators, trade unionists, and political citizens. It should only be abstract in so far as general ideas and principles are needed as a background for giving the power to make intelligent judgments and criticisms on the problems of working-class life. It must be frankly biased in favour of a society organised on a basis of fellowship, and it should be severely practical. . . The nature of the Guild has determined the character of the education given. Its members are at once Co-operators pledged to Co-operative ideals, and married working women whose experiences and spheres are those of mothers and housewives, and in these two capacities they desire to secure reforms and to take part in administrative work, co-operative and national. The Guild is a movement within a movement, and Guild education aims at making the Guild itself

and the Co-operative Movement generally, intelligent, progressive, and efficient.

“ . . . An attempt is made to reach every individual member, and, as far as possible, to prevent a dead weight of ignorance and apathy existing side by side with a progressive minority, . . . a state of things apt to occur in any large democratic organisation.”

Starting with these premises—that unity of action, and effective results in Guild education can only be maintained by concentrated consideration of definite reforms, a small number of “Special Subjects” are taken each year. The Central Committee selects those questions of co-operative and national importance on which it seems possible to take immediate action, some of these subjects having already been endorsed by Congress, and others being put forward for discussion preparatory to being considered by Congress.

For example, if the question of Co-operation *v.* Capitalism is to be studied, the modern development of world-wide trusts and combines and their effect on the control of industry are explained, and the need will be urged for meeting them by International organisation for co-operative trade and finance. So with any other subject of wide interest.

The formation of clear opinions lead on to action. In the Notes for Speakers recommendations are made as to the practical steps to be taken, including deputations to Committees of Management, resolutions at quarterly meetings, letters, deputations, and memorials to Town Councils, M.P.'s, Government Departments and others who may be influenced by hearing the well-considered views of a strong body of working women.

In other chapters we shall see the results of this form of window-cleaning. Here I am dealing with the methods in which the Guild trains its members for the work.

The Special Subjects are first considered at the annual school for Central Committee and Sectional Council members, who afterwards act as lecturers at the One and Two-day Schools arranged in the different districts. The teaching notes are also sent to all District Committee members. Thus prepared, these officials, numbering in all a band of some 300 to 400 speakers, hand on to the branches under their charge information which presently finds forcible expression in Congress resolutions or concerted public action. When, for instance, the Guild asks for Maternity Centres, it does so because 50,000 working women have studied the matter and are convinced that the reform is necessary.

Sometimes when the subject needs expert explanation special lecturers have been secured for schools and conferences, which are often used for opening new campaigns. Among much-appreciated lecturers at schools have been Dr. Christine Murrell on "Moral Hygiene," Miss J. E. Case, M.A., on "Divorce Law Reform," Mr. Leonard Woolf on the difficult problems of Taxation, and some of the larger aspects of Co-operation, and Prof. Hall on "Prices." At Sectional Conferences Miss Margaret McMillan's remarkable personality and intense feeling stimulated the Guild in their work for School Clinics, and Fru Anker explained the high ideals which lay at the root of the reforms made in the Divorce Laws of Norway.

The Memorandum already quoted points out that :—

"The effect of the education given by the Guild on its members is very marked. The results are out of all proportion to its imperfect character and its amount. . . . Visitors who attend the annual Congress and outside lecturers at schools and branch meetings never fail to realise that they have come among a set of women of exceptional keenness, ability, balanced judgment, and common sense."

The use which the Guild has made of its educational principles and opportunities will be seen, as I have

indicated, in other chapters. The present chapter may conclude with a summary of the educational activities carried out in the 44th year of the Guild's history, the point at which the present study ends.

Schools were held in each of the eight sections for Council members. Special District Committee schools were held in each of the 50 districts to deal with district work. Fifty-one districts arranged classes for branch officials, with a total attendance of about 2,931 members.

Fifty-one One and Two-day schools were held in 40 districts, to consider the subjects undertaken for the year, and the Central Committee and sectional council members, together with some 300 district committee members lectured and spoke at over 2,200 branch meetings from notes uniformly supplied to cover the special subjects attacked. In addition, conferences are held two or three times a year in each district, and twice a year in each section.

We look back at the women of 1884, timid of speech and fearful of intruding upon fresh ground, occupying themselves with simple homely pursuits, and shrinking from "dry and dull" subjects of discussion, yet with spirits longing for "more roses" along the drab path of daily existence. We see them, led by brave and original methods, and actuated by the spirit of co-operation and democratic self-government, planting roses, and still more roses, in the mind-gardens of the home-makers and future citizens of the State.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OPENING DOORS.

“ If life were all a washing day  
Of toil and moil and steam,  
With not one moment's time to play,  
One minute's space to dream,—  
We well might murmur dismally,  
And blame our wretched lot,  
If life were all a washing day,  
But it's not ! ”

WASHING days may be accepted as typical days of “ toil and moil ” for working women, even in this present era of labour-saving devices ; but the little verse above could not have ended with such cheerful emphasis, I feel sure, if it had been written in the eighties.

“ A Member of the Guild ” wrote, in March, 1885, to the “ Woman's Corner ” of the *News*, asking for better opportunities in the movement, saying :—

“ The men must leave home for work, but after working hours they can attend all sorts of social and political meetings ; but if the women wish for a little variety, and would like to meet together for a little social intercourse, we are sometimes told we ‘ had better attend to our home affairs and keep the stockings mended. ’ Now I believe most women are as fond of mending stockings as men are of cleaning shoes. . . . I know that Mr. Acland and Mr. Jones, in their excellent little book, *Working Men Co-operators*, try to please us by telling us we have all the advantages in our Societies which are enjoyed by the men, but it only seems so in theory.”\*

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\*Quoted in *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, page 22.



It is true, indeed, that the Co-operative Movement from its earliest days gave equality to women *in theory*, and it is not the purpose of this chapter to throw blame upon the men of the eighties for the backward position of co-operative women. The sympathetic attitude of a number of men was in advance of the times, as we have already seen; nevertheless, the women had themselves to make the struggle for freedom, and for the wider scope they enjoy to-day. Even Lady Acland has confessed that in the early days of the Guild she thought it possible that Guild organisation and propaganda might be conducted through correspondence in the "Woman's Corner," and that women need not come forward at all into the public light.

The first step the Guild members had to take, in order to break away from the line laid down at the first meeting held in 1884, was perhaps the most difficult of all. There should be "no platform speaking, no advertising, no going out of our woman's place," it was decided. Lady Acland tells how "on this question of public speaking . . . , there were curious moments when it seemed likely a split might occur in the early Guild movement. Mrs. Lawrenson, Mrs. Jones, who followed me as president, Miss Webb and others were in favour of public speaking, while I, because of the necessity I felt at this stage of conciliating those kindly folks who were afraid of women speaking in public, had to take the other side."\*

Mrs. Jones† was, indeed, the first to raise this question of public speaking. Writing to the "Corner" in 1885, she says:—

"This was a matter of great importance to me, myself being the first of the Guild in taking this step. The Guild of Co-operators have cordially invited women to assist them in the spread of co-operation

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\*A "Chat with Lady Acland," *Woman's Outlook*, Dec., 1921.

† See Chapter XVII.

round London. As this cannot be done by staying at home, if, when accompanying our husbands to a meeting, we are invited to address a few words to the women, we should do our best. I am told it is un-womanly, but, having thought this matter over, I decided to bring it before our meeting at Congress.

“As the Women’s Guild is growing rapidly, and requires more work, I should not like to do anything in connection with it which would be likely to deteriorate us in the eyes of our fellow-workers. . . . Many of those present spoke up, and said they did not disapprove of speaking on platforms, and we ought not to be afraid to do anything that would help to bring the women more forward, and encourage them to form branches of the Guild at every store.”

It was a strong, fearless, unselfish spirit which guided the hand opening this door to public service, but the hand itself was so gentle, that the co-operative movement scarcely realised what a power for progress the women were bringing through this open door.

Recognition came very soon, however. In 1884, the Guild of Co-operators, to which Mrs. Jones refers, were glad to avail themselves of the help of Women’s Guild speakers at propagandist meetings. When, in 1886, the Southern Section of the Central Board of the Co-operative Union formed an Educational Council, the Guild was invited to appoint representatives.

Women began to attend quarterly meetings of their societies, sometimes to the satisfaction, and sometimes to the consternation of the Committees.

“‘Before our branch was started,’ wrote a Guild secretary, ‘there was scarcely a woman to be seen at our quarterly meetings, and it was quite a talk if one happened to drop in.’”\*

The Guild was, of course, fortunate in possessing from the beginning some few speakers whose utterance

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\**The Women’s Co-operative Guild*, page 101.

would gain an attentive hearing from any audience. Mrs. B. Jones, herself, quickly proved that her gentle, refined, yet homely speech was attractive on any platform. Mrs. Lawrenson was soon noted for her beautiful delivery and elegant language, while the magnetic eloquence of Miss Tournier and Miss L. Davies inspired enthusiasm whenever their voices were heard.

These early leaders had the advantage of scholarship and culture, but the speakers, for whose training the Guild can justly take pride, are the great company of hitherto silent, unschooled women, who have patiently studied to develop such natural gifts of oratory as they possessed in order to help forward the cause of co-operation, and advance the interests of their sex.

One could dwell for long on this topic, for the door had to be opened not only into the big central council-rooms of the Movement, but into the local committee rooms, members' meetings, and public propagandist gatherings.

Even the door to membership had to be pushed open by the women in a large number of societies.

"To the credit of the Co-operative Movement it may be said that, as a whole, it has opened its doors to women on the same terms as men. . . . But some Societies have, unfortunately, departed from this rule of 'open membership,' . . . in some Societies only one in a family is allowed to be a member; in others, either a husband *or* wife, and grown-up children may be members . . . while in a few societies there are customs which definitely exclude a wife, or demand her husband's permission before admitting her as a member.

"It seems that the ground of the departure from the principle of equality has probably been due, not to any hostility to women, but to the desire to limit the amount of share capital in societies."\*

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\* *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, pp. 98-99.

By a curious irony, however, restrictions of membership, where practised, tended to shut out the housewives, the member of the family most closely interested in dealing at the stores, from taking any practical part in the management of its affairs.

One of the first concerted "campaigns" within the Movement undertaken by the Guild was for "Open Membership," and the campaign lasted long, for the men folk did not welcome the intrusion of women, and a certain amount of jealous fear as to the positions women might win in the movement kept this door shut against them. Even when this element was absent it was no light task to persuade a Society to change its rules on "sentimental" grounds (as the men were inclined to regard the wish of the women for personal membership), which seemed to them as though it could hardly increase the bulk of trade.

The battle was sometimes sharp and successful, sometimes tedious and the result disappointing, but the Guild stuck to its guns until time and circumstances wore down all opposition, and to-day, not only is "open membership" the general rule of the Movement, but there would be consternation indeed, if women members did not appear in good numbers at quarterly meetings.

The Educational Committees were the first to enlist the services of women. Mrs. Lawrenson and Mrs. Sheldon, of Woolwich branch, are recorded as the first guildswomen to gain seats on the Educational Committee of their Society in 1884, but the name of the first woman to secure a seat on a Management Committee is not recorded. The annual report for 1889 records 42 women on educational committees, and in 1891 the number had increased to 73, and there were six guild members on Management Committees.\*

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\* See Appendix I.

The annual report for this year, the ninth, notes that :—

“Prejudices and apathy are being steadily broken down. The men's committees are in most cases giving us their hearty support, and the women are responding with spirit to the call to widen their interests and actions.”

We were finding out that life was “not all a washing day.”

The Guild was beginning to prepare for that great festival which was to celebrate the formation of the 100th branch, and the tenth year of age. The question of women's position in the movement was beginning to give the Central Committee some concern. An investigation was undertaken throughout the branches to ascertain the status of the members themselves in this respect, and to gather, as far as possible, an idea as to the number of women holding shares in their own right throughout the movement.

The inquiry disclosed that a very large majority of the 6,400 guildswomen were wives and mothers, “unoccupied women” as the census has it! About 700 members were under 25 years of age, and these were chiefly workers in mills and factories. About 100 married women worked at trades, such as dressmaking.

In some 100 branches it was found there were approximately 1,000 women shareholders. It was further gathered from various sources that there were more than 100,000 women shareholders in the movement, and the Guild felt justified by these facts in the steps they were taking to get a more equal representation of women on the management committees of societies. In particular they desired to have any hindrance to membership removed so that women could take their full share in the guidance of their societies.

From this point one can but follow the wider opening of the door of opportunity in outline; seeking to

reproduce in brief quotations from the archives of the Guild something of the vivid interest the years held for the women who stepped out through these doors, to the wider life guildswomen of to-day enjoy as a natural right.

The Manchester Festival was a great starting point for action.

"The Festival will always mark an epoch in the Guild's history, as making our own members and outside co-operators realise the possibilities and strength of our organisation."\*

Brief references are made elsewhere to the proceedings of the Festival, but the annual report just quoted goes on to enumerate the resolutions arrived at during the three days' sittings. These included declarations that it was the "duty" of the Guild:—(1) To secure satisfactory conditions for employees; (2) to see that trades union regulations were carried out as regards wages and hours; (3) to definitely organise co-operative propaganda; (4) to train members in the business side of store life, with a view to taking a more direct share in the management of societies; (5) to study municipal questions; (6) to arrange for sick benefit clubs for members; and (7) to promote institutions for young people.

These resolutions provided the groundwork for the Guild's activities, and from this time onwards members in all sections took an increasing interest in the working of their own societies. "Even in the smaller country places the women are bestirring themselves," says the report for 1893, "e.g., at Berry Brow, a little village near Huddersfield, the branch secretary writes: 'At the last meeting (of the Society) six of the members, led by the president, boldly took their seats in the body of the hall, and for the first time exercised their right as shareholders to vote.'" At Ravensthorpe, the

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\*Annual Report, 1892.

branch succeeded in reducing shop hours by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week. Joint work with the men's committees was increasing in volume, and the report says:—

“There is no part of the Guild policy that we are more desirous of fulfilling than this of closely associated work in a common cause.”

The door of service on the governing body of the Co-operative Union has been hard to open to women, and is even yet closed in all but three sections. In 1893 Mrs. Lawrenson was elected to the Southern Section of the Central Board, and a year later the present writer was elected to the same Board, being joined in 1900 by Miss Spooner. Mrs. Lawrenson served for two years, 1893–95, and was again elected for one year, 1896–97. My period of service was from 1895–1901 when a breakdown in health prevented me from standing again. Miss Spooner retained her seat for eight years, from 1900 to 1908. Mrs. Abbott was elected in 1902, retiring in 1906, when the present holder of the seat, Mrs. Gasson, was elected.

Many attempts were made to win seats in other sections, but without success, until in 1917 Mrs. Found was elected to the South-Western Sectional Board for two years in succession, and in 1919 Mrs. Cottrell secured a seat on the Midland Section, and at that time shared with Mrs. Gasson the honour of being the only two representatives of women in the cabinet of the Co-operative movement.†

The true explanation of the small headway made by women in this branch of service is not because they lack either the will or the capacity to serve, but in the fact that election to the Sectional Boards lies in the hands of Management Committees of Societies, who are overwhelmingly composed of men, and there is much work for future guildswomen to do to correct this disproportion—a slow and disappointing process.

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†See also Appendix I.

The Central Committee arrived at a somewhat despairing attitude of mind in 1919, when they report :—

“ We regret we cannot report much progress towards the more equal share by women in official positions in the movement. Of the 70 members of the Central Board of the Co-operative Union only three are women ; a few women sit on the Union District Committees ; there are two women on the Executive of the Co-operative Party (Political), 220 sit on Management Committees of 142 Societies, and 662 on the Educational Committees of 248 Societies. It is always said that there is equality of opportunity for men and women in the movement. Certainly, most of the doors are open. But the seats are full, and possession is nine-tenths of the law, so that in reality the opportunity is not equal, and seats are hard to win.”

Perhaps this rather pathetic lament had some effect upon the electorate, for the Report of 1921-22 shows that the rose-trees of efficiency so diligently planted and so carefully cultivated in the guild-rooms are beginning to bear blossoms.

“ We are glad to be able to record,” says the Report, “ great advances this year towards that real equality for men and women in the movement for which the Guild has constantly striven. By their invitation to Miss Llewelyn Davies to preside at the Co-operative Union Congress, the United Board extend to women the greatest honour which the movement has to confer, and showed to the world that Co-operators in this country meant, in the words of the Guild’s resolution, ‘ to lead, and not to lag behind in the practice of just and democratic action.’ ”

“ Societies have followed suit by returning Mrs. Cottrell (Ten Acres and Stirchley) to the Board of the Co-operative Wholesale Society . . . Her



success has at last opened to women the greatest English co-operative stronghold. It only remains now to seek entry into the counsels of the International Alliance."

Mrs. Barton (of Sheffield) secured a seat on the Management Board of the National Co-operative Publishing Society in 1920, thus completing the representation of the Guild upon all the important federal bodies of the Movement."\*

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\* This record of the representation of women in the Movement stops at 1922. For the present position see Appendix I.

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME CO-OPERATIVE ACTIVITIES.

**"Woman's influence begins at home ; who shall say where it ends ?"**

—Motto of the *Women's Corner*.

**"Gentlemen, there are two kinds of dreams, the dream that what has been must needs go on for ever, and the dream that there are better things in store if only the dreamers will work and suffer for their accomplishment ; and it is those who dream this second kind of foolish dream that are the makers of history."**

—*An Open Letter to English Gentlemen*.

**M**ANY chapters might be written on the educational work of the Guild, but it is time now to turn our attention to some of its activities, which, while putting into practice methods of self-education and self-government, have established records of service both within and without the Movement.

The Guild has been famous for its "Campaigns," generally conducted with a vigour and persistence which has sometimes nettled, and occasionally shocked the less mobile "official" element amongst the men.

The first campaign on behalf of open membership has already been noted.\* This campaign was materially aided in later years by the rapid development of co-operative production, and the consequent demand for more capital. The growth of federal organisation in banking, and other facilities for handling capital have done away with the chief obstacle to open membership.

In following up the history of Guild Campaigns it is very difficult to dis sever at times those which had for their object service "within" the movement, from

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\* Chapter IV, page 73. 1

those in which the Guild sought to apply its organised strength to causes "without" the movement. It may perhaps be seen when the two sides of their activities are weighed up together, that the first and main object has been to widen the area of co-operative opportunity and co-operative practice.

The campaign just mentioned, for instance, was inaugurated on no narrow principles. In a paper urging the "Right of Women to Membership," written by Miss Reddish, and read at the Annual Meeting at Burnley, in 1896, it was urged that restrictions of capital (and membership) should give way to a more adventurous use of surplus capital. The opening of "branch shops—wherever possible—in any line of business meeting the requirements of the different localities," the use of surplus capital in production, house-building, "to employ the labour of members, and physically extend the area of co-operation, . . . for our own advantage, and for the uplifting of society generally." Progressive ideas, such as these were, came with a novel force from women's lips, and acted as spurs to the men in charge of societies. The influence exercised by the Guild in the direction of opening out new regions of activity though frequently resisted by the "men in possession" began to have real weight.

In the very early days the sympathies of the Guild were strongly attracted to the ideals of profit-sharing and co-partnership forms of production, and many dreams were indulged in of establishing workshops on these lines for women and girls. Mrs. Lawrenson was always a devoted advocate of this ideal, but the difficulties in the way of practical experiment proved too many. In 1888, Miss Davies and Mrs. Nash undertook a tour of inquiry, visiting a large number of profit-sharing workshops, and the factories of the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

As a result of this special study they became convinced that the system of production known as the



**A TYPICAL GROUP OF MEMBERS OF A NORTHERN GUILD BRANCH, ABOUT 1889.**



A. HONORA ENFIELD.  
General Secretary, 1922-1925.  
Secretary, International Women's  
Co-operative Guild.

EMMY FREUNDLICH.  
President of the International  
Women's Co-operative Guild.



MARY E. COTTRELL.  
A Director of the Co-operative  
Wholesale Society Ltd., and mem-  
ber of the Publicity Sub-Committee  
of the British Empire Marketing  
Board.

Federal System, that is, production carried on by, and on behalf of distributive societies (through the C.W.S.) was the better way. In 1891 Miss Llewelyn Davies submitted a paper on "Co-partnership v. C.W.S.", which evoked an exceedingly good discussion, Miss Davies having come to the conclusion "that it is more to the advantage of the worker to have good wages and shorter hours than the doubtful chance of a share in the profits."

In a letter to the *News* on November 14th, 1891, Mrs. Lawrenson defended "Workers'" workshops, and reiterated her desire that the Guild should be instrumental in "forming associations which shall enable girls to work—if they must work—for their own profit." She held that the workers' productives "were the superior form of associative production."

Henceforward, the official influence of the Guild was exercised in the direction of building up the demand for goods produced by the C.W.S., and many campaigns were undertaken in support of specific productions, such as "Wheatsheaf Boots," "Luton Cocoa," "Crumpsall Biscuits," in particular, or "Our Own Productions," in general. It was reported from Exeter that "if a certain co-operative production is not kept, about twelve women will go, day after day, to ask for it till they get it!"\*

Papers innumerable were written and read at branch meetings and conferences. Educational visits to warehouses and factories familiarised the guildswomen with the processes of manufacture and distribution.

Guildswomen who were members of Societies in their own right attended the quarterly meetings and supported their petitions by their votes. "We always vote progressive," remarks one branch, and another writes "We don't mix in wi' t' men's squabbles; we sits still and listen, *and we votes.*"†

Looking from the point of view of the Manager and

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\* Annual Report, 1899, page 13.

† Annual Report, 1898, page 7.

shop assistants, one can appreciate the fact that these good enthusiastic women were sometimes looked upon as "troublesome busy-bodies," who had "better be at home minding their own business." It took a great many years to convince the movement generally that it *was* the business of the housewife to see that her Society supplied her needs in every particular. To-day, the assistance of the organised co-operative housewife is not only welcomed, but courted by the authorities at the head of distributive societies and the Wholesale Society.

After having won a Co-operative Minimum Wage for women employees,\* a vigorous "Push the Sales" campaign was initiated in 1913. A scheme of suggestions for joint Propaganda Committees to organise special efforts in each Society was issued in April, 1913, to the Committees of every Co-operative Society. The scheme included suggestions for (1) Co-operative Weeks, with methods of advertisement inside and outside the Store; (2) Co-operative Days; (3) leaflets and posters; (4) Guild branch meetings.

It is reported in the following year that "Branches have taken up the 'Push the Sales' campaign with great enthusiasm, and the energy and ingenuity they have put into the work are worthy of all praise."

A special push was made to abolish from the store counters private makers' soaps, tea, flour, &c., and to increase the sales of C.W.S. productions.

Queensferry branch hit on the plan of having a "Praise Night," each member praising some C.W.S. production from her own experience. The Manager of the Society reported that "whereas before he never could sell C.W.S. goods, there was now a marked difference, and the sales had risen rapidly." Oldham Industrial Society reported an increase of 150 members as the result of a C.W.S. week, and Toxteth the enrolment of 100 new members.

Fancy dress dances, exhibitions of cooking, and innumerable competitions in spoon polishing, boot polishing and other lively events awakened general interest, and have since become part of the customary methods of propaganda.

The outbreak of war, in 1914, put a stop to such specialised propaganda, but the necessity for maintaining the position of co-operative undertakings against the fierce competition of profiteering firms and of increasing the capital of the movement to meet the rise in prices was not lost sight of, and the Guild assisted greatly towards these ends. In 1920, a joint Committee of the C.W.S., the Co-operative Union, and the Guild, was formed to carry out a national campaign for raising capital for the Movement.

In the Guild itself it is easy to trace the awakening of the co-operative conscience, as distinct from the bargain-hunting faculty which is popularly accepted as a virtue in housewifery.

At the annual meeting, held at Derby, in June, 1898, the question of "Non-poisonous Matches," which was then agitating the public mind, was brought before the delegates:—

"Resolutions, asking for a boycott of all matches except safeties, were sent to management committees . . . others petitioned the C.W.S. to sell only non-poisonous matches. Bury say they have pledged themselves to buy outsiders' 'safeties' until the C.W.S. starts works of its own."\*

The study of co-operative ideals brought to the notice of the members the widespread disregard of one of the chief principles laid down by the Rochdale Pioneers, that *no credit should be given or asked*. In 1898 a very thorough campaign was undertaken. A

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\*Annual Report, 1898, page 5.



series of papers were written by different members on "Credit and High Prices," and read at conferences, when the following resolution was passed, with few dissentients: "Every branch represented at this conference, and connected with a society where credit is allowed, pledges itself to urge its society to adopt the ready-money system at the earliest opportunity."

