

Co-Op Centenary Show

Age Exchange Theatre Company

October 1983

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Introduction

Table is set on platform with banners from 1883 and 1983, glasses and flask of water. Behind is board with all manner of hats and general props. Amid hubbub of audience, the cast enter unobtrusively onto platform, A is wearing a chain of office and B is carrying a minute book. C is the visiting speaker and D takes seat at piano for opening song. As talking dies down and B,C and D sit, A bangs gavel on table and addresses meeting.

Sc.1.

A.: (coughing) I am very pleased to be here on this very special occasion which celebrates the Guild centenary year (platform claps) and particularly with friends... we are going to start this morning with our song, which everyone knows... The Rainbow Flag.

A: Thank you ladies...as we have a speaker, we are going to dispense with the minutes of the previous meeting and the correspondence. It is my duty and a very pleasant duty to introduce our General Secretary, who is going to give us an outline of Guild history.

C: Madam Chairman, distinguished guests and fellow members - I am asked to cram 100 years into 15 minutes..(laughing) I want to emphasise in speaking of the history of the Guild... that what we are celebrating here today is the foundation of the first branches - and I emphasise particularly the word branches and the word members, because it is the MEMBERS and branches who are the bedrock - the foundation of any organisation. Although we talk about the Guild having been founded as a result of correspondence in the Womens Corner of the Cooperative News- that correspondence came about because women were talking amongst themselves...

D:(Rising from piano and engaging A and B) What are men always urged to do when there is a meeting held at any place to start a cooperative institution?
(gathering around the piano)

B: Come. Help. Vote! Criticise! Act!

D: What are women urged to do?

B: Come and buy.

D: That is the limit of the special work pointed out to us women..

B: We can be independent members of our store

D: But we are only asked to come and buy!

C: (continuing as if nothing has happened) and Mrs Acland wrote her letter in the Womens Corner, it was picked up by co-operators like Mary Lawrenson of Woolwich who thought what a splendid idea it would be if women were to get together and work to found an organisation- the first organisation of women to be formed as a democratic organisation, founded by the people who became the members. And meeting together and discussing things, gave them the confidence that they needed to step forward...

D: Surely there is more for us women to do than to spend money? (general agreement)

C: ...and meetings that gave them that confidence, also showed them that they had common problems - that they all suffered from the problems of irregular employment(C pauses while D steps forward and addresses audience)

D: I have a very large family - fifteen. Out of all these confinements I have only had my husband in work at the same time twice... so you will see that I have known what it is to be very short..

C: ..of poor housing and the exploitation of women in employment (C pauses again as before)

B: I believe the bad housing arrangements have a very depressing effect ...I know a street of houses where there are large factories built, taking the whole of the daylight away from the kitchen where the woman spends the best part of her life..On top of this you get the continual grinding of machinery all day. Knowing that it is mostly women and girls like me working in these

factories,gives you the feeling tht their bodies are going round and round with the machinery.

C: ..of minimal or non-existent health care..(pause as before)

D: When my sixth child was born, my health failed...I had so much worry and was unable at the time of carrying the child to have any help, however poorly I felt...

B: I did all I could for my sister with the help of an old woman who called herself a midwife. When I remember the methods adopted to carry out childbirth in those days, it seems wonderful to me that so many mothers lived to bring a large family into the world. In some instances the poor unfortunate patient was not allowed to have her hands and face washed for days. I remember hoping I should never have a baby if I could not be washed.

C:...and low wages...

A: We had to go on the Parish as they called it.

B: On the Board of Guardians..

A: And then they gave you 3 shillings, 5 shillings at the most in money.

B: That was to help you pay the rent.

A: The rest you had to get in groceries. My mother was too ashamed..because they knew her there at the co-op. She'd never go...

B: You see it was a limited list of what foods you could have.. you were allowed

just the minimum. She was too ashamed. She'd never go...

A: I wasn't happy about it either. We had to do the shopping on Saturday. Me and my sister (indicating B)

B: Have we got to do the shopping?

C: Yes, you know I can't do it!

(MUSIC under as A and B demonstrate)

A: So - basket between us - a big one- and to the shop.

C: Now don't forget the number

A & B: 958

A: The Co-Op of course. We always had to go to the Co-op - and being quite small - well, 10 or 11, we didn't know what the Co-op meant in those days...

