

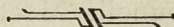
1925

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Women's Co-operative Guild.

WHAT WE GIVE AND WHAT WE GET

AN ACCOUNT OF THE WORK OF THE GUILD
OFFICE AND THE USE OF THE CENTRAL FUND.



DURING the first months of the year one item of expenditure comes before every Branch. This is the subscription of 9d. per member to the Central Fund, and new branches and members will feel that they would like to know how this money is spent and why they should pay it. These questions are most useful, because the answers to them bring out many sides of Guild work and show its value and importance to every Guildswoman. Those who have been to the Guild Congress, with its 1,000 delegates assembled together from all over England and Wales, and representatives from sister Guilds in Scotland, Ireland and other countries, will realise that the Guild is a great Society in which all the parts are in close contact, giving and receiving ideas, and acting unitedly with force and efficiency to promote Co-operative developments and to secure from municipalities, governments and Parliament the reforms needed by married working women. This vigorous Society has been made possible by building up a strong Central, Sectional and District organisation. And the activities of this organisation depend on the **Central Fund**, which is mainly provided by the Branch subscriptions of 9d. per member.*

* In 1922 the Branch subscriptions to the Central Fund amounted to £1,841. In addition, the Co-operative Union gave a grant of £500 and the Co-operative Wholesale Society of £400.

DISTRICT AND SECTIONAL LINKS.

The part of the District and Sectional Organisation is to link up and help the Branches in the same neighbourhood by means of conferences, schools and classes for Branch officers. New Branches are formed and looked after, weak ones are helped. The District Committee members form a band of local speakers on the Guild Special Subjects, who can be invited by Branches at small expense. In addition to speaking at Branches, the Council members act as speakers at conferences and schools.

Special Schools are held each year for the Sectional Council and District Committee members to give them training in their work. The District Secretaries meet the Sectional Council at one of the Sectional Conferences annually. Once a year all the Councils meet the Central Committee at the All-Councils Meeting to discuss the Guild campaigns and problems of the moment, and take back to the Branches and Districts the new points and information they gain.

To enable this work to be carried out, grants of £1 10s. to £10 are given to the Districts from the Central Fund according to their needs, the poorer and more scattered ones receiving most. In addition, the cost of the District Committee schools and the meeting of the District Secretaries and Council are paid by the Central Fund. The whole of the Sectional work is paid for by grants from the Central Fund.

In 1922, the expenditure on the Sectional and District work was nearly £900.

THE CENTRAL ORGANISATION.

The part played by the Central Organisation, consisting of the Central Committee, the General and Assistant Secretaries and the Office Staff, is still wider and more varied.

All the business needed for the smooth working of the whole Guild and its democratic machinery has to be carried out by the Central Office. It is not easy for branches to realise what this means. Every time a branch receives a

circular, or an election paper, or a Congress notice, some 1,200 envelopes must be addressed, stamped, filled and taken to the post.

Take for instance the preparations for Congress. In February the nomination papers, schedules, delegate's form and first notice of Congress have to be prepared, sent to the printers, and sent out to branches and districts. When the schedules are returned the information from these 1,200 forms must be analysed, summarised, and tabulated for use in the Annual Report. This and the writing of the Report takes weeks of work. Then the Report, resolutions and Congress programme must be typed out, sent to the printers, and sent out to branches. Meantime the nominations have come in. Every nominee must be written to and the voting papers prepared and sent to the printers. Before they can be sent out to branches each paper must have the number of votes inserted. Then come the amendments to resolutions to be got into order and printed, and this time over 2,000 envelopes must be prepared for branches and delegates. Many other details too long to describe must be remembered and attended to.

But Congress preparations are only a small part of the Central Office work. There are many other "send outs" to branches during the year. Then there are the new branches to see to. Every new Branch (last year there were 120) is sent three letters. Every day parcels of literature, business books, badges, etc., have to be made up and despatched. Every day, the accounts have to be kept and it requires quite half a trained person's time to deal with the receipts and payments. Every day also come letters to the office from Guild officials and branches with problems and difficulties to be dealt with, speakers to be found, help and advice in campaigns to be given.

All this requires a competent and sufficient office staff, but it by no means covers the most important work of the Central Committee and General and Assistant Secretaries.

