Margaret Llewelyn Davies: A Study in Female Leadership

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In 1901, Catherine Mayo was serving her last year of a six-year stint as branch organiser for the Women's Co-operative Guild. On a hot summer night, she paid a visit to the Guild branch at Kettering. She found the meeting room well-filled with Guild members eager to hear her speak. But the atmosphere was stuffy and oppressive. Looking about for a window to open, she noticed:

> The hall rejoices in beautiful large windows, but, alas! they are placed so high up that they are very difficult to open. We tugged at the ropes, but could make no impression. One of the guild members said she never remembered seeing them open but once, and that was when Miss Ll. Davies tackled them.[1]

Who was this woman who had managed what no other could in that meeting room at Kettering?

Margaret Llewelyn Davies was general secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild for thirty-two years, from 1889 until 1921. Official histories of the Guild attribute to her the organisation's growth in numbers and influence within and without the Co-operative Movement around the turn of the last century. Jean Gaffin and David Thoms in *Caring and Sharing* refer to her election as general secretary as a 'turning point' for the Guild and characterise her impact upon the organisation as 'profound.'[2] Catherine Webb, one of Llewelyn Davies's lieutenants in the business of Guild leadership, considered the general secretary's retirement in 1921 as the appropriate time to commence her history of the Guild, *The Woman with the Basket,* since it seemed to her the end of an era.[3] Indeed, one unpublished history of the Guild, which Llewelyn Davies kept among her private papers, alleged that she should be accorded greater recognition in the pantheon of Guild leaders than the organisation's two founders, Alice Acland and Mary Lawrenson.[4] However, none of these sources investigates her leadership critically and they deliberately ignore the dissident voices of those Guildswomen who opposed the agenda Llewelyn Davies and her cohorts on the organisation's executive, the Central Committee, imposed upon them. It is hoped here to offer a critical appraisal of her leadership complete with an assessment of the manner in which her private life affected her public career. Taking as a maxim the motto of second wave feminism that 'the personal is political,' a motto with which Llewelyn Davies herself would have agreed, it will be revealed that the general secretary's sexual orientation and class prejudices warped her ability to identify with the married working-class women who constituted the rank and file membership of the Guild, and especially those who regularly shopped at co-operative stores but chose not to join the organisation over which she presided because they were put off by its prioritisation of public service over private life.

The Women's Co-operative Guild was founded in 1883 for the married working-class women who were the customers of co-operative stores, and thus was affiliated with the Co-operative Movement. It hoped to improve the lot of such women by getting them out of the house for meetings at least one night a week, as well as to teach them how to be activists on behalf of Co-operation. As it grew in size, it developed in purpose, undertaking agitations for women's rights within co-operative organisations as well as in the non-co-operative public sphere. Catherine Mayo had, as organiser, the job of starting branches of the Guild at co-operative societies which had none and making sure the already established ones held regular meetings. In particular, she ensured that the branches discussed at their meetings the programme of work mandated by the Central Committee over which Llewelyn Davies presided. When Llewelyn Davies became general secretary of the Guild in 1889, she lobbied against branches holding either mothers' meetings or social nights filled with sewing and relaxed discussions of personal and neighbourhood affairs, otherwise known as gossip.[5] This single middle-class woman was confident that that sort of recreation could not benefit married working-class women. So each year, under her direction, the Central Committee chose a topic for the branches to study. These topics included the organisation of trade unions for women, protective labour legislation for female workers, women's suffrage, minimum wages for female co-operative employees, national health care for expectant mothers and the extension of Co-operation to the poor.

The histories of the Guild draw on the testimonials of women who idolised Llewelyn Davies for their assessments of her leadership. All these women describe how narrow and limited their lives had been until they joined a branch and began the process of self-education under its direction.[6] They attribute their increasing awarenesses of themselves and the wider world to Llewelyn Davies and the direction she gave the Guild.[7] These fans enabled the Central Committee to do a brisk business in sales of the general secretary's picture during her tenure in office. That the Committee made these sales under Llewelyn Davies's direction is evidence she participated in the making and the marketing of her image.[8] Indeed, she probably relished the fact a member of the Kettering branch of the Guild remembered her as the woman who opened windows few others could. That sort of symbolism appealed to her. For instance, in 1908, when the Central Committee commissioned Muirhead Bone to design a membership card, a variation on the window motif was selected for the card's pictorial, and Llewelyn Davies kept among her private papers the official description of the card's meaning.[9]

The design showed a woman wearing an apron and holding a market basket under one arm. She is standing on a hill in front of a cave-like stone building with an open door and looking into the sun rising over a factory town. Shielding her eyes with the other arm, she is watching birds as they soar in the sky above the town. And, as was recorded in Llewelyn Davies's papers,

> In the golden morning air she experiences strange stirrings within her, which she finds difficult to put into words .... She shades her eyes as the light grows stronger, and the saddness in her heart gives place to a sense of power and longing.[10]

'Power and longing' because the future is in her hands. Only her market basket can create the utopia of the Co-operative Commonwealth. Once she felt lonely and cramped in the home, but now she has 'the feeling of fellowship' because the Guild has put her into contact with other women like herself.[11]

Llewelyn Davies was a talented administrator, but reactive rather than proactive as a leader and dependent upon others for ideas. For instance, she turned the Guild's attention to the causes of divorce law reform and maternity benefits under national health care only after Asquith's Liberal Government initiated discussion of these issues. Her notions about what shape these reforms should take were derived from the models offered by Scandinavian legislation. She committed the Guild to supporting women's trade unions and protective labour legislation because of her friendship with Mary Macarthur and Clementina Black, who were involved in the Women's Trade Union League. Guild members often found several of the issues Llewelyn Davies chose for Guild work dry and intellectually taxing, and why the Guild should devote time to women's trade unionism and labour legislation puzzled some of them. The married working-class women who made up the rank and file of the organisation came from the relatively well-off ranks of their class and considered wage labour outside the home to be a temporary condition for females. Marriage had, after all, liberated them from it. So, Llewelyn Davies and her minions had to explain that since there were more women than men in the population, not everyone would find a mate, and even when some women found partners, they could not count on them having regular wages. Guildswomen therefore had an obligation to work for the welfare of these less fortunate of their sisters.[12]

Llewelyn Davies also borrowed ideas from the men she counted among her acquaintances. Toynbee and Rowntree are the most obvious examples, as evidenced by the Guild's experiment with the Sunderland Co-operative Society to extend the benefits of Co-operation to that segment of the working class too poor to afford to shop at co-operative stores. After several years of pressuring the male leadership of the movement to act, the Guild's efforts, which Sidney Webb had prompted Llewelyn Davies to initiate and direct, paid off. In 1902, the Sunderland Co-operative Society set up a branch store in an impoverished area of the town populated by the underemployed. The store sold goods in small quantities at prices which were uninflated by the expectation of high dividends, because no one thought the outlet would produce the profits of the stores patronised by the better-off workers. Attached to the store was a Toynbee Hall-style settlement house staffed by middle-class ladies associated with the Guild. Davies lived there for a time and undertook a survey of the neighbourhood on the model of Rowntree's survey of York.

