

JAMES COUZENS: MAYOR OF DETROIT
1919-1922

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Madison Kuhn
Major professor

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ABSTRACT

JAMES COUZENS: MAYOR OF DETROIT
1919-1922

By

John Mack Townsley Chavis

The purpose of this study is to clarify the place of James Couzens (1872-1936) in the tangle of problems which beset Detroit during his mayoralty, 1919-1922. He had, at the time he became mayor, a reputation for great managerial skill; Detroit, in the throes of industrialization and the problems occasioned by a large influx of foreigners and rural Americans, turned to him because of that reputation. The study views Couzens as an individualist and a doer rather than a theorist. He was a moral reformer who insisted on equal justice for all regardless of class, color, or creed. It was this role as social conscience of the community which earned him the title of reformer. But he was also a practical man who looked for the most efficient way to achieve a goal and usually worked within the existing structure. The reform charter of 1918 was written with specifications which called for James Couzens in every way except in name. He did not

participate in the construction of the charter; he supported it mildly; but as mayor of Detroit he enforced it equitably and fearlessly.

In the context of the urban setting of the Couzens' mayoralty, 1919-1922, three key issues which demanded much of his attention and helped bring to him national recognition as an urban administrator have been examined. They are municipalization of the street railway, unemployment, and civil rights. Detroit in 1919 was a city different in many ways from the Detroit of 1890, when Couzens arrived. But not merely did it differ in 1919 from the city of 1890, it differed from the city of 1900 and 1910 as well. It differed in physical size, in population count, in the composition of the population, and in the problems which had to be met. Couzens was able to bring a successful end to the thirty-year battle for municipal ownership of the street railway system and set the city on a course geared to meet the problems of continuing growth and industrialization. Then, much as his success in the office of police commissioner redeemed the Marx administration and helped Couzens win the mayoralty, his successful administration of Detroit's government and his success at the election polls carried him to the Senate of the United States once again as an honest government appointee.

Among the sources from which data for this thesis were drawn, of first importance was the collection of

Couzens' papers and scrapbooks housed in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Other manuscripts related to Couzens' mayoralty were examined at the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library. Newspapers provided a continuing report on activities of the mayor. Harry Barnard's biography treats primarily the period of his senatorial service (1922-1936) but was useful on his earlier life and character. His extensive bibliography of Couzens' material was invaluable for background data on Detroit. There is no definitive, scholarly work which treats Detroit in the first three decades of the century, decades which saw the city spring to greatness.

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A THESIS

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Dedicated to the Memory
of My Mother

Susan Townsley Chavis

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CHAPTER I

DETROIT, 1890-1918

Detroit, the city over which James Couzens took political control on January 14, 1919, was different in many ways from the Detroit to which he immigrated from Canada in 1890. It had quadrupled in population and trebled in expanse. The composition had changed. Its New York and New England people had been joined by newcomers from southern and eastern Europe and from the American South. Automobiles had become its industrial base. The city charter was new, transforming a representative council into one elected at large. The problems which beset the city had reached crisis proportions. The massive social, political, and economic changes which had taken place during the years since 1890 when Couzens started as a freight car checker for the Michigan Central Railroad, and rose to local and national prominence, were not unique. Other urban communities participated in the process which brought change to Detroit. Yet none was affected more vigorously than Detroit.

Detroit's growth was a part of the process which altered the character of Michigan, transforming its population from two-thirds rural in 1890 to 60 per cent urban in 1920.¹ From an economy that was based primarily on extractive processes such as lumbering, fishing, mining, and farming, it had developed into one of America's leading manufacturing states and the chief producer of automobiles and their parts.²

When James Couzens made the move over the forty miles which separate Chatham in Ontario and Detroit, he was seeking greater employment opportunities than his home community could provide. His action was similar to those of the many millions of men, before and since, who have left their homes for broader opportunities. All were in search of a better life. But very few made as large a contribution to the industrial forces which brought change as did Couzens.

Detroit's streets did not yet know the sounds soon to fill them--beeping horns, squealing tires, whining motors. It was a quiet and leisurely paced middle-sized city with a reputation for pleasant living.³ This is not

¹David I. Verway, ed., Michigan Statistical Abstract (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1962), p. 4.

²F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 378.

³Public Lighting Commission, City of Detroit,

to say that Detroit was a static community. From 1920 until the 1950's, Detroiters knew only growth in population, but the thirty years after Couzens arrived were the spectacular ones. As Detroit continued its unrelenting northwesterly growth, it confronted the problem of a great city without the adequate matrix of leadership that helped other cities move into the twentieth century.⁴ To a considerable extent, Detroit trained its leaders from among the swarm of workers that its growth attracted.

With a fifth of a million people in 1890, Detroit ranked fifteenth among American cities.⁵ By 1920, the year after Couzens was inaugurated as Detroit's reform mayor, it had reached a million and was fourth among American cities. That fourfold increase in three decades had been exceeded in the era when the upper middle west was settling--1820-1850--but that earlier growth only changed a village into a city.⁶ Couzens' three decades saw it expand from a major

Fiftieth Annual Report (Detroit: City of Detroit, 1945), p. 17.

⁴Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission and Wayne State University, Center of Population, Detroit Metropolitan Area and City of Detroit, 1930-1960 (Detroit: Wayne State University and Regional Planning Commission, 1961), p. 17.

⁵The 1890 and 1920 census returns were 205,876 and 993,678. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 512; Detroit News, June 18, 1920.

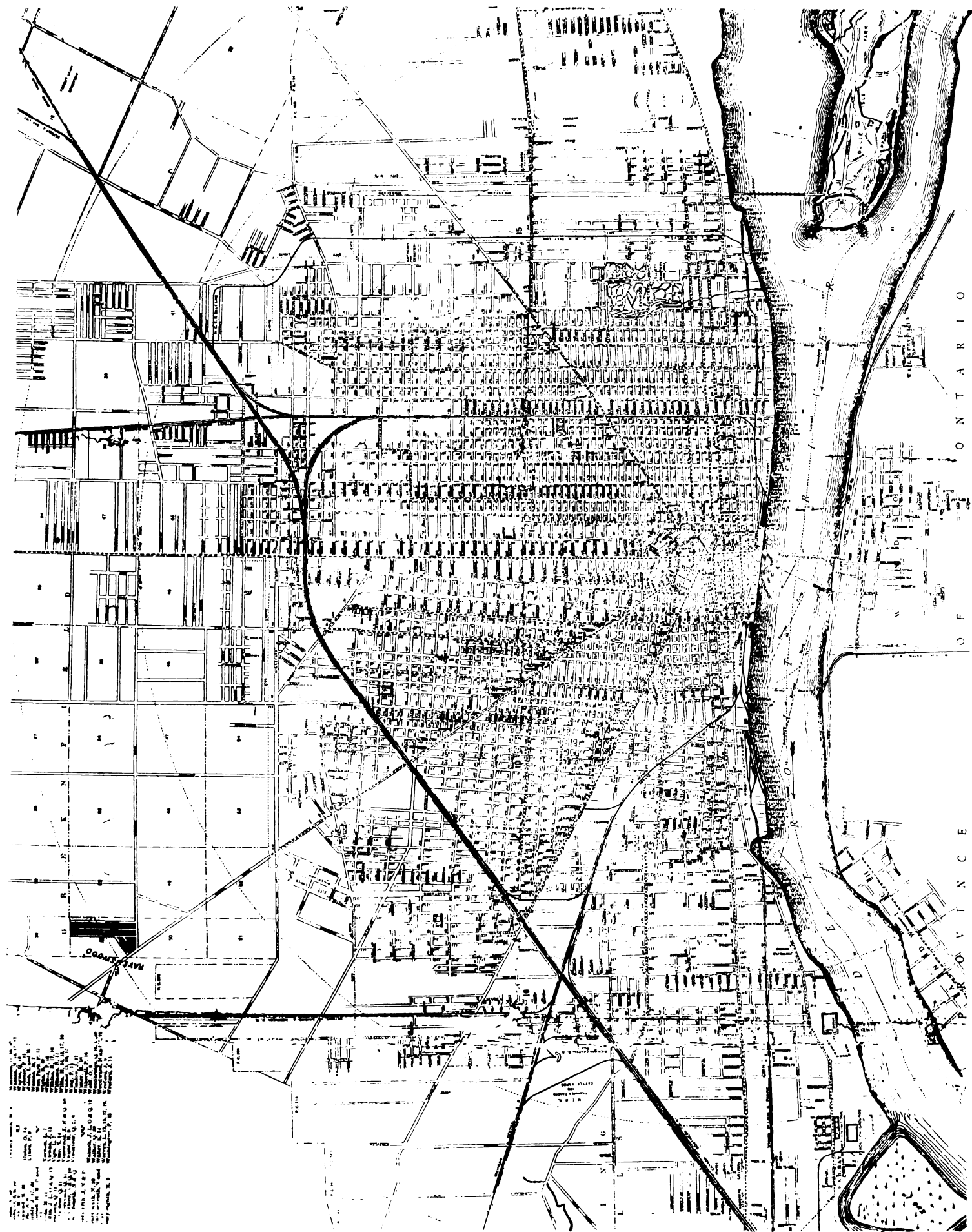
⁶Eric Kocher, Economic and Physical Growth of

city, fifteenth in population, to fourth in the nation, trailing only New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. As the population count increased in Detroit, the city extended its boundaries to accommodate the influx (see the two accompanying maps). In 1885, Detroit had added six square miles to the sixteen it already covered. By 1920, the boundaries of the city of Detroit had been expanded to enclose seventy-eight square miles.⁷ Few cities could find in their past experience so little to help them cope with the new problems of the twentieth century. It was perhaps natural that at a critical time it should look to a newcomer, to one of the builders of its industrial empire, for political leadership in 1919.

Detroit's problems were complicated by the fact that it was only part of a bursting metropolitan area in southeastern Michigan where men moved easily in and out of Detroit for jobs and homes and recreation. Its suburban communities, some non-existent in 1890, others small, semi-rural communities of several hundreds, grew to sizable cities during the same period. Highland Park, which became the home of the Ford Motor Company in 1910 and grew from

Detroit, 1701-1935 (Washington: Federal Housing Administration, 1936), pp. 61-64.

⁷ Clarence M. Burton, The Building of Detroit (Detroit: privately printed, 1912), p. 43; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: Population, 1920, Number and Distribution of Inhabitants (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 77.



DETROIT IN 1890

Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection

PROVINCE

ONTARIO



427 in 1900 to 46,499 in 1920, came to be completely surrounded by the city of Detroit. Hamtramck, situated much like Highland Park in relation to Detroit, grew from 3,559 in 1910 to 48,615 in 1920.⁸ Of the twenty-three cities in the United States which were over 25,000 in population and experienced over 100 per cent population increases between 1910 and 1920, five were in southeastern Michigan. Both Hamtramck and Highland Park increased their population figures over ten times during the decade, while Pontiac and Flint each added more than a 135 per cent increase and Detroit proper had a 113 per cent increase. One writer has noted that Detroit's nearly five-fold growth in population for the period 1840-1854 was met and surpassed by other cities of the West.⁹ "Most of these, however, after slowing down along in the 1890's as Detroit did, never recovered their former stride, while Detroit found new impetus to growth in the automobile industry and went on to challenge the nation's leaders."¹⁰

In addition to growth in population, growth in land area, and emergence as a major manufacturing center, the city over which James Couzens took political control in

⁸ Fifteenth Census, p. 512; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: Population, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 455.

⁹ Fourteenth Census, p. 77.

¹⁰ Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940), p. 245.

1919 had changed in another vital way since 1890. The composition of the population which began to come to urban manufacturing centers such as Detroit in the 1890's was different from the influx of previous decades. As the twentieth century moved into its second decade, the composition was altered even more significantly. During the middle quarters of the nineteenth century, not only out-state Michigan but also Ohio, New York, and New England saw many of their residents move to Detroit. Canadians like James Couzens, Englishmen, Germans, and Irishmen joined native sons in the journey to Detroit. But around 1890, workers of other nationalities began to appear in Detroit. Polish, Russian, Austrian, and Italian workers came in increasing numbers during each decade.¹¹

On June 13, 1918, the Detroit News noted that many races and nationalities were finding new homes in Detroit. It was threatening New York as America's most cosmopolitan city. The News stated that in 1890, three-quarter of the foreign born in Detroit were from north Europe and one-third of the foreign born in Detroit were from English-speaking countries. The threat to New York's status as the nation's most cosmopolitan city rested on the heavy influx into Detroit of immigrants from countries of south and east

¹¹Albert Mayer, A Study of the Foreign Born Population of Detroit, 1870-1950 (Detroit: Wayne University, 1951), p. 10; Lois Rankin, "Detroit Nationality Groups," Michigan History Magazine, XXII (Spring, 1939), passim.

Europe.¹² When the onset of the World War in 1914 closed many European boundaries to emigration, the increase of Detroit's black population changed the composition of the city even more visibly.

In 1890, Detroit's 3,500 Negroes constituted only 1.7 per cent of its population and a significant decline from the 2.4 per cent reported in 1880. In the decade of the 1890's the number of Negroes increased to 4,111 but the proportion dropped to 1.4 per cent.¹³ In 1910, the 5,741 Negroes were only 1.2 per cent of Detroit's 465,706.¹⁴ The forces which were drawing both the foreign born and the native born to Detroit had not begun to affect the Negro in the South to any appreciable extent. In 1910, 89 per cent of America's Negroes lived in the South, and it was from there that any sizable influx would have to come.

Several forces were operative during the period 1890-1920, motivating thousands of Negroes to quit the region of their birth and move to the manufacturing centers of the North. In the early years of the period, the demand

¹²Detroit News, June 13, 1918.

¹³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900: Special Reports, Supplementary Analysis and Derivative Tables (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), p. 262.

¹⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Abstract, with Supplement for Michigan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 95.

of industry was for the skilled worker. The blacksmith, the wagon maker, and the man handy with tools found jobs in Detroit.¹⁵ After 1900, the large factory capable of employing hundreds of persons, many of them unskilled, gradually developed.¹⁶ The machine pulled as well as pushed, and in the same direction. The opening of employment opportunities for unskilled employees was one event making the migration of the Negro to Detroit practicable, as it made practicable the migration to industrial centers of other rural, unskilled people. At the same time, these same people were losing employment in rural areas as the economy and techniques of farming changed during the period; fewer and fewer farm hands were required to meet the agricultural needs of the country and the world.¹⁷ Finally, with the outbreak of the World War in 1914, the source of supply of unskilled foreign workers for the growing industrial needs of Detroit began to dry up. Europe's industrial and military manpower demands had to be met, and escape was no longer possible for the masses of Europeans caught in conflagration. This event and the continued prosperity of

¹⁵N. Beasley and G. W. Stark, Made in Detroit (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1957), p. 19.

¹⁶Sidney Glazer, Industrial Detroit: Men at Work (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1952), p. 11.

¹⁷Arthur Pound, The Iron Man in Industry (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), Chapter 1.

Detroit's industry led its industrialists to extend their recruitment to untapped resources. The Negro was an available manpower resource to be had for the asking. He was asked to come to Detroit and he came.¹⁸

The influx of Negroes into Detroit during the period 1910-1920 brought the percentage to 4.1, or 40,838 persons in a population of 993,678. The increase in Negro population in Detroit during this period was 611.3 per cent, the highest in the nation. Cleveland, Ohio was next highest with a 307 per cent increase in its Negro population. All other urban communities in the United States which had more than 25,000 Negroes in 1920 had less than a 150 per cent increase for the period.¹⁹ For the State of Michigan the increase was 352 per cent, although the increase in number amounted to only 42,000 persons. Of this number, 35,097 migrated to Detroit and most of the others settled in southeastern Michigan communities.²⁰

During the heavy influx of Negroes to Detroit in the war period, news coverage of this phenomenon was often presented to the readers in military terms as if the city were under attack by barbarian hordes. The Detroit News led off an article with the heading "Negroes Open Drive On

¹⁸William S. Rossiter, Increase of Population in the United States, 1910-1920 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 127; Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City, p. 249.

¹⁹Rossiter, p. 128.

²⁰Ibid., p. 127.

City. Advance Contingents of 50,000 Southerners Expected By Summer, Arrive Daily."²¹ In another report the News declared as editorial comment that the natural home of the Negro is in the South and the South should revise its racial policies and call him back home.²² But the same drive for a better life that had affected James Couzens and others like him stirred within black breasts, for even more cogent reasons, and would not be stilled. The changed conditions in Detroit, in Europe, and in the rural South made it possible for the Negro to come. An official of the Bureau of the Census, in commenting generally on the increase of Negroes in communities such as Detroit from 1910 to 1920, stated that "it is seldom, indeed, that the returns of the Federal census reflect such a wide and general racial movement."²³

Detroit's transition from a middle-sized city to the fourth largest city in the United States and one of the world's major manufacturing centers was not without serious effects on the quality of life of the city's residents. Any such mass migration to a city, aside from the forces within the community which provoked the migrants to cut economic, social, and other ties to their previous communities, produces massive problems. The municipal

²¹Detroit News, April 2, 1918.

²²Ibid., January 25, 1918.

²³Rossiter, p. 127.

services of an urban community are complex today and were so fifty years ago. An urban community is strained to keep its services efficient and modern even allowing for a "normal" growth pattern. When that growth is greatly accelerated, a severe, often unbearable, strain is placed on that community. Streets, sidewalks, sewers, schools, recreational facilities, public transportation, police protection, courts, judges, hospitals, inspectors, assessors, libraries, houses, churches, professional and personal services, centers for the retail and wholesale distribution of goods, banking and insurance facilities: the list of those services which must be not only maintained but indeed extended for the new and the old residents of the community appears endless.

It is clear that the Detroit over which James Couzens took the political leadership in January 1919 had not kept pace with the needs of its people. Its military production quotas for the Army had been achieved, but not the quotas for the improvement of municipal services for the city's residents. A city geared up for war production may be especially handicapped in attempting to meet non-military needs brought on or at least intensified by war-time expansion. Whatever the case, new problems were piled on the old ones greeting James Couzens when he assumed office. Detroit's schools were on half-day schedules as students were crowding into existing buildings and money

could not be found to construct new ones.²⁴ One observer of Detroit's dilemma wrote: "We have attained a population of more than a million people so rapidly that we have outgrown practically every public utility and most every private facility for handling the normal business resulting from that population."²⁵

As a key executive in one of Detroit's largest and best known companies, the Ford Motor Company, Couzens had had considerable first-hand experience with urban problems. Industrial growth depends on many things other than a market for the goods produced. To grow within a community, an industry must consider whether adequate sites are available for plant construction, whether the transportation network which serves the area is adequate for employees, materials, and products, whether a labor pool equipped with the requisite skills is available, and whether the public utilities and municipal services will meet the increased needs of the industry. The needs of the industrialists, the businessmen, the workers, and the other residents of a community are all tightly interwoven. Not always, of course, to the best interest of all parties.

²⁴Detroit News, June 28, 1918.

²⁵Library of Congress, James Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 6, Letter, Rupert E. Paris to Frank R. Randall, July 30, 1918. This collection will henceforth be referred to as the "Couzens Papers."

The Ford Motor Company was involved in an issue in Highland Park in 1914 which serves to illustrate the interest which local industry must have in local municipal problems. Highland Park's sewer facilities were inadequate to handle the increased demand placed on them by the growth of industry and population. On September 22, 1914, Vice President James Couzens wrote Detroit's Mayor Oscar Marx for permission to allow Highland Park to empty its sewerage into Detroit's Morrell Street sewer. Eventually the Ford Company carried the case to court and got a decision allowing the connection to be made.²⁶ When he became mayor of Detroit, he would discover that he had helped to create one of Detroit's major budgetary problems.²⁷

Prior to his becoming mayor, Couzens had served as a street railway commissioner (1913-1916) and as commissioner of police for the city of Detroit (1916-1918). Thus before his resignation from administrative duties with Ford's in 1915, he had begun to acquire a view of urban problems as a public servant--balancing his experience as an industrialist. Just as adequate transportation for employees, materials, and products, is vital to industrial growth, it is vital to the healthy growth of a community broadly--and this is a public matter. Public

²⁶Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 1, Letter, Couzens to Mayor Oscar Marx, September 22, 1914.

²⁷Detroit News, December 26, 1919.

safety can be viewed from the private side as protection of property. From the public side, law, order, and justice can be viewed as serving the best interest of the whole community.

The growth of Detroit from 1890 to 1918 was part of James Couzens' growth. He was part of the process which brought change to Detroit. His work with the Ford Motor Company contributed significantly to the financial stability and industrial growth of that company. The Ford Motor Company was one of the essential ingredients in the process which made Detroit the automobile capital of the world.

Industrial growth changed Detroit in population, in size, and in character. Industrial growth brought to Detroit municipal problems which lowered the quality of life and thwarted its potential for healthy development. The story of James Couzens: Mayor of Detroit, 1919-1922 is the story of one man's efforts to meet the needs of his community and make it a better place in which to live.

CHAPTER II

COUZENS RISES TO POLITICAL POWER

The Transition from Private Citizen to Public Official

November of 1918, when James Couzens was elected to the office of mayor of the city of Detroit, marked the beginning of his long career as an elected public official. Until then he had filled the role of business executive and had accepted a series of increasingly responsible appointive positions in Detroit civic life. After then public affairs were primary in his life and his interest in business became so tenuous that in 1919 he sold his stock in the Ford Motor Company to Henry Ford for \$29,308,857.

The thought of serving as mayor of Detroit was not of recent origin. However, in 1918, as he saw his chance for the senate seat of retiring Senator William Alden Smith disappear in the morass of party politics, his eyes came to rest on the non-partisan mayoralty in Detroit. The urgings of admirers over the years that he seek that post made it seem a desirable alternative for 1918. As early as May 1912, an admirer had written to Couzens that it would

please him very much to see him elected mayor particularly at that time when the city was growing so rapidly. "We need," he continued, "a man of your exceptional ability and judgment to guide its affairs for the future interests of all concerned."¹ It is not known how many such letters are needed to set aglow the spark of desire for political office. Perhaps for an ambitious man the number is not large.

In the spring of 1913 a rare bit of revelry involving Couzens occurred following his loss of an election bet. Once again Couzens was informed of his suitability for the mayoralty even though this time in a jocular vein. In the betting, Couzens had supported William H. Taft over Woodrow Wilson in the presidential race of 1912. Couzens' opponent supported Wilson. The loser was obligated to host a banquet for the Knights of the Round Table of the Detroit Club.² John H. Johnson, editor of the Detroit Journal was Couzens' opponent and the winner of the bet. An unsigned letter on the Detroit Journal's stationery written in a version of old English appropriate to Knights of the Round Table stated the writer's regret at being unable to attend the banquet and continued with the wish to be present "to

¹Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 1, Letter, C. C. Card to Couzens, May 22, 1912.

²The Knights of the Round Table was a group of Detroiters who ate at a round table in the dining room of the Detroit Club.

nominate Sir James Couzens for Mayor and to deliver the vote of the Round Table to him, thereby insuring his election. . . . "³

Another booster of Couzens for mayor wrote him in September 1915 that he had followed his career and believed that there was no man in Detroit better qualified for the job of mayor. The writer stated that he was convinced that he was another Mayor Hazen S. Pingree--Detroit's pioneer municipal reformer. It was Couzens' policy to answer personally his correspondence. Though the writer was a man of little local prominence, Couzens replied courteously and promptly that he was appreciative of the support but must decline. He justified his refusal to seek the office of mayor with the statement that such an effort would require that he give up work that he was then doing which was just as beneficial to the community as the work of the mayor.⁴

It is appropriate to consider at this point in the discussion of Couzens' emerging political consciousness and the general public's growing awareness of him as a potential political leader, just what in his past would have led an observer to declare in 1915 that he resembled Hazen S. Pingree. There were many striking similarities between the

³Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Folder, Knights of the Round Table.

⁴Ibid., General Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Hugh Ireland to Couzens, September 15, 1915. Letter, Couzens to Ireland, September 17, 1915.

two, some superficial, but many profound. Pingree was a wealthy manufacturer and a Republican who served as mayor of Detroit from 1890 to March 22, 1897. Pingree first took office as the representative of his party. As he pursued his independent way he lost party support, though he was able to maintain office through his popularity with the working classes. He spoke out against the special privileges and corrupt business practices of business groups in league with municipal government. He sought cheap and reliable public transportation reaching to all parts of the city to serve the needs of the workers. When he failed to get the cheap fares he desired, he began the thirty-year struggle to take over the privately owned street railway in Detroit.⁵

Couzens, then, as an emerging urban reformer was not unique. He was in the tradition of reformers such as Pingree, Sam "Golden Rule" Jones of Toledo, and Tom Johnson of Cleveland. As Couzens, a man of wealth and power like Pingree, Jones, and Johnson, began to stand up, first as a private citizen, then as a public official, to denounce the corrupt practices of business and government, Detroiters had only to think back a decade and a half to the Pingree era to find a model. Acceptance of membership on

⁵William P. Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself (Boston: The Gorman Press, 1930), pp. 34-38; William P. Lovett, "Pingree of Detroit--Demagogue or Statesman," National Municipal Review, X (November, 1919), 595-97; Bald, pp. 325-28.

the Detroit Street Railway Commission in 1913 involved him immediately in one of Detroit's most publicized and one of its most highly controversial governmental issues. Not unnoticed was the fact that the issue of municipalization of the street railway was the one with which Pingree had been most closely identified.

Shortly after Couzens had accepted Mayor Marx's appointment to the street railway commission, he was active in negotiations between the Detroit United Railway Company and the city of Detroit. Out of the negotiations the city was able to get several concessions from the company. Most important for Couzens' reputation was the company's agreement to sell tickets during workingmen's rush hours at eight for a quarter and to continue the sale of tickets at eight for a quarter on the so-called Pingree line during the day.⁶ The public would hear about this again and again during Couzens' climb to power. Surely no one letter, nor one news article associating him with Detroit's mayoralty can explain his turn to politics. While there was considerable sentiment favoring him, there was no mass "draft Couzens" movement. His turn to politics was a personal decision which necessarily took into consideration the public support he might expect.

A second factor which contributed to Couzens' reputation as an advocate of reform and social justice and

⁶Detroit Free Press, August 6, 1913.

broadened his political appeal was the profit-sharing plan announced by the Ford Motor Company on January 5, 1914. This plan placed Ford's minimum daily wage at five dollars a day when the average wage was about \$2.35 to \$2.70 a day. Workers came by the thousands to mill about outside the Highland Park plant of the company in the hope that they might gain admission to that highly paid work force. They added to the burdens facing Detroit's leadership as it sought to deal with the already wearisome task of providing adequate housing, transportation, education, public safety, and the other services required for a modern city.

One historian has written that following the announcement of the plan, "headlines blazed throughout the globe. Overnight both heads of the company [Ford and Couzens] became international celebrities."⁷ A front page story in The New York Times announced to the financial center of the United States that Ford had initiated a profit-sharing plan which would distribute \$10,000,000 to 26,000 employees. Couzens in a personal statement to the press asserted that his company recognized an unequal division of earnings between capital and labor. "We think," he continued, "that one concern can make a start and create an example for other employers. That is our chief object."⁸

⁷Allan Nevins, Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company, with the collaboration of Frank Ernest Hill (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 534.

⁸The New York Times, January 6, 1914.

Henry Ford liked the interviews and attendant publicity that the announcement of the profit-sharing plan brought to him. Couzens, also, found himself in the role of spokesman for the plan. The Detroit News reported on a meeting of the Board of Commerce during winter 1914 when Couzens talked about unemployment. He told the members that the Board would not become a factor in the community until it became more useful to the people at large. Here it is important to note that Couzens referred to "the people" and their needs. He was speaking as a man of the people.⁹ He did not discuss the effect of the Ford Company's profit-sharing plan on the size of the problem of unemployment. The fact that the announcement of the plan had brought thousands of unemployed to Detroit to join the throngs already gathered outside the Ford plant in Highland Park was ignored. Though he did contribute \$1,000 to the Board's campaign to aid the unemployed.¹⁰

Couzens recommended that the Board discontinue all of its fads for the following few months and direct its efforts at helping the unemployed. He admonished them saying "I don't call that charity. It's Justice. If you fellows didn't pay your men such rotten wages, such help

⁹Detroit News Library, James Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 1, p. 4. This collection will henceforth be referred to as the "Detroit News Couzens Collection."

