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Legal Advice Bureau for Working Women

FINAL REPORT



Hon. Treasurer :

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WORKING WOMEN'S LEGAL ADVICE BUREAU

FINAL REPORT

The Committee of the Legal Advice Bureau present their report from January, 1919, to August, 1921.

The Legal Advice Bureau was established under the auspices of the Women's Trade Union League in 1903, Miss Sophy Sanger being its first Secretary. During those years, it may fairly be claimed that it has done much useful work and filled a place which would otherwise have been left vacant. By an arrangement with the National Federation of Women Workers, it has undertaken the compensation and legal work of that trade union. The circumstances with regard to both these bodies have now changed. The Federation has now been amalgamated with the National Union of General Workers, while the League has now been absorbed in a larger body. The Trades Union Congress has remodelled its constitution so as to provide for the joint action of trade unions with women membership; and has also resolved to set up a legal department dealing with legal questions concerning all unions; and has made an arrangement with the Women's Trade Union League by which the existing organisations of the Society will be used for the furtherance of the work of the Trades Congress.

These events entail the termination of the separate existence of the Legal Advice Bureau.

We have, therefore, to present our last annual report to our subscribers.

The Bureau has had much success during the eighteen years of its existence. That success is mainly due to the untiring exertions of the firms of solicitors who during those years have with the utmost generosity in a large number of cases given their professional services, and have undertaken difficult and gratuitous work for the sake of helping to obtain justice for some of the victims of our industrial system.

We desire to record our heartfelt thanks to Messrs. Alcock and Abberley, Messrs. Auld and MacDonald, Mr. Barrie, Messrs. Bowman and Ekins, Messrs. Hewitt, Woollacott and Chown, Mr. R. W. MacNeice, and Messrs. F. S. Rhodes and Bethell Jones. We also desire specially to mention how much the Bureau owed to Mr. Griffith, who lost his life at Gallipoli.

The National Federation of Women Workers have provided the Bureau with free accommodation in Dilke House, have undertaken the filing and storing of the cases dealt with by the Bureau, and have lent the Bureau the services of Miss Gottsman, a most efficient and excellent shorthand typist.

The number of serious accidents dealt with has decreased very considerably since the days of the war, and with the return of the workers to more ordinary occupations. Much time has, however, been spent on the settlement of serious cases of long standing.

We print below the total of the lump sum obtained in compensation during the years under review :—

Messrs. Hewitt, Woollacott & Chown ...	£3,373	0	0
„ Rhodes & Bethell Jones ...	1,657	0	0
„ Bowman & Ekins ...	162	0	0
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Total for 1919 ...	£5,192	0	0
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Messrs. Auld & Macdonald ...	£20	0	0
„ Hewitt, Woollacott & Chown ...	3,161	0	0
„ Rhodes & Bethell Jones...	2,140	10	0
„ Bowman & Ekins ...	1,135	0	0
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Total, from Jan., 1920, to Aug., 1921	£6,456	10	0

One group of cases which has been dealt with by the Bureau deserves special attention. A small baby carriage firm employed ten persons in painting; of these ten, five developed lead poisoning. Their compensation was dealt with by the Bureau, and representations to the Home Office have now resulted in leadless paint only being employed by the firm. This case is of some importance as illustrating the need for watchfulness.

We print below examples of some typical cases :—

Mrs. Y.————— was employed at the laundry attached to No. 7, Hayes' Filling Factory. She met with an accident on the 2nd July, 1918, for which she received compensation at the rate of 19s. a week from the 9th August to the 13th September, when her payments were reduced to

12s. 8d. In March she desired that her case should be settled, and on application to the Ministry of Munitions a sum of £25 was offered in May, 1919. In July the offer was advanced to £50, and in September the case was settled for £60 and costs, the amount originally asked for by our solicitor in April.

Mrs. McG————— was employed in breaking down fuses at a private factory. She met with an accident in June, 1918, her cap and hair being caught in the machine. She returned to work, but pains in the head subsequently developed and she found herself unable to follow her employment. She applied for assistance to the Bureau in May, 1919. The firm first refused to acknowledge any liability, and a settlement of £75 was ultimately arrived at.

Miss M———— met with an accident in August, 1918, by which she lost part of the first and second finger of her left hand. Compensation was duly paid. In January, 1919, she desired that the case should be settled, and an offer of £10 was made by the firm. The Bureau took up the case. The Insurance Company, after some negotiations, increased their offer to £60, and on taking the case before the County Court a settlement was arrived at for £75.

Mrs. B————— was employed as a power press hand and met with an accident in January, 1919. Her left hand was seriously injured and four fingers were lost. Compensation was paid, and the Insurance Company approached the worker with a view to a lump sum settlement in May, 1919, when an offer of £100 was made. This, on our advice, was declined by the worker, and the case was ultimately settled in August for £300 and costs.

Miss C————, aged 17, was employed as an ammunition box maker and engaged in cutting wood with a circular saw (an occupation utterly unfit for a girl). A knot in the wood caused the board to rise and the teeth of the saw caught her fingers, lacerating four fingers of the left hand, on January 11th, 1918. She received compensation until November, 1919, when compensation ceased. The case was finally settled for £250 and costs.

Miss B————, aged 18, was another instance of a girl employed on a circular saw. She met with a severe accident in March, 1918. Compensation was paid, and after prolonged negotiations a final settlement was arrived at for £160.