B: Counters on both sides - seemed to be massive Counters...and in one corner, I remember the huge ham - the cutter - and I was fascinated to watch the grocer turning the arm of the cutter - slicing off the ham - weighing out other things that were required -the sugar. The flour..

A: some were packed, but some were packed on the spot. They all came in great big sacks and it was service from behind the counter.

B: You didn't choose your own stuff. You stood at the counter and waited for an assistant to come along and serve you!

C: The first time I came in contact with the Co-op, someone told my mother that they'd got some sugar at the Co-op - so I went to line up for some sugar for my mother...

D: What's your number?

C: I was flummoxed - so I says 826, the number of the house

D: 826.

C: And I got 2lb of sugar on me house number!

A: My father used to wear those horrible stiff white collars and we used to have to take them and very often we used to have to wait for them to come into the shop.

B: The laundry hadn't delivered them! And we used to hate it.

A: And sometimes they hadn't got them and we had to go back - just to get my father's collars.

B: Because it was at the Co-op.

A: Ooh, that used to rile us. My friend used to be sent shopping, but she didn't have to go to the Co-op. She always finished her shopping first - while I was still shopping at the Co-op. I used to say, "I'll never be a Co-op member when I grow up. I'm not shopping at the Co-op.

B: My father used to come in and say...

D: Who bought that?

B: Jam or whatever it was on the table... and it wasn't Co-op. So I'd say "Ooh, it must have been one of the boys - not me".

D: I want nothing on my table but Co-op.

B: All right...we were a Co-operative household.

A: My mother was of that generation where you were a member and you were loyal and you didn't shop anywhere else for anything.

C: We used to try and buy Co-operative goods. It was used quite often if you had a mortgage to pay. Particularly if it was quite a heavy dividend, like half a crown in the pound in those days, which was a lot, when you remember that people's wages were very low.

D: I mean Tony had a new pair of shoes the day the dividend was paid out.

C: There was always the dividend at the end of the half year which helped out..which more than helped out..it was essential. You didn't get a new shirt, or anything new except after the divi.

A: A home at this time, we had a small tiny kitchen and a small room attached to it - it had a table where we had our meals and my mother was always so busy doing something that she never actually sat down with us to eat. She used to prepare the meals and plonked them down in front of us, so that she could eat while she prepared a meal - and off to a meeting. And the clock sitting on the mantelpiece - and behind the clock was the filing of all the papers and documents that were arriving by every post - minutes -, summonses to meetings - it seemed

to me that mountains of stuff was arriving ... mymother was the strongest personality in the house.

B: So the family had to go along with her!

(Rush Music)

A: Labour Party meetings (yawning)

B: Co-op Guild meetings (yawning and snoring)

A: Co-op Guild Socials - when the ladies used to stand up and sing and entertain one another

C: (Singing a song of the period)

B: (Shutting her up) Co-op Guild jumble sales (yawning)

A: Co:Op Guild American teas - where everyone brings something and you have to share it, everything has to be Co-Op of course.

B: Sitting at the back with a pad and paper so the women could get on..

A: The Children's Circle, held in the Co-Op Hall..

B: You paid a halfpenny to belong each week - you had a card and you had a mark on it. A number of Guildswomen were the helpers - they organised it. But the children themselves, their entertainment was mainly going on the platform, reciting poems and singing a song, or doing impromptu sketches...

A & B: (Climbing onto chairs) ...Hmm..Shopping by Ethel Talbot. (recitation with music underneath)

When I stay with Aunt Jane.
I don't like shopping days
Through cold or snow or rain
Down different streets and ways
She hurries me - oh such a race
Each shop seems in a different place

But at my house we know
A different kind of shop
And that is where we go
We call it the Co-op
For it sells everything together
So wet or fine's all the same weather!

And more, it is so gay!
There is such a lot to see
On Mummy's shopping day
I'm never dull, not me
I think perhaps the Fairies knew
We'd like the shop, and so it grew.

A: I remember a member of the Co-op Education Committee came to talk to us one morning..

C: What did you have for breakfast today?

A: Bread

B: Jam

D: Milk

C: Where did you get the milk?

D: From the Co-op

C: Where does the Co-op get it from?

D: From the dairy

C: Bacon? Where does the bacon come from?