At the annual meeting, held at Sunderland, in 1897, the question of "High Dividends: What they Mean," had been discussed, and a resolution unanimously adopted:—

"That co-operators should discourage the payment of a rate of dividend higher than is consistent with a just regard to reasonable charges for goods, liberal treatment of employees, efficient safeguarding of the stability of the society, and ample provision for the intellectual and social needs of the members."

A systematic inquiry through the branches as to rates of dividend and credit-giving brought out facts which showed that the inflation of dividends by means of high prices, together with high entrance fees, restricted membership, helped to exclude the poorer classes of the population from becoming members and sharing in the advantages of Co-operation. Individual action by the branches was undertaken in order to get reforms in these wrong practices in their own societies, with many satisfactory results recorded from time to time.

The real difficulties of meeting cases of genuine distress under a strictly cash trading rule, led to discussions on the need for "Emergency Funds," and on methods of raising and administering such funds.

The inquiry just mentioned brought out a very sorry tale of credit given in a large number of societies, but the replies disclosed that "in the vast majority the (guild) members show themselves against credit."

An interesting note is found in the annual report for 1898, describing "twenty-week clubs" in operation in three societies in one section.

"Some are managed in a way that has rather a gambling savour. The clubs are for twenty weeks. If No. 1 is drawn you get 20s. worth of goods at once, but if No. 20 is drawn you have to pay in all the 20s. before you get the goods."

The hire system existed in two societies, "the only two we have heard of where so un-co-operative a system is practised, and our members, in both cases, do not care to take any steps to abolish it."†

The Anti-credit Campaign was no temporary effort towards reform. The work went on for a long series of years. The annual report for 1905 records the appointment, at the request of the Guild, of a Joint Committee of two members of the United Board and two members of the Guild, of which Miss Spooner was the secretary:—

"The work of the Committee has so far been to approach certain societies and Guild branches where it seemed desirable and possible that some action to reduce credit might be taken. Our former efforts had led us to realise that the real power lay in the hands of Management Committees, and the Joint Committee's idea is . . . to back up Committees by trying to organise support among the members."

Performances of a bright little play, called *Mrs. Pendlebury's Pickle*, and a monologue for a child's recitation, entitled "Nancy Owepenny's Millstone," kept alive the anti-credit feeling, and records come along of societies either abolishing credit entirely or of adopting non-credit systems in certain departments.

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†These systems of trading are becoming general to-day, and because they are "trade bringers" co-operators are shutting their eyes to the possible *discredit* such methods may bring upon the good name of Co-operation.—C.W.

In 1907, the United Board proposed to abolish the special sub-committee and to hand the work over to the Sectional Boards. Congress, however, re-appointed the Committee and reconstructed and enlarged its membership to represent each of the Sectional Boards. Startling statistics brought out by the Co-operative Union in 1909 showed that the total amount of "Shop Debts" was over £1,000,000, an average of 8s. 3d. per head of the entire co-operative membership. "We are fighting a deep-seated evil, and reforms are not likely to come about quickly."\*

The plan of the United Board of delegating the work to the Sectional Boards, and "vetoing the direct appeal to the Societies" by the Joint Committee led the Guild, in 1911, to withdraw their representatives from the Committee and to continue their own agitation through the Guild rooms. In 1913, the Anti-Credit Committee was finally abolished by Congress.

Woven in with the campaigns against credit trading, high dividends, excessive entrance fees, restrictions on the admission of women to membership, and the complementary efforts to meet the difficulties of the poorer members by the creation of clubs, penny banks, and other facilities for creating capital with which to rescue the members from debt, there was a growing feeling that if Co-operation was to reach the very poorest of the population some special measures must be taken. In the autumn of 1899, a scheme was introduced at the sectional conferences in a paper written by Miss L. Davies, on "Co-operation in Poor Neighbourhoods."

The action which resulted from these conferences formed an extremely interesting chapter in the history of the Guild. It was an experiment conducted under many difficulties and much discouragement, but never-

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\*Annual Report, 1907-8.

theless created a landmark in the story of the Guild's endeavour to make of Co-operation a living force for the uplift of humanity.

The subject occupied much of the Guild's attention from 1889 to 1904, when the experimental "Settlement" at Sunderland, described in the next Chapter, came to an end, but a number of less-ambitious schemes were inaugurated. At York, Hull, Bristol, Sheffield, Woolwich, and Stockton, stores in poor neighbourhoods were set up, where "pennyworths" of commodities could be bought, and cooked meats and other ready-prepared foods were sold, and vigorous propaganda work went on. The "Coming-of-Age Fund" was used to provide organisers and speakers in connection with these efforts.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CO-OPERATION IN POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS.\*

#### A PRAYER FOR THEM THAT BE IN POVERTY.

(From *Queen Elizabeth's Private Prayer Book*, 1587.)

“Thou, O Lord, provideth enough for all men with Thy most liberal and bounteous hand, but whereas Thy gifts are, in respect of Thy goodness and free favour, made common to all men, we, through our naughtiness, niggardship, and distrust, do make them private and peculiar. Correct Thou the thing which our iniquity hath put out of order, and let Thy goodness supply that which our niggardliness hath plucked away.”

“THERE is a vast population which practically we have not touched—they are, as yet, outside the pale of the movement. They ought to be in, and there is every reason why we should strive to bring them within the fold.” These words, embodying a view that was a commonplace on co-operative platforms, were addressed to the Co-operative Congress, in 1899, by its president.

They were taken up by another speaker at the Congress, who said: “If we have to go down to the level of winning those who have not joined our movement, there is no agency which would do this better than the Women’s Guild.”

The Guild was glad to consider these remarks as in the nature of a challenge, and the result was that in a few months a paper, entitled *Co-operation in Poor Neighbourhoods*, was prepared.

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\*The main part of this chapter is drawn from Chapter IV. of *The Women’s Co-operative Guild*, published in 1904.

In it, life in a poverty-stricken area was described, and it was pointed out that many of our co-operative customs were not suited to the circumstances and habits of the poor, high dividends and high prices being the most effective barriers.

The suggestions made with a view to bringing Co-operation within the reach of the poorest, were as follows :—

- (1) A People's Store, to supply wholesome food and other articles at cheap prices and in small quantities, to keep people out of debt by cash payments, and enable them to save automatically ;
- (2) A Coffee and Cooked Meat Shop ;
- (3) A Loan Department, taking security in the form of bondmen, bills of sale, or personal property, so as to tide people over inevitable misfortune ; to lend without taking advantage of necessity, to ensure freedom from fraud, and to undermine the habit of weekly pawning ;
- (4) Club Rooms or Settlement, to be carried on by a special propagandist committee or resident workers, so as to attract from the public-house, to bring personal help, and form a centre of co-operative activity in the district.

Articles in the " Woman's Corner " of the *Co-operative News* expanded the scheme in papers which were afterwards reprinted and widely read at conferences, and in the Guild rooms. Meetings were held with management committees and educational committees, and several societies, notably Sunderland and Plymouth, which had already established branches in the poorest parts of these towns, took the scheme into serious consideration.

" Co-operators as a whole, especially the men, did not take very kindly to the proposals. . . . The

co-operative ground was covered with a hard crust, and a great deal of spade work had to be put into it before it could take in the seed which the Guild was prepared to sow. . . . At first the official bodies of the movement showed an unwillingness to take part in the work, as were so many of the rank and file."

"The United Board, however, agreed to grant a sum not exceeding £50, in order that the Guild might undertake an inquiry for which it should alone be responsible. . . . The work, broadly speaking, fell into two divisions: (1) An investigation into rules and customs as regards admission, share capital, dividends, penny bank clubs; into prices, and into the frozen meat and coal trade; (2) in addition, certain towns were selected, and the poorest areas in each personally explored. The characteristic money and trading customs were observed in these localities, and the people visited in their own homes."

A paper entitled *The Open Door* embodied the result of this inquiry, and became the watch-word of the effort to reach the poor.

"While the Guild was advocating the policy of the 'open door' as applicable to all societies, and more consistent with the spirit of fellowship, a group of co-operative buildings, on the lines suggested by the Guild, was rising in Sunderland. The Sunderland Society had already been experimenting by planting branches in some of the most congested regions of the town. The grocer's shop in the new block was to take the place of a small rented shop, where a mongoose had been kept on the premises to prevent the leakage caused by rats."

"It was a red-letter day for Sunderland, and the Co-operative movement, when the corner premises of the branch store in Coronation Street were opened on October 8th, 1902. Coronation Street is the narrow shopping thoroughfare, full of chandler's and butchers'

shops, public-houses, chip saloons, and 'London ward-  
robes' for the inhabitants of the numberless dark lanes  
which open out of it. The branch store is in the very  
heart of the most overcrowded part of Sunderland,  
between Spring Garden Lane and Golden Alley (terrible  
misnomer), a region which has the highest record of  
death, disease, and crime. Here the Sunderland  
co-operators have chosen to bring Co-operation, coming  
with the idea, not that 'nothing is too bad for the  
poor,' as a poor woman said, but that nothing is too  
*good* for the poor."

"The bright new store buildings consist of a grocer's  
shop (where Mr. Hart, the manager, presides, with four  
assistants), a butcher's shop, flour store, a hall and small  
rooms for two resident workers. . . . Plate glass  
and electric light show off the pile of co-operative  
loaves at 1d. and 2½d., 1d. pots of marmalade, tins of  
tea and syrup, bottles of hair and castor oil, &c.

"The butcher's shop is equally attractive, with  
its steaming-hot joints of pork at 1s., or shanks at 5d. ;  
hot pease pudding, with gravy, ½d. and 1d. ; tripe, 4d.  
and 5d. ; brawn, 5d. The sale of hot soup at ½d. and  
1d., was found so popular, and such a financial success,  
that it was introduced with equally good results into a  
neighbouring east-end branch store."

"Turning round the corner into Walton Place,  
there is a door, probably with children on the step,  
leading up a narrow staircase to the little hall, gay with  
white and green paint, pictures, electric light, and the  
bright fustian curtains from the Hebden Bridge Co-  
operative Society. Opposite the hall, over the butcher's  
shop, is the sunny kitchen of the 'Store Ladies' which  
has to serve as office, sitting-room, kitchen, and be  
used for parties, for boiling kettles to make the ½d.  
cups of tea for the hall concerts, and for any other  
purpose that is wanted. The tiny scullery, in which  
a bath had been put, with a lid to form a table, is thought



'very canny.' Two of the five doors of the small kitchen open into the diminutive bedrooms looking into Coronation Street, where the return home of the people when the public-houses close, the terrible drunken rows, and the rumbling of the corporation carts over the cobbles, in the middle of the night, are sounds to which the occupants have to become accustomed."

For three months the organisation of the work at the Settlement was entrusted by the Society to the General Secretary of the Guild, who was assisted by Miss Spooner, Miss Partridge, Mrs. Abbott, and Miss Mayo. In January, 1904, the Sunderland Society put the arrangement on a permanent footing, by appointing Miss Partridge and Miss Rushworth as resident workers.

Several Guild workers, in turn, spent short periods at the Settlement as assistants to these two permanent workers.\* The personal relationship of the Settlement workers with the people round the Stores were of the most friendly and interesting character. Miss Llewelyn Davies tells how they became real friends with the children, amongst whom, the penny bank "spread like wildfire." "They—the children—were full of fun, very affectionate and never rude, though at times they have made us much too conscious of their presence at the front door. But it is disarming when a 'settler' goes down to open the door, thinking there is someone there on business, to find a little girl whose only remarks are: 'Miss —, I've come to seek ye; I want to be by yer side; or to find two little girls, with shawls over their heads, have come to say that both their dolls are in bed with lots of clo' on, and dreaming about a tea party.'"

Many are the confidences made at the desk, to which the children feel they have a right to come. "A little

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\*The present historian spent an interesting few weeks at the Settlement, leaving it with unforgettable memories.

barefooted fellow will dash in with a counterpane over his shoulder, just to mention that he'd been to the 'pop'; . . . . or on Saturday, a small girl tells that she is 'going to be wshed arl over, head an arl.' "A child of 16, who came in one day to deposit, was asked how it was she was so small, and in a calm, old-fashioned manner replied, 'I've been kep down by minding babies.' 'How many?' 'Me mother's had 13 and I've minded eight.'"

The personal contact with the women, and with the men, too, of this poor neighbourhood was equally friendly. "Visits are made to those who are on the way to becoming members, and pence collected towards the shilling entrance fee. . . . This enables friendships to grow, and impression to be made. The men of the neighbourhood belong, largely, to the class of labourers connected with the shipyards, and many of the women are hawkers of fish, &c. The girls are employed in 'baccy' and brewery works, or in little 'places,' and the children sell papers, oranges, winkles, or whatever turns up handily, and do errands for the neighbours for pennies."

"To sum up what, so far, seems to have been proved by the noble pioneer work done by the Sunderland co-operators, we may say that: (1) it is possible to win the trade of the poorest; (2) that such trade is a financial gain to the whole society; (3) that the store is a sure means of gaining the confidence and friendship of the people, establishing a relationship built on self-help, and unspoilt by the demoralising effects of charity; and (4) that the store might become a foundation and centre for constructive work in parts where it is most needed."

The hopeful spirit of the pioneer workers was sadly damped later on in the year. From the beginning of the experiment there had always been a cer-

tain section of the members of the society who could not agree that special efforts should be expended on the poor districts. They held the strong, but narrow view, that "democracy" in co-operative trading meant that no one district should have special treatment not accessible to all. In spite of proof of financial success, which reacted over the whole society, this opposition, combined with friction between the committees of the society, and the resignation of the resident workers, led the Directors to recommend to the quarterly meeting of the society, in September, 1904, that the employment of resident workers be discontinued, and by a vote of 82 to 25, the Settlement part of the Coronation Street Store was abandoned.

During the one-and-three-quarter years (1902-4) that the little settlement was in existence, 292 members were made, eighty-three others having only begun to pay up their entrance fees. The total trade for the four half years was £11,339 in the grocery, and £6,958 in the butchery. This meant that a dividend (2s. in the £) of £1,800 was distributed in the neighbourhood of Coronation Street, legitimately earned by the co-operation of the people themselves. Two thousand and seven joined the penny bank, the amount paid in reached the sum of £566. 12s. 8d. Weekly concerts were held in the hall; a library had been started, clubs and classes held, and a branch of the Women's Guild formed; while a great deal of visiting in the homes of the people had been carried on. The cost of the Settlement, which included two paid workers, worked out at about £160 a year.\* History holds no record of what might have followed had the experiment been carried further, in the enlightened spirit in which it was started by Sunderland Co-operators. How to reach the poorest is still a problem to be solved. The Co-operative Commonwealth, of which we dream, cannot come into being until those on the

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\*Annual Report, 1904-5.

lowest platform of the economic life of the people are raised to a plane of self-supporting, self-reliant comfort. The prayer of Elizabeth, that "niggardliness" may be "plucked away," still waits an answer. Perhaps Guildswomen of the future will once more try. "The like endeavour to renew should e'er a kindlier time ensue."

## CHAPTER VII.

### CITIZENSHIP CAMPAIGNS.

"I am much pleased to be able to do anything to further the action of an institution so valuable as the Women's Guild actually is—still more as it promises to be.

"You rightly appreciate the functions of Co-operation in my judgment in speaking of it as a 'gospel' . . . The fact that men can make a heaven for themselves within, even under the most adverse outward circumstances, has blinded the eyes of even good men in a great degree to the possibility of creating for all men outward circumstances which shall be the true expression of this spirit . . . I trust the Women's Guild will do much to foster the dispositions out of which this higher state will arise, and without which it can never arise."

—From a letter written to Mrs. Lawrenson, by E. V. Neale, September 28th, 1886.

AS the above quotation indicates, the Women's Guild had, from its inception, a standard of conduct set before them by the great leaders of the Movement of those days. Practical citizenship—for women—was, in 1883, a dream of the few, but the Guild soon made of it a settled purpose in their plan of association.\*

The study of Arnold Forster's "Laws of Everyday Life," gave a start to the practical interest in things outside the home and store life of the members. Campaigns for better conditions of industry led to active support of such measures as the appointment of Women Factory Inspectors† (1892), and the preparation of a "popular paper" on "Women and Municipal Life" lent, it is true, to one branch only in 1892. Benefit and

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\*See Chapter III.

†Annual Report, 1892.

pension schemes for women were discussed in the same year, and in this year also, the first joint excursion of branches in the metropolitan areas visited the House of Commons and Lambeth Palace. "The unusual spectacle of 120 co-operators assembled under 'Big Ben' attracted no little attention."† Discussion on Women's Suffrage in 1893, was followed by the gathering of 2,200 signatures to a national appeal on behalf of the enfranchisement of women, and we may conveniently follow here the subsequent part taken by the Guild in this long and varied struggle of women to gain a voice in the responsibility of government.

In 1897, the Guild waxed indignant at the anti-suffrage utterances of certain M.P.'s, and the Editor of the "Women's Corner" undertook to forward to these gentlemen the opinions of the members.

"'We regret to see,' says the report for that year, 'that Mr. M—, M.P., a co-operator and a trade unionist, should be so ill-informed as he appeared to be at the recent meeting . . . He there said that the only women who wanted votes were idlers and Tory bigots. We should like to know in what class he would place the thousands of our co-operative women who wish to be voters.'"

In 1901 Guild members took part in getting up a petition from the Yorkshire and Cheshire female textile workers in favour of women's suffrage. Thirty-one thousand signatures were secured, and Miss Reddish, one of the principal organisers, with seven other Guild women, carried the petition to the House of Commons. Mrs. Ellis (Batley), Miss Mitchell (Keighley), and Miss Wormald (Heckmondwike) spoke in the committee-room of the House.

When the Women's Enfranchisement Bill of 1904 was before the House, the Guild entered upon an active campaign, demanding, at the Gloucester Congress, that

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† Annual Report, 1892.

the vote should be given to women on the same terms "as it is, or may be, granted to men." Meetings to the number of 274, were held in 168 branches, the resolutions passed being pressed upon Members of Parliament. During the course of these meetings, however, the question was debated as to whether the Guild should accept nothing but Adult Suffrage, or such partial measure as could be got. In a Manifesto, issued to show the Guild's position, it was stated "That while womanhood (and therefore adult) suffrage is their goal, the Guild leaves itself free to support any measure which would be a step in the direction of this goal."

A special fund of £100 was raised to enable the Guild to carry on its Suffrage Campaign by means of deputations, processions, and other constitutional methods of making their desires known.

In order to bring the Co-operative Movement into line, a number of Societies were asked to send a resolution for discussion at the Union Congress at Preston, in 1907. Ten Societies did this, but "the United Board declined to place the resolution on the agenda, on the ground that it was political, entirely ignoring the fact that questions of a far more 'party political' character have been constantly discussed at Congresses." The Guild "deplored this attitude,"\* and went on with their propaganda.

In 1909, however, a resolution supporting the granting of the vote to women was accepted and carried by a good majority at the Newport Congress, the cause of the women being championed by a staunch friend of the Guild, the late Mr. Thomas Tweddell (Chairman of the Co-operative Parliamentary Committee). On May 27th, 1909, the Guild supplied eight groups—silk workers, cotton weavers, tenters, hosiery workers, boot workers, potters, felt hat workers, and

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\*Annual Reports, 1905-6 and 1908.

housewives—in the great lantern procession and pageant of trades and professions, arranged by the London Society for Women Suffrage, and the Artists' Suffrage League, which marched to the Albert Hall on that day.

The tactics of the militant suffragettes were beginning at this time to trouble the peace of the Guild, as they did that of the country. Members were "alienated to such an extent from this great subject that there was much reluctance to consider it at branch meetings."

The formation, in this year, of the People's Suffrage Federation for Adult Suffrage, to which the Central Committee and a number of branches affiliated, did much to correct this "disappointing weakness" in the members. When to the Guild Congress sitting at Torquay in June, 1917, there came the news that the Suffrage was won, the delegates gave voice to the liveliest delight and satisfaction, despite the fact that no woman under 30 years of age was considered fit to exercise the vote. Subsequent congresses annually demanded that the franchise should be further extended until men and women stood on an equal footing.\*

In 1907, the whole position of married women in relation to savings in the Co-operative Society was raised by decisions in the County Court, confirmed by a decision of the Court of King's Bench, that a wife's savings, made out of money given her for household purposes, belonged to her husband. Inquiries were made and a great many cases were collected in which the amount allowed to the wife for carrying on the home was seen to be painfully insufficient. The matter was discussed at all sectional conferences, and questions for legal opinion were submitted through the Co-operative Union. As a result, Co-operative Societies were advised

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\*Resolution accepted at Newcastle Congress, 1926 :—

"That we urge the Government to grant votes to women at 21 years of age on the same terms as men, at once, as this reform is long overdue."



to refuse to pay out a wife's shares to the husband unless an order from a court of law was produced, as required, before a husband can legally claim them.

The discussions opened out the large question of the economic status of a wife contributing to the resources of the home by her labour and her skilled management and economy, and the idea was formulated that there should be some legal definition of the right of a wife to a certain amount of the family income. "The husband is compelled, according to his means, to pay fair and reasonable debts incurred by his wife. Why then should it not be made compulsory for her to have a legal claim to a part of the family income? "\*

In the years following this primary consideration of the legal position of the housewife, many progressive ideas were considered. From 1911 the outstanding work of the Guild centred round the efforts to secure for the mother some definite place in the benefits of the Health Insurance Acts. The war years, with their own problems of the relative position of men and women in industry, in the home, and the State, brought out suggestions and schemes for Family Endowment, Widows' Pensions, Endowment of Motherhood, and a State Bonus for all. A comprehensive resolution was adopted at the Middlesbrough Congress, 1919.†

Another aspect of family life occupied the attention

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\*Paper on "Wives' Savings," by Mrs. Gasson, read at the Autumn Sectional Conferences, 1907.

†Resolved: "That this Congress is of opinion that the Government should take immediate action to provide for the needs of widows with or without children, but urges that their claim should be considered in conjunction with the equal needs of other mothers and children. This Congress therefore points out that in dealing with this question the respective merits of Widows' Pensions, Endowment and Motherhood and the State Bonus for all should be considered, so that a scheme may be adopted which shall meet the family needs of the workers and be free from all inquisitorial methods of administration."

of the Guild from 1910, and involved the organisation in a serious conflict with the Co-operative Union upon the principle of self-government of a voluntary auxiliary body within the movement. This was the question of Divorce Law Reform, which is dealt with in Chapter XIII. The present chapter must make brief record of the work done by the Guild for the betterment of child life through national and municipal agencies.

During 1904-5, consideration was given to the Health of School Children. A resolution was passed at the Congress held in Sheffield "urging Educational Authorities to put into force the powers they possess for carrying out systematic Medical Inspection of Children in Elementary Schools." The following up of this idea involved the branches in a great deal of persistent hard work in uniting the progressive forces in their several localities to bring pressure on local Authorities.

Subsequent reports, papers and memoranda teem with references to the work done for this cause. School Clinics are now an established part of our educational system. In the fight to gain this great reform the honoured name of Miss Margaret MacMillan will never be forgotten.

For a good number of years the question of abolishing half-time workers, and the raising of the school leaving age, was a somewhat thorny subject of debate. The question was raised at the Oldham Congress, 1909, in a paper prepared by the Central Committee, and occasioned a particularly animated discussion. The resolution proposed had eventually to be voted upon by ballot in three sections: (a) That the present half-time system should be abolished; (b) that the full-time school age should be raised to 15; and (c) that the hours of work of young people should be legally shortened, and a specified time each day be compulsorily devoted to general and technical education.

The voting showed the stage at which the Guild had arrived in regard to these progressive ideas.

The results of the ballot were as follows : For (a), 620 votes, against 91 ; for (b), 238 votes, against 453 ; for (c) 549 votes, against 138.

In some aspect or other these questions of education and child labour evoked perennial discussion and resolutions at Congresses, and the present attitude of the Guild is that opportunities should be open to all children to continue their education up to the age of 18, either in free places (with maintenance if necessary) in secondary schools, or in education carried on during working hours.

