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HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT BY WOMEN

(Being an account of the development
of the work initiated by Octavia Hill)

Pamphlet

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THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGERS

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HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT BY WOMEN.

1. INTRODUCTORY.

During the post-war years there has been a growing sense of public responsibility for social well-being.

With the development of educational and cultural facilities, public health administration, and the movement towards industrial freedom, has come a realisation that the proper housing of its people constitutes a key problem for the community. The housing conditions of large numbers of workers were shockingly bad before the war, but it was only in 1919, when the cessation of all building for five years had resulted in a startling house famine, that an attempt to deal with the situation on a national scale was initiated.

It was inevitable that at first the financial and technical aspects of the housing question should have received the most consideration, and yet it becomes increasingly clear that it is the social and human aspects which determine success or failure in the long run. The legislator and local administrator, the town planner, the architect and the builder, each have their part to play. The actual work of filling the houses and managing the estate has still to be done.

The object of this pamphlet is to call attention to the importance of the contribution which trained management on the lines initiated by Octavia Hill can bring to a permanent solution of the housing question.

2. HISTORICAL SURVEY.

Octavia Hill, working in London in the early sixties, found that her efforts to improve the social conditions of the people were often frustrated by their terrible home surroundings. She soon perceived that the rent collectors and agents of the slum landlords had a considerable power over the lives of the occupants of their property—the power which management gives. This power she desired to use for social regeneration. She obtained help from John Ruskin, who agreed with her that their venture must be made to pay. Ruskin purchased three leasehold tenement houses in Paradise Place, Marylebone, for Miss Hill's first experiment. Six more were soon acquired, and with these nine houses she worked out and demonstrated on a small scale the principles on which the success of her work depended.

In 1912 (the year of her death), Miss Hill directly controlled over 2,000 tenancies including cottages, flats and large houses let in tenements. Of these, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were the owners of the greater part, some 1,500 (see Appendix 1). The annual rental controlled in London then came to something fairly high up in the ten thousands. From 1912 to 1916, the growth of the work continued at about the same pace as in Miss Hill's lifetime. During her lifetime it had spread to Edinburgh, Manchester, Dundee, Glasgow and other British towns. An Octavia Hill Association was established in Philadelphia (U.S.A.), and is still working. In Holland, there is a considerable following and for some time ladies came from Holland to be trained. Sweden sent two workers for training and social workers from Russia, Italy and other countries came to Miss Hill for consultation.

To appraise this growth of the work, we must remember the social conditions of the time. In the middle of the last century sanitation as we know it had only just begun. Miss Hill's grandfather, Dr. Southwood Smith, was one of the most prominent reformers in this direction. Education was neither compulsory nor free. Popular places of amusement were few and scarcely touched the poorer classes. The need for open spaces and public playgrounds was hardly realised. Miss Hill had to face many defects in social organisation as part of her housing problems. Glimpses of her splendid struggle with the many evils of the times are given in her "Homes of the London Poor," and her annual letters (from 1872) to her fellow workers. The relief organised in connection with her tenants led to her association with and development of the Charity Organisation Society. The necessity in the lives of the tenants for the uplifting power of some glimpse of beauty and art was the beginning of the Kyrle Society, for which her sister, Miss Miranda Hill, did so much. The excursions and holidays planned and arranged on the tenants' behalf and the lack in their surroundings of any of the softening influences of Nature planted the seed from which grew the work of the Commons Preservation Society and the National Trust. The improvement in general social conditions enables to-day's workers to undertake the management of larger estates with no larger expenditure of energy and with much more promise of social success than was possible for Miss Hill, although financially and technically there are factors at work which upset the former economic position.

The development of work whose foundation depends so much on strong personality is always doubtful when that strong personality is removed. Miss Hill's followers in housing work had reason to question its successful continuation at the time of her death. Her housing work was not public, as was, for instance, the work of the National Trust to which she had latterly devoted much of her leisure time. Although provision had been made privately for the existent housing work to continue, knowledge about it might not be sufficiently widespread to secure the steady extension ensured under Miss Hill's personal guidance. There were certain of her friends, however, who, knowing and understanding what had been done in housing, believed that House Property Management would prove the lasting monument to Miss Hill's memory. They took active steps to draw attention to it. In London the Charity Organisation Society, led by Sir Charles Loch, was persistent in bringing housing management to the attention of the public in their Council and Special meetings and in 1916 it was the subject of one of their most widely circulated Occasional Papers. During the War the usefulness of women managers was remembered and all the trained women managers available were hurried to Munition Housing Centres to take charge. A dozen of these were distributed with trainees under them in six different centres over the country.

During the War a much greater development than had as yet occurred singly began. The Commissioners of Crown Lands (then of Woods and Forests) had decided to place certain houses coming under their control at the termination of leases in charge of an Octavia Hill worker. The work began with one tenement house and a correspondingly small weekly collection; within seven years the houses controlled were 850, covering an approximate 60 acres of land, with 2,000 tenancies of a mixed character and with a population of about 8,000 (see Appendix 1). Covering the period of this allocation, small leasehold property was also falling in on the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' Estates. This was placed in charge of the workers in the various local centres already established, as was an additional estate of 274 houses, adding again very considerably to the rental in charge and to the number of houses and people on Octavia Hill managed property.

