

I do not want to speak today of how the Independent Labour Party and the National Union can help one another in those forms of work in which we are deliberately uniting our forces; but I do want to speak of another kind of help which you men of the Independent Labour Party, and indeed of the whole Labour movement, are giving, unconsciously, perhaps, to us women of the Women's movement—a kind of help which I believe we can reciprocate if you will let us.

When any section of the community has been fettered and oppressed, whether it be a class, or a sex, or a creed, or a race, the first result of a movement towards freedom is apt to be a feeling of bitter antagonism towards those who have been responsible for the fetters and oppression. The reaction from oppression is sometimes almost as unjust in its manifestations as the oppression itself. A phase of rather ugly self-assertiveness has to be gone through before the right relations are established and a state of normal healthy balance attained. We in the Women's movement are going through this phase now. We are clamoring a great deal about our rights; about the monstrous selfishness of man-made laws; the faithlessness of male politicians; there is, in fact, a danger that the Women's movement, which came into being as a result of a generous impulse to help men in the great work of social regeneration—there is a danger that this movement may for the time express itself in the form of sex-antagonism. It is this danger that you are helping us to overcome. How can we let ourselves fall a prey to sex-bitterness when the men of the Independent Labour Party are helping us at every turn in our work in the country—when we see that you feel our wrongs as keenly as we do ourselves? Above all, when we know that you are prepared to forego any further franchise gains for yourselves until women can share in them—we realize that it is not against men we have to fight, but against a wrong system which has erected an artificial barrier between men and women, dividing into two camps those who ought to be comrades working side by side.

And in the same way is there not a danger in the Labour movement that the result of an oppressed class may lead to class-bitterness? Can we in the Women's movement not help you there? We have broken down class barriers in our movement, just as you have broken down the sex-barriers in yours. You place sex-equality in the forefront of your programme, and you welcome women to your ranks as comrades on the same footing as yourselves. Similarly, membership of our Union is open on equal terms to men and women of every class and occupation. Everyone has a vote, and only one vote. We welcome as a fellow-worker anyone who wants to work, even if she happens to be a duchess! Cannot we do for you in the matter of class-antagonism what you are doing for us in the mat-

ter of sex-antagonism? Do not mistake me. I am not arguing against class-consciousness; but against class-bitterness. The former is a necessary stage in the process of emancipation; but bitterness never helps any movement; it destroys the clear vision and the balance of judgment.

I believe it is by saving one another from becoming bitter in the course of the struggle we have set ourselves, that the Labour movement and the Women's movement can give each other help far more valuable than any mere co-operation in elections—help that will bring out the best in both movements, and keep them sound.



AT A CONGRESS OF ENGLISH WORKING WOMEN.

Janet Case in The (London) Nation of June 27.

During the last thirty years the Women's Co-operative Guild has been built up by the independent efforts of the women of the co-operative movement, aided by grants of money from the governing body of the Co-operative Union and from Co-operative Societies. It has stood for a progressive policy, which included the establishment of a minimum wage for all co-operative employes, the employment of none but trade unionists and the extension of co-operation in poor districts; and as an organization of married working women it has more and more expressed their needs and wishes, and has come to be recognized by the country as the natural exponent of their views.

Among these married women's questions is Divorce Law Reform, which for the last four years has been included in the subjects for discussion and for educational work. Year by year the support in the Guild has grown stronger, and resolutions have been passed at successive congresses with increasing majorities in its favor. This year, for the first time, the right of the Guild to shape its own policy has been called in question. The Central Co-operative Board, yielding to outside pressure from the Salford Catholic Federation, made its annual money grant to the Guild conditional upon their dropping the divorce agitation, and on their taking up no work disapproved of by the United Board.

This was a direct challenge to the independence of the women, and they left the Board in no doubt about their answer.

