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### Original Citation

Laybourn, Keith (2015) The New Philanthropy of the Edwardian Age: the Guild of Help and the Halifax Citizens' Guild, 1905-1918. *The Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, 23. pp. 73-94.

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# THE NEW PHILANTHROPY OF THE EDWARDIAN AGE: THE GUILD OF HELP AND THE HALIFAX CITIZENS' GUILD, 1905-1918

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In the decade before the First World War many of the social and intellectual tensions that existed in Britain were evident in the debate within the philanthropic community about how to deal with poverty. Central to this debate was the work of the Guild of Help, an organisation which sought to offer a new more community-based solution. Yet in the end, the Guild of Help movement failed to provide an answer to poverty since its approach was chiefly designed to endorse the existing class distinctions, the moral responsibility of the middle classes to the poor and the moral discipline of the recipient, and lacked the resources to achieve its objectives. Although it became the most important agency of voluntary help to the poor in Britain, outstripping the Charity Organisation Society (COS) by 1909, it veered little from that organisation, its resources and concerns. It might have wished to work with the public bodies and the state, in a way which was anathema to the COS but its commitment was firmly tied to a society in which *laissez faire* and local community action predominated. In the end the wartime state intervention of 1914-1918 turned the Guild of Help into part of a mass relief agency working with other voluntary bodies, an action which ultimately led to the formation of the National Council of Social Services in 1919. Nevertheless, the New Philanthropy which the guilds encouraged, was a fascinating attempt by the middle classes to work through the local community, still the locus of power in early Edwardian Britain, to tackle poverty, to establish a partnership between philanthropy, the community and, ultimately, the state, in an attempt to ward off the rising threat of state socialism in a climate of social crisis. It was also a movement which saw the transition from charity to social work, and one in which environmental and health considerations, began to rival the moral control of working-class life. This Edwardian New Philanthropy was powerfully represented in the Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help which was organised in 1905 and publicly launched on 12 December 1905 by a group of citizens, including the two MPs of Halifax, Sir Savile B. Crossley and J.H. Whitley, James Parker the prospective Labour parliamentary candidate and future MP for Halifax, the Revd G.J. Williams, Alfred W. Whitley J.P., J.H. Howarth J.P. and a large number of local dignitaries, Guild Captains and Helpers.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Mayor, the designated President of the Guild, announced that:

... the Captains of the twenty-three districts into which the borough had been divided. They comprised doctors, schoolmasters, magistrates, and working men, who received hearty reception on their presentation. A finer body of men, the Mayor declared, could not be produced anywhere. He urged them to try to gain the confidence of the people they came

in contact with, and let them feel that, interested in their welfare, they were visiting them expressly to do them good.<sup>2</sup>

However, such lofty civic pride exaggerates both the vital role that the Guild saw itself playing in an attempt to tackle poverty in Halifax and the extent to which the Guild was a community response which went beyond the middle classes. In the face of unemployment and economic problems it soon realised that its influence was limited and that it was geared to offering the advice of middle-class Halifax more than physical help to the poor.

### **The perceived failure of the Old Philanthropy and the emergence of the New Philanthropy**

In the Victorian Age philanthropy prospered through the numerous small local charities that abounded but was most prominently represented by the COS, essentially a London-based body for charitable provision. According to E.W. Wakefield's survey of charity in the north of England there were, in 1898, only twenty-six COS organisations with forty-four paid and 235 voluntary organisers, serving three and a half million people in various towns across the North at a cost of £16,000 per year. By 1908 the COS in the North had expanded to thirty-three organisations, sixty-four paid and 500 voluntary organisers serving a population of four and a half million at a cost of £23,000 per year.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, most COS organisations in the North were small, employed one or two paid workers, and had relatively few volunteers.

Wakefield stressed that matters had improved in the North but, of the COS, commented that 'our too slow growth' indicated the future need to acknowledge civic responsibility and to enlist more support to deal with the problems of unemployment, the 'sweated' labour system and resultant poverty.<sup>4</sup> He also felt that, in the Edwardian Age, the COS had to take on some of the new techniques of the guilds, which would make their anti-mendacity work of the COS more effective. He supported the Guild movement's commitment to giving advice rather than relief, suggested in the following commonly used doggerel:

I gave a beggar from my little store  
Of well-earned gold, he spent the shining ore  
And came again, and yet again, still cold  
And hungry as before.  
I gave a *thought*, and through that thought of mine  
He finds himself a man, supreme, divine  
Fed, clothed, crowned with blessings manifold;  
And now he begs no more.<sup>5</sup>

Wakefield was reflecting upon the fact that enormous amounts of money were being spent on charitable relief, some authorities suggesting that it totalled about £60 million per year in Britain, without any measurable decline in poverty.<sup>6</sup> To many, such as Seebohm Rowntree, the York chocolate manufacturer and philanthropist, a new more scientific philanthropy had to be developed and controlled, targeted upon the poor who could be helped by

advice and instruction rather than by financial relief. Julie Sutter's *Britain's Next Campaign* (1903) highlighted the need for a municipally-based system of poverty relief. Church leaders, such as the Bishop of Ripon, advocated some type of community-based response to poverty, and its consequences to unemployment and infant mortality, and German ideas of community-based poverty relief began to be discussed.<sup>7</sup> The first tangible results of a turmoil of ideas emerged in 1904.

The Guild of Help was inaugurated in Bradford on 21 September 1904 but first emerged as an idea on 14 October 1903, when the Mayor of Bradford held a meeting for the purpose of discussing the co-ordination of work and workers amongst the poor with a view to the adoption of the type of system in vogue in Elberfeld, Germany, where the state dealt with poverty through working in the community to offer social casework and advice to the poor.<sup>8</sup> A Central Board of the town's charities, which included some of the German community of Bradford, was formed and met monthly to devise a scheme of co-ordinating charitable provision. A provisional committee of ten people met regularly during the ensuing ten months and publicly launched the Bradford City Guild of Help on 20 September 1904. The idea was to form an alternative to the COS, and to gather into a well-organised body 'all the community who have a desire and more or less capacity for social services', committed to the motto of 'Not Alms but a Friend'.<sup>9</sup>