In 1920 the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association Women's Section appointed a Sub-Committee to inquire into the systems of management of house property. A report was published in the Association's Journal and reprinted in other publications. In the same year, Miss Edith Neville, one of Miss Hill's early admirers, financed the publication of *House Property and its Management* (Allen & Unwin Ltd.). This contained an important preface by Dr. I G. Gibbon of the Ministry of Health and was widely circulated among the many new housing authorities who were then so busy getting to work with building. It was not until 1926 that there was any evidence of attention being given to the management of these new estates. Various enquiries were being made by individual council members and officials and many more being received by the

Council of Social Service in the provincial centres. The Council accordingly arranged for an address and discussion on Octavia Hill management at their Annual Conference in Chester that year. Many councillors were present and the subsequent circulation of the address was one of the principal means of introducing knowledge of the work into municipalities. Mr. Parker Morris, Town Clerk of Chesterfield (now of Westminster), had simultaneously been making investigations; as a result Chesterfield in 1927 was the first municipal housing authority to appoint a woman manager. Considerable development followed and was markedly rapid up to 1930, when house-building began to slow down. (Appendix 3 shows the municipal centres now established, December, 1933).

Throughout the many inquiries that followed that of Chesterfield, Mr. Parker Morris' report to the Chesterfield Council was of special service, and all Octavia Hill workers are much indebted to him for the time he has devoted to the interests of the work in the provinces and is now giving in London.

The steady demand for trained workers under the much more complicated conditions of work induced by the various Housing and Rent Restriction Acts naturally led to an adaptation of training to modern demands. The examination of the (now) Chartered Surveyors' Institution and the facilities for obtaining theoretical knowledge presented by the newly-established College of Estate Management were seen to offer the best means of obtaining a recognised standard of technical efficiency. There had been considerable danger of the work being looked upon as something which could be done by any suitable woman without technical training. This is absolutely contrary to the stated opinion of Miss Octavia Hill as set out in her letter to her fellow workers in 1900.

The help received by women from the Council of the Institution and from Mr. Goddard, its Secretary till 1932, leaves them always indebted. There was a real difficulty for women candidates as their numbers increased to obtain practical work in qualifying offices—an essential part of a Surveyor's training. This difficulty was overcome by the granting of a special management certificate to women who had passed the usual written examination and who had worked at management for over a year.

Following the splendid lead of Father Jellicoe in the formation of the St. Pancras House Improvement Society, there was an increasingly rapid demand for managers for the many Public Utility Societies springing up in London and elsewhere. These posts are enumerated in Appendix 2.

The National Housing and Town Planning Council played an important part in emphasising management by publishing two papers for general circulation. That written by Mr. Parker Morris is still much in use for replying to inquiries. Women's Management has also been the subject of B.B.C. talks and has been introduced into films, conspicuously that produced by the Under Forty Club.

Under the financial strain women's work of every kind has its opponents, but it is difficult to see how in normal times so natural an outcome of women's household interests can fail to establish itself and increase as a really sensible modern development of women's work.

3. PRINCIPLES OF THE WORK.

The inspiration of Octavia Hill's work was the principle that business and social welfare are not independent spheres of activity, but that all trade rightly regarded is social service. This principle she applied particularly to housing, because she saw that of all commodities, the supply of living accommodation to the poor could not be regarded primarily as a profit-making business without disastrous effects on health and civic life. An undertaker, approached by Octavia Hill with regard to the purchase of his slum tenements, demanded a high price on the ground that the

property was valuable to him not only because of his revenue from rents, but because he "had the funerals." He may not have realised that he killed his tenants and their children in order to bury them, but he frankly regarded his miserable dwellings exclusively as a profit-making machine.

Since the eighteen-sixties an increasing sense of public responsibility has resulted in much public health and housing legislation. Owing to the position created by the War, there have been subsidies from the National Exchequer and local rates for large working-class housing estates. That is to say, there is now a general acceptance of the principle that if the provision of living accommodation for those who are too poor to bargain freely and obtain value for money is to be undertaken for private profit, the interests of the tenant must be safeguarded by the State. Octavia Hill did not devise a system suitable to the widespread public control and ownership of to-day. Her solution was to make herself into a model property owner and to demonstrate the immense improvement which could be brought about by treating the ownership of working-class houses as an opportunity for public service.

This conception of the position of a landlord led to what may be regarded as the second principle inspiring Octavia Hill work, a principle which is familiar to-day in the form of the slogan "Homes not Houses." In building a new cottage or flat, or adapting an old one, the primary object should be the creation of something which can be the home for a family. Our ideas on this subject change very rapidly owing to the necessary adaptations for smaller families, our higher standards of material comfort and convenience and our increased knowledge of hygiene, but the poor quality and bad design of many of the small houses built since the war are a persistent reminder that profit-making has been the chief consideration in the production of such dwellings.

