

# Women's Co-operative Guild.

## GUILD FINANCES AND VOLUNTARY WORK.

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FELLOW MEMBERS,

You will remember that at the last Guild Congress two resolutions were brought forward dealing with money payments in the Guild. The first was in favour of Sectional Secretaries being paid on a part-time basis. This was not passed, but referred back to the Central Committee for consideration. The second was a recommendation in favour of Branch Secretaries receiving "honorariums." This was carried.

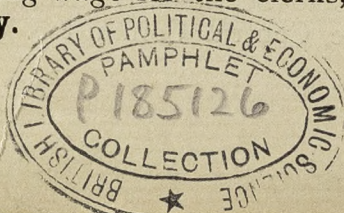
In view of these resolutions it seemed desirable for the Central Committee to give thorough consideration to the whole financial policy of the Guild, and to the question of voluntary work, and in doing so to take into account what the position of a future General Secretary should be, as it is obvious that the present General Secretary could not continue in office indefinitely.

First of all, we want you to keep clear the difference between **Paid Work** and **Honorariums**. Paid work is work done for a living wage, whether whole-time or part-time. Honorariums are small gifts of money, having no relation to proper payment. By **Voluntary work** we mean work done in return for which no money at all is given.

### CENTRAL OFFICE WORK AND STAFF.

The Central Office work is now carried on by the General Secretary, Miss Llewelyn Davies, and the Assistant Secretary, Miss Lilian Harris (voluntary workers) and the General Secretary's assistant, Miss Enfield. The only workers paid from the Guild funds are the two clerks, Miss Yuill and Miss Pidgeon.

In all large organisations a whole time Central Office staff is a necessity, and in considering the future, in view of the present size and importance of the Guild, we must provide, not only for a living wage for the clerks, but also for the **General Secretary**.



This will be understood when the work for which the General Secretary **is responsible** is realised. It is not possible to give in full what that work is, but the following summary will indicate it.

Take first the general ROUTINE AND EVERY DAY WORK. Every time a Branch receives a circular from the office, it means that nearly 1,000 envelopes have to be addressed, stamped and filled, and this has to be done many times in the year. The Elections require the preparation and sending out of nomination and voting papers, and the reckoning of the voting strength of each of our 800 Branches, while letters to each of the 200 to 300 candidates nominated have to be sent out and replies recorded.

For the Annual Report the large schedule of questions—"those blessed scheddles" as they have been called—has to be made out, the replies summarised on huge sheets and the Report finally written. As to the preparations for Congress, they are almost endless, and begin for the next as soon as the last one is over. They include four sendings of Circulars and Agenda and Forms to Branches and Delegates, attendance at Reception Committee meetings, and a large amount of incidental correspondence and details to be arranged.

Then the office deals with all new Branches. Last year we made 100, and this year they have also been pouring in. Each new Branch receives three letters during the first three months: one, containing so much of the milk of the Word that it is known in the office as the "Guild Bible." Every day, parcels of literature, business books, badges, etc., have to be made up and despatched. Every day also the accounts have to be kept, and it requires quite half a trained person's time to deal with all the receipts and payments. Naturally every kind of letter comes to the office from our officials and Branches, with problems and difficulties, speakers to be found, help and advice in campaigns to be given.

A very important side of the General Secretary's work is the CENTRAL COMMITTEE WORK. Full information has to be collected on all the subjects dealt with at the Central Committee meetings and needed for the consideration of our policies. Memoranda on the various co-operative, industrial and political questions arising are prepared, and new Parliamentary Bills scrutinised, all of which often mean interviews with individuals and Government Departments. Then there is the preparation of the Agenda for Congress, including Papers and Resolutions, etc., and for the All-Councils meeting, which is quite a little Congress in itself. There is also the drafting of all Circulars to Sections, Districts and Branches for submission to the Central Committee. Between the Central

Committee meetings the opinions of the Central Committee members are obtained by circular letters.

The EDUCATIONAL WORK of the Guild continually grows. Our band of Teachers and Speakers now numbers nearly 300 and many Schools are now held. The General Secretary is responsible for supplying them with "Hints" on each of our 12 or more Special Subjects, which have to be drawn up and revised every year. This is a heavy and difficult piece of work and a very important one. Pamphlets often have to be especially got out, such as those on International Co-operation, League of Peoples, etc. Papers for Sectional Conferences and other papers are also prepared as required.

The organisation of CAMPAIGNS on different subjects, and of special pieces of work such as the recent Milk Deputations, are planned out from the office, and help and advice given to the Sections and Districts carrying them out. Deputations to Co-operative Societies, Government Departments, Members of Parliament, Local Bodies, are coached up to the points to be dealt with, and information supplied to them.