Another campaign which stirred the Guild to its best efforts was directed against the Sugar Duty, introduced in the Budget of 1902. Information was gathered as to the additional burden the tax would impose upon the workers, and on May 25th, 1902, the English and Scottish Guilds, together with the Women's Trade Union League, sent a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking him to receive a deputation of working women. His reply was a refusal to meet the deputation.

He did not "question the fact" that sugar is much more largely consumed by women and children of the poorer classes than by men, but he could not see "that any useful purpose would be served by receiving a deputation in support of a proposition which he does not dispute, but which could not alter the policy which His Majesty's Government has adopted." Not only the Guild, but the whole Co-operative Movement was moved to indignant protest, and a resolution in favour of a Free Breakfast Table was carried at the Co-operative Union Congress held at Middlesbrough in that year.

The national controversy on Free Trade, which agitated the country at that time was felt to have a very special importance for co-operators, and for co-operative housewives in particular. Energetic action

was taken. Five autumn conferences discussed the question; branches held meetings and sent resolutions to their M.P.'s, and the Guild as a whole decided to organise a women's Free Trade Demonstration in the Manchester Free Trade Hall, in co-operation with other Manchester women's organisations. Over 3,000 women responded, and a remarkable demonstration unanimously carried the following resolution:—

"That this meeting of women declares its steadfast adherence to the policy of Free Trade, and condemns all attempts to revive the system of Protection, which would impoverish the people, enrich monopolists, corrupt public life, and embitter colonial and international relations; and, seeing that women, both as workers and housewives are so deeply concerned in this question, deploras that they cannot make their protest effective through being debarred from the Parliamentary Franchise."\*

In 1901 the Guild discussed the question of Old-Age Pensions from the point of view of co-operative schemes for creating pensions for co-operative workers in particular, and members of societies in general.

An illuminating paper, prepared by Miss Harris, detailing various schemes then before the movement,

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\*Annual Report, 1903-4.

*Note.*—Seventy-two Guild branches were represented. The hall was decorated with Guild banners and free-trade mottoes. The speakers and supporters on the platform formed a remarkable array, representing nearly all shades of political opinion. Mrs. Bury (vice-president of the Guild) was in the chair, and the speakers were Miss Alison Garland (Women's Free Trade Union), Mrs. Cobden Unwin (daughter of Richard Cobden), Mrs. Booth (W.C.G.), Mrs. Wimbolt (weaver), Mrs. Byles (Salford), Mr. Ernest Beckett, M.P. (Conservative and Unionist Free Food League), Mr. Emmott, M.P. (Liberal and Free Trade Union) Mr. Philip Snowden (Independent Labour Party). Interesting letters were read from Lady Aberdeen, Lady Henry Somerset, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, Mrs. Bright McLaren (John Bright's sister), Mrs. H. J. Tennant and others. All the speeches were excellent; but the audience was still more excellent and significant.

came to the conclusion that "Co-operators could not solve the problem."

"We therefore turn to the proposals for a national pension scheme, which alone seems able to reach every class, and to solve the problem of old-age pauperism. It is clear that no co-operative scheme can touch the great mass of destitute old men and women, so as citizens we must be careful not to put any barrier in the way of a more comprehensive scheme. Any scheme for a section of the people has the danger of lessening the support of a complete scheme."

Pensions being in the air about this time, it is small wonder that a large number of women were caught in the net of a fallacious scheme for the creation of pensions through the purchase of tea. And at the Congress held at Lincoln in 1903, an animated discussion took place leading to a resolution drawing the attention of the C.W.S. to the fact that many co-operative women were purchasing "Pension Tea" from the promoters of the scheme, and asking them to issue a statement as to the desirability or otherwise of instituting a co-operative pension or insurance tea scheme. The lure of "Pension Tea" agitated Guild tea parties for some time, until in due course, the scheme collapsed leaving many thousands of women in the country disillusioned and disappointed.

After the passing of the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, we find the Guild regularly pressing, year after year, for the reduction of the pensionable age from 70 to 60 years, for the increase of the amount of pension, and for the removal of all disabilities.

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\*The new Pension Act of 1925 fulfils some of the desires of the Guild, but not all. There are many inequalities in the present scheme which the members will no doubt persistently draw attention to until they, too, are removed, and the nation is possessed of an all-comprehensive non-contributory pension scheme for widows, orphans, the disabled, and the aged.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INTEREST IN INDUSTRY.

"The Store is the social market where wage-earning is henceforth to assume an intelligent position, not a merely blind or hostile one, towards wage-earning; where the significance of 'beating down' on the wholesale or retail scale will be realised; where the two forces of industrial organisation—the producers and the consumers—will join hands for giving greater security to the improved health and comfort, the better surroundings, and the brighter prospects which are expressed in the phrase 'Standard of Life.'"

—*Unionism in the Workshop and the Store*, by VAUGHAN NASH.

IT has been seen in previous chapters how the Guild was led along the paths of intelligent interest in internal co-operative affairs to practical service for the movement. In this chapter I propose to trace the manner in which this growing interest led the Guild to take a public stand in relation to conditions of labour both within and outside the movement. The decade of 1884 to 1894 were years of wakening in the outside world as well as within the co-operative world. Charles Kingsley's "Alton Locke" and "Yeast" had stirred the public conscience, and trade unionism was a growing force in the organisation of men's labour, while Tom Hood's "Song of the Shirt" haunted the visions of many whose belief in "philanthropy" as a panacea for poverty caused by low wages was beginning to give way.

In 1891 papers were read at branch meetings on "Co-operation and Trades Unionism," and at the annual meeting, held at Whitsuntide, in 1892, a resolution that a special effort should be made to reach trades unionists through their wives, was passed.

Following this, at the Manchester Festival, a resolution was passed that :—

“ It is the duty of each branch to do its utmost to see that trade union regulations, as regards wages and hours, are carried out among employees in co-operative stores and workshops.”

Preceding this (in 1891) a campaign of a very interesting character was undertaken. This was the beginning of the special effort to bring together trades unionists and co-operators to their mutual advantage. The campaign was opened by a series of letters contributed to the *Trades Unionist* under the title of “ Can Women Raise Their Husband's Wages ? ” The correspondence began with a lively letter from “ House-keeper,” agreeing that it was good to sustain the unions and keep up wages, but complaining that “ John came fidgeting around her marketing, wanting to know what was the price of this, and where that came from, and whether the children's boots were this or that or the other,” and she asks if it will benefit her to spend at one shop only instead of shopping in the cheapest market. The argument put forward, in reply, was that by spending their money at the stores, women could actually increase the *real* purchasing power of wages.

“ Whoever heard of a householder who saved a penny by buying a ‘ cheap ’ pot of jam, made by a sweating firm, and moreover, two ounces short in weight, having that penny in her pocket at six months' end ? Who has not heard of a co-operative woman drawing £1, £2, and even £3 in hard cash from her store, as dividend on her six months' dealings ? ”

The argument proved to be good propaganda, and the Guild then suggested a series of joint meetings to which trade unionists' wives would be invited. A resolution recommending this course was signed by prominent Unionists and Co-operators, and the meetings

were held in various parts of London.\* Much spade work of this kind has also been done in later years.

Springing out of these meetings and conferences came the desire for some distinctive mark by which consumers could recognise goods made under union conditions, and the idea of a *Trade Union Label* was evolved. This suggestion was submitted to the Trade Union Congress, at Glasgow, in 1892, and remitted to a sub-committee from the Trade Union and the Co-operative Parliamentary Committees.

The idea of the label commended itself more to co-operators than to unionists, for the "Hatters'" Trade Union was the only one to take up the scheme with any practical results, and men's hats, bearing the label, were vigorously pushed through the stores, and for some time had quite a good effect in rousing public opinion upon conditions of labour. Alas! the idea never extended to women's hats.

Another aspect of Trade Unionism supported by the Guild has been that of bringing women into Trade Unions. In 1892 efforts were made to form unions amongst factory girls, in conjunction with the recently-established Women's Trade Union Association, of which Miss Clementina Black was a pioneer and Miss Holyoake was secretary for some years. The Guild report for 1892 quotes an appreciative note from the third annual report of this Association, in which the help of the Guild

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\*The signatories to this recommendation were F. C. Baum (Executive London Trades Council), F. Maddison (Editor *Railway Review*), Ben Tillett (Dockers' Union), Tom Mann (Amalgamated Society of Engineers), Benjamin Jones (Co-operative Union), G. Sutherland (Co-operative Wholesale Society), Thomas E. Webb (Co-operative Wholesale Society), J. J. Dent (Co-operative Union).

The meetings were addressed by a number of prominent trade unionists, co-operators, and Women's Guild members. A paper written by Mr. Vaughan Nash, entitled "Trade Unionism in the Workshop, and Store," was read and discussed at a number of the conferences.



was warmly acknowledged. The Report concluded: "The prospect of their assistance is one of the most encouraging points in the year's history."

"These are some of the indications," says the *Guild Annual Report*, "that our members are realising that there is a world beyond the family—and even beyond the store—which their action, or want of action, affects for good or ill.

"The Guild is beginning, we hope, in however small a way, to take its place by the side of other reforming movements, learning with them that what is needed is a better understanding of each other's aims, a more consistent carrying out of each other's principles, and a greater amount of concerted action."\*

In 1892 Miss Clara Collet† was appointed one of the Labour Correspondents in the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, and the Guild offered to collect for her information regarding women's work.

The first piece of work set by Miss Collet was a schedule of questions to guild members individually, asking for information as regards age, occupation, &c., of the various members of their families. Six thousand five hundred schedules were sent out, but only 714 returned, "many of our members looking upon the questions as a piece of impertinence, and refusing to have anything to do with them—not realising that all we and the Labour Department desired to do . . . was to collect information in order to secure a firm basis for all the many reforms that we desire to see carried out in women's lives and conditions of work."‡

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\*Annual Report, 1892-3.

†Miss Collet's friendly interest in the Guild was continuous, and her presence at Congress, as a representative of her Department, was greatly appreciated.

‡Ibid.

I cannot refrain from quoting here a paragraph with which the report of 1893-94 concludes :—

“ The question naturally often arises, ‘ What good does a branch of the Guild do ? ’ We hope that this report is a partial answer to the question. But while we can show actual results in the way of new members, increased loyalty, &c.—the sort of reply that our questioners generally desire—we deprecate being judged merely by the material side of the help we give. We believe that such results naturally follow from the wider view of the movement that it is our desire to inculcate. But we aspire to accomplish work which will not show itself in tangible form at the present moment. If we have helped to train women’s minds (the need and desire for which is touchingly expressed to us by our members), developing in them a belief in the new social faith ; and if we have helped to give women a field of action in which to carry out our faith, then the harvest of the seeds we are sowing will be reaped by future generations.”

The most stirring event in the labour world of 1894 was the great Coal War, a fierce struggle for the semblance of a living wage which will linger long in the annals of trade unionism. The determined stand made by the miners’ wives to enable their husbands to resist the proposed reductions was greatly aided by the support of Co-operative Societies and the Women’s Guild. Members not personally affected by the lock-out took the children of the miners into their families ; others helped with relief committees ; others collected and gave clothing. A fund contributed to by Guild branches (then numbering 171, with 7,500 members) and friends was raised through the “ Corner ” and amounted to £45. 12s.\*

The struggle brought to the fore a Guildswoman

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\* See Page 191.

who was a miner's wife, and then acting as Secretary in the Airedale District. In Mrs. Dickenson the Miners discovered an advocate possessed of a golden voice and a native eloquence capable of moving the hearts of thousands to pity and support. Mrs. Dickenson addressed seven mass meetings in the neighbourhood of Leeds, her native town, and was then invited to address a great meeting in St. James's Hall, London.

Describing her experiences, she said: "Many times have I been asked if I was not afraid of speaking in a place like St. James's Hall, and before so many people," and my reply is: "I did not see the London audience, but the starving women and children on whose behalf I had come to speak."

Mrs. Knott, secretary of the South Yorkshire District, also did much strenuous relief work. A great impetus was given to Co-operation during this struggle, for those sufferers who were members of a store found their little savings of immense help to themselves and others.

The friendly relations between the two movements was tremendously strengthened at this time, and the part played by Co-operation in the Coal war has been repeated since upon many occasions in other labour struggles. Throughout its history the Guild has advocated wholeheartedly, as exemplified in these early days, the closest relations with the Trade Union Movement.

Coal wars have recurred, and possibly will again happen until the national importance of, and responsibility for the industry is recognised. But the present generation will never see again a "Cabman's Strike" such as occurred in the spring of 1895, when the Guild organised a tea for distressed cabmen's wives and children to the number of 200, and succeeded in inducing a number to join the stores, in spite of the fact that Co-operation in London was then in a very feeble condition, with small shops hidden away in back streets.

The year 1894 was notable for much public interest in labour matters. A new Factory Bill, and Truck Act Bill, was before Parliament, and stirred the interest of all who were truly concerned about sweated industries, and the ill conditions of women's labour generally.

Women's Trade Union organisations have always made it one of their chief objects to improve and extend Factory and other legislation which regulates the conditions of work of women and children. The Guild has repeatedly taken part in campaigns with this object and in inquiries connected with this question.

In 1894 a conference was called by the Women's Trade Union Association, with the object of forming a central body of affiliated women's societies for investigating and reporting on questions affecting women, and the Guild was represented by Miss Spooner and myself. The outcome of this conference was the formation of the Women's Industrial Council. Through its various committees the Council made many important investigations, and became a powerful influence in progressive legislation on women's work.\* For a number of years the Guild and the W.I.C. were mutually helpful in pressing for reforms, and in providing information.

The new Factory Bill, above mentioned, made no adequate provisions against sweating, and both the Guild and the W.I. Council petitioned the Home Secretary for the compulsory registration of workshops, and the inclusion of laundries for the regulations of hours and conditions of work. In the same year Mrs. Ashworth, of Burnley, then president of the Guild, and Miss Reddish (organiser), collected information for the Labour Department as to the conditions under which the children of married women, working in the mills, were left at home.

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\*Miss Amy Hicks was the first Secretary of the W.I.C., and upon her marriage a year later Miss C. Webb was appointed General Secretary, holding the post until 1902. The council was dissolved in 1916.

The results were published in the *Labour Gazette*, June, 1894 :—

“ They showed that out of 165 cases covered by the inquiry, the children were left with grandparents in 39 ; with elder sisters, or housekeepers, in 24 ; with neighbours in 70. In the remaining nine cases, the children were left with no one to take care of them.”

This inquiry set on foot the persistent interest of the Guild in the care of infants, and of half-timers and wage-earning children.\*

On the question of half-timers, there was for some time a sort of natural geographical division in the opinion of Guildswomen. In the mill working sections the women needed to be converted to the idea that child labour could be done away with entirely, while in the non-textile sections, members were quickly convinced of the wisdom of the reform. When the Factory Bill of 1894 was under discussion, it is reported in the Annual Report for 1895-96 :—

“ At one period it seemed probable that a clause for raising the age of ‘ half-timers ’ would be introduced into the Bill, and with a view to obtaining the opinion of our Lancashire and Yorkshire branches on this subject, a paper was sent to them, which they were asked to discuss. Seventeen branches did so. Of these, nine passed resolutions in favour of raising the age, one approved but passed no resolution, and seven were opposed to any alteration. . . . At

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\*The cause of “ Wage-earning Children ” was early taken in hand by a committee inaugurated under the Women’s Industrial Council, on which the Guild was represented. Its object, not even yet fully realised, was to rescue all children of school age from wage slavery in any form. The work was slow, often disheartening, but never remitted until by steady pressure on public opinion and legislation, children of 11, 12, 13, and 14 years were stage by stage released from wage-earning and enabled to make what use they might of their school days.

**MEN WHO  
HAVE**



**HELPED THE  
GUILD.**

**MANSITTART NEAL**



**S. BAMFORD.**



**J. C. GRAY.**



**Sir WM. MAXWELL.**



**J. J. DENT, C.M.G.**



**T. TWEDDELL, J.P.**



**H. J. MAY.**



A TYPICAL CONGRESS CROWD (PORTSMOUTH, 1922).

the annual meeting in July, in London, a paper was read on the subject, and a resolution in favour of raising the age was passed with five dissentients."

As soon, however, as the Factory Act was passed the Guild set to work to master its meaning, and to make up its mind as to further reforms needed. A series of four papers, summarising the laws under the new Act, were written: (1) "Hours of Work for Women," by Mrs. Vaughan Nash; (2) "The Abolition of Overtime for Women," by Miss Lilian Harris; (3) "The Evils of Home Work for Women," by Miss March-Phillips; (4) "Women as Factory Inspectors and Certifying Surgeons," by Miss I. O. Ford.

A body of thirty-six special "readers" was got together to visit branches, and explain the papers, and branches were asked to formulate opinions upon the different points raised. Concurrently with these educational efforts and to help members to an intelligent opinion in regard to suggested reforms, an investigation into the condition under which non-textile workers were employed, was undertaken by individual members in a large number of branches.

Some thirty members became collectors of information for the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, under Miss Reddish's guidance, the inquiries covering nearly 500 cotton, woollen, and silk mills, and over 86,000 women and girls.

With all this inquiry going on, the Guild began to wonder if the conditions obtaining in our own workshops and factories were all they should be, and in 1896 Miss Reddish secured the kind permission of the Co-operative Wholesale Society's directors to visit and report upon the conditions under which girls worked in the Leeds Clothing Factory.

Inquiries were also undertaken as to the work of women and girls in distributive stores (see Chapter IX).



For the next year or two the main energies of the Guild were concentrated on the Anti-Credit Campaign, and propaganda work, but reports appear of action taken in regard to Sir Charles Dilke's Early Closing Bill, and urging the enforcement of the Truck Acts in shops. Resolutions condemning the manufacture of poisonous matches, and poisonous glazes in pottery, and for additional women factory inspectors, and women medical officers for the Potteries, were sent to those concerned in promoting these reforms.

Strenuous opposition was offered, in conjunction with the Women's Trade Union League, against the Factory Bill of 1900, which threatened to make Sunday work in factories legal. The Bill was killed, and the new Bill of 1901 brought forward. Although this Bill was on much better lines, the Guild remained conscious that further reforms were necessary to ensure complete protection for women workers, both in factories and small workshops, and in work done in the homes.

When the Trade Boards Bill was introduced in 1909, the Guild warmly welcomed it as a means of improving conditions in the sweated trades. Its chief weapon, however, has always been the constant advocacy of Co-operative productions, made under conditions over which Co-operators themselves can exercise control.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MINIMUM WAGE CAMPAIGN.

**"Committees must always have control, and this very control brings responsibility to interest the labourer as much as the capitalist of the Store. Till this is understood and acted upon we have not a clear road before us to the higher forms of co-operation in production; where we are continually saying the interests of the capitalist and the worker shall be assimilated."**

—WILLIAM MAXWELL, Bristol Congress, 1893.

**F**OLLOWING up the stirring resolutions made at the Manchester Festival (see page 75), the Guild actively concerned itself with the condition of co-operative employment. The ball was set rolling by Mr. (now Sir) William Maxwell, who read a startling paper at the Bristol Co-operative Congress, in 1893. This paper showed that, although in some degree the movement was considerate in its treatment of its employees, the hours worked were appalling, especially for women and girls, and the wages in many cases as disgracefully low as those prevalent in retail traders' shops.

"This will not do," said the Guild, and for the next two years they quietly added to their knowledge accurate details and facts drawn from the personal information provided through the branches. In addition to the special inquiries made by Miss Reddish, schedules of questions were sent out in 1896 to 169 Societies. Of these 103 made returns covering wages and conditions of 1,662 women and girls employed as shop assistants, check clerks, cashiers, dressmakers, milliners, tailoresses, boot-workers, and farm and dairy workers. Complete returns in 1,349 cases provided grounds for a vigorous

campaign in advocacy of a "living wage" for women, and later on, for a "Co-operative Standard" of wages for women co-operative workers.

Although the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees early advocated a minimum scale for boys and men, ranging from 6s. per week at the age of 14, to 24s. per week at the age of 21, it made no proposals for a minimum scale for girls and women. When, in 1907, the Co-operative Congress affirmed the principle of a co-operative minimum wage, the Guild approached the A.U.C.E. with proposals for a women's scale, and for combined work in getting it adopted not only by distributive societies, but also by the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

The scale agreed upon was as follows :—

Age . . . .	14	15	16	17	18	19	20 and over.
Wage ..	5s.	7s.	9s.	11s.	13s.	15s.	17s.

A joint representation to the United Board resulted in the acceptance of these scales, which were endorsed by Congress in 1908. The Guild quickly realised, however, that the scale would remain a dead letter unless the societies and the C.W.S. could be aroused to adopt it, and for the next five years they worked vigorously to attain this end.

Facts were collected, and published in a paper entitled *A Co-operative Standard for Women Workers*, which circulated in thousands. The paper showed that

"Guildswomen felt that a responsibility was laid upon them. They were shareholders and employers desirous of establishing model industrial conditions; they were mothers interested in their own and others' girls; they were progressive women organised to advance the cause of women."

The investigations brought to light chaotic variations in wages, and the absence of any general standard. Cost of living had little or nothing to do with rates of women's

wages, nor had the amount of surplus made by societies. The custom of the district was the ruling factor, and although the average wage paid by the Movement was noticeably above the general average for Great Britain (and societies, as a rule, paid higher wages than the private firms in their own neighbourhood), it was found that in most districts considerable advances were necessary to reach the scale.

The action taken during this campaign is specially interesting, because it shows how reforms in industrial conditions can be constitutionally pressed forward and won by rank and file members in a co-operative democracy.

The first necessity was to secure a full discussion of the subject, and to convey a knowledge of the facts throughout the movement.

Vigorous propaganda was carried on by articles in the *Co-operative News*, papers and speakers at Co-operative Union and Guild Conferences, circulars and deputations to management committees, and the publication and distribution of lively and varied leaflets. Conferences with management and educational committees were arranged, and long discussions took place. At the Societies' business meetings Guildswomen brought forward resolutions in favour of the scale, gaining much experience in the methods of drafting resolutions in conformity with the rules of the society. The A.U.C.E. supported the scale, and joint committees of the Guild and the A.U.C.E. persistently worked to bring more women into the Union, with such success that in four years, from 1908 to 1912, the number of women members increased from 500 to 2,700.

The Guild repeatedly suggested that the number would grow much more rapidly if the Trade Union appointed a woman organiser.

In 1908-09 there is a record of setting up a "Roll of Honour" of societies adopting the scale, headed by

Enfield Highway and Birmingham Societies, and by 1911, 64 societies had fallen into line. As the distributive societies paying the scale increased, the campaign for securing the payment of the scale by the Co-operative Wholesale Society became more effectual.

In 1910, a petition signed by 13,337 Guildswomen was presented to the C.W.S. Directors, asking for an assurance that the scale would be put in force within a specified time for all their women workers "as a step towards a living wage, and the ultimate adoption of equal pay for equal work." The reply did not give the assurance desired, and the Guild proceeded to take advantage of the democratic constitution of the C.W.S. by getting societies to send in a resolution in favour of the scale for the business meetings. Whole-hearted support came from societies themselves paying the scale, special assistance being given by Enfield Highway, City of Liverpool, and Stockport. The first attempt to put a resolution on the agenda failed, the Directors rejecting it as out of order, but a slightly modified wording was finally accepted for the meetings in June, 1911. This was adjourned for three months to allow the C.W.S. Board to make a statement to societies, which, among other points, showed that some 4,000 of the women employed were paid below the scale.

The Central Committee replied, and in the discussion throughout the movement, Guildswomen became familiar with all the hostile arguments, and learnt how to answer them. They pointed out that if it is necessary that work should be done, the worker ought to be paid a living wage, and that wages and salaries are not really regulated by "worth." They explained that a minimum is not a maximum, and would not prevent higher wages for greater skill. They claimed that the decision to adopt a minimum standard was a question of policy rightly decided by the *members*, and did not infringe the necessary power of management committees to fix

individual wages provided they were above the standard. They showed that the additional cost was small in relation to trade, and that better wages would increase the efficiency of both the workers and the management. They stood for the principle that if a national dividend is paid in all departments, a national minimum wage scale should be guaranteed to the workers.