A: Denmark

C: Where does the tea come from?

D: Ceylon

B: India

C: Now, lets go back again. Did you know that the bacon you've been eating that you said came from Denmark - the animals were bred on a Co-operative farm- where all the farmers come together in a Co-operative. The flour comes from Russia or Canada. The wheat pools, they are co-operative. The bread was made in the Co-operative bakery and that belongs to your mums and dads -the members of the Co-op.

B: And this in a child's mind was idealism. And to me, it was absolutely wonderful.

(Everyone gobbling)

We desire to be just and loving to everyone. To work together as brothers and sisters. To be kind to every living creature and to help to form a new world, with justice as its foundation and love in its law. Each for all and all for each (hubbub and chatter)

D (In a child's voice): I now call the meeting to order. The Secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting.

A:(child's voice) Muriel, you'd better stand up and read the minutes

B: MUSIC

(Muriel reading the minutes under the ensuing dialogue) Minutes of meeting held July 17th, present 12 members, Laurie Pavitt in the chair...(continue as dumb show)

A: I was never going to join the Co-op Guild..because my mother used to go out on a Tuesday night and when she used to come home, we used to have Co-op Guild for two or three days. What Mrs So and So said - we all knew what went on...I was never going to join the Guild...I used to think as I grew up: "Ooh, fancy'er going there every week - that's not for me"

C: Why don't you come along and join the Guild?

A: Pooh - I don't want to join that...I ended up joining, didn't I?!...The first

week I was married, my husband said to me

B: Here's a pound. I want you to go and join the Co-op. I want you in future to do all your shopping at the Co-op.

A: After I was married, I began to get interested in the Co-op movement and met another Guildswoman who said:

C: Well, why don't you come to the Guild?

A: Ooh, I don't know...my husband...So I said to him.."There's a Co-operative Guild in Cricklewood. They meet on a Monday night at 7.00.

B: Yes, that's all right

A: And so it came regular every Monday night.

B: Well, you're out every Monday night

A: Well, you're out every Wednesday night at your Trade Union branch. If its good enough for you, its good enough for me to go out. So he thought on that and he thought...

B: There' one that's going to stand up for her rights!

A: On the day I joined the Guild - I remember going into the Institute - there were about 15 or 20 women there - all dodging about around the back, getting cups and saucers out as usual -and this lady at the table

(Bustle)

C: Hello dear, is this your first time?

A: Yes..

C: Well, speak up...

A: When I first started in the Guild, I would call myself timid. The most embarrassing thing I ever did in my life. If anybody asks me what is the most embarrassing thing in your life..somebody moved a resolution you see and somebody said...

D: I'll second it.

A: And I jumped to my feet and said "I'll third it!"

(laughter)

I felt terrible - really terrible.

C: Don't worry dear, it shows you're awake, which is more than can be said for some of them here...

A: I was so full of enthusiasm you see..but later on, as time went by...(she takes the minute book from Muriel - Muriel has been delivering the minutes in dumbshow behind previous section)...Mrs Slade was our speaker and told us about her visit to Ghent and the Co-operative Exhibition. 29 countries were represented and very wonderful things were on view. The Lutona Chocolate factory in miniature. Also the hat factory and the little shop in Toad Land where Robert Owen first started the Co-operative movement. The bust of Robert

Owen was made from soap provided at our factory. Karl Marx was also in the mottled soap and Lenin in bristles. Mrs Stearn then gave us a song which was greatly appreciated.

Applause - into Mrs Stearn
singing a song of the period

D: It was a kind of laddar - where you started moving the vote of thanks to the visiting speaker.

A: Madam (coughing) Madam Chairman...it is with great pleasure..

D: Or seconding the vote of thanks and standing up feeling terrible embarrassed when everyone looked at you and you had to say thank you...

A: It is with great pleasure that I second the vote of thanks...

D: Then you probably moved from there to being a delegate to something and having to come back and give a report..

B: I was sent by the Guild to the NCLC - the National Council of London Colleges..we used to meet in Denmark Road and it was a tiny little dirty little room. I don't suppose it was as big as my kitchen and the rats used to run along the floor, but we still had the lecture, we had gas light with the gas mantel up the top there, you know teaching us what Socialism and the Co-operative movement really meant..