The principles of "Homes not Houses," applied either to new or old houses, covered a much wider field than architecture, and Octavia Hill discovered that once the landlord had done his part in the way of repairs and improvements and given thought to questions of decoration, the tenant would usually do his share in the making of a home. The rousing of a sense of responsibility in tenants who had been brought up in slums was not, however, an automatic affair; it was not always easy. From this evolved the idea of sympathetic management, dealing with individuals instead of with tenements in the mass. Criticism there must be, and where friendship is established, criticism is not harmful.

Yet Octavia Hill realised that a gift of imaginative sympathy although of supreme importance in the work she established, was not a sufficient qualification in itself. The work could only be carried out efficiently by trained people. A generation ago a woman property manager had to go through a strenuous course in technical and social work to acquire the knowledge she needed; to-day, in addition to this practical course, she takes examinations which give her a professional status.

4.—SCOPE OF THE WORK.

Rent Collection.

To most people the work of collecting poor people's rents appears to be a sordid occupation, or, at best, a matter of dreary routine. Where the Octavia Hill method is adopted, rent collecting is interesting and highly skilled. The collector is responsible to the owner, whether public or private, and must try to collect the whole of the money due. In taking over old property the first thing to do is to investigate rents. A discussion of fair rents is beyond the scope of this booklet, and the collector, however influential, will rarely have the power to fix her own scale; but she must be satisfied that rents are reasonable in comparison with the general level of rents in the district and that there are no glaring anomalies. Once the scale is fixed and there is no reasonable ground for complaints of injustice, the collector's aim is to create a sense of responsibility in the tenant. A starting point can be found in two generally accepted principles, (1) that "you must keep a roof over your head," or "your shelter's everything," and (2) "if your rent's paid, your place is your own." These ideals are highly individual, but they are useful as a beginning.

The next stage, one which is only reached with difficulty, is the realisation of the estate as a whole, a grasp of the simple fact that if rents are not paid regularly money is lacking not only for individual repairs but for general amenities and improvements. It is not by any means always possible to arrive at this co-operative consciousness, but some people can reach it, and with others the collector will have done well if she can implant the ideal of a clear book. In difficult times a clear book may be an impossibility, and the collector must discriminate between different classes of arrears. She must know whether debts are due to unemployment, illness, or other misfortunes, and when it is impossible to press for payment. There will be weeks when nothing can be paid and long periods when current rent only can be collected. At such times, the decision that has to be made is whether there is a reasonable prospect that the family fortunes will improve, or whether it is better in the interests of the tenant and of the estate to arrange a move to cheaper accommodation. This can sometimes be done by managing an exchange between two families. But as a rule, where the arrears are due to temporary misfortune, the right course is to allow the debt to stand over and to collect it in regular weekly payments when the family income makes it possible. The collector must also know the bad payers. Bad payers are of two varieties; the majority are the casual vague people who live in a muddle; the rest are the small percentage of tenants on every estate who dodge all obligations and regard landlords especially as fair game. Five per cent. of bad payers involve more work than 95 per cent. of people who try to pay regularly, but the collector has failed if she lets their arrears accumulate or simply obtains eviction orders against them. Where, however, a manager is convinced that an eviction is necessary, it should be carried through promptly.

Through the investigation of arrears the collector finds many practical ways of serving her tenants. It is only possible to indicate a few of them. One of the worst pests in every poor district is the moneylender. The law is that every moneylender must be licensed, and not, unless the circumstances are exceptional, charge more than 48 per cent. per annum; but the law is frequently broken. Licensed and unlicensed lenders regularly charge a penny in the shilling per week, or 433 per cent. per annum. This means ruin to many families who have borrowed in times of trouble. In this instance, as in many others, a collector who has the confidence of her tenants may be able by explaining the law to put a stop to the extortion. Sometimes accident or other compensation may be due and all that is needed is to give the address of a poor man's lawyer. Sometimes it is a matter of getting into touch with hospitals, convalescent homes, National Health Insurance or Public Assistance Officials, sometimes, most useful of all, it is possible to find employment for people. This work may involve spending money. It is advisable that the collector herself should spend as little as possible, and should let tenants know how to obtain available help; but it is useful on large estates to have a Tenants' Fund for emergencies, and many owners (municipalities amongst them) appreciate this necessity and set aside money for the purpose.

Maintenance of Property.

A property manager is responsible for the upkeep of the estate. She must plan and supervise the work necessary to prevent deterioration and arrange a routine of decorative repairs, and she must encourage tenants to take a delight in looking after their homes. In the case of old properties repair work is very heavy and involves dealing with dangerous structure notices and all classes of sanitary repairs, including rebuilding walls, chimney-stacks, and out-houses, reroofing old houses and laying new drains. It involves dealing with every kind of vermin—rats, mice, beetles, slugs and bugs, ants, lice and fleas. Bugs in old houses are particularly difficult to exterminate and give the property manager more work than any other pest. They thrive wherever there is insufficient light and air and once they are nested behind plaster or woodwork they are difficult to get at; they can live through the winter without food and multiply rapidly in warm weather. They live only on human blood and no ordinary measures of cleansing on the part of landlord or tenant have the slightest effect upon them. Only the destruction of affected wood and plaster and the drastic use of some form of poison gas or very strong spirits followed by ceaseless vigilance on the part of the tenant can rid an old house of bugs.