The position of the C.W.S. Directors has been described by Mr. Percy Redfern in his "Story of the Co-operative Wholesale Society." He says:—

"The advocates of the minimum wage were able to concentrate upon one consideration, and that one only. Theirs was a bold and simple proposal, easily comprehended. It appealed to the imagination, and the moral claims made upon its behalf aroused enthusiasm. The C.W.S. directorate, on the other hand could not move unencumbered. The Society, having accepted a minimum for men, hardly might refuse a minimum for women. And, standing by itself, unrelated to the thousand facts of industrial life, the highest figure of the scale was unexceptionable. It meant little more than a guaranteed standing room upon the earth, and every member of the Committee would have been glad to see it in smooth operation. But there was the rub. This was a rate which the C.W.S. management had taken no part in fixing, and had regarded simply as a guide to what co-operators considered desirable. For the executive to thrust it upon their managers as a hard-and-fast demand would be another matter."

When the resolution for the scale was voted on in December, the majority against it was only 547 in a total vote of 2,500. This encouraged the Guild and societies to continue their work, and the subject was raised again at the quarterly meetings in December, 1912. Just before the meetings, the C.W.S. Board

made the cheering announcement that the scale was being put in force for the 1,000 packers they employed, who were amongst the lowest paid workers. At the meetings the resolution asking the C.W.S. to put the scale in force for all its women workers by the year 1914, was carried by a majority of 139 votes.

The public rightly understood the magnitude of the decision. A leading article in the *Manchester Guardian* pointed out its importance as an example, and said that it marked "a triumph for the progressive power of democratic organisation and a vindication of women's capacity for politics."

The Guild did not abandon their work for better conditions upon the general acceptance of the principle they had so long and so strenuously striven to establish, but kept a very watchful eye upon the course of events, and like the famous Father O'Flinn, continued

"Checking the crazy ones,  
Coaxing onaisy ones,  
Lifting the lazy ones  
On wid the stick."

For instance: some societies complained that they were unable to apply the scale to workers in dressmaking and millinery departments "because these departments did not show surpluses." The Congress held at Newcastle, in 1913, resolved that the Central Committee should make a detailed inquiry into the wages, hours, and conditions of apprenticeship, and surplus in these departments. This inquiry showed that the non-surplus earning reputation of these departments largely rested on the method of crediting the drapery departments with the profit on materials used in the dressmaking and millinery shops, and that a method of accountancy, allowing a fair discount on materials used, together with good management, and a proper proportion of skilled workers, and payment for all apprentices upon the minimum scale, would set these departments upon a paying basis.

From the Guild reports of various campaigns for the improvement of Labour conditions we get illuminating insight into its methods. As early as 1892, the president of a society wrote: "The women carried the earlier closing resolution, despite the grumbling and protestations of a considerable number of the male members."\* This action in support of shorter hours was repeated in the following years by many branches. Questions of sanitation and seats for women employees were also taken up.

In the report for 1898-99, it is said "considerate treatment of our employees is one of the points, so to speak, in the Guild charter. This year we find Willesden Junction helped to get the store closed at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, and half-an-hour earlier on four days in the week; Lea, Holloway, Manchester, and Hindley supported resolutions for shorter hours; Leicester discussed early shopping; Wigan passed a resolution that all its members should refrain from shopping during the last hour; Dewsbury secured a week's holiday in the year for its caretaker; Totterdown is about to call attention to the short time allowed for meals." The report for 1908 indicates that this sort of work has been quietly going on during the intervening years, while the work of converting the societies to the idea of the minimum scale was going forward.

The outbreak of war in 1914, however, made so complete a change in wage conditions, and in the general position of women in industry, that the line of development was turned into different channels, which are described in Chapter XI.

Thus we can trace, through the history of the years, a picture of how the Guild steadily built up within the Co-operative Movement the principle of a "Standard of Wages" below which the movement should not fall, and exercised an influence strong enough to mould the

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\*Annual Report, 1892-3.



opinions and practice of the movement to the same end. I am convinced that the Co-operative Movement is in a better and a stronger position to meet the industrial and commercial competition of the capitalist world because of the valiant struggle its women members made to bring the governing bodies within the movement to a full sense of their responsibility towards those who serve under its banner.\*

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\* The National Co-operative Policy, which Societies are now urged to carry out contains many of the reforms for which the Guild has worked consistently. Amongst these may be noted : Low entrance fees ; open membership ; cash payments in all transactions other than club transactions ; the payment of trade union standard of wages, or the minimum rate as approved by Congress from time to time, whichever is the higher ; the maintenance of good relationships with organised labour and joint action in matters of common welfare.

## CHAPTER X.

### NATIONAL CARE OF MATERNITY.

**"God could not be everywhere, and therefore  
he made mothers."**

—*Old Saying.*

**T**HE Guild very early realised that one of its special functions, and its unique opportunity for service, would be in the direction of reforms having to do with motherhood and family life. "The Improvement of Domestic Life," the secondary object of the institution, meant for them, not merely the improvement which could be brought about through membership of a co-operative society, but improvement in all that goes to make up the quality of domestic content and happiness.

As we have seen, the early Branches followed the example of mothers' meetings, and instituted "maternity bags," cutting-out parties and sewing classes.\* The growth of civic education, however, gradually moulded the opinions of guildswomen to the understanding that many of the reforms desired must be secured through *public action*, rather than by private charity and benevolence. Sewing classes, for charitable purposes, were therefore discouraged† and active interest in social reforms encouraged.

In 1898, the Midwives' Registration Association forwarded a petition to the President of the Local Government Board, in favour of a bill dealing with the registration of midwives. Mrs. Deans (C.C., 1898) signed this petition on behalf of the Guild, and represented the Central Committee at the meetings of the association.

Following visits of small parties to Paris and Belgium

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\* Page 27.

† Page 32.

in 1905-06, a wave of interest was created throughout the Guild in the provisions made in these countries for the medical care of women and children\*; and an inquiry was set on foot through the branches to find out if provisions were, or could be made on reasonable terms in this country for similar medical services.

Miss E. E. M. Allen of the Southern Section, has constituted herself the champion of a State Medical Service; never failing to keep the idea before Congress, and advocating its necessity particularly in rural areas.

It was found that in some towns medical aid societies and provident dispensaries were already doing good work, while in other areas, especially in the north-west, and northern sections, there was no provision of any kind. After discussion at branch meetings and sectional council meetings, the following resolution was passed :—

“ That this conference is of opinion that the inquiry made by the Guild shows that there is need in many places of mutual provision for medical aid, and considers that a medical aid scheme would be a suitable development for Co-operative Societies to adopt.”

To Woking Society is accorded the honour of being the first society to start a family medical aid scheme upon a basis of a yearly deduction of 4s. 4d. from the dividend of members joining the club. At Jarrow a scheme for maintaining a “ Co-operative Nurse ” at a cost of 6d. deducted from dividend, was discussed, and many societies set up schemes for supplying sick-room appliances for the use of members. In 1907 it is reported that 21 societies and 23 guilds had established such schemes, and by 1912 a record is made of 104 societies having appliances on loan, generally under the care of a guild member.

“ Dispensaries for Babies ” and “ Schools for Mothers ” were advocated as “ a splendid form of

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\* See Chapter XV.

co-operative educational and propagandist work," and it was agreed to devote part of the "Coming-of-Age Fund" to sending an organiser to any society who would take up this work in poor neighbourhoods. At the same time Medical Officers of Health and other competent persons were invited to address branches on Infant Mortality, while Town Councils were urged to appoint women health visitors. Guild branches took a very active part in helping to establish "Schools for Mothers," and in the subsequent work connected with them.

The Guild was thereby well prepared, when the idea of a National Insurance Bill was talked about, to give it immediate and practical attention, focussing their interest mainly upon the position of non-working married women, and the needs of maternity. Mrs. Vaughan Nash, with Miss Lilian Harris, interviewed an actuary, and proposals were drawn up for the inclusion of maternity benefits in the Bill. These were submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer *before* the Bill was printed. As a result of their letter, the Guild was asked to send a deputation to Sir Rufus Isaacs, in the absence of Mr. Lloyd George, and to their satisfaction, when the Bill was issued, it was found to contain provisions practically on the lines suggested by the Guild.

During the discussions on the Bill, the Guild concentrated on the *position of married women*. It pointed out the failure of the Bill as a provision for *national* health when it left out altogether any provision for the 6,000,000 married non-wage-earning women, whose health was of supreme importance to the family and the nation. Strong efforts were made to get some form of State assistance in the shape of hospital and sanatorium treatment, but without success.\*

In May, 1911, a letter was sent to all M.P.'s pointing out defects, and asking for amendments, and protesting

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\* Annual Report, 1913-14.

against the maternity benefit being handed to the husband as his property, or being administered in kind. After the Act was passed, the Guild kept in close touch with the administration; Miss Harris (assistant secretary) was appointed on both the Joint and English Advisory Boards, and Mrs. Eddie (Manchester) to the English Advisory Board under the Act.

One of the most strenuous campaigns ever undertaken was entered into when the Amending Bill of 1913 was brought forward. Conferences, meetings, letters to M.P.'s, letters to the press, memorandums to public officials followed each other in quick succession, urging that in any amendments made in the Act,

- (1) The Maternity benefit should be the property of the mother.
- (2) That it should be paid without delay.
- (3) That sick pay for four weeks at confinement should be paid to Insured married women as well as the maternity benefit of 30s. due under her husband's insurance.
- (4) That arbitration fees should be uniform and within the means of the poorest members of insured societies.

It was soon clear that most of these points would be accepted, and the Guild therefore concentrated its efforts upon the first proposal, to which there was great opposition. In July, 1913, a deputation from the Guild waited upon Mr. Masterman and members of the Insurance Commission urging this reform, presenting at the same time a formidable list of authentic cases of hardships endured by women whose husbands claimed the benefit and spent it upon themselves.

When the Standing Committee of the House of Commons decided in favour of the amendment, another memorial was presented to the House appealing to the members to endorse the decision. This memorial was

a triumph of rapid organisation. Within the space of five days, 565 signatures were secured of women councillors, midwives, nurses, members of insurance committees, sanitary inspectors and health visitors, poor-law guardians, officials of political and other women's organisations, educationists, doctors, social workers and others. A supplementary list brought the total of names up to 733.

Mr. Handel Booth, M.P., gave much help in the fight, and during the committee stage, Miss L. Davies and Miss Harris attended in the committee room with a watching barrister engaged by the Guild.

The interest aroused in the House was great. Members were left free to vote, no Government whips being put on. The only party to put on whips was the Labour Party, which had brought forward a hostile amendment, Mr. Philip Snowden, however, standing staunchly by the women. M.P.'s, left unshepherded, found themselves in the wrong lobbies, and the situation was saved by Lord Robert Cecil, who seized the opportunity for a fresh amendment.

The final victory of the Guild was won when this amendment, making it possible for the husband's signature to be accepted "only if authorised by the wife," was carried by 21 votes.

"Much more than a remedy for a grave abuse of maternity benefit was won by this victory." "It was the first public recognition of the mother's place in the home, and a new step towards the economic independence for wives, and the break up of the barbarous law of coverture."\*

The winter of 1917 brought about a fresh campaign in connection with the Insurance Amendment Bill introduced in November, 1917. Certain recommendations were proposed which the Guild strenuously

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\*Annual Report, 1913-14.

opposed. The chief of these was the proposal that women leaving insurance on marriage should receive a "Marriage Benefit" of £2 instead of the ordinary benefits of the Act. The Guild proposed that instead of this marriage benefit an additional maternity benefit should be given for the first child, with a year's free insurance. The Bill passed through the House of Commons before the Guild had time to make its opinions felt, so efforts were concentrated on getting an amendment in the House of Lords. Lord Knutsford and Lord Sydenham proved two good friends, and the unique feature of the campaign was a circular to peeresses asking them to get their husbands to attend and vote! Miss Enfield was the heroine of this House of Lords campaign, seeing Lord Knutsford and upholding the Guild position in interviews with Insurance Commissioners and Actuaries.

"After Lord Knutsford's speech on the Second reading of the Bill, expressions of support began to pour in. The Government grew nervous, negotiations took place, and finally the marriage benefit was withdrawn, and an agreed amendment was arrived at which gave maternity benefit of 30s. for the first child born within two years of the marriage, and 5s. a week for six weeks within a year of leaving employment, and a year's medical and sanatorium benefit."\*

In order to deal more effectively with all the work the Guild was undertaking, a Citizen Sub-Committee of the Central Committee, with a special fund, had been formed, which had the valuable assistance of Miss Margaret Bondfield as secretary.

The "eyes and ears" of the Citizenship Sub-Committee on this matter were over 100 correspondents appointed in the Districts, together with many other unofficial correspondents, Guild members keenly alive

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\*Annual Report, 1917-18.

Miss G. PIDGON. Mrs. E. NEEP.

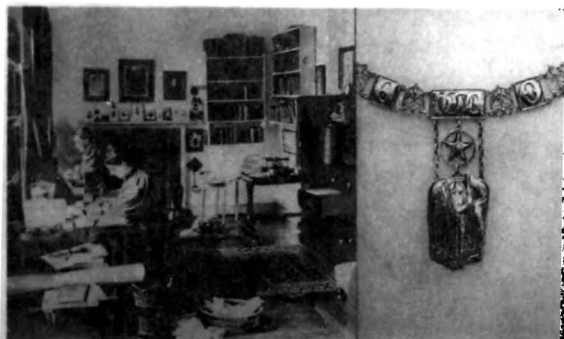


Miss W. COX.

Miss M. YUILL.

Present London Office of the  
Guild, and Staff.

Inset : The General Secretary  
(Mrs. Barton).



The W.C.G. Secretary's Office in the  
Vicarage, Kirkby Lonsdale, showing  
Miss L. Davies (Gen. Sec.) and Miss  
L. Harris (Asst. Sec.).

Chain of Office.  
Designed by  
Miss L. Preece.





**Coronation Street Store.**

**Little customers  
at the Store.**



**Miss Ll. Davies, Miss Partridge (standing),  
and little customers at Sunderland Settlement.**

**THE GUILD'S  
SUNDERLAND  
EFFORT AMONG  
THE POOR.**

to the conditions of the working women's lives. These provided the Committee with local notes, and specific cases.

As a result of the experience of the omissions and administration of the Insurance Act, it was made clear that the system of insurance based on employment could never meet the maternity needs of married women, and that the only way to deal with these was by the *National Care of Maternity through the Public Health Services*.

A series of letters were published in a book entitled "Maternity: Letters from Working Women."\* It is not too much to say that this book startled the world of thoughtful readers, both in England and America, into whose hands it came. The press reviews showed the remarkable impression which it made, and in spite of the war two editions were sold out within a few months.

Dr. Ballantyne, the well-known obstetric surgeon in Edinburgh, recommended the book to his medical students, and in the United States, Miss Lathrop, of the U.S.A. Government Bureau for Maternity and Child Welfare, was so deeply interested that she visited the Guild Office, and eventually her department arranged for Mrs. Barton to attend a great conference on Maternity and Child Welfare at Washington in 1920 (together with Sir A. Newsholme, who was chief medical officer of the

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\*Published in 1915.

*The Times*.—"A book of notable interest and singular distinction. . . . The letters are human documents, straightforward, outspoken, and quiet."

*The New Statesman*.—"It is scarcely possible to overstate the value of this publication."

*The British Medical Journal*.—"A remarkable book, and one which the profession in general and the obstetricians in particular will do well to ponder over."

*Labour Leader*.—"It is like no other book that has ever been written. It is the authentic voice of our working-women mothers, imparting to the world a knowledge which the most rigid scientist cannot affect to disbelieve, a knowledge of their suffering."

Local Government Board up to 1918).. Great interest was aroused by Mrs. Barton's speeches both at the conference and in several American towns.

One of the most important things brought out in "Maternity" was that infant mortality and disease were largely due to the serious neglect of maternity problems by the medical profession and the public, and to the impossibility of working women getting the medical advice needed in pregnancy, child-birth, and post-natal conditions, for both mother and child, as well as the necessary rest, care, and food.

To bring this medical advice within the reach of all mothers, the Guild urged that Municipal Maternity Centres should be established throughout the country, assisted by a State Grant, and it may be said that during the war years, the Guild as an organisation concentrated its public energies upon this effort to save life in this direction.\* It upheld two positions : (1) It emphasised the view that the Maternity Centre must be a Public Health Service, as opposed to centres under the Board of Education. (2) It insisted that the Maternity Services should be municipal, and any part taken by voluntary associations being in connection with municipal work, or as pioneers until the municipality would take it up. Municipal maternity homes, midwifery service, and home helps were pressed upon the local authorities unceasingly, while guildswomen sought office on local authorities where such services were needed.

The Local Government Board circular on "Maternity and Child Welfare" incorporated many of the Guild's suggestions.

An interesting feature of the insurance and maternity campaigns was the close contact of the Guild with the Government Departments concerned, and the desire of those departments to know the point of view

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\* See Chapter XI.

of women, and to meet their needs. Throughout the war this spirit in government departments continued, and afterwards, in the Ministry of Health, while Sir Robert Morant was Permanent Secretary. It was the strong desire to establish permanent contact between the workers' organisations and a government department which touched their lives so closely, that led the Guild to press for a Consultative Council of the general public, as part of the administrative machinery of the Ministry of Health.\*

Unfortunately, after the death of Sir Robert Morant and the setting in of the period of reaction and false economy which began in 1921, contact with the public became the last thing the Government desired, and the excellent beginning made in the years since 1911 has been entirely checked for the time being.

In 1918, there is a list of 184 members sitting on the 122 new Municipal Maternity Committees then formed. Service on these committees and on the Insurance Committees involved a considerable financial strain on working women. The Guild felt it necessary to put forward a very strong plea for an allowance for out-of-pocket expenses, in addition to railway fares. A memorandum set out in frank terms the difficulties of a number of women appointed to these committees.† It is an illuminating insight into the cost of citizenship service for the workers. (See Appendix III.)

In 1921 the following disheartened statement is made in the Annual Report :—

“ The political campaign to cut down expenditure on the public health services so essential to the national life has made it impossible to work for new developments, and has rendered it necessary to

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\* See Chapter XI.

† The great majority of married working women appointed on to Insurance Committees were Guildswomen.

concentrate on the defence of what has already been gained. The attempt to cut down the grant for milk to mothers and infants aroused great indignation in the Branches, which at once sent resolutions to their local authorities and the Ministry of Health protesting against the proposal; 212 branches report that they took action. . . . The Guild asked Sir Alfred Mond to receive a deputation. The Ministry, however, announced that they would continue the grant for the rest of the year, and the deputation did not, therefore, take place."

The Guild was asked to give evidence before the committee of the British Medical Association appointed to consider the value of Maternity and Child Welfare Service, but owing to the impossibility of collecting the necessary material in time, the invitation was not accepted. A letter stating the main principles as regards maternity work was sent instead. In July, Mrs. Hood spoke on the subject at the English-Speaking Conference in Infant Welfare, arranged by the Association of Infant Welfare and Maternity Centres. The Government's economy policy, says the Report for 1922, made it "impossible to secure development of the public maternity services, or even to prevent their being cut down in many places." With a government pledged to "attempting no improvements," and with local authorities preoccupied with housing difficulties and efforts to save the rates, it was felt that little effective work could be done, and that the Guild's energies could be better spent this year on a national effort to arouse the Government to action in regard to housing.

Hope for progress revived with the advent of a Labour Government in 1924, and the Guild stood by to help wherever possible, calling attention, for example—in a resolution passed at the Annual Congress held at Leeds in that year—to the serious matter of mortality

in maternity,\* and calling upon the Government to institute "at the earliest possible moment"—

- (1) An adequate service of fully-trained midwives.
- (2) A service of Home Helps.
- (3) Adequately equipped Welfare Centres, Maternity Homes and Hospitals.

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\*This question is engaging the earnest attention of the medical world at the present time (1927).

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WAR YEARS AND AFTER.

"When we look back after the battle-smoke  
Has cleared away, oft where we think we lost,  
We shall behold that it was victory,  
Knowing the banners which to earth were tossed  
Shall stream again before the merry wind,  
With brave hearts following on for evermore—  
That men fail only when they die for naught  
Not when they win one step towards the shore."

ETHEL CARNIE.—*Songs of a Factory Girl.*

**G**ATHERING up the incidents of the war years as they affected the Guild organisation, one might use a sort of Irishism, and say, "If it was affected adversely at all, the effect was all to the good." The adverse effects were those common to the nation at large: darkened towns; meeting places taken by the military; difficulties in travelling. These, together with the claims upon women for all manner of services, and soon, bitter sorrow and bereavement, could not do other than deplete the membership for the time being.

The report for 1915-16 notes a decrease of two branches from 611 to 609, and of 2,085 members from 31,658 in 1914, to 29,573 in 1915. In 1917 the number of branches had increased to 666, and in 1918-19, when the tension of strife was lifted, there is a record of 100 new branches formed or in course of formation, and an increase of nearly 5,000 new members, bringing the total membership up to 32,908 in the branches affiliated. Branches which had been obliged to close down for lack of meeting rooms were beginning to function again, leading the way to the remarkable revival of 1919-20, when an addition of 68 new branches, and 11,631 new members is recorded.

Reasons for this revival were suggested by the Central Committee as follows:—

“ The profiteering, high prices, and consolidation of capitalism which have been such marked features of the war period, have shown, in a striking way, the signal advantages which co-operation can confer on the public, while bringing home to co-operators the strength of the interests arrayed against them. . . . At the same time the political enfranchisement of women is rapidly raising their status, is increasing their sense of power, and securing greater recognition of their value in public work. The Guild, being composed of co-operative women, has naturally been quickened by these far-reaching occurrences.”

During these fateful four years, while branches and individual members were busy providing comforts for the soldiers and sailors, all the ordinary activities of the Guild, educational, propagandist, and civic, were pursued with unabated vigour, and there was little falling off in the work done in branch, district, section and congress. Inside the movement, the importance of “ Saving in the Stores ” was brought prominently before the members, and the regular campaigns were not interrupted.

Many of the objects for which the Guild had worked, did indeed acquire added impetus owing to the conditions brought about by the war. The importance of maintaining a high standard of wages, and of good conditions of employment for women were emphasised by new and increasingly difficult labour problems. To meet these problems as they arose, the Workers' War Emergency Committee, consisting of representatives of Trade Unions, the Co-operative Union, the Labour Party, and the Women's Industrial Organisations, was formed. On this committee, Mrs. Gasson represented the Co-operative Union, and Miss Margaret Bondfield the Guild. Unem-



ployment amongst women was the first difficulty to be contended with, and the local Women's Unemployment Committees set up contained many Guild members, who threw themselves whole-heartedly into the organisation of schemes to save the women from the despair and distress which fell upon them.

As it will be remembered, this phase passed, and women became absorbed in industries which had never before been open to them. Within the Co-operative Movement the terms upon which women should replace men in productive and distributive occupations provoked much discussion. The Joint Guild and A.U.C.E. Committee "discussed this matter and the Guild Central Committee," says the Report of 1915-16,

"made an enquiry into the subject in November (1915), and received most valuable information from secretaries, managers, and employees. . . . The conclusions resulting from the inquiry were published, and the importance of maintaining the standard rate of the trade was urged. . . . The proposal was put forward that women without experience should be started at the Congress scale for women, or any higher scale actually in force in the Society, and their wages raised quarterly so that at the end of the year they should be paid on the men's scale. This safeguarded the eventual payment of the men's standard, while giving the management committees a period in which to make the necessary adjustments of labour."

During the recurring period of unemployment after the war the Guild maintained a close watch upon industrial matters affecting women and girls, and pronounced itself definitely on the side of "equal pay for equal work." In 1918 the "Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations," was formed, and was recognised by the Labour Party as an advisory committee on women's questions, and by Government

departments as the body through whom representatives of industrial women's organisations for public committees, and as Justices of the Peace, could be nominated. Miss Llewelyn Davies became a vice-chairman of the committee, and Mrs. Hood\*, Mrs. Barton, and Miss Harris represented the Guild, which, in regard to representation on public bodies, played a considerable part.

A useful piece of public work undertaken by the Guild, at this time, was to draw attention to the rapid and dangerous rise in food prices which began to be severely felt in 1915 and 1916. With their usual thoroughness the Guild obtained from its own members details of actual incomes and expenditures in letters written by members either from personal experience or from the experience of neighbours. In this inquiry the Scottish, and the Irish Guilds joined with the English Guild, forming a united strength of 40,000 women, especially interested as wives and mothers, and as Co-operators in the purchasing power of money. The Government Food Prices Committee was appointed on July 16th, 1916, and the results of the Guild inquiry was tabulated and presented in evidence before the committee by Miss Llewelyn Davies and Mrs. Layton. The information supplied proved conclusively that "serious under-consumption" and a grave lowering of the standard of living was resulting among those classes whose income, or whose earnings had not risen with the rise of prices.