C: All the training I have had has been through the Guild - through the Guild movement...

D: The Guild movement was responsible for many women playing roles in public life which they'd never done. I mean we were Councilors, on management committees, and everything, and it was all through the Guild.

C: (reading from pamphlet) " Guildswomen on Public Bodies in March 1927:-

One Guildswoman is Mayor

On County Councils and Municipal Boroughs - 69

English and Welsh Consultative Councils of the Ministry Of Health

One on Milk Advisory Committee of Ministry of Health

Magistrates 72

69 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 and Housing Advisory Committees, Police Court Rota, Old Age or War Pension Committees, Rural and District Councils.

D: (cutting across this list, which will be edited down a bit (hear! hear! says the typist) It gave women confidence, you see.

A: In the special events that were going to take place where they had to send somebody - they sent me...I can't go, I've got the baby! (holding imaginary child)

C: No! I've got her! (taking child)

A: It was just the same with two babies...I can't go, I've got the children...

C: You haven't got the children!

C & B: Ah, we'll look after them.

A: That was the kind of feeling we had in the Guild. And, of course, I attended all kinds of meetings and I am very pleased I met the Secretary of the Guild, Margaret Llewellyn Davies. About a year before she retired, they sent me to a conference in Leman Street - I went to the conference as a delegate of my Guild and I sat in the hall... all the people crowded in and found seats in Leman Street

(B,C & D set chairs with back to audience - B & D sit on them ,as does A)

A: (turning to address the audience) ...and Margaret Llewellyn Davies came up with a new case...

(C approaches from down stage)

...chatted to this one and that one and the other - she got up onto the stage...

(stands at table up stage)

...there was a stage and she got up on the stage and she began to open her case, you know, and while she was opening it. she looked around and suddenly, she paused,...looked at me and shut her case and still looking - never moving her eyes - she went along the platform, down the steps. I sat there, scared. All I could see was her eyes -

C: Are you a member of the Guild?

A: Yes

C: Well, I am pleased, and I hope you'll be member for a very long time

(C - frozen for a moment)

D: She was a sweet person - charming - but quite ordinary - if you saw her on the street she looked quite...ordinary. You couldn't say she was beautiful. She was charming. I mean because she was charming in herself .

A: As I say, that was the only time I actually met her and she spoke to me. And I was terrified!

B: And then the great, really reaching all that was possible emerged when you were sent by your local Guild to CONGRESS...and you escaped...

A: In fact, the first year I went to Congress, we had to sit round the table...Not that they hadn't asked me to go to Congress before: they had,. I just couldn't go. And by that time, my boy Ken was just starting work and my husband being a shift worker..and I said, "You know, I'd love to go to Congress" so we sat round the table, the three of us, and my husband said:

B: Let's look what shift I'm on...what week is it? I'm on early shift. I'm off in the morning...I can get him up before I go to work..see he's had his breakfast and I shall be home by three in the afternoon that week, so I'm home by the time he comes home from work.

A: You know this is how we worked it out...we really were a co-operative

household...because anything we decided, my husband, my son and myself, anything we were to agree, we'd agree together. "This is a co-operative household" I'd say to my son "And that's our way of life". That's how we worked it out and I was able to go to Congress.

B: You went and stayed in someone else's house...

D: Someone else cooked the breakfast...

C: Bed and breakfast usually of some kind...

D: Boarding house somewhere...

A: The first Congress I went to was in Leicester - about 50 years ago. I suppose in those days there was about 1500 of us and the members used to bring their banners - they were all round the hall and it was really wonderful...

(Music creeping in - "Of Whole Heart Cometh Hope")

And I remember so well, because there was this hymn they sang "of Whole Heart Cometh Hope"

(Music getting louder)

and I remember singing that...

(B,C, & D singing softly - they now have hats on)

C: And I remember the tears streaming down my eyes because I thought - all of us women have come together here to try and make the world a better place for

people to live in and what's going to be the outcome of it. After all these years I can remember that..And I cried...

(joining in with C,B,D to end of chorus)

D: (Music under) There's nowhere in the world where the Congress is run like our Guild Congress...You don't let the men come out and smoke...when you're there, you're there!

B: I said no - I'm not wearing a hat. A hat doesn't mean anything to me. I've never worn a hat, why should I start to wear a hat because I happen to be on a platform?

