

# Stocksbridge Band of Hope Industrial Co-operative Society

LIMITED,

Stocksbridge, near Sheffield.

## Notes and Notions.

**A**FTER many weeks the industrial world looks like settling down, and with peace we expect this country will reap the prosperity so desirable after years of travail.

Now that distress in our district is likely to lift it is appropriate to review the part played by the Society in assisting in the district. Up to July 1st the Society had issued approximately 1,040 gallons of soup, thus providing free dinners for those who applied for tickets to the number of 83,200. Bread had been retailed at the cost price of 6½d. All vouchers presented by miners have been met. The Co-operative Women's Guild have given assistance wherever they could, and last week they issued £15 from their funds to needy cases. The co-operative employees have also extended a helping hand. In addition to sending a weekly supply of bread to the Central Relief Committee they have relieved 100 persons, the cost being £32. We possess letters which prove the value of the help the Society had been able to give.

The half-yearly meeting had not been held when these notes were written. We hope to give a report thereon next month. Although a dividend of 3d. in the £ is small, yet in view of the times it is satisfactory. Any society which holds in trust the savings of its members must not sacrifice in the slightest the stability of those savings. Any member studying this Society's balance sheet cannot help but feel pleased at the healthiness of all the Society's assets.

The Guildroom has once again become free for social events. Its interior is now transformed, and it is the best room of its kind in the district. The Women's Guild meet there each Tuesday night, and all women members are given a hearty invitation to join the Guild. Mrs. Burrows is the secretary, and we are pleased to hear from her that the number of guildwomen is increasing.

We are now in a position to cater for any class of meals. Our Society has established a reputation for catering for all kinds of functions, and members cannot do better than ask Mr. Taylor or any branch manager for terms.

Some of our employees and members have asked if it is not possible to form a co-operative choir. It is not generally known that some of the best choirs in the country are from co-operative societies. The C.W.S. choirs have won first prizes at many

festivals, and our local friends at Sheffield and Ecclesall have many notable successes to their credit. Should there be a general desire to forward this movement I have no doubt that the educational secretary (Mr. Eastwood) would be pleased to make all necessary arrangements.

It used to be said that what was put in print was right and an established fact. So far as this journal is concerned we are prepared to stand by the statements. But in some of our contemporaries, especially when they write about co-operative societies, we regret to find inaccuracies, and members will be wise to inquire carefully before taking the remarks as facts. We have just seen two reports, to be noted only by their being all wrong.

The Stocksbridge and district sports will shortly be held. Members are particularly asked to inspect the prizes, which will be on view in our windows one week prior to the sports. These prizes have been obtained from the C.W.S. through your Society, and all concerned are highly satisfied. Our dry goods manager is delighted. If you desire any similar articles getting you will save money by seeing him.

The collective life assurance scheme is now so well appreciated in our district that it is not necessary for me to sing its praises. But another step to its perfection has been made. Any member leaving the district should apply to the Central offices for a transfer form, giving the last five years' purchases. For now, when a death occurs, the insurance can be based on purchases from all the societies of which the person was a member.

The remarks of Esau to Jacob regarding his birthright and blessing were forcibly recalled when a lady was heard to say, with a sigh, "Ay, they've not only given us a small divi., but they've taken t'sale away!" With Antony she could surely have said "This was the most unkindest cut of all."

Should any of our readers be in possession of anecdotes relating to our local ancient celebrities the Local Editor would be pleased to receive them, and as they form invaluable material we propose to give them as we think fit, and so here beginneth:—

STOCKSBRIDGE AND DISTRICT ANECDOTES, No. 1.