¹⁰Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Folder 4, List of major charitable contributions, 1909-1930.

wouldn't be necessary." At this point, he was making clear to the membership of the Board of Commerce that the condition of the unemployed and their need for assistance to carry them over a period of joblessness was the effect of the pay policy of these businessmen who must now provide funds for assistance. He drew a comparison: the businessman he said, took care of his property during periods of non-productivity but ignored his employees during similar periods.¹¹

Couzens was in a comfortable position. The businessman could see that he had an investment in his employees. It was just good business to take care of your investment. The working people accepted the argument as coming from a man who had their interest at heart. Couzens gained on both sides. He was now both a shrewd businessman and a man of the people. As time passed he would wrap himself deeper into the mantle of the people which they so eagerly held for him.

Again, on May 22, 1916, the correspondent who saw the instincts of Pingree in Couzens, wrote to propose an even grander political career for him than mayor of Detroit. "What I would like to see Mr. Couzens is, for you to try the mayor's office one term, then run for governor and be elected one term and then go in for the United States

¹¹Detroit News Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 1, p. 4.

Senate." Again Couzens politely demurred.¹² When the correspondent stated in a subsequent letter his regret at Couzens' decision not to seek political office Couzens responded: "No one can tell just what the future will bring, but for the present I am not a candidate for any of the offices referred to."¹³

That his political horizon was growing was indicated in the summer of 1916 when United States Senator Charles E. Townsend wrote him to ask his political intentions. Townsend was concerned about Couzens as an opponent and needed to know if he intended to oppose him in the primary election. Couzens replied that friends had encouraged him to enter political life, but that he did not propose to run against Townsend.¹⁴

Satisfied that he would not have to oppose Couzens, Townsend sought to use him in his own campaign. The Senator invited him to serve as his campaign treasurer, to which Couzens agreed. He was hardly all that Townsend would want in a political supporter. When he was invited to chair a meeting for Townsend he declined, because of

¹²Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 3, Letter, Hugh Ireland to Couzens, May 22, 1916. Letter, Couzens to Ireland, May 24, 1916.

¹³Ibid., Letter, Ireland to Couzens, June 8, 1916. Letter, Couzens to Ireland, June 12, 1916.

¹⁴Ibid., Letter, Townsend to Couzens, August 3, 1916. Letter, Couzens to Townsend, August 3, 1916.

his new office as commissioner of police, he said, although he did make a partisan statement in support of the Republican party.¹⁵

Up to this point, Couzens had been taking half steps toward a political career; in September 1916, he had taken a giant step when Mayor Oscar Marx appointed him as commissioner of police. As commissioner he became a full-time public official. With exception of the period between his resignation as commissioner in July 1918 and his inauguration as mayor in January 1919, he served in public office on a full-time basis until his death twenty years later. As commissioner, then, he changed his role from full-time businessman with civic interests to full-time public servant.

The circumstances which led to the appointment of Couzens as commissioner of police reflected his stature in the community both as an administrator and as an honest, forthright citizen. The Marx administration was facing defeat in the November election. Crime had been on the rise as Detroit sought to accommodate and assimilate the thousands of newcomers. The good government groups were pressing hard on lawlessness and the current commissioner of police, John Gillespie, was charged with being lax. He

¹⁵ Ibid., Box 6, Letter, W. T. Dust to Couzens, August 10, 1916. Letter, Couzens to W. T. Dust, August 16, 1916. Letter, Couzens to Charles C. Simons, August 28, 1916. Letter, Couzens to W. A. Rankin, October 26, 1916.

had even been accused of taking orders from undesirable members of the community. Clearly Commissioner Gillespie was a liability. Only a man such as Couzens with a reputation for incorruptibility and great administrative ability would be able to divert the voter from sending Marx down in defeat. Couzens was available.¹⁶

In the mayor's correspondence with Couzens, he assured him that there were no strings attached to the appointment and that, if he was returned to office, he expected him to remain the full term. The mayor would with this end any suspicion that Couzens would be used and dumped after the election. In his acceptance letter to Mayor Marx, Couzens stated that as a member of the Detroit Street Railway Commission he had observed the mayor's sincerity and the unhampered freedom he allowed his appointees. With great confidence, he assured Marx that with changes in the police department the administration would survive.¹⁷

Again, as in 1914, with the announcement of the profit-sharing plan at Ford's, Couzens received wide publicity. It was, and would be today, newsworthy that the wealthy manager of an internationally famous industrial

¹⁶Beasley and Stark, pp. 231-32; Detroit Free Press, October 23, 1936.

¹⁷Detroit News Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 3, p. 429.

corporation should leave to accept a full-time administrative post in a municipal government. It was notable that an advocate of high wages and social justice should assume responsibility for law and order. Couzens said that he would accept the salary, but would use it as bonuses to recognize merit within the department. His promises of strict enforcement of the law seemed so unattainable that they brought smiles to the faces of jaded citizens, and brought ever greater publicity to Couzens.¹⁸

So unexpected and so effective was the strategy of Marx and his advisors that his Democratic opponent, William F. Connolly, cried "foul." Commiserating with the deposed commissioner, John Gillespie, Connolly asserted that it was a cruel deed which had been perpetrated to prevent Frank H. Croul, Gillespie's predecessor as commissioner of police (July 1, 1909-March 17, 1913), from being re-appointed commissioner of police as Connolly promised the voters he would do, if he was successful in unseating Mayor Marx.¹⁹ From Connolly's argument it would have seemed more appropriate had Croul opposed Marx in the mayoral contest. Croul, a law and order proponent, was being pitted against Gillespie and the crime issue. When

¹⁸Harry Barnard, Independent Man: The Life of Senator James Couzens (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 107-9.

¹⁹Detroit News, Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 3, p. 431.

Couzens replaced Gillespie, Connolly's campaign strategy was blocked and he went to defeat in the November election.

Couzens, who was the center of the mayoral election in 1916, did not participate actively in the local campaign. However, in addition to the office he held in Senator Townsend's campaign group and a statement in support of the Republican party in the national election, he did show his interest in other ways. In October, he made a \$4,000 contribution to the Republican National Committee.²⁰ Also, he agreed to be a candidate for presidential elector. The latter role involved no campaigning but it testified to the party leadership's estimate of his public standing. As usual, the Republican candidate carried Michigan and Couzens cast an electoral vote for Charles Evans Hughes.²¹

Couzens' actions in 1916, gave party leaders no occasion to question his loyalty, but he was no docile party stalwart as later events would show. When the national treasurer asked for a contribution in 1918, he replied he was less a supporter of party than of men. In the past he had refused to contribute until the candidates were known. "There are Democrats," he explained that he

²⁰Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 4, Letter, Couzens to Charles B. Warren, October 10, 1916.

²¹Ibid., Letter, Couzens to John D. Manum, October 24, 1916.

would "rather vote for than some Republicans."²² Perhaps a less independent man would have written a check--he could not plead poverty--but Couzens was learning the penalty of unqualified generosity. Two years earlier he had contributed to the Congressional Republican Committee only to discover that a fourth of his benevolence had been siphoned away by solicitors.²³ He had no desire to be mulcted and even less desire to have it become a matter of public ridicule. Though he began, in these early days in his public life, to make occasional political contributions, the records available on his giving reveal that the sums were usually small, \$100 to \$500. If he was appointed to any office because it was expected he would make a sizable contribution to party coffers, those expectations were not fulfilled. Aside from gifts to his wife and relatives, his large contributions went to activities related to the health and welfare of the people of Detroit and Michigan.²⁴

Couzens' gradual immersion in political affairs can be seen from the time of his acceptance of membership on the Detroit Street Railway Commission to his declaration as a candidate for the office of mayor. Just as gradual was

²²Ibid., Box 6, Letter, Couzens to Fred W. Upham, May 16, 1918.

²³Ibid., Special Correspondence, Box 14, Letter, Couzens to Ralph Easley, August 27, 1917.

²⁴Ibid., Third Increment, Folder 4, Lists of charitable contributions.

his transition into a man of words. Although he was by nature and in practice, a man of action rather than words, he had to adjust to a role at the speakers' table. Milton A. McRae, a prominent newspaper executive with the Scripps-McRae League of newspapers, has written that Couzens was reluctant to accept the presidency of the Detroit Board of Commerce in 1913 because of his inability to give a speech.²⁵ McRae promised to write Couzens' speeches for six months, if he would accept the office. In three months, McRae asserted, Couzens was able to speak better than he was and without any assistance.²⁶ This comment brings into question the quality of McRae's oratory, for Couzens was still apologizing for his "absolute incompetence to make public addresses" as late as the summer of 1917.²⁷ In spite of this feeling of inadequacy, increasingly he found himself having to speak publicly. He never became a polished performer, but this may have been to his advantage. In the role of an independent, hard talking, honest administrator, the public did not expect a polished performer. In fact, it was more appropriate for him to remain as he was.

²⁵Milton A. McRae, Forty Years in Newspaperdom: The Autobiography of a Newspaperman (New York: Brentano's, 1924), p. 408.

²⁶Ibid., p. 408.

²⁷Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 5, Letter, Couzens to Mrs. Arthur J. Lacey, August 10, 1917.

It is clear that Couzens' moves toward a political career were not impetuous: after 1913, he had passed through the presidency of the Board of Commerce to membership in the street railway commission to commissioner of police. When, in his campaign for mayor in 1918, he spoke disparagingly of politicians, his opponent, Democratic party leader, William F. Connolly, responded that Couzens' past jobs as D.S.R. commissioner and commissioner of police indicated a great deal of political effort on Couzens' part.²⁸ Of course, Connolly was correct. These jobs though non-elective had given him exposure as a public man not simply exposure as a private businessman. He had developed a following among the working classes of the city. He had come to realize that he could render service to the public and he wanted the opportunity.

If his political ambitions were clear in 1918, his political alternatives were not. If he aspired to the Senate through the governor's chair, 1918 was not the proper year. Governor Sleeper would surely seek--and receive--renomination. If he sought the Senate directly, 1918 was more promising. He had known since 1916 that Senator William Alden Smith intended to retire, a fact that Smith confirmed in a letter to Couzens in March 1918. That gave

²⁸Detroit News, November 4, 1918.

him five months to organize support for the August primary.²⁹

But Smith offered no encouragement when Couzens asked advice.³⁰ "Whoever is elected," Smith counseled, "needs a statewide acquaintance." Since Couzens had not been around in the state as a political figure, he was advised "to work in the party to lay a foundation for political preferment and then undertake to realize it."³¹ Couzens did not forget Smith's failure to support him. A year later when Smith, then retired from the U.S. Senate and back in Grand Rapids, asked Couzens to deposit some of his money in the Grand Rapids Savings Bank as a favor to him, Couzens replied curtly that he could not afford to carry money on deposit. He went on to say that the local tax on deposits of 2 to 3 per cent plus income tax on top of that made it impractical.³² He chose not to build political credits through the unprofitable investment of his wealth.

²⁹Barnard, p. 113; Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 6, Letter, Smith to Couzens, March 3, 1918.

³⁰Ibid., Letter, Couzens to Smith, March 8, 1918.

³¹Ibid., Letter, Smith to Couzens, March 14, 1918.

³²Ibid., Box 8, Letter, Smith to Couzens, September 3, 1919. Letter, Couzens to Smith, September 9, 1919.

In spite of Smith's counsel, support for Couzens in the senatorial primary race of 1918 appeared strong in Detroit, even among the most unlikely persons. His unsavory predecessor as police commissioner, John Gillespie, was reported to be actively engaged in lining up forces to elect him to the Senate. This unexpected aid was prompted, the Detroit News thought, by Couzens' rigid enforcement of "everything on the statute books." It believed that Gillespie's friends wanted Couzens out of town. No doubt they hoped for freedom to resume their operations in gambling, prostitution, and blind-pigging.³³

Malcolm Bingay, long a newspaper man in Detroit and a biased reporter on many things, especially James Couzens, saw the events of 1918 in another way when he looked back at them from 1936. He wrote that in 1918 when Couzens asked him what he thought of his chances of becoming senator (allowing for the support of Mayor Oscar Marx and his group), he told Couzens that it was a trick to dump him. According to Bingay, once Couzens declared for the senate race, he would have to resign from the police department. After his resignation was received, the Marx group would withdraw its support, thereby removing Couzens from public office.³⁴

³³Detroit News, April 1, 1918; Malcolm W. Bingay, Of Me I Sing (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1949), pp. 186-89.

³⁴Detroit Free Press, October 23, 1936.

Bingay, who in 1918 was employed as managing editor of the Detroit News, did not reveal the source of his information. However, Couzens would have been prone to accept Bingay's view as consistent with the character of men such as John Gillespie. In later years, he would state that in this year of decision, he chose to run for the office of mayor in 1918 because he had been laughed at by those in the Marx administration and was determined to see whether he was right or wrong in his efforts to clean up the city.³⁵ He neglected to comment on his failure to get party support for the senate seat, which was more important in turning him to the mayoral race than real or supposed insults to him from the Marx group. For in Detroit, Couzens had the wide acquaintance Senator Smith thought essential for the senate race, and, in addition, the mayoralty was a non-partisan office. Party irregularity was not an issue.

On June 4, 1918, the News reported that Couzens would not run for the Senate because his counsel had advised him that on account of his holdings in the Ford Motor Company, which had important government contracts, he would be disqualified for such a post.³⁶ Although he had had no executive responsibilities with the company since his resignation in October 1915, he was a major stockholder

³⁵Detroit News, December 22, 1922.

³⁶Ibid., June 4, 1918.

and a member of the board of directors. Couzens' position is creditable, yet Henry Ford, the head of the company, ran for the same senate seat that year without personal fear or public ridicule and with what he believed was the endorsement of President Wilson.³⁷

On June 26, 1918 the News was certain of Couzens' decision to run for the mayoralty but had had no official statement from Couzens. "With James Couzens determined to run it means that the embryo plan of Marx-Dodge forces to groom Divie B. Duffield must be dropped."³⁸ The Marx-Dodge group, headed by Mayor Marx and John F. Dodge of Dodge Brothers Company, had planned well. Divie B. Duffield, the good government candidate, had been chairman of the charter commission which was elected in November 1917 to revise the city charter of 1883. He had been brought into the Marx administration as corporation counsel in January 1918. Perhaps the Marx group could preserve some political influence by supporting Duffield. But Couzens, who had not been pliable enough for the Marx group as police commissioner, could not be trusted to bend to its demands.

³⁷ Spencer Ervin, Henry Ford vs. Truman H. Newberry; The Famous Senate Election Contest; A Study in American Politics, Legislation and Justice (New York: R. R. Smith, 1935), pp. 43-44, 70.

³⁸ Detroit News, June 26, 1918.

Detroit Gets a New Charter

The new charter for Detroit was the issue around which the mayoral campaign of 1918 was fought. Charter revision was one in a series of political moves to bring good government to Detroit which had been sponsored by the Detroit Citizens League, a group of locally prominent business and professional men, following its founding in 1912. In 1917, the good government group, consisting of the League, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, and the Detroit Board of Commerce, had succeeded in placing a proposition for charter revision on the November ballot. In November, the proposition received the endorsement of the voters. The work of the commission elected in November 1917 to prepare the revision received voter approval in June 1918.³⁹ It was the mayor elected in November 1918 who would implement the good government charter for Detroit. The good government group was deeply concerned that one of their own be chosen for the job.

In the August 1918, issue of the Civic Searchlight, the official publication of the Detroit Citizens League, Couzens had not received the League's preferred candidate rating, nor had he publicly indicated concern at this slight. Nevertheless, the approval of the League as

³⁹ William P. Lovett, "Detroit and Its New Charter," National Municipal Review, X (March, 1921), 149-51.

expressed in its rating of the candidates was valued by local political candidates for the votes it attracted and Couzens, as other aspirants for political office, desired its support. In evaluating Couzens, the Civic Searchlight had noted that he was "energetic, self-confident, but handicapped by lack of tact and insufficient knowledge of underlying principles of city government, and lacks ability to cooperate with numbers of people."⁴⁰

Certainly there was very little in that statement to garner votes for Couzens. There was little here to indicate that he had a reputation for having been, up to his resignation from the Ford Motor Company in late October 1915, one of the top automobile company executives in the world. From the League's position it is clear that he was not the favorite-son candidate. His failure to support strongly the new charter of 1918 was a sin in the eyes of the League and other supporters of the good government movement in Detroit. Perhaps his other alleged sins of lack of tact, ignorance of principles of city government, and inability to cooperate could have been forgiven, but failure to support the charter with vigor was unforgivable. To the League, the charter was representative of years of work. Too much was at stake in this election.

The Civic Searchlight was right when it asserted that Couzens had not publicly supported the new charter.

⁴⁰The Civic Searchlight, V (August, 1918), 3.

This does not mean that he did not favor the changes which the charter commission proposed. He had supported their campaign for charter revision in the fall of 1917. However, it had been his practice, while serving in the administration of Mayor Oscar Marx, not to become involved publicly in matters which he considered to be political. Couzens had held his post of commissioner of police until ten days after the charter election. Having decided to run for the mayoralty under the new charter, and acting within its requirements that no candidate for elective office might hold another civil office simultaneously, Couzens resigned from the police department on July 5, 1918.⁴¹

If Couzens had opposed or favored the charter and if he had felt free to comment, he would surely have done so. He was not known for reticence. His respect for his position as commissioner of police and his desire to keep that post aloof from what he may have regarded as political activity would have restrained him from comment. He did, however, participate in the actual construction of the charter, acting in his official capacity as commissioner of police. His behavior in the matter led to a confrontation which he would rather have avoided.

During the winter of 1918 while the charter commission went about its task of rewriting the city charter,

⁴¹Charter of the City of Detroit, June 25, 1918
(Detroit: City of Detroit, 1918), Title IV, Chapter 1,
Section 2(e).

Couzens watched without comment. The demands on his office to control the growing crime rate and to administer the wartime rationing of fuel to the community so that industry, business, and householder would share fairly, were exhausting in and of themselves. His apparent complacency in regard to the charter was destroyed, however, when the commission accepted the counsel of City Clerk Richard Lindsay on matters which related to Couzens' domain. Lindsay wanted the commission to place in the new charter provisions granting to police officers one day off each week and retirement after twenty-five years, however young. Couzens preferred to give one day off every two weeks and retirement after twenty-five years only at age sixty and beyond. An authoritarian administrator, he was piqued at Lindsay's interference. The following Saturday, when he encountered Lindsay at the Detroit Club, the relaxed atmosphere had not lessened his annoyance with Lindsay and he called him a cheap politician. Lindsay resented the verbal abuse and very soon after the incident he was able to gain revenge.⁴²

Couzens, as a crusading police commissioner, had alienated many of the local politicians. His no-exceptions-to-the-rules administration was especially galling to politicians who had to produce results for their constituents

⁴²Detroit News, March 5, 1918.

or face repudiation at the polls. He earned the politicians' resentment twice over when he abolished the release system by which the aldermen had been getting their clients out of jail and refused to allow special parking privileges for the aldermen.⁴³ This measure of bad will and his insult to Lindsay joined to bring the proud Couzens to a standstill, if only for a day.

In the absence of Mayor Marx from Detroit, Alderman Joseph Walsh, who was serving as acting mayor, fired Couzens from his position as commissioner of police. This occurred on the Monday following the Saturday night he had insulted Lindsay. Upon hearing of Walsh's act, Mayor Marx hurried back to Detroit and wrote Couzens a letter of re-appointment to avoid legal complications which might otherwise have followed. All that was needed to reaffirm Couzens' status as police commissioner was for him to be sworn in once again. As city clerk it was Lindsay's job to swear in city officials and he refused to swear in Couzens without an apology. Couzens was willing to apologize for his undignified act. Lindsay accepted the apology and shortly thereafter Couzens was once again officially and incontrovertibly commissioner of police in Detroit.⁴⁴

⁴³The New York Times, June 2, 1917; Detroit News, March 5, 1918.

⁴⁴Ibid.

No doubt the reputation which Couzens had built as quarrelsome and tactless was based on incidents like these. The League did not have to fabricate its reference to a "lack of tact." Then, too, the Detroit Citizens League had worked hard to bring about the reform charter for Detroit. Very understandably, its members would want assurance that the mayor who would be elected to administer the new charter would be sympathetic to it. This would account for the concern registered in the Civic Searchlight for Couzens' failure to declare himself openly and avidly for the charter.⁴⁵

But there was another side. The phrase "lack of tact and ability to cooperate" which was used so commonly to characterize the negative side of Couzens' personality was not negative in his view. To him, in those situations which led to such characterization, he was simply being honest and straightforward; he refused to compromise truth and justice. This view frequently placed him at odds with his peer group in the business life of Detroit. It was because of this conflict, more than for any other reason, that he was rejected by the League.

There were threads which ran through the good government groups in Detroit and tied them to one another. Although membership was held separately in each individual organization, names found on the roster of one organization

⁴⁵The Civic Searchlight, V (August, 1918), 3.

were often found on the rosters of others. Couzens had been a participant in most but not all of these groups. Sometimes he had agreed, but often he had disagreed, with the interlocking memberships. These organizations in Detroit, e.g., the Detroit Board of Commerce, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, the Detroit Citizens League, the Employers' Association of Detroit, were not unlike organizations which had been established in the other major cities of America to meet the needs brought on by industrialization and an expanding population. The men who supported them were usually, like those in Detroit, the civic, business, and professional leaders of their communities. Charter reform was one of their principal techniques for gaining control of local government from the political machines which controlled the vote of the urban masses.⁴⁶ This was one of the avowed purposes of the reform movement in Detroit.⁴⁷

This phenomenon of urban reform was not merely national it was international. One American historian, commenting on the political reform of the late 1800's and

⁴⁶ Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, LV (October, 1964), 159.

⁴⁷ Lent D. Upson, "The Detroit Charter," National Municipal Review, VII (May, 1918), 322-23; Lovett, "Detroit and Its New Charter," p. 148; Arthur C. Mills-paugh, "Bi-partisanship and Vote Manipulation in Detroit," National Municipal Review, V (October, 1916), 620-26.

early 1900's in California wrote that: " . . . wherever one found that characteristic ferment arising out of Western Society's attempt to adjust its archaic agrarian social system to the new industrial and urban world, there one found the moral, humanitarian, and democratic strains of progressivism."⁴⁸ The point to be made is that Detroit's experience and reaction were similar to those of cities throughout the western world. Whether the reaction of the leadership of these cities was moral, humanitarian, and democratic, or whether it was enlightened self-interest in the guise of morality, humanitarianism, and democracy has been at issue in recent scholarship on the period.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the Charter of 1918 was a mark of success for each of Detroit's good government organizations. Each with its intertwined roots giving sustenance to the other had contributed to the campaign which led to the voters' approval of a charter commission in November 1917, and again to the voters' approval of the work of that commission on June 25, 1918.

The Detroit Citizens League was organized in 1912 under the guidance of Henry M. Leland. Leland was a conservative New Englander who had served as the president of the Cadillac Motor Company and later produced the Lincoln automobile. He was one of Detroit's leading

⁴⁸George E. Mowry, The California Progressives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 88.

⁴⁹Hays, p. 159.

industrialists, an unbending proponent of good government, and a dedicated opponent of labor unions.⁵⁰ An interesting and relevant story has been told of how he came to Detroit. It is said that he came to the Middle West to found a machine shop in 1886 and arrived in Chicago on the day of the Haymarket Riot. He was so appalled at the violence and the poor labor relations there that he came to Detroit to establish his business.⁵¹ Mr. Leland's anti-union behavior gives credence to this story. After coming to Detroit, he was concerned to prevent the city's becoming embroiled in labor unrest. Under his guidance the Employers' Association of Detroit was organized. This group had as its end the maintenance of the open shop. It was not until the 1930's and after bitter battles had been fought that labor would overcome the Association's control.⁵²

In its first annual report Leland's League identified its enemies: pool rooms, dance halls, saloons, and houses of prostitution. Its declared purpose was to give leadership to the Christian constituency of Detroit in opposing the enemy and in working for the civic betterment

⁵⁰ John C. Lodge, I Remember Detroit (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1949), p. 84.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵² David Greenstone, A Report on the Politics of Detroit (Cambridge: Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1961), Part V, p. 2.

of Detroit. It characterized its membership as clean citizens who believe that responsibility for good government is a prime obligation of all good citizens.⁵³

Couzens' relations with Leland had been strained over the years. As early as 1910, they had passed words over a check for fifty dollars from John Kelsey of the Kelsey Wheel Company. Both Couzens and Leland were raising money for the good roads campaign being conducted by the Detroit Board of Commerce. Leland wrote the Kelsey-Herbert Company for a fifty dollar contribution. Couzens wrote John Kelsey directly for a contribution of fifty dollars. When Couzens was credited with the fifty dollars from John Kelsey, Leland challenged Couzens and demanded that he be given the credit. Couzens refused to allow this and sent a copy of Kelsey's letter of transmittal to Leland.⁵⁴ Then in October 1915, Leland wrote Couzens asking him for his help in the work of the League. Couzens responded to Leland's request with a very testy letter certain to offend Leland. Couzens fumed that "we all have our limitations and I have reached the limit of my capacity to assume more work and responsibilities." He strongly asserted that there

⁵³Detroit Citizens League, Detroit Citizens League: First Annual Report, September, 1912-June 1913 (Detroit: Detroit Citizens League, 1913), p. 1.

⁵⁴Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Henry M. Leland, October 31, 1910.

were lots of capable men in Detroit who were not doing very much for Detroit.⁵⁵

Aside from these fiery exchanges, there is much more behind the antagonism between these two men, and between Couzens and the League. Pliny W. Marsh, an attorney who had served the Prohibition Party of Michigan, was elected secretary of the League in September 1912. Marsh, in formally accepting the post, declared: "Let us remember ours is a fight for God, and Home, and Native Land!"⁵⁶ However ecumenical the concept of Home and Native Land may have been, the God was apparently Protestant; the League's membership was sought among this group.⁵⁷ As an immigrant from Canada, Couzens knew that many in Detroit were loyal to the United States although it was their adopted rather than their native land. His wife (Margaret A. Manning, whom he had married in 1898) was a Catholic. There had been an agreement that the children would be raised as Catholics. Couzens himself was an inactive Presbyterian. In addition to his immigrant background and Catholic family, he did not believe that the enemy could be so simply identified as "pool rooms, dance halls, saloons, and houses of

⁵⁵ Ibid., General Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Henry M. Leland to Couzens, October 1, 1915. Letter, Couzens to Leland, October 5, 1915.

⁵⁶ Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself, p. 86.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

prostitution." He knew that there were unemployment, sickness, and greed, and that these too were enemies. Detroit's new citizens from east and south Europe spoke different languages. Their religions were different. Their values were different. To address a group of civic, professional, and business leaders and characterize efforts at civic improvement as a fight "for God, and Home, and Native Land," was to suggest that "good government" may be an instrument to aid them in controlling and excluding the non-Protestant, the poor, and the foreign born. James Couzens sensed this. Couzens was not at odds with Leland the man as much as with the things for which Leland, Pliny Marsh and the Detroit Citizens League stood, apart from good government.

Couzens much preferred a rival agency for governmental reform, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research. The first issue of the Bureau's publication, Public Business, asserted that it was incorporated March 22, 1916 "for the purpose of securing efficiency and economy in government, whether national, state or municipal, by all lawful means other than promoting or defeating the election or appointment of any person or persons in a public position."⁵⁸ Agencies like the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research had spread across the country by 1916 in response to the growth in governmental costs and the increase in municipal services brought on by burgeoning urban

⁵⁸Public Business, I (May, 1916), 2.

communities and the desire for efficiency and economy in such operations by the businessmen of these communities.