C: In those days everybody wore hats and coats- It wasn't a done thing to go without a hat.

A: I can remember one particular Guildswoman that used to go to Congress year after year.

B: She was an agricultural worker...

D: She was more like a man...

A: And she would get up on the rostrum and say - she would give her name, not her Christian name, her surname.

C: Smith.

A: Like that! A very deep voice..

B: My word, everyone learned a lot from her! They got so used to seeing her at Congress, that as soon as she started...

A,B,C & D: Smith!

A: They would say it with her. It was amusing. She was a marvellous speaker. She dressed like a man: trousers, a shirt blouse and tie - but she was an educated woman and she put over very clearly the poisons that were used in spraying the fields and that sort of thing.

C: If men have to get dressed up and put masks on to spray the fields - THAT GOES INTO OUR FOOD

A: She was a real hard worker. I always remember it. When we came out, my hubby said...

B: Its marvellous...If you women have got the power in your hands - you've got the power to rule the world

A: He was amazed at the women with their knowledge and resolutions.

C: And we were not only interested in education - we were social in the Guild. We didn't have Bingo in those days. But we had our little parties and get togethers and birthdays. In the cottages round Cricklewood, nearly all the men had allotments and they used to bring some flowers or some potatoes or some parsnips or something - we'd sell them at the Guild and then we'd have a party with the money we got out of the fruit and vegetables you see.

D: (playing a waltz?) And there was always monthly socials and dances where Guildswomen would do the refreshments and we'd have a band..

(B & A dancing)

C: They were wonderful!

B: We would always have a singer, baritone or soprano or a piano forti solo -
violin solo

(beginning of Chopin Prelude)

D: And outings - charabanc outings (laughing) We had one or two Guildswomen
who'd come down from the East End of London

(Arranging chairs to make charabanc)

And they really let their hair down on these coach parties. We always started
very lively

(Chopin changing to "Knees Up Mother Brown")

D: It was such an occasion, such a treat to go to the seaside, you see. And on
the way home, the ladies would start dancing down the aisles...

A,B & C: "Knees, knees up, don't get the breeze up .."

D: Singing and dancing after they'd had perhaps half a glass of beer or
something at the stop..

A,B & C: "Knees up Mother Brown - Hey!"

B: It was something special to have the day away from home, you see.

A: And then there was outings to thge LCS works - there was the cocoa factory at Luton.

B: Jam factory at Reading

C: Soap works at Silvertown - soap works and sweets..You paid your coach fare and they gave us a guided tour.

D: And May Day Parades!

B: On May Day, we would have a May Day procession through the Borough and the Co-op would provide coal carts...

C: An open coal lorry. And we spent all the night before cleaning this coal lorry up and draping muslin all over it and we decided we'd go International, so we put seats up on this coal lorry and every lady represented a different country. And I stood up at the back as Brittania, being tall you see. I had to stand at the back - it was very precarious position with the helmet and the sword...Just really to advertise co-operation.

D: Women's Guild banner was in every demonstration.

C: One of our Committee ladies had got a niece who was a good embroideress, and she made this wonderful banner with Co-operative Women's Guild, a lovely wheatsheaf and "September 1931" - that was when the branch opened - and underneath "Unity" and tassles.

A: I mean, we have walked from Shepherd's Bush on a demonstration

B: None of us had the money to pay the fare!

A: From Shepherd's Bush to Victoria Park, East London. And that's no small...that's no small step.

D: And every demonstration that took place- and the Guildswomen came out on them, that took place in Hyde Park, you never dreamt of riding a bus from here to Hyde Park. You walked from here to Hyde Park.

A: We nearly got pinched once going into the House of Commons

B: We weren't very popular, I might tell you

A: I'm charging in with my banner and about a 6'3" policeman says to me:

C: Where are you going with that?

A: I'm going in there

C: You can't take that in there

A: What am I supposed to do with it?

C: You must stand it over in that corner you see

A: You'd better look after it 'cos there'll be a row if I haven't got it when I come out.

B: We've had some times in the House of Commons

A: Then you walked back again!

B: Simply because you didn't have the money to pay the fares

C: No matter what working class demonstration took place, you'd find Guild banners..the May Day demonstration..my husband and I would never fail to go down to the Embankment and walk to Hyde Park with our banners. We had the Guild banner up, you know, and the Trade Union banner. We never missed on the first of May...