The memorandum, accompanied by a letter from Miss Ll. Davies, was sent to the press and received widespread publicity from papers of all shades of opinion. Its main proposals were that "The Government should take over the supplies of meat, wheat, milk and coal, and distribute them through the agency of municipalities and co-operative societies, as the only means of preventing profiteering."

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\*Mrs. Hood, J.P., is chairman of the Committee (1927).

The effect of war deprivations upon the welfare of expectant and nursing mothers was a matter of the deepest concern to the Guild. Efforts to secure help were untiring.\* The case for the provision of dinners and milk by municipalities was placed before the Government Food Prices Committee, and a recommendation in support of such provision was included in the interim report of that committee in September, 1916. "With the change of government in December, 1916, came a new President of the Local Government Board, Lord Rhondda. As the promised Bill on Dinners and Maternity Welfare had never appeared, . . . an interview was arranged between Lord Rhondda and Miss Llewelyn Davies, who put the Guild proposals and the point of view of the working women before him and left a new memorandum embodying a large scheme."

"On May 1st, 1917, Lord Rhondda received a deputation from the Guild, consisting of Mrs. Hood (Enfield), Mrs. Lawton (Stoke), Mrs. Mitchell (Birmingham), Mrs. Ferguson (Darlington), Mrs. Taylor (Barry) who gave Lord Rhondda an account of the conditions existing in his own coalfields, Mrs. Layton (Willesden), and the General Secretary. A strong plea was made for a Public Health Maternity allowance of 10s. per week for two weeks before, and four weeks after confinement, in addition to existing insurance benefits; for Maternity Committees to be made compulsory; for municipal services of Midwives and Home Helps; for the provision of dinners and milk as "treatment"; for the provision of Maternity Homes and Hospitals; and that all maternity work should be centred in a maternity department with a woman at the head of it under the L.G.B., which should become the new Ministry of Health.

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\*Valuable help in organising practical work was given by Mrs. Deane-Streatfeild and Miss Janet Case.

"The deputation lasted one and three-quarter hours, and in reply, Lord Rhondda thanked the deputation for putting their views so clearly before him."

In carrying forward the propaganda on behalf of Maternity and Infant Welfare work, the Guild received, in this year, a donation of £50 from the committee of the Hodgson Pratt Memorial Fund.\*

Maternity committees were developing rapidly during 1916, and had already been formed in 45 towns. The number of Guild members on them was 75. A year later 259 Guild members, from 139 branches, sat on Maternity Committees. The Maternity and Child Welfare Bill, introduced in March, 1918, came into force in September of that year, and made the establishment of Maternity Committees compulsory, and the provision of home helps possible—two provisions for which the Guild had long worked. One guildswoman, Mrs. Cottrell, was appointed on to the Government Consumers' Council; three were appointed to the English and Welsh Consultative Councils of the Ministry of Health; and one, Mrs. Barton, to the Housing Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health.

As the local committees became established, however, the Guild found itself obliged to waste much time and energy on securing representation on the various bodies set up, sharing, indeed, the difficulties encountered by the Co-operative Movement and other working-class organisations in this respect.

When the Local Food Control Committees were formed in August, 1917, however, about 230 guildswomen had secured representation on about 210 of these committees, and a circular from the Ministry of Food recommended to local councils that Co-operative

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\*The Hodgson-Pratt Memorial Fund is administered by that staunch friend of the Guild, Mr. J. J. Dent.

women should be asked to serve on the committees for running national kitchens.

The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women was very active during 1918 in promoting representation of working women on the central public committees, and in putting forward the names of working women as nominees for appointment as Justices of the Peace. The Guild was represented on the following committees :

Old Age Pensions Departmental Committee (Mrs. Baker).

Overseas Committee, Colonial Office\* (Mrs. Harrison Bell).

Housing Council of the Ministry of Health (Mrs. Barton).

Central Committee under the Profiteering Act, Complaints Committee and Investigation Committee (Mrs. Leighton).

Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Health in England (Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Burke).

Consultative Council of the Ministry of Health in Wales (Mrs. Rose Davies).

Consumers' Council (Mrs. Cottrell).

The position of most of these committees, however, proved very unsatisfactory from the point of view of the Standing Joint Committee, and in 1920 the committee raised the matter with the Ministry of Health, and got a question asked in the House of Commons. Actions proposed by the various committees were ignored or set aside, and some of them, for example, the Housing Council, were not called together after the first meeting or so. The Committee therefore withdrew its

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\* This Committee replaced the Management Committee of the Emigrants' Information Office upon which Miss Catherine Webb had served since 1887.

representatives from this council and issued a public statement on its action.

Twelve guildswomen were amongst the first women magistrates appointed in 1920, and by 1927 there were 72 guildswomen holding these important and honourable civic posts.

The public activities of the Guild during the war years and immediately after, brought the organisation into considerable repute as a body of women who were prepared to do things, and to get things done. The Guild began to feel that this flattering reputation might have certain disadvantages, and in 1921 it was resolved to review the position, and a paper was issued for general discussion, which proved a somewhat heart-searching document. The following quotations may serve not only as history, but as useful guides for the future.

"One of the problems which all workers in a movement like ours have to face is how far to concentrate their efforts on certain lines and subjects, and how far to widen their activities. For the Guild, which has its co-operative side, its citizen side, and its women's side, this is a particularly difficult problem; almost every question, economic, social, political and educational, seems to come within the scope of the Guild's interests. In order to keep a large vision and a sound judgment we must keep ourselves alive to these many questions; at the same time, if we mean to achieve practical results, we must conserve our energy for the really important things, and not allow it to be dissipated by trying to do a little of everything.

"The Central Committee is continually having to face this problem. We have invitations to be represented on all kinds of committees, requests for support from any number of organisations, and appeals to take part in activities of all sorts from disarmament campaigns to a war on house flies!

We have constantly to ask ourselves the question, 'Shall we, by taking part in this or that, really help to achieve the purpose for which the Guild stands?' . . . That does not mean that the Guild programme should never include anything but Guild subjects, or that Guild branches should never lend a helping hand to other organisations. Nothing of the kind. We must keep our broad vision and sympathies.

"We do not aim at merely passing improvements or reforms just on the surface. We aim at a fundamental reconstruction of the whole of our social and industrial life. The Guild's purpose is to help in building up through the co-operative movement an entirely new social order, from which profit-making, with all its evils, has been abolished, and where there is that real equality between man and man, between man and woman, and between nation and nation, which is at once the result and the foundation of all true co-operation. That is what the Guild is aiming at, and we must never lose sight of it."

This useful paper proceeds to point out the need for "Concerted Action" in regard to any common programme undertaken, and urges that local co-operative and citizen actions should have their basis in previous Guild campaigns. Allied questions such as are akin to Guild interests should not be neglected, but should be subjected to a test as to whether such questions fall into line with the purpose of the Guild. It is further pointed out that a large number of organisations have, or were growing up under post-war conditions which might seek the help of the Guild, or offer to send propagandist speakers to branch meetings. Some of these are described as genuinely sympathetic to co-operative ideals, others as antagonistic, but affiliation with any should be carefully weighed lest the strength of the Guild be dissipated, if not destroyed. "This may seem to some narrow-minded. . . . but . . . we

cannot afford to dissipate our strength. We must give all the time and strength we have to the building up of our new world, and let other people do the repairing of the old one. We must see that our Guild machinery is used for our Guild purpose."

The Guild was, undoubtedly, beginning to feel the drain upon its energies imposed by the withdrawal, or partial withdrawal into other spheres of activity of some of its best workers. In any case the time which working women can devote to public work is limited, and it was naturally the best qualified members, many of them holding official positions in the Guild, who were the most sought after, for service on public committees.

The call to concentration was, in fact, a rallying call to old and tried workers, as well as to the younger members who had yet to learn how great is the need for such concentration.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FINANCE AND FESTIVALS.

"The proverbe saith that many a smale maketh a grate."

CHAUCER, *Persones Tale*.

PERHAPS it is wrong to class Guild finances amongst the small things of life! Making both ends meet is by no means a small matter in a working woman's life, and it is the most persistently recurrent problem in the domestic affairs of the working woman's organisation. But women are not the domestic "chancellors of the exchequer" for nothing. When it comes to that scientific process known as "cutting the coat according to the cloth," no one can make a better or more attractive garment out of scant material than the Women's Guild.

Each branch makes its own rule as to the annual subscription from its members, the usual amount being 1s. to 4s. per year. The annual contribution from the branches to the Central Fund was, until 1914, 2d. per member, when it was raised to 4d. per member. In 1920, in view of the change in central administration, the fee was increased to 9d. per member. Each branch also subscribes at least 2d. per member annually to the District Fund.

These annual payments do not, however, complete the financial support given to the Guild by its members.

In practically every guildroom a box is placed on the table labelled "Help in Need Fund," "Emergency Fund," "Convalescent Fund," or "Relief Fund" (in industrial disputes, &c.), into which the members drop pennies as they can spare them. The boxes are opened

as occasions require to provide little comforts for sick members, or to help a troubled member over some emergency. The amount of money contributed through these Branch donations would be very difficult to compute, for the Guild rarely takes credit for the sums it thus distributes "all for each." My impression is that the total would be very large, and in proportions of self-sacrifice put to shame many charitable gifts of the wealthy.

Another much appreciated source of income are the grants from various bodies of the movement. As early as 1886 Mrs. Lawrenson persuaded the Co-operative Union that the work undertaken for Co-operation by the Guild was worthy of some financial support, and a grant of £10 was made to the Central Fund from the Union.

This grant was continued in increasing amounts until the break of four years, from 1914 to 1918.†

The Co-operative Wholesale Society also has given financial support without condition, both in the form of grants to the Annual Congress, and in grants to the Central Fund. In 1908, when the Guild office was transferred from Kirkby Lonsdale to London, and a difficult problem was presented in the additional cost for office accommodation and clerical assistance, the C.W.S. came to the rescue with a special grant of £100.

The grants in 1926-27 from the Union and the C.W.S. were £500 each, while the total subscription from branches in that year was £2,032. In addition to the support given to the national fund, societies who appreciate the work of the Guild have contributed donations on special occasions, such as the donations to the self-government fund.‡ Grants are made to Branches, either by direct vote of the society's members, or through educational committees, and where actual money grants are not

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† See Appendix VI.

‡ See Chapter XIII.

made, meeting rooms, light and other facilities are provided as part of the educational work of the societies.

I need not detail here the return the Guild makes for such support as it receives; previous chapters sufficiently show what the handmaiden of Co-operation is capable of.

The expenditure of the Guild has been modest in comparison with what it has accomplished, and the voluntary work of its members has always been their biggest contribution. When Miss Llewelyn Davies and Miss Harris retired in 1921, the growth of the Guild made it necessary for the full-time officials who succeeded them to be paid, and the office staff increased. The Guild maintains for its clerks the principle it has always upheld, of equal pay for equal work, and the N.U.D.A.W. men's scale for similar posts is paid to them. The sectional work is financed out of the Central Fund, grants being made to each Sectional Council, and the local district funds are also supplemented with grants. Publications, &c., for sale, pay for themselves.

Special work has been met by special funds. Among these have been the funds for the Suffrage and Minimum Wage Campaigns, the Citizen Fund, the International Guild Fund, the Inquiry Committee Fund, and the "Coming of Age" Fund. This last was in connection with the 21st birthday of the Guild, an event which was celebrated with much rejoicing at Stratford under the auspices of the Co-operative Congress, when, says the report for that year, "a memorable gathering . . . a great audience of men and women, including many of the early Guild workers and friends assembled in the Town Hall." The beautiful Guild banner was unfurled, and speeches were made by Mrs. Acland and Mrs. Lawrenson. The President of the Congress, Mr. Golightly, spoke in encouraging terms of the entry of women into the Co-operative field.

But it is not only for strictly official purposes that the Guild Branch needs money. It loves to be able to send delegates to innumerable meetings for which the annual subscription hardly provides the means:

The Branches put their wits to work in most ingenious ways to raise these funds.

Farthing funds, whist drives, jumble sales, harvest festivals, pie suppers, surprise teas, are among the most popular ways of gathering money.

Some branches make a practice of two or three members bringing to the guild room, each meeting day, some little gift—a pot of home-made jam, a bunch of flowers, a little knitted garment—which is raffled at 1d. per ticket, and so accumulate the necessary expenses for sending members to Congress, or paying the fares for some desirable speaker. The Women's Co-operative Guild is not only the brightest club for women in existence, but it is also the cheapest and the least affected by snobbery or patronage. A member may sometimes stay away from a meeting because she is temporarily without the three halfpennies for the cup of tea and biscuit, which is part of the afternoon's ceremony, but she never feels that she is accepting a "charity" when her fellow-members secure a grant from the Convalescent Fund to "send her away convalescent" after an illness. There is pathos as well as interest in arranging the finances of the Guild.

One other most noteworthy event for which money has to be raised is the Guild Congress. This is a festival with serious import; attendance at it is one of the most coveted privileges of the guildswoman's life, and a history of the Guild would not be complete without some description of this important annual gathering.

From 1885 to 1892 the annual meeting was held at Whitsuntide, under the auspices of the Co-operative Union Congress, but in 1893 the Guild felt strong enough to essay a separate meeting. The first of this

series was held at Leicester. In 1900 the gathering attained the dignity of a Congress, and was held at Woolwich. Congress is held in each section in rotation, and competition for the privilege of entertaining Congress is always keen, although to-day it means that accommodation must be found for over 1,000 members for three days. For local arrangements a reception committee is formed, composed of representatives of the Guild branches in the section, reinforced by representatives of the societies and educational committees in the area. They begin work quite early in the year, and rarely fail to make such arrangements for the comfort and good entertainment of the delegates that they carry back to their several homes and guildrooms delighted reports of their experiences.

Congress arrangements entail additional help in the Central Office, and the staff is taxed almost beyond endurance. As for the delegates, preparation for going to Congress is a work of many weeks. There is much saving to be done for the new dress, shoes, or hat, which is a necessity if one is to appear at one's best amongst the delegates. There is sure to be three or four days' meals to arrange for the family left behind, and an extra clean up, and some washing to do on the Saturday beforehand. Every year, even to-day, there are delegates who have never before left their homes and families, and quite a number who have never been so far from home in all their lives.

It must be remembered that wherever the venue of the Congress may be some delegates have to make a long journey to reach the place of meeting.

It has been my work on very many occasions to provide a descriptive account of Congress for the Women's Pages of the *Co-operative News*, or for the *Wheat-sheaf*. I may be forgiven for drawing upon one such account, since, as it will appear, I was not present in person.

"The Women's Co-operative Guild held their thirtieth annual meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on June 9th, 10th, and 11th, 1913, 650 members attending, and over 28,200 staying at home. As one of the unfortunate ones who stayed at home, I am obliged for once to be contented with reports at second and third hand. After diligently reading the full and official report in the *Co-operative News*, adding together the hearsay evidence of kind correspondents, and weighing up the more or less critical comments in various representative journals in the light of my own past experience, I have come to the conclusion that all who did not get to Newcastle Congress—myself included—missed one of the best and most weighty of the whole series.

"Not only were the subjects on the agenda important and far-reaching, but the delegates appear to have attacked them in a manner altogether admirable. As one observer whose first Congress it was, I believe, noted in her report: 'There was not one superfluous speech; every speech was as clear and direct as the ideas which prompted it.' Another observer, this time an early worker, Miss Amy Sharp, a former editor of the Women's Corner of the *Co-operative News*, and a most valuable leader in the days when the Guild was in the making, thus records her impressions of 'our beloved Guild in full-grown maturity':—

'My thoughts went back to my first Guild meeting, when a dozen of us met in a tiny committee room; and now—the Town Hall, a civic welcome, and 650 delegates! Then to sit listening to such debates; the succession of strong, independent-minded speeches come from all parts of the hall without pause or hesitation; the opposition equally frank and good-tempered; the loyal acceptance of the general conclusions—it was indeed a satisfying experience.'

" These two warm appreciations will serve for a general view of the manner in which Congress was conducted, or, rather, conducted itself, for although the sessions were presided over by Mrs. Wilmhurst, reinforced by a bell, a vice-president, central committee, council members, a standing orders committee, officers, and (not least) Miss Llewelyn Davies, the Guild's honoured general secretary, and all the due platform dignity of visitors, 'foreign' delegates and distinguished representatives from 'other forces' it was the delegates on the floor of the hall who kept the discussions at the high level of excellence noted by these two observers.

" A glance at the pictured group will show what these delegates were like—just self-respecting wives of working men, the 'mirror of the millions of disfranchised working women,' as the *New Statesman* describes them, referring, however, to the guildswomen's point of view and political significance, and not, as one may say with equal truth, to their personal appearance."\*

The foregoing may be taken as a fair picture of many Congresses. We may picture the walls of the assembly halls draped round with the banners of the Sections and Branches, their bright colours and handsome designs making an impressive decoration and a unique feature of the Guild Congress.

So also is the dignified appearance of the president who concludes her year of service by delivering her presidential address, and wearing, for the last time, her beautiful Chain of Office.† The little ceremony of passing

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\* The *Wheatsheaf*, August, 1913.

† The chain was designed by Miss L. Preece. On the pendant is a figure of Hope, and on the face of the links are the letters of the Guild Motto: "Of whole heart cometh hope." On the back of the links are the initials of each Guild President.

the chain of office from the outgoing president to the newly-elected president, is a touching symbolism of the passing of individual honours, and the continuance of the Co-operative organisation to which each in turn has, and will, give of her best. As the outgoing president lifts the chain from her own shoulders, and places it upon those of her successor, she offers her the kiss of sisterhood, and a few heartfelt words of encouragement. The new president responds with equal feeling, and there are generally moist eyes amongst the delegates, for whom the little ceremony closes a happy experience.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE STAND FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT.

**"I am instructed to say that all present considered the Divorce Law not one to be lightly sought for, but when a just need calls for action it should be brought within reach of the poor."**

—Letter from a Branch Secretary.

**I**N 1909 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the question of Divorce Law Reform. It sat for nearly four years, taking evidence from all manner of persons. Amongst them Miss Llewelyn Davies and Mrs. Barton, as officials of a working woman's organisation, were asked to give evidence, and did so in October, 1910. About 40 Guild members contributed their personal views and information showing the need for reform, while the Branches were asked to pass resolutions on the following points: (1) Whether the law should be the same for women as for men; (2) whether divorce should be made cheaper so as to be within the reach of the poor; (3) whether women should be eligible to serve on juries and become barristers. "Three hundred and forty-four branches with 19,259 members responded, the overwhelming majority of the replies being in the affirmative to all three questions."\*

Thus opened one of the most strenuously fought contests with "the powers that be," which the Guild is ever likely to wage. The evidence gathered together by the Guild members proved a terrible indictment of the injustice of the Divorce Laws as they then stood,

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\*Annual Report, 1919-20.

and was accepted by the Commission as the only expression of the direct views of the workers.\*

In 1910, the Central Committee report on the answers received from the Branches to the questionnaire sent out. Replies were received from 429 branches. Of these 114 Branches with 22,893 members were in favour of an equal law for men and women (including 25 branches which were opposed to Divorce); 361 Branches with 19,194 members were in favour of Divorce proceedings being cheapened, so as to bring it within the reach of the poor; 310 Branches with 18,263 members were in favour of women serving on juries.

"The attitude of the women towards Divorce was very marked. They look upon it as a much-needed method of release from a life causing degradation and suffering to women and children. Their desire for reform did not proceed from any light wish for a life of pleasure, or from any wish to loosen home ties. The respect for marriage was universal. . . . 'Nothing but love should hold two together in this most sacred of all bonds,' says one member."†

When the reports of the Commission were published in 1912, the recommendations of the Majority Report were considered throughout the Guild. While a certain number of branches disapproved of any change in the law, these recommendations were endorsed by substantial majorities at the Congresses of 1912 and 1913. The additional cause of mutual consent, after two years' separation, was approved by a smaller majority.

An account of the evidence given on behalf of the Guild was printed in 1911,‡ and a large number of copies sold.

The campaign woke to life an opposition from an unexpected outside source. In October, 1913,

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\* Quoted in Report on Evidence submitted by the Guild.

† Annual Report, 1910-11.

‡ *Working Women and Divorce*. David Nutt, London, 1911.

a letter was received from the Manchester and Salford Catholic Federation objecting to the Guild taking up the subject, on the ground that grants were made to the Guild by Co-operative Societies and the Co-operative Union, and that some members of societies were Catholics who disapproved of divorce altogether.

The Guild refused firmly to alter their action in regard to this reform, and the Federation then approached the United Board. The Board yielded to the threats of possible "Disruption in the Movement," which the Federation said might follow if the Guild persisted in their propaganda work, and a letter was received from the Central Co-operative Board asking the Guild to "very seriously consider giving up work in this direction."\* To this the Guild replied at some length setting out the position of the organisation as an educational and reforming agency on questions affecting married working women, and refusing "to recognise the right of an outside body to dictate our action on what we consider to be a vital social and moral reform."†

This reply was considered by the Board in connection with the annual grant made by the Board to the Guild, which beginning in 1892 with £10, had risen in 1913 to £400. The Board met at Dublin, where the Congress was held at Whitsuntide, in 1914. A deputation was received from the Salford Catholic Federation, and after discussion the following resolution was passed:—

"That the application of the English Women's Co-operative Guild for a renewal of the grant of £400 be agreed to on condition that they cease the agitation in favour of Divorce Reform and that in future the Women's Co-operative Guilds take up no work disapproved by the Central Board."

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\*.For the full text of correspondence, see Annual Reports, 1913 and 1914.

†Ibid.

The Guild considered that this meant a check to their power of self-government, and the position was met at the Guild Congress held at Birmingham in June, 1914, with the following counter resolution :—

“ Seeing that the position of the Guild has been attained through its power to act independently and to develop on its own lines, this Congress declares that it cannot accept the conditions laid down by the Central Co-operative Board as regards its grant to the Guild, believing that the future progress of the Guild and of the Co-operative Movement depends on the Guild policy being democratically controlled as in the past by the members themselves.”

This resolution was passed with enthusiasm and without a dissident, and the Guild backed it up in sections, districts, and branches, by immediate contributions to a special fund which more than covered the £400 withheld by the Union.

The outbreak of War in August, 1914, changed the current of public work for the Guild as for all other social organisations, and the question of propaganda for Divorce Law Reform fell in abeyance.\* The position as regards the Guild's relationship with the Central Board did not change, however, and they could not give the desired undertaking. Pamphlets were issued on both sides ; a motion was tabled on the agenda for the Union Congress held at Leicester, in 1915, by 16 societies, urging that the grant be made “ on the same lines as formerly.”

The outside sectarian body continued its agitation, but although a few societies were moved to adopt the resolutions suggested by this body, the threatened “ disruption ” did not materialise.

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\*Although no general revision of the law has been made, the three reforms of equality for men and women, cheaper legal proceedings, and the admission of women on to juries and as barristers have been carried through.

The Guild recognised that the question at issue was not that on which the objection was laid, but the more vital one, so far as the organisation was concerned, of submitting its initiative and its future power of progressive action to the control of the Union, a body upon which it has no "locus standi," and upon which at that time only one woman had a seat.

"Not only does the connection of Co-operation with other sides of life give the freshness and variety necessary to the educational work of the Guild, but the freedom to initiate and control its own policy in the most democratic way is the life-blood of the Guild. . . . The movement has always derived a great deal of its strength and its importance from the fact that it has attracted within it people of the utmost variety of thought and opinion. . . . In the particular case of the Guild, the effect of outside control would be particularly bad, because it would, in actual practice, be exercised by men over women. The point of view of women is inevitably overlooked, and their needs are not understood, so that it is of supreme importance to have in the movement a body of women co-operators free to express their point of view and to explain their needs.

"It is impossible and undesirable that everyone should immediately agree with any new ideas or proposals—but if any body of people, outside, or inside the movement which does disagree with such ideas shall have the power through official control of preventing their discussion, there will be an end of all freedom within the movement, and an end to co-operative education."\*

It was frankly acknowledged that the Union, as guardians of the money contributed to its support by

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\**The Women's Guild and the Co-operative Union Grant. A plea for Freedom of Speech and Self-government.* Pamphlet issued by the W.C.G., 1915.

the Societies, was within its rights in withholding grants to any voluntary organisation whose work, during any preceding year, did not meet with the approval of Congress. The point at issue was the endeavour to make the acceptance of a grant the basis of submission to the control of the Union over future work.