The Bradford Guild caught the popular mood and its members were called upon to give talks in different towns and communities after the *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1905, reported upon its activities.<sup>10</sup> There were requests for talks from citizens in 108 towns by the end of 1906.<sup>11</sup> There were six more guilds at the end of 1905, operating in Bolton, Eccles, Halifax, Heckmondwike, Salford and Swinton. In 1906 others were formed at Birmingham, Sunderland and three other locations. Thirteen others were formed in 1907, including important ones at Sheffield, Croydon and Manchester. In 1908 ten others were formed, including one at Wakefield.<sup>12</sup> In total, there were seven guilds in 1905, twelve in 1906, twenty-five in 1907, thirty-five in 1908, sixty-one by the beginning of 1910, seventy with more than 8,000 members by 1911, and eighty-two in September 1917, adopting a variety of names such as 'City League of Help', 'Guild of Social Services', 'Guild of Personal Services', and 'Civic Aid Society', and all linked to the semi-autonomous Guild of Help movement and attending its annual national conferences.<sup>13</sup>

The largest guilds soon advertised their presence through the publication of monthly journals. Indeed, there were at least nine such journals most notably *Help*, the journal of the Bradford Guild of Help, *The Helper*, organ of the Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help, and the *County Borough of Bolton Guild of Help Magazine*, later known as *The Helper*. It is from these journals that our understanding of the Guild movement largely derives since the records of only a few of the larger guilds, of which Halifax was one, survive, and then often only in part.

Out of this activity emerged a national movement which held conferences at Bradford in 1908, Bolton in 1909, Sheffield in 1910, Birmingham in 1911, Croydon in 1912, Halifax in 1913, and other venues thereafter. The formation

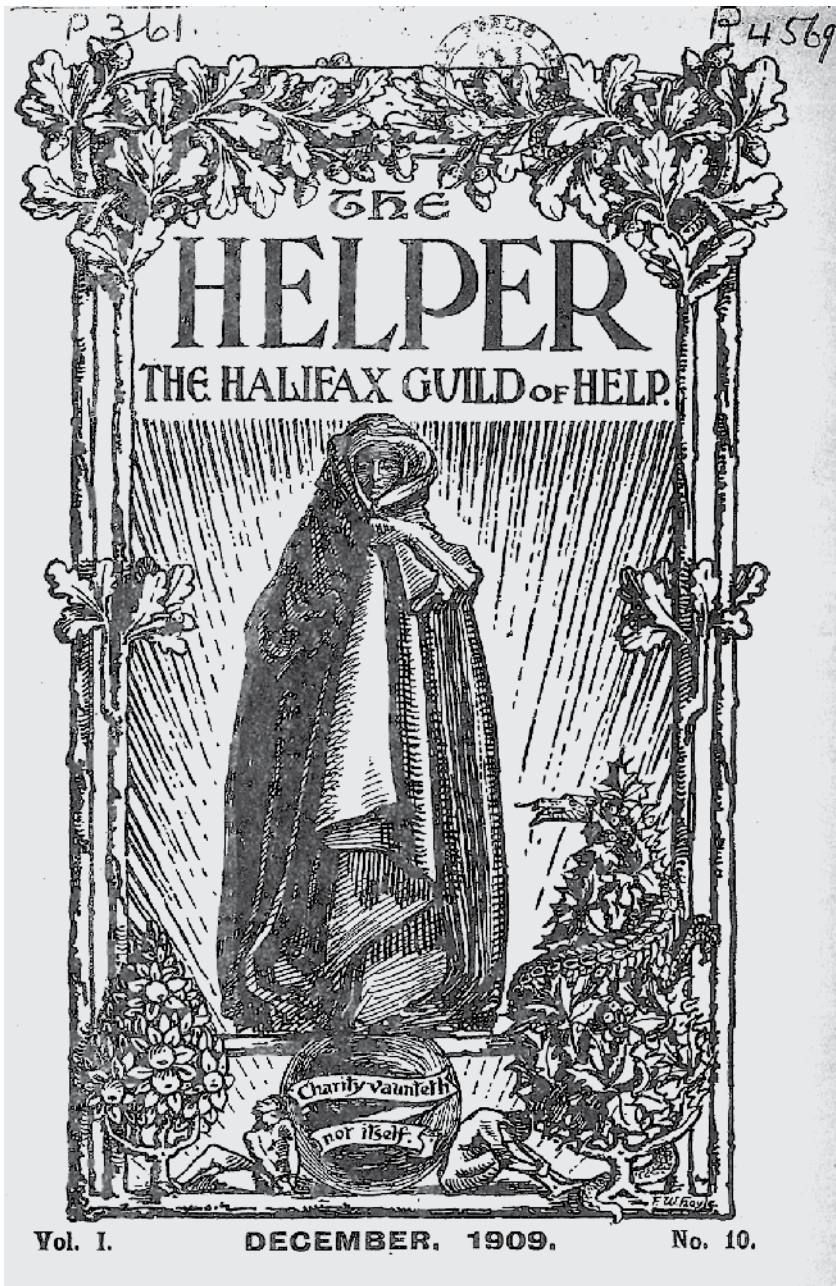


Figure 1 The Helper, The Halifax Guild of Help (Photograph courtesy of Halifax Public Library).

of a National Association of Guilds of Help was considered at the Sheffield Conference on 4 May 1910 and a provisional committee was formed. It finally came into existence in 1911.<sup>14</sup> As a result of the philanthropic bodies working together during the Great War the National Council of Social Services was formed in 1919, the main purpose of which was the formulation of a national policy for voluntary work in co-operation with the state.<sup>15</sup>

There were few striking differences between the New Philanthropy of the Edwardian age and the Old philanthropies of nineteenth-century charity and the COS. Both forms undertook casework and shared many other activities. Yet, despite their commonality, contemporaries and historians have noted that there were at least three significant differences. First, the Guild of Help was more positive in its attitude towards working with public bodies and evolving a community response. Elizabeth Macadam, who outlined the idea of the New Philanthropy in 1934 could identify in 'the new philanthropy...a unique partnership...a system of combined statutory and voluntary social service, which had grown up in the last forty years'.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the London-based COS was far more centralised than the Guild movement which remained largely a collection of autonomous bodies whose emphasis upon civic consciousness proved almost inimical to national organisation. Thirdly, the guilds showed far more respect for the individual, accepting that economic causes for poverty could be just as important as individual failure.<sup>17</sup> However, it was the first and third of these, its commitment to working with public bodies in a structure to deal with poverty and the willingness to offer 'Help' through a 'Friend', that became the defining mantra of the Guild of Help.

