

International Movement

We were all proud of the International Movement and I went to the International conference when it was in Lausanne in Switzerland — and you had to be voted for that, because it was just one member went for each section, and I was lucky enough to be the member who got it, and you feel really thrilled when you're mixing with people from other countries, you feel very thrilled because you think they're in their countries doing this kind of work and we're here, we've already got a common purpose and it's really lovely to come together with them sometimes.

It must have been in 1933 and I can remember the educational secretary of the day, I would be then about 15, and he had been to Vienna to the ICA Congress. And he came back and told us about this wonderful meeting in Vienna, where Co-operators had come from all over the world and how they talked about the different subjects allied to co-operation. And to my mind this was absolutely marvellous, that I was part of a world movement. At 15 you can be extremely impressed by those things. And there were lots of us like that.

We were very internationally minded you know. It is an international movement and the women were very conscious of their sisters in Belgium and Russia. Quite a lot of Co-operative women have been to Russia on delegations. They've been to other countries too, but that was the country, being socialist minded, they all wanted to go to.

There was always foreign delegates at Congress and they were always welcomed with rapture whichever country they came from. They all tended to be socialists of course because that was the whole ethos of the movement.

I think you could honestly say, you were really proud of what the Co-op had, and what it stood for, because it was.... well it was a world wide organisation to start with, and you were part of it.



Guild delegates at the 1976 International Co-operative Alliance Congress — Paris 1976.

What We Do Now



Guild members assist in flood relief work on Canvey Island following floods in February 1953.

We're very much involved with International work — we've raised money in the past for flood schemes, flood relief and famine relief.

We've collected for cancer research, we've collected for muscular dystrophy. The National Lifeboat. We've got a Lifeboat at Hayling Island, off Portsmouth which we collected for and I believe is still there.

We were very active in the Bucket of Water scheme. It started off as an idea as to what could the Women's Committee do to assist the newly developing Co-operatives in India and Africa. And we came up with the idea of, "couldn't we provide some irrigation schemes and water because this is the greatest shortage in many of these countries". It's something we consider is fundamental, except you don't realise how much you use, till perhaps you have a holiday in a caravan when it isn't on tap, you know. You've got to fill and keep refilling water buckets. So the idea met with favour obviously because we thought, well this is something that will really help the women and children in the villages. The co-operative women in Great Britain thought it was a wonderful idea and sponsored it through the Co-operative Gazette and asked Co-operative Societies in this country to put in subscriptions to it and donations. Every country in the world did exactly the same and in fact from countries such as Japan and Sweden, phenomenal amounts of money were sent for this and the money — I don't know the exact figure that was raised — it was quite substantial — this money has been used to provide irrigation and wells in India and in various parts of Africa. In other islands where there has been this acute shortage of water — and it really was a very, very good idea. We've never come up with one as good as that since.

For the last few years St Michael's Hospital, Enfield has been supported by the Central Guild of the Enfield Highway Society. They've collected money to buy these special chairs for the patients and they take a little concert party there quite regularly.



Canon Collins addresses the send off meeting for the "Women's Caravan of Peace" from the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1958.

We have adopted a Ward in St. Michael's Hospital and all the money we collect goes on that Ward. We make small rugs for the patients' knees — about fifteen or twenty of these have been sent over the last few years. And we've provided a television set and about six chairs that are specially adjustable for different kinds of disablement. Adjustable chairs. Each time we visit we take tea with the patients.

This year our project is for hospices for the dying — that's what we're hoping to collect for in 83/84.

We planted two trees in Elizabeth House, a local old people's home — we did that for the centenary year. A cherry tree and another sort. We planted the trees and gave them tea as well.



At the present moment we've been talking of planting trees, everywhere, for International Tree Year and that of course in itself is very necessary, particularly in India and Africa because it's the only way to hold the soil together you see, to stop the erosion of the soil. We still are undertaking various schemes which will assist our poorer sisters in other countries throughout the world.

We are still working for others. We'll go on working until we drop . . .