In further illustration of her penchant for imitation, Llewelyn Davies is often credited with rationalising the Guild's organisational structure so the branches and the Central Committee could communicate more effectively.[13] She divided the country into geographic sections, and the sections into districts, into which the branches were grouped. That design was not invented by her. It was already in use by the Co-operative Union, the national organisation of co-operative societies. Moreover, Annie Jones, who served as president of the Guild from 1886 until 1892, had argued for adopting the Union's organisational structure even before Llewelyn Davies became general secretary.[14]

As a leader, Llewelyn Davies was criticised by some Guildswomen for involving the Guild in too many disparate and diverse activities at once.[15] This tendency caused her to fail to follow through on causes she had adopted for Guild attention. For example, in 1907 when a Middlesbrough County Court judge ruled that married women could not consider as their own the money they had saved from housekeeping expenses because that money had been earned by their husbands, Llewelyn Davies had the Guild drop its plans to discuss opportunities for higher education for women and turn its attention to the defence of 'Wives' Savings.'[16] The Guild's rank and file eagerly espoused this cause because, as working-class wives, they had always presumed the dividends their purchases accumulated at the co-operative stores were their own, even when the family membership was taken out in their husbands' names. In fact, male store managers had always presumed that, too.[17] The Guild managed to get the issue of 'Wives' Savings' put on the agenda of the 1908 Co-operative Congress. It was decided there to refer the matter to the attention of the Union's Parliamentary Committee, which had as its responsibility the drafting of bills sympathetic to the interests of the movement and the finding of sponsors for them in Parliament.[18] But the Parliamentary Committee never took up the matter and Llewelyn Davies never petitioned them to remind them to do so, even though she frequently wrote to them asking them to support women's suffrage.[19] Presumably, like many women's suffragists, she believed that winning the vote would enable women to demand feminist legislation on their own. Hence she gave that cause more priority than agitating, through men, for any particular law to assist women. If that was her rationale, it was a logical one. However, it was one upon which she had no authority to act unilaterally. The rank and file of the Guild, as well as of the Co-operative Movement through its Congress, had spoken; they wanted legislation to protect wives' savings. It was her obligation to remind the Parliamentary Committee of that. This is but one example of the general secretary's penchant for ignoring the wishes of the majority despite her self-proclaimed devotion to the democratic process. Not surprisingly, this penchant was rooted in her class background, which prompted her to feel that she knew better than her lower class charges what was in their best interests.

The particulars of Llewelyn Davies's life may be found in the first volume of Joyce Bellamy and John Saville's *Dictionary of Labour Biography*.[20] More interesting is what she had to say about herself and her life's work as the unmarried middle-class interpreter of the needs and wants of married working-class women. What little is left of her private papers are housed at the London School of Economics. They were deposited there after Llewelyn Davies's death, in 1944, by Lilian Harris, the woman with whom Llewelyn Davies had lived and worked for most of her adult life.

In the late twentieth century, it has become fashionable to speculate about the sexual orientations of such life partners as Llewelyn Davies and Harris. While nothing in the Llewelyn Davies papers suggests that she and Harris were lovers, the sanitised nature of those materials raises suspicions. For instance, there is nothing of a personal nature in them, and very little pertaining to Llewelyn Davies's activities as general secretary of the Guild - with the exception of the Sunderland experiment.[21] There are no letters from, or drafts of her epistles to, the many notables with whom she corresponded, including Virginia Woolf, L.T. Hobhouse, and Aldous Huxley. Most of the material in the collection covers interests which Llewelyn Davies pursued after she resigned from the Guild's leadership in 1921, although it is true many of these had grown out of her association with that organisation - such as the national care of maternity and the international peace movement. Yet there are hints elsewhere that at one time Llewelyn Davies's private papers were richer than they are now. In 1931, Llewelyn Davies compiled a number of letters she had received from Guildswomen into a volume entitled *Life As We Have Known It.* She asked Virginia Woolf to write an introduction to the book. There Woolf recalls the day she visited Llewelyn Davies in 1913, and the general secretary 'unlocked a drawer and took out a packet of papers. You did not at once untie the string that fastened them. Sometimes, you said, you got a letter which you could not bring yourself to burn ...'.[22]

In what remains today of those papers there are some items wherein Llewelyn Davies describes her hopes for the imminent dawning of a co-operative/socialist utopia; there are also copies of tributes paid to her and Harris by the Guild and the larger Co-operative Movement. But the most intriguing materials are several photographs. With these a Freudian could have a field day!

Llewelyn Davies and Harris took these pictures on their trips abroad on behalf of either the international co-operative or the pacifist movements. One of the photographs, 'Monument der Slachtoffers van 18 April 1902 - Stadskerkhof van Leuven,' is a shot of a sculpture of a woman with very muscular arms, supporting a fainted man.[23] Another is of a sculpture entitled 'Marianne,' a monument funeraire by von Beveren. This Pieta-like piece represents a larger than life woman, attired as an Amazon and wearing the expression of a mater familias - stern yet capable of love. She is looking down at a small naked man in her lap. The male figure almost appears to be grafted to her belly. He has an exhausted expression and is looking up to her as if in need of her protection and care.[24] In addition to these photographs, there is a pen and ink drawing entitled 'Fecondite.' This depicts a beautiful, bountiful young earth mother, suckling two infants at once and surrounded by several older children. One of them is an adolescent girl, carrying a basket brimming with ripe fruit.[25]

What conclusions may be drawn from these as to the gender attitudes or sexual orientations of their collectors? Clearly, they show Llewelyn Davies and Harris considered the female of the human species to be the superior and more important of the two sexes, since upon them men and children depended for strength and sustenance, not to mention the continuation of the race. Does this mean Llewelyn Davies and Harris were lesbians? Neither married nor appear to have had any wish to do so. Harris's aversion to marriage is understandable. She was one of fourteen children had by a wealthy banker by two wives, both of whom died as a consequence of their 'Fecondite.' But Llewelyn Davies's parents were happily married and presided over a loving family of seven children, of whom all but Llewelyn Davies were boys. Both her parents and their families had progressive ideas when it came to social issues having to do with either labour or gender. And fortunately, it remains possible to know what Llewelyn Davies thought about her upbringing.