The emphasis of the Guild of Help was always placed upon the family and the local forces rather than the municipality and the state. This approach was presented in diagrammatic form on the back of every Bradford casebook, and in some other Guild magazines, as a visual representation of the philosophy of the Guild of Help. At the centre of the diagram of social forces was the family. This was successively encircled by the personal forces of relatives, neighbourhood forces (including neighbours, employers, clergymen, doctors, trade unions), and civic forces (including teachers, the police and health departments). Only when these were exhausted were private charitable forces to be called upon bringing in the COS, benevolent individuals, district nurses, ladies' charities, charitable employment and the churches. The Guild movement emerged effectively at this stage, organising the charitable relief (often through local registration for all local charity), once other efforts had been found wanting. Finally, and only when all other efforts had been exhausted, the state could be called upon to provide poor-law hospitals and poor relief. At this stage, the poor would have become destitute and the Guild would have failed in tackling poverty.

### **Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help**

There were thousands of small local charities throughout England and Wales and often a hundred or so in sizeable towns and communities. They included church charities and personal bequests dealing with health, education and

poverty. Halifax was no exception and most of its charities are listed in the Halifax Churches Inquiry in the mid 1890s.<sup>18</sup> However, many were tangential to poverty – as in the case of T. Shaw, the late MP's, two donations of £1,000 each to provide for ten Higher Board Scholars to allow the boys of poor families to attend Heath and other secondary schools in Halifax – and unco-ordinated. There was also a COS organisation in Halifax but it does not seem to have done a great deal and there is practically no information on it until it wound up its affairs when the local guild was formed.<sup>19</sup> The Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help was the first serious town-wide attempt to co-ordinate charitable provisions in Halifax to deal with the specific problem of poverty in a pro-active manner.

Faced with serious unemployment and poverty at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century there was a feeling in Halifax that some wide-ranging community action had to take place. On 4 January 1905 a private meeting of some of the clergy and ministers of Halifax, and a few others, was called by J.H. Whitley MP, at his residence, Brantwood, to consider the poverty known to exist in the town. Present at this meeting were eleven men – the Revd Canon Savage, Vicar of Halifax, the Revds C.H. Osler, R.F. Peachey, W. Graham Scroggie, R.L. Bellamy, and G.J. Williams, and Councillor A. Crabtree, Chairman of the Education Committee, Mr F.J. Hirst, solicitor, Mr Thomas Collinson, of the Society of Friends, J.H. Whitley and Mr A.W. Whitley.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, many other meetings were held, largely guided by Julie Sutter's book on *Britain's Next Campaign*, and on 24 March 1905 a conference was held and a lecture on the Bradford Guild was given by Mr Moser of Bradford after which P. Mulcahy and S.S. Tillotson joined the founding group.<sup>21</sup> A Provisional Committee was then formed and in June that committee was widened to include all religious denominations and members of the Board of Guardians, School Attendance Officers under the Education Authority, the NSPCC, teachers, the Chief Constable – a wider selection of notables than was usual in guilds. Tillotson was appointed Chairman of the Committee and A.W. Whitley acted as the Honorary Secretary. In July 1905 Mr A. Holden Byles BA was appointed as organising secretary, having studied 'the workings of Elberfeld System in Elberfeld, Leipzig and Berlin', until Mr J. Hebblethwaite was appointed Secretary in August on a salary of £150 per annum.<sup>22</sup> An enthusiastic public launch meeting was held on 12 December 1905.<sup>23</sup> At this meeting, the Revd G.J. Williams emphasised the importance of providing 'moral influence and personal as well as moral guidance and personal contact' but also added that they would give them [the deserving poor], when needful, clothing, and coal and money for house rent.<sup>24</sup>

The Halifax Citizens' Guild was organised by a Central Board from December 1905, supported by a general Representative Committee and, from 1910, by Group Head Meetings. It was divided into twenty-three districts (twenty-four by 1909, recorded as A, B, C and D, and from 1 to 6, though D3, Luddenden, was often not organised). Each district was headed by a Captain who worked with volunteer Helpers who would take on cases, give advice and help to the poor. The Captains in Halifax were all male, although female heads of districts were not unknown in other guilds, and none of the founding clergy

and ministers were allowed to be Captains or Helpers though all became honorary members of the Guild in 1910.<sup>25</sup> In 1911 Halifax had at least 280 helpers, possibly 300. The original hope is that there would be 388 but this was scaled down to 340, 330 and then to 300 and in November 1905 311 people had applied to be Helpers and 279 were registered.<sup>26</sup> This compared to the 450 Helpers in Bradford, 630 in Manchester, 225 in Croydon, 180 in Burnley, 140 in Wimbledon, 1,000 in Sheffield, 700 in Birmingham, 200 in Middlesbrough, and about 100 in Poole, in Dorset.<sup>27</sup> The Halifax Citizens' Guild was thus the fifth largest of the seventy or so guilds that were operating in 1911.

The Guild Movement always made great claim to being a movement of all classes in the municipality but only Farnworth Guild, a small guild located near Bolton, with about 50 per cent working-class membership, seems to have had more than a handful of working-class Helpers.<sup>28</sup> Even though only a modest-sized collection of records survive for the Halifax Guild it is clear that it was overwhelmingly an organisation of the middle classes.<sup>29</sup> In 1909, wealthy individuals such as the Mayor of Halifax, Ald. F. Whitley Thomson JP, was president, and Alfred W. Whitley, the brother of one of the two MPs for Halifax, was Honorary Secretary. There is no list of the Helpers but the names of the Captains indicate that they were drawn from the middle class, and included Dr E.W.S. Hughes, who was Captain of the Ovenden-based district D5 in 1908 and 1909, Dr W.M. Branson of Trafalgar and Cripplegate District in 1908 and A.E. Thomas, a sometime journalist and editor of *The Helper*, who was Captain of A4 the Haley Hill district in 1909.<sup>30</sup> When a new Captain was sought for C3 District the choice was between an Inland Revenue Officer, a member of the Equitable Bank and a wealthy volunteer in District A4 – and the last of these was the successful candidate.<sup>31</sup> It is not possible to suggest that there were no working-class Captains and Helpers, and the Halifax Guild was insistent that it was drawing Helpers 'from all classes of the community', but there is no surviving evidence that they existed.<sup>32</sup> Their absence may partly arise from the fact that though cordial meetings were held between the Guild and the Halifax Trades and Labour Council in October and November 1905 the view of the latter seemed to be that 'the work of the Guild might lead to results prejudicial to its best interests', by which it was meant that the Guild might help employers to reduce wages by drawing from a body of unemployed workers.<sup>33</sup> For the Halifax Citizens' Guild the all-embracing community nature of the guild movement was clearly a myth.