The Bureau proposed to get things done for Detroit by cooperation with office-holders, by increasing efficiency and eliminating waste, and by serving as an independent, non-partisan agency for keeping citizens informed about public business. Characteristic of its business orientation, its bulletin, Public Business, noted that the work was being done because good government was as essential to the business interests of Detroit as it was to the social well-being of its citizens. Its list of services to promote industrial efficiency in city government clearly intermingled the needs of the business community and those of the booming, bustling, growing city. It asked for clean, well-paved streets, better health protection, proper disposal of refuse, efficient police and fire protection, centralized purchasing, standardization in supplies, reasonable salaries, equitable assessments, and, of course, a thoughtful expenditure of public resources.⁵⁹

Couzens felt much more comfortable with the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research than with the Detroit Citizens League. Though both agencies talked about looking at the facts, good government, and efficiency, the Bureau did not assume the patriotic, moralistic posture of the League. It sought to adapt the successes of scientific management

⁵⁹Ibid.

used in business to the problems which disturbed the city and its government. Couzens was a manager; he understood and approved. In fact, in November 1917, he sent out over his signature a number of letters soliciting financial support for the Bureau, stating that it returned "more for the investment than any other one thing of a purely financial nature." It had, he noted, saved taxpayers money.⁶⁰

The Detroit Board of Commerce, the third major local organization in the good government movement, was more closely allied to the business community than the Detroit Citizens League or the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research. Formed to foster the commercial and industrial advancement of Detroit, it was more concerned with municipal promotion of a climate favorable to business expansion than it was with the purity which concerned the League or the question of tax economy per se that aroused the Bureau.⁶¹ In February 1911, the Detroit Saturday Night, actively engaged in a Board of Commerce membership recruitment drive, observed that "business and professional men are coming to see that they cannot divorce their individual interests from civic affairs. Civic action and concern will make a better city. The Board of Commerce exists for this." The writer added that it was the power house of public

⁶⁰ Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 5, Letter, Couzens to George Farwell, November 21, 1917.

⁶¹ Detroit Saturday Night, June 5, 1909.

opinion and public opinion would be heeded by common council.⁶² The political implications of this statement were clear though, of course, the Board stood against partisan, machine, politics that were so often unfriendly to business.

Job Hedges, who was billed as a "New York Wit and Orator," summed up nicely the philosophy of the group. Hedges entertained the Detroit Board on one of its annual cruises. He told the cruise members that better conditions were to be brought about by the better element in the community doing their duties as citizens rather than looking at reform simply through a change of political systems.⁶³ The truth of the message no doubt touched the sun-drenched vacationers to their hearts.

Detroit's Board of Commerce set about its task in much the same way as did similar good government organizations throughout the United States. It pushed for efficiency and honesty in government. It established committees to investigate reports of faulty paving bricks, street railway inefficiency, vice, and other troubling aspects of city life and government. From the findings of these committees the Board recommended improvements in municipal services to further the goals of the

⁶²Ibid., February 25, 1911.

⁶³Couzens Papers, Scrapbook 2, The Little Stick, c. 1913.

organization.⁶⁴ Also, the Board engaged in a massive Americanization effort to assimilate the masses of immigrants to American standards of conduct and government.⁶⁵

Couzens became more deeply involved with the affairs of the Board of Commerce than with any of the other reform groups. Joining while a key executive in the Ford Motor Company, he remained a member until he broke with the Board during his years as mayor. By 1910, he was serving as chairman and treasurer of the finance committee. In this post he was pushing hard to help finance a large advertising and educational campaign in support of a \$2,000,000 bond issue for paving roads in Wayne County. Those roads, he wrote potential subscribers, would benefit every business house in the city.⁶⁶ Obviously he understood that the goals of the Board toward civic betterment were closely related to the self-interest of the business community. Civic action and concern may, indeed, make a better city; but a better city would certainly make for better business opportunities.

In view of the years of organizational work and financial support which Couzens had given to the cause of

⁶⁴Detroit Saturday Night, August 19, 1911.

⁶⁵Detroit News, January 1, 1918; John Higham, Strangers in the Land; Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p. 244.

⁶⁶Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Wright Kay and Co., October 31, 1910.

good government in Detroit by 1918, his position on charter reform was well-known by the Detroit Citizens League evaluation committee when it convened to rate the candidates for the mayoral election of 1918. The endorsement of the League, which was so valuable to political aspirants, was withheld from Couzens, perhaps, in part because he had not publicly campaigned for the charter reform, but primarily because he did not fit the mold. He was abrasive, independent, his own man; but more unbearable than these qualities, was the fact that he sometimes questioned the goals of the business community and this was inexcusable from one of its own. Unwittingly, though, the charter itself that had been fabricated by the charter commission and propagandized by the good government agencies in Detroit fitted, like Cinderella's shoe, only one person and that person was James Couzens.

The impetus for the charter revision rose out of the joint effort of the Citizens League and the Bureau of Governmental Research through their Citizens Charter Committee under the guidance of Tracy W. McGregor, a prominent and wealthy Detroit social worker. It supported a slate of candidates whom Detroit voters elected to serve on the charter commission in November 1917.⁶⁷

The commission which wrote the charter was representative once again of Detroit's legal and business leaders.

⁶⁷ Lovett, p. 108; Lodge, pp. 98-99.

The commission's chairman was Divie B. Duffield from one of Detroit's finest families. Educated at Phillips Exeter and Harvard University, he had completed his legal education at the Detroit College of Law. When he was appointed as corporation counsel for the city of Detroit in January 1918, Paul H. King replaced him as chairman of the commission. King was a prominent lawyer and had served as secretary to the Michigan State Constitutional Convention in 1907. Later, he worked for Truman H. Newberry in his senatorial campaign in 1918 and served as Governor Alexander J. Groesbeck's campaign manager in 1920. King was found guilty along with Newberry in 1920 of violation of the Federal Corrupt Practices Act, but the United States Supreme Court over-turned the lower court decision in 1921.⁶⁸ Other members of the commission were: John C. Nagel, realty appraiser and city assessor; Sherman D. Callender, lawyer; William A. Petzold, secretary-treasurer, J. L. Hudson Company; Eugene S. Clarkson, lawyer; Richard M. Watson, industrialist; Edward C. VanHusan, realtor; and Lee E. Joslyn, referee in bankruptcy. The less articulate and less influential voices of the poor, of labor, skilled or unskilled, of white collar workers, of the foreign born, or of the Negro were not to be heard in these quarters.

⁶⁸Carl Keen, "Groesbeck's Senatorial Appointment of Couzens to Fill the Newberry Vacancy: A Study of Individualism and the Republican Party in Michigan, 1918-1922" (unpublished Masters thesis, Michigan State University, 1957), pp. 34, 44.

Duly elected, the committee set to work and by late February 1918, offered a draft of the new charter. Quite appropriately, the first public presentation was at a dinner given by the Detroit Citizens League at the Board of Commerce building. Here the members of the commission took a line which, with one or two additions, was followed to the end of the campaign. A reporter for the Detroit News wrote that among their principal arguments were these: that the charter made for conduct of the business of the city on a basis more nearly approaching the efficiency of a private corporation; that it effectively concentrated authority and fiscal responsibility in the mayor; that the checks provided in the charter by the initiative and referendum over the nine councilmen elected at large could be more democratic than the old charter; that it was in no way radical. Charter Commissioners William A. Petzold and Lee E. Joslyn emphasized to the members the cautious policy of the commission in avoiding radical changes other than the reduction of the forty-two-man council elected by wards to a nine-man council elected at large.⁶⁹

During the preparation of the charter, the League had not been inactive. A volunteer speaker's service had been organized to speak for the charter.⁷⁰ On April 1,

⁶⁹Detroit News, March 1, 1918.

⁷⁰Ibid., March 21, 1918.

the League called a meeting to form a committee to direct the charter campaign. According to the announcement, representatives of civic organizations, neighborhood improvement clubs, and labor and business groups had been invited to attend.⁷¹ In the heat of the campaign John C. Lodge, clubman, alderman, and businessman, spoke for the charter. In later years, he asserted that this was the only time in his political career that he had made speeches for any cause. In his talk for the charter he added the element of patriotic duty likening it to civic duty. This was a popular appeal during the war years. He declared that registering to vote for the new charter and the nine-man council it would bring was a patriotic duty. Lodge said that the charter would increase the city's business efficiency from as much as 50 to 100 per cent. "Every businessman in the city who values his business and who believes in getting the largest results on any financial investment should vote and encourage others to vote."⁷² There was no question in Lodge's mind about the inter-relationship between good government and good business.

By May the politicians in Detroit began to react to the strength of the forces behind the new charter. Mayor Oscar Marx called on his aides to work for it.⁷³

⁷¹Ibid., April 1, 1918.

⁷²Ibid., May 14, 1918; Lodge, p. 98.

⁷³Detroit News, May 24, 1918.

Later in the campaign he urged all city employees to join the campaign for the new plan.⁷⁴ The Detroit News became alarmed at this trend in support of the charter among politicians and made a plea to the electorate. "Those who were counted on to oppose the charter have adopted a new scheme," it stated. "Instead of working against it, they are conceding its passage and are now announcing that they will be candidates under it, in an attempt to carry their power over to the new nine-man council." The News suggested that the way to discourage these politicians was to roll up an overwhelming vote in its support to show them how strongly Detroiters felt the need for a housecleaning. The vote was indeed overwhelming--nearly eight to one.⁷⁵

On June 25, 1918, the long struggle to bring about charter revision in Detroit was ended. Now one final chore remained for the Detroit Citizens League's leadership. A man of their own breed must be tapped for the powerful role which had been given the mayor in the new charter. He then would assure that it was carried into practice as it had been intended. Divie B. Duffield, lawyer, corporation counsel for the city of Detroit, former member of the charter commission, unsuccessful candidate for the Republican nomination against the incumbent Mayor Oscar Marx in

⁷⁴Ibid., June 7, 1918.

⁷⁵Ibid., June 24, 1918.



1916, was their choice. Duffield was available. Duffield was willing.

Couzens' Mayoralty Campaign and Victory

In spite of the fact that Divie B. Duffield was already standing on the sidelines ready to rush into the mayoral contest as the good government candidate, this did not deter Couzens once his decision was made to enter. As the Couzens-for-mayor movement gathered momentum, the Detroit News gave it a push with its call for a city government of businessmen. "If the voters will put nine businessmen into the new council and a businessman in the mayoralty who doesn't know politics," the News stated, "Detroit will be in a position to boast of the most efficient and most inexpensive city administration in the world."⁷⁶

Finally, on July 3, 1918, Mayor Marx received the awaited Couzens' resignation as police commissioner effective July 5, 1918. Couzens wrote that he hoped he would be successful in his campaign for the mayoralty, for if he was, he would thereby have control of the police department for the next term of three years, instead of just for the period remaining to Marx.⁷⁷ This belligerently worded

⁷⁶ Ibid., June 27, 1918.

⁷⁷ Ibid., July 3, 1918.

letter, almost a challenge to his superior, justified his resignation in terms of the opportunity to continue the police work he had started.

John Gillespie thought that in Couzens the good government group had received what it deserved. Cynically he observed that the Citizens League and others cried for a big businessman candidate. Now they had him and did not know what to do with him.⁷⁸ William F. Connolly and Couzens were the major aspirants for the post. Duffield, as straitlaced as his supporters, conducted a quiet campaign. He proposed to keep the Detroit United Railway Company out of politics, which was a completely unrealistic proposal, and sought not to distract from the war effort.⁷⁹ "No one who is truly patriotic," he said, "will raise any question whatever which may cause bitterness of feeling or tend to divide our people."⁸⁰ Connolly had the support of the Democratic party in this non-partisan reform election, a factor which did not weigh heavily in his favor. Generally well thought of, he was a shrewd politician and a bright lawyer. He conducted a quiet, clean campaign geared to the patriotic spirit of the times. John Gillespie, was in the race, but never in the running.

⁷⁸Ibid., July 5, 1918.

⁷⁹Ibid., July 10, 1918, July 11, 1918.

⁸⁰Detroit Journal, July 11, 1918.

The Marx group, which had had to alter its strategy to counter Couzens' decision to enter the race, campaigned against him. Its members let it be known that they did not believe that he could run any kind of campaign without their support. Edward T. Fitzgerald, a former newspaperman and then secretary to Mayor Marx, asserted that no man could be elected without an organization. A candidate would have need of close friends.⁸¹ Such talk as this would hardly hurt Couzens. Had not the Marx group been so caught up in the web of its own political intrigue, it would have been clear to its members that this time things were different. Surely a successful candidate would need organizational support and friends, but part of what the reform charter was all about had to do with the sinister connotation of the political organization and the political friendship. In editorial statement the News replied that "in this election the citizens will determine and not the organization."⁸²

The non-organization man was not long in developing an organization. On July 11, 1918, he hired a campaign assistant, the "Couzens for Mayor Club" was set into action, and then his headquarters announced in early

⁸¹Detroit News, July 1, 1918.

⁸²Ibid.

August that Edward T. Fitzgerald had left Mayor Marx's administration to work in the campaign.⁸³

As Couzens' first public campaign move he asserted in his disarming way: "I want it clearly understood that I am not being forced into this race by the overwhelming requests of my friends, or anything of that sort. I personally believe," he continued, "that I can serve the people of Detroit faithfully and well as mayor. That is the reason I am running."⁸⁴ The statement was completely in tune with his character, the charter, and the times. He was declaring that he belonged to nobody, that he was being completely open with everybody and that he wanted to work for the best interest of the community. From this statement, so unusual for a political candidate, this non-political man once again received national publicity. Furthermore, he refused to be tied down to a detailed plan for his administration. General Pershing was placed in charge of the army because of his expertness, Couzens stated, not because of his plan.⁸⁵ For himself, his expertness as an experienced big business administrator was his platform. He declared: "I offer myself to my city

⁸³Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 5, Letter, Couzens to F. C. O'Meara, July 11, 1918; Detroit News, August 3, 1918.

⁸⁴Ibid., July 9, 1918.

⁸⁵Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 6, Letter, Couzens to E. T. Hilton, August 5, 1918.

for exactly what I am--a businessman with a specialized training in private and public service."⁸⁶

During his entire campaign, from his candidacy in the August primary through the November election, Couzens was consistent in his inconsistent political behavior. He directed his campaign in a positive way ignoring his opponents completely. He was running on his past life, his reputation. His argument was simply look at what I stand for. Look at what I have done. Place my feet in the shoes that have been made by the proponents of reform and good government and see if they were not made for me.

An advertisement for Couzens sponsored in the Detroit News by a local businessman carried this theme into print. "Read the Charter!" the advertisement advised; there one could discover the duties of the mayor and the qualities required to perform the job. The several qualities which came to mind after the charter was read, according to the ad, were that he must be: a businessman, an organizer; fearless, courageous, independent; entangled in no net of party, creed, class, or prejudice. The statement ended simply: "The charter nominates James Couzens."⁸⁷

In addition, Couzens polished brightly his reputation as a common man. Much of his effort was directed at

⁸⁶ Detroit Free Press, August 3, 1918.

⁸⁷ Detroit News, August 24, 1918.

carrying the campaign to the working man. He visited the Michigan Central Railroad yard where he once worked and reminisced with the old timers. He told a group of Ford workers that he wanted them to ask him to work for them as mayor of Detroit. He repeated time and again that the man who voted against him could expect the same consideration as the man who voted for him.⁸⁸

With his uncanny knack for publicity Couzens broke into newspaper headlines once again. On August 8, 1918, pictures were published of him being put off Fort Streetcar #1578. The car fare had been raised from 5¢ to 6¢ on that line and he had refused to pay the increase. It was clear to political observers that he was involved in a drama conducted for the news media gathered close at hand.⁸⁹ Yet there was an astuteness and an appropriateness about the incident. Couzens had declared in his platform that the streetcar question was paramount. With this act of defiance directed at the Detroit United Railway Company, he underscored the point.

Edward T. Fitzgerald has been credited with plotting this sensational act. This may have been. Yet the act was consistent with acts which Couzens performed as police commissioner and it must have had his endorsement. The fact

⁸⁸Ibid., August 22, 1918.

⁸⁹Ibid., August 8, 1918.



that the event occurred on the old line constructed by Hazen S. Pingree was not lost on the public, nor was the fact lost that after several days of rioting over the increase the D.U.R. went back to a 5¢ fare. John F. Dodge, president of the Detroit Street Railway Commission, yelled at Fitzgerald that he and Couzens had started the riot. "The rioting was the results of cheap politicians led by a would be Pingree who ought to be put in jail on federal charge for inciting riots."⁹⁰ Neither Couzens nor those he led was jailed and the public support made it a worthwhile stand.

When the votes were tallied for the non-partisan primary election, it was revealed that Couzens had won with a plurality of more than 4,000 votes over his nearest opponent. William F. Connolly was second. Divie B. Duffield third. And John Gillespie finished last. In accordance with the new charter James Couzens and William F. Connolly would face each other on November 5, 1918 to determine who the next mayor would be.⁹¹ As the election campaign progressed the Marx group, which had supported Gillespie, swung to Couzens as did the good government group which had supported Duffield.⁹² Their actions were not surprising. Connolly, a former judge, was a partisan

⁹⁰Ibid., August 13, 1918.

⁹¹Ibid., August 29, 1918.

⁹²Ibid.

politician who was a leader of the Democratic party in Detroit. At the time of the campaign, he was a strong supporter of the candidacy of Henry Ford for United States Senate on the Democratic ticket. Although his integrity was not questioned, it would be difficult for him to serve the non-partisan role envisioned by the charter makers. For Republican Mayor Marx there was no alternative other than to support Couzens who as a former member of his administration and as a Republican would be, though in a non-partisan role, more likely to allow a continuance in office of Marx's appointees than would Connolly.

Couzens' campaign strategy for the November election was much more of the same. His workers developed a neighbor-to-neighbor campaign in each district in the city. They placed twice as many newspaper advertisements as did the Connolly group. They transported Couzens to the factories and he spoke to the people, men and women, assembled to hear him. He strongly backed the right of women to vote with the challenge that "any man who thought about his mother, wife, or sister would vote for woman suffrage."⁹³ He was deeply concerned not to exceed the \$2,000 limit on his personal contribution to his campaign expenditures. Truman H. Newberry, the Republican candidate for the United States Senate was already in deep trouble over his expenditures during the senatorial primary race. Perhaps this led

⁹³Ibid., October 30, 1918.

Couzens to be even more restrained in his political expenditures. Nevertheless, the incongruity of a multi-millionaire carefully counting dollars and forbidding the use in his campaign of paid precinct workers, window cards, banners, billboards and broadcast mailing of campaign letters to registered voters, brought him wide publicity once again.⁹⁴

As in the August primary, Couzens refused to discuss his opponent, and both men carefully avoided any reference to their respective parties. So circumspect was Connolly that Alexander J. Groesbeck, a Detroit Republican and candidate for re-election as state attorney general, defended Connolly for being loyal to his trust.⁹⁵ But such non-partisanship could cost Couzens more, for his was the majority party, particularly in the election of 1918. Silence on party in this non-partisan election was appropriate; it also could gain votes for Connolly and lose votes for Couzens. However, when the official returns were made known on November 7, 1918, Couzens had polled 55 per cent of the mayoral vote--45,013 to 36,405. He had done well in his first political campaign.

⁹⁴Detroit Journal, October 29, 1918.

⁹⁵Detroit News, November 5, 1918.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT ADMINISTRATOR AS URBAN REFORMER

Introduction

In his farewell speech, Mayor Oscar Marx expressed regret at leaving the job he had held for six years. "I am sorry, in a way, to leave," he said, "but I am glad that the office is to be taken by a man of the greatest energy, one with high purposes, who will carry on the business of the city splendidly."¹ Marx, too, like the reformers who had campaigned so vigorously against him, was caught up in the language of his time. If, then, the city was a business; and, if Marx's successor was a business executive more than a politician, it is appropriate to ask what dividends the electorate-stockholders received from his selection to head the corporation of Detroit. By and large the stockholders thought they had an adequate dividend for their votes, for they returned him to office in 1921. Based, in part, on his reputation as an effective urban administrator, he rose to the United States Senate

¹Detroit Times, January 8, 1919.

in 1922. But what, in fact, did he promise? and what, in fact, did he deliver? This chapter and the three subsequent chapters seek to answer these questions.

As Couzens took office, he reviewed the range of problems facing Detroit, and proposed to bring about their resolution. During his term in office, some problems became the routine concern of his administrators and others rose again and again to public view and demanded his personal attention. This is not to say that he did not influence the routine operations of his departments through budgetary and administrative decisions. However, the popularized issues showed him operating openly in the public view.

Of all the aspects of municipal administration, none brought greater attention to the Couzens' administration than did municipalization of the street railway system, unemployment, and civil rights. These are treated in Chapters IV, V, and VI, respectively. In them Couzens emerges as the dominant force. However, the record of a top level administrator can be no better than the records of those he chooses to fill the major administrative posts under him. Who these men were in the Couzens' administration and how they were selected says much about the character of the administration. This chapter will review the commitment Couzens gave to the electorate, the men he selected to carry out the major responsibilities of his administration, and his administrative style and philosophy.

Inauguration and Commitment
to Change

On the day of Couzens' inauguration to the first of his two terms in office, the Detroit Times repeated the assertion frequently printed in Detroit's newspapers that he was under obligation to no person or group. He owed nothing to a boss, ring, party, manager, or newspaper. He owed nothing to the Citizens League or the Board of Commerce.² This being the case, he had no obligation to office holder, nor to office seeker. As he spoke to the assemblage of newly elected city officials, departmental appointees, and well-wishers gathered to hear his inaugural speech, his words also went out to ears unaccustomed to the sounds of council chambers. "There was the feeling of a change in the whole method and manner of government. A different crowd was there. . . ."³ Manufacturers and big businessmen came to hear. Henry Leland was there. For him the hope of this occasion which followed a half dozen years of political reform effort by the League must have outweighed his displeasure with Couzens.

In his inaugural speech Couzens plead for cohesion and solidarity based on the patriotic fervor of the war period just ended. "We must," he asserted, "municipalize Detroit's war time patriotism." He continued: "We have an

²Ibid., January 15, 1919.

³Ibid.

unequalled opportunity to render this community a genuine efficient business administration, but I labor under no delusion that I can accomplish such an administration alone. We must be partners, you and I and every single citizen."⁴ Item by item he set down the changes he hoped to bring to the city. Not unexpectedly the first item was municipalization of the transit system. Leland was against it, but since the days of Pingree most politicians, businessmen, and the public had been for it. They saw that a growing, expanding, industrializing city had to move people and materials easily over greater and greater distances. Good roads and good public transportation allowed the city to grow and that meant profits all around. From the vital transportation issue on which the growth of the city depended, he had turned to consider the problem of water supply and quality. Couzens observed that from 1915 to 1918 Detroit had nearly doubled its size in square miles, from forty-one to seventy-eight. The water system had to be expanded and the water filtered to free the citizens from the "chlorine cocktails" they then consumed.

Generally, the speech was prosaic and to the point. However, several rays of light peered through, shining on children and social justice. The concern of Couzens for children was revealed clearly. He stated that the efficiency of a community should be measured by the question: Does the community offer a good place for children and

⁴Detroit News, January 15, 1919.

their bringing up? If the question can be answered in the affirmative, then that community is efficient. This statement was not commented on by Couzens' listeners, yet, in retrospect, it seems predictive of a growing concern for children. His philanthropy from this period on, and his support in Detroit of Dr. Adolf Lorenz, a Viennese "bloodless" surgeon who treated cases of infantile paralysis, were expressive of his personal concern for the health and welfare of Michigan's children.

Couzens had come to the conclusion that society could best be served by working with children, not simply by providing education for the future, but also proper food, clothing, health care, and training. The training he envisioned was to be directed at instilling in the children self-discipline, honesty, and the willingness to work hard. Many millions of his wealth were spent to meet the health needs of Michigan's children. The statement revealed that, although he was the epitome of the manager in his self-discipline, thoroughness, honesty and efficiency, he had moved beyond accepting these qualities as ends and thought of them as means to an end. An efficiently and honestly administered city is not by itself a good city. It is a good city only when it is a good place for children and their up-bringing.

Under the topic of welfare in his speech he encouraged businessmen to be concerned about their workers. Also he made a plea to the community on behalf of the

soldiers and sailors who had even then in January 1919, started their return to civilian life. He thought that efforts ought to be made to place them in jobs. He asked council for cooperation in getting every possible piece of public construction started so that jobs might be created for those persons who could not find jobs. Unemployment was, and would increasingly become, a matter of concern for Couzens. The industrial depression presented major problems to the urban centers which housed and served workers. Detroit, largely an industrial city, was especially sensitive to fluctuations in industrial employment. It was essential that Couzens, who became mayor at a time of municipal reform and readjustment from a wartime to a peacetime economy, would be gravely concerned about unemployment.

With his comments on unemployment, Couzens ended the inaugural speech. For him the time of theorizing, the time for making campaign and inaugural pronouncements, was over. From then on, until he resigned from the office of mayor of Detroit, he would write his record as municipal administrator. It is this record which must be examined before his achievements can be assessed.

The Men Couzens Chose

Couzens once contrasted himself with John F. Dodge, saying that while Dodge knew the automobile business from

every angle, all he knew was men.⁵ That he knew men can be granted to him, based on his success in developing a sales force for the Ford Motor Company. Because of the far-flung sales operation of the company, it was necessary to be able to pick men who could produce on their own, without the guiding hand of a supervisor. The Ford Motor Company had been markedly successful in its sales operation. At Ford's he also developed a staff within the local plant which was as successful in its operation without his constant attention as was the sales staff. One of the points which Henry Ford is reported to have made in explanation of his split with Couzens was that Couzens had been at the plant only 184 days during the past year. The explanation did not clarify the basis for the split, but it did document quite clearly that, at least, Couzens was an executive who did not dominate others by his presence.⁶

In 1922, in response to a letter from a job-seeker, Couzens explained how he set about getting men to fill the key posts in his administration. "Every man I wanted for the head of a department," he stated, "I went after and every man who wanted a position had to go after the head of the department in which he wanted to be placed; because when once I had hired the head I did not interfere with

⁵Ibid., October 18, 1915.

⁶Pipp's Weekly, January 19, 1924.

the personnel whatsoever."⁷ The techniques of executive recruitment and management he had learned in over two decades of leadership positions in Detroit were useful to him as he weighed the possible candidates for the top jobs in his administration. As in his later years at Ford's, he would be absent frequently from his mayoral post over the next four years, as time and time again he was stricken by illness. The selection of capable and independent subordinates would be vital to the success of his administration.

As the chief executive under a strong mayor form of city government he had overall responsibility for government, but he could not be concerned with all its details. He would have to rely on his key appointees to carry the administration. Two days after the election Mayor Marx said that he would not make any appointments without consulting the new mayor. Under the new charter all department heads and citizen commissioners were appointed at the pleasure of the mayor. It was understood that the new mayor must not be burdened by the appointees of a previous administration. Couzens expressed his thanks to Marx and assured the city employees that no man would

⁷Mayors Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Letter, Couzens to W. J. Black, April 24, 1922. This collection will henceforth be referred to as the "Mayors Papers."

be changed unless his work warranted it.⁸ True to his word, the Couzens administrative take-over was not harsh. Here he acted with caution.

It would be difficult to list the city appointive offices in order of importance to the community they serve. However, certain city offices are so obviously basic to the day-to-day operation of a city that they may be classified as key offices. Couzens considered those to include the police commissioner, the corporation counsel, the controller, and the commissioner of public works.⁹ The priority placed on the office of police commissioner reflected the importance of conserving public peace, an importance that is now considered a recent development. Couzens' enumeration was expressive of the problems which beset him and the city as he began his administration.¹⁰

The most unusual of his appointees was Dr. James W. Inches, whom he selected for the post of commissioner of police. This commissioner supervises the police department and makes rules for the government and discipline of departmental personnel. His assignment is to preserve public peace and order, prevent crime, arrest offenders and protect the rights of persons and of property.¹¹ At the time of his

⁸Detroit News, November 7, 1918. ⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter XXI.

¹¹Municipal Manual of the City of Detroit 1963 (Detroit: City of Detroit, 1962), p. 47; Charter of the

appointment to this office, Inches was Detroit's commissioner of health. A medical doctor, he had risen to prominence in the small community of St. Clair, Michigan, northeast of Detroit, and from there he had come to serve as health commissioner in the Marx administration.