D: Or any protest..

A: My mother went to London with the Co-op Guild and it was to plead..protest...against the pensions..they were very low...and women who had lost their sons in the War didn't get anything..and pension..pensions were so low..they were starvation levels, weren't they? And she came home after the demonstration and she said she was outside Parliament shouting, and the police ran their horses into the crowd. And there were women there, but the police ran their horses into those crowds of women..

D: Or demonstrations:

B: I'd read about the Jarrow marchers and I knew they were coming. And I went down to Hyde Park. And as they came, everyone pushed and they pushed me as well. I was with my husband, but I lost him. I was able to dodge right round the back of these two horses and got to the front to see them coming. We knew why they were coming..and what they were coming for..and hoped they would achieve..I feel that was the only real hunger march..they were really hungry..

C: We did a great deal of work for the Jarrow marchers. We got them tea as they went through. The soles were worn off their feet with the long march, and we found them shoes and bathed their feet. It was a sight to see all those men. They did look poor. They slept on the floor in our hall. They were very hungry when they came, all of them suffering the terrible deprivation of unemployment, weren't they?

B: My mother said "Here come the Jarrow marchers" It wasn't until I was older that I realised that I'd looked on history.

D: And there were the Peace Demonstrations. The Guild was very active in the Peace Movement.

C: I think most Guildswomen were pacifists. They had lost sons and brothers and husbands hadn't they in the first war? You don't forget it. I lost my boyfriend in the First War..so I think most Guildswomen were against war.

D: And then we were very active in support of the Spanish people in the Civil War and the International Brigade..and in providing clothing...

Music - Banda Rosa(?)

C: We all did knitting in green wool for the Basque children.

A: I didn't go to Spain, but when they brought the Basque children over to Southampton, a friend of mine that was active in the Guild said:

B: "Well, we've offered to go down to look after the children"

A: All right, I'll come with you- so we went down to help. And when we got there, a whole crowd of nuns came to take over the children..I suppose they thought..well, they were more concerned about setting up a hut to save their souls than they were about saving their sores.

B: The children were covered in sores and lice were coming out of their sores.

A: We had to put them in Dettol baths - and they screamed and they screamed, these children. And I remember saying to these nuns"Never mind about saving their souls.let's save their sores first and we'll see what happens"

B: It really was dreadful

A: When the children arrived, the bunting was out on the street because of some naval occasion - I don't know what it was, but the children coming up on buses were open-eyed with amazement, because they thought the bunting was for them and a plane came over and the children cringed at that. That's something I really do remember. They were really frightened. I was very moved by all these children - absolutely frightened - you could see in their eyes that they were very frightened. And then when the camp was run down,the children were farmed out to various families and two Spanish children came to stay with us.

B: We really felt we were doing some thing to help

D: And the Guild always had a raffle to raise funds.

B:(Reading minutes)" There was a one penny collection taken at members' tea for the two young men penalised for wearing Peace Poppies.."

D: We would have been horrified if anyone brought along to the Guild raffle

anything that had been bought at International or Perksees

A: I remember a terrific rumpus once at Leman street over somebody bringing Palmolive soap -you know it was announced from the platform how disgusting it was when we'd got our own soap- somebody should bring Palmolive soap. It was a natural thing, wasn't it, that you were going to support your own factory

B: There was Pilaw polish - P.I.L.A.W.-

A: That was the

Everyone: Boot Polish

C: Co-op Luton -

Everyone: Cocoa

D: RedSeal and Silverseal

Everyone: Margarine

A: Now, what was the soap powder? I can't remember what it was - that had a special name...what was....

(may be the audience supplies it)

A: We used to have competitions in the Guilds, taking along the labels, and cutting out the actual name and people would be guessing.

B: We've had many a time doing that and you hoped you were helping members to remember

C: There was Desbeau, which was the corsetry and the underwear from the Desbeau factoryyes...

B: And what was the name of the shoes - they had a special name for the shoes...

(Audience?)

B: W heatsheaf shoes -that's right.