It is also difficult to establish the gender balance of the guilds. Lists of the names of Helpers survive for Bradford and Poole and they indicate that there were more women than men acting as Helpers, these often being the wives and daughters of the middle-class Helpers and Captains or District Heads. This seems to have been the case in Halifax where there were four women on the Central Board of twenty-one members in 1907-1908, one being a Miss Whitley and another being Secretary of the Clothing Bureau.<sup>34</sup> There were also joined by Miss Ethel Wright and Miss A. Margaret Leicester, and in later years by Mrs Marchetti, Mrs Nathan Whitley, Mrs Osler (the wife of one of the founder members) and others.<sup>35</sup> However, none of the fourteen-member General Representative Committee were women and, as already suggested, none of the



Captains were women. Yet the Health Association, formed under the remit of the Halifax Guild and working with the Medical Officer of Halifax and Lady Visitors included a Mrs Holden (wife of the first secretary and organiser), Mrs Ernest Hill, Mrs Edward Whitley and Mrs Charlotte Smithers.<sup>36</sup> Miss Wayne, of the Guild, seemed to be working alongside Miss Thompson, a municipal Health Visitor. It is difficult to believe that, as with other large guilds, at least half the Helpers and members were not women.

### **The civic consciousness of the Halifax Citizens' Guild and work with the municipal authority**

The core work of the Guild was to organise Helpers, sometimes referred to as 'Friends', to visit poor families and individuals who had sought help or been referred to through their central office at Rawson Chambers. About a thousand cases a year (though exceptionally 1,318 in 1907-8) were brought to the attention of the Guild, although it seems to have taken up only between about 460 and 640 (Table 1). These arose from of a wide variety of problems, although ill-health, and unemployment and widowhood were usually the commonest reasons for their submissions to the Guild. The purpose of the Helpers was to prevent people sliding into destitution and 'To hold out a friendly hand to any and all, who being destitute, even by their own fault, are willing to make a determined effort to rise again.'<sup>37</sup> Although advice was always given, some of these cases were dealt with by arranging hospitalisation, though the Guild felt that it was limited in its attempt to deal with the illness of consumption finding that in at least fifty-four of eighty-two consumptive cases submitted to the Guild between 1905 and 1910 the individual was dead.<sup>38</sup> The unemployed

**Table 1 Causes of Poverty in Halifax based upon an analysis of the cases dealt with by the Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help<sup>40</sup>**

Cause	1909-10	1910-11	1911-12
Illness	140	147	200
Consumption	12	14	24
Incapacity	27	11	8
Age	20	7	17
Widows	88	76	90
Desertion	19	16	8
Unemployment	199	126	206
In Building Trade	35	8	10
Irregular Employment	30	10	21
Drink	9	8	6
Not found, etc.	17	43	13
Not needy/unsuitable			31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>634</b>

were helped by the fact that the Guild advertised for employment opportunities to put on their Labour Register through *The Helper*, an announcement in 1909 stating that 'Employers or Householders requiring Labourers, Charwomen, or other assistance, are requested to apply to the Secretary at Rawson Chambers. Telephone 203'.<sup>39</sup> The A4 District was, at that time, considering introducing a Visiting Scheme from 1909, whereby each Helper would take responsibility for every twenty-five to thirty houses in the district. As already indicated, there was also a Clothing Bureau.

The whole purpose of the Guild was to build an effective community structure with which to tackle poverty and unemployment. Therefore it became involved in extensive social casework to alleviate the suffering of the poor by giving advice and arranging necessary health, clothing, and holiday provision. This desire, led all guilds into a wide range of activities. Indeed, the Halifax Guild encouraged the local authority to appoint health visitors, and in Bolton, Bradford, Halifax, and other areas, the guilds contributed to the provision and distribution of school meals. The Halifax Citizens' Guild informed its supporters that the Adult School was offering a course of lectures on the best possible food choice for a small income.<sup>41</sup> In Halifax the disposal of the Mayor's funds was entrusted to the guild. The Halifax Citizens' Guild also maintained a small workshop for the unemployed.<sup>42</sup>

The Guild operated a Men's 'Institute', for discussion and lectures, and allotment gardens for the poor to grow their own food, using spare municipal land in Halifax and renting it out cheaply. From April 1908 and March 1909 it helped the Halifax Education Authority provide 63,605 free meals to school children,<sup>43</sup> also bearing the cost of feeding necessitous school children, and spent £30 on feeding 300 children in the Christmas holidays of 1908/1909.<sup>44</sup> A Maternity Provident Club under the title of 'Babies Welcome' was started at the beginning of 1909 and offered 'School for Mothers' classes and maternity bags, which could be kept for six weeks by expectant mothers.<sup>45</sup> A Juvenile Advisory Committee was set up by the Board of Trade 1910 and the Guild formed an After-Care Visitation system which was set up within the following year.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it also operated with a Children's Welfare League, essentially an information agency that was set up in 1910.<sup>47</sup>

Health and environmental matters clearly occupied much of the time of the Guild. Indeed, there was alarm in 1910 that death rates in some Halifax wards were very high. Death rates for the borough as a whole were 13.2 per 1,000 but varied immensely between wards: 21.0 in East, 14.6 in Central, 18.4 in North and 8.8 in Skircoat, with the five-year averages being 19.8 in East, 16.7 Central. 17.5 North and 11.3 Skircoat.<sup>48</sup> As a result the Guild took up the issue of the Halifax slums, offered help to pregnant mothers, as indicated, and was receptive to the health initiatives of the Agenda Club. This club was a national body of Guild supporters, led by E.V.D. Birchall, which based itself on the samurai tradition of supporting the community, and advocated that there should be a National Health Week in 1912, of lectures and exhibitions, organised for the 28 April to 4 May 1912.<sup>49</sup> Halifax was involved in this and also organised activities in the second National Health week held for the week beginning 6 April 1913.<sup>50</sup>