When Couzens was contemplating his own resignation as commissioner of police, he had announced that he thought a member of the police department should become police commissioner. This may have been an honest reaction to the problems he had faced as commissioner. Whether or not it was a reaction to past experiences, it was a wise statement for a political candidate who would need the political support of the police and their backers.¹² As mayor, however, he obviously recognized the need to have his own man in that vital office. It is the mayor who is conservator of the peace and it is his responsibility to "see that all laws pertaining to the municipal government of the city and all ordinances of the common council are faithfully observed and executed."¹³ With robbery, liquor violations, traffic violations, and prostitution a present, growing and corrupting, power in the community, it was wise not to lose

City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter XXI.

¹²Detroit News, July 1, 1918.

¹³Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter XXI.

command of his agency for law enforcement to a career policeman who may become a power unto himself in determining administrative policy toward law enforcement.

But, perhaps more than the above, his choice of Dr. Inches reflected his concept of police work. Attracted to the physician by his handling of the flu epidemic and other emergencies, he observed that there was a close relationship between good health and good citizenship. He considered criminal behavior to be psychopathic behavior.¹⁴ Both Couzens and Inches viewed the crime problem from a new angle which examined the relation and responsibility of society at large for the conditions which produce crime. For them it was a case of making the punishment fit the criminal, not the crime.¹⁵ The burglar, the holdup man, the prostitute, the cheat, the drone were manifestations of sickness in society. The medical doctor so clearly worked his wonders on the sick body, might he not heal society as well?

Another of the key appointments was that of corporation counsel. As representative of the city in its legal business, he would carry out Couzens' war against the Detroit United Railway Company and provide guidance in other delicate legal matters. For the post he chose a man whom he knew and trusted: Clarence E. Wilcox of the law

¹⁴Detroit News, December 18, 1918.

¹⁵Ibid., January 5, 1919.

firm of Anderson, Wilcox and Lacy.¹⁶ John W. Anderson, one of the partners, was one of the original investors in the Ford Motor Company who had, like Couzens, become a multi-millionaire as the result. Arthur J. Lacy, the other partner, was Couzens' personal lawyer. There is no indication of collusion. Lacy, who accompanied Wilcox when he went to see Couzens with the intention of refusing the post, recalled that the mayor berated him for excessive concern for the law partnership. Wilcox weakened and agreed to serve. Neither the lawyers nor Couzens seemed to have been concerned about conflicts of interest. Lacy continued as Couzens' personal lawyer and Wilcox maintained his membership in the firm. According to Lacy, Wilcox did not suffer financially from his public service. His city salary was treated as a law fee to the law office and he received his full share in the partnership.¹⁷

The Detroit News reported that Wilcox was named corporation counsel and his salary of \$20,000 a year from his law practice would be slashed to the \$7,500 he would receive from the city.¹⁸ No evidence has been found that

¹⁶Detroit Times, January 7, 1919; Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter XXIII.

¹⁷Interview with Arthur J. Lacy by Richard T. Ortquist and Marvin Petroelje, Spring 1964, Michigan Historical Collections, The University of Michigan.

¹⁸Detroit News, January 7, 1919; Graene O'Geran, A History of the Detroit Street Railways (Detroit: Conover Press, 1931), p. 374.

Couzens knew about the comfortable arrangement which Wilcox worked out with his law firm. He may or may not have been aware of this. He certainly knew that, during the period Wilcox served as corporation counsel, he held a directorship in the Highland Park State Bank; the bank had been organized by Couzens.¹⁹ It would appear that Couzens had a decided advantage when he sought to recruit a man like Wilcox. Public service under him did not need to entail the personal sacrifices normally expected.

Couzens was to choose with equal caution the man to serve as the city controller. The controller, who is the chief financial officer for the city, keeps a record of its financial condition. He plays a vital role in the development of the city's budget, the raising of funds to support operational expenses, and the disbursal of funds to meet fiscal obligations.²⁰ As Couzens would move to expand the municipal services of Detroit to meet the needs brought on by wartime neglect and growth, a skilled controller was necessary to maintain control over the collection and disbursal of funds which would reach a size hitherto undreamed of.

¹⁹Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 3, Letter, Couzens to Frank Dodge, February 17, 1919; Box 4, Folder, December 1-14, 1916, Financial Statement on Highland Park State Bank.

²⁰Municipal Manual of the City of Detroit, pp. 28-29; Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter VI.

For the first few months of his administration, George Engel, who had been controller since 1913 under Mayor Marx, continued in that office. In July, Engel succeeded Harold H. Esselstyn as commissioner of public works and Couzens brought in the man who would continue as controller throughout the remainder of his office. Henry Steffens, Jr., chief accountant of the Bureau of Governmental Research, was appointed to the post effective July 1, 1919.²¹ Steffens, a certified public accountant, had served in Detroit since 1916, the year the Bureau was founded. Prior to that he had been with the Milwaukee Bureau of Municipal Research and the Minneapolis Bureau of Municipal Research.²² That experience endeared him to the good government forces: the League and the Bureau. He was well grounded in the principles of accounting and their application to municipalities. The fact that he was just twenty-nine brought Steffens the title of the youngest city controller in Detroit's history.²³

The post of commissioner of public works was the most difficult to fill. It was the job which Couzens had claimed to be the most important because it was where the most money could be saved. Among the many municipal

²¹Detroit News, June 11, 1919.

²²Research Bureau Reports, 1918 (Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, 1919), p. 636.

²³Detroit News, June 11, 1919.

services which the commissioner of public works oversees are included care and maintenance of public streets, sewers, and city owned buildings. Without question this job was in 1919, and continues to be, crucial to the growth and development of Detroit.²⁴

For the first six months Harold H. Esselstyn served as the commissioner of public works. After he resigned to return to his private engineering business, Couzens appointed George Engel, the city controller, to that post. Engel had had banking experience and was engaged in the furniture business prior to and after his appointment as controller by Marx in 1913. On May 1, 1920, he resigned as commissioner of public works, noting that his responsibilities as commissioner took too much of his time to meet the obligations placed on him by a growing furniture business.²⁵ He was succeeded by Joseph A. Martin, who would serve as the commissioner of public works throughout the remainder of Couzens' administration.²⁶ Martin had been an accountant in the office of the city controller under Engel. When Engel became commissioner in July 1919,

²⁴Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title IV, Chapter VIII.

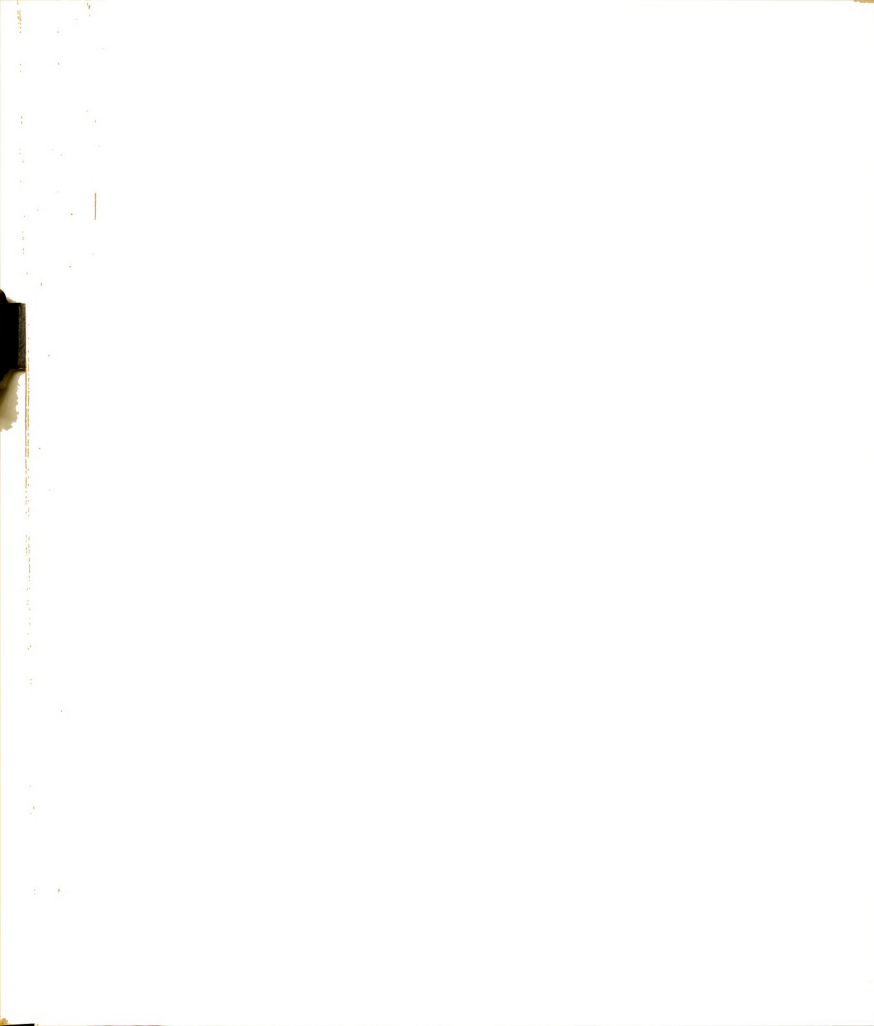
²⁵Clarence M. Burton, The City of Detroit, Michigan (Detroit: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922), III, 179-80.

²⁶Municipal Manual of the City of Detroit, 1963, p. 51.

Steffens became controller. Martin continued in the controller's office under Steffens. When his former boss resigned from the department of public works in 1920 he shifted to that department as its head. Engel, Steffens, and Martin were all accountants by training, as was Couzens. Couzens' commitment to honest accounting was revealed in these appointments.

This was the manner in which he filled the administrative posts which he thought key positions in the operation of the city. However, no matter what the position, each time he acted with objectivity. There was no wholesale replacement of appointive officers. Examination of the list of officers active as he took office and at the time of his resignation from the mayoralty attest to this. Here and there among the commissioners are found the names of respected friends: Dr. Hugo A. Freund, his personal physician was on the board of health but he had been appointed to this board prior to Couzens' election. Dr. Max Ballin, a surgeon who performed major surgery on Couzens, was appointed to the public welfare commission. Couzens' private secretary, Henry S. Morgan, was appointed to the house of correction commission. His architect, Albert Kahn, continued on the art commission. His personal lawyer, Arthur J. Lacy, was appointed to the civil service commission.²⁷ These were men of high competence and it was

²⁷ Henry Steffens, Jr., ed., Detroit's Government (Detroit: City of Detroit, 1923), p. 4.



no disservice to the city to use them. But many names remained on the list of appointive officers after four years of his administration which had been placed there prior to his taking office.

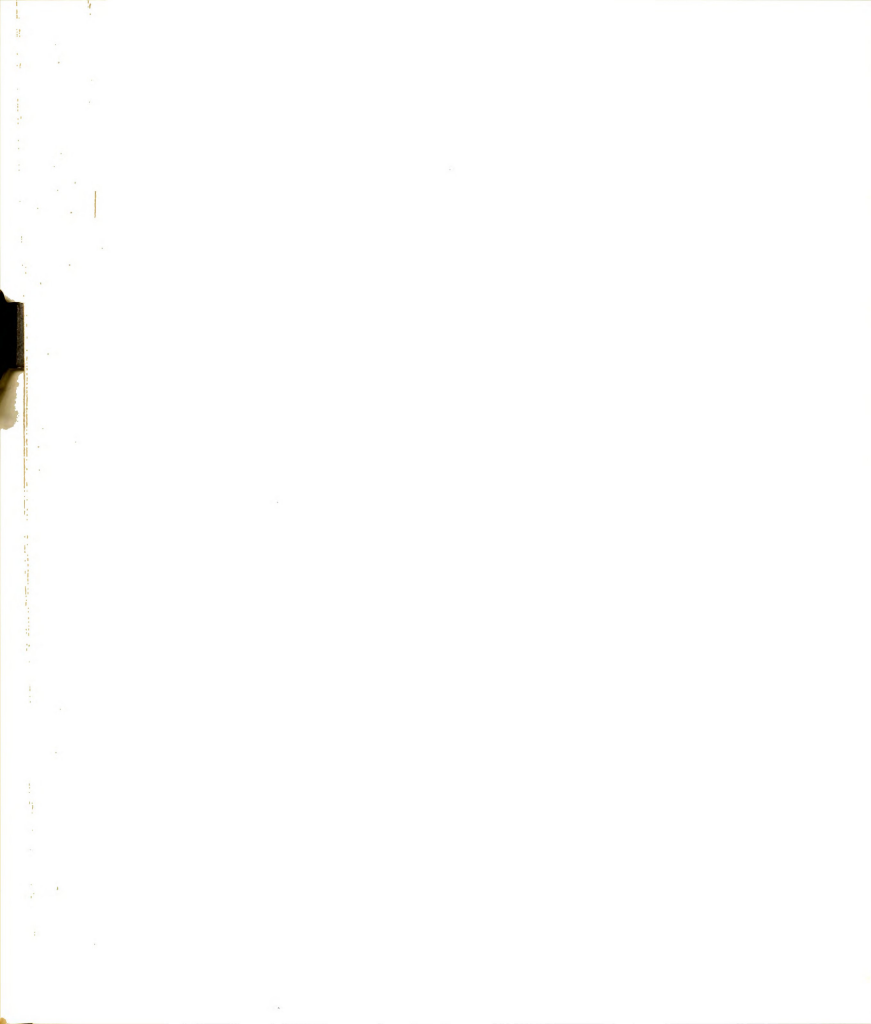
As unkind a newspaperman as Malcolm Bingay was in his final assessment of Couzens as an administrator and in all other respects, he was not at all unkind in his assessment of his appointees. Bingay wrote that "his appointments were wholly nonpolitical, and most of them were excellent."²⁸ William P. Lovett, executive secretary of the civic watchdog Citizens League, wrote that universally Couzens appointed young men of recognized ability and training to head the city's departments.²⁹ Couzens' estimation of his own ability to select men was not in error.

Couzens' Administrative Style and Philosophy

Couzens' administration was dominated by the urban problems of his period. The urgency of those problems impressed itself on him and his administration. He, as other big city mayors, sought to solve the problems in the best interest of his community as he saw it. The manner in which he proceeded was in many respects similar to that

²⁸Malcolm W. Bingay, Detroit Is My Own Home Town (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946), p. 122.

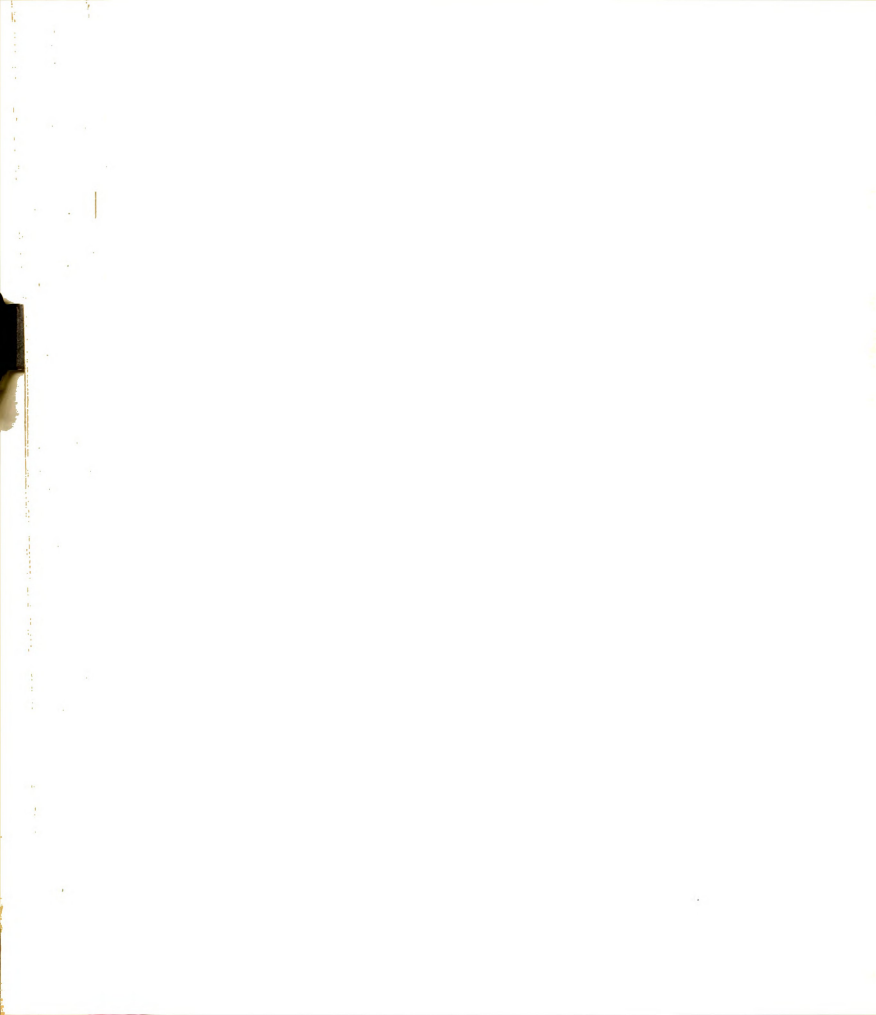
²⁹Lovett, "Detroit and Its New City Charter," p. 150.



followed in other cities throughout the country. However, similar as Detroit's problems may have been to those of other communities, and similar as Couzens' responses were to the responses of other mayors, Couzens was unique. His character, his philosophy, and often his wealth were inextricably involved in many of the responses which his administration made to the problems of his era. For this reason, it is important that the qualities which characterized Couzens and affected his administrative decisions be considered.

When Couzens was with the Ford Motor Company, he was the man up front who kept the office running and balanced the books; Henry Ford was the engineer and the dreamer. It had been a winning combination. Now that Couzens was at the head of the city government, there would be no Henry Ford. Couzens would be the chief accountant, the engineer, and the dreamer where dreams were to be-- though only rarely would he allow that dreams were a part of his job. "I have no patience with people that 'build castles in the air,'" he asserted. "Likewise I do not believe in looking very far ahead." From his point of view, if one took care of today, tomorrow would take care of itself.³⁰ Yet, he had a plan and that plan was so certain, so concrete, that to him it was not a castle in the air, it was real. Just as real as the Ford Motor Company.

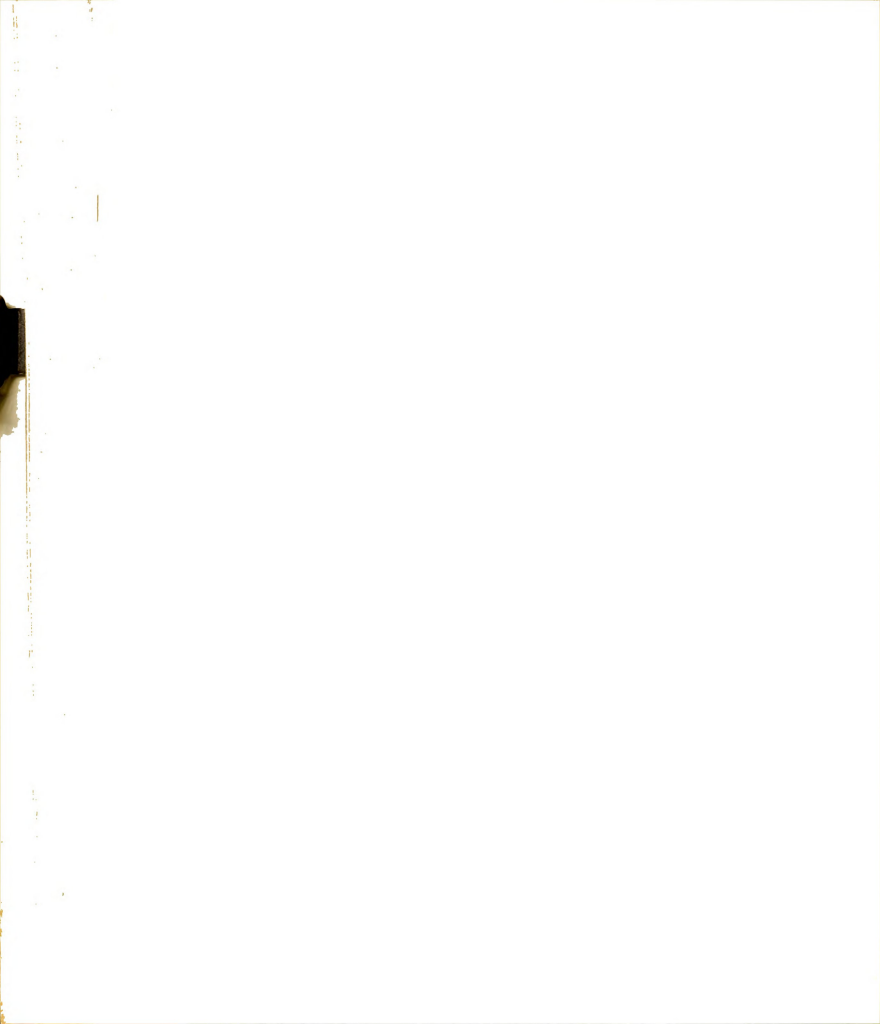
³⁰Detroit Times, September 17, 1922.



His plan is seen in his campaign speeches and philanthropy. In August 1918, he had stated that efficiency in government was merely a means to an end. "I don't want to be mayor because I believe I can be efficient," he had said. "If I made efficiency my goal, I would be like the Kaiser." He went on to say that he considered a blend of the business ideal with the fellowship of man as that which was most needed. The reason why he wanted to be mayor was to help the fathers, mothers, and children he had encountered as commissioner of police. "They are the mistakes of our old time municipal government idea which must be remedied," he said. What was needed was a business administration with soul.³¹

This blast against efficiency viewed as the end of government was restated in his inaugural address when he said that a city is efficient if it is a good place to raise children. He was a builder of castles, it would seem. Sturdy, factory-like castles, but just as much dreams as the soaring, flimsy kind. He believed that people could be changed by changing the physical world that surrounded them. For him the material world and the spiritual world were entwined. In 1920, when the housing shortage was an issue of major importance in Detroit and other urban centers of the country, he wrote the superintendent of the Methodist Union of greater Detroit that

³¹Detroit News, August 23, 1918.



crowded living conditions were responsible for most immorality.³² He did not discuss the source of immorality in the spacious homes of the affluent. He simply believed, on the basis of his experiences as police commissioner, that there was a strong tie between environment and immoral behavior.

Most of his work as mayor and as philanthropist (which during his mayoralty overlapped his public life) focused on the material rather than on the cultural environment. He wanted filtered water, good transportation, adequate housing, improved streets, law, order, and justice. In a letter to the president of the art commission he wrote that the stomach and good health of the people come before art.³³ In response to a request from the associate editor of the Detroit Junior College Collegian that the Junior College be made a four year college, he replied that there were many things desirable to do; however, in this case he was not convinced that the taxpayers should pay for services of exclusive benefit to 1,000 students. He continued: "There are other activities--such as the physical well being of many of our children--which it seems to me should come ahead of the establishment of a 4-year college."³⁴

³²Ibid., August 21, 1920.

³³Mayors Papers, Box 1, Letter, Couzens to Ralph A. Booth, March 6, 1922.

³⁴Ibid., Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Harry H. Platt, January 18, 1922.

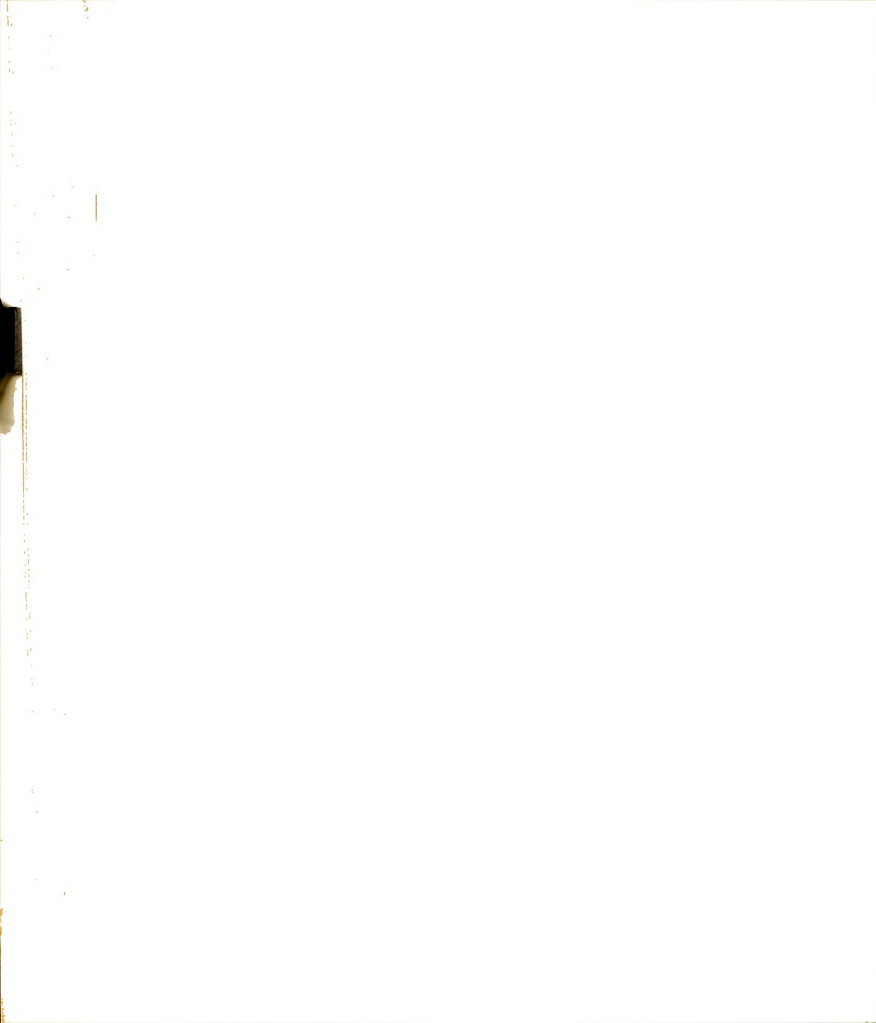


He neither understood nor sensed the effect of cultural activities on the quality of life in Detroit. During his administration his greatest contribution would be to the areas in which he sensed and understood the need. The library, the art museum, and the institutions of higher education in Detroit would not gain the support they felt was necessary for the enlargement of their programs. When his decision to keep the library budget at the same level for fiscal year 1922-1923 was criticized, he replied that he questioned the wisdom of Detroit's acceptance of the Burton Historical Collection as part of the library. He said that it was one man's hobby and it cost the city \$30,000 a year to support it. Furthermore, the two or three times he had been there it was empty except for staff members.³⁵ He sent back the proffered membership card to the Detroit Historical Society, saying that he had too many interests already and "could not possibly be of any assistance or add any influence."³⁶

Both of these historical activities were strongly supported by Clarence Monroe Burton of the Burton Abstract Company. Burton was a foe of the municipal ownership project to which Couzens devoted so much effort, and Couzens was not known to be a forgiving and forgetful man.

³⁵Detroit News, February 25, 1922.

³⁶Mayors Papers, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Detroit Historical Society, April 26, 1922.



