

THE SCOPE AND WORK  
OF A  
LOCAL FABIAN SOCIETY

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Submitted to the Annual Fabian  
Conference, 5th July, 1913,  
and approved.

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O B J E C T S.

The special objects of a Fabian Society are: -

1. To convert as many persons as possible to Socialism.
2. To enable its own members to educate themselves in Socialism, and to train themselves for further service.
3. To be as helpful as possible to other local organisations such as the Local Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Trades Council, the local Co-operative Societies, the Women's Labour League and other women's organisations.
4. To exercise all possible influence on the Local Government Bodies, so as to promote good government in a Collectivist direction.
5. To promote the interests and extend the influence of the Fabian Society.

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M E T H O D S.

Among the principal methods employed by Fabian Societies are: -

1. Regular meetings of the members (lectures, discussions, business meetings, excursions, &c).
2. The disposal of literature.
3. The organisation of lectures in other Societies.
4. The publication of local Tracts.
5. The utilization of the local press.
6. Scrutiny of and co-operation with Local Governing Bodies.
7. Holding educational classes.
8. Undertaking local investigations or study of local problems.
9. Co-operation with the Local Labour Party, Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies and other local bodies.

Each Society should consider from time to time whether its work in any of the above lines, or in others, can be developed or increased.

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## ORGANIZATION.

It is advisable to give to as many members as possible some definite work to do. With this view, besides an Executive Committee, a General Secretary and a Treasurer, some or all of the following may usefully be elected wherever members can be found to undertake the work: -

1. Literature Secretary or Literature Committee.
2. Press Secretary or Press Committee.
3. Local Government Secretary or Committee.
4. Education Secretary or Committee.
5. Lecture Secretary or Committee.
6. Bookbox Secretary or Librarian.

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### THE SOCIETY'S OWN MEETINGS.

These should be held regularly, at fortnightly (or monthly, or even weekly) intervals from about September or October to May or June. It is advisable to print a programme for the whole Session, if possible: or at any rate for each quarter. Some time should be allowed (either the whole or part of a meeting) at least once a quarter for discussion of the Society's own business. Otherwise the programme may be made up, according to resources, out of (a) lectures by some of the Society's own members; (b) lectures by members of other Fabian Societies or by other Socialists; (c) non-socialists, especially persons of local distinction or special knowledge, who may respond to an invitation; (d) general discussions by the membership on topics of interest; (e) a set debate between two persons taking opposite sides; (f) the reading of a draft tract or other publication sent down from London for the purpose.

It may be convenient to hold the meetings at different places, sometimes securing a large public hall, at other times a small public room, and at other times, again, taking advantage of a member's invitation to meeting at his residence.

Arrangements should be made for the admission of non-members, at some or all of the meetings. It is desirable sometimes for the Secretary to send formal invitations or cards of admission to selected persons; or for all the Executive Committee, or for all the members to do this.

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## DISPOSAL OF LITERATURE.

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One of the most important pieces of work is to dispose of a constant stream of Fabian Tracts, and other literature. This duty should be pressed on all the members. But every Society ought also to have either a literature Secretary (or, better still, a Literature Committee, with its own Secretary), who should take special charge of this work. Arrangements should be made for getting supplies in bulk from the London Office; and for storage and distribution.

There should be a Literature Stall at each of the Society's own meetings, with a volunteer always in attendance.

It is sometimes possible to get permission to have a Literature Stall at other meetings, especially if it is volunteered that the special literature of the meeting will also be sold.

Volunteer literature sellers should be told off to visit all suitable gatherings or large demonstrations.

A steady sale may be made by relays of volunteers at places where outdoor meetings are held.

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ORGANIZATION OF LECTURES IN OTHER SOCIETIES.

Any members who can lecture even moderately well, either on Socialism or on any particular subjects of interest, should be pressed to permit lectures to be arranged for them. A list should be prepared of all the societies of any kind within a ten mile radius (including Trade Union Branches, Co-operative Societies, Literary and Discussion Societies, Political Societies and Clubs, Working men's Clubs, Church or Chapel Societies, Women's Societies of various kinds, Adult Schools, Brotherhoods, &c.). Letters should be sent to some or all of these from time to time (every August or September for instance) offering the services of lecturers on particular subjects.