The Guild movement aimed to introduce a more ‘scientific’ approach to relieving poverty by avoiding the indiscriminate distribution of relief of Old Philanthropy. As a result the movement took up the responsibility for monitoring relief given to the poor in Halifax through a Clearing House or Mutual Registration system which was designed to check on what charitable relief the poor were receiving. Guilds like Bradford, Manchester and Croydon developed these quickly but Halifax was slow to develop such a scheme. Indeed, a scheme was not considered seriously until 1912. A preparatory scheme was finally agreed on 21 October 1912 and came into existence on 1 January 1914.<sup>51</sup> By July 1914 4,000 people were on the mutual register and this had risen to about 5,000 people by the end of July 1915, after which it seems to have disappeared from sight submerged in the war relief campaign as the Guild gradually moved towards forming the Halifax Council of Social Welfare.<sup>52</sup>

There was, however, much concern at the strains placed upon the Halifax Guild by its multifarious activities. In its *Third Annual Report*, 1907-08, the Halifax Citizens’ Guild noted that the cost of cases had risen substantially in its first three years. Of the 920 cases raised in 1907-08, 625 were ‘Helped’, forty-one referred to other societies, and each Guild case ‘Helped’ cost 10s 11d (54.5 p) compared to 9s 9d (49p) in 1906-1907, and 7s 4d (37p) in 1905-06.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the resources of the Guild were clearly stretched for in the year 1907 to 1908 it only raised £776 but spent £842. Faced with such financial pressure the Guild raised money by a three-pronged strategy. First it sought charitable contributions from the public, receiving for instance large gifts of £40 and £100 in 1909.<sup>54</sup> Secondly, it created a Stand-By Emergency Fund, which listed over 200 people, including J.H. Whitley MP, A.W. Whitley, George Whitley and S.R. Whitley, who were willing to contribute.<sup>55</sup> Thirdly, it set up an Emergency Fund to which contributions were made.<sup>56</sup>

Even then, in 1909, *The Helper* noted that there was increasing regret that: ‘The cost of relief of the cases is very considerable and money is not coming in to meet it’.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the total expenditure of the Halifax Guild was broken down into the costs of administration, ‘The Institute’, ‘The Allotment Gardens’ and ‘Relief’. The total amount devoted to relief in the three full years between 1908 and the beginning of 1912 was 43, 44 and 54 per cent, respectively. Monetary relief to the poor therefore represented up to half the total expenditure of the Halifax Guild, the rest being taken in costs and a salary.<sup>58</sup> However, the Halifax Guild emphasised that it only gave material relief where it considered the ‘need is clearly of a temporary character’.<sup>59</sup> It was an attitude which strengthened as the forces of the local and national state intervention emerged in an age of Liberal reform.

Co-operation between the Guild and municipality was a significant feature of the New Philanthropy of the Guild and of civic consciousness, though it led to some exaggerated comments about the nature of the new relationships, and most obviously in Halifax. In February 1909 *The Helper* announced that:

The month of January, 1909, will be a land-mark and epoch in connection with the Halifax Guild of Help. The Mayor of the Borough has publicly recognised the Guild with its organisation as the most complete in the Borough for applying sympathetically and skilfully

the Town's Relief Funds. The great fact of the month is the statement by the Mayor that 'all unemployed men who will work shall have their work found'. This is of vital import to all Guild workers as one can readily understand. Just as the Old Age Pensions is the first open acknowledgement of the principle of communal responsibility for help given to those who have fallen into poverty through causes beyond their control, so we can have here an instance of a town providing work for all its own unemployed citizens. We believe that Halifax is the first town in the Kingdom to publicly acknowledge the responsibility.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, in a speech at the fourth annual meeting (1909) of the Halifax Guild, J.H. Howarth, its chairman, stated that unlike Bradford it might consider making the guild more a municipal organisation than simply a philanthropic organisation.<sup>61</sup>

### **Unemployment and the Halifax Guild**

The Halifax Guild was uncertain what all these local, and indeed state, developments and connections meant for its future, and especially for its work with the unemployed, a group who often accounted for more than half the cases taken up by the Guild. It was sure that it should be involved but soon recognised that unemployment was something which only Government could truly tackle.

In Halifax the percentage of unemployment cases, when all types of unemployment and underemployment are taken into account, varied between about 40 to 50 per cent.<sup>62</sup> In order to deal with this problem the Halifax Guild worked closely with the public authorities in using the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905. This provided money for businesses and local authorities to employ workmen. In Halifax, this work, and general relief for the unemployed, necessitated the formation of a Distress Committee which brought together the Poor Law, the municipality and charity, to deal with unemployment. The Distress Committee could find work for the unemployed and find it partly through the rates and partly through voluntary contributions.

In the winter of 1908 the Halifax Citizens' Guild agreed to administer the funds of the Distress Committee. It worked wholeheartedly on its new duties: 'Last winter the Guild undertook to distribute the funds subscribed by the town...we threw our funds into the extended work...relaxing our own system, we judged cases more by the measure of mere distress and less on preventive and curative principles'.<sup>63</sup> Yet there were many problems and the Guild recognised that the 'Distress Committee is labouring under considerable disadvantage and the considerable difficulties'.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, it was hoped that there would be 'friendly co-operation between the Distress Committee and the Guild'.<sup>65</sup> The Halifax Guild was clearly concerned about many of the aspects of the mechanics of co-operation but was in little doubt about the necessity of taking action to deal with unemployment.