Among her private papers is an autobiography she wrote in 1931 when a Norwegian magazine, *Norges Kvinder,* requested some information so it could publish an article about her. There she says she was brought up in an atmosphere of 'advanced social and religious thought, and no restraint was put on our religious and political views.'[26] Of her mother's side of the family, Llewelyn Davies writes that they were Unitarians and some of her uncles were Positivists and supporters of trade union legislation. Unitarians had always been in the forefront with those who espoused 'advanced' ideas because of the religious persecution and discrimination they endured for denying Christ's divinity.[27] Llewelyn Davies was particularly close to her mother. When she died in 1895, the general secretary wrote that she had been 'mother and sister to me.'[28] She described how her mother had supported her in her work for the Guild. Mrs Davies had paid the salary of the first Guild organiser hired by her daughter and had helped with the organisation's paper work.[29]

In her autobiography Llewelyn Davies mentions that her father was a friend of F.D. Maurice, T.H. Huxley, Browning, and Carlyle. In fact, Maurice was her godfather. Her father was an Anglican minister who had come under the influence of the Christian Socialists. She then goes on to say, 'My aunt, Emily Davies, was a pioneer of middle-class women's education, and the originator of Girton College.'[30] Llewelyn Davies attended Girton College after beginning her higher education at Queen's College, London. Apparently, her family applied their 'advanced' ideas to their own, as Margaret was treated no differently from her brothers when it came to educational opportunities. However, there was the exception of her given name. Each of her six brothers was christened with the family name, Llewelyn, as his middle name. But she was named Margaret Caroline. She adopted Llewelyn on her own some time prior to the commencement of her public career as an activist for the working class. Perhaps this name change means she wished she had been born a boy, but that is doubtful because of her women-centred life's work and her tendency to bond closely with other women.

Before Lilian Harris entered her life, her closest friend was Rosalind Shore Smith. She met Shore Smith in Marylebone, where both of their families lived. Llewelyn Davies's father was rector of Christ Church there. Llewelyn Davies and Shore Smith were extraordinarily close, both simultaneously deciding in the mid-1880s to devote their lives to the amelioration of the condition of the working class. In Marylebone, they became active in a club designed to provide working-class adults with more wholesome recreation than that offered by pubs and music halls. They played at being what Llewelyn Davies called 'amateur sanitary inspector[s].'[31] Finally, in 1886, they encountered the Marylebone Co-operative Society and were taken to a meeting of its newly formed branch of the Women's Co-operative Guild by a mutual friend.[32] It has been claimed that Llewelyn Davies's Christian Socialist father probably instigated his daughter's interest in Co-operation, since back in the 1860s the leaders of that Anglican ministry had become supporters of the Co-operative Movement.[33] However, it is just as likely Llewelyn Davies herself concluded that if she intended to devote her life to advocacy on behalf of the working class, she would have to participate in that class's culture. In her autobiography she says she came to realise that trade unionism and Co-operation were 'woven into the fabric of workers' lives.'[34] She adds that joining the Marylebone branch of the Guild, 'opened up to me a new world, practically unknown to the well-to-do classes.'[35] Like the Victorian missionaries to darkest Africa, she found she had to get to know the natives intimately, and to make their interests her interests, before she could bring them the light. This analogy is a useful one because middle-class reformers like Llewelyn Davies were as guilty of imperialising their charges as were

Christian missionaries the inhabitants of the colonies. While those missionaries acted out of a sense of racist notions of the white man's burden, the reformers were motivated by classist perceptions of the condition of England question. In the last analysis, neither were capable of functioning as interpreters of the needs and wishes of those to whom they ministered.

After joining the Marylebone branch of the Guild, Shore Smith and Llewelyn Davies began to go more separate ways. First distance, then marriage came between them. In 1889, just before Llewelyn Davies assumed her position as general secretary of the Guild, her father was transferred to the parish of Kirkby Lonsdale, in Westmorland. A few years later, Shore Smith fell in love and married. Her husband, Vaughan Nash, was a middle-class propagandist for the Co-operative Movement, and after their marriage both continued to work for the cause. Shore Smith remained associated with the Guild and edited for eight years the column that organisation used in the weekly newspaper of the Co-operative Movement, the 'Woman's Corner' of the *Co-operative News.* During that period, she and Llewelyn Davies worked closely to use the column to represent the Guild's interests. But the nature of the relationship had changed.

Llewelyn Davies met Lilian Harris in Westmorland. Harris lived with her family in the mansion her wealthy father had built in the Lake District. She quickly came to replace Shore Smith in Llewelyn Davies's life. The physical resemblance between Harris and Shore Smith is striking. Photographs show both had dark, wavy hair and wore it similarly. Both had thick-lidded eyes, thin lips and large noses. It is probable Llewelyn Davies and Harris became fast friends because Harris reminded the Guild leader of Shore Smith.

Harris virtually moved into the room in the vicarage turned over to Guild business and began to function as the general secretary's girl Friday, even before she was officially appointed the Guild's cashier in 1893. When the Reverend Davies retired in 1908 at the advanced age of 82 and the household moved back to London, Harris went with them. Virginia Woolf provides a picture of life in that house in Hampstead from her visit in 1913 ....

On entering the 'very dignified old house,' Woolf was greeted by Harriet Kidd, an unwed mother and former factory hand to whom Llewelyn Davies had given a secretarial job.[36] Woolf immediately sensed a class barrier between herself and Kidd, characterising the receptionist as a 'watch-dog to ward off the meddlesome middle-class wasters of time who come prying into other people's business.'[37] Woolf seems to be suggesting that because this working-class woman was protecting Llewelyn Davies, the general secretary of the Guild had been accepted as one of the working class to whom she ministered. Again, the missionary analogy proves useful. Whites who had lived for some time in the colonies among the people of colour there were sometimes more tolerated by the indigenous population than new arrivals.

Kidd took Woolf upstairs, where she was met by Lilian Harris, who immediately put the novelist at ease. Harris impressed Woolf as a woman who effortlessly organised events like the Guild's annual congresses.[38] She could answer 'questions about figures and put her hand on the right file of letters infallibly ...'.[39] She 'sat listening, without saying very much ...,' and also made the tea.[40] In sum, she was the angel in the house. When Llewelyn Davies was ill or busy caring for her increasingly infirm father, Harris had stewardship of the Guild, having been named assistant secretary in 1901. The general secretary trusted her friend to speak and act for her. The two were married in mind and heart.

Finally, Woolf says, Llewelyn Davies, the matriarch of the household, made her entrance, looking 'arrowy and decisive' - in a word, masculine.[41] Again, this raises the question of Llewelyn Davies's sexual orientation. Although there is no concrete evidence that her relationship with Harris was a physical one, Virginia Woolf's own predilections would make her likely to recognise a homosexual couple when she saw one. However, it is just as likely the two were celibate humanitarians, devoting their lives to the service of others after the fashion of Roman Catholic nuns. Nonetheless, whether a- or homosexual these two unmarried middle-class women considered themselves spokespersons for married working-class women. During the Guild's agitation for divorce law reform, the limitations their sexual orientations created for their abilities to identify with the wishes of Guildswomen surfaced.