The amount of work a property manager does under the heading of repairs varies widely on different estates. A properly qualified manager with full control generally has a staff of men whom she employs as a contractor would, planning and supervising their work and paying their wages. This means ordering and checking stock and discrimination in buying to the best advantage from wholesalers. The men's time-sheets have to be checked and their work priced. Where outside contractors are employed tenders have to be obtained and examined and the work carefully checked. The enterprising manager has ample scope for experiments as to the use of fittings and materials, colour schemes and decorative effects. With a local authority, it will generally be the work of the manager to order the repairs and carefully check the accounts, whether the work is carried out by the Borough Engineer's Department by direct labour or by private contractors. While the majority of the houses dealt with will probably be new ones, the prevention of deterioration of the property is a most important part of the manager's duties.

Accounts.

Accountancy is an important branch of the manager's work. Here again, although estate book-keeping has to be learnt and tried methods should in most instances be adopted, there is room for experiment and discovery and the adaptation of different systems to different types of estate. Each week the collecting books are "proved" on a simple and ingenious system adapted by Miss Octavia Hill. The system is not only a convenient way of ensuring accuracy; it shows arrears at a glance. It is a general practice for the tenants' books to be collected and audited every quarter and this system is recommended. Rent sheets, income and expenditure accounts and bank balances are prepared for submission to the owners. On Crown estates and on some municipal estates this return is made every month.

Apart from the book-keeping involved in rent and repair work the most important branches of accountancy are those relating to the payment of rates, taxes, insurance, and the preparation of balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. A knowledge of valuation is necessary and the manager may have to appeal against assessments. Claims for rebates on "empties" have to be made. There will also be a petty cash account and in the case of block dwellings, such items as staircase lighting and caretaker's wages. Where the estate consists of houses or flats built under the 1924 and 1930 Acts, there may be subsidies to claim and administer.

Selection and Placing of Tenants.

The scope of this work varies very much on different estates. A manager may take over all the tenants and only create new tenancies as vacancies occur, or she may start with a new cottage estate or block of flats and select tenants from a list supplied to her by the owner—generally in this case a municipality or a housing society.

The importance of careful selection and placing of tenants cannot be over-emphasised; it is one of the chief factors in preventing a recurrence of slum conditions. A carefully thought-out approach to the future tenant in the preliminary discussions with him as applicant can do much to create the right relationship. The important point to realise is that housing needs cannot be fully met by building a collection of houses in a field and mechanically transferring people to them. The questions involved are very individual and each application requires a careful consideration with a view to allocating as nearly as possible the right house from the point of view of income, place of work, size of family, and general standard as ascertained from a personal visit to the applicant.

Need must be the first consideration. An essential principle of the Octavia Hill system, however, is that tenants should be placed in dwellings at rents which are within their capacity to pay, and the greatest care must be taken in applying this principle if management is to yield the best results from the point of view of both landlord and tenant.

The placing of the individual tenant is another matter of great importance, involving careful grouping of tenants of similar standard. If the groups are not too large it is possible to avoid the practical disadvantages of placing tenants of too varied a standard in immediate proximity, or, on the other hand, large blocks of "difficult" tenants calculated to re-act unfavourably on each other in the mass. A proper application of scientific principles of selection and placing makes it possible to house tenants of very varied social classes on the same estate and develop a community spirit among them.

The whole question of selection and placing is of particular importance in slum clearance and as this work is mainly, though not exclusively, dealt with by the municipal authorities, further details will be found in the section on "Municipal Work."

Court Work.

The final test of an Octavia Hill worker's ability and character is her power to collect her rents and manage her estate well without evictions. It would be easy to have a model school if all the bad children were expelled. Moreover, to turn a family out of their home is a more serious matter than to expel a child. But in the interests of other tenants it is sometimes necessary to take Court proceedings. In the case of persistently bad payers, if the payments ordered by the Court are not kept up it is better to obtain an eviction order. It may also be necessary in rare instances to evict tenants who pay their rent regularly but who are a nuisance to their neighbours, or extremely dirty, or who keep a disorderly house, or carry on an illegal trade. It is very seldom that the tenant waits to have his furniture taken out of the house; as a rule, when he is given reasonable time, he manages to make some arrangement. In rare instances the County Court bailiff or police must be allowed to enforce a possession order and the manager must be present to supervise the moving of furniture and take the keys of the vacant rooms.