The concerns of the Guild were heightened by the fact that there had been high levels of unemployment in the winter of 1908-9 which had provoked the Halifax Hunger Marchers to approach the Guild and enquire about its unemployment measures and why it was 'not relieving single men in lodging

houses'.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Hunger Marchers shocked the leading figures of the Halifax Guild, unnerved by the potential for protest that unemployment provided and concerned that both the 'respectable' and the 'not so-respectable' working classes were involved. Indeed, the Halifax Guild reflected that:

We have no desire to see any more processions of the so called 'Hunger Marchers' in our times. We state with knowledge that a good proportion of the 'Marchers' were men of very poor calibre; but at the same time we know that a proportion were good men thrown out of work through no fault of their own. We cannot but feel the disgrace of such processions of out-of-work in this well-to-do Borough.<sup>67</sup>

The Distress Committee and the Mayor's action to curb unemployment worked haltingly but the Guild hoped that the new Labour Exchange, opened in 1910 following government legislation and under the superintendence of Harry Smith, a Guild member from Bradford, would resolve the problem. It was stated that 'All Guild workers rejoice at the establishment of the Halifax Labour Exchange' and were encouraged to 'inform "out of work cases" to the Labour Exchanges and to get them to register' for work opportunities as they emerged.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, there was increasing awareness that the Guild could do little to deal with unemployment. In effect, by 1909 the Halifax Guild had recognised that unemployment was the pressing problem, was frustrated at the ineffectiveness of local organisations to deal with it, but hoped that its greater involvement would make some measurable impact on the actions of the state. In its *Annual Report* for 1908-09 the Guild admitted that despite the Mayor's Appeal it did not have the resources to deal with the rising number of cases connected with unemployment – a rise of 300 cases that year – stating that:

We have certain limited resources in men and money, and since we cannot deal effectively with the whole field of poverty at present, it seems best to apply our resources to dealing with a limited range of poverty, where we can deal really effectively. And it needs to be recognised that the Guild according to its ideals, desires to be first and foremost a moral agency, and not a distributing society.<sup>69</sup>

The point was reiterated in the annual report for 1909-10 which stated that 'they had learned from experience how large a proportion of need arose simply from absence of employment, and how little can be done to remove the cause locally and individually'.<sup>70</sup> It is clear that the state's move towards dealing with poverty and unemployment was beginning to impact upon the thinking of the Halifax Guild.

Indeed, in the broader context the Guild began to think about its future role. On 15 June 1909 the Central Board expressed the view that due to past experience 'the time has come to limit the extent of help that it should be granted to any case, or to retreat very considerably the number and character of the cases to which help should be granted'.<sup>71</sup> Three days later J.H. Howarth, the Honorary Treasurer, observed that the Guild had 'been playing at the work' and it was added that 'He pointed out that much of the work had been supplementary to that of the Guardians and the Distress Committee and it was to be found that we had only treated the lowest stratum and not reached the people whom we desired to prevent from falling into destitution'.<sup>72</sup> As a result, he felt that 'we should have to alter our tactics and refer to the State a large number of

cases we have hitherto attempted to assist'. By September 1909 it was clear that the Halifax Guild was being overwhelmed by unemployment cases and, a month, later A. W. Whitley was calling for a plan by which the earlier ideals of the Guild might be retained and upheld.<sup>73</sup> That plan emerged in November 1909, suggesting that preventive and curative measures should be examined in all cases, which meant ignoring cases being dealt with by the Poor Law, aiming to get the Guild to work more efficiently, and reducing the financial assistance being offered to the unemployed and other cases.<sup>74</sup> In the end, it was clear that the Halifax Guild was incapable of dealing with the burden it had assumed, was now flinching at the prospect of being the municipal type of guild it had become, and wished to return to the moral uplifting role of the Guild movement. Increasingly, it saw state action as the solution to poverty.

In 1911 this raised a further debate over the relationship between the Guild and the Juvenile Advisory Committee of the Board of Trade Labour Exchange. J.H. Howarth, Chairman of the Guild, summed up the issues: 'In 1911 there is an Act of Parliament, there is a Board of Trade Advisory Committee. Somebody must do the work required ... Ought we to manage this work, can we, will we?'<sup>75</sup> When he put the question to a Guild meeting 'A large majority voted in the affirmative'; and the meeting discussed 'whether the work ... should be taken up by the Guild as a body, or should the Guild Helpers as individuals offer their services', though no final decision was made.<sup>76</sup>

### **State intervention changing the game: The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, Old Age Pensions and National Insurance**

The development of state intervention was the most important occurrence in the decade or so before the First World War, largely because it challenged local administrative control that had been the basis of British society until the early twentieth century. On the whole, the Halifax Guild recognised the challenge that was coming, and inherent in its New Philanthropy was its commitment to working with public bodies. It is clear that the Guild of Help hoped to check the pace of state intervention, though it is clear that it failed to do so as it was eventually swallowed up in the vortex of war. The powers of ideas, the failure of philanthropy, and the growth of welfare capitalism have been used variably by historians to explain the rapid involvement of the state.<sup>77</sup> Yet whatever the driving force of the reforms pushed forward by David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and the Edwardian Liberal governments, it is clear that the Old Philanthropy was not to be easily swept away. Opinions about the survival of the Old Philanthropic system varied. The Bradford Guild of Help felt that the removal of the Old Philanthropy by the New Philanthropy would provide the Guild with new opportunities whereas at the other end of the spectrum the Halifax Guild was worried that its own role would be minimised by new state legislation, although some of its members supported the reduced role of the Halifax Guild.

There was particularly strong support from within the Guild movement for the state provision of old-age pensions. The idea had developed from the work of

Canon William Blackley in 1878, through the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor of 1893, until a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which included Lloyd George, gave official recognition of the idea of a non-contributory pension arrangement. The Old Age Pensions Act was passed in 1908 and introduced on 1 January 1909, giving five shilling per week to those aged over seventy, with a sliding-scale arrangement on those with incomes from eight shilling to twelve shillings. These payments were paid through the Post Office rather than through the Poor Law, thus becoming the right of a citizen.