It was the United Nations that launched this project for Botswana. The Co-op Party and the Guild took this up and we launched four of those vehicles from different parts of the country and I was asked to take the London one on the tour. We were a fortnight on the road — two weeks collecting — beautifully organised. Mrs. Kempton, of course she was partly responsible for it all, and I toured with a team — about four other women, and what we did — we went into each town or city on the road to Morecambe where we had a Congress that year, and either the local Guild got something arranged, either a coffee morning or an evening with a film — some social event where we could collect money for this project. Prior to our arriving the Societies had collecting boxes in the store. On some occasions we were allowed to collect in the store with the customers — in some places we were allowed to do street collections while we were there. The police of course decided whether we could or couldn't and that was it. So we travelled on, but the first thing we did when we arrived was to go into the Societies Transport Department — they serviced the vehicle, topped it up — got it all ready for the road. No cost or anything — marvellous. The next thing was to go out and meet either the manager or the chairman of the Council where we were and he received us in the parlour and on most occasions he handed a cheque that he'd collected — you know — various events and so we travelled on, all the way up to Morecambe and our accommodation was somebody locally put us up for the night or two nights — we were going to be in the town and we all then, the four caravans, converged into Lancashire and then we travelled in convoy to Morecambe. To the Congress. Now we had Mr. Macama, the High Commissioner and his wife to see us off in London — he was the High Commissioner for Botswana in London — they were there to see us off in Leicester Square and do you know what he said to me just as we were leaving? He said, er "I wish you success on your journey. May the rain fall on your caravan wherever you go" and I thought "Lord". We hadn't been out of London very long and it was pouring with rain, but of course, I realised what he meant by that. They hadn't had any rain for seven years in Botswana. This was really to educate the people. To set up Co-operatives in Botswana.

Earlsfield report 1982/3

Chairman — Mrs G Bayliss

Secretary — Ms S. Oliver

Madam Chairman and fellow co-operators,

This is the 63rd report of our Guild and despite many setbacks, and loss of membership we are still flying the Co-op flag here in Earlsfield.

Membership

has unfortunately fallen to 28; and I am indeed very sorry to report the death of our oldest member, Mrs Edie Harwood aged 93 years who was a very active member, whom we all miss helping out on our stall each week. A donation was sent in her memory to Mr Ben Jones Convalescent Fund and her name entered in the Evergreen Book.

Representatives

We are represented on the District Committee, Halls Fund, Law Centre, Age Concern, also Labour Party and School Governors.

Affiliations

are fully paid to Head Office, Section, District and the Tooting Labour Party.

Activities

Delegates attend all Section and District Events; we hosted the District Autumn Fair also the Centenary Lunch, both events being very successful. Two delegates attended Congress at Worthing this year and many members attended the Centenary Service at Westminster Abbey and Congress as visitors for the day by coach. We thank the Education Committee for their grant of £20 this year also District Committee for £5. This helped with our Congress expenses. Delegates have also attended Education Weekend Schools and Political Conferences. Excellent reports from all these events were given to members by delegates. We wrote a letter of protest to B.B.C. re. lack of publicity given to our Centenary Congress, also re. the film "God Speed Co-operation". Protests have also been made to maintain doorstep delivery of milk and in support of the Health Workers against closure of hospitals and services. Support for the Pensioners Conference on Gas and Electricity Standing Charges. From the "Knit In" held in our Guild, and other knitted squares, a beautiful single blanket was made and donated to Age Concern for use by an elderly person in need. Members attended Guild Picnic Day at Loughborough and support is given to Manor House Hospital. Society Stamps are sold every week in the Guild Room.

Speakers

during the year have included Mrs M. Honeyball (Impressions of the Labour Party Conference), Mrs D. Codd (Travel), Mrs J. Standing (Work of Magistrate), Mr F. Styles (R.A.C.S.), W.P.C. Cannon (Work of Women Police), Mrs E. Jackson (Report of Weeks School Co-op College), Mr Blogg (Manager Barclays Bank), Mr J. Mileham (Visit to Miami), Mr P. Ellis (Metropolitan Police), Mrs H. Smith (National Health Service), Mr Brown (Chiropody), Mr R. Martin (Conservation), Mr Louis (Blind Association), Mrs M. White (Woodcraft Folk), Mrs A. Walker (Visit to China), Mr J. Dixon (Post Office), Mrs L. Henning (Electricity Consultative Council). Other afternoons have been bingo, beetle drives, cake competition, bulb competition, Film shows, nearly new sale, harvest home, crafts. A very happy and successful Xmas Party with turkey dinner was enjoyed by all members.