Both Police Court and County Court procedure have to be learnt, and a manager should take Police Court cases without the assistance of a solicitor or a bailiff. Notices to Quit should be served personally by the manager wherever possible (it is not possible if the tenant always absents himself in daylight) and the reason of the notice explained. Court proceedings can usually be carried out without making bad blood between the manager and the tenant, and where the payment of arrears ordered by the judge or magistrate is kept up, "Court" may improve the relationship of a manager and a bad payer.

Records, Reports and Committee Work.

The careful keeping of records is important for continuity and efficiency in the work and for statistical purposes. The method usually adopted is to keep a card index of all tenancies. The amount of information that it is found convenient to keep on the cards will vary in different offices, but it is useful to know the names and ages of the children, the tenant's occupation and approximate average income. Where a system of differential rents is in force it is essential to have accurate knowledge of income. The best plan is generally to ask all tenants to fill in a simple form giving the required information and to sign it. The forms are a useful check on subletting, which is illegal in the case of tenants rehoused with the help of a subsidy under the 1930 Act, and which should not be allowed in any case where a new tenancy is granted.

Correspondence, indexing and filing play a normal part in office work, but an Octavia Hill manager has unusual opportunities for research into such questions as the relation between unemployment curves and rent arrears. Health statistics may be compiled, but this is not an easy matter, since good housing however important, is far from being the only factor making for health.

The manager generally makes a full report on her work at least once a year, and a short report each quarter, or for each meeting of her Committee. In some municipalities managers of Council property attend the meetings of the Housing Committee.

Miscellaneous Activities.

A summary of the chief branches of the work has been given, but no manager's work is confined within this range. Personal relations with the tenants involve her in many ways. She is called on to settle disputes, to give advice, to take care of money, sometimes to give evidence in a court.

Where there are block dwellings the manager interviews and recommends the appointment of caretakers and supervises their work. Where new building is in progress the manager co-operates with the architect or borough surveyor in preparing estimates of the number and size of flats or houses needed for the next scheme (for example, the number of two and three bedroom lettings, the amount of accommodation for old-age pensioners), and in recommending improvements founded on her previous experience and knowledge of other estates.

Where there are gardens—individual or shared by the estate—playgrounds, nursery schools, infant welfare centres and clubs, the property manager does not attempt to control these herself, but she co-operates with others in doing so, or is a member of the Committee responsible for their organisation. The more she takes part in the social life of the estate the better. It is sometimes difficult to keep bad payers up to the mark and to join them on a day's outing, but the manager who can most successfully do both is the best person for her work.

5.—OWNERS AND ESTATES.

Octavia Hill managers are usually employed by owners who are erecting new dwellings or reconditioning their property. The term "reconditioning" is given to many different classes of work and may mean:—

- (i) putting houses into thorough repair in accordance with strict by-laws, with such improvements as the provision of additional w.c.s and water-supply on the staircase of a tenement house
- (ii) adaptations, such as turning large old tenement houses or other buildings into well-equipped "open" flats
- (iii) adaptations involving internal reconstructions, demolition of outhouses and obstructive buildings, erecting new additions to existing buildings, or turning back-to-back cottages into "through" houses.

The property owners employing Octavia Hill managers are:—

- (a) Companies, Trusts, Private Landlords (including solicitors who have charge of estates)
- (b) Public Utility Societies
- (c) Municipalities.

(a) There are many owners of houses or small estates which are not ripe for development and which at the same time would be very unsatisfactory if not well administered. If these houses or cottages are not overcrowded and are kept in good repair they fulfil a very useful purpose. Rents can be kept low and there may be good gardens. Many such small estates are found in London.

Companies, Trusts and private landlords employing Octavia Hill managers are:—

- (1) Aubrey Trust
- (2) Commissioners for Crown Lands
- (3) Ecclesiastical Commissioners
- (4) Pilkington Bros. Ltd.
- (5) Duke of Westminster's Estate (London)
- (6) Whidborne Estates
- (7) Wilsham Trust.

Some of the work done by these bodies has already been briefly described. Some are extending their rebuilding schemes as leases fall in and they gain greater control of their property.

(b) **Public Utility Housing Societies** are now springing up everywhere and usually employ Octavia Hill managers. Among those mainly engaged in new housing are:—

- The Bethnal Green and East London Housing Association Ltd.
- Chelsea Housing Improvement Society Ltd.
- Kensington Housing Trust Ltd.
- Lambeth Housing Ltd.
- St. Pancras House Improvement Society Ltd.
- St. Marylebone Housing Association Ltd.
- Shoreditch Housing Ltd.
- Stepney Housing Trust
- The Swaythling Housing Society Ltd.
- Westminster Housing Trust Ltd.
- Willesden Housing Society Ltd.

Among those engaged in reconditioning according to definitions

- (i) Improved Tenements Ltd.
 - Liverpool Improved Houses Ltd.
 - Manchester Housing Co. Ltd.
 - Paddington Housing Association Ltd.
- (ii) Birmingham COPEC House Improvement Society Ltd.
 - Southwark Housing Association Ltd.
- (iii) Thistle Property Trust Ltd. (Stirling)
 - Birmingham COPEC House Improvement Society Ltd.