The publication in 1912 of the Royal Commission's recommendations for the reform of the divorce laws and the Guild's subsequent agitation to broaden them to include divorce by mutual consent split the Guild. Lancashire women under the leadership of a Mrs Bury, who had served four three-year terms on the Central Committee and was three times president of the Guild, objected to their organisation's support for liberalising the divorce laws. They took their wedding vows seriously. They had promised for better or worse, to death do they part, and they believed that all who entered into such promises should live by them. As women from the relatively well-off ranks of the working class they knew how trying could be marriage to a man who demanded constant deference because of his ability to provide for the family. Perhaps they were, or at least knew of, women who were battered. They realised that even loving and tender husbands could be a problem because loving meant pregnancy with its attendant physical debilitations and additional caring obligations. Nonetheless, they committed themselves to living with their husbands for better or worse, no matter how worse it was. Llewelyn Davies was incapable of understanding the position of these dissident Guildswomen.[42] She had never personally experienced heterosexual love or lived intimately with a man. Working-class men from her middle-class perspective would have appeared to her particularly objectionable. Gruff and unwashed, she could not imagine how any woman could endure them, even if they were loving and tender, perhaps especially if they were loving and tender. No wonder she made it her life's work to make working-class wives as independent of their husbands as possible.

Of her accomplishments as general secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild, Llewelyn Davies was most proud of what she had been able to do to break down what she described as the 'isolation' experienced in the home by working-class wives, and of the improvements her efforts had brought to the health of mothers and their infants.[43] The Positivist bent she had inherited from her mother's side of the family drove her to measure the former with statistics in the annual reports of the Guild, which she wrote every year for thirty-two years. For Llewelyn Davies, proof that a working-class wife had been liberated from her 'isolation' was measured by the number of activities she undertook outside of the home. Thus the general secretary meticulously cited in her annual reports statistics relating to the number of women elected to educational or management committees of the co-operative stores, to the various committees of the Co-operative Union, or to the board of directors of the Co-operative Wholesale Society. She listed how many Guildswomen became factory inspectors, poor law guardians or justices of the peace.

In her early years as leader of the Guild, Llewelyn Davies had imagined that one day soon such a separate organisation for women co-operators as the Guild would no longer be necessary because gender discrimination within the Co-operative Movement, at least, would fall before the evidence of women's competency to function in roles that men had hitherto monopolised. Male and female co-operators would then work side by side to advance their cause.[44] But each year the evidence of the numbers indicated to her that gender discrimination was not to be so easily conquered. For every three women elected to educational committees, only one successfully ran for a seat on a management committee.[45] Men were willing to vote for women candidates for educational committees because the instruction of future generations in the principles of Co-operation suited what was considered to be woman's natural role. The reading of balance sheets continued to be thought men's work, so election to management committees eluded even those female candidates whom the Guild had trained in accounting.[46]

Winning seats on such powerful committees of the Co-operative Union as the Central Board, or election to the CWS's board of directors was even more difficult. During Llewelyn Davies's tenure as general secretary, no more than one or two women ever served at any one time on the Central Board of the Co-operative Union, and no more than one on the board of directors of the Wholesale.[47]

Reflecting in her autobiography on this empirical evidence for the persistence of sexism, Llewelyn Davies admitted that she had been too sanguine in her youth about the prospects for the end of gender discrimination. She no longer thought the Guild could one day soon disband. She said: 'From my experience I have found that, so long as there is class and sex inequality, it is necessary that working-women should have their own separate and affiliated organisations.'[48] Only within the confines of such bodies would working-class women find the nurturing they needed to prepare them to lead active public lives as co-operators and citizens. Her many years of reading and editing the correspondence of Guildswomen had shown Llewelyn Davies how deficient in basic skills were such women:

> ... the special circumstances of women's lives, and the effects of these circumstances, together with the fact that men are in possession, and not without prejudice as regards women's place and work, make it essential, if men and women are to come together on terms of real equality and comradeship, and if women's point of view is to be properly expressed, that women should for some time yet have special organisations of their own.[49]

She knew working-class women risked ridicule and dismissal from both men and social superiors if they dared enter public arenas untutored and unprepared.

However, occasionally Llewelyn Davies revealed that she, herself, was not entirely innocent of class prejudice. She permitted her fellow Guild leaders in the public forum of the *Co-operative News* to blame the narrow-mindedness of working-class women as much as the sexism of men for the failure of Guildswomen to win election to more than educational committees.[50] She even said the same herself in the history of the Guild she wrote in 1904.[51] Nor had she respect for working-class wives who preferred domesticity to public activism, despite the numerical evidence indicating many more female co-operators wanted quiet private lives than active public ones. Of the millions of women who shopped at co-operative stores, only a few thousand ever bothered to join the Guild.[52] And of those who became members, some left when their branch leaders forced them to discuss topics like women's suffrage or pacifism, which seemed too radical to them.[53] So the general secretary used the letters written to her by working-class wives who balanced home duties with other commitments to admonish those who alleged their households kept them too busy for community involvement. In *Life As We Have Known It,* a Mrs Layton recalls how wrong she was to have assumed that she was too busy to join the Guild when she was first invited;[54] and a 'Lancashire Guildswoman' provides a model for scheduling the week's housework around meetings.[55] This second woman was particularly proud of having 'never bought a week's baking' during her married life and of her reputation as the woman who always hurried home from out-of-town commitments in order to have a hot dinner ready for her family.[56] However, she did admit she heard the siren song of domesticity call to her many times in her travels on behalf of her work: 'I have trudged through snow and rain with my bag, and I have carried my bag in my hand until my fingers have tingled with the frost, feeling that I should have been better at home.'[57] But her 'real love for the work' and the reception she received when she arrived at her destination helped her resist temptation.[58] Evidence of the atypicality of these women is provided by the fact Llewelyn Davies had used the same letters in her 1904 Guild history to encourage the domestically-oriented to adopt public activism.[59]

Llewelyn Davies also showed class bias when she characterised working-class women according to stereotypes with which middle-class readers of Victorian fiction would be familiar. They were either heroines or quaint personages who spoke odd dialects. For instance, the women she chose to represent as the typical Guildswomen in *Life As We Have Known It* all overcame monumental hardships before coming to live happily ever after. One survived the filth and epidemics of Bethnal Green; another endured many abusive situations as a domestic servant until finally coming to be employed by a caring couple who taught her to read; another experienced the lash of the overseer as a child agricultural worker in the Fens; and there was Harriet Kidd, who was raped and impregnated by the factory owner for whom she worked.[60] Had the extraordinary survivors in *Life As We Have Known It* been typical of those who shopped at co-operative stores, or even of Guildswomen, there would have occurred the dawn of the Co-operative Commonwealth Llewelyn Davies so eagerly predicted from them wielding their market baskets like 'revolutionary weapon[s].'[61]

In addition to heroines, Llewelyn Davies's publications are populated by working-class women and men who speak in half-literate, regional dialects like Dickens characters. In her 1904 history of the Guild, she recounts what one working-class wife said to her husband when he tried to stop her from going to a

Guild meeting: 'Nay, tha's had thy day in leaving me wi' childer, it's my turn nah, and ah's going.'[62] She also reports the conversation she overheard between two men after a lecture sponsored by a Guild branch:

> I say, how don these women manage to get up sich good lecters? They're better nor moest o' thoose we getten fro' th' Educational Committee, an' th' women hanna so mich money for to goo at noather, but they beaten us chaps sometimes.[63]

She also displayed her class prejudices by prefacing the testimonials of the benefits of Guild membership she provided in her 1904 history by remarking of working-class women: 'Very few have the character and interest to study and think alone, unaided ...'.[64] So the general secretary made it her business to direct their course of study.

