

THE FABIAN SOCIETY.

3 CLEMENT'S INN, STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.

September, 1912.

TO THE MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES OF THE FABIAN SOCIETY.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

We are directed by the Executive Committee to appeal to you to consider whether you cannot during the ensuing year increase the work that you have lately been doing in connection with, or as an outcome of, your membership of the Fabian Society.

Complaints are made from time to time by some of the members of the Society that no opportunity is afforded to them of "doing any work for Socialism," and also by other members, who are themselves busied in the Society's task, that so many are contented with a merely "passive" membership. In such a matter it is, and must be, part of a member's work to find his own line of work for himself; and the Executive Committee gladly recognize the zeal, assiduity and success with which many members take an active part in the manifold work which the Society, by its extensive and widespread membership, is thus able to perform.

There are, it seems, members of the Society who seldom take any more active part in its varied activities than listening to some of its fortnightly lectures, reading FABIAN NEWS and the Tracts posted to them, and perhaps occasionally making use of the library of 6,000 volumes that "The Members' Bookshelf" places gratuitously at their disposal. Many such members are already actively engaged in public work of one kind or another, serving on councils or committees, or fulfilling similar duties of a public nature, and they have no more time to spare. But the Executive Committee believe that there are others who would willingly exchange "passive" for "active" membership if suitable opportunities were pointed out to them. In response to such appeals the Executive Committee place before the members the following *Program of Work* for the ensuing year—a program in which personal propaganda, individual and group study, investigation and research, and active political work are combined. Members are invited to communicate with the Organizing Secretary as to the kind of service that they are prepared to render.

The Autumn Campaign for 1912.

"WAR AGAINST POVERTY." TO DEMAND LEGISLATION NEXT SESSION FOR A NATIONAL MINIMUM OF CIVILIZED LIFE.

Foremost among the opportunities for work during the ensuing season must be named the Special Autumn Campaign which is being organized by the Standing Committee of the F.S. and I.L.P., with the definite object of obtaining "legislation next session" on some or all of the immediately practicable "seven points," viz. (i) the Legal Minimum Wage, (ii) the Reduction of Hours of Labor, (iii) Complete Provision Against Sickness, (iv) a National Minimum of Child Nurture, (v) the Prevention of Unemployment, (vi) Healthy Homes for All, and (vii) the Abolition of the Poor Law.

This campaign, to be opened at Newport during the Trade Union Congress, will include (a) a National Conference of Delegates in London and a Demonstration at the Albert Hall on October 11th, (b) conferences of delegates of working class organizations of all kinds in provincial towns, (c) lectures to all sorts of organizations and meetings all over the kingdom, (d) resolutions, petitions, lobbyings, deputations, etc., (e) the organized use of the newspaper press, and (f) the special circulation of appropriate literature. To make this campaign successful much additional help is required, practically all over Great Britain. Members (wherever residing) who wish to know how their services can be utilized are urged to communicate at once with the Organizing Secretary.

Committees of Enquiry.

A.—AT THE HEAD OFFICE.

With the view of discovering what there may be of value in certain non-Fabian standpoints, and of formulating our own ideas on the subjects, it is proposed, during the ensuing season, to conduct two Committees of Enquiry, one on "The Control of Industry," and the other on "Land Problems and Rural Development."

The Committee on the Control of Industry, which will be presided over by Mrs. Sidney Webb, will, probably by separate sub-committees, enquire into (a) Syndicalism; (b) Self-Governing Workshops and Industrial Co-partnership; and (c) Co-operation by Consumers (whether in the Store and its factories, the Club or the Municipality).

Among those who have already signified their willingness to take part in this Committee are Clifford Allen, Miss Atkinson, Hubert Bland, Emil Davies, H. Gillespie, J. Spencer Hill, G. Lansbury, Dr. Marion Phillips, Mrs. Reeves, H. H. Schloesser, Mrs. Bernard Shaw, H. Snell, Clifford Sharp, Sidney Webb and Mrs. Sidney Webb.

The Committee on "Land Problems and Rural Development," which will be presided over by H. D. Harben, will enquire into the position and prospects of the English country side, both from the standpoint of production (large or small farms, tenancy and

ownership, arable and pasture farming, development of minor products, etc.), and also from the standpoint of the life of the rural citizen (how to secure a reasonable standard not only of subsistence but also of civilization for the cultivator).

Among those who have already signified their willingness to take part in this enquiry are Hugh Aronson, R. A. Bray, H. D. Harben, C. M. Lloyd and Mrs. Pease.