Our CONNECTION WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND COMMITTEES brings much work. This is seen specially in connection with the pressure brought to bear as regards the National Care of Maternity and the Ministry of Health, while on other Committees, interviews and letters are necessary to keep Co-operation and the women to the fore. Advice and help is supplied to Guild members on National and Local Committees. The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations on which it is almost essential the General Secretary should sit, requires a large amount of attention as it deals with a great variety of important subjects.

Time has also to be given to the interesting and varied VISITORS who are continually coming to the office for information. Not only Guild members themselves, but Co-operators and women from foreign countries—Russia, America, Norway, Armenia, etc., who show the most keen interest in and appreciation of the doings of the Guild. Guild members in remote Branches can hardly realise how each one is contributing to the esteem in which the Guild is held in many distant lands.

#### **Central Committee Recommendation.**

For the future when the General Secretary and Assistant Secretary retire, the Central Committee are of opinion that the very smallest staff necessary would be a General Secretary, with a salary of at least £300 a year, and a Cashier and two Clerks. Such payments would be the first charge on the Central Fund.

## SECTIONAL, DISTRICT AND BRANCH SECRETARIES

### PAID WORK.

We now come to the question whether salaries, whole or part-time, should be paid to any other Secretaries.

We may dismiss the idea of whole-time salaried Sectional Secretaries, as the time for such a development is not yet ripe, and as it would cost a sum of over £1,500. As regards part-time salaries, it would be most difficult to reckon the irregular time that is put in by married working-women, or to keep any check on the work done. Also a salaried Sectional Secretary would tend very seriously to concentrate work in her hands, thus discouraging the valuable and educational work of other Council members. Moreover the cost could not be less than £500 a year.

**HONORARIUMS.** The other suggestion made is that Honorariums (small gifts of money) should be paid to Sectional, District and Branch Secretaries. Honorariums to Sectional Secretaries were abolished at the Congress of 1918, in view of the desirability of accepting the principle of voluntary work, and because it was felt the money could be used more beneficially to the Guild by the establishment of a yearly All-Councils Meeting, which is proving of increasingly great value.

Of late years, Honorariums to District and Branch Secretaries have been creeping into the Guild. It is most desirable that whatever custom is adopted should be a **general** custom and it would obviously be unfair to make it depend merely on the wealth of a District or Branch.

There is little doubt that if the Guild were to approve of Honorariums for Sectional, District and Branch Secretaries the unfairness of excluding the Central Committee, Councils and Lecturers at Schools would be raised. Therefore it is very important that our members should realise the effect of what they do in their Branch or District. It is not merely a question of giving Mrs. A. in some particular Section, District or Branch a small money gift. The question we are bound to face is whether we desire the system of Honorariums to become **the rule** in the Guild.

In making up your minds on this question we earnestly ask you to keep in view **what is best for the Guild as a whole.**

The question we have to ask ourselves is—would the effect of little bits of money payments becoming universal in the Guild be injurious to the fine enthusiasm for service and the smooth working of the Guild? When the Guild first

started its Classes, an honorarium of 2s. 6d. for teachers was tried. But it caused so much dissatisfaction and jealousy, that it was quickly given up. It is a matter of knowledge and experience that honorariums create friction and introduce wrong motives and that persons seek delegations and posts for the sake of them. Also, that once introduced, they inevitably spread (indeed, we already find cases of Presidents, Treasurers and Committee receiving honorariums) an organisation becomes honey-combed with them, and the enthusiasm and selflessness which is the life-blood of a propaganda organisation is undermined.

Again, small **FEEs TO SPEAKERS** are injurious in another way. It will be admitted that fees to Guild speakers could not become universal and that therefore there is unfairness in their being taken by some. But apart from this, there is a further objection. Those Branches are placed at an unfair disadvantage which cannot afford to ask the speakers who charge fees. They are also in a difficulty as regards the uncertainty as to whether fees will be asked or not. Nor does it follow that the speakers taking fees give better addresses than those who give their services quite freely. Indeed, it would very often be just the opposite. And we heard of speakers being late and speaking for a very short time, but charging a fee all the same. We are sure that most Branches would be relieved to know clearly and definitely that all Guild speakers were available on the same terms, i.e., for love.

The Guild has always relied on the voluntary services of its members in the past, and our members have been proud to contrive so as to manage both home and Guild, and they have done so in the most splendid way. Do we care sufficiently for the Guild to resist the introduction of any methods which would injure its spirit and ideals? Any kindnesses we may wish to do to individuals, and the sisterly sympathy which it is the joy of Guildwomen to express, must take such forms as will not hurt the Guild. The Guild is the common and precious possession of thousands and thousands of women, and constitutes their larger life. It joins their home life to the outside world, voices the reforms needed by married women and gives them their place and work in the Co-operative and Labour Movements.

By far the best thanks that members of a section, district or branch could give their secretaries is in the progress and spirit of the section, district or branch, and every enthusiastic Guild official would prefer this to any material expression of appreciation. It should be noted, too, that honorariums do not do away with the giving of presents.