Statistics relating to their work will be found in Appendix 2. Such societies usually work in close co-operation with local authorities and may obtain the Government subsidies (now under Sec. 29 of the Housing Act 1930), sometimes building on land bought for them by the municipalities or providing houses for tenants displaced by municipal clearance schemes. The advantage of having some of the work done by Public Utility Societies in such instances is that a voluntary society is in a better position to experiment than a Council. It can be, and often is, a pioneer. It has more elasticity and can do more personal work in initial stages. In the past such societies have done most valuable work in housing the poorest tenants and in demonstrating what can be done with the aid of cheap money (2½ or 3 per cent.) and in rehousing 100 per cent. of the displaced population, as has been done by the St. Pancras and the St. Marylebone Societies in London.

In some instances the employment of an Octavia Hill worker by the Public Utility Society has led to her employment by the local authority on certain estates.

(c) **Municipal Estates.**

The newest branch of Octavia Hill work is in connection with local authorities. The development since the War has been rapid and extensive and it occupies a place of increasing importance. The appointment of a woman manager at Chesterfield in 1927 was quickly followed by two more, at Stockton and Rotherham. At present there are a number of local authorities employing women with total or partial control of their estates and with a large and increasing annual rent roll. (See Appendix 3.)

One of the most remarkable developments of public enterprise since the war has been that of municipal housing, and local authorities are now coming to realise the importance of social and administrative factors in a permanent solution of the housing problem. The fact that a large amount of public money is invested in municipal housing and also that the local authority has a definite responsibility for the proper housing of the people in its area means that municipal housing is at once in the position of a trading concern and a branch of social administration, and that its officials should be social workers as well as public administrators.

The Octavia Hill woman housing manager has the advantage of a training which recognises social as well as technical factors and an increasing number of local authorities are coming to realise the importance of the contribution she can bring.

The municipal side of the work is very different in detail from that of the branches already described but the underlying principles are similar. Many local authorities have gradually become the owners of large numbers of houses without at first realising the need for a definite housing department. A new branch of public service which co-ordinates the different sections of housing administration in one department is in process of development, and such a department needs a competent manager in direct contact with the estates and with complete control. Such a manager does her best work when in full charge of rent collection, maintenance of property, selection and placing of tenants, and Court work, and when she is directly responsible to the Housing Committee. This gives her the advantage of being able to tackle the whole problem in a radical way. She is as much concerned with the prevention as with the cure of slums, and stresses considerably the development of a community spirit on the new estates. While the extent of the control does and must vary with different sizes and types of local authorities, there is a great advantage from both the administrative and social points of view in having the same staff to deal with all the different sides of the work.

The woman municipal housing manager acts as a link between the Housing Committee and the housewife in such matters as making suggestions for improvements in the internal design and fittings of the houses, bearing in mind that the home is the woman's workshop. She can advise as to decorations, external design, the proper laying-out of estates and gardens, with a due regard for æsthetic as well as utilitarian considerations. By her careful presentation of reports and analysis of statistics of various kinds, she can assist the Committee to relate housing supply to demand, advising as to the proportion of different types of houses and the best place for housing developments in different parts of the town after consideration of places of work. Such factors are likely to receive the greatest consideration when there are, in addition to public-spirited councillors, officials with social experience combined with technical knowledge. The management of municipal housing estates on these lines is a complicated and absorbing business. There are several interests involved—the Council who are finally responsible for the good administration of the estates, the tenants, who are indirectly the partial owners of their houses and who help to elect their own landlords, and the other ratepayers who help to pay for the houses but do not have the privilege of living in them. For the woman who is keen on public administration as well as on housing and social work, the municipal branch of this profession offers immense scope.

Slum Clearance.

A special branch of the work in municipalities and one of greatly increasing importance is that of slum clearance. Much of the foregoing paragraphs on municipal housing can be stressed in slum clearance even more than in ordinary housing.

Where there is a slum clearance scheme, the best plan from every point of view is to appoint a manager for the area marked out for demolition, so that she has the opportunity of knowing the tenants and can carry out the entire work of transference to the new houses or flats. If 100 per cent. of the tenants are rehoused on the same site there is obviously no selecting to be done, but the placing of the tenants then becomes a matter of great importance, even although it may be restricted by the comparatively slow pace at which operations can take place. But the re-housing may not be all on the same site, and in that case there may be great opportunity for assisting the re-housed tenant by placing him among neighbours who are likely to be helpful, but not unduly superior, and bearing in mind the principles already explained in the section on "Selection and Placing of Tenants."

The important point is to create the right attitude in the prospective tenant by using the psychological moment of the transfer to the best advantage. If the manager cannot be in charge of the clearance area for some months beforehand, much can still be done by having the immediate preparatory work in the hands of the future rent collecting staff and preserving continuity in the relationship with the individual tenant. A friendly approach can do a good deal to remove the feeling of compulsion and encourage the desire for better surroundings which is in most cases present to a greater or lesser extent. Much can also be done by trained managers to prevent the transfer of vermin from old houses to new.

