

1925

WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE GUILD

HF (42)

268

THE MILK WE WANT

To be obtained from the Women's Co-operative Guild,
29, Winchester Road, London, N. W. 3.

PRICE, **2d.**

The Milk We Want.

*Issued by the Central Committee of the Women's
Co-operative Guild, May, 1925.*

Milk as a Food.

WE look to our co-operative movement to supply us with all the necessaries of life, and as knowledge increases, each generation finds that there are new needs which must be supplied if the requirements and welfare of the people are to be secured.

It is only within the last twenty years that the evils arising from inadequacy and impurity of the supply of milk have been generally recognised. There are Guildswomen who can look back to the times when, as one of our oldest workers recalls, the family never had milk except in tea when there were visitors, and can remember how many babies died, and how puny many were who survived. And even to-day the quantity of fresh milk consumed daily is said to be only a quarter of a pint per head of the population. When it is remembered that a well-to-do family of four people, without children, uses a pint per head per day, and that a baby not breast-fed ought to have from one to two pints daily, it will be realised how small a quantity the workers of the country use.

This is partly due to the fact that we do not yet realise the value of milk as a food. For babies and young children it is essential, and provides all the elements of food which are necessary for healthy childhood in the most digestible and nourishing form. It has been found that the daily diet, if it is to support healthy life, must contain proteins, fats, sugar, starch, salts, and other minerals and vitamins. Milk contains all these in suitable proportions and is specially rich in vitamins, an ingredient that recent researches have shown to be



essential for vigorous health. Vitamin A is necessary for building the bones of the child and for preventing the development of rickets. Vitamin B provides against certain nervous disorders, and vitamin C prevents scurvy. While solid food is essential as soon as teeth appear, milk and its vitamins remain a valuable part of diet for growing children. "It has been proved by actual tests," says Professor H. Kenwood, "that children who are under weight can be restored to normal weight, health, and vigour in a surprisingly short time (in their own homes and with no additional cost for food) by increasing their milk ration. Large numbers of children to whom a glass of milk has been given at school in the middle of the morning have been found, as the result, to improve in strength, appearance, and disposition, and to benefit more from schooling. While milk is essential to childhood, it is very desirable for adults, for whom it is a light, cheap, and nutritious food, of great value in maintaining health and strength. For expectant and nursing mothers it is invaluable."

Professor Kenwood also points out that in nutritive value one quart of milk is equal to nearly 1lb. of lean meat, or nine or ten eggs. Even at the present price, therefore, there would be a saving in cost if milk partly replaced other articles of food.

Guildswomen have learnt much about the value of good milk through their work for the National Care of Maternity, which, in its turn, has been a vital factor in increasing the demand for milk amongst working women. The time has come for the Guild to concentrate its efforts on securing everywhere a co-operative milk supply, and in building up the largest possible demand amongst the members for clean and pure milk.

The Need for Cleanliness and Purity in Milk.

The Milk (Special Designations) Order which came into force in 1923 does much to encourage the production of pure, clean milk, and to give the consumers knowledge of the quality supplied to them. The Order recognises four grades of milk, "Certified," "Grade A (Tuberculin

Tested)," "Grade A," and "Pasteurised." Want of cleanliness in the preparation of any food is dangerous, but in none is the danger greater than in milk. For dirt breeds the disease germs called bacteria, and milk is one of the substances in which bacteria can easily thrive. The amount of dirt removed by up-to-date cleansing methods is amazing, and one co-operative society had a striking illustration of its harmful nature. Some of the refuse removed from the milk was thrown to a dozen hens and within twenty-four hours eight had died. Two small societies, with farms near at hand, call attention to the dirty conditions under which much milk is produced, one saying that if the people could be made to realise the conditions and demand an alteration, the sooner the better.

The ultimate object of reform is to secure such cleanliness in the original production of milk at the farm and in its transport that no further treatment is necessary. For this purpose the cows must be healthy, the cowsheds must be sanitary and clean, the milking pails must have narrow openings, the milkers must wash their hands before milking and wear overalls kept in a clean place when not in use. There must be arrangements for cooling and bottling the milk, and for sterilising with steam all the apparatus used, in addition to cleansing them in the usual way. Milk thus produced is Grade A milk. To secure the further guarantee for freedom from tuberculosis, the cows must be tuberculin tested. Similar arrangements are recognised for Certified milk, though in this case the conditions for testing the cows are more stringent. This milk is what all milk ought to be, and is well worth the additional price, usually about 1d. more than ordinary bottled milk and 2d. more than "loose" milk.