Finney Shay, of watch-cleaning fame, had many graces, and custom attributed to him magical powers. Thereby was Finney pleased. Now the King and Miller at Deepcar possesses (or possessed)



an old-fashioned fireplace, the grate being of large dimensions. Finney, determined to show that his power for raising the devil was no myth, went into the hotel about noonday, and after argument stakes were laid, and Finney stood in front of the fireplace determined to raise the dark one. Drawing a circle, he placed therein the signs of the zodiac, and with arm and eyes upraised he made various flourishes, muttered a few mystical sentences, and, finally, shouted "Mephistophles! I conjure thee arise!" Immediately a dark form sprang from the fireplace. All those in the room dashed outside save Finney. He and the dark one sat down to the table, and freely drank they of the liquors which the believing ones had left, and their hearts were glad within them.

N.B.—Finney had met the village sweep before he entered the hotel. Tradition states that only Finney and the sweep left the hotel that night, and both were merry.

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### A Manager on the State of Trade.

We are apt to consider that our circumstances are unique, but when depression comes it is not confined to one district nor one country. We ask our members carefully to consider the remarks of Mr. Swingler (the manager of Birmingham Society) in his presidential address to the Co-operative Managers' Association, as reported in the *Producer*:—

Mr. Swingler said: At the moment they were living in a time of industrial depression, and he did not think even the most confirmed optimist was satisfied with the position. They had an anxious time during the war in conducting their business, but were now experiencing conditions infinitely worse. They saw thousands upon thousands of the industrial population out of work, and as the dispute between mine owners and mine workers continued, they could see the ranks of the unemployed augmented daily.

Naturally, this state of things was having a disastrous effect on trade. Sales throughout the country were decreasing, and as a consequence expenses were increasing at an alarming rate.

Already many societies were working their employees short time, and many more would have to follow. It was going to be a question of sacrifice amongst all ranks of employees if they were to weather the storm, because from what they knew by actual experience, that with continual rise in expenses, dividend was gradually being eliminated.

#### HIGH EXPENSES, FALLING PRICES.

What was the position if dividend was eliminated? Let them candidly admit that when they reached that stage it would be a serious check to progress. The co-operative educationist might claim that dividend was not an important factor, as far as the member was concerned, but they who had to deal with the business side of the movement knew full

well what the effect of reduced dividends was on the loyalty of their members.

They were up against a position never equalled, he thought, at any time in their experience as officials—bad trade, high expenses, and falling prices. Their only hope to improve matters was a speedy reduction in expenses, and that could only be brought about by a revision of wages. None of them wanted to return to a pre-war rate for their staff, but they were hampered now, undebtedly, by the high cost of wages on sales.

The competition of the private trader in every branch of trade was persistent, and showed a strong endeavour to retain trade. To progress they had to face and meet this competition, and with their expenses so high it was a grave problem to deal with. Personally, he had been surprised at the low wages asked by applicants for situations. If their competitors were paying such low wages it was a serious handicap to them in their business.

When prices began to rise rapidly during the war practically all management committees instructed their officials to keep prices down, and give the members the benefit. He considered that was a wrong position to take up. They ought to have followed the market prices and created reserves to meet the slump when it came. The pendulum swung both ways.

It was fair to assume that the private trader generally did exceedingly well on rising markets, and he was thus in a better position to-day than co-operators in respect to cutting his losses.

What do they find now? Members were critical in their survey of prices, and made comparisons which in most cases were unreasonable, as price only, and not quality and price, was taken into account. Too many co-operators forget past benefits.

They get a good example of current trading in the last C.W.S. balance sheet. Huge losses were incurred on a colossal trade, and the same was likely to happen in the retail societies. Naturally they, as buyers, were gravely concerned at such a position, but if they considered the state of the markets one could not see any better results could have obtained.

#### C.W.S. THE BEST VALUE.

There was no doubt but that the C.W.S. productive works would resume their progressive course when trade revived, and he believed, and was sure they believed also, that for quality and price the Wholesale productions were absolutely the best value.

We have recently seen much correspondence on the question of "Flaggers." Some of the writers did not realise that many of the goods sold by these so-called "Flaggers" are invoiced through the C.W.S. The practice of these people waylaying one in the street was an objectionable one, even in a legitimate way of business. They had offices, and if trade was sought after it should be done in a business-like manner.