When the slum-dweller has moved to the new estate, the manager's personal interest, based on encouragement rather than criticism and her tactful advice about the treatment of some of the fittings in the new houses, will do much to enable the tenant to adapt himself to his new environment and help him not to slip back into old habits.

There is also the vexed question of rents in slum clearance schemes. It is essential that the re-housed tenant should be placed in a house at a rent which he can pay. Under the Housing Act of 1930, a number of local authorities are now using the additional subsidy to operate scales of differential rents based on income and size of family. This necessitates very detailed knowledge of the tenants' circumstances, and if tenants become suspicious of a means test there may be administrative difficulties. By far the best way of administering differential rent scales is to have trained women managers, when it will be found that most of the difficulties disappear. The manager gets to know the tenants so intimately that she is familiar with changes in the family circumstances without inquisitorial inquiries, and the periodical revisions of the rebates granted can be put through with the minimum amount of difficulty. These are the main special features of slum clearance work. The problems connected with it present peculiar difficulties, demanding ingenuity, tact and wisdom on the part of the manager, but they are a good test of her work as a whole.

6. TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS.

Practical training for Octavia Hill work is arranged by the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers at a cost of twenty guineas. Candidates for training are interviewed by members of the Training Committee and the Training Secretary. If they are considered suitable they are given the opportunity of entering one of the offices of a responsible manager as vacancies occur. Exchanges of students are arranged so that the different aspects of the work on various estates are thoroughly learnt by practical experience.

There are also special training schemes for municipal work, notably at Rotherham, particulars of which can be obtained on application to the Housing Department, Rotherham.

Students may qualify professionally by taking either:—

- (1) The Women House Property Managers' Certificate of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution, 12, Gt. George Street, S.W.1; or
- (2) The Professional Examination of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution; or
- (3) A B.Sc. Degree in Estate Management (London University).

In special circumstances, an alternative technical examination will be accepted, such as the Sanitary Science Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute, or other technical qualifications considered suitable by the Training Committee.

Holders of special qualifications, such as certain University degrees or Social Science Diplomas, may not be asked to take further examinations, but must supplement such qualifications with an agreed technical course and practical work. The best posts will of course be open to those who qualify professionally.

A list of subjects for the Women House Property Managers' Certificate (1933) is a useful indication of examination requirements.

- (1) Central and Local Government (Outline of)
- (2) Construction of Buildings
- (3) Dilapidations (Measurement and Valuation of)
- (4) Draughtsmanship
- (5) Economics (Elements of)
- (6) Estate Accounts
- (7) Fixtures and Dilapidations (Law of)
- (8) Landlord and Tenant
- (9) Local and Imperial Taxation and Tithe Rent Charge
- (10) Report
- (11) Sanitation as applied to houses.

The mixture of legal and scientific subjects is attractive to some students and difficult for others. The same person cannot as a rule shine at valuations, mathematical subjects, drawing plans, grasping legal points, and writing good reports, and some candidates will find it necessary to take longer over the course than others. A University degree course in Economics, Commerce or Law will help; some Science degrees and a History degree make an interesting background; Languages and Literature naturally do not cover the same ground. From the purely educational standpoint it is a great advantage to have a University degree; from the point of view of tackling the syllabus for the Women House Property Managers' Certificate it is unnecessary.

Personality counts for much in all professions; it is of supreme importance in Octavia Hill work. It is of no use for anyone who has not a real love of people to embark on this career. Success depends on establishing the right contacts, on gaining respect without aloofness or condescension.

The work requires vision and attention to detail, grasp of broad principles combined with administrative ability. It requires patience, good temper, and a sense of humour. Good health is essential, for rent-collecting in bad weather sometimes calls for considerable endurance, and work may take a manager into a stuffy unwholesome room and then out on to a windy roof-top; in the course of her experience she encounters all sorts of infectious disease and poisonous smells. On the other hand, she has the advantage of being much in the open air instead of being always shut in an office.

Aspirants for managers' posts must be able to take responsibility, be ready to tackle unexpected difficulties and at times to face public misunderstanding and criticism.

The work is a vocation for those who see in it an opportunity for social service and who are temperamentally suited for experimental and pioneer effort.

7. CONCLUSION.

Statistics will be found in Appendix 4 demonstrating the financial advantages of Octavia Hill administration. It is more difficult to measure the social progress in statistical terms, though it is apparent to anyone who visits an estate some time after it has been taken over by trained women managers.

At the present time, owing to the conditions of financial stringency in the country, the development of housing has been slowing down and the future policy is uncertain. The experiment of leaving the supply of ordinary working-class houses to be met by private enterprise is to be tried again. The main operations of the local authorities in the immediate future will be in the sphere of slum clearance, but these operations are likely to be very extensive as the country is embarking for the first time on an organised effort completely to abolish the slums. The work of the public utility societies will go on and will be likely to increase in value with the curtailment of public enterprise on a wide scale.

Whether the working-class houses in general, however, are publicly or privately owned, there is an essential need for the best kind of management and the present time is a peculiarly fitting one for considering the contribution which Octavia Hill managers can give.