It is not surprising that Llewelyn Davies considered what the Guild had achieved for mothers and their infants the other great accomplishment of her career. That organisation's fight for the inclusion of maternity benefits in the 1911 Health Insurance Act, and then the payment of those benefits directly to the mother rather than the male head of household, and later for a programme of maternity care (including home helps) run by the local government boards, made for the one area of agitation in which the Guild had much success.[65] Despite the failure of the government to follow all the Guild's recommendations to the letter and the post-war budget cutbacks, the Guild's other reforming efforts had had even more mixed results.

Its campaign for a minimum wage for the female employees of co-operative stores and manufactories won the support of the CWS, but the Wholesale left implementation to the discretion of store and factory managers with the predictable result that many did not enforce the scale. Its support for divorce law reform landed the Guild in a four-year struggle with the Co-operative Union during which the Union cut off its funding of Guild activities. The settlement house established by the Sunderland Co-operative Society was closed after a year, and the neighbourhood store was left to struggle on its own. The international co-operative movement ran afoul of economic depression, and the rise of fascism and Hitler soon made pacifism look pretty foolish. There is no record of what Llewelyn Davies thought about the Second World War. Nor was she in London for the Blitz; she and Harris having already left Hampstead for Dorking, where at most they would have heard the war machines rumble by on their way to larger prey than their little town.[66]

With respect to the enfranchisement of women, Llewelyn Davies was very proud of what the Guild had been able to do to prove that working-class women wanted and deserved the vote.[67] And even in 1927, after women had had the vote for almost a decade, she still believed that the world was about to be transformed by women's enfranchisement,[68] unlike Virginia Woolf who had already come to the conclusion that a guaranteed income of £500 a year was more useful than the right to vote.[69] Nonetheless, Llewelyn Davies was not about to claim for the Guild the credit for the passing of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, like she did the maternity benefits legislation, even though the organisation had thrown its weight behind adult suffrage and supported the People's Suffrage Federation.

As for the lack of enthusiasm among Guildswomen for agitating for women's trade unionism and protective labour legislation, this eventually forced Llewelyn Davies to the position that the Guild was itself a trade union, 'a married women's trade union.'[70] Therefore it had as its special business the conditions of labour in the home, including the task of reproduction. Moreover, since practically all Guild members were mothers, they could claim to speak authoritatively about maternity even if she could not. Thus campaigning on behalf of mothers and their infants became the cause for which the Guild and its childless leader received the most recognition from the government and dignitaries.[71]

Despite her personal disinterest in heterosexuality, the general secretary appears to have loved children and they seem to have reciprocated the affection. Among the remnants of the materials from the Sunderland experiment in Llewelyn Davies's private papers are photographs of her with the neighbourhood's children and letters to her from girls who wanted to keep in touch with her after she had left the settlement house.[72] One, a Frances Jane Davie, was an especially frequent correspondent with the general secretary. She gave Llewelyn Davies her exercise book from a poetry reading at the settlement house,[73] and also sent explanations as to why she could no longer attend the children's league meetings - she had to help her mother at home.[74] She called the general secretary her 'Ideal Friend,'[75] and tried to imagine what Llewelyn Davies's home in Westmorland was like, concluding it had to be 'like the garden of Eden.'[76] Indeed, Margaret Llewelyn Davies must have seemed to the children she encountered at the settlement house like a mythological goddess come to live for a time among them. The general secretary was a tall and graceful woman, with a melodious speaking voice. Her aquiline nose gave her face a classic beauty, especially in profile. More to the point, she was aware of her attributes and appears to have used them to seduce the children into becoming co-operators, persuading them to join the store's penny bank and the settlement house's children's league. As one of her fellow missionaries at the house pointed out, 'The boys and girls are first-rate propagandists,'[77] effective agents for breaking down the resistance to the store among the more reticent adults. This suggests Llewelyn Davies was, in reality, not interested in the children for their own sakes, although the end to which she used them as means was certainly altruistic.

The Guild leader had as her primary objective the mothers of the children, always believing that when you helped the mother, you helped the child. As early as 1889, she had opposed in a Central Committee meeting the notion, '... that the chief work of the Guild was dealing with children rather than women.'[78] Her predecessor as general secretary, Mary Lawrenson, a school teacher by profession, had tried to make the Guild an organisation dedicated to working for the welfare of children. After Llewelyn Davies took over, however, Lawrenson found that she would have to forsake the Guild for involvement with the children's groups sponsored by the Co-operative Movement if she wanted to continue to pursue her interest in the young;[79] the new general secretary became that successful at redirecting the Guild's emphasis along lines she preferred. A combination of her middle-class advantages and fortuitous constitutional changes within the Guild enabled this reactive leader who borrowed ideas from others to capture the organisation as thoroughly as she did.

Llewelyn Davies's social background made possible her election as general secretary at the age of twenty-eight, after only three years of involvement with the Co-operative Movement. Members of the Central Committee were elected annually. The branches were first circularised for their nominations; nominees then contacted to be sure they were willing to run; finally, voting papers were sent to the branches and returned by them to the general secretary for tabulation. Llewelyn Davies first ran for a position on the Guild's Central Committee in 1887, after only a year's membership at the Marylebone Co-operative Society. When she tried again the next year, she won, paving the way for her successful bid for the general secretaryship in 1889, when Mary Lawrenson resigned. She was on the ballot for that position with one other candidate, her friend Shore Smith, who posted a notice in the 'Woman's Corner' of the *Co-operative News* asking that no one vote for her as she considered Llewelyn Davies to be the ideal person for the job.[80] Shore Smith must have assessed her friend's fitness for the office correctly because Llewelyn Davies would have no serious challenges to her position for the thirty-two years she held it. But had Llewelyn Davies been a working-class woman neither this rapid rise to a position of authority in the Guild nor fixity of tenure in it would have been possible.

A working-class wife would first need a supportive husband to be able to join a Guild branch and enter upon work for it. Indeed, most working-class women who rose to positions of national or regional importance in the Guild had husbands who were either employed by the Co-operative Movement or were themselves zealous co-operators. For instance, Mary Lawrenson and the president of the Guild with whom she had served, Annie Jones, had such husbands.[81] So did the married women in *Life As We Have Known It*.[82]

Next, a working-class wife would need a small family if she hoped to rise within the Guild, because too many pregnancies and child care obligations would get in the way of her Guild commitments. Again, to use the examples of the only two working-class women on the seven-member Central Committee in 1888, when Llewelyn Davies first gained election to it, Mary Lawrenson had only one son and Annie Jones four children in an era when most working-class families were much larger.