Members willing to take part in either of these enquiries are invited to write to the Secretary before Sept. 15th next, stating which of the two Committees they wish to join. It is intended that the Committees should not merely discuss, but actually seek to discover, and members volunteering must therefore be prepared to undertake a share of the work in one form or another. It is proposed (a) that select bibliographies should be prepared and the principal published sources of information should be consulted; (b) that expert exponents of the several movements should be invited to attend and talk them over with the Committee; (c) that (with the help of local Fabian Societies, etc.) enquiry should be made into, and perhaps visits paid to, particular examples and experiments, in order to realize the spirit which inspires them, the measure of success which they have attained, and their shortcomings or limitations. In order to enable each Committee to work together with any fruitfulness, it will be necessary for all its members to read (or to re-read) some easily accessible book (to be decided upon) so that all may start with a common acquaintance with what is known on the subject. Some members may be able, in addition, to undertake personal investigations in particular directions, or to undertake the reading and summarizing of particular reports or not easily accessible books, or to help in the necessary clerical work, or otherwise contribute their quota.

At the end of the enquiry, each Committee should, perhaps by arrangement among its several members, endeavor to prepare a report, for consideration and adoption by the Committee, for communication to the Society, and possibly for publication.

B.—BY LOCAL FABIAN SOCIETIES.

It is suggested that members of Local Fabian Societies should consider whether their own Society might not usefully undertake a similar enquiry, either independently into some subject of local importance (such as housing; boy and girl labor; the extent to which the Public Health, Children, Factory and Workshop, Shop Hours and other Acts are being locally enforced; how the Poor Law and the Education Acts are being locally administered), or into one of the two subjects of national scope to be dealt with by the Committees in London, for which they could act as local investigators and correspondents. The appointment of such a local committee of enquiry might well be considered at the next meeting of each Fabian Society.

C.—BY GROUPS.

The Women's Group calls for more workers in connection with the enquiries it has in hand with regard to Women's Wages, the extent to which women workers support dependants; and other subjects.

Contesting Local Elections.

One obvious duty of every Socialist is active participation in local elections. The ensuing year will see an exceptional number of such elections, many of them of kinds that are usually neglected. Parliamentary bye-elections always get more than enough attention, but the various other contests, in which active citizenship is equally called for, and which offer excellent opportunity both for Socialist propaganda and Socialist administration, often go by default without even a contest. This is especially true of Rural and Urban District Council elections, which occur at different dates in different places. In England and Wales there will be, in 1912-3, the following elections:—

Town Council and Metropolitan Borough Council elections on November 1st, 1912.

Parish Council elections in March, 1913.

County Council elections in first week of March, 1913.

The Metropolitan Boards of Guardians elections in May, 1913.

Urban District Council, Rural District Council, and Board of Guardians elections (outside London), of which a large majority take place in May, 1913.

Local Groups and Fabian Societies ought at once to consider what action can be taken with regard to these forthcoming contests, action which can best be taken through the local Labor Party or Labor Representation Committee, to which (where such bodies exist) all local Groups and Societies are recommended to belong.

London members are particularly urged to consider, at once, how they can take effective action to get more Labor and Socialist members, men or women, elected, not only to the London County Council, but also to the Metropolitan Borough Councils and Boards of Guardians. Unless vigorous steps are promptly taken in each locality a large number of the 200 separate ward elections for the Metropolitan Borough Councils, and a still larger number of the 200 separate ward elections for the Metropolitan Boards of Guardians *will not be fought at all!* This can be dealt with only by local effort. We should like to see one or more members of the Fabian Society or other Labor or Socialist organizations, as candidates in every one of the 200 wards into which London is, for these two elections, divided. Those members who cannot themselves become candidates may find ample work during October and April in the election campaigns. Particulars as to qualification, how to proceed to get up a contest, method of nomination, cost of the election, etc., will be supplied by the Organizing Secretary on application.

Service on Local Insurance Committees.

A new opening for personal service has arisen, for both men and women, in connection with the Insurance Act. The Local Insurance Committees and their district sub-committees will exercise important public functions; and it is, moreover, essential that the working of the Act should be watched and studied. Members are urged to seize every opportunity of getting appointed to these new bodies, for which, in the aggregate, over ten thousand persons will be required.

Individual Study.

Members of the Fabian Society ought, it may be suggested, to feel a special responsibility for making themselves acquainted with every issue of social or economic interest that comes up, in order that they may be in a position, not only to have sound opinions themselves, but also to be able to influence those with whom they come in contact. With this object there is organized "The Members' Bookshelf," which places the best books on all such subjects at the disposal of individual members free of charge. Local Fabian Societies and Groups do not at all adequately avail themselves of the advantages offered by the Fabian Book Boxes. The now extensive series of the Society's publications, more than one hundred of which are now on sale, provides instruction in succinct form and extensive suggestions for further reading on nearly every subject that rises into current interest. The Secretary—calling to his aid the best expert authorities on each enquiry—is at all times ready to answer questions (including law and public administration) and to furnish carefully selected lists of books. A small trust fund is available out of which members residing in or near London, who wish to pursue systematic University Courses in Economics and Political Science, but who are unable to pay the fees, may privately obtain pecuniary assistance towards this expense.