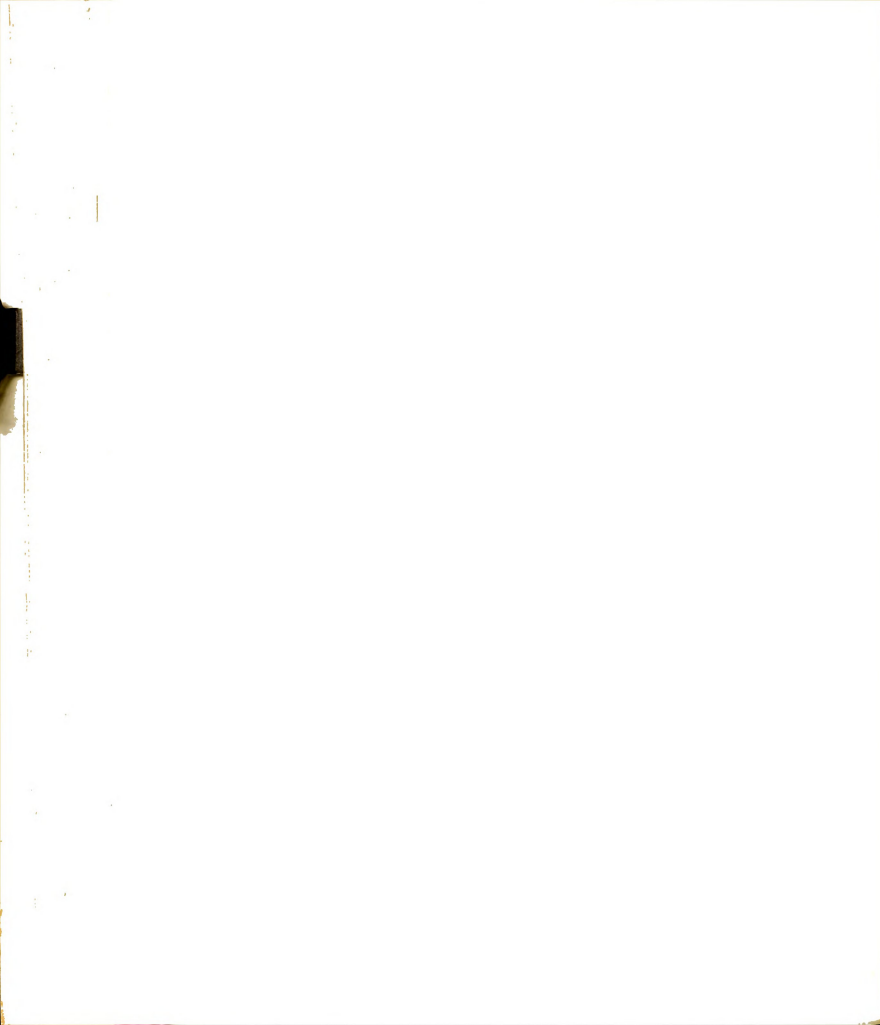
However, his reactions in these instances were characteristic of his actions generally in matters related to the unsubstantial commodity produced by such institutions.

His view of himself as an uncultured man may also have stiffened his determination not to be used by that unproductive crowd which set itself above the common people. When the American Federation of Arts asked him to renew his subscription, he responded that he had contributed to the Federation only because Mr. George C. Booth, the president of the Detroit News, had asked him. He declined to become a regular subscriber and suggested that support be sought from those who knew the value of art and not from common folks like himself who did not understand it.³⁷ To a correspondent who assured him that Detroit appeared to university people as "the most open and promising field in the country for a strong and forward looking institution of science and higher learning," Couzens wrote that the proposed plan should be dealt with by educators. "I myself have never had any great academic education, and I do not think I am quite competent to determine how far it should be extended."³⁸

It seems that as his views about the goals of human life and his business experience affected his administrative

³⁷Ibid., Box 1, Letter, Couzens to Leila Mechlin, February 16, 1922.

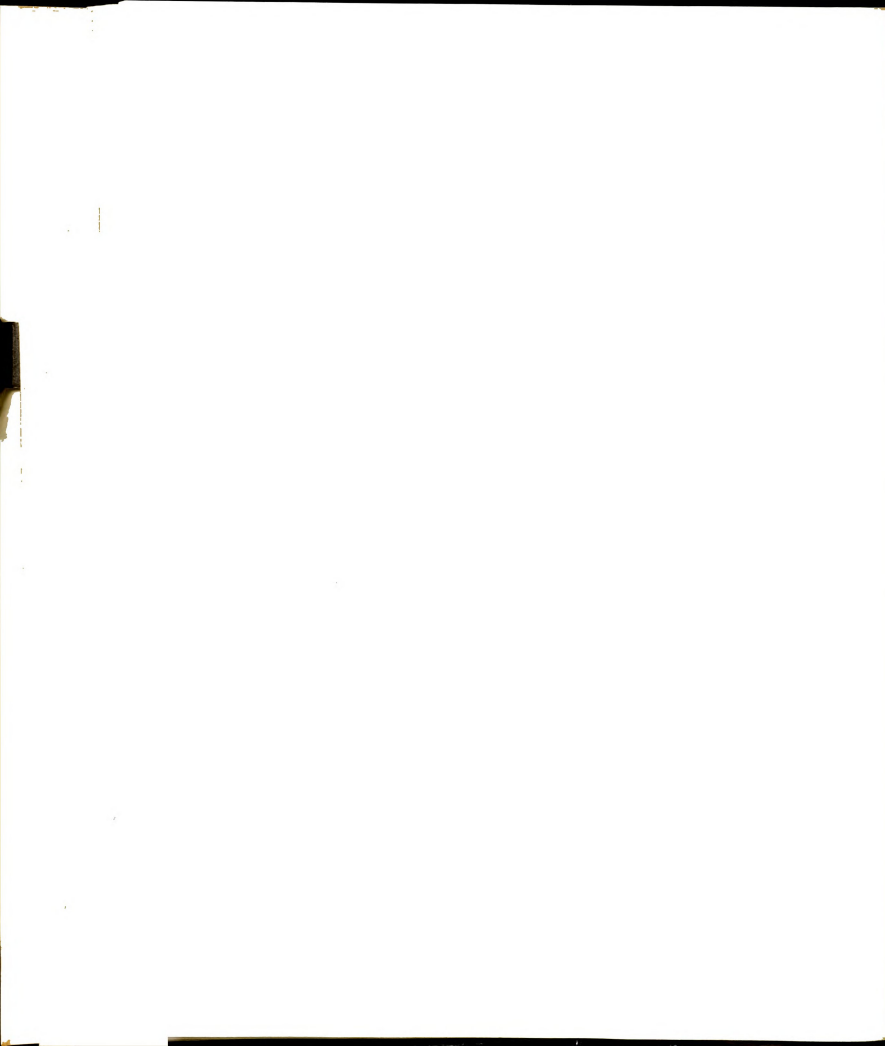
³⁸Ibid., Box 3, Letter, Couzens to J. E. Kirkpatrick, February 16, 1922.



decisions, so his views about himself also played a part. The budget for streets, sewers, and health would soar, the budget for libraries would remain the same in spite of the hope stated in his 1919 inaugural speech that the average number of books read by Detroiters in a year would be increased from two to an average of two dozen.

He saw the need in Detroit for housing, streets, pure water, public transportation, grade school and high school buildings that the great population shifts had created. He was aware of the desire for these and other services on the part of the local merchant, the land developer, the real estate salesman, and the factory manager. But primarily, he wanted to bring about these improvements because of the right of all men to live a good life, a healthy, productive life. He did not seek to save money by shortchanging the physical needs of the community. He sought to save money that was improperly expended on services and materials that were overpriced or unnecessary. Increasing amounts of money had to be raised to meet the demands but every dollar would be wisely spent, that was the only promise. At the start of his administration he had rated the commissioner of the department of public works, the commissioner of police, the corporation counsel, and the controller of first importance. His environmentalistic philosophy made these offices vital to his plan.

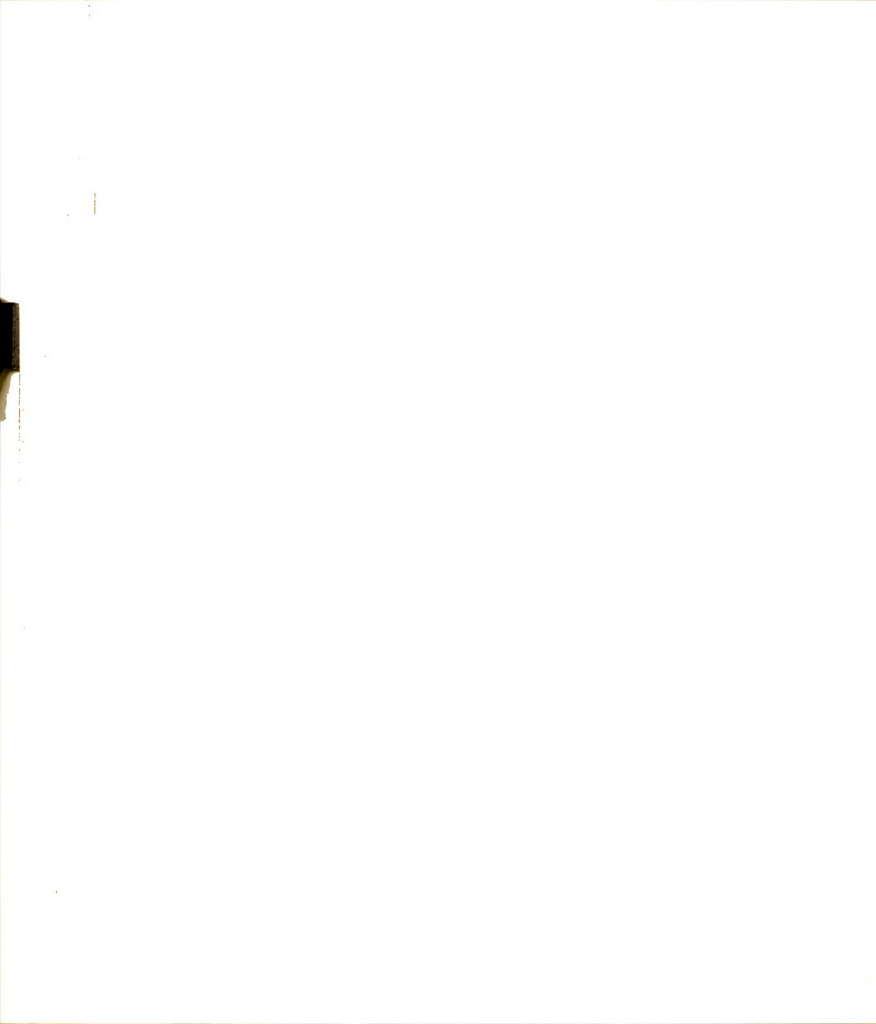
Shortly after resigning from the office of mayor in 1922 he was interviewed by the Printers' Ink magazine on



"How Advertising Can Help Guard the Nation from Bolshevism." In the interview he said that if he were Czar of the United States he would concentrate his attentions on the school children. Those adults over thirty could go off and do whatever they wanted that did not hurt others. The school children would be taught the principles of upright citizenship, decent living, and fair conduct. "In fifteen or twenty more years we would have a real country from a standpoint of business and everything else."³⁹ This was not the first time he had spoken of the importance of children to society and its reform. This was not the first time he had dreamed of dictatorial powers which would serve to further his goals for society. At the end of his mayoral career these musings may have been an expression of frustration at not having done all he would have done had he had the power to override the wishes of his opposition. Whatever the case, the dream was not consistent with the democratic doctrines which he had expressed over the years of his office.

In his administration he sought, he said, to blend business efficiency with soul. He argued that the democracy he also supported was not efficient and that there was no way of making it efficient. If man was to live under a democratic form of government, efficiency was out. He

³⁹ Interview with James Couzens by G. A. Nichols, "How Advertising Can Help Guard the Nation from Bolshevism," Printers' Ink, CXXIII (May 31, 1923), 134.



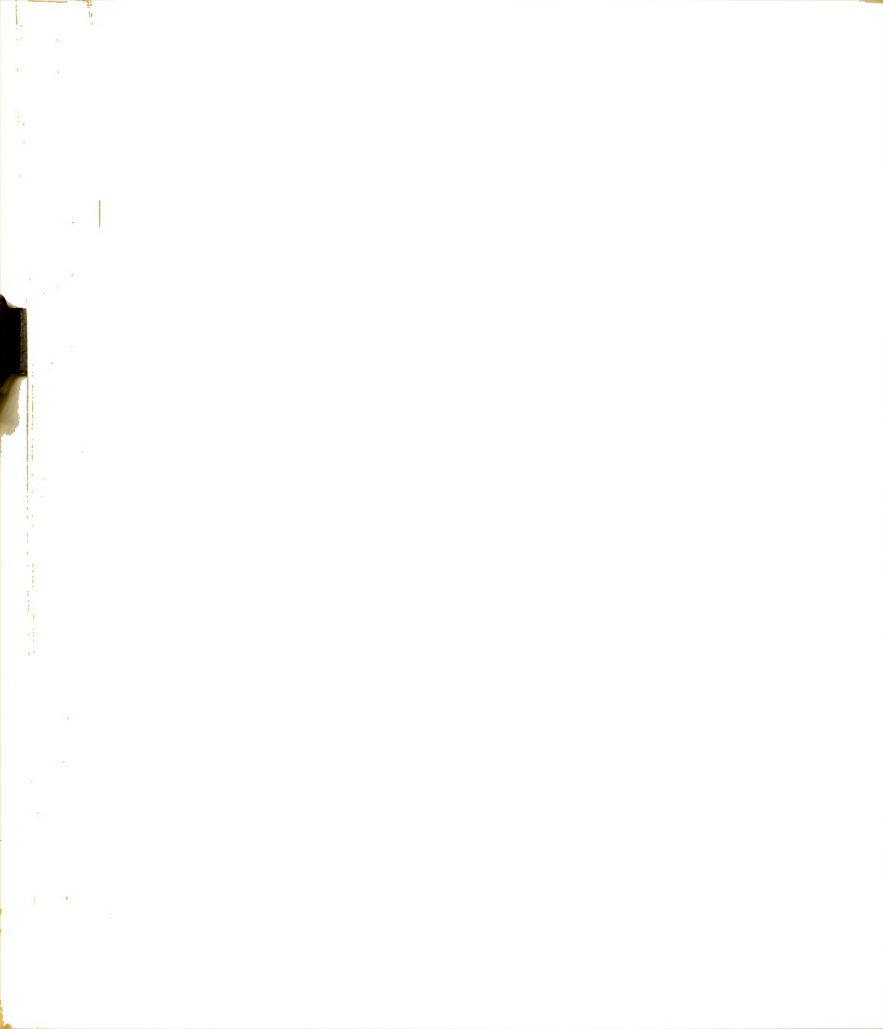
wrote that he would "rather have a democracy and pay the cost of inefficiency, than to have a monarchy with all the uncertainties that go with it."⁴⁰ Yet he hankered after efficiency nonetheless. He never resolved this ambiguity and he never believed in democracy in practice. I do not mean to say that he was lacking in compassion, or unfair. But in spite of his stated "faith in the good judgment of the majority of the population of any community," he was not a democrat.⁴¹

His brother Albert wrote a letter to him in 1917 which showed clearly the drive which propelled him from the limited financial resources of his youth to wealth and influence. "You have frequently told me," Albert wrote, "that when you wanted a certain job you went after it, you were not greatly concerned about others above or below you or what they thought of your ambitions you were after results for yourself. . . ." ⁴² Similarly, in a letter to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, formerly a reform mayor in Cleveland, his good friend Milton A. McRae recommended him for wartime service in Washington. He described Couzens

⁴⁰ Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 4, Letter, Couzens to Sidney T. Miller, February 23, 1917.

⁴¹ Ibid., Box 5, Letter, Couzens to Barklay McGowan, November 27, 1917.

⁴² Ibid., Letter, Albert Couzens to Couzens, September 6, 1917.

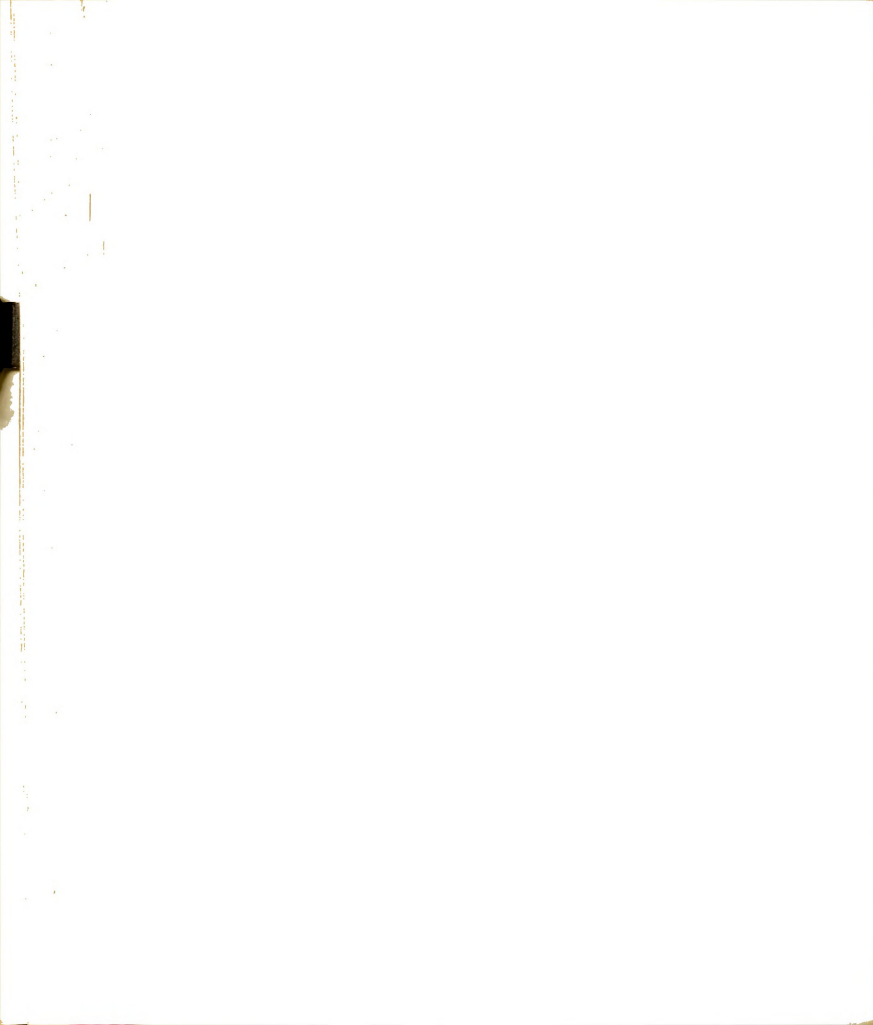


as "a belligerent, pugnacious, determined man--just the sort of a man to carry out fearlessly any directions that you would give to him--especially when he felt it would be a patriotic duty to perform them."⁴³

This drive which his brother and McRae described often led Couzens to behavior inconsistent with the democratic process. When the voters rejected his proposal for municipal ownership of the transit lines, he did not accept the decision as the will of the people and withdraw. He immediately set out to find another way of accomplishing his goal. The notion of letting the people decide quickly gave way to the exercise of pressure to make the people decide the desired way. He kept working determinedly until he succeeded in bringing about municipal ownership.

In November 1917, John Purroy Mitchel, reform mayor of New York City, had been defeated at the polls. It has been said of Mitchel, who was an advocate of business efficiency and honest accounting, that he was "too economy minded, too narrowly expert, too technical to serve the city well." Mitchel's major weakness was that he was not aware that urban administrators needed to be sensitive to human needs. The rapid growth of the city "entailed vastly expanded municipal services." Mitchel's administration was

⁴³Ibid., Letter, McRae to Newton D. Baker, October 13, 1917.



"technical and righteous rather than flexible and imaginative."⁴⁴

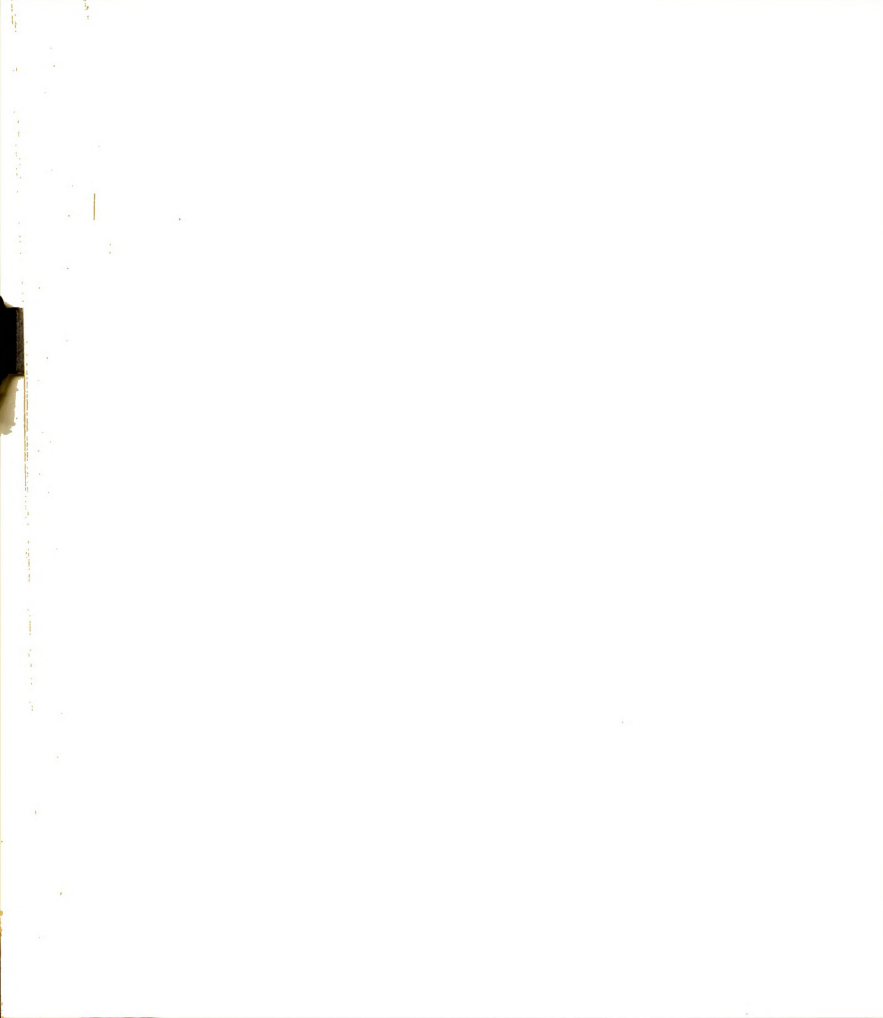
Several weeks after Mitchel's defeat, Couzens commented on it. He said that "with government efficiency is not the only thing. You can't compare running a business and running a government."⁴⁵ There was something more required to run the government than efficiency and a balanced ledger book. Hence, unlike the narrow-minded business reformers of the period who occasionally and momentarily rose to political power, Couzens cannot be judged on a businesslike value scale alone.

The fact is, however, that he added considerably to the myth that he was simply an adding machine by the definitive statements he issued on the business goals of his administration. In the mayor's message for 1920, he asserted: "We were elected upon our assurance that affairs would be handled in a businesslike manner and I trust this communication will lend the conviction that no department's activities have been approached in any other than a businesslike way."⁴⁶ He meant simply that he believed that for

⁴⁴Journal of American History, LII (March, 1966), 856-57; Edwin R. Lewinson, John Purroy Mitchel: The Boy Mayor of New York (New York: Astra Books, 1965), pp. 245-47.

⁴⁵Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 5, Letter, Couzens to Barclay McGowan, November 27, 1917.

⁴⁶Mayors Papers, Box 3, Mayor's Message, 1920.



every dollar spent by the city, a dollar's worth of goods or services had been received. One week after his inauguration, he had announced to the press that after February 1, workers at the City Hall would be required to work until 5 p.m., six days a week, and work was to commence precisely at 8:30 a.m.⁴⁷

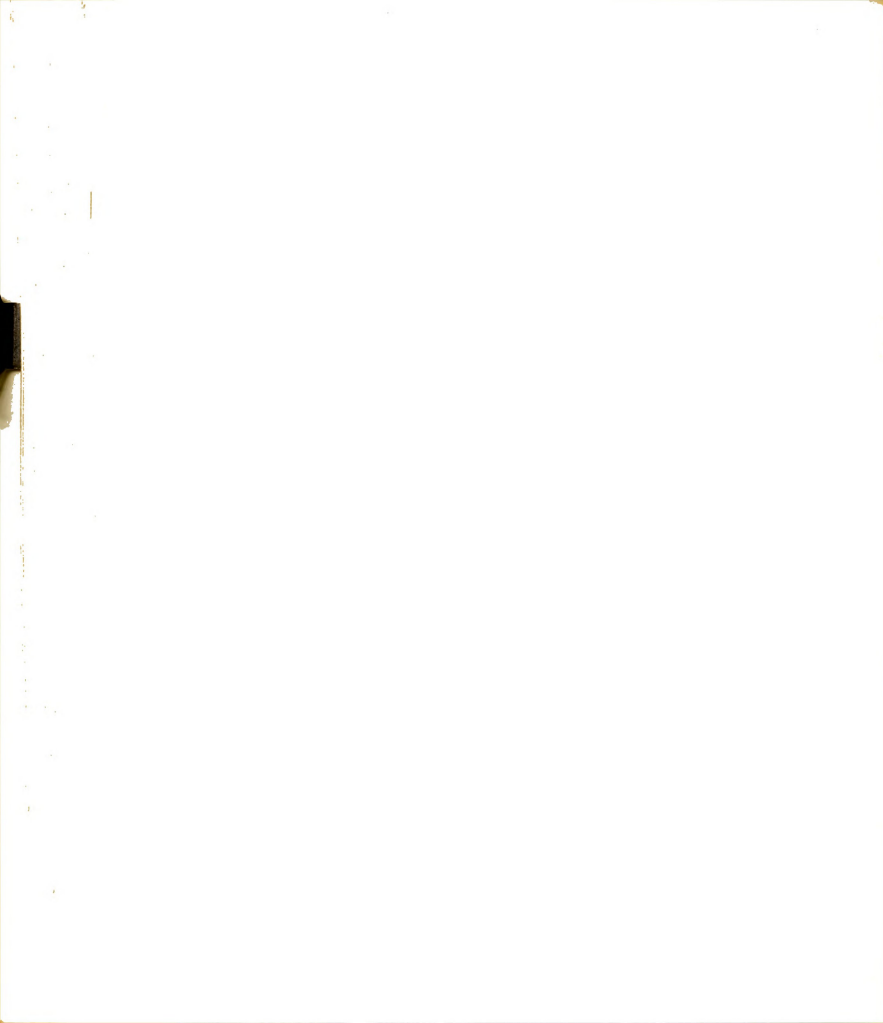
During his entire administration he was alert to the drone and the cheat, and untiring in his issuance of orders to city departments to comb out wrong doers. Adam Strohm, the head of Detroit's library system, was charged with the use of city property and employees for personal business and subjected to a hearing by the library commission. Couzens, in a letter to a member of the library commission, accused Strohm of possessing an easy conscience.⁴⁸ Following the Strohm incident, he distributed a general order stating that city vehicles, equipment, and supplies were not to be utilized by city employees for their own personal use.⁴⁹ Vigilance and general orders were the price of incorruptibility.

However, he was not afflicted by the short-sightedness which characterized reformers such as Mitchel.

⁴⁷Detroit News, January 23, 1919.

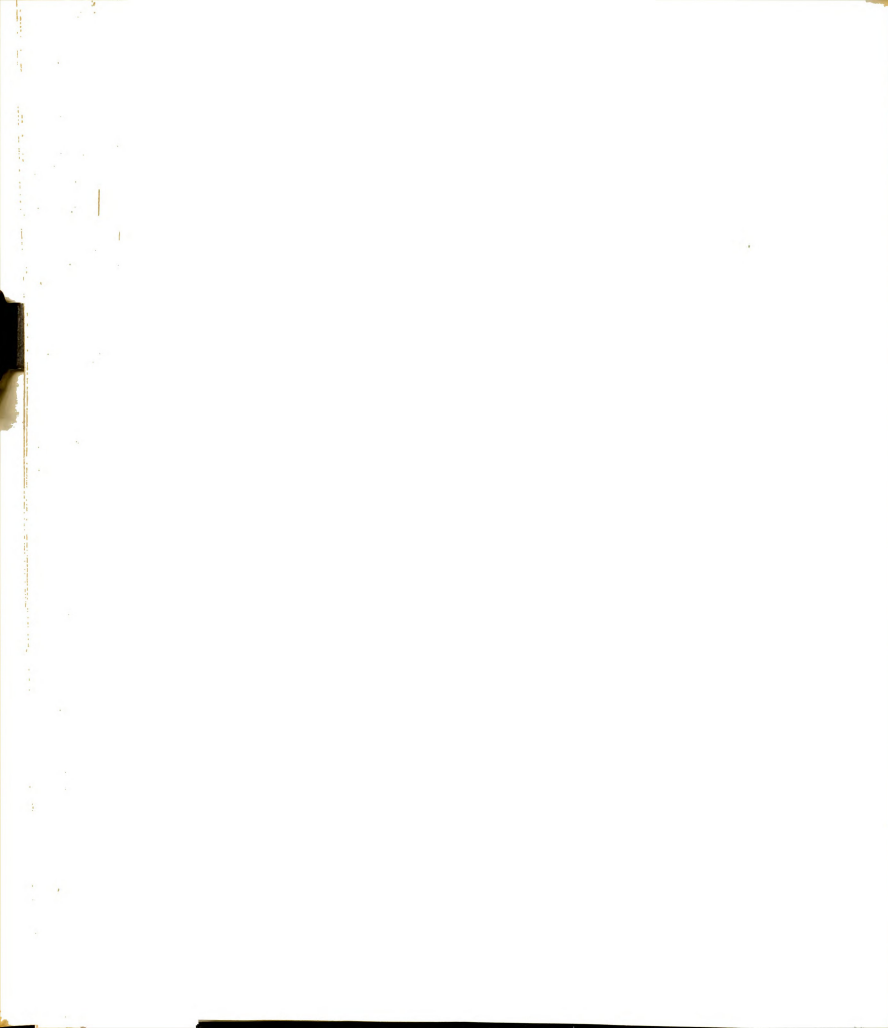
⁴⁸Mayors Papers, Box 1, Letter, Couzens to Charles R. Robertson, September 22, 1922.