Then, a working-class woman would have to spend years of activism on the branch level of the Guild before running for a national leadership position, since she would need to acquire the basic language and speaking skills, not to mention the self-confidence, that formal education had given Llewelyn Davies. She would also have to have the good fortune to have suffered none of those accidents of fate, such as the death or disability of a husband, which often reduced working-class wives to taking in laundry to support the family. Her husband would have to have a secure, well-paying job too, because there were many incidental expenses that went with Guild work, and she would have to have spending money for them. Beyond the 6d per annum membership dues owed to her branch,[83] there were additional fees depending on how involved she wanted to become in Guild work. After the Guild was divided into districts and sections in 1890, a working-class woman would have had to become active in those if she hoped to rise in the Guild. The districts held periodic conferences, and if she were chosen as her branch's delegate to one, the branch was obligated to pay only half her expenses. If she moved up to sectional work and became a delegate to a sectional conference, the central fund (accumulated from annual contributions from branches at the rate of 2d per member) paid for half of her expenses. If she became well enough known to become a sectional secretary, an important prerequisite for election to the Central Committee, the central fund would pay her an honorarium annually, but the Guild was determined to keep this sum small so that it could not be considered a salary, since its policy during the years of Llewelyn Davies's tenure as general secretary was to maintain the principle of voluntarism in its leadership positions.[84]

There is evidence that Llewelyn Davies often used her personal wealth and connections on behalf of the Guild. On 7 April 1888, the Central Committee received a special donation from the Marylebone Guild branch;[85] a gift from Mrs Davies financed the first Guild organiser, money from a friend, Ada Mocatta, the second, and Llewelyn Davies offered her own money for the salary of the third if the Guild agreed to pay her travelling expenses.[86] When the Co-operative Union tried to stop the Guild from agitating for divorce law reform by cutting off its annual grant of £400, Llewelyn Davies offered to cover any resulting deficits in the Guild's budget from her own pocket, asking only that the Guild pay her back when it could afford to do so.[87] No working-class woman could have afforded such generosity.

When Llewelyn Davies became general secretary of the Guild, it was not yet clear that that particular position on the Central Committee would become the dominant one. Between 1886 and 1892 the president of the Guild wielded great authority. It is true the presidency had been no more than an honorary position in the mid-1880s, when the ailing Alice Acland occupied it and the Guild even considered eliminating the office, but her replacement by Annie Jones in 1886 changed matters.[88] Jones was well-connected in the Co-operative Movement by virtue of her marriage to Ben Jones, the director of the London branch of the CWS and co-author with Alice Acland's husband of the then definitive textbook on Co-operation, *Working Men Co-operators.* She believed passionately in the movement and spoke on platforms on its behalf. She felt women were the ideal propagandists for Co-operation because they were the ones who did the grocery shopping. Moreover, she deferred to the male leadership of the movement in a manner both men and traditionalist women found reassuring. At the 1890 Co-operative Congress she told her audience that she would not advise women 'to take up co-operative work and neglect household duties ... [because] they had a duty to their husbands and children, and though they should try to help one another, still they had to remember in the first place home duties.'[89] Had Annie Jones been able to remain as president of the Guild as long as Llewelyn Davies served as general secretary, the direction that organisation could have taken might have been much different from the one Llewelyn Davies set for it. Possibly, it would even have attracted a greater proportion of female co-operators as members because a married woman who prioritised the home, like Annie Jones, was more typical of the average woman shopping at a co-operative store than was Llewelyn Davies. But, in 1892, Jones was forced to leave her office because of the new rules governing service on the Central Committee, which the Guild had adopted in 1888, limiting terms of service on it to three years for everyone except the general secretary. After a twelve month hiatus, Jones again became eligible for election to the committee according to the new rules. So she ran in 1893, and was successful, but she died suddenly the next year at the youthful age of 42. Llewelyn Davies had happened upon her position at the right time in the

Guild's constitutional history, and the premature death of a leader with an opposing vision enhanced her opportunity to shape the direction of the Guild.

Many have claimed the Women's Co-operative Guild was a democratic organisation run by its rank and file and not governed from the top down by the Central Committee or its general secretary. Llewelyn Davies insists on this point in her history of the Guild, so does Catherine Webb in hers, and Gaffin and Thoms in their 1983 telling of the Guild's story.[90] Most recently, an unpublished doctoral dissertation has made this claim, as is evident by its title *'The working class women's most active and democratic movement': the Women's Co-operative Guild, 1883-1950.*[91] A disputation of this thesis best begins with the following quotation from one of the tributes made to Llewelyn Davies upon her retirement from office:

> whether we like to think it or not, an enormously large degree of the vitality and effectiveness of any association of people, however broadly democratic its government may be, rests upon the personality of its executive official.[92]

The comments about her retirement made by Guildswomen illustrate further the extent to which Llewelyn Davies had become the Guild. After thirty-two years of being led by her, it was impossible for many Guildswomen to imagine the organisation without her.[93] One woman, A. E. Corrie from the Coventry branch, went so far as to write to the women's column of the *Co-operative News* that there must be some misunderstanding, Llewelyn Davies could not really be resigning.[94] As for those who could bring themselves to believe their leader was leaving them, most pointed out that, 'It is wonderful, as you say, that the working women should have built up such an organisation, but it would have been impossible without strong personalities [a reference to Llewelyn Davies in combination with Harris] at the head.'[95]

Llewelyn Davies and Guild propagandists tried to use rhetoric to create reality. They wanted the Guild to be democratically run and hoped that if they said it was often enough, it would become so. The evidence most often used to defend the proposition that the Guild was a democracy is the role played by its annual Congress in the organisation's governance. Each branch sent delegates to the Congress, one delegate for every twenty-five members, but anywhere from 50 per cent to 30 per cent of the branches never bothered to send delegates.[96] At Congress, the delegates would vote on propositions put before them by the Central Committee, support for which the Committee had developed over the course of the year. The Central Committee meeting minutes show few suggestions arising from the branches, and moving through the districts and sections, to the Central Committee.[97] Indeed, the traffic in ideas went the other way. The Central Committee would, for instance, select a topic for study at the autumn sectional conferences; the topic would then go on to the district level for discussion, and finally to the branches. The resolutions to support the Central Committee's direction which invariably arose from these deliberations would then be voted on at the next summer's Congress. On occasions when branches attempted to circumvent this process, the Central Committee ruled them out of order. For instance, in 1918, the Leicester branch of the Guild attempted to introduce a resolution of its own before a sectional conference. (There is no record of what that resolution was.) The sectional council sought the advice of the Central Committee concerning this deviation from protocol. The Central Committee instructed the sectional council to tell the Leicester branch 'that in view of the fact that Sectional Conferences are held for the purpose of discussing special subjects agreed on, no resolutions are in order except those moved by the Councils themselves ...'.[98]