The Guild of Help movement welcomed such developments and the Halifax Guild reported that of 1,499 claims in Halifax 1,442 had been upheld and that of these 1,284 were allowed five shillings, 59 four shillings, 70 three shillings, 15 two shillings, and 14 one shilling. On this basis it was estimated that in 1909 the old-age pensions would cost £17,966 in Halifax alone.<sup>78</sup> The Halifax Guild estimated that the total national costs of old-age pensions would be £11,600,000 in the first year.<sup>79</sup> In fact the cost in the first year was £8 million compared with the £6.5 million expected by the Government.<sup>80</sup> That sum was a considerable amount by the standards of the day, and equivalent to about half the total amount spent on the Poor Law in England and Wales. Not surprisingly, the Halifax Guild was able to declare ‘What a great blessing this Pension Act has been proving by many cases brought under the notice of our Helpers’.<sup>81</sup>

There were, however, doubts within the Guild movement about the future of the Poor Law. The Royal Commission on the Poor Law (1905-09) produced two reports on its future. The Majority Report, largely influenced by the COS, accepted that the Poor Law should remain an all-embracing social institution and sought to reverse the trend towards removing categories of social need from its responsibility. Yet, recognising that the Poor Law was held in bad odour, it suggested that voluntary agencies should be united under Public Assistance Committees, which were to make effective use of voluntary charities and social casework agencies.<sup>82</sup> Thus voluntary agencies could act as a barrier through which only the destitute, not the poor, could pass. This was well received by the philanthropic community whilst, in contrast, the Minority Report, which offered little support for voluntary help, normally received scathing criticism. Whereas the Majority Report wanted to make ‘a swollen Poor Law’ into an all-purpose relief agency, the Minority Report aimed to destroy the Poor Law.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the Minority Report argued that local authorities should take over the Poor Laws but that there also ought to be specialist departments, such as education, health and pensions, to deal with the separate problems of poverty. Beatrice Webb – a leading socialist, a member of the Commission and chief architect of the Minority Report – also felt that there should be a co-ordinating registrar of public assistance who would dovetail the work of individual departments and assess, by a means test, what, if anything, ought to be charged. The Minority Report also wanted a nationally-organised service for the able-bodied and a powerful Ministry of Labour was to be set the task of organising the labour market through the use of labour exchanges, using programmes and public works in times of cyclical depression. The basis of the modern system of welfare was envisaged by this report.

In line with the philanthropic community, the Halifax Citizens' Guild initially supported the Majority Report and was critical of the Minority Report and this view persisted when 'Mrs Sidney Webb', came to Halifax in December 1909 to deliver a lecture to the annual conference of the Halifax Guild. There was a general agreement that Mrs Webb's address was 'undoubtedly excellent' but equal condemnation that the subject 'The Sphere of Voluntary Agencies in the Crusade against Destitution' had not been dealt with.<sup>84</sup> Arguing that two million people per year were applying to the poor law and that the public had lost faith in the workhouse and 'indiscriminate alms giving', Mrs Webb campaigned for the Minority Report she had helped write.

As a result of this lecture the Halifax Guild set up a 'Guild Study Circle', to consider the implications of the two poor-law reports, under the chairmanship of the Revd Prebendary Burn the new vicar of Halifax.<sup>85</sup> In July 1910 Burn reported that there was confusion and dismay amongst the Study Circle and that, whilst welcoming the formation of Labour Exchanges and declaring his support for the Minority Report, he felt that: 'Many earnest workers ... lament the production of two rival reports ... and still more the efforts to win, by agitation, the bulk of the people over to one side or the other'.<sup>86</sup> Beatrice Webb's lecture had clearly divided the Guild. In the end, of course, this dichotomy did not matter for the Royal Commission failed to produce any significant response from the Liberal Government. The Local Government Board, which ran the Poor Law, did not want change and David Lloyd George was too intent upon developing his insurance and pension schemes in order to reduce the burden on the Poor Law as a solution to its problems.

Increasingly, guilds were attracted to the unemployment, health and trade board schemes which the Liberal government introduced. They liked Winston Churchill's Trades Board Act of 1909 which set up trades boards to negotiate minimum wage in the 'sweated trades' such as tailoring. They were attracted to the Labour Exchange Act, another of Churchill's assaults on unemployment. Above all, they, as was the case with the Halifax Guild, became fascinated with the National Insurance Act of 1911, which set up contributory schemes of insurance for unemployment and health. J.H. Howarth, by then chairman of the Halifax Guild, asked: 'Are these two ideals [of state action and voluntary assistance] each self-sufficient and mutually exclusive. It may be found possible to supplement the inadequacy of voluntary efforts by the fuller resources of the State, and to temper the rigidity and uniformity of state action with something of the freedom and individual adaptability of voluntary personal service'.<sup>87</sup> In other words, both the voluntary and state sectors had distinct roles to play in the salvation of the occasionally poor, but respectable, working-class families.

The Halifax Citizens' Guild seemed easier with the state health insurance scheme for it 'will welcome help from a voluntary organisation such as the Citizens' Guild'.<sup>88</sup> It was felt that the Guild could advise about the spending of the thirty shillings maternity money on the doctor and the midwife, that the Insurance committee could liberally assist any nursing organisations established by the Guild, and that co-operation with the Guild in consumption cases would be most valuable. It was recognised that the new state developments would reduce the burden upon the Guild. Indeed, even the reticent and conciliatory



Halifax Guild could ask: 'Will there be any need for the Guild of Help when the benefits of the National Health Insurance come into operation?' Answering its own question it asserted that 'it is certain that, as we are in a time of transition, the Guild will find outlets for its energies in other directions'.<sup>89</sup> The role of the Guild was an issue which also exercised the mind of the slowly-emerging national Guild movement of which Halifax was a vital part.

### **The Halifax Guild and the National Association of the Guild of Help.**

Localism dominated the activities of every guild and was almost an anathema to the effective development of a national movement. Therefore the Guild of Help was slow to build up a national movement through its annual conferences and its National Association. The former was little more than a social gathering and the latter failed to inspire much in the way of a national purpose. The first annual conference, held at Bradford in 1908, was a milestone but failed to take up the offer of the British Institute of Social Services to act as a centre of information for the Guild of Help. Indeed, it was decided, in a preliminary meeting before the Bolton Conference in 1909, that the guilds would organise their own conferences.<sup>90</sup> The second conference, held at Bolton on 17 and 18 February 1909, was less than enthusiastically received by some of the forty-five guilds. Indeed, the Halifax Guild sent four representatives who were disappointed at the lack of practical experience that was being imparted, wanting more round-table discussion, although 'the social side was useful' for comparing notes.<sup>91</sup> Frustration at the proceedings of the national conference appears to have been linked with a lackadaisical approach to the development of a National Association. The idea had first emerged at a meeting in Sheffield on 24 July 1908, held to organise the second annual conference at Bolton, where the Secretaries of the Bolton and Manchester Guilds 'were requested to draw up suggestions for the formation of an Association of Guilds of Help'.<sup>92</sup> Yet at the Bolton Conference it was decided that 'the time was not opportune for forming a National Association'.<sup>93</sup> However, a Provisional Committee was set up at the 1910 annual conference, although the National Association of the Guilds of Help (NAGH) did not come into existence until the 1911 annual conference. It was later to develop regional federations during the winter of 1915/1916, one of which was for the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Throughout these developments the Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help was deeply involved in the national annual conferences and the Association, though often critical of its slow development. At the first National Annual Conference of the Guild of Help, Bradford, Tuesday 26 February 1908 A.W. Whitley, JP, Honorary Secretary of the Halifax Citizen's Guild, spoke on 'Methods of raising Administrative relief'.<sup>94</sup> He was also present at the second Annual National Conference at Guild of Help at Bolton, on 17-18 February 1909.<sup>95</sup> At the third National Conference of the Guild of Help held at Montgomery Hall in Sheffield, 4 May 1910, a paper was given by J.H. Howarth.<sup>96</sup> Halifax was also represented at the conference by A.E. Thomas and Miss Wright, as delegates, and J. Hebblethwaite as Secretary.<sup>97</sup> At the fourth National Conference