⁴⁹Ibid., Letter, Couzens to Frank H. Alfred, October 3, 1922.



Although he asserted that he had little foresight and let tomorrow take care of itself, he was aware of the need for expansion of municipal services if the people of the community were to be properly provided for. He was impressed by the fact that Detroit had thousands of school children on half days, that the streets were pot-holed and in need of extension, that new market facilities were needed as recommended by the welfare commission. In December 1918, even before he had officially taken office, he declared that the city should right then push to the limit every contemplated construction project. This would not only help the city meet the need for new and improved facilities to accommodate the growth in size and population, but would also help to provide employment during a period of economic readjustment following the war.

Failure to use the slow and uncertain democratic process to administer changes in government was not peculiar to him. The businessman turned reformer has often relied on the autocratic techniques of his business experience to bring about the change he envisioned. During Couzens' political campaign for re-election as mayor of Detroit in 1921, the News supported him and printed a series of articles by prominent Detroiters who believed he should be retained in office. Among those who endorsed him was Alex I. McLeod, who had served as secretary to Pingree. McLeod drew a parallel between the two reformers. He



declared that both were active energetic, full of pep, gluttonous for work, stubborn, intolerant of opposition, dictatorial, autocrats.⁵⁰ How strange in a democratic society that such a string of adjectives should be used as a recommendation for office. Yet, Pingree, Sam Jones, Tom Johnson, and Couzens each with the political image of "man of the people," used some of the skills of the demagogue. In some sense, they usurped the role of the political boss. They were to a degree beneficent despots.⁵¹

The masses accepted and supported such men as these, returning them again and again to political leadership in their respective communities. They invoked in the masses a sense of pride as they did battle with the strong and wealthy. During Couzens' administration both the Detroit News and the Detroit Times occasionally published cartoons which bore a striking resemblance to the public image borne by Couzens. The News cartoon was called "The Terrible Tempered Mr. Bang." The Times cartoon was "Everett True."

Both Mr. Bang and Everett True were men who acted without fear of harmful consequences to themselves or their families. And for some merciful and miraculous reason they were spared, meeting only with the hosannas of thankful

⁵⁰Detroit News, October 29, 1921.

⁵¹Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, A History of Urban America (New York: MacMillan Co., 1967), p. 215.



spectators. During the influenza epidemic in 1918 (which reached such proportions in Detroit that political meetings were cancelled and theaters closed), Mr. Bang was shown in a railroad station. An unthinking traveler coughed without covering his mouth. Mr. Bang with flying fists set the unwary stranger straight on the danger and discourtesy of such careless behavior.⁵²

Everett True, like Mr. Bang, upended the impolite and crude citizens he encountered as he moved about the town. The man who smoked in close quarters to the annoyance of others, the loud and uncouth, the insensitive person who violated others' rights, met a quick and violent justice at the hands of Everett True. Both True and Bang were loud and in some ways insensitive, but they were on the side of the people.⁵³

I do not wish to imply that these cartoons were patterned after the man Couzens. I am saying that the steady publication of the cartoons by the two newspapers showed an acceptability of this kind of behavior on the part of the reading public. Here in True and Bang were two fellow citizens doing what the reader was thought to want to do, but what he feared to do because of the consequences. Couzens was Everett True and Mr. Bang. He said what needed saying. He acted with impunity against the high and

⁵²Detroit News, October 9, 1918.

⁵³Detroit Times, 1919.



mighty. He was the common man, the car checker for the Michigan Central who made good, telling those who offended the public, regardless of rank, where to get off--and getting away with it.

The fact was that his wealth and long-term association with Ford gave him an immunity to the punishment the ordinary citizen would have received. He could not be punished for setting a judge straight. He was never read out of the exclusive clubs in which he held membership, no matter what his conduct. He could be Everett True and the Terrible Tempered Mr. Bang and get away with it, not as a common man but because he was an uncommon man.

In October 1920, Franklin D. Roosevelt noted the public acceptability of the personality traits found in Everett True, Mr. Bang, and Couzens. Speaking at Grand Rapids on behalf of the Democratic presidential candidate, and himself, the Democratic vice presidential candidate, Roosevelt said of Republican Warren Harding that he was unfit for the presidency because he was not able to say what he meant and mean what he said. "Most of us," Roosevelt continued, "realize that the American public likes a clean-cut, straight-from-the-shoulder man and that it does not like men in public life who say one thing and mean another."⁵⁴ Roosevelt did not have Couzens in mind, yet the qualities he enumerated as admired by the American

⁵⁴Detroit News, October 18, 1920.

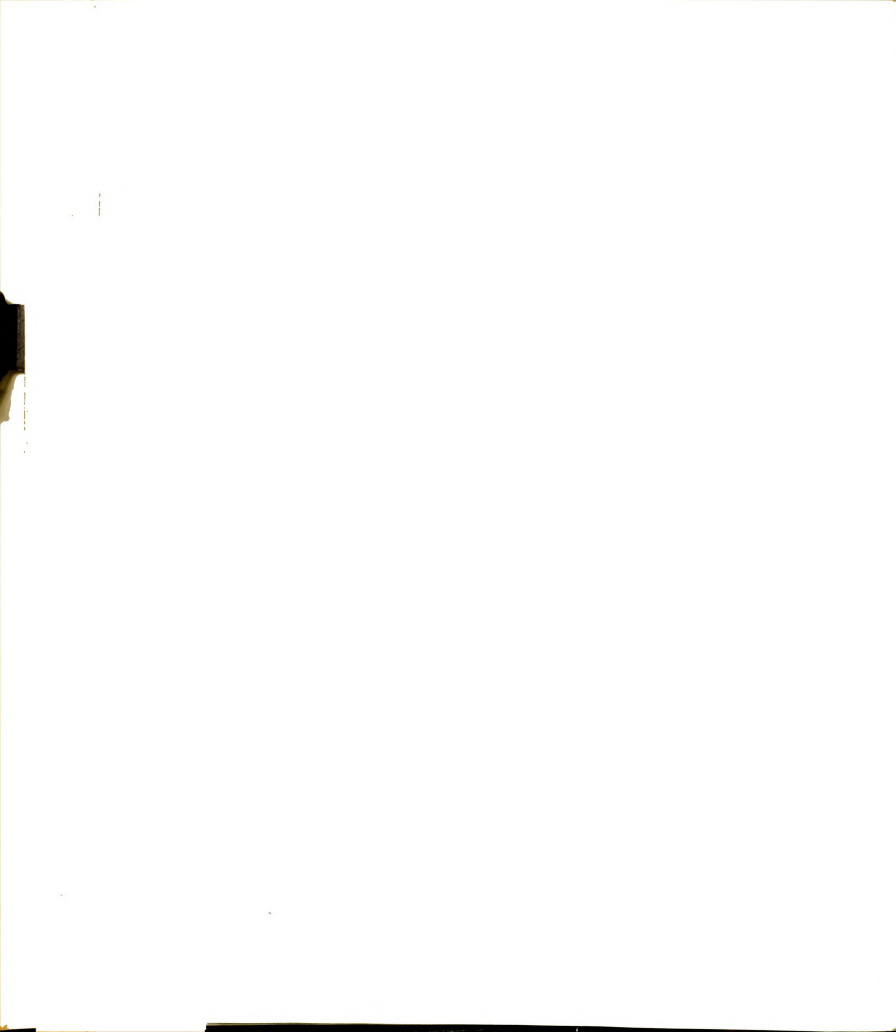


public were the qualities which Couzens personified. There was public support for the kind of reputation that Couzens had. To call him uncooperative and lacking in tact was to raise the questions: uncooperative and tactless with whom? when? and, under what conditions? The people felt gratified when a man they considered representative of them stood up and raised the issues of profits and vested interest with the owners and managers of business.

As an administrator, Couzens was not a democrat. In fact, he did not have a systematically developed philosophy of government beyond his passion for social justice and economic equality joined with his views on scientific management.⁵⁵ Few of his principles or theories came from books. He simply wanted to serve mankind, to help make the world a better place. "The thing you have got to do," he told a group at St. Marks Church, "is the thing that is the greatest good for the greatest number."⁵⁶ Although he used the phrasing of Jeremy Bentham's "greatest happiness principle," he carefully replaced "happiness" with "good." It is unlikely that he would have espoused a rule of human conduct in which happiness served as an end in itself. He

⁵⁵Ray Tucker and Frederick R. Barkley, Sons of the Wild Jackass (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1932), p. 244.

⁵⁶Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Address, Couzens at St. Marks Church, February 11, 1920.



wished for a society of well-disciplined, hard-working, healthy humans, moderate in diet and habits. This was good.

There is another side of his character which also helps explain the reputation he gained for being driving and autocratic. In addition to his compulsion for work, he believed in an inner voice as a guide to right conduct. The News commented during the political campaign of 1918 that at the start of his career "he had no life plan but to work--to do a good job in whatever he undertook. It gave him interior satisfaction just to perform a good piece of work."⁵⁷ Four years later Couzens re-emphasized his commitment to work. He declared that work was his hobby and even though his doctor had advised a ten-day vacation on his boat, he had not decided whether to obey or to go to work and enjoy himself.⁵⁸ This compulsion for work built into his character gave him an inner-directedness which partly freed him from the influence of those about him and contributed to the reputation he had with some of his associates as insensitive and aloof.

The inner-directedness which allowed him to find personal pleasure in his work independently of social acceptance was reinforced by an inner voice which guided his actions. An instance of his reliance on conscience was

⁵⁷Detroit News, August 24, 1918.

⁵⁸The New York Times, September 17, 1922.



revealed in his efforts to help a bank associate make a tough career decision. He counseled him that "none of us look exactly through the same eyes or see things exactly the same, so the best thing to do is to follow your own conscience and trust that the other fellow will do likewise."⁵⁹ He did not tell the banker to do what would lead to the greatest good for the greatest number. He told him to do that which his inner voice counseled. But, of course, Couzens was not a theoretician.

Those who do what is dictated by the inner voice are often unwilling to allow others to do the same, especially when the dictates of inner voices conflict. Couzens was research-oriented as was the good government movement as a whole. However, once the data were in, a decision had to be made. Research provided a basis for intelligent decision-making. It did not provide the impulse for action, nor for goal setting. That came from within, in accordance with his inner voice.

When men act in the last resort on the basis of personal conscience, political compromise may be ruled out at that stage and confrontation made inevitable to the detriment of the institutions they are committed to save. Thus Couzens would often do battle rather than compromise. His opponents often thought it his cussedness.

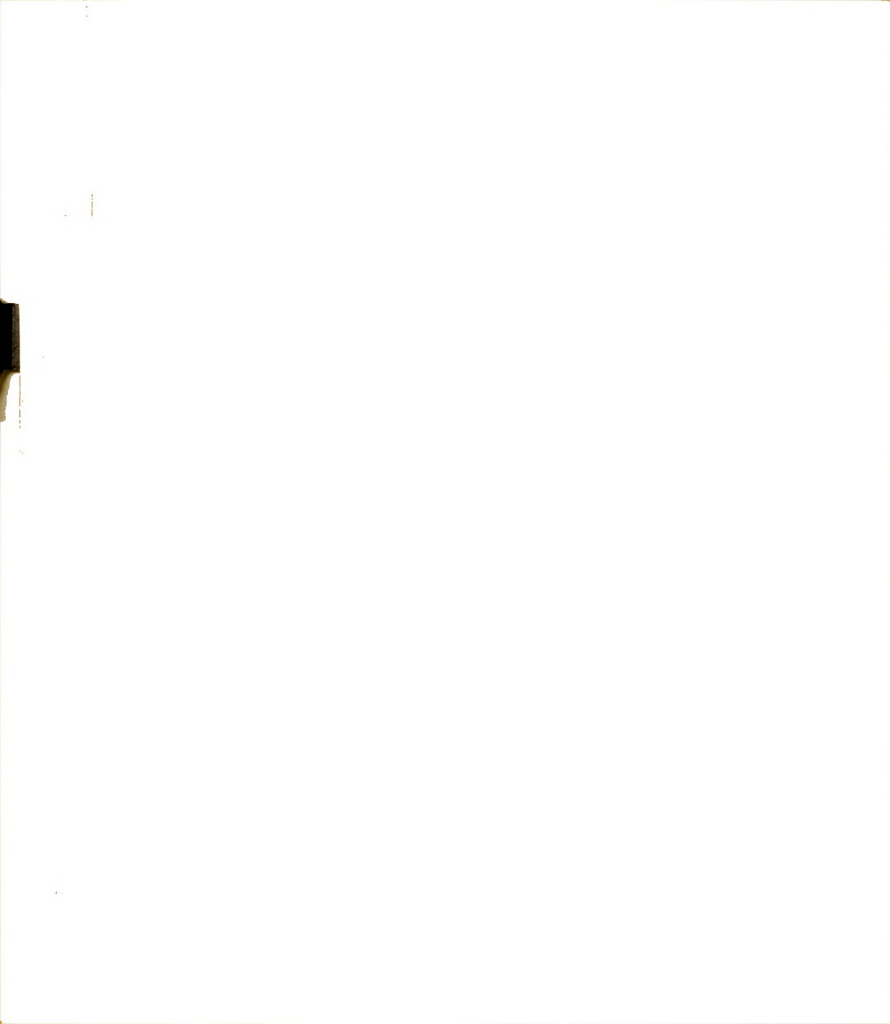
⁵⁹Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 5, Letter, Couzens to E. O. Rice, December 24, 1917.



A few days after Couzens' resignation from the office of mayor, Russell Barnes, feature writer for the News, wrote a two-part article on the Couzens administration. In large type the series began with the title "Detroit, Plus Couzens, Blazes Trail for Cities. Municipal Government, 'Conspicuous Failure' of America, is Made Honest and Aggressive in 4-year Administration."⁶⁰ However, recognition of the quality of Couzens' performance was not limited to Barnes and the Detroit News. By then even the Detroit Citizens League which had failed to recommend him in 1918 supported him. The Grand Rapids Citizens League publication, the Sentinel, reported in the November 1922, special edition, that Couzens was to speak before the annual meeting of that organization. "He is pointed out by his critics," said the Sentinel, "as the greatest mayor in the United States." After citing the ease with which he tackled hard problems, his capacity for hard work, and his brilliant discharge of duty, the Sentinel declared that "the entire world knows of the manner in which he disposed of the street railway problem in Detroit."⁶¹ Couzens had been an international figure in the industrial world; now he had become internationally known as a reform mayor.

⁶⁰Detroit News, December 11, 1922.

⁶¹Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 12, Copy of Sentinel, special edition, November, 1922, No. 24, p. 1.

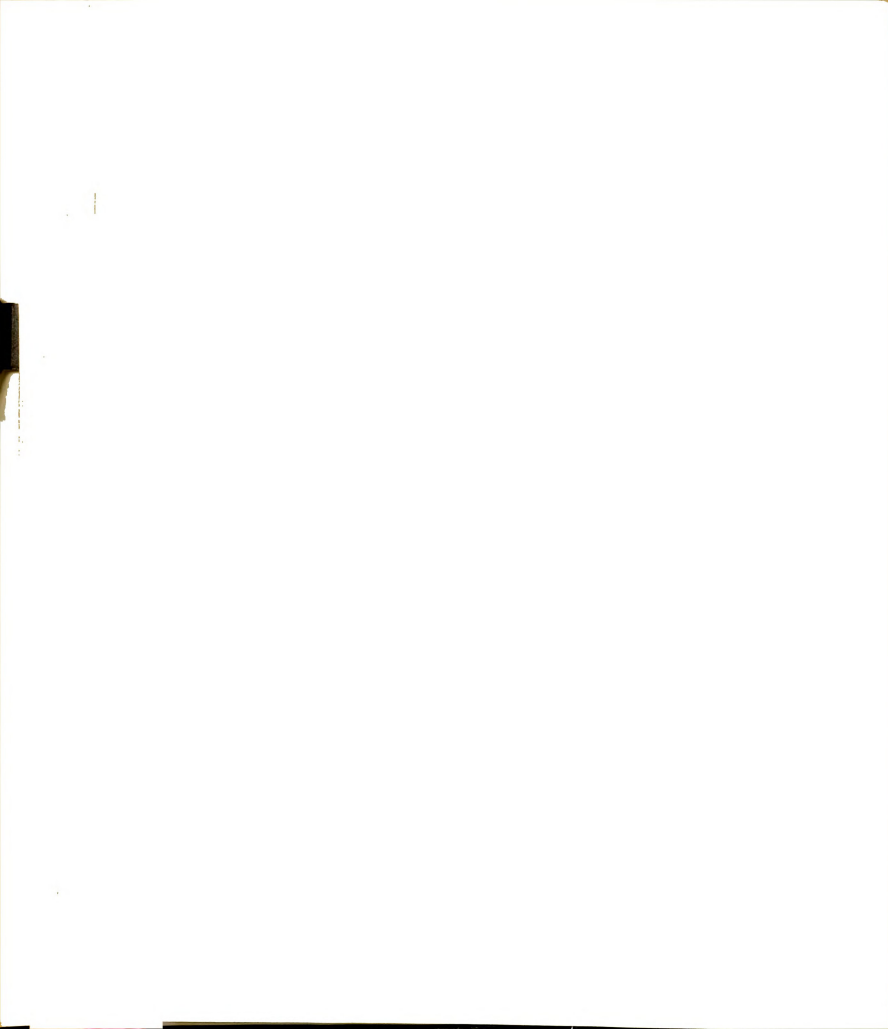


Barnes, in his analysis of the Couzens administration, raised the two questions proposed by James Bryce as tests of practical efficiency in city government. He asked of Detroit: What does it provide for the people? and, what does it cost the people? The list of improved services to the people of Detroit was over a hundred. By far the majority were services directed at the physical needs of the people or contributed to the physical growth of the city. The people of Detroit were receiving more services (Couzens counted over 200), and a better quality of services than they had received before. But it also cost them more than before.

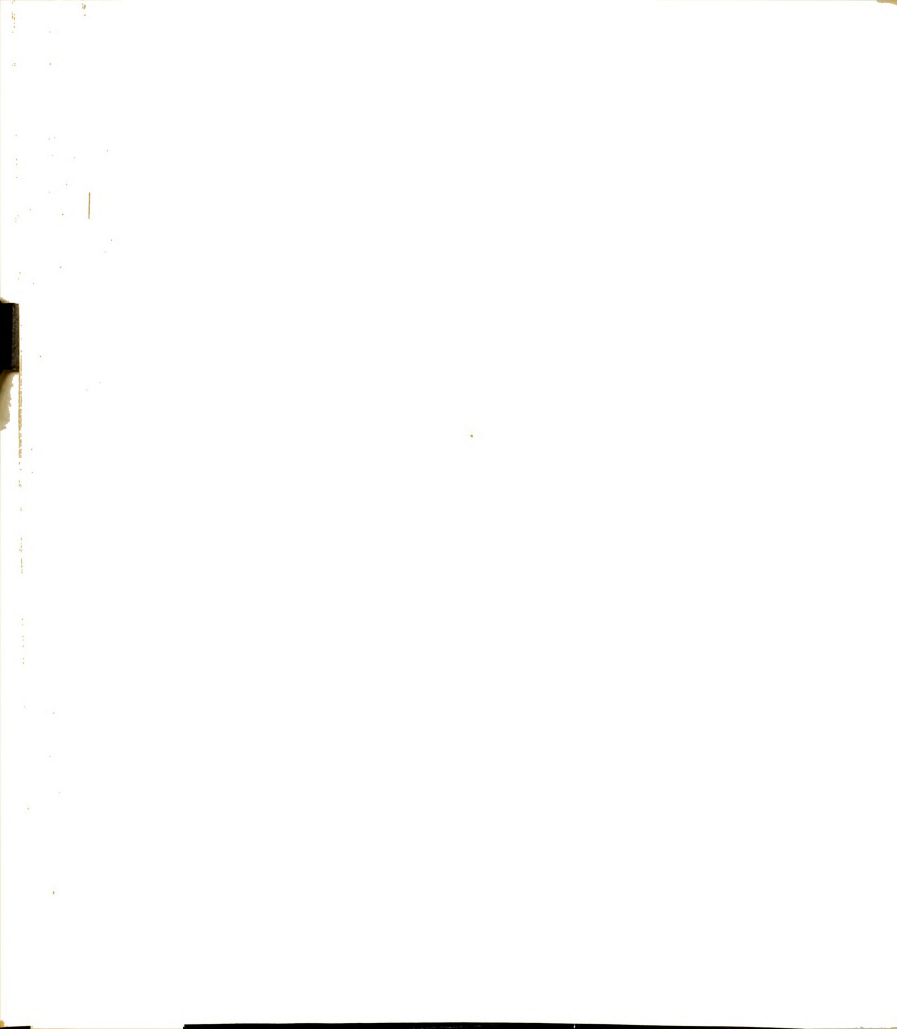
The voters of Detroit accepted over \$70,000,000 of bonded indebtedness to pay for the sewers, hospitals, water purification, bridge, parks, and street railway extension that they were convinced they needed. It was Couzens' task to present the facts to the people and then to administer carefully the resources made available to him. Barnes concluded that "the Bryce demand that the people be given adequate value for each dollar spent seems to be satisfied."⁶²

Couzens claimed to lack foresight. Almost with a disdain for those who said they understood art and literature, he said of himself that he lacked such understanding. He was said to be prosaic and unimaginative. But he did

⁶²Detroit News, December 15, 1922.



have a dream of what society should be like, and his administration and philanthropy were used to help bring the dream to reality. And above all he had no question in his mind that he was the one to lead his fellow citizens to the land he promised them.



CHAPTER IV

MONOPOLY FOR THE PEOPLE: MUNICIPALIZATION
OF THE STREET RAILWAY

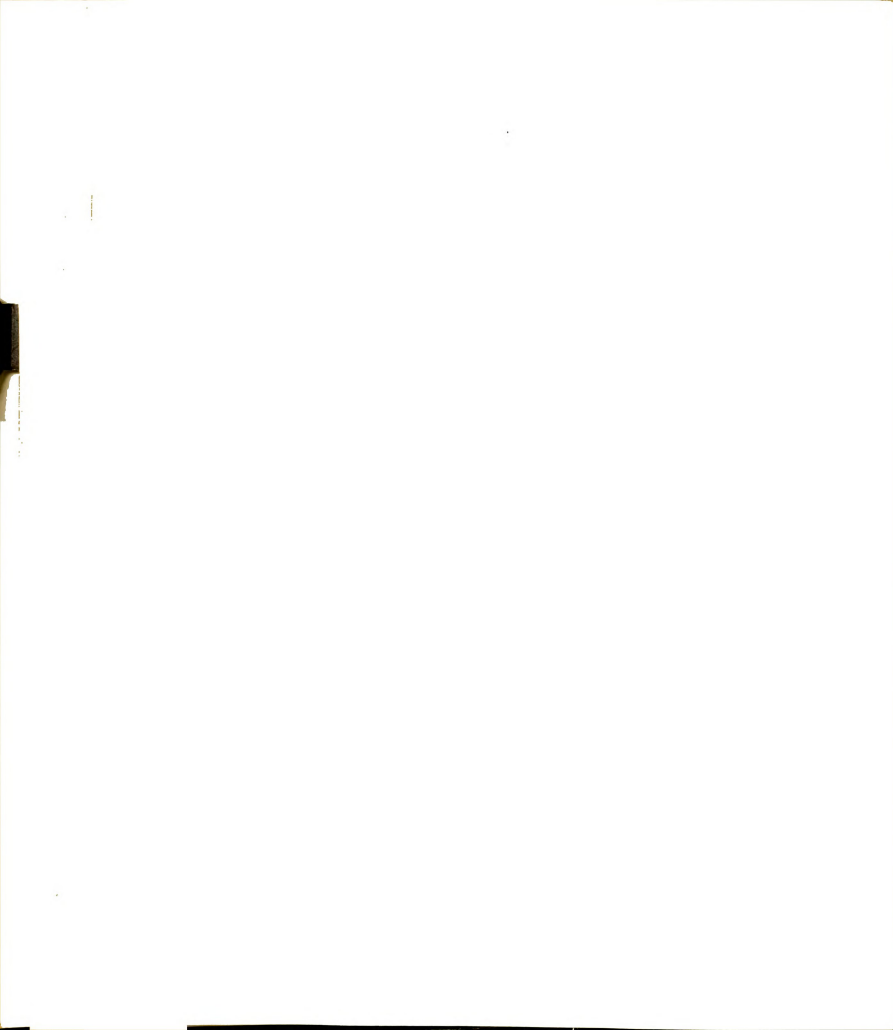
The Challenge

Two days after his inaugural address in January 1919, the Detroit News laid a challenge to Couzens in a front-page political cartoon.¹ In July 1918, Couzens had declared that municipalization of the street railway system was the paramount issue of the mayoral campaign and would be one of the major goals of his administration.² His inaugural speech had reasserted his determination to bring about municipal ownership and end the conflict which had restricted the growth of the transportation system which served Detroit.³ Now the News, which had participated so vigorously in the battle for municipal ownership in the

¹Detroit News, January 16, 1919.

²Ibid., July 9, 1918.

³Detroit Free Press, January 15, 1919; Detroit News, January 15, 1919.



role which it cast for itself as defender of the public good, wanted to see the matter settled and the resources of the community turned toward the resolution of the many other problems which the expanding metropolis had to face.⁴ In the cartoon the News asserted that the inaugural pronouncements made by Couzens were fine, but quick action should follow.