A: When my mother bought me shoes, before she looked at the top, she looked at the sole. If it hadn't got the w heatsheaf on, you couldn't have it. You had to have a W heatsheaf soled shoe.(laughing) When I got to be a teenager and had my own money to buy my own shoes - we sat in the shoe shop and we rowed - and I wouldn't have them. We quarrelled over the shoes because they had no w heatsheaf on them - But I'm paying for them!

C: I don't care - you're having Co-op shoes.

A: So we came out of the shop. I had w heatsheaf shoes in the end!

D: There were Co-operative days

B: Ooh yes, they were fine..

A: We used to hold our Co-operative days in a great big field. We used to dress up in old time clothes and there was bands and stalls of course - a country fete - that's what it was like - anyone could go.

B: Then they said - instead of having these small things, why not let's have a great Co-operative day.

D: Wembley Stadium!

B: We'll have a great pageant.

(music from pageant 1938 under the following)

V/O C: We present to you here, the Pageant of man and his will to cure the disease of his society and the darkness of his mind. This is the pageant of his will to put an end to the so-called competition that throws a shadow of war, and the profit-making that ends in slavery.

D: Andre Van Chysenge was pulled in - he was one of the famous of that time. And for months we in the youth movement and the Guilds were in a great Pageant about the Industrial Revolution.

B: General Ludd says: "Smash the Machines" I can still quote it..

D: So you had this tremendous great Pageant with thousands and thousands of

people converging on Wembley.

A: It was the one and only!

V/O FOR THE PAGEANT VIDEO AND SOUND TRACK

General Ludd

With an army of flames

Goes marching

Against terrible crimes

C: it was so hot, Birdy and I had our feet in the pool!

A: I'll never forget it ! There was more people there than I've ever seen in my life

D: I was in the choir. Alan Brush was the conductor. We all had white dresses. It was like a dream really. You think you're there - big place like Wembley Stadium, singing with all those people..

C: We went as Switzerland from our Guild. We had all the countries that are in the Guild dressed up in the National colour - we had everything we should have had - it was skis -everything to do with Switzerland, and we did get a certificate for being correct.

A: I was only in a group that represented Latvia. I think all these countries wre represented in the Pageant because the movement was growing.

B: The machine ballet was really wonderful - I can see the wonderful costumes in my mind's eye -I can see all those steel automatons shall we call them and you got used to the music - the music at first was strong but it continued to give

volume. We used to chant the Luddites, about breaking the machinery and we got more and more excited - this was how he trained us until we got to a crescendo.

: My little girl was dressed as Food for Plenty. She looked lovely. She was all dressed up in bananas and fruit. She had flowers in her hair. She did look lovely..

A: We marched along the barriers and there were flower girls and everything that was necessary for a mixture of countries, but I particularly remember the Luddites because we had to get excited and show our fists - rebelling against machinery. It was all anti-machinery. You see, the war was building up and I think we must have built up a fever against machines of any kind..

Pageant Voices

All: We are women, is to weep
The last privilege we keep?
We are women and we bore
All the fighters in the war...

A: Very much we worked for peace

C: I remember coming the main street, walking home with all these women in great anxiety - they'd got sons of calling up age and they were adamant that their sons wasn't going to be called up..

B: They're not having my sons

D: They're not having my son

A: And they really were upset. And really worried..almost in tears, because although they were saying tht, they knew there was no chance of preventing it unless they were strong enough to become conscientious objectors...

Music - "Rule Britannia" or the ilk

B: (An army officer, with new army recruits) Today, we have the naming of parts. Yesterday we had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning we shall have what to do after firing. But today, we have the naming of parts...

A: We had a large gathering in aid of peace..

B: This is the lower sling swivel. And this is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see when you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel which in your case, you have not got...

Music - Rule Britannia

D: The men had a certain amount of patriotism. There was a certain amount of military bands and this kind of thing. Tottenham beat West Ham and we beat the Germans. But for the women, sadness. Only sadness. And so the tremendous surge of these women "never again, never again"

A: I was an absolute pacifist and Laura my daughter was the same. And she refused to do anything that would cause suffering. She refused to do anything. I went up to Newcastle for her trial..

C: (The Magistrate) Would you do so and so?

B: I will..I'll do that. I'll do anything that will not take life.

C: Would you go into a hospital..do hospital work?

B: I'll do anything that doesn't take ...I'll wash floors for you if you like. But I will not do anything to take life.