The question came before Congress in various forms for four years in succession. The Grant being offered, upon conditions, and year by year refused by the Guild, the principle of "full control of its own policy" being re-affirmed by resolutions at Guild Congresses. The loss of the grant was made up by a voluntary increase of contributions from 2d. to 4d. per member, and by increased donations from the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and from many Societies whose sympathies were with the attitude taken up by the Guild. In 1916, the annual subscription of 4d. per member was adopted as a rule, and the report of that year acknowledges donations from 74 Societies, including the A.U.C.E.

Meanwhile the events of the war years helped to prove to the movement that its voluntary women's organisation was capable of placing at its service a body of well-trained Co-operators, not afraid of working for the cause either within or outside the movement. The attainment of the political suffrage for women, and the rise of the Co-operative Political Party improved the status of the women as potential supporters in a wider field than simple "buying."

In August, 1918, the question of the Grant to the Guild was re-considered by the Central Board, following an interview between the Guild and members of the Executive Committee of the Union. "The question of the relations between the two organisations was frankly discussed. The outcome of that meeting was the renewal of confidence between the two bodies."\*

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\* Report of the Central Board to Congress at Carlisle, 1919.

After a brief discussion on the report of the Executive Committee the following resolution was adopted.

(a) That we renew the grant to the Women's Guild, same to be given on the work done by the Guild during the year previous to their report being submitted to Congress.

If at any time the grant is withheld the Central Board to give reasons for so doing.

(b) That with the object of closer working between the Union and the Women's Guild, the United Board and the Guild Committee meet together at least once a year to discuss the possibility of co-operating in work in which both organisations are interested. The Grant for 1918-19 has been paid.†

Thus, after sacrificing £1,600 to retain its self-government, its annual grant was restored to the Guild.

Unfortunately, space does not permit of any detailed reference to the many spirited leaflets issued during the progress of the struggle for independence.

The fight was not entirely with the Central organisations. Some few branches found themselves called upon to make sacrifice of local donations, and to meet local pressure and efforts at control. But the whole Guild accounted their cause worth fighting for, and rallied round their Central Committee and their "General," Miss Llewelyn Davies, throughout the hard four years.

There was a threatened revival of the question in 1920, arising out of the findings of the "Survey Committee's" report and proposals with regard to Auxiliary Bodies within the Movement. In 1921,

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† Report of the Central Board to Congress, at Carlisle, 1919.

however, the Guild was able to report to Congress as follows :—

“The Guild has been able, to its great satisfaction, to leave on one side the question of the position of ‘Auxiliary Bodies’ in the Movement.

“No change of rule affecting the Guild’s position is to be submitted at the Co-operative Congress, therefore it has been unnecessary to take any steps to maintain our self-government. Our earnest hope is that the present harmonious relations may be maintained on the lines of the agreement made with the United Board, to whom we extend our warm thanks for their increased grant of £500.”\*

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\*Annual Report, 1920-21.

See also Appendix VI.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### POLITICS IN THE GUILD ROOM.

**"You can stand still in a flowing stream, but never in the world of mankind."**

*—Japanese proverb.*

**WE** have been able to see in earlier chapters how the pressure of widening perception concerning the influences exercised by national and municipal administration upon the home life of the people, irresistibly drew Guildswomen to desire the political power of the vote.

Apart from purely feminine questions, such as those concerning the welfare of women and children and women workers, the consideration of such questions as Free Trade, the Land Question, Taxation Problems, and other national legislative problems, brought home to the members the knowledge that while laws could be understood and obeyed in the seclusion of the home, they were made in Parliament under conditions and by persons over whom Co-operation had little influence, let alone control.

Following the traditions of the Co-operative Movement, however, the Guild held aloof from introducing what is known as "Party Politics" into the Guild room, believing that as the Co-operative Movement is open to people of all shades of political opinion, to shut the door against any would hinder the forward march of our principles.

The rise of the Labour Party with its progressive aspirations, and its working class foundations seemed to



Miss E. A. TOURNIER,  
1892. Sectional Secretary  
(Southern), 1889.



Mrs. ASHWORTH,  
1893 and 1894.



Mrs. ADAMS, 1895.  
Sectional Secretary  
(Western), 1890.



Miss REDDISH,  
1897.

PAST  
PRESIDENTS  
OF THE  
WOMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE  
GUILD.



Mrs. BURY,  
1896, 1904, and 1908.



Mrs. CARR,  
1898 and 1906.



Mrs. ADAM DEANS,  
1899.



Mrs. HODGETT,  
1900 and 1907.



Mrs. BOOTHMAN,  
1901.



Mrs. GREEN,  
1902.



Mrs. McBLAIN,  
1903.



Mrs. GASSON, 1905.  
Sectional Secretary  
(Southern).



Miss GRATON, 1909.  
Sectional Secretary  
(Yorkshire).



Mrs. HARRIS,  
1910.

PAST  
PRESIDENTS  
OF THE  
WOMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE  
GUILD.



Mrs. BLAIR, 1911.  
Sectional Secretary  
(Lancashire).



Mrs. WIMBURST,  
1912.



Mrs. ESSERY,  
1913.



Mrs. FOUND,  
1915.



Mrs. WILKINS,  
1916



Mrs. BOOTH,  
1917.

call upon the sympathies of those who had hitherto given little heed to party questions as such. It must be remembered that lacking the vote, the great mass of women were without party bias, or political training, and it was natural that a party which approached the problems of every-day life from a point of view, and in the language most familiar to their homely experience, should make a great appeal to them.

There was much confusion of mind, not only in the Guild, but in the Co-operative Union also, as to what might be called "Party Questions" and what not. The Union, for instance, in 1906, refused to put a resolution supporting the enfranchisement of women on the agenda for the Congress, because they considered it a "party political" question!

The existence of the Joint Parliamentary Committee composed of representatives of the Union and the Co-operative Wholesale Societies, appeared to the Guild to give proof that political action on behalf of the movement could not be avoided.

At the Guild Congress held at Ipswich in June, 1906, a paper was read by Mrs. Abbott (Tunbridge Wells) in support of the following resolution, proposed by the Central Committee:—

"That, seeing the importance of a well-considered decision as regards the relation of Co-operation to the Labour Party, this Congress recommends every branch to fully discuss the paper on this subject read at Congress, and to bring the question before the members of the Society."

A particularly animated and excellent discussion took place, in which I remember taking a strong line against any amalgamation of Co-operation with the Labour Party. The resolution was defeated, and the question did not arise in an official form until the

Congress of 1912, held at Hull in that year, when Congress supported the idea of a "closer alliance between Co-operation and the other Labour forces" initiated by Mr. Maxwell at the Co-operative Congress at Portsmouth. Branches were advised to give support to the Labour papers and to urge their societies to advertise in these journals.

In 1917, a resolution proposed by the Central Committee voiced the necessity for adult suffrage, the representation of Co-operators in Parliament to protect the interests of Co-operative Societies, "a working basis being found with the Labour Party." An "instruction" was proposed and accepted that the resolution should be taken in two parts and voted on separately, and finally, the words "Labour forces" was substituted for the words "Labour Party," and the resolution, as amended, was carried.

The establishment of the Co-operative Political Party, in 1917, gave the Guild a banner round which to rally, and the Report for 1918-19 records that the principal work of the year has been to "stimulate members to active work in bringing the newly enfranchised women into the Co-operative Party." Forty to fifty schools were held, covering every district, and attended by over 1,000 members, many of whom were afterwards active in carrying on propaganda for the Party.

An interesting outcome of the advancing tide of women's political activities is recorded in the following paragraph in the Report for 1918-19.

"On the passing of the Representation of the People's Bill many organisations began to turn their attention to the political education of the women voter, and the Guild was approached by no fewer than eight distinct organisations to affiliate for this purpose. . . . It was felt, however, that the Guild

had been long doing its own citizen educational work, and that what lay before it was to give effect to this work by action on definite political lines. . . . Branches were advised to concentrate all their efforts on work for the local Co-operative Political Councils, and to affiliate only with other industrial organisations.

Since 1912, as has been said, a majority of the Guild has been in favour of an alliance with Labour forces. When the Co-operative Party was formed in 1918, the Guild called upon "local Co-operative Parties to join hands with Labour forces." An amendment to omit the words "join hands with Labour forces" was lost, and the resolution was carried by a large majority. In 1920, Congress declared that it "wholeheartedly supports the alliance with the Labour Party."

In September, 1919, a series of ten successful conferences were held jointly with the Co-operative Party Executive, and four Guildswomen were included in the list of approved Co-operative Candidates for Parliament.\* It was regretted that no woman had been selected by a Co-operative Constituency, "although every Party except the Co-operative Party is running women candidates." In this year 100 branches affiliated to their local Labour Party.

In the following year (1920) it was joyfully reported that Mrs. Barton had been accepted as the prospective candidate for the King's Norton Division of Birmingham by the Co-operators, Trade Unionists, and Labour Party.

The General Election of 1922 gave Mrs. Barton the opportunity of putting up a splendid fight against two opponents, "and it was the general opinion that another fortnight would have turned her vote of 7,017 into a

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\*Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Rose Davies, Mrs. Ferguson, and Mrs. Hood.

majority." Unfortunately, at the General Election in 1923, which put the Labour Government into power, her chances of success were seriously handicapped by local differences between the Parties, which prevented her adoption till close upon the election. She nevertheless secured the second place in the poll with 6,743 votes, largely owing to the energetic work put into the election campaign by organised teams of local Guild members.

The disappointing situation was deeply felt by the Guild, and "deplored" in a resolution in Congress. The disappointment was aggravated in the following year by the fact that no constituency was secured for Mrs. Barton in exchange for King's Norton, which was won at the December election in 1924 by Labour "largely as a result of her work."

Politics in the Guild room is still a debatable subject, and the question, pro and con, is vigorously taken up by a large number of branches as a matter of practical importance at the present time. No Guild candidate has been adopted, but a better understanding has been arrived at with the Co-operative Party, and a further step taken in 1925, when Congress passed the following resolution:—

"This Congress, believing that it is necessary for all co-operators to use their voting power as well as their spending power for the overthrow of Capitalism, calls on all Guild branches to make the question of Co-operative politics an essential part of their Guild programme. Further, this Congress looks to the honour of all Guild officials to uphold the policy of the Guild."

Amendments seeking to delete the word "co-operative" and to insert the word "labour" were moved but were lost, but an addendum was accepted urging "that arrangements be made to enable

Branches that so desire to affiliate to the Co-operative Party through the Central Committee."\*

The Guild set to work in its usual way to get this resolution put into practice. A series of "schools" being held, at which speakers are trained in the grounds of a common policy by means of carefully prepared notes, setting out the reasons for political action, and the necessity for specialised Co-operative politics.

I may close this subject with a quotation from the "Hints to Speakers," prepared for the schools just mentioned. The note shows once again, even on the most controversial question of the present day, that the Guild maintains its spirit of self-governed freedom of thought and action.

"No problem was ever solved by running away from it, and that is not the Guild way. The Guild has been built up on the courage with which it has tackled any problem which has confronted it. We stood for Peace during the war, and went boldly on with our education and propaganda when it was most difficult, because people were roused to the highest pitch of hatred and venom. Shall we be afraid now to tackle the political question in our guild room when both the Movement and the Guild has declared itself in favour of political action ?

"To do so would be to take a backward step. We know there are differences, but they are there to be met in the true spirit of broadminded discussion."

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\* "Over 200 branches of the Guild are at present affiliated to the Party. The increased interest shown by members of the Guild in the work of the Party has been of valuable assistance, and we are realising that the pioneer work of the Women's Co-operative Guild in Great Britain is having beneficial results in regard to the Co-operative Party."



## CHAPTER XV.

### WORLD-WIDE CO-OPERATION.

**“For the God of heaven and earth, greatly providing for mankind, would not that all things should be found in one region, to the end that one should have need of another, that by this means friendship might be established among all men, and everyone seek to gratify all.”**

—LETTERS MISSIVE FROM EDWARD VI, A.D. 1552.

**I**NTERNATIONAL relations between co-operators are of comparatively recent growth. In 1885, the first representatives of French Co-operators attended the British Co-operative Congress, and laid the foundation of the International Co-operative Alliance.

Very early in Guild history we find expressions of a sympathetic feeling for “our Sister Co-operators” in other lands. From 1889 onward there are constant references in the annual reports to correspondence and intercourse with foreign co-operators interested in the work of the Guild.

The first of the many foreign visitors, to whom the Guild has always accorded a warm welcome, was Frau Schwerin from Germany, who came to the Annual Meeting at Doncaster in 1894. I well remember her delighted interest in the proceedings, and the racy and complementary account she afterwards wrote for the German Women’s paper *Frauenwohl*. I remember, too, that many of the delegates had never before heard a foreign tongue, and, says Frau Schwerin, in the article alluded to—

“Imagine my feelings when I suddenly heard my name called, and was pushed on to the platform, and deep silence told me eloquently that I must speak.

'At a pinch one speaks even English.' I told them, in a few words, what feelings and wishes for my country had passed through my mind ; how I would faithfully report all, and how I hoped that their good example would be followed, of standing side by side, when it is the question of carrying a beneficial idea into execution, without enquiring into the political or religious creed of the individual.

"There was much emotion ; my hands were shaken till there was no feeling left in them ; flowers were presented to me, and the train carried me away."

To the Congress in 1897 came another eloquent and humorous speaker, Mrs. M'Lean, who attended as the first fraternal delegate from the Scottish Women's Guild.

In the Report for 1898, "Foreign Relations" became "International Co-operation," and correspondence with Holland, the United States, and Russia is recorded. Holland led the way in the formation of continental Guilds. Professor and Madame Treub, from Amsterdam, attended the English Co-operative Congress at Liverpool in 1899, and on their return to Holland established the Amsterdam Guild, where Miss Mayo visited "our new sisters" in 1900. Two other Dutch workers who made a great impression on the Guild Congress at Lincoln in 1903 were Miss Hugenholtz and Miss Bergsma. The latter was young and delightfully keen about women's work generally.

These growing international friendships were further cemented by International Demonstrations arranged on two Guild anniversaries. The first was at the "Coming-of-Age" Congress in 1904. At this gathering Scotland, Ireland, Holland, and Spain were represented, and the new Guild Banner, with its inspiring motto "Of Whole Heart Cometh Hope" was unfurled amidst great enthusiasm. The second occasion was upon the Guild's

twenty-fifth anniversary (1908), when Guildswomen attended from Scotland, Ireland, and Sweden (the latter represented by Miss Jonson, the Secretary of the new Swedish Guild). Women co-operators from France and Hungary, and a man co-operator from Finland, all took part. It was for this meeting, when the proposal for an International Alliance of Co-operative Women was passed, that the song on the Guild Motto was composed, one verse seeming especially appropriate to the cause of internationalism :—

“ Of whole heart cometh hope,  
Of comradeship comes strength,  
The swifter step, the lightened load,  
The journey's joy at length.”\*

Knowledge of other countries was stimulated through the kindness of a “ Friend of the Guild,” Miss Ada Macatta,† who made it possible for a number of members to visit other lands. Paris, Lucerne, Ghent, and Brussels were visited by parties of Guildswomen, forerunners of the Co-operative tours enjoyed by hundreds to-day. “ Foreign travel,” says the Report of 1907, “ may be barren when sight-seeing has few ideas behind it, but when the workers of one nation touch hands with the reformers of other nations the gain can hardly be measured.” The most memorable tour was that to Ghent and Brussels, where the remarkable combination of all labour forces in the Co-operative Stores and the Co-operative Medical-aid schemes were seen, while the seed was sown for the future establishment of Maternity

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\* For both the suggestion of the motto and the song, the Guild is indebted to Mrs. Vaughan Nash.

† Miss Ada Macatta succeeded Miss Llewelyn Davies as the Secretary of Marylebone Branch, and was a well-known figure at all the early Congresses, helping at the literature stall and in other ways. Innumerable Guild tea parties and socials were enlivened by her guitar.

Centres in England by the visit to the "School for Mothers" carried on by Dr. Miehle at Ghent.

While the foreign relations were growing Colonial expansion was taking place, and the 500th Branch of the Guild was established at Salt River, Cape Colony. Miss Lilian Harris, visiting South Africa, in 1908, had an "enthusiastic meeting" with the Branch, and also gave an address on the Guild at Simon's Town.

During the next six years foreign intercourse was concerned largely with women's questions. A very interesting visitor was the brilliant Russian, Alexandra Kollontai (now the first and only woman ambassador, having been appointed to that post by the Soviet Government, first in Norway and then in Mexico). An expert on maternity questions in various countries, she greatly appreciated the Guild's work for married women. When she visited the Office Miss Llewelyn Davies at once captured her for a sectional conference then being held, at which her eloquence carried all before it. Another friend of the Guild, more widely known to its members, was Fru Ella Anker, who combined advanced opinions with a charming personality. Her account of the superior position of women in Norway gave much encouragement to all those working for similar reforms in England.

Hope of closer international co-operative relations was given in 1913, by the presence of Frau Emmy Freundlich of Austria and several other women delegates at the International Co-operative Congress at Glasgow. But these hopes were destroyed for the time in 1914, when the world was plunged into enmity, and intercourse was stopped. It will always be a great satisfaction to Co-operators that the International Co-operative Alliance maintained its international character and never lost touch with its members in the warring countries. Co-operative women also made gallant efforts to keep in touch. Frau Freundlich wrote, in 1915, to

ask if it would be possible to hold a meeting of women co-operators "to speak about Peace." She said:—

"It is very necessary that we co-operative women have relations together when our men are fighting one another. The women must now be the protectors of international life . . . . Co-operators must now prove that they are an army for peace, and that Co-operation is a way to attain an eternal Peace."

The English and Dutch Guilds tried to secure a meeting of co-operative women at the time of the Women's International Peace Conference at the Hague, then being arranged. But wartime difficulties proved too great. These two Guilds, together with Austrian and Swiss women co-operators, then sent a resolution to all the Co-operative Unions and to women's organisations in all countries, which pointed out how completely co-operative principles are opposed to war, and concluded with an appeal to the women of all lands to strive for peace.\*

In the succeeding years there was much difference of opinion in the Guild as regards condemnation of the War. But the study of international relations and of the conditions necessary for an enduring Peace was carried out at Guild schools and conferences throughout the whole war period. Resolutions embodying these conditions were passed at the Guild Congresses in 1915, 1916, and 1917. In 1918, however, the effect of the long-continued war propaganda in the country showed itself in the Congress, and a resolution in favour of a negotiated peace with no annexations and universal disarmament was defeated by 399 votes to 336.

After the war Guildswomen more and more turned their minds to the necessity for removing the possibility of war. The 1919 Congress called on the workers of the world to unite at once to secure a true League of Peoples

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\* The English Co-operative Union printed this resolution in its *Quarterly Review*, September, 1915.

for permanent peace. Military training in schools was strongly condemned, and disarmament supported. International Co-operative trade, with its constructive power for peace, was studied each year. Its value as "A new Basis for Peace" was convincingly advocated by Miss Llewelyn Davies. She says:—

"International trading relations must be put on a basis which will restore the beneficent object of trade—the satisfaction of world-wide human needs. This object has been lost sight of under capitalism, the basis of which is the competitive profit-making of a minority. . . . A hope for the peaceful transformation of the economic order comes to us through the Co-operative movements, now advancing with such rapid strides in most European countries. . . . International Co-operative trade would be free from all profit-making . . . the surpluses of trade would be pooled and divided amongst the nations, and international trade would become, not a fight between nations to overreach each other, but a harmony in which the interests of each and all were one."\*

Branches took an active part in the practical work of reconciliation by supporting the efforts of the Friends' War Emergency Committee and the "Save the Children" Fund to relieve the stricken European countries. In 1920, two representatives of the English Guild, Mrs. Ferguson and Miss Enfield, attended the Austrian Co-operative Congress, and during their visit they saw the actual conditions under which the people were trying to live. Returning, they gave their report in a paper entitled "A Fortnight in Austria," which roused the deepest interest in the terrible position of Austrian women and children at this time. A gift of flannel, sewing cotton, candles, and soap, as well as 3,600 articles of clothing, was sent out to the sufferers. Perhaps the

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\* Foreign Affairs.

greatest effort of the Branches was made in response to the Co-operative and other appeals for the Russian Famine Fund in 1921, and in the previous years, the Guild had protested strongly against the attitude of the British Government to Russia, and demanded friendly relations.

It was in 1918 that the Guild came into direct contact with Russian Co-operators. In that year Dr. Varvara Polovtsev came to England. A Doctor of Philosophy, with high ideals and noble presence, Dr. Polovtsev works devotedly for the building up of the new Soviet Russia. Through her the Guild began its connection with the Russian Co-operators in London, and the possibilities of trade between the English and Russian Movements were then first explored.

The interest of Guildswomen in the subject of International Co-operative trade has been remarkable, and the study of this difficult economic question has shown its effects in the constant and enlightened support of international trade given by women delegates at the C.W.S. Quarterly Meetings and at Congresses.

In the first years after the war, when the machinery of world trade had broken down, the Guild was concerned to show how Co-operative Movements in the different countries might meet the difficulties by direct exchange of imports and exports. A debate in the *Co-operative News* between Miss Llewelyn Davies and Miss Harris and the C.W.S. Press Agency gave welcome publicity to this subject, and though the opportunity was not seized by the movement, undoubtedly the interest in international trade was strengthened. At the same time, by articles in the press, a memorandum to the Labour Advisory Committee on International Affairs, an article in the *International Labour Year Book*, and in other ways the Guild drew public attention to the possibilities inherent in Co-operation.

Within the Movement the Guild, while warmly

supporting all trade between individual Co-operative Wholesale Societies, stressed the fact that, in themselves, these separate transactions did not apply the co-operative principle of abolishing profit. It therefore advocated the formation of international trading machinery which would develop into a fully equipped international wholesale society. The Guild also urged that, just as all retail societies should order their supplies through the C.W.S.—whether manufactured by the C.W.S. or not—so in international dealings, all imports should be purchased through the C.W.S. of the exporting country. On the motion of the Guild, the International Co-operative Congress at Basle in 1921 accepted this principle but it is still far from being fully carried out.

The representation of women at the Basle Congress showed the keenness of Guildswomen for international work. More than a third of the English and Dutch delegations were women. This Congress constitutes a landmark to co-operators, because it was there the foundations were laid of the International Co-operative Women's Guild. It was a thrilling occasion when the 40 women representing seven nations met together. The largest number came from England, Holland, and Switzerland, and the other countries represented were Austria, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and the United States. The enthusiasm shown on all sides gave promise that this little seed would grow into a mighty tree. "You are making history," said one of the men delegates who regretted he could not be admitted.

The conference unanimously decided to form an International Co-operative Women's Committee of one representative of each of the existing Guilds with the addition of a President and Secretary to be elected by the conference. Frau Emmy Freundlich, to whom reference has already been made, was appointed President. A member of the Austrian C.W.S. Board and of the Central Committee of the International Co-operative



Alliance, she is an experienced and internationally minded Co-operator, while as an Austrian M.P. and Viennese City Councillor she is a great citizen also.

Miss A. Honora Enfield was elected Honorary Secretary, and the English Guild offered its office for the secretarial work. Nothing could have been more valuable to the new organisation than Miss Enfield's thorough understanding of international co-operative problems combined with well-thought-out ideas for dealing with them.

To play a part in such an organisation strengthens and enlightens every national Guild. It opens up fresh fields of work and influence, and the common objects discussed enable every Guild to contribute its share to the experiences of co-operative women in all lands. As a first International study, the Guild undertook to investigate the probabilities of "Reform in Domestic Work." The chief burden of women's work in the home, "The Family Wash," has been closely studied during 1926, and it is expected that a report of the greatest interest will be presented at the Annual Conference to be held at Stockholm in 1927, under the auspices of the International Co-operative Alliance, the "big brother" whose sympathy is entirely at the service of the women's organisation.

Above all, it is hoped that the international bonds between co-operative women will help to create the spirit which searches out what service each can most effectively render to all, and the mind which will apply to the larger world of politics as well as within the Co-operative world, those methods which alone can eliminate the causes of war, and make a true Commonwealth of Nations.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE WRITTEN WORD.