Distribution of the Society's Publications.

The coming autumn will see a period of great activity in this department of our work. As has already been announced, a "Biographical Series" of Tracts will be inaugurated by the publication of three treating of Francis Place, William Morris, and "Robert Owen as a Practical Reformer." Other are in preparation on "Owen as an Idealist," on John Stuart Mill, and on Ferdinand Lassalle; whilst further additions to the series will follow if the first numbers are rapidly sold off.

Alongside these the ordinary output of Tracts will be maintained. Manuscripts on Profit Sharing, on German Socialism, on Electric Undertakings, on Women's Work and Wages in the Past, and on the Civil Service are in various stages of completion; whilst the work of the Committees of Enquiry is likely to result in reports which will take the form of Tracts.

The ten volumes of the Fabian Socialist Series (Fifield; 6d. or 1s. each) could, we believe, be much more effectively pushed into circulation by our members. The latest publication, "Songs for Socialists," which has just been issued, will, it is believed, be of use to all Labor and Socialist gatherings, and needs only to be made better known to be widely appreciated. The Executive Committee have gone in for this publishing work, at the same time keeping the older Tracts revised and up to date, *relying on our members to push the sales*. The Society's activities in this direction are dependent on such personal service. New Tracts have to be paid for in cash, and the more we publish in any year, the greater the need for members' activities. During the two years

from March, 1910, to March, 1912, we published fifteen Tracts, which was more than the total number (fourteen) published in the four years 1901-2-3-4; and as recently as 1908 only three Tracts were published within the year.

In fact, the opinion, not infrequently expressed, that the Society shows less activity than in old days cannot be justified by a reference to statistics. But it is often forgotten that the issue of Tracts is expensive, not only because the money laid out is only replaced by sales spread over a considerable period, but also because every member, associate, and subscriber receives a free copy; and thus every additional Tract published means 4,000 copies supplied gratis.

There is the greatest possible diversity in the action of members with regard to disposing of the Society's literature. This is supplied at a low price for distribution (in parcels costing 5s. 4d. each). Some members are constantly sending orders for Tracts and books, which they sell or give away. Others seem never to lift a finger to help the circulation. It is hard to believe that any member, in whatever remote part of the country he may live, can find no opportunities for this work.

Increasing the Society's Funds.

Some members who cannot give personal service contribute their quota by subscriptions in excess of the normal income tax of one half per cent. per annum (or ten shillings for each hundred pounds of income) to which our members voluntarily subject themselves. Unfortunately some members do not find themselves able to keep up to this standard, and others, it is feared, forget that there is such a standard. Whatever the cause, the Society's treasury shows signs of depletion.

The steady increase of the Society's work led to the general accumulation of arrears, and a Committee of the Executive carefully investigated the working of the office at the end of last year. In consequence of their recommendations, the Executive Committee rearranged the work, increased the staff, raising salaries where necessary. Later on, the Members' Meeting passed a resolution directing further increases in certain cases.

The result of the past activity was that we began the current year with an unpaid account of £120, and a debit balance of £169.

It is therefore necessary to ask members to increase their subscriptions wherever they are in a position properly to do so. We have not for several years made demands upon them for the Parliamentary Fund, to which in the past they have liberally contributed, and for which we shall when the occasion comes confidently appeal again. But our regular subscription income has for some years past shown no elasticity. Ordinary subscriptions from members totalled £1,074 in 1912, £1,163 in 1911, £1,243 in 1910 and £1,169 in 1909, whilst the membership has increased over 200 during these years. We

are afraid that some of the members, new and old, do not realize how much each member actually costs the Society in free literature and postage alone. We are convinced that the majority of our members will cordially welcome the activities indicated in the foregoing pages, and we have, therefore, no hesitation in calling upon them to provide the necessary means for carrying out their wishes.

Members are invited to send in supplementary donations, and to indicate, wherever possible, that they will pay an increased subscription in future years.

By Order of the Executive Committee,

EDW. R. PEASE, *Secretary.*

W. STEPHEN SANDERS, *Organizing Secretary.*

Form for Remittance enclosed.

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By Order of the Executive Committee,

EDWARD R. PEASE, Secretary.

W. STEPHEN SANDERS, Corresponding Secretary.

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