A: And I can assure you, I was very proud of her..a lot of the peace movement people were in the gallery attending it..they had come to see the conscientious objectors and so they were all delighted with her. And they gave her forestry work. She did forest work for her war work, that was what she did...

B: I reject war and I will never fight in another.

A: People think there's something wrong with me when I won't buy a Flanders poppy - I've never bought a Flanders poppy in my life . Not that I'm disrespectful to the boys that lost their lives. But we believed in peace poppies. We believed in the white poppy. Never have I bought the Flanders poppy and sometimes, when they come up to you, I have a funny feeling in there. They think "Oh her, she doesn't care" But I do care! Care because they should never have lost their lives. To me, war is just really dreadull. So I've never bought Flanders Poppy.

C: The Congress , believing that International Peace will only be achieved by total disarmament of all nations, condemns the policy of the National Government in ioncreasing expenditure upon armaments and urges the constructive expenditure of the nation's wealth for the welfare of the people. This Congress further

pledges itself to work for the Guild peace policy which is the absolutonist pacifist policy and refuses to take part in war or preparation for war.

B: I was away at Congress in 1939 and they disbanded Congress because they gave it out over the thingy that war had been declared, so they abandoned Congress. We all came home. All the delegates came home.

C: And of course the first six or seven months of the war it was very quiet, very quiet down here. I closed the Guild because everybody went away - ooh, we had a lovely Guild, grown from three to about 70 - and after I closed the Guild, I sent all the documents up to Head Office.

B: I got a job at Grange Park Road Co-op Grocery Shop and I worked there for over five years until the boys came home. And while I was working there, they had a flying bomb right opposite the shop on a garage and it blew it all up and our manager was injured. We were all trapped in the cellar underneath the shop. The ARP had to come and dig us out.

D: We went to see Priestley's play during the war with my Guild. "They Came to a City". Do you know it? Its lovely. Its beautiful. And after the play had started, the Stage Manager came on and said "There is an air raid on directly overhead. If anyone wants to get out..." you know the curtain came down, the lights went off, not a soul moved. And he'd told us that they were directly overhead which meant that any minute you know, we could be bombed. Nobody moved and the play went on.

C: The Guild did this feeding to the troupes in the deep shelters, but I wouldn't take any part of it. It caused a family row because my mother-in-law was the Guild District Secretary and she undertook to do it, thinking I was going to help. But I refused to do it because I said it was part of the war

effort and it caused a big hullabaloo

A: As soon as the war ended, the Guild was involved in helping people in Germany. The National President of thge time and Cecily Cook actually went out to Germany and they saw the desolation in Berlin. We had the Guild members knitting things and collecting clothes for the dispossessed in Germany. For the women and children who were living in the ruins and the rubble.

B: I remember in the early Confereneces after the War, we had representatives from Germany who were terribly frightened of appearing on the platform, but they got the warmest possible welcome. I think everyone felt "this has never got to happen again" And the way that it won't happen again is to have real international contacts at the lowest level and real international friendship.

C:- And of course now we're very much involved with international work.

B: We raised money for flood schemes..

A: Flood relief and famine relief..

D: There was the bucket of water campaign

C: Yes, we wanted particularly to assist the newly developing co-operatives in India and Africa.

D: And came up with the idea of...couldn't we provide some irrigation schemes and water, because that is the greatest shortage in many of these countries..

A: At the moment, we've been talking about planting trees everywhere for International Tree Year and that's...

B: And that's very necessary, particularly in India and Africa because its the only way to hold the soil together ..

C: So we are till trying to assist our poorer sisters in other countries throughout the world. Well, that's a very quick skim over the campaigns we've conducted over the last hundred years. We can look back with great pride, but we have to look forward as well. These campaigns that we have conducted in the past - how much we need to be conducting them again now. We're seeing the National Health Service which we campaigned for, disappear in front of our very eyes through the present Tory government. We're seeing the Social Services going the same way. We see education being cut at all levels.

So as we set our standard today at the end of our first hundred years, we need to have in mind that there is still a tremendous amount to do. We need a new rallying call. Let us say, "Long Live Co-operation"

(Piano has been leading up to Jerusalem under the end of this speech and now all be upstanding and sing with audience the first verse)

FINIS