But at present, only a very small proportion of the milk supply is produced under these conditions, and until the consumers control the sources and conditions of production, other measures are necessary to ensure that they receive clean milk.

The Order recognises the importance of enabling consumers to know that if the milk supplied is not Grade A or Certified, it has been properly cleaned and treated to destroy bacteria. A certificate can, therefore, also be obtained for milk that has been pasteurised by the following system: It is heated up to 145 degrees, and kept at this point for half an hour, then rapidly cooled to a temperature of about 40 degrees, and it is sold in bottles usually at about 1d. more than loose milk.

Therefore, while the ultimate aim of a co-operative milk campaign must be milk that is produced under the very best conditions and does not need artificial treatment to make it pure and clean, this can only be secured when co-operative societies control so large a part of the milk trade in their areas that they can insist on proper conditions at the farms from which they buy it.

In the meantime Guildswomen will seek the next best thing—milk that has been properly treated to render it safe; and the first step in our campaign will be to try and extend the trade of those societies already supplying such milk and to induce more to do so.

Why a Co-operative Milk Campaign is Needed.

It is a propitious moment for such a campaign, because a beginning has been made by a number of co-operative societies on admirable lines, with financial results which should encourage other societies to follow their example at once.

At the same time, the general situation as regards milk production and distribution makes it important that the co-operative movement should not miss the present opportunity for bringing producers and consumers into close and direct relations in order to improve the whole milk supply, and to eliminate the middlemen who, through the formation of great combines, are making huge profits out of both producer and consumer.

The farmers have now a strong organisation in the Farmers' Union. This is the first movement of the kind

genuinely coming from the farmers themselves, and it increases the probability of developing agricultural co-operation. The door is thus opened to possibilities of building up a new form of co-operative undertaking for dealing with milk and other agricultural produce, in which consumers and producers would act together.

Again, the farmers are very desirous of escaping from the tentacles of the wholesale milk combines, which largely control not only the price to the farmer but also to the consumer, by refusing to supply milk retailers if they sell below an agreed price. Briton Ferry Society, for example, had its supplies refused by a wholesale supplier because it was selling at 1d. less than other retailers. There are indications that the farmers recognise the advantage of direct contact with the consumers' organisations. Blackpool Society, for instance, says they have been very fairly met as regards prices by the Farmers' Union, who recognise the standing of the co-operative society, which settles its accounts weekly—a great advantage to the farmers. Without exception, the farmers who supply milk to the society have become active purchasing members.

Co-operative Societies now Engaged in the Milk Trade.

At present about 200 co-operative societies supply milk. These include every kind of society—those in large industrial towns, in seaside resorts, in textile and mining villages, in small towns in the midst of agricultural districts. An inquiry by the Guild, in response to which replies were sent by seventy-four societies, to whom the Guild desires to express hearty thanks, has elicited much valuable information.

The trade done varies from 65,000 gallons a week by the London Society to 200 gallons a week which a small society draws from its own farm. Among the societies which have captured a large proportion of the trade of their towns are Derby, 65 per cent; Stockton, West Stanley, Ashington Industrial, and Ashton-under-Lyne,

50 per cent; Leicester, 40 per cent; Plymouth and Enfield Highway, 33 per cent. Scunthorpe is the chief purveyor in its district, and Failsworth has almost a monopoly.

How Co-operative Societies keep down Milk Prices.

The position as regards price is that the majority of the societies charge market price, the customer benefiting by the dividend paid. But the market price is often kept down by the societies. Plymouth states that their trade is an important factor in the control of local prices. Derby, Scunthorpe, and Buckfastleigh largely control the price. Blackpool says that the price would have been 1d. a quart more but for the society. Harwich, Luton, Eccles, and Grays have kept down the local prices. Langley Mill and Long Eaton have recently refused requests from other retailers to raise prices, while London Society's refusal to raise their price by 1d., as requested by a deputation from other retailers, was largely instrumental in keeping down London prices. A certain number of societies do not follow the market price. Ashton-under-Lyne and Reading, for instance, which obtain all their supplies from the Co-operative Wholesale Society, fix their own, and are at times below local prices. Ten Acres (which finds the business very profitable), Farnworth, and Amble sell at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. less than other dealers. Bolton and Stockton, with most up-to-date machinery, sell 1d. less than local farmers; Portsea, Harwich, Guide Post, and others are below market price some months in the year.