Thanks

My personal thanks are extended to our Chairman, Vice Chairman, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer for help and understanding given to me this year. To all Committee Members for the jobs so very willingly done; with special thanks to our ladies who make our welcome cup of tea each week so making our Guild a happy and enjoyable place; and finally thanks to all members for your generosity and for attending so regularly for without you all, our Guild could not function properly. I sincerely thank every one for their kindness to me this year and hope that next year I shall be able to report an increase in membership.

Sophie Oliver
SECRETARY

The Co-operative Ideal

The Co-operative Movement is there to teach you about the way of life — there is another way of life — that's the Co-operative way of life, if you'd like to accept it.

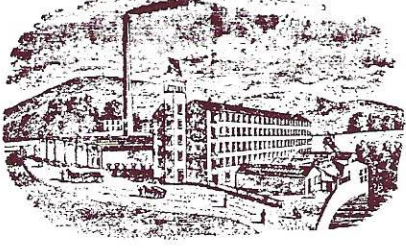
I came very close to poverty all the time, I was in touch, shall we say, with poverty, all the time, so that it was really building up my feelings about poverty and bettering things — you know and as I say when I went into the Guild with Mrs Battershall, I found all that came back to me, all this working and helping people. And I think that was my background — it was the thing that made me so attracted to the Women's Guild, that here we were, in the Women's Guild, trying to better people's minds, bodies and souls and of course we were out to increase the strength of the Co-operative Movement because we felt that the Co-operative movement was the saving of the people. It was for the people, by the people and on their behalf to improve their lives.

The Co-operative Movement was going to replace capitalism — not partially but completely. Eventually it would roll back this whole evil world of profit and exploitation, employing people to make money out of their labour. It was a tremendous idea. It really inspired people. They genuinely believed in it. They genuinely believed that it was possible to draw out the best in human nature and change the structure of economic society. They could see it simply as a method for ordinary people to run their own lives, which they had been prevented from doing for as long as they could remember. They had been caught up in the industrial urban system, which denied them the right to participate. So the Co-op was the way out.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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Agents—The Co-operative Wholesale Society, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and London, and the Scottish Wholesale Society, Glasgow.

The Guild is essentially a working class organisation if you go around the branches, they are for the most part, working class women who've slaved to get an education for their children and who've seen their children grow away from them as a result and they are sort of left behind.

My mother certainly believed in this religion. And she saw the Women's Co-operative Guild as one facet in the whole range of activities which the Co-operative Movement could sponsor and assist in order to give people a useful and constructive and an entertaining way of life.

It comes back to my Guild because that was my life. I wouldn't have stayed away from all that for all the tea in China. Why? Because it done something to you. You feel as if you was doing a little bit of good, though you never had nothing yourself. You felt you was doing a little bit of good to people.

You must never lose the idea that it is a caring sharing society. You have got to care, whether you like it or not. And you've got to care what happens to the sick and you've got to care what happens to the education of kids. This is important.

The Co-operative idea — each for all and all for each. I will still say the creed that we learned at the age of 11. "We desire to be just and loving to everyone. To work together as brothers and sisters. To be kind to every living creature and so help to form a new world with justice as its foundation and love as its law. Each for all and all for each."

## WHY BUY SWEATED GOODS AND SUPPORT SWEATING FIRMS?

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### CO-OPERATIVE UNIONIST STORES,

436, COMMERCIAL ROAD,  
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### WHY?