APPENDIX 1.

DATE WHEN OCTAVIA HILL
WORKER WAS APPOINTED.

No. of Tenancies
At Start. Dec., 1933

Commissioners for Crown Lands.

1916	(Rebuilding—this will slightly reduce number of tenancies)	5	2,000
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Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

1884	Southwark	181	264
1899	Westminster	238	430
1901	Lambeth	256	732
1903	Walworth	800	830
1921	Newington	65	281
1932	Wandsworth Road	—	21
		1,540	2,558

APPENDIX 2.

HOUSING TRUSTS.

DATE WHEN OCTAVIA HILL
WORKER WAS APPOINTED.

No. of Tenancies
At Start Dec., 1933

1889	Southwark (Private Trust)	12	12
1899	Improved Tenements Association (Kensington)	4	666
1902	Paddington Housing Association Ltd.	3	325
1909	Manchester Housing Company Ltd.	13	230
1911	Southwark (Private Trust)	650	650
1924	St. Pancras House Improvement Society Ltd.	—	700
1926	The Bethnal Green & East London Housing Association Ltd.	—	73
1927	Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society Ltd.	67	312
	Kensington Housing Trust Ltd.	—	274
	Oxford Cottage Improvement Association	36	36
	St. Marylebone Housing Association Ltd.	—	179
1928	Chelsea Housing Improvement Society Ltd.	10	64
	Liverpool Improved Houses Ltd.	15	739
	Thistle Property Trust Ltd. (Stirling)	21	42
1929	Hampstead Housing Association	4	39
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne Housing Improvement Trust Ltd.	—	160
1930	St. Helens Housing Ltd.	12	20
	Westminster Housing Trust Ltd.	—	—
1931	Cambridge Housing Society Ltd.	61	61
	Lambeth Housing Ltd.	24	24
	Shoreditch Housing Association	2	2
1932	The Swaythling Housing Society Ltd.	188	207
	Willesden Housing Society Ltd.	21	55
1933	Southwark Housing Association Ltd.	—	4
	Stepney Housing Trust	16	16
	United Women's Homes Association Ltd.	1,200	1,200
		2,359	6,090

APPENDIX 3.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

DATE WHEN OCTAVIA HILL
WORKER WAS APPOINTED.

No. of Tenancies
At Start. Dec., 1933

1921-26	Amersham R.D.C.	200	—
1924	Kensington Agent for Borough Council (increased to 200 in 1933 when woman manager appointed—see below)	169	—
1926	St. Pancras	62	143
1927	Chesterfield	481	816
1928	Bebington	625	986
	Chester	356	1,213
	Rotherham	560	1,950
	West Bromwich	400	3,061
1929	Cheltenham	550	980
	Hendon	—	345
	Leeds	500	875
	Norwich	—	4,613
1930	Bolton	394	600
	Westminster	70	740
1931	Cambridge	80	180
	Hastings	432	550
	L.C.C.	594	936
1932	Tunbridge Wells	220	326
1933	Brighton	—	—
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	370	426
	Kensington	300	300
	Paddington	8	8
		6,371	19,048

APPENDIX 4.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

ANNUAL RENTAL.		ARREARS % ON RENTAL.			
When O. Hill management was introduced.	March 1933.	When O. Hill management was introduced.	March 1933.	Increased Rental.	Decrease in Arrears.
£23,025	£32,094	2.17 %	1.48 %	£9,069	.69 %
£4,316	£6,684	12.772 %	9.374 %	£2,368	3.398 %
£9,913	£23,495	2.5 %	1.9 %	£13,582	.6 %
£14,429	£20,141	10.6 %	7.06 %	£5,712	3.54 %
£15,968	£105,607	1.08 %	.72 %	£89,639	.36 %
£12,547	£54,770	8.0 %	3.5 %	£42,223	4.5 %
—	£18,000	.24 %	—	—	—
—	£9,724	3.55 %	3.21 % (after 6 months' appointment).	—	—

Housing Trusts.

Most of these have adopted the Octavia Hill system of management from the commencement.

Annual Rental.	Arrears per cent. on Rental.
£4,814 .	2.5%
£2,111 .	.3%
£5,555 .	1.8% (arrears 11.7% when Octavia Hill system introduced).
£7,253 .	1.9%
£1,090 .	.2%
£3,224 .	1.7% (unemployment figures for this district 94%).
£433 .	Nil
£4,173 .	.89% (arrears 2.27% when Octavia Hill system introduced).
£577 .	Nil

Private Owners, &c.

Annual Rental.	Arrears per cent. on Annual Rental.
£26,488 .	.03% (managed on Octavia Hill's lines from commencement).
£8,000 .	.08%
£5,300 .	Nil (managed on Octavia Hill lines since 1875).
£8,640 .	1.6% (In these houses, about 75% of the breadwinners in the family are unemployed).
£13,788 .	.37%
£3,687 .	.1% (in these houses 18% of the breadwinners in the family are unemployed).