Quality of Co-operative Milk.

At the same time, societies have shown a strong desire to do everything possible to secure the supply of clean, pure milk. So far they have not been able to do much in providing Grade A milk, partly, no doubt, because comparatively few farmers supply it; partly also because co-operative women do not yet know its value and realise that, for the sake of the health of their families,

it is well worth the higher price. It will be part of the work of the Guild to spread this knowledge. The societies which state that they supply it are Exeter, where it forms about 4 per cent of the trade, and London and Scunthorpe, which produce it on their own farms. Huddersfield is considering taking the necessary steps to produce it on their farm, and Chard produces milk which, in a County Council competition, was stated to be of that standard.

Generally speaking, however, societies in the large towns especially are obliged to take the other method of ensuring purity—that of collecting the milk from many farms and cleaning and pasteurising it themselves. Several societies have the Government certificate for this method, Brightside and Carbrook (Sheffield) and Northampton Societies being the only retailers in their towns which have this certificate. Twenty-eight societies altogether report that they have some system of pasteurising, and eight others state that they obtain pasteurised milk from the C.W.S. Several societies report a fair trade in bottled milk—that essential factor in ensuring clean milk; and a good number are considering extensions or improvements in their methods.

Societies which draw their supplies entirely from farms near at hand and deliver it immediately, as a rule only cool and in some cases clean the milk, machinery for steam cleansing of churns and cans being also installed in some cases. A few deliver the milk exactly as received from the farmers. In such cases, given reasonable care at the farms, there is not the same need for the milk to be treated artificially, for it is not exposed to the same risk of contamination as milk taken by rail into the big towns, and as it is delivered quickly, there is less time for the bacteria to multiply. One society draws attention to the importance of clean, smart appearance in delivery; it supplies its men with white overalls and peaked caps, and gives prizes for the best-kept milkcarts and ponies.

Controlling the Conditions of Production.

Several societies have taken steps to improve the conditions under which milk is produced. The following may be mentioned as illustrations: Chester-le-Street has induced its farmers to put in cooling machinery; Leicester offered to double any prizes won by the farmers in the Royal Agricultural Society's pure milk competition, and of thirteen farmers who entered and won prizes, eleven supplied the co-operative society; Portsea Island inspects the farms from which the milk comes; other societies carefully select the farms they deal with.

Does the Milk Trade Pay?

Some societies, such as Bolton, Eccles, and Failsworth have been in the milk trade for forty years and more, and speak of it as very profitable. Long Eaton, Stockton, Ten Acres, Leicester, London, and Birmingham add their testimony to the financial results, while the growth of the trade in many societies in a few years shows that it is a paying department appreciated by the members. The experience of two societies which have recently started the trade is interesting. Stocksbridge (Yorks) in its first half year, when it did a trade of 300 gallons weekly, reduced the price of milk by 1d. a quart, made provision for doubling its trade, and showed a profit of £5. Stockport, in nine months, has built up a trade of 5,024 gallons of loose milk and 6,432 bottles of sterilised milk a week, and is building a model dairy, which will be open to the inspection of members.

Some societies supply a portion of their milk from their own farms, but the great majority purchase all their supplies, so that entering the milk business does not entail taking up farming.

Difficulties met by Societies in the Milk Business.

In making the inquiry, the Guild asked whether the competition of farmers selling their own milk was serious. A few felt it to be so, but the large majority did not find

it a difficulty, and several state that their price is lower than that of these farmers. The position may perhaps be summed up in the words of the manager of a co-operative milk department in a country town, that "an efficient and up-to-date dairy can always hold their own against these farmers, even though they sell their milk cheaper."

Other difficulties met with by societies are:—

(1) That all the members want their milk by breakfast-time, and that this would entail too heavy a cost of delivery. This difficulty is specially felt in the North, as it is not the custom there to leave the milk on the doorstep as is done in London, and probably prevails more in societies which do only a small proportion of the trade in their areas than in those that do a large part of it, like Derby, where a house-to-house delivery can be organised. Undoubtedly, a development of the trade in pasteurised bottled milk would assist, as such milk can more easily be kept overnight. It may, however, be pointed out that it is very essential to organise all co-operative delivery, not only milk but other things, so that the housewives may know what time to expect the goods.