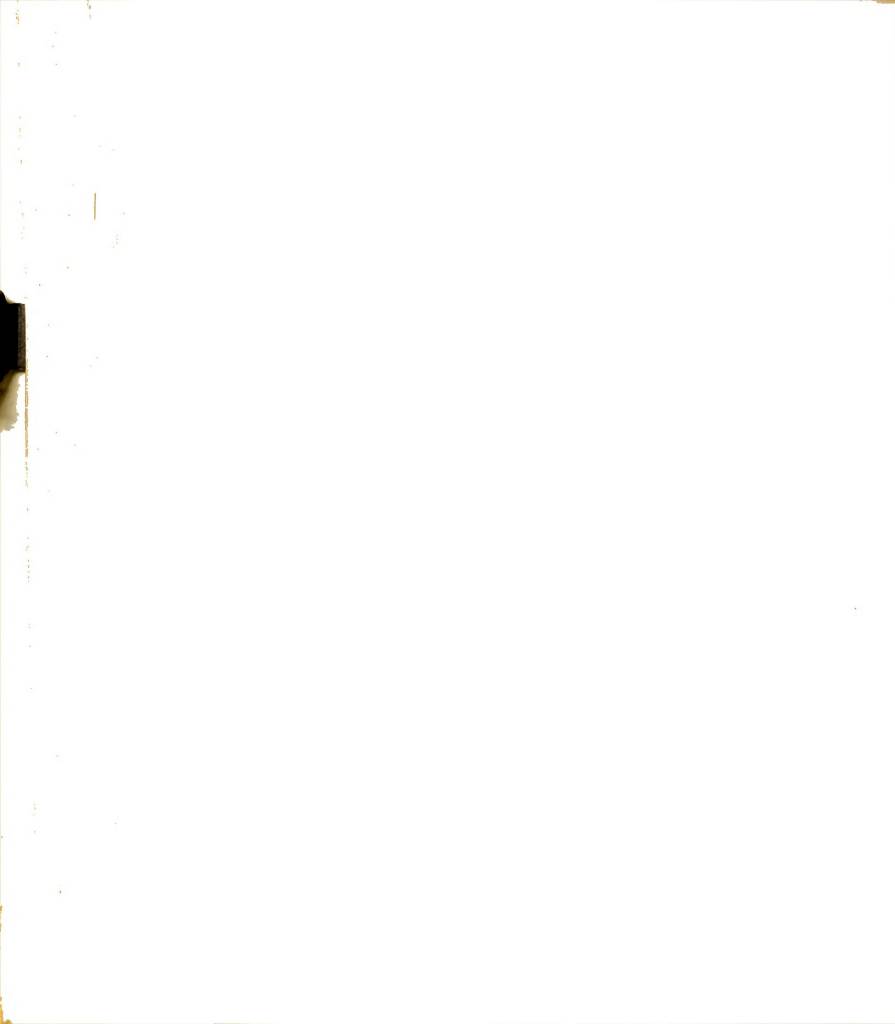
The Detroit Free Press, circulation rival with the News, was in agreement on the need to resolve the conflict. In an editorial published on January 14, 1919, the Free Press stated that service on the Detroit United Railway at that time was probably the worst in the history of Detroit. The D.U.R. had failed to cooperate in meeting the transportation needs of the community. Although the city government was 50 per cent to blame, the Free Press continued, the D.U.R. was equally to blame.⁵ Later, the same week, the Free Press criticized the D.U.R. again, and in strong terms, for its inability to handle the transportation problems of the city.⁶

The Free Press was not then nor did it become a supporter of municipal ownership. However, in the early

⁴Arthur Pound, The Only Thing Worth Finding: The Life and Legacies of George Gough Booth (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1964), pp. 201, 236-38.

⁵Detroit Free Press, January 14, 1919.

⁶Ibid., January 19, 1919.



days of the new administration, the paper supported Couzens' efforts to bring order to the chaotic transportation system immobilized by inflation, the material and manpower shortages brought on by the war, the maneuvers of political opportunists, and the profit motive which propelled its investors. "We have considerable faith in the wisdom and public spirit of the mayor and the members of the Council," the Free Press asserted, "and consequently a belief that if they take up the traction question seriously, solid good will come out of their efforts."⁷

In spite of newspaper support for settlement of the transportation crisis, and Couzens' call for community support, the forces in the city which opposed municipalization had not surrendered. They were there and would remain as determined and ingenious as ever in their opposition to the coup he felt he must bring off. In the view of the opposition, municipal ownership threatened the very core of democracy and free enterprise. For them it was not simply a political issue; it was political, social, and economic.

The management of the D.U.R. was supported in its opposition to municipal ownership by substantial Detroit citizens such as Clarence M. Burton and Henry M. Leland. Burton, a lawyer, an amateur historian, and the donor to the city of the Burton Historical Collection which Couzens

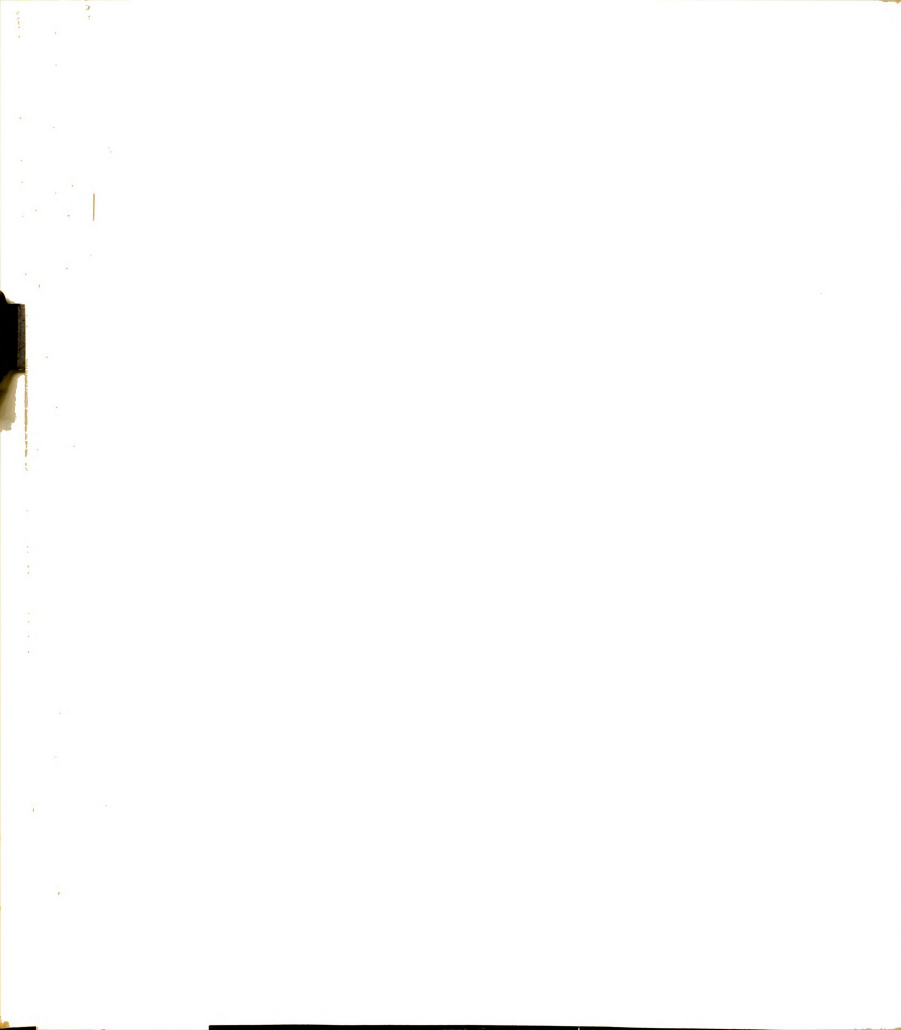
⁷Ibid., January 14, 1919.



thought was an unnecessary expense for the city, opposed municipal ownership of street railways, although not of libraries and manuscript collections. Even though he must have realized that the city was engaging in an ever increasing list of municipal services, he saw this highly publicized contest as the deciding one between Americanism and radicalism, between private property and public property.⁸ Henry M. Leland, like Burton, saw the municipal ownership contest as symbolic of the attack on one of America's most sacred institutions. Leland had come to Detroit in preference to Chicago because of its more harmonious labor market and he had fought vigorously to preserve an "open shop" in Detroit. He could not accept municipal ownership as a desirable alternative. His entrepreneurial sensitivity led him to support a fair return on the investment and protection of private property.

Among the good government groups, which found their support in men like Burton and Leland, there was now some ambivalence concerning municipal ownership as Couzens gathered his staff and supporters for his assault on the D.U.R. The Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research presented itself as a fact-finding body only and did not publicly support political action. The Detroit Citizens League which had been the principal force behind the charter reform of 1918 officially supported the charter

⁸O'Geran, pp. 270, 283.



and its municipal ownership provision without reservation and in disregard of Leland's sentiments toward municipal ownership. The Board of Commerce, like the League, had supported the charter without reservation. However, subsequent actions of the Board in the matter of municipal ownership were inconsistent with its pledge.

On March 21, 1919, Couzens released a scathing statement to the press. The Board of Commerce, to his great annoyance, had sent a delegation to Lansing to promote the passage of the Dafoe bill. This bill would authorize a state commission to set rates for public utilities and to decide whether cities should own their utility systems. To Couzens it was obviously a step backward. In his statement, Couzens recited his history of membership in and his financial support of the Board, and asked just whom the Board represented in this action.⁹ He paid for a full page advertisement in the News in which he appealed to the community for support. "Whom will you trust?," he asked. "Are you ready," he continued, "to follow and back up the men you elected to run your city's business?"¹⁰ His request was simple. As head of the corporation, he wanted to run it.

⁹Detroit News, March 21, 1919; Detroit Free Press, April 8, 1919.

¹⁰Ibid., April 3, 1919.



As new and radical as municipal ownership was conceived by its opponents, in Detroit, municipal ownership was neither new nor radical in the countries of Europe from which so many of Detroit's working class population had come. Nor was it believed to threaten the governments of the countries in which it was found.¹¹ While some Detroiters focused their attention on the socialistic implications of municipalization of the street railway system, they used services daily which they did not consider socialistic, yet which were as socialistic as ownership of the street railway system would be.

As the city had grown the city's services had increased in number and expanded in size to meet the needs of growth as well as to make available to its residents new technology applicable to the urban community. Some of the services undertaken by the city were totally new to the community, others had been the responsibility of the individual and had on occasion been provided as private enterprises. The list of those services which were initially private enterprises in Detroit and were assumed by the city as municipal services over the years would include education, water distribution, sanitation, fire and police protection, libraries, museums, and public health. Thus, while municipal ownership was being denounced as socialistic, and Couzens himself was being called a socialist,

¹¹Frederic C. Howe, European Cities at Work (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), pp. 234, 243, 253.

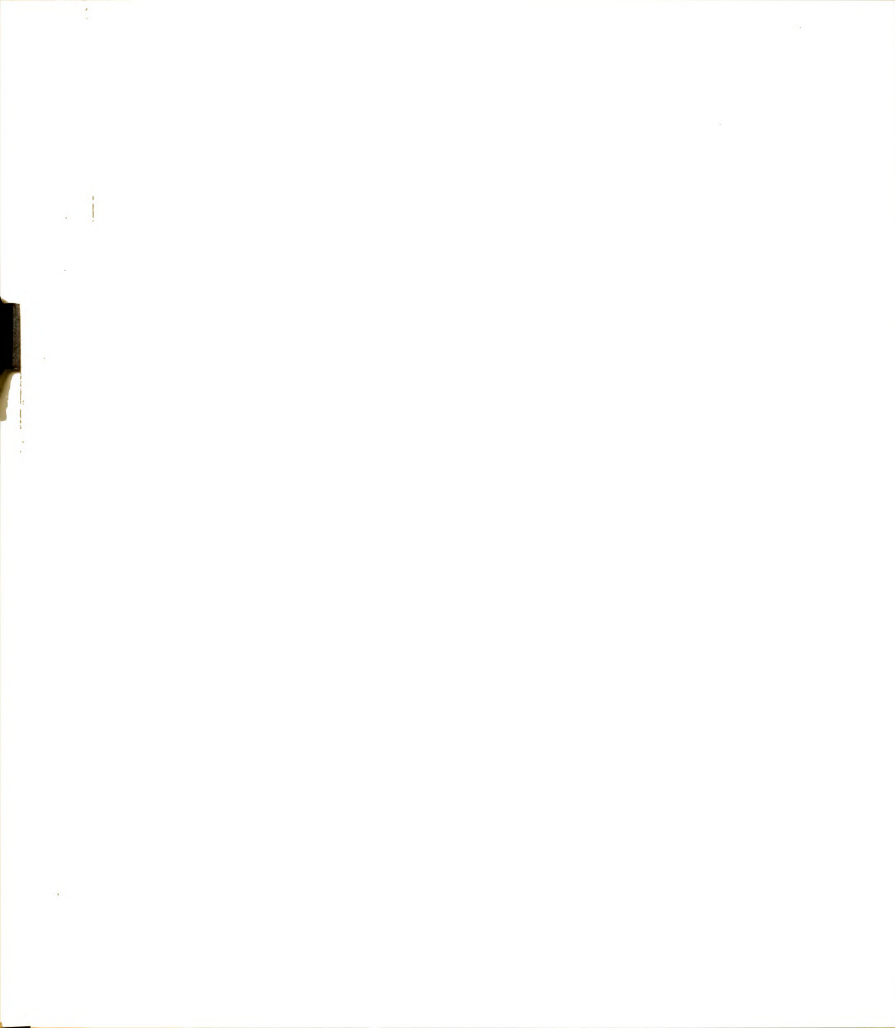


the city had taken upon itself the provision of additional services for the benefit of its residents without the dissent of those who opposed municipal ownership of streetcars on the basis that it was socialistic.

As his campaign advanced Couzens was to hear increasingly the charge of socialist made against him. He was not then nor did he ever become a socialist in the philosophical sense. He did not have well-reasoned socialistic goals. As most American municipal reformers of the period, he utilized the methods and goals of socialism in an effort to bring about the reform measures he thought essential to the efficient operation of the city.¹² Expediency rather than philosophy directed his actions.

He was clear in his position on municipalization and why he thought it was the answer to Detroit's street railway problems. If a service was a natural monopoly in the sense that the service could best be provided by one company rather than by competing companies, then that service should be provided by the community itself. Private ownership of natural monopolies such as water systems, sewerage, electricity, gas, telephone, and street railways led to practices not in the best interest of the total community, but in the pecuniary interest of the private

¹²Samuel P. Hays, Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 103.



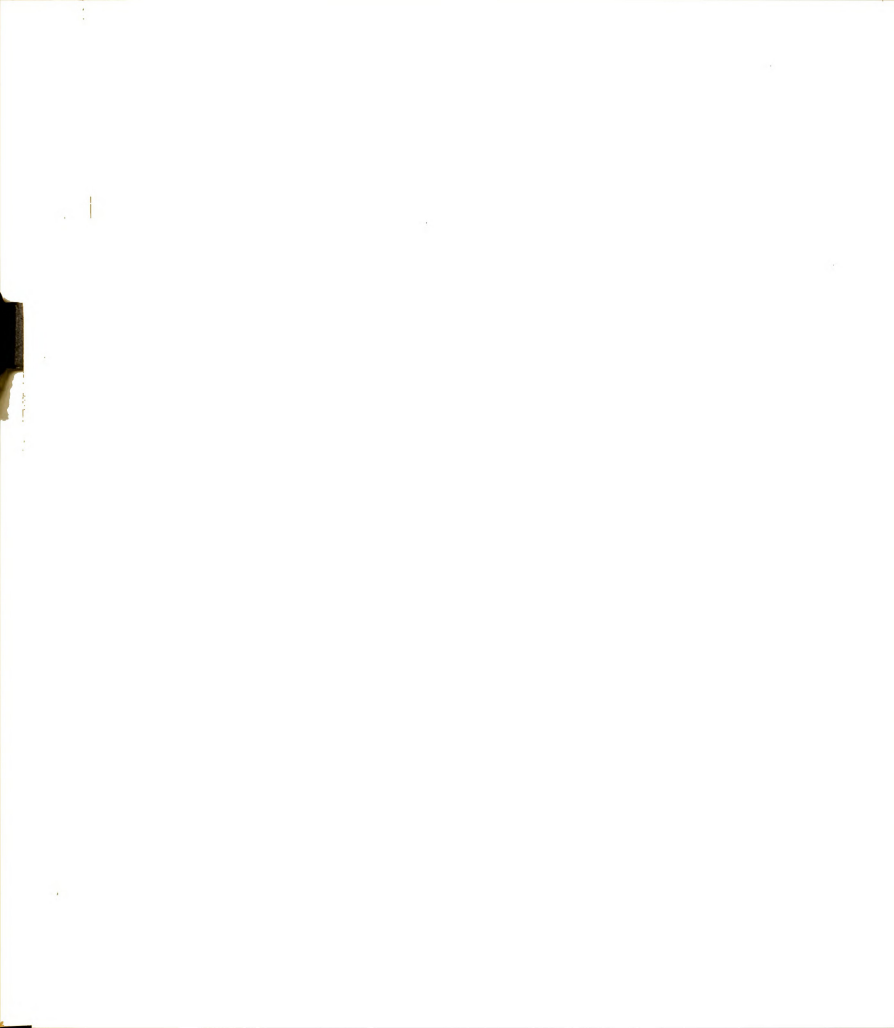
entrepreneurs.¹³ Where competition between private companies was possible and in fact existed, he did not object, for it was his belief that the public would profit in better and cheaper service.¹⁴ If there was collusion between companies, or if a single company held a monopoly over an essential municipal service which was itself a natural monopoly, then in these instances, public ownership was best. Couzens would recall the strangle-hold of the Selden patent on the automobile industry and how he and Henry Ford had stood nearly alone against it and won the right to produce automobiles in a competitive market without payment of royalties to the monopolistic Selden group.¹⁵ He promised that he would never support the municipalization of industry and commerce or any other service in which competition was practical and practiced.

During his winter 1920 campaign for passage of a proposition to authorize and empower the city of Detroit to acquire, own, maintain and operate a street railway system, and to borrow \$15,000,000 for that purpose, Couzens spoke again and again to the issue of private monopoly. He argued that the D.U.R. was a monopoly owned by foreign

¹³O'Geran, p. 96.

¹⁴Mayors Papers, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Henry A. Ward, August 16, 1922.

¹⁵William Greenleaf, Monopoly on Wheels: Henry Ford and the Selden Automobile Patent (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1961), pp. 111, 249.

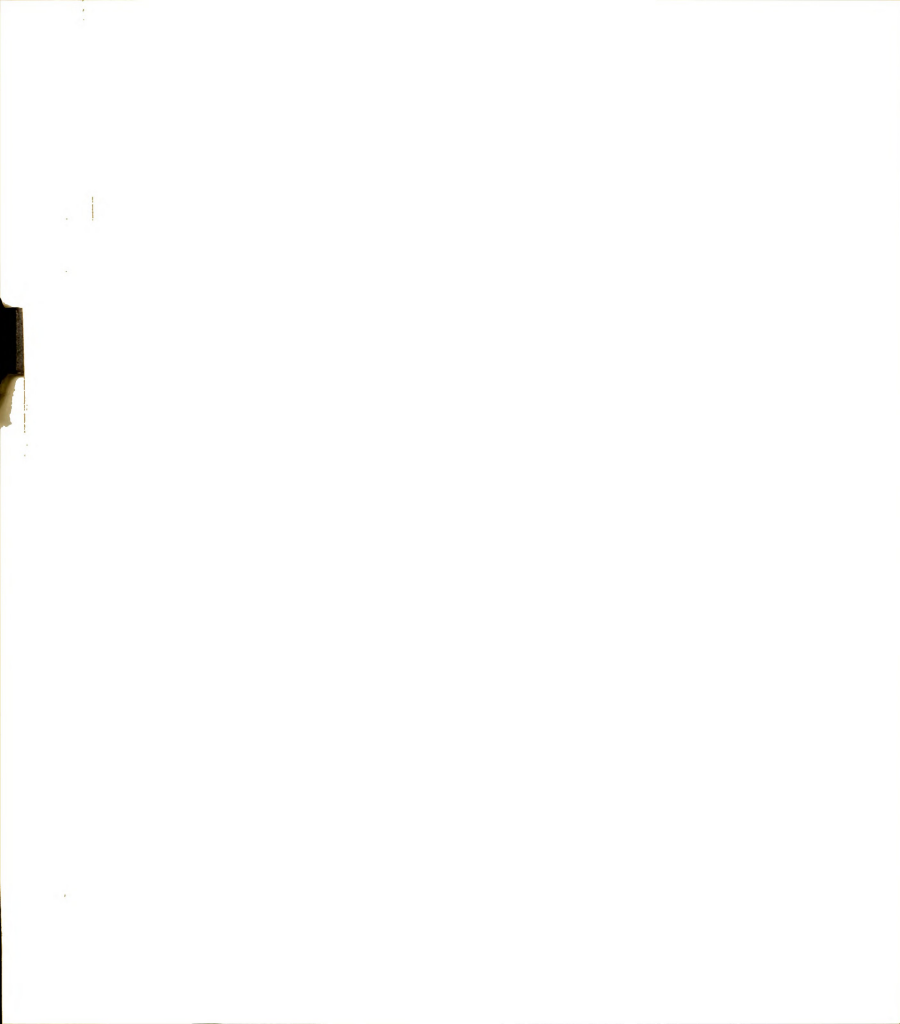


investors and controlled in New York. He believed that the sole interest of the stockholders who owned the company was to get all the profit they could. There was no interest in service. For him this was the difference between the goals of the privately owned utility company and the municipally owned utility company. The private company had profit as its goal. The public company had service as its.¹⁶

Why did the streetcar issue become so significant for Detroit? Why was it that, when municipalization was the pattern for cities in many parts of the world, so much resistance rose up to thwart the stated desire of Detroit's politicians? Why, when public lighting was municipalized in 1893, and new services were added yearly, did municipalization of the street railway system become the battleground for the anti-municipal ownership forces? Why were other private services, which appeared to be natural monopolies, such as telephone and gas service, able to survive as such?

Certain services were too large and too costly to return the profit desired by investors. Water purification and distribution, sewerage, and education were of this character. A large part of the bonded indebtedness which Detroit incurred during the Couzens administration was to provide the extension and improvement of those very services into the newer subdivisions. Then telephone service,

¹⁶Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Address, Couzens to Grand River Improvement Association, February 13, 1920.



gas service, and even residential electrical service were of a different character. These services might be extended piecemeal throughout a community without the danger that the lack of the former would entail.¹⁷ The inefficient operation of the telephone company may have caused Couzens to fume and threaten to use whatever influence he could to get the service improved before the company got a rate raise from the state of Michigan.¹⁸ However, in the daily life of the workingman the telephone was not essential. Nor, in those days of coal heat and oil lamps, did the gas company and the electric company pose serious threats to day-to-day living. Without either one or the other the worker might be inconvenienced, but life went on.

Transportation for the workingman in Detroit was an entirely different matter. In a city in which the annexation of sizable parcels of land occurred almost yearly, the extension of lines and the quality of service on existing lines were crucial to the workingman.¹⁹ Transportation to and from work was a necessity for most,

¹⁷ Sam B. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and the M.I.T. Press, 1962), p. 31.

¹⁸ Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to A. von Schlegell, general manager of the Michigan State Telephone Company, June 10, 1915.

¹⁹ Barclay Parsons and Klapp Consulting Engineers, Report on Detroit Street Railway Traffic and Proposed Subway (New York: Barclay Parsons and Klapp, 1915), pp. 7-9.



as were trips to shop, to visit friends, and even for amusement. On Sundays and holidays, workers and their families rode various lines to amusement resorts or simply rode from beginning to end and back again. Cheap, comfortable, clean, and fast transportation was more a dream for them than a reality.

In Detroit's congested streets, accidents to persons and property were common.²⁰ When accidents did occur, cars were delayed and those passengers waiting for cars and unaware of the nature of the delay became disgruntled. Their dissatisfaction multiplied several times over when streetcar personnel, in an effort to resume scheduled operations, skipped waiting passengers to pick up those farther down the line. To the workingmen of Detroit the street railway with its rumbling cars was a necessary evil and a ready target for their complaints.

Jere C. Hutchins, who served Detroit's street railway interests from 1894 until the sale of the D.U.R. to the city in 1922, saw the problem from quite a different perspective. In his view, he had worked hard over the years of his residency in Detroit to make the transit lines the best in the country. He asserted that by 1916 the D.U.R. surpassed all systems of electric railways in the

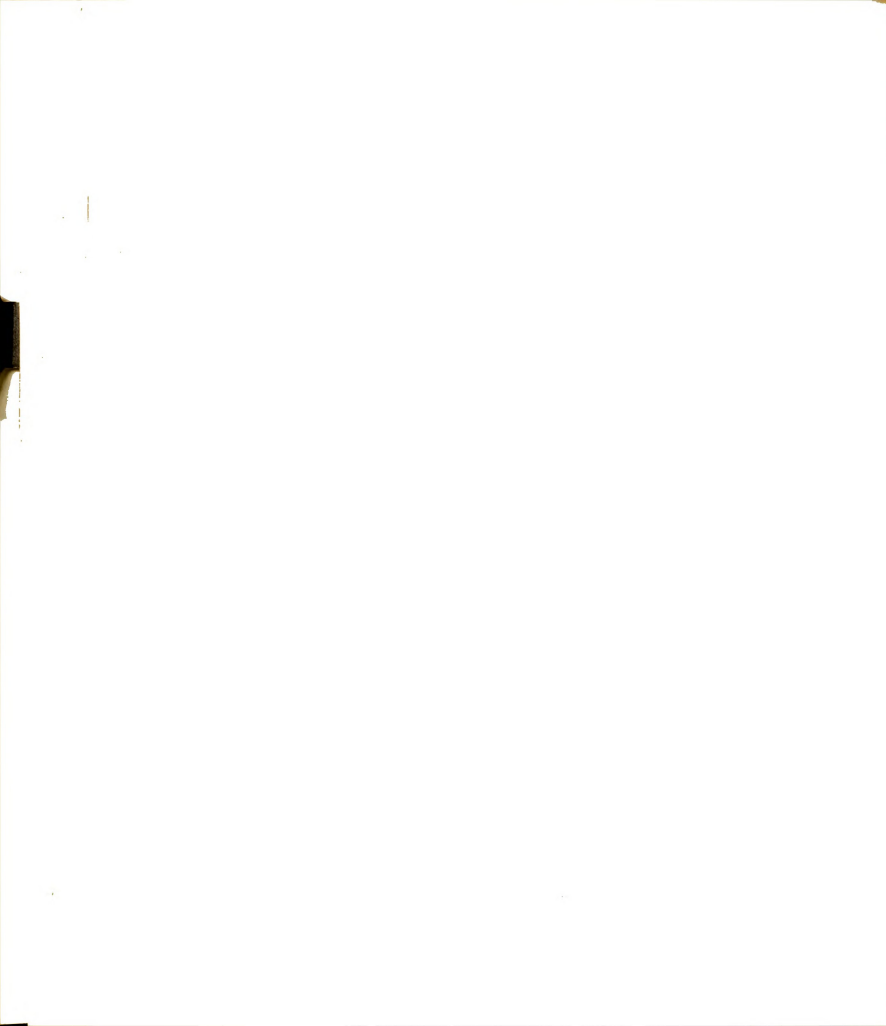
²⁰Jere C. Hutchins, Jere C. Hutchins: A Personal Story (Detroit: privately printed, 1938), pp. 182-83.



world.²¹ He believed that the streetcar was a target for unfair criticism.

As manager of the D.U.R., Hutchins had pressures upon him from several sources. His board of directors, stockholders, local politicians, local businessmen, employees, and customers had goals which sometimes conflicted and which, in any case, the resources of the company could not meet. It was true, as Couzens maintained, that the investors in the company were interested in profits more than in service. It was true that streetcar extensions were not being made to the sprawling, restless outer edges of the city as the residents and realty investors would have them. The latter's desire for expansion of street railway service into sparsely populated (hence unprofitable to the street railway company) areas was obviously in conflict with the interests of the investors in the street railway company. It was true that the maintenance, improvement, and expansion of trackage, equipment, and service would provide more rapid, convenient and comfortable service. It was true that the expenditure of the sizable amount of money to do these things would necessitate safeguards to the investors such as franchises, or favorable purchase agreements, and increased revenue.

²¹Ibid., pp. 256-58.



To the politicians who depended on the street railway system for an issue, to the workingmen who depended on the street railway system for service, to the real estate promoters who depended on the street railway system to open new subdivisions, and to the Detroit News which used the street railway issue as a popular cause to champion, the upgrading of service was desirable, but not the binding agreement or increased revenue. To the investor in the street railway system, the former was contingent upon the latter. It was true that the employees of the street railway system in Detroit were prone to strike for improvement in their pay, house, and working conditions. It was true that for the most part the D.U.R. was tied in 1919 to the same five-cent fare that had been granted when the Detroit City Railway was incorporated in 1863.²² This was the case when the price inflation in Detroit between 1916 and 1920 alone shows that bituminous coal had increased 188 per cent in cost, anthracite coal 80 per cent, and labor 100 per cent.²³ Indeed, the conflicts in interest for the D.U.R. and the city were numerous.

When Hutchins moved up from president of the D.U.R. to chairman of the board in 1916, he asserted that his

²²O'Geran, pp. 21, 29, 309.

²³"The Changing Value of a Municipal Dollar," National Municipal Review, IX (1920), 800.