of the Guilds of Help held at Birmingham, 16-18 May 1911, A.W. Whitley chaired the Conference and was elected Vice-President.<sup>98</sup> He lectured on the 'Police' arguing that there was a need for tact and care with children and strongly advocating that guilds should take over the care of lighter cases from the Probation Officers, pointing to the need for joint consideration between Magistrates and Guilds, an experiment which was taken up in Bolton though not in Halifax.<sup>99</sup> By the fifth National Annual Conference of the Guilds of Help, held at Croydon, Saturday, 8 June to Tuesday 11 June 1912, A.W. Whitley, who was chairman, was President of the National Association of the Guilds of Help.<sup>100</sup> This led to the sixth National Conference of the Guild of Help being held at Halifax from Thursday, 5 June to Saturday, 7 June 1913.<sup>101</sup> At that conference the Mayor of Halifax and A.W. Whitley, still President of the National Association of Guilds of Help, spoke briefly to welcome the delegates at the Garden Party held at Bermerside.<sup>102</sup> He reminded his audience of the 'Foundation of our Belief', discussed the need for minimum wages and continued work by the Guild of Help, arguing that they:

... must join hands with them and the State with them and all voluntary bodies if good was to be done ... Feeding of school children, medical inspection of children of open-air schools, boys' clubs, girls' clubs, and the like: those were the aggregates of young lives in after care that they were supplementing by individual care ... Recent legislation such as Old Age Pensions and National Insurance, Feeding of School Children, and the like, have almost changed the face of the England we used to know, and they will go far to abolish poverty on its material side, but we shall only repeat the old mistakes if we rely on State legislation to accomplish our desires. That is too mechanical. It is personal and spiritual factors that must now account for more and more if we are to reach our desired goals.

In other words, the Guild movement had to adjust its role to the needs of the individual whose other needs were not met by an impersonal state. Yet on the eve of the Great War there were some who felt that the Guild Movement and the Halifax Citizens' Guild had to scale down and meet the new conditions. Indeed, Mr T. U. Kaye, B.Sc, at a Garden Party organised by the Mayor and Mayoress at Jumbles and before 150 members of the Halifax Guild, argued that faced with state intervention 'the Citizens' Guild would become more a Guild of advice than of help'.<sup>103</sup> A.W. Whitley's message was being re-emphasised; the Guild movement would now have to continue in a new form.

### **Changes in the Great War**

The outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 dramatically transformed the Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help. Within days, in Halifax, and throughout the country, Representative Local Committees (often called a Local Representative Committees) were established to bring all philanthropic bodies to work with municipal council to relieve war distress.<sup>104</sup> The Halifax Citizens' Guild operated within the Halifax Representative Committee, providing relief for the families of soldiers and sailors as well as the poor. However, the Guild eventually called a meeting of fifty or more societies on 23 November 1917, presided over by the Mayor, to improve the co-ordination of charitable organisations

as a result of the war effort. This meeting decided to form a Council of Social Welfare, and as a small preliminary committee was appointed to draw up the Constitution. Once this was done an inaugural meeting was held on 4 July 1918, when members and officers were elected. By the Constitution the Guild of Help merged into the Council of Social Welfare handed over its assets and goodwill. The Halifax Citizens' Guild became part of the Halifax Council of Social Welfare on 1 August 1918. This body was composed of six representatives from the Town Council, six from the Board of Guardians and had many other bodies with one or two representatives.<sup>105</sup> The Halifax Citizens' Guild of Help had no delegates since it no longer existed as a distinct organisation. Effectively it merged into the new body having paved the way for its development. The Halifax Council of Social Welfare was seen as a new departure from what had existed prior to the Great War. It provided a meeting ground for relieving bodies where questions of common policy could be discussed. Indeed, it was suggested that it:

tends to break the barrier of isolation which previously existed between bodies and societies which are working with the one principal object in view, viz. the improvement of our social conditions, it opens the road to the co-ordination of effort, it helps to prevent overlapping both in visiting and relief ...<sup>106</sup>

It was thus a partial fulfilment of the initial aims of the Guild of Help movement, providing a scientific approach to philanthropy by co-ordinating and checking, through Mutual Registration of a type, the provision of relief. This body became part of the National Council for Social Services in 1919.

## **Conclusion**

The Guild of Help was one of the major constituents of voluntary relief in Britain in the decade prior to the Great War. Almost infectiously it propounded the New Philanthropy, focussing upon the need to develop both civic consciousness and a new type of partnership with public bodies, along scientific and efficient lines. Yet even before the enormous widening of the role of the State during the Great War it was failing to provide an answer to the problem of poverty. It found dealing with the causes of poverty too great for its resources, failed to evoke a truly civic-wide response from local communities, and its emphasis upon civic action was inimical to the Guild movement's integrated and co-ordinated development as a national movement. Nevertheless, it did provide some relief for the poor, offered direction to local charities, gave relief to the unemployed, and helped to tackle the burgeoning health problems of towns such as Halifax. In the Great War it assumed a wider role as it merged into larger national social structure for the relief of poverty. The Halifax Citizens' Guild, in particular, made a significant local contribution to dealing with Edwardian poverty but, like other guilds, it was overwhelmed with the enormity of the task it set itself and limited by the scope of its support in the face of rising state intervention. In the end, local initiative was not enough.

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