An urgency resolution on the subject was submitted to the congress at its meeting in Birmingham last week, and from the very first the end was easy to foresee. The great hall was packed from end to end with the 800 or 900 delegates, representing the 32,000 members of the Guild. The feeling was tense. From every side delegates rose in quick succession, speaking from their places in the crowded galleries, or making their

way in quiet order down the long hall to take their turn at the rostrum in front of the platform. They did not waste their words; but they made their meaning clear. Neither did they spare the feelings of such representatives of the Central Board as were present as visitors upon the platform. They scorned to sell their independence "for a paltry £400," drawn from funds to which, it may be noted, the women, no less than the men, contribute. It is half their income, but they cheerfully faced a reduced exchequer and increased endeavors to raise the sum within the Guild as the price of their freedom. "We are out for improved conditions for women and children, yes, and for men; but we are not out to work as subordinates." "We want to work on an equal footing, but we are not prepared to be dominated." The vote was overwhelming. It was the women's Declaration of Independence.

The question of Divorce, which had raised the storm, was kept subordinate. After pointing out that there was no intention to coerce a minority, but only to allow to a majority the freedom of their consciences, speakers left this topic for the larger issue.

The turn of Divorce came later. The debate on this subject next day showed that the feeling for reform was stronger even than last year. The ideal of married life is high among Guildswomen, as is the actual standard of their married lives. They do not take marriage lightly. You could tell that from the spontaneous burst of applause that followed the reminder that men and women take one another for better, for worse. But the tragedies of broken lives that come within the range of their experience rouse them to a demand for better and humaner marriage laws to save human beings from unnecessary suffering and degradation. When the red voting tickets were held up in support of the recommendations of the majority report, the hall looked like a field of poppies. The addition of mutual consent as a ground of divorce was approved by a large majority, and the need for women assessors in court was endorsed by the whole meeting.

The Guild has naturally taken from the start great interest in the question of maternity benefit, and as an outcome of this interest it has this year brought forward a scheme for the national care of maternity, by means of maternity centers, under the care of the public health authorities, where ante-natal conditions may be studied, with opportunity for consultations on pregnancy sickness, with municipal midwives and with an increased maternity benefit, which would allow of a period of rest both before and after the confinement. On this subject the women, speaking from first-hand knowledge, speak as experts, and the backing of the Guild should give cogency to the representations on behalf of the scheme that are being made to Cabinet Ministers. But here, as

elsewhere, the women feel the lack of the driving power of the vote, and a rider was added to the resolution, which was carried with only four dissentients, urging a Government measure of parliamentary and municipal franchise for all adult women, and, what is more significant, urging all Guildswomen to refrain from working for any candidate who would not pledge himself to this reform.

The other subjects for discussion included schemes for the education of Guildswomen, and for a co-operative college, and the speeches revealed the passionate hunger of these women for educational opportunities. "We are crazed for education." . . .

We are used to hearing benevolent people tell us what, in their opinion, must be done for working women. Would it not be perhaps worth while to ask the women what they want? For it is quite certain that they know.

BOOKS

THE FEDERAL RESERVE ACT.

The Operation of the New Bank Act. By Thomas Conway, Jr., and Ernest Patterson. Published by J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia. 1914. Price, \$2.00 net.

This book, as the authors say in the preface, "endeavors to analyze the effects of a monumental piece of legislation, marking a distinct change of policy in one of the most important lines of business in the country." It is likely to impress the reader as a candid and impartial statement of the results reached after a careful study of the Act. The defects of the previous banking system are set forth in the first chapter, and the need of new legislation is fully recognized. The new law is examined in detail; there are summaries of the arguments of friends and foes as to the most important of the provisions which have aroused controversy.

On some points the authors reserve their opinion, holding that time alone can show the effect of the law, and that, while it is a great piece of governmental machinery, much will depend on the ability and judgment of the Federal Reserve Board and the Secretary of the Treasury. On other controverted questions, however, there is a decided expression of opinion. For example, the claim that bankers should supervise the banking system, which was frequently urged while the bill was before Congress, receives no support from the authors of this book. The presence of a banker on the Federal Reserve Board, they think, would be analogous to that of a railway official on the Interstate Commerce Commission. But they make it clear that the new law will not unduly interfere