To illustrate further the top-down nature of Guild government with a specific example, in 1904, the Guild celebrated its twenty-first anniversary and established a Coming of Age Fund. The Central Committee deliberated the purpose to which the fund should be put. These discussions coincided with the decision of the Sunderland Co-operative Society to abandon its support for the settlement house that Llewelyn Davies had made her pet project. She pushed for using the money to support further efforts to extend Co-operation to the poor, but suggested the branches be circularised for their opinions first.[99] However, the branches came up with a variety of suggestions for using the money; the result being that the Central Committee decided to take to the annual Congress for a vote the suggestion that the Coming of Age Fund be used to finance schemes for bringing Co-operation to the poor.[100] Where, of course, it was unanimously approved that the money be so used, enabling the Central Committee to appoint a Miss Rushworth to be an organiser at the store the Bristol Co-operative Society had established in a poor neighbourhood.[101]

From her retirement, the former general secretary continued to chart the course for the Guild. She had groomed her two immediate successors, Honora Enfield, who had been her personal secretary, and Eleanor Barton, who had stood by her when a number of Guild branches challenged the Central Committee's 1917 and 1918 Guild Congress resolutions demanding a negotiated peace during World War I.[102] In 1931, she recommended the organisation's attentions be focused on the three reforms she considered most urgent for the future. First, she declared the state must be made to give a family allowance to increase the purchasing power of the people as a first step to a more equal distribution of wealth. She also called for a new outlook on marriage, sex, and parental relations - one that would correspond with the growing independence of women and youth. Finally, and most of all, she called for the abolition of war and fear of war.[103] She did not provide more specific details as to what she meant by a new outlook on marriage, sex, and parental relations, nor did she describe how she thought the state could be persuaded to give a family allowance or abolish war. However, she was certain that the Guild she once led should be in the forefront working to secure these achievements, and that its efforts would make a difference, even if Guildswomen represented only a fraction of the women who shopped at co-operative stores. Llewelyn Davies was a great admirer of the communist experiment in which the Bolsheviks of the new Soviet Union were engaged, and indeed, her Guildswomen were in a position similar to Lenin's Marxist intelligentsia - few in number when compared to the rest of the population. Yet she was as confident as he had been, that with a few apostles, revolutions could be made. Unfortunately, as the Soviet experiment proved, relying on the leadership of a few neither makes for democracy nor addresses the needs of the majority. That Llewelyn Davies was attracted to such a style for effecting change again illustrates her class biases - her feeling that the many were too overburdened by the chores associated with everyday life to know what was in their best interests until educated by their leader.

Thus a critical examination of Margaret Llewelyn Davies's background and the circumstances of her private life reveals the extent to which her public career was shaped by them. Her leadership style, the causes she prioritised, the limits of her ability to identify with others were prescribed and proscribed by her experiences of class and by her sexual orientation.

Conscious of her own importance to an organisation of women without the time, training, and sometimes even the desire for public lives, she kept among her private papers a history of the Guild which accorded her more significance than the its founders. She sold pictures of herself to the rank and file Guildswomen who admired her; she considered herself a breath of fresh air in their lives. In a manner similar to a colonial missionary, she delighted in converting working-class housewives into political activists, showing them that the personal is indeed political but thereby also imposing her values about what makes for a fulfilling life on them. Deaf to dissidents in the Guild because either her middle-class background or her sexual orientation made her incapable of valuing what they considered important, she made sure the Central Committee always got its way. She had come to a position of authority within the Guild, not because of her inspired leadership abilities, but because she was a capable administrator who could implement ideas borrowed from others. Her class advantages assisted her in this. Working-class Guildswomen had neither the leisure time nor the financial resources that she had. Finally, fortuitous constitutional changes and the untimely death of Annie Jones helped secure for her her fixity of tenure on the Central Committee and removed competing visions for the Guild's future. Margaret Llewelyn Davies was an unmarried middle-class woman with a mission: she wanted to do her part to solve the condition of England question in both its class and gender manifestations. For her that meant using the Guild to make working-class housewives correspond to what she considered was in their best interests.

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NOTES

[1] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, July 6, 1901.

[2] Jean Gaffin and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, 1983), p41.

[3] Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket* (Manchester: Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works, 1927), p16.

[4] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol I, item 48, folio 152.

[5] *The Twenty-first Annual Co-operative Congress, 1889* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, 1889), p106; Women's Co-operative Guild, *Outline of Work with Model Branch Rules* (Manchester: Co-operative Printing Society Ltd, 1891), p7.

[6] Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket,* passim; Jean Gaffin and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing,* passim.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Hull University Library, DCW 1/5, Minute books of the Central Committee, August 22 and 23, 1921.

[9] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 34, folios 77-78.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] For instance, Llewelyn Davies and Catherine Webb, her colleague, both argued these points in the 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, September 22, 1894 and September 30, 1893 respectively. Earlier, in 1892, Llewelyn Davies had assigned the topic to branch study; see: 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, October 8, 1892.

[13] Gaffin and Thoms, *Caring and Sharing,* pp54-81.

[14] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, June 18, 1887.

[15] Mary Lawrenson, Llewelyn Davies's predecessor as general secretary, believed Llewelyn Davies had moved the Guild too far away from co-operative concerns; see: 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, December 17, 1904. Also, in the years before World War I a frequent

contributor of letters to the editor of the 'Woman's Corner' of the *Co-operative News,* a Mr H Abbott, was quite critical of Llewelyn Davies's leadership. On April 22, 1911, she voiced the opinion that many of the concerns the Guild had become involved with were 'faddist' and asserted that the so-called 'minority' who thought as she did was not as small as 'some think.'

[16] This was quickly made the theme for the autumn sectional conferences; see: 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* November and December 1907.

[17] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* November 9, 1907.

[18] *Co-operative News,* June 6, 1908 gives a verbatim report of the discussion and decision.

[19] Co-operative Union Library, Manchester, Minutes of the Parliamentary Committee from 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, passim.

[20] Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography,* vol. 1 (London: Macmillian Press Ltd, 1972), pp96-99.

[21] The library at the University of Hull holds materials having to do with Llewelyn Davies's tenure as general secretary of the Guild, including the minute books she kept of the Central Committee meetings. However, this collection neither contains personal information about her nor focuses entirely on her as a public figure, since it is a collection of Guild materials which spans more than the years of her service to that organisation.

[22] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975), pxxviii.

[23] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VII, item 14, folio 7.

[24] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VII, item 15, folio 8.

[25] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VII, item 16, folio 9.

[26] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 39, folio 97.

[27] Ursula Henriques, *Religious Toleration in England,* 1787-1833 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) provides a fine discussion of the contributions of Unitarians to the foundations of political radicalism.

[28] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, March 2, 1895.

[29] Ibid.

[30] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 39, folio 97.