**"The Pen is the tongue of the mind."**

—CERVANTES.

NO history of the Guild would be complete without some record of the part played in its fortunes by the *Co-operative News*. The Guild owes a great debt of gratitude to Samuel Bamford, then Editor of the *News*, who, in 1883, secured for Mrs. Acland a "Corner" of the *News* through which she could appeal to the women co-operators. There was considerable opposition to such an absorption of space on the part of the Newspaper Board of that day, for it should be remembered that in the eighties there were few papers to cater for women's special interests, and the co-operative movement was, as a whole, dominated by masculine preferences.

Samuel Bamford, however, was a man of wide sympathies and far-seeing co-operative judgment, and from the institution of the "Woman's Corner" under a woman editor, the *Co-operative News* has afforded to women an independent medium of communication of the greatest value.

Apart from the use which Mrs. Acland, Mrs. Lawrenson, and others made of the "Corner" (recorded in Chapter I.), the new editor sought to meet the desire of women readers for information on all sorts of subjects: live topics which appealed to the homely domestic instincts as well as to the wider intellectual aspirations of co-operative women.

Mrs. Acland's health did not permit of her continuing the detail work of editorship for long, but she was

most ably assisted by Miss Amy Sharp, of Rugby, whose work, not only in the management of the "Corner," but in other offices of the Guild, gave much strength during the formative years of the organisation. Mrs. Acland contributed, through the "Corner," many interesting and useful articles upon "Health," "Economic Cookery," the "Education of Children," and other subjects of importance to housewives and mothers. To Miss Sharp the Guild owed special thanks for many papers dealing with business-like organisation. Some of the best used papers in the Guild library were from her pen.

While the "Corner," and the "Woman's Pages" as the "Corner" came to be called later on, has been the rallying ground of Guild interests, and its chief organ of general communication, it has never been directly under the control of the Guild. It has maintained its power of independent outlook, and if need be, of criticism in regard to women's part in co-operation, and its successive editors, all women fully trained in Guild organisation, have never lost sight of the fact that there may be a large circle of women readers outside the ranks of the Guild.

During the earlier years it was possible to record in the "Corner" not only papers upon all sorts of topics, but reports of conferences and branch reports, but as the Guild grew the task of the editor in regulating the space to be afforded to these several matters became increasingly difficult. Branch and district reports had to be ruthlessly cut down, or amalgamated, and the editor's life was made a burden (as it is to this day) by her efforts to console the disappointed senders of reports which could not be squeezed into the limited space of pages which did not expand at the pace of the Guild. From 1893 onward I have taken a share in these efforts by contributing "Notes from the Central Committee" for several years, brief reports of special events, and other articles.



Mrs. HOOD,  
1918.



Mrs. WILLIAMS,  
1919.



Mrs. FERGUSON, 1920  
Sectional Secretary  
(Northern).



Mrs. DEWSBURY,  
1921.



Mrs. PROSSER,  
1922.

PAST  
PRESIDENTS  
OF THE  
WOMEN'S  
CO-OPERATIVE  
GUILD.



Mrs. ALLEN,  
1923.



Mrs. MATTHEWS, 1924.  
Sectional Secretary  
(Lancashire), 1919-22.



Mrs. WEBSTER,  
1925.



Mrs. BIRD,  
1926.

SOME  
SECTIONAL SECRETARIES  
PAST AND PRESENT.



Mrs. UNSWORTH  
(Midland).



Mrs. M. BUTLER  
(Yorkshire).



Mrs. RUSSELL  
(Lancashire).



Mrs. A. FOULKES-SMITH  
(South-Eastern).



Mrs. H. HARVE  
(Southern).



Mrs. E. E. HAMNETT  
(South-Western).



Mrs. NUNN  
(Western).



Miss SPOONER  
(Past Secretary).



Miss E. E. M. ALLEN  
(Past Secretary).



Mrs. PIDGEON  
(Past Secretary).



Mrs. E. STEWART  
(Past Secretary).

In 1896 Miss Sharp removed from Rugby, and gave up her work as editor after thirteen years' service, during which the "Women's Corner" became an established feature of the *Co-operative News*.

Upon her retirement, Mrs. Vaughan Nash was appointed by the Newspaper Board to the editorship of the "Corner." Miss Llewelyn Davies and Mrs. Vaughan Nash entered co-operation together, when the latter was Miss Shore Smith. It was when they were attending co-operative meetings in East London that Mrs. Nash met her husband, Vaughan Nash. Although never seeking an official position in the Guild, Mrs. Nash, for a great many years, gave invaluable services in guiding its efforts and interpreting its meaning. She wrote much of its earlier literature, and brought out the significance of women as consumers: with Mr. Nash she turned the attention of co-operators to the evils of lead poisoning in the Potteries, and helped the Guild's campaign on behalf of leadless glaze ware; she summarised the mass of opinion on Divorce Law reform gathered from the guildswomen, and in many ways gave talented help by which the growing organisation profited without realising its indebtedness.

Mrs. Nash held the editorship until 1908, with myself as assistant and deputy during a considerable part of the time, when domestic calls obliged her to relinquish the post. There was, however, ready to serve, a guildswoman, not only fully trained in Guild work, but trained also in the journalistic work of the *Co-operative News* as well. Miss Annie Bamford, the daughter of the late Samuel Bamford, and sister of the late William Bamford, who succeeded his father as editor of the *News*, gained from her father not only a wide knowledge of the ramifications of the co-operative world, but a strong faith in its root principles, which she treasures above all things. It was at the Guild Congress, held at Blackpool in 1901, when reporting the

proceedings, as she had done for a year or two previously, that Annie Bamford met a fellow reporter, Charles E. Tomlinson. They were married shortly afterwards, and a partnership in co-operative journalism was begun which has given to both husband and wife unique places in the inner world of co-operative thought: Mr. Tomlinson as editor of the *Millgate Monthly*, and Mrs. Bamford Tomlinson as the editress of the "Women's Pages" of the *Co-operative News*, the *Woman's Outlook*, *Our Circle*, the journal of the young people's movement, and a series of little books for the bairns, called *Sunshine Stories*. Annie Bamford Tomlinson, as the popular and efficient secretary of the Lancashire Section, might have developed her gifts of enthusiasm and eloquence in platform work, but she has preferred to devote all her energies to making the records of the Guild as complete as possible. While maintaining tenaciously the liberty of the press, she has striven always to present to the general reader of the *News* an interpretation of the Guild as a whole, with strict impartiality in matters of sectional or personal moment.

Appeals and "demands" for more space have been frequent and urgent, and at one time a separate Guild Journal was projected, but upon consideration it was decided "that the value of keeping the Guild in touch with the whole movement and in evidence before it, was too great to be dispensed with."\* The *News* has always afforded generous space for the record of the Guild Congresses.

The Guild members are, indeed, the most ardent supporters of the co-operative journals, and have supported also every project for enlarging their scope. The need for a daily paper which should represent the views of the Co-operative and Labour forces has been acutely felt by women who are desirous of understanding the movements of the day as they affect the workers.

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\*The Women's Co-operative Guild, page III.

For this reason the Guild gave support to the proposal that the Co-operative, Trade Union, and political Labour bodies should become jointly responsible for the *Daily Herald* when that project was before the movement in 1924.

In addition to the current weekly news of Guild activities to be found in the "Woman's Pages" of the *Co-operative News*, the Guild has published in all about 250 pamphlets, memoranda, and leaflets, dealing mainly with the varied subjects under consideration from time to time. For instance, five pamphlets and many different leaflets were written on the "Minimum Wage," eleven pamphlets on "Co-operation and the Poor," ten pamphlets and a number of memoranda on the "Care of Maternity." Many pamphlets and leaflets dealt with Co-operative Productions, the place of Women in the Movement, Co-operative Developments, and other propaganda subjects. Leaflets entitled "Save in Your Own Store," and "Co-operative Women Support Your Own Store," have been bought in thousands by Co-operative Societies for distribution. Other papers dealt with Guild organisation and business procedure.

These publications have been chiefly prepared in the Guild office or written by officials and members of the Guild. When special knowledge was required, writers outside the Guild have kindly contributed papers or have allowed their lectures to be published.

The Guild has also been responsible for the following more important records :—

"Maternity: Letters from Working-Women." G. Bell and Sons. 1915 (out of print).

"Working Women and Divorce." David Nutt. 1911. Price 6d.

"Short History of the Guild, 1883-1894." An introduction to the Guild Annual Meeting handbook, by Catherine Webb. Out of print.



"The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1883-1904."

By Margaret Llewelyn Davies. Out of print.

The following list of publications, with date of issue and price, is given as examples of those which can now be obtained from the Guild office.

- Through Trade to the Co-operative Commonwealth. (1927.)  
By Eleanor Barton, J.P. 1½d.
- The Place of Co-operation in the New Social Order. (1920.)  
By A. Honora Enfield. 1½d.
- The Milk We Want. (1925.) 2d.
- New Forces for Co-operative Efficiency. (1923.) By Lilian Harris. 1½d.
- Food Purity and Food Values. (1925.) By Florence Ranson.  
Two papers, 2d. each.
- Notes on Family Allowances. (1925.) 1½d.
- Memorandum on Midwifery Services. (1918.) By A. Honora Enfield. 3d.
- Suggestions for the National Care of Maternity under the Ministry of Health. (1919.) 2d.
- Hints to Expectant Mothers. (1916.) By J. W. Ballantyne, M.D. 1½d.
- Electricity in the Home. (1925.) By Mabel Partridge, B.Sc. 1d.
- Education and the Workers' Right to Live. (1923.) By Lady Mabel Smith. 1d.
- War against War. (1923.) 1½d.
- The Guild Aeroplane. (1921.) By E. M. Bain. 1d.
- Flowers of the Guild Garden. (1926.) By Ellen Woodward.
- The Relation of the Guild to other Organisations. (1924.) 1½d.
- What we Give and What we Get. (1923.) 1½d.
- Mrs. Jones Guild Convalescent Fund. By Catherine Webb. 2d.
- Business-like Ways for Branch Meetings. 1½d.
- Work of a Branch Secretary. 2d.
- Sectional Work. 1½d. District Work. 1½d.
- A.B.C. of the W.C.G. 1d.
- Facts about the Guild. Leaflet, 2s. a 100.

The following are also on sale :—

PUBLISHED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE WOMEN'S GUILD.

Death or Life? (1924.) By Margaret Llewelyn Davies.

The Family Wash. (1927.) 2d.

Good Food and How to get it. (1927.) 3d.

PUBLISHED BY THE CO-OPERATIVE UNION.

Women as Consumers. (1921.) By Margaret Llewelyn Davies. 2d.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CONVALESCENT FUND.

**"Better to hunt in fields for health unbought,  
Than see the doctor for a nauseous draught."**

—DRYDEN.

**P**ERHAPS one of the best-known "household names" in the Guild's roll of honour is that of Mrs. Benjamin Jones, a pioneer worker and early president.\* Her contemporaries are to-day few in number, but the affection and respect with which she inspired all who knew her is carried forward in the Guild Convalescent Fund, created in 1895 as a permanent memorial to her.

Within a few months of her death (in May, 1894), which occasioned the first break in the ranks of the early workers, a fund of £227 was raised, societies, branches, and individuals contributing. Mrs. Abbott, of Tunbridge Wells, undertook the hon. secretaryship of the fund, and under her wise advice a scheme was evolved which has proved both elastic and sound in its operation. The fund was invested with the Co-operative Union, and the interest used quarterly for the purpose of sending sick members away for convalescence.

At the Sunderland Annual Meeting, in 1897, it was decided that the capital sum only should remain at investment, and annual subscriptions and donations used as contributed. Donations to "Capital," given as memorials to lost members, are added to the original fund, which was, in 1922, transferred, for investment, from the Co-operative Union to the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

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\* See page 70.

The scheme of the fund provides "change of air for Guild members recovering from illness," but, when funds permit, the committee may assist cases where serious illness might be *prevented* by prompt change of air.

The Committee consists of one representative of each sectional council. Their duties are light, since the onus of responsibility for application and proper use of the fund rests with the branch applying.

Within the scope of a maximum grant of £4, help can be given to suit the special needs of each individual applicant, and the records are rich with the appreciation in which the fund is held by all the members, whether they have had need to receive its help or not.

Mrs. Abbott administered the fund for eight years, earning the thanks of the whole Guild for her "indefatigable service." The Annual Report for 1904 places it on record that "Those who have worked with Mrs. Abbott know how business-like she has been as a secretary, how wise as a doctor, and how just as a selector of cases. She has also roused the enthusiasm in the Guild in favour of the fund, and made our members understand that aid comes not as charity, but as a matter of insurance."

Mrs. Abbott resigned her office at Sheffield Congress, 1905, the fund, under her administration having reached the total of £926. 4s. 1d. (including £300 capital invested). Four hundred and thirteen members had been assisted with grants amounting to a total of £569. 4s. 1d.

At the Sheffield Congress I was elected to carry on the work so splendidly inaugurated by Mrs. Abbott, and it has been my happiest service till now. The fund has grown with the growth of the Guild, and there are few branches to-day who do not drop their gifts of loving-kindness into the never-failing pool of helpfulness.

From 1905 to 1910, a yearly collection was made from the delegates to Congress, the "ladies with the

plates" creating a searching of bags and pockets for pennies as the delegates left the hall. In 1911, however, Congress decided that this form of tribute was unbusiness-like, and a sixpenny levy per delegate was instituted. In 1924 the levy was increased to one shilling for each delegate attending Congress.

At the end of the financial year, 1926, the fund stood as follows. The total income from its commencement in 1895, including invested memorials, was £8,014 8s. 10d. The total number of members assisted, was 3,414, grants given amounting to £6,620. 10s. 1d. The total expenses, during the 32 years, have amounted to £576. 1s. 4½d. The Fund records now include a long list of past members, whose names are kept in remembrance through its kindly offices. The permanent Memorial, called the Capital Fund, stood at £471. 2s. 11d. at the close of 1926.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RECENT HISTORY.

**Read my little fable :  
He who runs may read,  
Most can raise the flowers now,  
For most have got the seed.**

—TENNYSON. *The Flower.*

**I**N the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to trace the story of the Women's Co-operative Guild, step by step, from the earliest beginnings of its many-sided interests, and its co-operative and public activities ; gathering up the threads as the years wove them into a well-planned, vigorous organisation, endowed with a faith which binds, and a hope which inspires to action. In the present chapter I must take as a starting point a period which marks the end of an era in the Guild's history, and make from that point a brief survey of the last few years.

The Annual Report for 1921-22 recorded the resignation of Margaret Llewelyn Davies from the General Secretaryship, which she had held from 1889, and of Lilian Harris, who was Assistant Secretary for some twenty years.

The first report after their retirement says that this event—

“ brought to a close at the end of 1921 a long and glorious chapter of the Guild's history—a chapter filled with struggle, growth and triumph, with great achievements and greater visions, and written with the large generosity and unflinching sympathy which knew how to make the least of us feel that we are greater than we knew.”

To mark their deep appreciation of these two beloved officers the Guild decided to invite Miss Davies and Miss Harris to become lifelong honorary members of all Branches and Committees by conferring upon them the "Freedom of the Guild." The presentation was made at the Congress held at Portsmouth in June, 1922, under the Presidency of Mrs. Dewsbury, who likened the occasion to a "thanksgiving session," as indeed it was. The gratitude of the Guild was shown not only in the gift of the "Freedom," but in a gift of over £700, raised without any public appeal, and in a spirit which meant much real self-sacrifice upon the part of Branches who were feeling the pressure of hard post-war times.

With the gifts there was presented to each "Free-woman" a little silver medallion, bearing on one side a design taken from the Central Guild banner, symbolical of the Guild's motto, "Of whole heart cometh Hope," beautifully reproduced in enamel, and representing a figure in blue, planting a young tree, in which is a nest with eggs—the whole representative of hope and new life, and on the reverse side a brief inscription. Mrs. Layton and Mrs. Green, two members of the Central Committee who had been longest in the Guild, made the presentation, and the occasion was, to the hundreds of delegates present, one of thrill and emotion which none will ever forget.

Unfortunately, Miss Harris was unable to be present owing to illness, and Miss Davies, in her reply, was compelled to speak for both. She said: "There is nothing you could have given us that we should value so much as the Freedom of the Guild. It shows such generosity of spirit. It implies such *confidence*. We have often spoken of courage as one of the most important of Guild characteristics. Now the gift of these little emblems will always be a reminder that hand-in-hand with courage walks confidence. To make progress

it is not only necessary that the rank and file must have confidence in their elected leaders, *but leaders must also have confidence in the rank and file.* Both are equally necessary, and both are based on sincerity, openness, and experience. It has been due to this mutual confidence between the Central Committee and the members that the Guild has been able to accomplish its work in the past. Never could any Executive have had finer support, and its confidence in the rank and file has been unbounded; for, you see, you have never failed us. Whatever there was to be done locally or nationally, Guildswomen rose to it, whether it was canvassing their own town, going on deputations to Cabinet Ministers in Whitehall, cutting sandwiches for teas, urging our reforms on Management Committees, Town Councils, or Members of Parliament, walking for hours in processions, writing us long letters when information was needed, presiding at Congresses, our members have proved themselves worthy of confidence.

“By these gifts you have indicated the different ways in which you will allow us still to remain your comrades. We are glad to make room for others, but we feel we are still united with you, and can never, never be grateful enough to you all for the life and love you have given us.”

The use to which Miss Davies and Miss Harris finally decided that the Testimonial Fund should be put met with the cordial approval of the Guild, namely, that it should be used to cementing friendship between Co-operative Women in all countries, through the International Women's Committee. In June, 1924, Mrs. Leighton (of Woolwich) was sent by the Testimonial Fund as Guild envoy to Norway, where she spent a fortnight visiting Guilds and Co-operative Societies, and making a personal study of women's conditions in Norway. Frau Freundlich, President of the International Guild, was the guest of the Fund at the Annual

Congress held at Leeds in 1924. Frau Greetz, of Germany, was the guest at the Congress held at Cambridge in 1925, and in 1927, Frau Necaskova, from Czecho-Slovakia, was welcomed at Leicester.

Portsmouth Congress, at which these farewells were said, met under the guidance of the Guild's new officers, Miss A. Honora Enfield, who had been elected General Secretary, and Mrs. Barton, who was appointed Assistant Secretary. The Rules had been carefully revised at the Manchester Congress in 1921 to allow for the transition from voluntary to paid officers. The annual subscription from Branches had been raised from 4d. to 9d. per member, and a new rule made: "That the General Secretary shall be a full-time paid officer, the salary being fixed by the Central Committee."

Congress, however, after a warm discussion decided, in accordance with the principle for which the Guild had worked,\* to fix a *minimum* rate of salary, below which the Central Committee could not go. A minimum of £300 per annum was agreed upon, but it was felt that this was indeed a bare minimum considering the importance of the work to be undertaken, and the high cost of living. The Committee met the situation by offering a salary of £400, and Congress endorsed their action after some little dissent from delegates who had not realised the status required of an officer in charge of a great organisation like the Guild.

The Guild did not settle down to the new régime without difficulties, as might be expected. There were elements of friction which had to be met and overcome, and during 1922, 1923, and 1924 "domestic affairs" had to take a large place in the discussions in guild rooms, conferences, and Congress. An agitation arose against the scale of salaries paid, and criticisms were made upon the work of the new officers which wasted much time, and roused some feelings incon-

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\* See Chapter IX.



sistent with the loyalty and mutual confidence which Miss Davies' farewell words had so finely displayed. The difficulties of the Central Committee were enhanced by the somewhat prolonged illness of the General Secretary, Miss Enfield, and also of Miss Yuill, an important member of the office staff, in 1924,\* "a year which was one of exceptional activity largely owing to the stimulus given to public life by the Labour Government."†

Two papers, one on "Guild Structure," and another entitled "What we Give and What we Get," were issued and earnestly considered by the Branches. In 1924 an Inquiry Committee was appointed to review the whole organisation, and to consider developments necessary to meet the rapid growth of the Guild, which, in the six years previously, had doubled in membership, and increased the number of branches by nearly 70 per cent.

The Inquiry Committee submitted a report to the Congress at Cambridge in 1925. Many of the proposals were accepted, including the appointment of a chief clerk in place of an assistant secretary, and increased powers for the Standing Orders Committee in dealing with Congress business. Two proposals were, however, highly controversial. One of these was to reduce the Secretary's salary from £400 to £300, and the other was to alter the position of Sectional Secretaries from that of voluntary officers to that of part-time paid officials. The Central Committee, warmly supported by the Sectional Councils, disagreed strongly with these pro-

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\* The Guild has always enjoyed the utmost loyalty and devotion from its office staff. Miss Kidd, who served as chief clerk for many years until her too early death, is held in affectionate remembrance by those who knew of her work. Miss Yuill, Miss Pidgeon, Miss Cox, and Mrs. Neep (the latest recruit) are all keen Guildswomen who are unsparing in their devotion to the service of the Guild.

† Annual Report, 1925.

posals. After full consideration by the Branches, the Report was finally submitted to the Congress at Newcastle in 1926. The points for each side were put before the delegates with the utmost restraint and good feeling, and the debate which followed was on an equally high level. The two proposals were rejected, and the final decision of the delegates reaffirmed the principle of voluntary service upon which the Guild had been built up, and maintained a salary in accordance with the onerous duties of the office, and with the dignity and status of the Guild.

Another important proposal which was carried was an alteration of the Rules to include in the "Objects of the Guild" definite support for the Co-operative Party. This resolution attaches the Guild to the efforts the Co-operative Movement is making to secure political recognition for its principles and practices.\*

Another change in domestic affairs had also to be faced in 1925, in the resignation of the General Secretary, Miss Enfield. It will be remembered that at the time of her appointment, in 1921, as successor to Miss Llewelyn Davies, Miss Enfield also held the post of secretary to the newly-formed International Co-operative Women's Guild, and her keen interest in International organisation was of great value to the English Guild at that time, when, in the press of changing internal affairs, Guildswomen might have been inclined to think only of themselves. While large and important fields of work were not neglected, great attention was paid to internal education, and her work as General Secretary was also eminently useful in steering the Guild wisely through a transitional period of considerable difficulty, thus easing the way for future progress.

Miss Enfield's gift of languages, however, and her knowledge of International organisations marked her out

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\* See Chapter XIV.

for leadership on this side of the Movement, and the Guild was not surprised when, after four years' effort to carry out the dual offices, she found that she could best devote her gifts to the service of Co-operation in its world-wide aspect.

The appointment of Mrs. Eleanor Barton as her successor once again showed the good judgment of the Guild. Mrs. Barton's qualifications for the post covered experience in Guild, Co-operative, and Citizen work.

Her Guild experience included service on Branch, Section, and Central Committee, on the latter from 1912 to 1914, and again in 1920, in which year she was appointed Assistant Secretary. She was President in the difficult year of 1914. Her Co-operative work was as a Director of the Brightside and Carbrook Society and of the Co-operative Newspaper Board. In civic work, her experience has been wide. She has been a member of the Sheffield City Council, and is a J.P. She has represented the Guild on several Government Committees. This training, combined with staunchness to principle, energy, and gift of speech, made her an acceptable choice, and after all the controversial questions which had agitated the Guild for the past few years had been happily settled at Newcastle, her election was acclaimed by the Congress with the warmest approval, and the Guild settled down to face the future with renewed confidence in its mission and in its leaders.

I have given some considerable space to these domestic events because they are of more than passing interest in the history of a democratic organisation, and because they bring out the strength of the Co-operative spirit cultivated throughout the Guild, by its training and its faith in the ideal side of Co-operative endeavour.

Amidst all its internal upheavals and anxieties the Guild did not relax its active work for the progress of the Movement. All the varied Schools were carried on

successfully. The campaign for increased trade was vigorously pursued each year, jointly with the local societies and the Co-operative Wholesale Society. The movement for Co-operative milk supplies was heartily supported; local societies were pressed to open dairies, and the need for a national policy in regard to the purchase of milk and similar questions was urged in discussion with the United Board.

Joint work with the Co-operative Union, with the Men's Guild, and with the Political Party was carried out. In citizen work there was much to demand attention. A housing campaign, and the study of Labour Saving and Electricity in the home occupied many meetings.