Mrs. W————— was employed at a hotel and met with an accident while engaged in her work in June, 1919,

causing compound fracture of her hip. She received compensation until October, 1920, when the Insurance Company attempted to reduce the compensation, and offered £100 in settlement. The case was contested by the Bureau and was ultimately settled for £675, with costs. This case was brought to the Bureau by Mrs. Sanger, who was kind enough to guarantee the costs. Without this guarantee the case could not have been fought, as the woman was not a trade union member and the funds of the Bureau would not at that time have admitted taking the risk involved.

Mrs. S————— was employed at a tin box firm. In consequence of an accident in October, 1919, she lost part of three fingers. Compensation was paid, and on partial recovery she was employed on light work, a declaration of liability being registered at the County Court in March, 1919. She was discharged owing to slackness of work and the claim was then revived and the case finally settled for £100 and costs in February, 1921.

Miss McC—————. This case presents some interest. This was an unusually severe and obstinate case of sugar dermatitis. She was first taken ill in March, 1920, and her compensation was stopped in September of the same year. An appeal was made to the certifying surgeon, whose report was favourable. It was, however, impossible to secure a settlement until proceedings had actually begun in the Southwark County Court. The opening of proceedings ultimately resulted in obtaining £50 and costs.

Miss B————— was a girl of 15 employed at a laundry who met with a severe accident in November, 1917, her left hand being drawn into the calender. She was receiving a wage of only 5s. a week. On her recovery she was offered light work at the firm, and the case remained in this position until October, 1920, when it was settled for £335 and costs.

It will be seen that some of these cases spread over a considerable period. The Bureau is always reluctant to settle in the case of juvenile workers until the latest possible date, as in view of the possibility of the review of payments an early settlement is nearly always prejudicial to the worker.

The accounts show a small surplus. This, however, will be needed for certain bills not presented at the date of the balance-sheet.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS
for the year 1919.

	Subscriptions.			Donations.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Aspland, Mrs.	1	1	0			
Carbutt, Miss				2	0	0
Clough, Miss B. A.	2	2	0			
Cox, Miss Irene	0	5	0			
Dougall, Miss	0	10	0			
Du Croz, Mrs.	0	5	0			
Dupee, L.	0	10	0			
Hampton, Mrs.	2	2	0			
Hirst, F. W., Esq.	0	10	0			
Hutchins, Miss	0	10	0			
"H. and W. B."	1	1	0			
Knight, E.				0	10	0
Lawrence, Miss A. Susan				36	10	0
Leach, W., Esq.				10	0	0
Markham, Miss Violet				57	0	0
National Federation of Women Workers	10	0	0	15	0	0
Neal, Miss	2	0	0			
Nettlefold, Miss N. F.	1	1	0			
Pease, C. Artlington, Esq.	10	0	0			
Pearson, Mrs.				1	0	0
Teichmann, Mrs.	1	1	0			
Trevelyan, Mrs.	1	1	0			
Walker, Dr. J.	1	1	0			
White, Miss Josephine	1	1	0			
Women's Trade Union League	10	0	0			
Y.W.C.A.						1 1 0
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	£46	1	0	£123	1	0
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SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS.

1st January, 1920—August, 1921.

	Subscriptions.			Donations.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Beale, Miss B.	2	0	0			
Clough, Miss B. A.	4	4	0			
Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Workers' Union					4	4 0
Dougall, Miss	1	0	0			
Du Croz, Mrs.	0	5	0			
Gladstone, Viscountess	1	1	0			
Hirst, F. W., Esq.	0	5	0			
Hitchins, Miss	0	10	0			
"H. and W. B."	1	1	0			
National Federation of Women Workers	10	0	0		20	18 0
Neale, Miss K.	2	0	0			
Nettlefold, Miss N. F.	2	2	0			
Pease, C. Artlington, Esq.	23	0	0			
Scott, Mrs.					1	0 0
Sheffield Branch, N.F.W.W.					2	2 0
Trevelyan, Mrs. G. M.	1	1	0			
Tuckwell, Miss Gertrude M.					17	0 0
Walker, Dr. J. H.	2	2	0			
White, Miss Josephine	2	2	0			
Women's Trade Union League	10	0	0			
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	£62	13	0	£45	4	0
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Receipts and Payments for the Year Ending December, 1919.

RECEIPTS.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Balance in hand, 1st Jan.,							
1919 :—							
„ Bank Current Account ...	9	17	6				
„ Deposit Account ...	15	0	0				
„ Petty Cash ...	17	6					
„ Stamps ...	6	5	½				
				26	1	5½	
„ Miscellaneous Receipts ...	2	0	0				
„ Subscriptions ...	46	1	0				
„ Donations ...	123	1	0				
				171	2	0	
„ Interest on Deposit Account					3	1	
„ Balance overdrawn ...				4	10	7½	
				£201	17	2	

PAYMENTS.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
By Office Expenses ...	1	5	6				
„ Postages ...	13	14	1½				
„ Printing and Stationery ...	18	1	4½				
				33	1	0	
„ Law Costs and Medical Fees				168	16	2	
				£201	17	2	

Audited and found correct.

(Signed) F. KERSHAW.

Receipts and Payments for the period of January 1st, 1920 to August, 1921.

RECEIPTS.		£	s.	d.		PAYMENTS.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To Receipts:—														
„ Subscriptions	62		By Deficit on 1919					4	10	7½
„ Donations	45		„ Postages	15	6	8				
							„ Printing	8	10	9				
							„ Bank Charges	1	1	0				
							„ Law Costs and Medical Fees	68	3	3				
							„ Sundries	1	0	5				
												94	2	1
							By Balance:—							
							Cash	1	8	0½				
							Bank	7	16	3				
												9	4	3½
						<u>£107 17 0</u>						<u>£107 17 0</u>		

Audited and found correct.

(Signed) F. KERSHAW.