(2) That there is a dislike to pasteurised milk. This probably arises from the use of the older methods, which did alter the flavour and the cream-producing value of the milk. The new retarding method should obviate this, and propaganda on behalf of clean and pure milk should remove prejudice.

(3) That the members cling to former suppliers. This difficulty of getting co-operators to leave other shops meets all new co-operative departments; and here again propaganda is the best remedy.

What the Co-operative Wholesale Society is Doing.

To help societies which find it difficult to compete against the big combines in securing supplies of milk, the C.W.S. milk department was formed. It now has eight depôts in different parts of the country, and a

number of factories for pasteurising milk (for which it holds the Government licence) and for making the surplus into cheese, dried milk, &c. About seventy societies get all or part of their milk from the C.W.S., and several speak highly of the quality of milk supplied. One important way in which the C.W.S. has been able to help societies has been in "balancing" supplies, i.e., taking surplus supplies from areas which had too much milk and either sending them where more was required or using them for manufacture.

Problems of the Milk Trade.

There are many questions of national co-operative organisation—such as the best methods of obtaining supplies; whether the provision of central collecting and pasteurising stations should be undertaken by the C.W.S. or local federations of societies; how best to deal with surplus supplies; the conduct of negotiations with the Farmers' Union, &c.—which require discussion by the whole movement. For they must be solved if the co-operative movement is successfully to control milk distribution and to replace existing combines. The Guild has urged the calling of a small conference of the central co-operative organisations interested in the milk question to discuss and report on these problems.

But this paper is only concerned with the immediate action needed to arouse the members of societies to the importance of at once starting milk departments and increasing the sale of milk where it is undertaken until, like Derby, the society becomes the predominant distributor in its town. All who desire to remove this essential foodstuff from the control of profiteers should concentrate their efforts on increasing its sale by co-operative societies. This is by far the surest way of securing its control by the community. For control by municipalities—the other alternative—is subject to political reaction, as was seen in Sheffield. There, an experiment in a municipal milk supply was ended as soon as a reactionary majority was returned, and it has been left to the Brightside and Carbrook Co-operative

Society steadily to build up a milk trade on the best lines of cleanliness and purity, under the permanent control of the people. And for the next few years, at any rate, there is little hope of Parliament pressing municipalities to take action. No more valuable service to the public can be rendered by Guildswomen than in carrying on a vigorous campaign in their societies for the establishment and extension of a co-operative milk department.

Practical Action.

(1) Where the society has no milk supply the Guild branches should (a) invite a Guild speaker on the subject, and (b) then ask the management committee to receive a deputation on the subject. The question should also be raised at the quarterly meeting. If the deputation has not been successful, a resolution might be moved asking the management committee to appoint a sub-committee to go into the question of taking up the milk trade and to report. Hints for deputations and speakers can be obtained from the Guild central office.

(2) When a milk department is in existence or is about to be formed, the Guild branches should ask the management committee to arrange to meet the Guilds, Education Committee, and representatives of the employees in a round-table conference, to plan out a special milk propaganda campaign. Methods which might be adopted in this campaign are:—

(a) Every Guild branch to have a lecture by the Medical Officer of Health, or official of the Maternity Centre, or some local expert, on "Milk as a Food." At this lecture the necessity for clean, pure milk would be shown, the advantages of cleansing, pasteurising, and bottling would be explained, and the value of Grade A milk especially for infants would be emphasised.

(b) Every Guild branch to have an address on the society's milk department and to visit the society's dairy.

(These lectures and visits would prepare the Guildswomen to act as propagandists.)

(c) Similar lectures on "Milk as a Food" and the "Society's Milk Supply" to be arranged for—

- (i.) Small afternoon meetings of women not yet in the Guild, and
- (ii.) Public meetings by the Education Committee, with lantern slides where possible.

(d) A house-to-house canvass to be arranged to distribute leaflets on pure milk and on the society's milk department, and invitations to the afternoon meetings. Since the distribution of milk can be much more economically carried out if every house in a street takes it from the same source, it is suggested that the canvass should be specially organised to obtain this result, street after street being systematically taken, so that the most economical delivery can be built up.

7436

L13