The General and Assistant Secretaries prepare the "Hints to Speakers" on the 10 or more special subjects decided on by the Central Committee for the year, and these

"hints" are supplied to the band of some 350 speakers provided by the Sectional and District Organisation. This is a heavy and difficult piece of work, requiring the collection of information from many sources, and is very important for the vitality and efficiency of Branch work. Pamphlets often have to be written on some of the Special Subjects, as well as for conferences.

It is, too, the special business of the Central Committee and General and Assistant Secretaries to act, as it were, as a nerve centre for the whole Guild, receiving information from the Branches about their needs, problems, and desires, finding out the best ways of meeting them and considering what Co-operative and citizen questions most require the attention of the Guild. Education and campaigns dealing with the reforms and developments needed, are then carefully planned out.

The carrying out of these campaigns and those arising out of the "Special Subjects" requires the drafting of the numerous circulars to Branches, Districts and Sections, which keep all informed of what the whole Guild is doing, and stimulate local action. Deputations to Co-operative Societies, Government Departments, etc., are coached up on the points to be dealt with and supplied with information. It was the existence of this Guild Central organisation, constantly at work at finding out and expressing the needs of Motherhood, that enabled the whole Guild to use its power to press for the Maternity Benefit, to get it made the property of the wife, to put forward ideas for the National Care of Maternity, and to secure their adoption by Government Departments and Municipalities. In this year's campaigns for increasing Co-operative Trade and on Housing, branches have had experience of the stimulus to their local work and of the power of bringing the views of Guildswomen before national Co-operative bodies and the Government.

Another part of the work of the Central Organisation is to co-operate with other parts of the Movement, with Industrial Women's organisations, and with Societies working for Peace. The Guild is now represented on joint committees with the Co-operative Union, the Co-operative Wholesale

Society, the women's sections of the Trade Union and Labour Movements, and the Workers' International Russian Relief Committee. The General Secretary is responsible for collecting all the information necessary for wise policies on the numerous problems arising in this joint work.

The cost of the work of the Central Committee and Central Office (printing, postage, Central Committee Meetings, Staff Salaries, Office rent and expenses, Representatives' expenses, etc.), amounted in 1922 to £1,731.*

Finally, it is through the Central Organisation that the Guild takes its part in the International Co-operative Movement. A special study has been made of International Co-operative Trade, and several papers on it have been written for the information of Branches and Speakers. The Central Committee is represented on the International Co-operative Women's Committee, and has arranged for the Secretarial work of this Committee to be done at the Guild Office, the General Secretary having been appointed Secretary of the International Committee. This entails much work in preparing the monthly notes for the International Bulletin, in correspondence in different languages with the Committee and other countries, and in the consideration of the questions on which common action in all countries can be taken. Last year an interesting development was the attendance of Guild representatives at the International Peace Congress called by the International Federation of Trade Unions.

The cost of this work in 1922 was about £33 (including £5 subscription to the International Co-operative Women's Committee). But usually it would be more, as last year there was no meeting of the Women's Committee, nor of the International Co-operative Congress.

WHAT THE CENTRAL FUND GIVES TO BRANCHES

It will be seen that the Central, Sectional and District organisation bring greatly increased activity, education and power to every single branch. Without this organisation,

* In addition, £337 was spent on Papers, Badges, Business Books, but this was covered by the sales amounting to £382. On an average, these items produce a small balance in favour of the Guild.

Branches would have no means of meeting together, no Annual Congress, no conferences, no speakers, no Schools, no campaigns, no deputations to Governments, no papers, no combined action of any kind. It is all these things which the Branches obtain for their members by their subscription to the Central Fund. In paying this 9d. (costing each member less than $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a week) each branch is doing its part, as it were, in providing the life blood of the Guild. The Branch is helping to make itself more attractive to its members, more influential in its own society and town, and at the same time it is sharing in a far wider influence in the whole Co-operative Movement and in national affairs, while beyond this again, it is taking part in building up the International Co-operative Commonwealth needed to abolish poverty and war.

A. M. PROSSER, *President.*

M. MILLMAN, *Vice-President.*

A. H. ALLEN, *Treasurer.*

A. ANDREWS.

E. M. BAIN.

J. A. CLOSE.

L. MATTHEWS.

E. WHITEHEAD.

A. HONORA ENFIELD,
General Secretary.

April, 1923.

To be obtained (price 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.) from the Women's Co-operative Guild,
28, Church Row, Hampstead, London, N.W. 3.



TUDOR STREET, E.C.
31634