### Central Committee Recommendations.

The Central Committee are therefore of the opinion that in the best interests of the Guild, it is vital to retain voluntary service throughout the Guild except for the office staff, who must be whole-time officers working regular office hours.

We therefore propose :—

(1) In order not to make too heavy demands on our voluntary officials we should from time to time try to lighten the work of Sectional and District Secretaries, *e.g.*, by dividing up the Sections and Districts, by taking over clerical work by the office, etc.

(2) That speakers and representatives should charge **all** incidental expenses in travelling, for example, not only fares, but meals away, etc.

(3) That no Grants from the Central Fund should be made to Districts if the Secretary receives an honorarium.

(4) That work for the Convalescent Fund should be treated as Voluntary Work. To enable this to be done, the financial side of the Convalescent Fund would be taken over by the Central Office, and a Voluntary Secretary appointed for dealing with Convalescents.

(5) That where Districts and Branches decide to give up Honorariums, a year's notice should be given.

**N.B.**—We would remind Branches that Congress can only give a ruling in connection with the Central Fund (that is as regards Office Staff and Sectional Secretaries) and the Convalescent Fund. The use of District and Branch Funds depends on the decision of District and Branch members. But any recommendation that Congress may make to Districts and Branches ought to have great weight, for it is highly desirable there should be a general policy resting on the general acceptance of a principle.

### GUILD FINANCES.

Our estimated expenditure for next year may be roughly divided into the following :—

Central Office and work ... ..	about	£1,038	0	0*
Grants to work of Sections and Districts	about	560	0	0
Total ...		£1,598	0	0

Our Income is raised as follows :—

Branch Subscriptions to Central Fund .....	£530	0	0
Profits from Sales .....	44	0	0
Grant from Co-operative Wholesale Society	300	0	0
Grant from Co-operative Union .....	400	0	0
Sundry Receipts.....	20	0	0

Total ... £1,294 0 0

\* This includes Printing Postage, Stationery, Central Committee Meetings, Speakers and Representatives' expenses, All-Councils Meeting, Office Rent, etc., Clerks' Wages, which will this year be increased according to the new A.U.C.E. scale for men for London.

Within the last weeks a new and most serious position has arisen. The Survey Congress at Blackpool has adopted the Survey proposals about auxiliary bodies which affect the constitution and self-government of the Guild, and the £400 Grant. A full statement of the course which the Central Committee recommend should be taken is now issued, and the whole matter will come up at our next Congress.

Apart from this complication, the estimate of our income and expenditure shows that we need an extra £300 in order to carry on our work satisfactorily on the present lines. To this must be added the £300 for the future salary of General Secretary, and about £100 for an additional clerk. Therefore we need to raise a sum £700.

It was the opinion of the All-Councils Meeting that it was desirable that Congress should at once face the whole situation. In their view the best course to be adopted would be to raise the Central Fund Subscription to 1s., and that Branches should meet this outlay by increasing their individual subscriptions to Branch Funds by 1s. per member annually. This would only mean an additional  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per week to each member.

The 1s. would allow the Branches to retain for their own work the 4d. per member now paid to the Central Fund, and would give the Central Fund an additional £1,000. This would cover the £700 mentioned, and give room for the additional rises in prices we must expect and for further developments.

### CONCLUSION.

We ask you to give your most earnest thought to the questions we have been dealing with, before coming to a conclusion. We recognise fully the difficulties Branches will meet in giving up honorariums where they exist, and in asking their members for a higher subscription. But in the past we have been able to rely on the enthusiasm of our members both in giving free service and in providing funds. The Guild has been built up on such enthusiasm, and has achieved a position and power unique in the history of working women. Without realising it, we may be losing this priceless inheritance if we fall away from the spirit of the women who have made their own organisation what it is. The gift of an honorarium may seem an unimportant and purely local matter, but we know the effect of a small hole in a dam, and we have had experience both in the Guild and other organisations of how much of the greatest value is lost if the voluntary spirit is in anyway undermined. If our members think over what the Guild has done for married working women—how it has given them knowledge, and a sense of comradeship, widened their home life, shown

them their power as Co-operators and their place in the Labour Movement, how it has brought them reforms, made their voice heard on national and local public Committees, and provided them in our Congress with a real Parliament of Women—when we think of these things we believe our members will decide that the extra  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per week is well worth paying, and that every effort should be made to retain the devotion and public spirit which has hitherto animated the Guild.

We are, yours fraternally,

L. WILLIAMS, *President.*  
 E. BARTON, *Vice-President.*  
 E. LAYTON, *Treasurer.*  
 A. BLAIR.  
 M. DEWSBURY.  
 M. FERGUSON.  
 F. GREEN.  
 F. HUTCHINGS.

M. LLEWELYN DAVIES,  
*General Secretary.*

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