This should be the business of a special Lecture Secretary (or a Lecture Committee with its own Secretary).

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PUBLICATION OF LOCAL TRACTS.

It is sometimes possible for a Society, without crippling its financial resources, to publish a Tract itself, (being a specially good paper read at one of its meetings, or an examination of some subject of local interest). The local conditions as to Housing, Sanitation, Small Holdings or allotments, School-feeding, School Clinics, the local administration of the Poor Law, the local Workhouse, the Unemployed, &c. may furnish material for a useful leaflet. A survey of all the local conditions on these points - a fit subject for Group Study - makes a very useful Tract.

It is advisable to seek the advice of the London office at an early stage. In some cases, copies might be bought for the use of other Fabian Societies, and the expense of printing thus shared, if arrangements are made beforehand.

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### UTILIZATION OF THE LOCAL PRESS.

Great use can often be made of the local press, so as to advertise the Society, spread its ideas and educate the newspaper readers. Every Society ought to try to have an energetic Press Secretary (or Press Committee with its own Secretary). Among matters to be attended to are the following:

1. Getting inserted as news preliminary notices of forthcoming meetings and lectures.
2. Getting lectures reported (if no reporter attends, the Secretary should send in a report of his own).
3. Writing letters for insertion (a) in answer to other letters; (b) commenting on some item of local news; (c) criticising some action of the Local Governing Bodies, &c.
4. Engaging in a controversy with some opponent in the local press.
5. Contributing articles either on Socialism, or on some branch of public administration or philanthropic service or an economic topic.

Do not neglect any newspaper within a ten mile radius. They all have their own readers.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Valuable work may be done, the Society's reputation may be increased, and useful education afforded to its own members by systematically watching the proceedings of the various Local Governing Authorities (County, Borough, District and Parish Councils; Local Insurance Committees; Post Authorities; Boards of Guardians, in England, Wales and Ireland only, School Boards in Scotland only); This work should be undertaken by a Local Government Committee with its own Secretary; or at any rate by a Local Government Secretary.

Arrangements should be made for regularly getting and scrutinizing (a) the reports of proceedings; (b) the printed documents issued; and, if possible, (c) private information from Councillors, with regard to each of the Local Governing Authorities. This should afford (i) material for use by the Press Committee or Press Secretary; (ii) matter for "Questions" to be asked in the Council by any Labour member, or other friendly Councillor; (iii) ground for enquiry of the London Office; (iv) the subject for complaint to the Local Government Board, the Board of Education, the Board of Trade or the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries; and (v) sometimes an opening for a "question" to be asked in the House of Commons.

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EDUCATIONAL CLASSES.

It is sometimes found useful and practicable for the Society to run educational classes for the benefit of its members; either on Socialism, or on Economics, or on the machinery of Local Government, or on some leading book, or on some specially topical subject. Such classes require a competent lecturer or class leader. Syllabus, lecture, notes and questions might sometimes be supplied by the London office.

Instead of an original lecture, a chapter of a book might be read aloud and discussed at each meeting; or a series of Tracts might be read aloud and discussed.

The Education Secretary (or Education Committee with its own secretary) would make this a special department.

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FABIAN BOOK BOXES.

The Society has the opportunity of having a lending library available for its members, changed four times a year, for a subscription of ten shillings a year. Book boxes can be made up to suit any special requirements.

This should be in charge of a Book Box Secretary or Librarian.

LOCAL INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH.

Valuable work may be done, either by individual members, or by Committees or Groups, in investigating social questions of local interest; either independently, or in connection with the Fabian Research Department. At present (1914) the two subjects being dealt with are (a) the Control of Industry, including Co-operation, Profitsharing, Municipal and State Enterprise, Trade Union Organisation, etc.; (b) State Insurance.

The first subject enquired into was Land and Rural Development, and the results of the Enquiry have been published as a Report under the title of "The Rural Problem."

JOINT ACTION WITH OTHER BODIES.

The Society should aim always at being as helpful as possible to all Socialist or Workingclass organisations in its district; co-operating with them in getting up meetings or demonstrations, obtaining for them any information or professional advice that is required, and rendering any other service for which an opportunity may offer.

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