The keen interest of the Guild in International Co-operation grew with each year. The problems of International trade were studied, and the work of the International Guild was materially helped by the decision of Congress, in 1925, at the suggestion of the Branches, that a levy should be made annually to the I.C.W.G.

Demands for Peace and Disarmament called out the enthusiasm of Guildswomen all over the country. Thousands of signatures were obtained for the "Peace Letter Pledge," and at the great Peace meeting at the Albert Hall, in 1926, the work of the Guild was mentioned with special appreciation by Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, M.P., the originator of the Peace Letter. Many Guild Branches also took part in the remarkable Peacemakers' Pilgrimage in 1926, and in local demonstrations.

During the Coal dispute of 1926 the Guild again proved its practical interest in the trials of the workers. The Branches worked strenuously on behalf of the distressed wives and children of the miners. Over £5,000 in money was raised, a great deal of clothing was collected, and 387 miners' children were adopted by Guild members during the dispute. These figures only indicate

something of what was done for those in distress. Many Branches helped with funds and clothing but kept no records of their efforts.

These aspects of the Guild's large-hearted modes of social service are, perhaps, the best notes on which I can conclude my all-too-brief survey of its more recent history.

Students of social history at large, looking back in future years, must, it seems to me, see in the rise and growth of this unique woman's organisation,—with its members scattered over the whole country, living the narrow lives of working housewives, bound by small means, and absorbing economic problems, yet seeking with determination to gain knowledge wherewith to fit themselves for a full life of civic duties,—a movement of impressive significance in the progress of humanity. The spirit of Co-operation which binds the Guild into one united whole in purpose and action, and gives to the shopping baskets of its members a great power to lift the ordinary commerce of daily existence into a movement for social betterment, is also the spirit which can regenerate the world.

## APPENDICES.

### APPENDIX I.

Mrs. Nevitt was elected on to the North-Western Sectional Board in 1923, and Mrs. Corrie on to the Midland Board in 1924, Mrs. Cottrell having retired on her election to the C.W.S. Board.

Mrs. Bain was added to the strength of the Southern Sectional Board in 1925, and on being appointed Assistant Secretary of the Guild in 1921, Mrs. Barton retired from the Newspaper Board, and Mrs. Dewsbury succeeded her in that important office.

In March, 1927, the representation of women in the Movement was as follows:—

#### ON BOARDS AND ASSOCIATIONS.

*Co-operative Wholesale Society.*—Mrs. Cottrell.

*Central Board.*—Mrs. Gasson and Mrs. Bain (Southern Section), Mrs. Nevitt (N.W. Section), Mrs. Corrie (Midland Section).

*National Co-operative Publishing Society.*—Mrs. Dewsbury.

*Educational Committee, Co-operative Union.*—Miss Symes (representing the Guild).

*Co-operative Party Executive.*—Mrs. Bedhall (representing the Guild).

*Sectional Propaganda Committees.*—Midland, 1 ; North-Western, 2.

*District Associations.*—Guild members sit on the Bristol and Somerset, Surrey, and Gloucester Co-operative Union District Associations.

*National Co-operative Publishing Society Advisory Committees.*—Midland, 1 ; Northern, 2 ; Southern, 2.

*Educational Committees' Associations.*—Women members sit on the Executives of all the Educational Committees' Associations.

*Convalescent Fund Committees.*—Miss Webb (Secretary, Southern), Miss Gration and Mrs. Bamford Tomlinson (North-Western), Mrs. Found (South-Western).

Three hundred and thirty-seven women sat on the Management Committees of 194 Societies, and 626 women sat on Educational Committees, while two Guilds act as Education Committees for their respective Societies.

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## APPENDIX II.

### GUILDSWOMEN ON PUBLIC BODIES IN MARCH, 1927.

One Guildswoman is Mayor.

On County and Municipal Boroughs, 69.

English and Welsh Consultative Councils of the Ministry of Health, 3.

One on Milk Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health.

Magistrates, 72.

Sixty-nine sit on Municipal Maternity Committees.

About 63 sit on Housing Committees.

About 74 on local Insurance Committees.

About 77 on Urban District Councils.

About 60 on Local Education Committees.

About 186 on Boards of Guardians.

Guildswomen also sit on Trades Councils or Labour Representative Committees, Venereal Diseases Committees, Labour Advisory Committees, and Housing Advisory Committees, Police Court Rota, Old Age or War Pensions, Rural and District Councils.

## APPENDIX III.

## MATERNITY.

EXPENSES OF REPRESENTATIVES ON INSURANCE  
AND OTHER COMMITTEES.

The following are quotations from letters, illustrating first hand personal experience :

" I missed two meetings on account of expense. I had not the money to spare, it being the end of the week (Thursday), my husband's wage being only 26s. weekly, and have 8s. 6d. rent to pay."

" Railway fares are 4s. 8d. ; if able to attend on market day, 3s. 5d. We were paid up during February, after having attended since July. I should like to state here that I missed several times during December and January, not having the wherewithal to travel. . . . As regards cost of meals while away from home, I go without, taking a bit of something in my pocket to eat on the quiet. I get forward with my work the day before, and pay a neighbour 1s. to look after my little boy. Usual time away from home on committee, from 12 noon, getting back about 7 in the evening."

" As you know, it is much more economical for a mother to make the tea and cut up the bread and butter rather than leave it to the husband and children to do. It is really in these little ways we have to be careful, or else the money does not last out. My car fare is not so heavy as some, but when one, after paying all household expenses on Saturday, has about 2s. or 3s. to last from Monday to Friday, even 4d., or 6d., out of this has to be considered, and I know there are some women like myself who cannot afford to ride—we walk."



## APPENDIX IV.

## MATERNITY.

Grants in aid of the Maternity and Child Welfare service, to the amount of 50 per cent of their approved net expenditure, are distributed, under regulations approved by the Treasury, to Local Authorities and voluntary societies carrying out arrangements within the scope of the regulations, and duly sanctioned by the Minister of Health.

In 1925-26 the total amount disbursed was £850,173, local authorities claiming £651,022, and voluntary societies £199,151. The total net expenditure of local authorities on these services was £1,242,817 in 1924-25.

The total number of persons acting as health visitors, on March 31st, 1926, was 3,878. Of these, 919 were employed wholly on Maternity and Child Welfare work. On March 31st, 1926, there were 2,195 Maternity and Child Welfare Centres in England, as compared with 2,122 on March 31st, 1925—1,422 were conducted by local authorities, and 773 by voluntary agencies.

The net expenditure of local authorities in 1924-25 on the supply of milk at less than cost price to expectant and nursing mothers, and young children, was £182,000.

## APPENDIX V.

## EMPLOYMENT.

In 1897 the number of persons employed in the movement was 67,381, and in 1925 the number had increased to about 200,000.

The wages of girls and women workers have increased since 1914 from 78·6 per cent to 120 per cent above the minimum rates adopted in that year.

Conciliation Boards, consisting of representatives of the Co-operative Union and the A.U.C.E., were set up in

1916 to deal with the labour troubles within the movement. A National Board, with District Boards, covered the whole of the organisation. In 1917 Hours and Wages Boards were set up in all the districts. These Boards were designed to prevent disputes, rather than to function as arbitrators in settling disputes after they had arisen, as was the purpose of the Conciliation Boards. A Labour Adviser has now been appointed, and new machinery for settling disputes which went beyond the powers of the Boards already in operation adopted at the Congress in 1926, in a resolution which "Urges all co-operative societies in membership with the Co-operative Union to use the new machinery in a sincere spirit of conciliation in order that disputes arising in the co-operative movement may be settled without resort to strikes or lockouts."

APPENDIX VI.

GRANTS.

Year.	Co-operative Union.			Co-operative Wholesale.		
	Per annum.			£	s.	d.
	£	s.	d.			
1886 to 1892 .....	10	0	0	...	—	—
1893 to 1894 .....	50	0	0	...	—	—
1895 to 1898 .....	100	0	0	...	—	—
1899 to 1905 .....	200	0	0	...	—	—
1906 to 1912 .....	300	0	0	...	—	—
1913 .....	400	0	0	...	—	—
1914 to 1917—						
Grant withheld.	—	—	—	...	—	—
1918 to 1919 .....	400	0	0	...	—	—
1920 to 1926 .....	500	0	0	...	—	—
1908 .....	—	—	—	...	100	0 0
1909 .....	—	—	—	...	50	0 0
1910 to 1913 .....	—	—	—	...	75	0 0
1914 .....	—	—	—	...	125	0 0
1915 to 1917 .....	—	—	—	...	150	0 0
1918 to 1920 .....	—	—	—	...	300	0 0
1921 to 1924 .....	—	—	—	...	400	0 0
1925 to 1926 .....	—	—	—	...	500	0 0
1917 Donations from Societies	...	...	...	...	181	0 6

## GRANTS FROM SOCIETIES TO BRANCHES.

Grants from Societies to Branches have gradually increased in number and amount. In the year ending December, 1925, they were as follows:—

SECTION.	Under £5.	£5 and under £10.	£10 and under £20.	£30.	£40.	£40 and upwards.	Totals.
Midland ...	71	60	13	1	...	...	145
Northern ...	25	11	5	...	...	...	41
Lancashire ..	18	37	75	31	1	2	164
Yorkshire ...	53	45	12	5	...	1	116
South							
Eastern	59	17	6	11	1	...	94
Southern....	61	58	11	1	...	...	131
Western .....	10	25	7	...	...	...	42
Totals ...	303	254	129	49	2	3	740
1927	324	256	142	43	1	3	769

## APPENDIX VII.

LIST OF BRANCHES TABULATED IN REPORT FOR 1890  
STILL IN LIST FOR 1926.

Name.	1890. No. of Members.	1926. No. of Members.	Daughter Branches.	Total Membership.
Manchester .....	43	102	12	1,394
Wallsend.....	35	296	...	...
Cricklewood .....	17	27*†	...	...
Dover .....	38	244	...	...
Wimbledon.....	16	28*†	...	...
Battersea .....	46	91*†	...	...
Carlisle .....	15	75	1	95
Sheffield .....	47	51	9	369
Marylebone .....	74	14*†	...	...
Caterham .....	8	17*†	...	...
Ashford.....	19	46	2	79
Brighton.....	30	136	10	444

Name.	1890. No. of Members.	1926. No. of Members.	Daughter Branches.	Total Membership.
Burnley .....	60	100	1	150
Rugby .....	38	74	...	...
Rochester .....	16	105	2	155
Banbury .....	54	68	1	114
Rochdale .....	22	30	2	66
Reading .....	24	100	1	120
Woolwich .....	15	50*†	...	...
Leeds .....	120	26	37	1,368
Bolton .....	80	250	...	...
Kentish Town .....	20	92*†	...	...
Bermondsey .....	29	75*†	...	...
Erith .....	18	30*†	...	...
Coventry .....	31	150	3	259
Bristol .....	20	58	16	673
New Brompton‡ .....	50	52	...	...
Plymouth .....	56	204	7	481
Peckham .....	12	112*†	...	...
Ipswich .....	34	103	7	360
Hackney .....	13	38*†	...	...
Norwich .....	30	150	...	...
Charlton .....	12	40*†	...	...
Ely .....	...	60	...	...
Exeter .....	...	30	...	...
Penge .....	...	37*†	...	...
Peterborough .....	...	128	6	404
Plumstead .....	...	88	...	...
Portsea Island .....	...	146	11	478
Ripley .....	17	76	3	127

\*These branches have many of them not had a continued existence, but have followed the fortunes of their Societies; but the spirit of the Guild remained, and revived when opportunity occurred.

‡ Now Gillingham.

† These branches belong to one or other of the three great amalgamated Societies—the London, Royal Arsenal, and South Suburban, which have daughter branches as follows:—

London—88 Branches, 3,773 Members.

Woolwich (Royal Arsenal Society)—36 Branches, 2,069 Members.

South Suburban Society—29 Branches, 712 Members.

## APPENDIX VIII.

## MEMBERS OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

Name.	Date, Years of Service.	Offices held.
Mrs. Acland .....	1883	... Secretary, 1883. Pres., 1884-6.
Mrs. Lawrenson	... 1884-1892	... Gen. Sec., 1885-9.
Miss Allen (Mrs. Redfern)	1884-88	... Gen. Sec., 1884.
Miss Greenwood .....	1884-86; 1888	...
Mrs. Halliwell	... 1884	...
Mrs. B. Jones	... 1884-92; 1893	... Pres., 1886-1892
Miss Shufflebotham (Mrs. Trotman)	... 1884-91	...
Miss Catherine Webb	... 1885-88; 1892-4...	V.-Pres., 1893
Mrs. Hill ...	... 1885-86.	...
Miss Sharp	... 1886-91	... V. Pres., 1891
Mrs. Carter	... 1887-90	...
Miss Ll. Davies	... 1888	... Gen. Sec. 1889-1921
Miss Holyoake (Mrs. Holyoake Marsh)	... 1888-91; 1893	...
Miss Reddish	... 1889-91; 1895-98..	Pres., 1897
Miss E. A. Tournier	... 1890-92; 1894-98..	Pres., 1892
Miss M. Spooner	... 1891-93; 1896	V.-Pres., 1896
Mrs. Knott	... 1892-3	...
Mrs. Adams	... 1894-6	... Pres., 1895
Mrs. Ashworth	... 1892-6; 1897-8	... Pres., 1893-94.
Mrs. Bury	... 1894-6; 1898-90; 1902-4; 1906-8	Pres., 1896, 1904, 1908
Mrs. Spence	... 1894-5	...
Mrs. Hodgett	... 1895-7; 1899-1901, 1905-7	... Pres., 1900, 1907
Mrs. Carr	... 1896-8; 1904-6	... Pres., 1898, 1906
Mrs. Deans	... 1897-9	... Pres., 1899
Mrs. Widlake	... 1897-9	...
Mrs. Dring	... 1898	...
Mrs. Potter	... 1899	...
Mrs. Boothman	... 1899-1901	... Pres., 1901
Mrs. Green	... 1900-03; 1919-22..	Pres., 1902
Mrs. McBlain	.. 1900-3; 1907-9 ..	Pres., 1903
Mrs. Bentley	... 1900-1	..
Mrs. Bentley	... 1900-1	...
Mrs. Butterfield	... 1901-3	...
Mrs. Fidkin	.. 1902-4	... V.-Pres., 1904
Mrs. Nightingale	... 1902-4	...
Mrs. Gasson	... 1904-6	... Pres., 1905
Miss Goodall	... 1904-6	...

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Name.	Years of Service on Committee.	
Mrs. Eddie	... 1905; 1912-5	... V.-Pres., 1914
Mrs. Warren	... 1905-7	... V.-Pres., 1907
Mrs. Brown	... 1907-9	... V.-Pres., 1909
Miss Gratton	... 1907-9	... Pres., 1909
Mrs. Harris	... 1908-10	... Pres., 1910
Mrs. Treble	... 1908-10	... V.-Pres., 1910
Mrs. Blair	... 1909-11; 1919-21..	Pres., 1911
Mrs. Wilkins	... 1909-11; 1915-17	Pres., 1916
Mrs. Jacques	... 1910-11	
Mrs. Wimhurst	... 1910-12	... Pres., 1912
Mrs. Booth	... 1911-13; 1916-18	Pres., 1917
Mrs. Essery	... 1911-13	... Pres., 1913
Mrs. Barton	... 1912-14; 1920	... Pres., 1914 Asst. Sec., 1921 Gen. Sec., 1925
Mrs. Coffey	... 1912-14	...
Miss Allen	... 1913-15	... V.-Pres., 1915
Mrs. Cottrell	... 1914-15	...
Mrs. Found	... 1914-15	... Pres., 1915
Mrs. Butler	... 1915-17	...
Mrs. Daymond	... 1915-17	...
Mrs. Nevitt	... 1915-17	... V.-Pres., 1916-17
Mrs. Hood	... 1916-18	... Pres., 1918
Mrs. Williams	... 1917-19	... Pres., 1919
Mrs. Ferguson	... 1918-20	... Pres., 1920
Mrs. Hutchings	... 1918-20	...
Mrs. Lawton	... 1918	...
Mrs. Layton	... 1919-21	... V.-Pres., 1921
Mrs. Dewsbury	... 1919-21	... Pres., 1921
Mrs. Prosser	... 1920-22	... Pres., 1922
Mrs. Close	... 1921-24	...
Mrs. Penny	... 1921 and 1923	...
Mrs. Millman	... 1921-23	... V.-Pres., 1922-23
Mrs. Allen	... 1922-23	... Pres., 1923
Mrs. Andrews	... 1922-24	...
Mrs. Bain	... 1922-24	... V.-Pres., 1924
Mrs. Matthews	... 1922-24	... Pres., 1924
Mrs. Whitehead	... 1922	...
Mrs. Matt. Lewis	... 1923-25	...
Mrs. Campbell	... 1924 to present	...
Miss Symes	... 1924	... V.-Pres., 1925
Mrs. Webster	... 1924-26	... Pres., 1925
Mrs. Bedhall	... 1925	...
Mrs. Mc.Ard	... 1925	...
Mrs. Tucker	... 1925	...
Mrs. Bird	... 1925	... Pres., 1926

NOTE.—The year stated is that of election to the C.C. or other office. The Guild year running from June to June. Thus, Mrs. Bird was elected President in June, 1926, and concluded her year of office at Leicester Congress, June, 1927.

## APPENDIX IX.

## ANNUAL MEETINGS AND CONGRESSES.

YEAR.	PLACE OF MEETING.	SUBJECT.	READER OF PAPER.
1885...	A.M. Oldham	1. Guild Children	... Mrs. B. Jones
	Union Congress.	2. Representation of Guild at Congress	Discussion
1886...	A.M. Plymouth	1. Guild Organisation	... Mrs. Acland
		2. Drapery Departments	... Mrs. Jones
1887...	A.M. Carlisle	1. Formation of Southern District	... Mrs. Jones
		2. Co-operative Association for Needle-women and Work Girls	... Miss Sharp
		3. Guild Dividends	... Miss Webb
1888...	A.M. Dewsbury	1. Branch Work	... Mrs. Wood
		2. Branch Work	... Miss Llewelyn Davies
1889...	A.M. Ipswich	1. Guild Work	... Miss Shore Smith (Mrs. Nash)
1890...	A.M. Glasgow	Addresses by	... Mr. W. Maxwell (S.C.W.S.)
			... Mrs. Lindsey (Glasgow)
1891...	A.M. Lincoln	Addresses by	... Mrs. Cracroft (Lincoln)
			... Mr. Scotton (Derby)
1892...	A.M. Rochdale	Addresses by	... Miss C. E. Wilson (Manchester)
			... Mr. Young (Plymouth)
1893...	A.M. Leicester	1. Women as Shareholders and Officials	Mrs. Woodward
	First separate Annual Meeting.	2. Co-operation and Domestic Life	... Miss Webb
1894...	A.M. Doncaster	1. The Guild and Local Government	... Mrs. Abbott
1895...	A.M. London	1. The Half-time System	... Mrs. Rigby
		2. Reforms in Co-operative Education	Miss Llewelyn Davies
1896...	A.M. Burnley	1. Surplus Capital	... Miss Reddish
1897...	A.M. Sunderland	1. Compensation Act	... Mrs. V. Nash (Miss Shore Smith)
		2. High Dividends	... Miss Webb

ANNUAL MEETINGS AND CONGRESSES.—*continued.*

YEAR.	PLACE OF MEETING.	SUBJECT.	READER OF PAPER.
1898...	A.M. Derby	1. Co-operative Housebuilding	... Miss Mayo
		2. Co-operative Productions	... Mrs. Slack
1899...	A.M. Plymouth	1. Women on Management Committees	... Mrs. Day (Stockton)
		2. Women on Educational Committees	... Mrs. Marshall (Huddersfield)
	First Congress	3. Childhood	... Miss McMillan
1900...	Woolwich	1. A Co-operative Relief Column	... Miss Llewelyn Davies
1901...	Blackpool	1. Temperance Reform	... Mrs. Bury
		2. Co-operative Life Insurance	... Mrs. Eddie
1902...	Newcastle	1. Report of Inquiry Committee on Co-operation and the Poor.	
		2. Open Membership	... Mrs. Owen
1903...	Lincoln	1. The Co-operative Wholesale Society.	... Discussion
		2. Women on Borough Councils	... Miss Reddish
1904...	Gloucester	1. Citizenship	... Discussion opened by Miss Reddish.
	Coming of Age.	2. Credit Trading	... Mr. J. C. Gray
		3. The Licensing Bill	... Mr. Seebohm Rowntree
1905...	Sheffield	1. Health of School Children	... Miss Walker (Dundee)
		2. Feeding of School Children in Paris	... Mlle. Bonneval (Paris)
1906...	Ipswich	1. The Co-operative Store Abroad	... Miss Llewelyn Davies
		2. Co-operators and the Labour Party	... Mrs. Abbott
1907...	Darlington	1. Health Departments	... Miss Llewelyn Davies
		2. Position of Married Women	... Mrs. V. Nash
1908...	Burton-on-Trent	1. A Co-operative Standard for Women Workers	... Paper prepared by C.C.
1909...	Oldham	1. Half-time System	... Paper prepared by C.C.
		2. What is a Good Dividend?	... Paper prepared by C.C.
1910...	Oxford	1. School Clinics	... Mrs. Harris
1911...	Bristol	1. Women and Government Insurance Schemes	... Paper prepared by C.C.



ANNUAL MEETINGS AND CONGRESSES.—*continued.*

YEAR.	PLACE OF MEETING.	SUBJECT.	READER OF PAPER.
1911...	Bristol ...	... 2. Co-operative Comrades-in-Arms ...	... Paper prepared by C.C.
1912...	Hull ...	... 1. Co-operation and Labour Uprisings...	... Mrs. Eddie
1913...	Newcastle ...	... 1. Education of Guildswomen ...	... Miss Llewelyn Davies
1914...	Birmingham	... 1. Report of Inquiry on Co-operative Dressmaking ...	... Discussion
1915...	Liverpool ...	... No papers read. Principal Resolutions on (1) Self-Government; (2) Education; (3) National Care of Maternity; (4) Peace.	
1916...	London ...	... Resolutions on (1) Taxation; (2) International Trade; (3) Peace.	
1917...	Torquay ...	... Chief Event: News of Enfranchisement of Women. (1) Maternity; (2) Survey Committee's Report; (3) Political Action.	
1918...	Bradford ...	... (1) The Political Party; (2) The Union Grant; (3) A People's Peace; (4) Voluntary Work.	
1919...	Middlesbrough	... (1) The Co-operative Commonwealth; (2) International Co-operation; (3) Voluntary Work.	
1920...	Derby ...	... (1) Voluntary Work; (2) High Prices; (3) Co-operative and Labour Alliance; (4) Housing.	
1921...	Manchester ...	... (1) Joint Capital Campaign; (2) Housing; (3) Representation at Congress; (4) A Salaried Official; (5) Old-Age Pensions at 60.	
1922...	Portsmouth...	... Chief Event: Retirement of Miss Llewelyn Davies and Miss Harris, and presentation to them of the Freedom of the Guild. (1) International Co-operative Women's Committee; (2) Disarmament; (3) Education; (4) Unemployment.	
1923...	Cardiff ...	... (1) Amendment to Rules; (2) Co-operative Party and Women Candidates; (3) International Co-operative Trade; (4) Peace; (5) Pensions' Bill.	
1924...	Leeds ...	... (1) Co-operative Production; (2) Juvenile Employment; (3) Cost of Living; (4) Abolition of all Food Taxes.	
1926...	Cambridge ...	... (1) National Milk Supply; (2) Politics; (3) Family Allowances; (4) Pensions.	

## APPENDIX X.

## NOTE ON THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT.

The Co-operative Movement is an association of Self-governed Co-operative Societies, originating in Rochdale in 1844. The membership is open to men and women on equal terms, shares being of the value of £1 each with limited liability. Retail Distributive Societies numbered in 1925 (latest figures available) 1,289, with a membership of 4,910,983; share and loan capital amounting to £100,683,815, and a trade for that year of £183,584,049. The Individual Societies are affiliated to the Co-operative Union for purposes of legal guidance, propaganda, and education. They are federated for mutual Trade and Production in the English and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Societies Ltd.

The English Women's Co-operative Guild is an auxiliary, through its Branches, of the Societies in England and Wales. The Scottish Women's Co-operative Guild and the Irish Women's Co-operative Guild are auxiliaries to the Societies in Scotland and Ireland respectively.



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