[31] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 39, folio 98.

[32] Hull University Library, DCW 3/1, *Handbook of the Annual Meeting*, 1894, p34.

[33] Bellamy and Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, p97.

[34] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol.I, item 39, folio 98.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It*, pxxiv.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It*, pxxv.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] See the correspondence between Mrs Bury and Llewelyn Davies in the 'Women's Corner,' of the *Co-operative News* between April 19 and May 3, 1913 . Also, see the *Co-operative News's* coverage of the divorce law reform discussion at the 1914 Guild Congress, *Co-operative News*, June 27, 1914 .

[43] See the introduction Llewelyn Davies wrote to Catherine Webb's *The Woman with the Basket*, pp 9-14, for her estimation of the Guild's accomplishments under her direction.

[44] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News*, July 7, 1894.

[45] In Llewelyn Davies's last year as the Guild's general secretary, for example, 756 women were elected to educational committees and 241 to management committees; see: Women's Co-operative Guild, *Thirty-eighth Annual Report*, 1920-21, p16.

[46] The Guild began a systematic effort to train women for positions hitherto monopolised by men in 1891 when it published Catherine Webb's instructional pamphlet on how to read a balance sheet.

[47] Seven women served terms on the Central Board of the Co-operative Union during the thirty-two years Llewelyn Davies served as the Guild's general secretary. One of them, Mary Cottrell, also became the first woman CWS director.

[48] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 39, folio 100.

[49] Margaret Llewleyn Davies, *Women as Organised Consumers* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, nd), p3.

[50] 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* July 22, 1899 and July 14, 1900.

[51] Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1883-1904* (Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmorland: Women's Co-operative Guild, 1904), p21.

[52] In 1921, there were 1,352,000 co-operative stores with a total membership of 4,549,000; see: Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1890-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p242. But there were only 905 Guild branches with a total membership of 50,686; see: Women's Co-operative Guild, *Thirty-eighth Annual Report,* 1920-21, p14.

[53] On February 15, 1908 the 'Woman's Corner' of the *Co-operative News* printed a letter from a branch secretary who wished to remain anonymous. She reported that her members threatened to resign their memberships when she introduced women's suffrage for discussion. In *Life As We Have Known It,* a Mrs Scott described how her branch's following of the Guild Central Committee's commitment to a negotiated peace during World War I caused membership to fall 'from over 100 to about 20,' p99.

[54] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It,* p39.

[55] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed) *Life As We Have Known It,* pp134-135.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *The Women's Co-operative Guild,* pp149-153.

[60] Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It*, passim.

[61] Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket*, p12.

[62] Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, pp159-160.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, p155.

[65] The Guild's programme is described in the last chapters of the Guild publication *Maternity: Letters from Working-Women*, 1915.

[66] The Guild's London headquarters, however, was bombed; see: Hull University Library, DCW 8/8, Mrs Ganley's unpublished history of the Guild, ch 5, p6.

[67] Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket*, p12.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1977), passim.

[70] Interestingly enough, it was Llewelyn Davies's old friend, now a wife and mother herself, Rosalind Nash (nee Shore Smith), who pointed this out to the general secretary and Lilian Harris; see: London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 41, folio 117.

[71] Gaffin and Thoms, Caring and Sharing, pp 68-73.

[72] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. III, item 7, folio 2 and vol. IV, item 21, folios 58-59, item 22, folios 60-61, item 15, folios 44-45, item 16, folios 42-43, item 17, folios 49-50, item 18, folios 51-52, item 12, folios 37-38, item 11, folios 34-35, item 23, folios 62-67, item 29, folios 29-32, item 13, folios 39-41, item 7, folios 13-22.

[73] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. IV, item 7, folios 13-22.

[74] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. IV, item 13, folios 39-41.

[75] Ibid.

[76] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. IV, item 29, folios 29-32.

[77] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. IV, item 48, folio 74.

[78] Hull University Library, DCW 1/1, Minute Books of the Central Committee, September 30, 1889.

79 Mary Lawrenson lost an election to the Central Committee in 1893 and thereafter preferred to devote her energies to working for children, although she remained active in her Guild branch at Woolwich and became the first woman elected to the Central Board of the Co-operative Union.

80 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* May 18, 1889.

81 Mary Lawrenson's husband was the director of the co-operative society in Woolwich, and Annie Jones's husband was the director of the CWS's London branch.

82 Margaret Llewelyn Davies (ed), *Life As We Have Known It,* passim.

83 By the 1920s, the annual dues had risen to as much as 4s in some branches; see: Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket,* p144.

84 Hull University Library, DCW 1/4, Minute books of the Central Committee, the January 31, 1908 meeting suggests honorarium scales dependent on section size, ranging from £2 for a section with 20 branches to £12 10s. for a section with 120 branches, and stresses that the sums be kept too small to be considered wages. For further assertions of the Guild's commitment to voluntarism, see: Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket,* p47; Women's Co-operative Guild, *Thirty-seventh Annual Report,* 1919-20, p28; Women's Co-operative Guild, *Thirty-eighth Annual Report,* 1920-21, p19.

85 Hull University Library, DCW 1/1, Minute books of the Central Committee, April 7, 1888.

86 Hull University Library, DCW 1/2, Minute books of the Central Committee, January 23, 1893; DCW 1/3, Minute books of the Central Committee, April 13, 1898; DCW 1/4, Minute books of the Central Committee, January 8, 1907.

87 Hull University Library, DCW 1/6, Minute books of the Central Committee, October 19 and 20, 1914.

88 'Woman's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* April 10, 1886, May 1, 1886, June 5, 1886.

89 *The Twenty-second Annual Co-operative Congress, 1890* (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, 1890), p 112.

90 Margaret Llewelyn Davies, *The Women's Co-operative Guild,* passim; Catherine Webb, *The Woman with the Basket,* passim; Gaffin and Thoms, *Caring and Sharing,* passim.

[91] Gill Scott, *"The working class women's most active and democratic movement": the Women's Co-operative Guild, 1883-1950,* DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 1988, passim.

[92] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VIII, item 3, folio 4.

[93] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VIII, items 14 to 79.

[94] 'Our Women's Page,' *Co-operative News,* October 15, 1920.

[95] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. VIII, item 30, folios 44-45.

[96] These percentages are compiled from the Guild's annual reports for the period from 1899 to 1921.

[97] Hull University Library, DCW 1/1-7, Minute books of the Central Committee, 1888-1920, passim.

[98] Hull University Library, DCW 1/7, Minute books of the Central Committee, April 25 and 26, 1918.

[99] Hull University Library, DCW 1/4, Minute books of the Central Committee, October 14 and 16, 1904.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Hull University Library, DCW 1/4, Minutes books of the Central Committee, July 16, 1905.

[102] 'Women's Corner,' *Co-operative News,* June 23, 1917 and June 22, 1918.

[103] London School of Economics, coll. misc. 268 m363, vol. I, item 39, folio 102.