1. Because the articles are good, and made under fair conditions. Let women boycott bad employers by refusing to buy their goods.
2. Because women can thus raise their husbands' wages. The Stores are managed by working people, who all share in the profits. For every £1 spent there, each Member gets 1s. as his or her share in the profits.
3. Because at the Stores you have a Free Library, Free Classes, Free Entertainment, etc.

Women's help is wanted in the Labour Movement.  
Women must rally together and help on the good time coming by joining the Women's Co-operative Guild.  
Women are the purchasers. They must be Co-operators  
Women also want help themselves. They need less work, more change, more to spend, more to read, more interests.

Come and give a hand, and see how the Guild can help you, at any or all of the following Meetings:  
THURSDAY, FEB 18th, at 8 o'clock, in the CO-OPERATIVE HALL, Johnson Street, Commercial Road,  
**Joint Social Evening** for Tower Hamlets, Bow, and Poplar Branches. Music and Singing.  
Address by Miss LLEWELYN DAVIES (General Secretary, Women's Co-operative Guild) Dialogue between Mrs STONE and Mrs SHOFFER.

**TOWER HAMLETS MEETINGS**, at Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, at 8 p.m.

MONDAY, MAR. 7 — DIALOGUE between Mrs. STONE and Mrs. SHOFFER.

MONDAY, MAR. 21. — ARGUMENT: "Must Women always be Household Drudges"?

**BOW MEETINGS**, at the Stores, 227, Bow Road, at 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEB 24. — DIALOGUE: "Must Women always be Household Drudges"?

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 9. — ADDRESS by Miss TOURNIER (Vice-President of the Women's Co-operative Guild), on "How Women can help in the Labour Movement"?

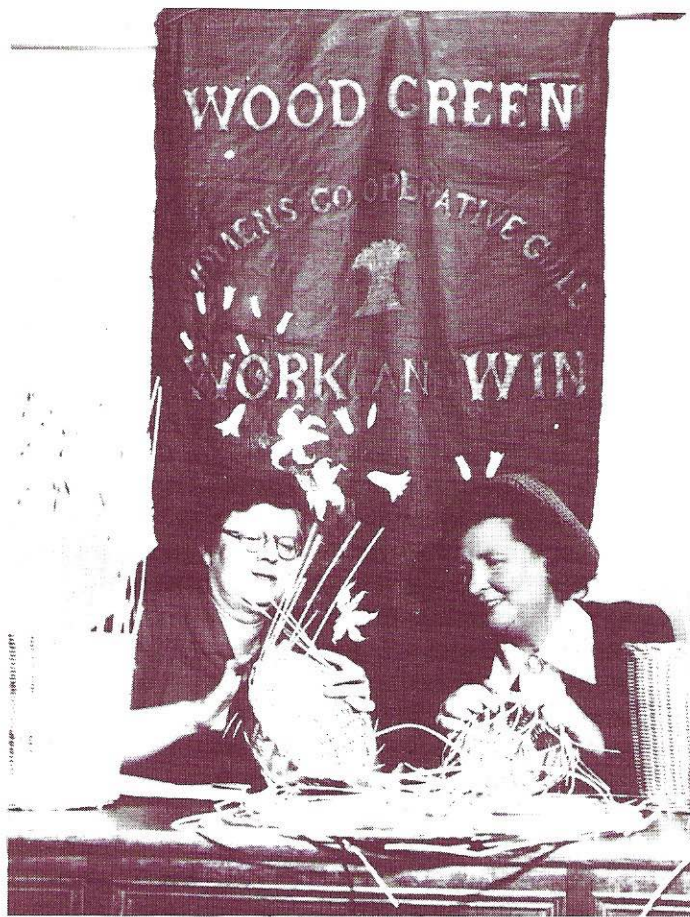
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 23. — DISCUSSION: "Is it worth while to join the Women's Guild"?

**POPLAR MEETINGS**, at the Stores, 70, Brunswick Road, Poplar, at 8.30

MONDAY, FEB. 22. — DISCUSSION: "For and Against the Women's Guild."

MONDAY, MAR. 7. — ADDRESS by Mrs JONES (President of the Women's Co-operative Guild).

MONDAY, MAR. 21. — DIALOGUE: "Must Women always be Household Drudges"?



The Co-op stood for fairness, for one thing, that it was an organisation and a trading organisation, that because of its principles of, you know, people sharing in the profits and putting its money into education and politics, it was achieving something far more than some of the other shops and the other supermarkets. So one began to feel that this was important — that you weren't just a shopper. Because you were a member you were a part of it. And there's no doubt about it, to me it's been a way of life.

The common purpose is to achieve the best life you can for my kind, isn't it? The accent was on women because we are a women's group, a working class women's group. A new member would expect to find a lively group, discussing issues of the day and conducting meetings properly so that everybody knew what was going on. I personally would expect to find some really definite work going on.

It seemed like a new world if the Beveridge Plan should ever come about. It just seemed like Utopia. It was a Utopian idea which was marvellous. And he was able to explain to us that it was not only Utopian but it was practical. It must come about. The Guild had been discussing all these things and he brought them together you see. The Maternity help, the sickness help, the whole of the Health and Employment Plan. The start of our Social Services really.

I joined because I was a Co-operator — not because I was a member of the Communist Party. But, because I was a member of the Communist Party, it made me a better Guildswoman because I could see how things could be changed. I could see how the Guild could be built up. I could see what I thought was right.

To live happily, to have a full life, you must co-operate. You must co-operate with people and share. And to me sharing, no matter what it is you share, whether it's money or food or friendship, there's something in co-operation and that word means something, to co-operate.

I'm lost without the Co-op. I miss the Co-op and the Co-op movement. But I think women really have achieved something because of the Guild defending their rights in that they are individuals whether they are married or not, single or anything else . . . they have learned to fight for themselves, really fight for what they believe in and I will continue doing that until I drop.

We're still working towards a better life for women, an easier life . . .

The rainbow spans the world and has no end and we say Co-operation spans the world and has no end. The integration of the spectrum of seven colours is a co-operative colour in a sense because it brings out white.

The Guild was something entirely on its own. It is autonomous in the sense of Women's Organisations. But it is an integral part of the Co-operative movement and therefore, anything that we did, our whole purpose really, was not just to promote social progress but to do it through the Co-operative movement, which we believed was the right way of doing it. We believed that Co-operation was a way of life. It was a religion. And therefore, if you wanted to be a real Guildswoman and most of us were, then you bought at the Co-op. For instance, we would have been horrified if anyone brought along to the Guild raffle anything that had been bought at International or Perkses. You brought along an item that had got Co-op on it. Most Guilds were very very strong about that.

A true Co-operator practises it in her life, shares everything. If someone had to go to hospital another Guild woman would take over her family, children and all. Or, if there were too many to sleep then she'd split them up.

The Guild was fighting for the benefit of mankind and to liberate women because they were so tied to the house and they were trying to get you to be interested in things outside.

We really were a co-operative household when I was married. Because anything that we decided, my son and my husband and myself, we'd say "This is a co-operative household . . ." You know . . . anything we were to agree, we were to agree all together . . . "You know why we are doing this", or "You know why we're doing this" . . . I used to say to my son . . . "And that's our way of life".

I was absolutely bred and born in the Co-op.

Of course, you don't realise the importance of these things at the time when you're actually taking part, you know, to keep dates and things down to you. Not sort of realising the importance of these things when they're taking place.



For giving their time and their memories we would specially like to thank Mrs Carroll, Mrs Buckland, Mrs Felix, Joan Baker, Kathleen Kempton, Angela Hardy, Mrs Massey, Mrs Brunning, Muriel Russell, Norah Willis, Mrs Hindle, Florence Cayford, Mrs Jones, Mrs Mewis, Mabel Ridealgh, Laura Davies, John Stonehouse, Laurie Pavitt, Mrs Winget, Mrs Jenkinson, Mrs Easterling, Mrs Francis, Mary Stott, Maisie Smith, Mrs Avis, Sophie Oliver and members of Earlsfield Guild, Mrs Moss and members of the Park Lane Guild, Mrs Cattermole and members of the Gale Street Guild.

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