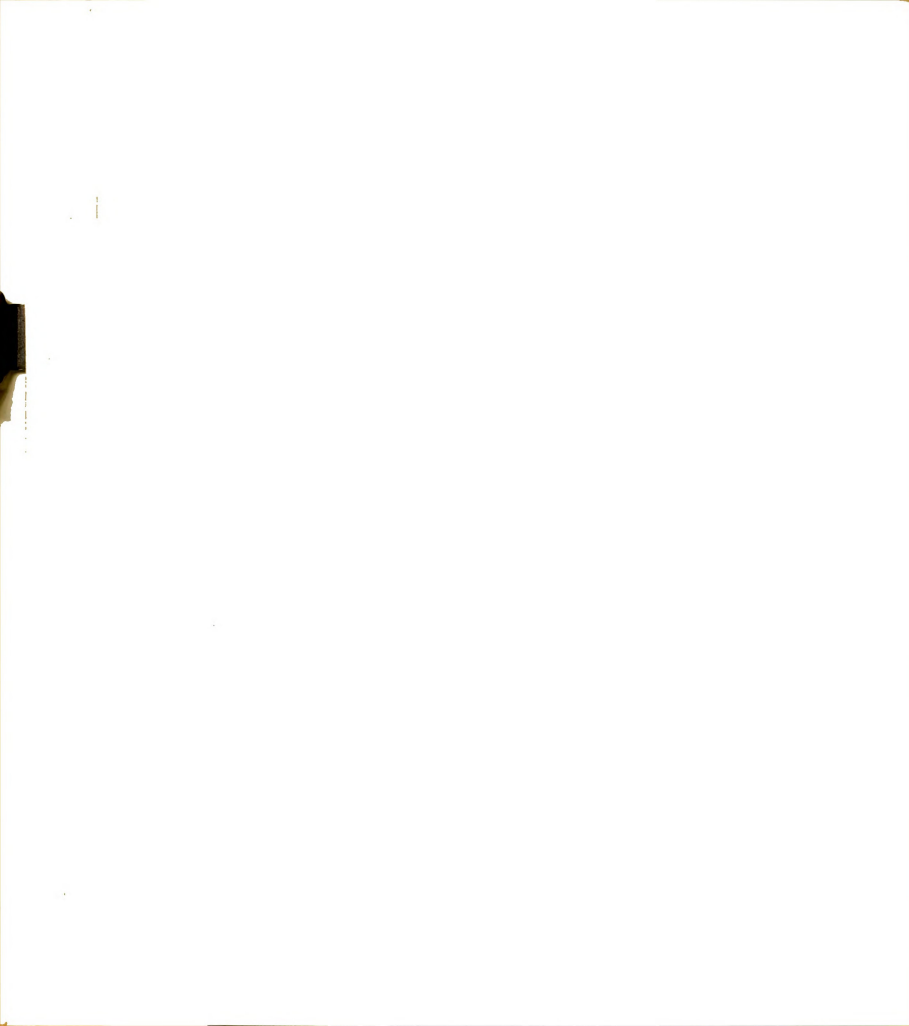
loyalty had been to the company and to the community. He stated that "the promotion of the company's interests, as being identical with the interests of the great public we serve, has in truth been the chief aim of my waking hours and often the subject of my dreams at night."²⁴ In that day of the dying private municipal street railway system in Detroit, Hutchins' assertion that the private and public interests were the same was more a dream than a perception of the facts.

The municipal ownership issue in Detroit, as I have tried to suggest, was complex. The needs of the growing city, the historical precedents, the goals of several different interest groups, and the conflict of philosophical positions were enmeshed in a thirty-year record of ambiguity. The issue had led to gross and debilitating animosities. For the good of all concerned, whatever the decision, a decision had to be made.

How the Challenge Was Met

In January 1919, when Couzens took up the challenge to break the impasse between the city and the transit company and move to meet the transportation needs of Detroit, he was not unprepared. He had had a long acquaintance with street railway problems beginning during the years he had served as a Ford manager and had been concerned about the

²⁴Hutchins, p. 20.



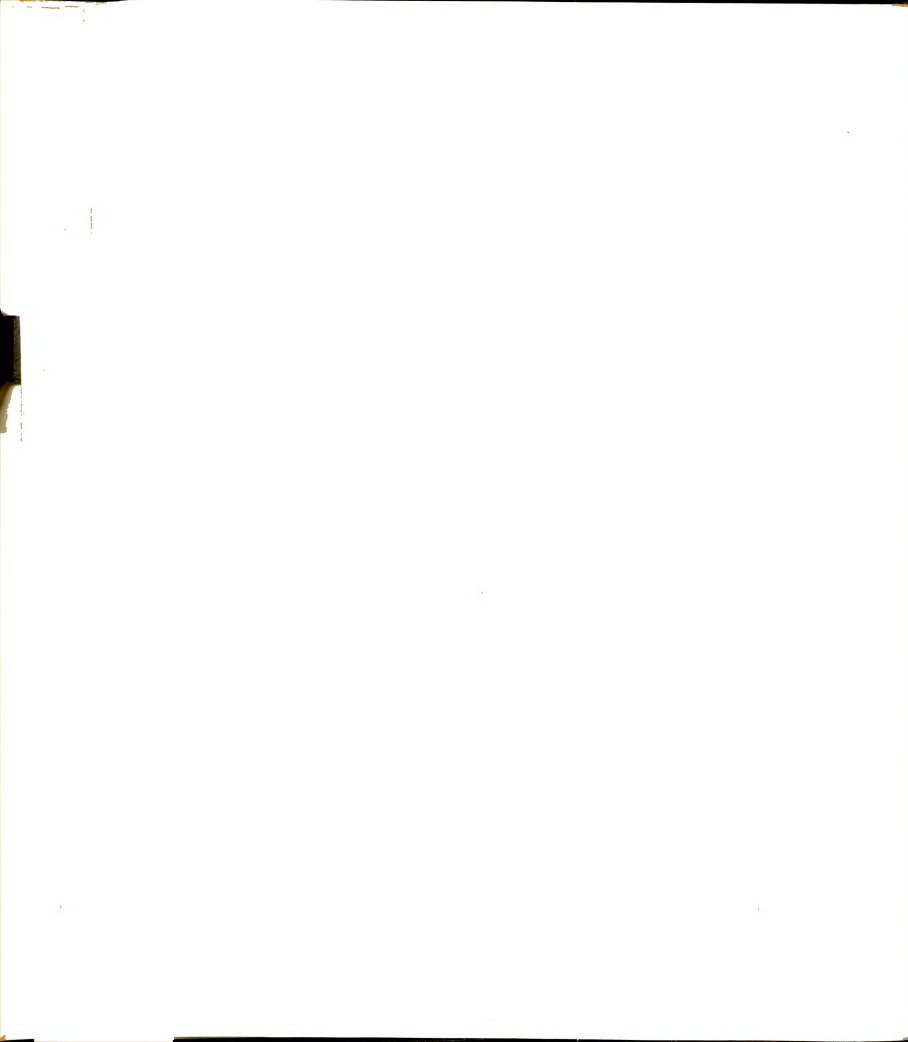
flow of workers to and from his plants, through the several years he had served as a member of the street railway commission.

His service on the street railway commission began in 1913. In April of that year, the voters of Detroit authorized a charter commission to change Detroit's charter "to legalize the proposed municipal ownership of the street railway." This commission created a street railway commission with appointive powers resting with the mayor. In late July 1913, Mayor Marx presented to the common council for its approval the names of the men he had appointed to the newly created street railway commission. The men were: James Couzens; John F. Dodge, industrialist; William D. Mahon, head of the street railway union; and Jay G. Hayden, Detroit News reporter, secretary of the commission. These men, whose appointments were ratified by the council, had then as their charge the creation of a municipally owned and operated transit system.²⁵ This charge was fully incorporated into the reform charter of 1918.²⁶

When Couzens accepted the appointment by Mayor Marx, it was an opportunity for him to get involved in the political life of Detroit and he had seized it quickly. As

²⁵O'Geran, pp. 274-75; George B. Catlin, The Story of Detroit (Detroit: Detroit News, 1923), pp. 632-33.

²⁶Charter of the City of Detroit, 1918, Title VV, Chapter XIII; Delos F. Wilcox, Analysis of the Electric Railway Problem (New York: Privately printed, 1921), pp. 310-11.



president of the Board of Commerce, he had been involved in the civic and economic issues that concerned businessmen, but he had wanted something more. He wanted to accomplish something worthwhile for the people of Detroit.²⁷ He thought that membership on the commission which had been issued a mandate by the voters to oversee the municipalization of the street railway system was a way in which he could render a real public service.

Upon acceptance of the appointment to the street railway commission in 1913, Couzens expressed his view of the role of the commission. "The commission," he asserted, "will get down to work as soon as organized and will push forward as rapidly as possible toward municipal ownership."²⁸ The April 1913, election results which showed 80 per cent of the vote in favor of the purchase and operation of a street railway, were a mandate for positive action.²⁹ During the period he served on the street railway commission, from July 1913, until early fall 1916, when he resigned to accept the office of police commissioner, Couzens pressed to carry out the mandate. The commission failed to make progress against the D.U.R. Both sides used

²⁷ Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, Couzens to Marx, October 28, 1915.

²⁸ O'Geran, p. 274.

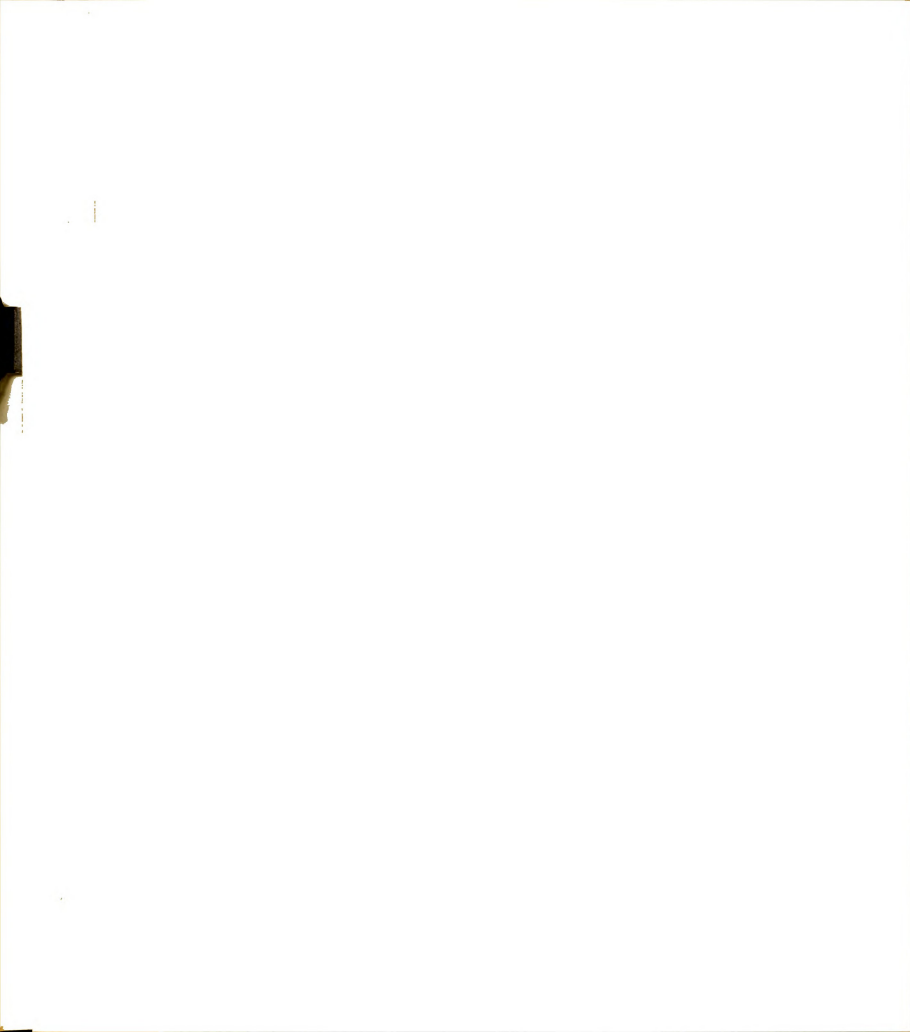
²⁹ "Direct Legislation in Detroit, 1910-1925," Public Business, III (June 12, 1925), 234.



every legal and propaganda device conceivable to further their own ends. Couzens would learn that the D.U.R. and its supporters were as resourceful and crafty as its opponents. The failure of those years would rankle Couzens and stiffen his determination to see it through once and for all. He would not come up with anything new as he laid out his strategy, but he would persist with a passion year in and year out, meeting speeches for the D.U.R. with speeches against the D.U.R., meeting litigation with litigation.

In November 1915, the electorate in Detroit was asked to accept the commission's proposal to purchase the street railway system, one in which Couzens had a major hand. No purchase price had been established by either the company or the commission. The cost to the city was to be determined by the circuit judges of Wayne County sitting as court of equity. The opposition had had a field day with this "pig-in-a-poke" plan. Sixty per cent of the vote cast was required for a victory by the commission. The proposal was defeated 32,514 yes votes to 35,676 no votes.³⁰ Thus ended Couzens' efforts as a commissioner to bring about municipal ownership. The following year, he would resign from the street railway commission when he accepted Marx's appointment as police commissioner.

³⁰O'Geran, pp. 274-89; "Direct Legislation in Detroit, 1910-1925," Public Business, III (June 12, 1925), 236.

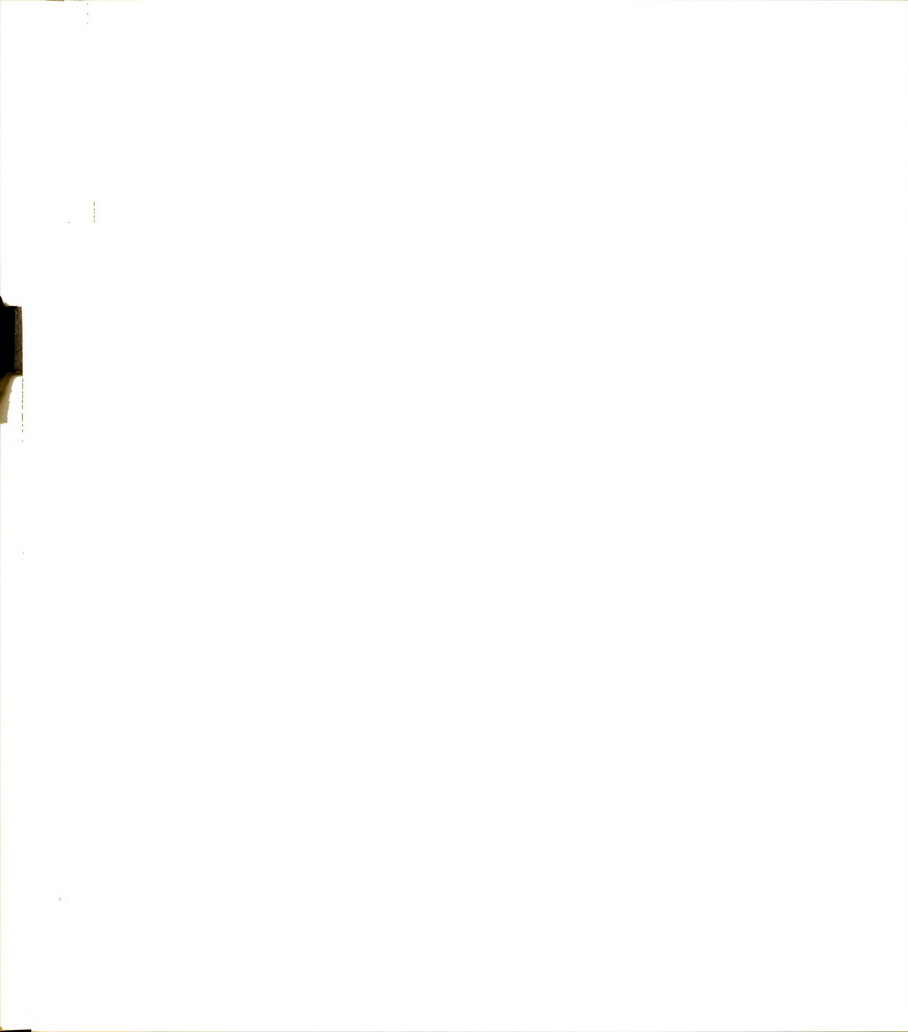


In June 1918, prior to Couzens' declaration for the mayoralty, Michigan's Attorney General Alexander J. Groesbeck made public in board outline a plan for bringing about municipal ownership of the street railway system. It was strikingly similar to the successful campaign which Couzens would conduct once he assumed office. It was an action plan such as appealed to these two men of action. Groesbeck observed that practically nothing had been done in the last ten years to bring about municipal ownership of the street railway lines. He asserted that the different administrations had not driven a spike, laid a rail, or strung a wire. He counseled that now that the city was master of the situation, it should proceed as soon as possible to build a subway and the necessary connecting lines. Then, he added, "when it is clearly understood the city is going ahead to build its own system the problem will be solved."³¹ Couzens would follow a plan similar to Groesbeck's as he moved to meet the transportation problem.³²

The street railway commission appointed by Couzens after his mayoral election was composed of Francis C. McMath of the American Bridge Company; Col. Sidney D. Waldon, formerly a vice president of the Packard Motor

³¹Detroit News, June 13, 1918.

³²Ibid., July 27, 1918.



Company and the Cadillac Motor Company; and Abner Larned, a manufacturer, and a long-time supporter of Couzens. Edward T. Fitzgerald, Mayor Marx's former secretary, who served as a political adviser to Couzens, was appointed secretary.³³ Early in February 1919, the commission joined Couzens and officials of the D.U.R. in preparation for presenting a purchase proposition to the electorate in April. He had previously exacted from D.U.R. president F. W. Brooks the agreement to sell, if an acceptable price could be decided on.³⁴ With his unsuccessful effort, in 1915, to bring about municipal ownership to guide him as mayor, Couzens planned to determine a purchase price agreeable to both the D.U.R. and the street railway commission before seeking voter approval. After offers and counter offers, the purchase price of \$31,500,000 was agreed to.³⁵

The Municipal Ownership League, whose stated purpose was to bring about municipal ownership, once more, as in 1915, opposed the plan supported by Couzens in the spring of 1919. In the name of municipal ownership the League campaigned actively against it. The cry was that

³³Detroit Times, January 21, 1919.

³⁴O'Geran, p. 291.

³⁵Edward T. Fitzgerald, "The Fate of the Five-Cent Fare," National Municipal Review, VIII (November, 1919), 676.



the purchase price was exorbitant.³⁶ The Board of Commerce, which did not support the plan, had become involved in lobbying for the Dafoe bill which favored state control of utility rates and municipal ownership.³⁷ Although Henry Ford had personally supported the commission's plan in 1915, his disapproval of the 1919 plan was seen in the public actions of his lieutenant, Charles E. Sorenson. Sorenson stated to the press that Ford was developing a gasoline streetcar that would replace electric cars; purchase of the street railway would work only to the benefit of its stockholders. Couzens responded that Sorenson was trying to kill the purchase plan for the benefit of the D.U.R.³⁸ Sorenson's statements, at that critical time, on the feasibility of the gasoline streetcar have not been explained. It may have been that Ford, who had been defeated by Truman Newberry in the race for the United States Senate in November 1918, was piqued at Couzens' success. Whatever the motivation behind the attack, it caught Couzens unawares and it hurt his campaign effort.³⁹ After this attack, Couzens always added to his plans the

³⁶O'Geran, pp. 302-05.

³⁷Detroit Free Press, April 8, 1919.

³⁸Detroit News, April 6, 1919.

³⁹Barnard, p. 127.



statement that he would use the gasoline streetcar, if it were to become available. The gasoline streetcar never went into production at the Ford plant.⁴⁰

While the Free Press had encouraged Couzens as mayor to move rapidly to deal with the transportation problems, it opposed the purchase plan he presented. It attributed lack of community support for the proposal to the poor handling of the steam railways, as well as the telephone and telegraph networks, by the Federal government during the war.⁴¹ In its editorial pages, it argued that those who were fighting against the purchase plan were moved by the "sincerest solicitude for the welfare of Detroit." Fare increases under municipal ownership were inevitable, the paper asserted, but the supporters of the purchase plan would not admit it.⁴²

George B. Catlin of the Detroit News wrote that the price which Couzens had agreed to pay the D.U.R. was recognized at the time as far in excess of the actual value. However, the sum was agreed to as acceptable, if only to end the impasse. The voters thought otherwise and rejected the plan 70,471 negative votes to 63,882. A 60 per cent yes vote was required for approval.⁴³

⁴⁰Fitzgerald, p. 678.

⁴¹Detroit Free Press, April 3, 1919.

⁴²Ibid., April 7, 1919.

⁴³Catlin, p. 633; Detroit News, April 8, 1919;

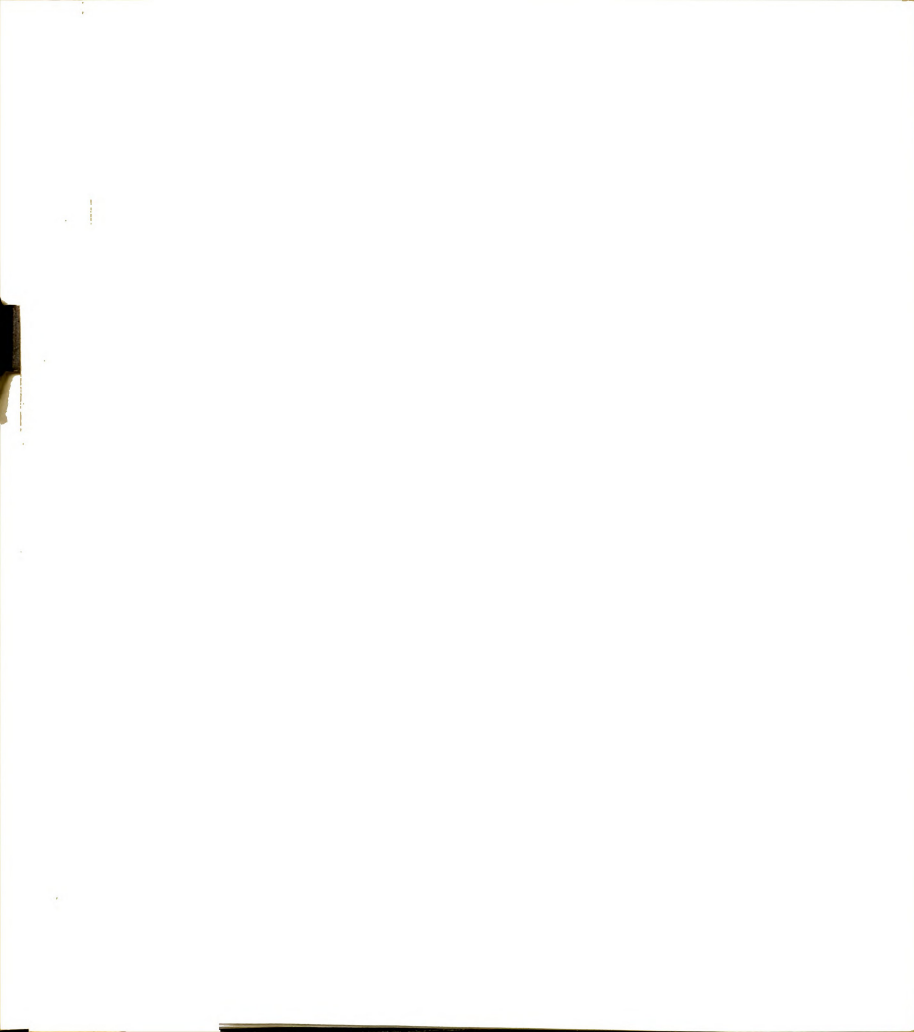


Couzens had now been defeated twice in attempts at outright purchase of the D.U.R. However, with the determination which characterized his career, he laid plans anew. The two unsuccessful purchase plans had provided strong arguments against their adoption. The so-called "pig-in-the-poke" plan of 1915 set no purchase price and was, for this reason, vulnerable to suggestions of failure to protect the public treasury. The second plan allowed the expenditure of a sum recognized to be in excess of the valuation of the D.U.R. property to be purchased. This plan was vulnerable to the charge that public funds were being recklessly expended for an overpriced property. Simply as a way of disposing of the D.U.R. and getting on with the resolution of Detroit's transportation problems, the plan was not acceptable. Couzens' next attempt would circumvent the concept of purchasing D.U.R. equipment and trackage; he proposed to construct a competing line. This time his plan was in no way dependent on dealing with the D.U.R.⁴⁴

During the year between the defeat of his purchase plan at the polls in April 1919 and submission of his new plan for construction of a competing line to the voters in April 1920, Couzens devoted many hours to the development

The New York Times, April 9, 1919; "Direct Legislation in Detroit, 1910-1925," Public Business, III (June 12, 1925), 237.

⁴⁴The New York Times, January 7, 1920.

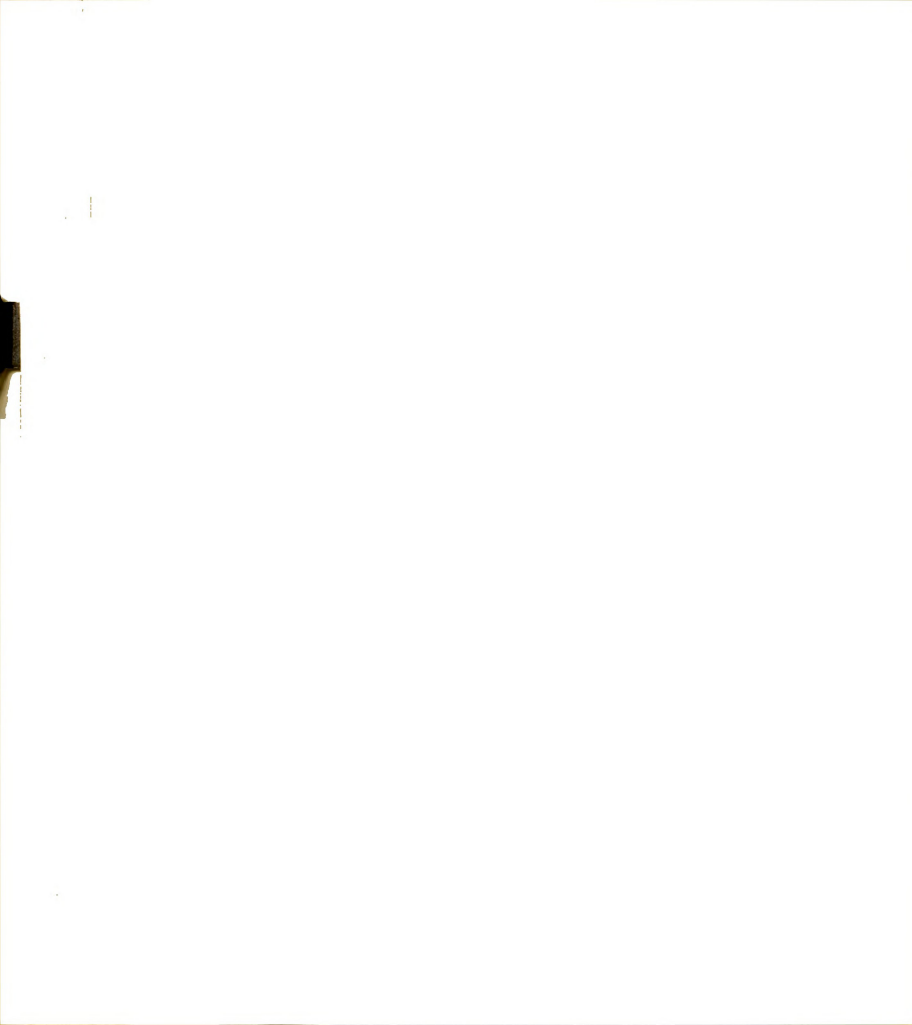


of the plan and its presentation to the public. He closed the door completely to any plan which required cooperation with the D.U.R. He had come to believe that all efforts at cooperation were doomed to failure, for either the company, or other enemies of municipal ownership, would interpret to the voters his attempts at cooperation as evidence of political corruption; this in order to discredit and possibly defeat municipal ownership.

When John C. Lodge, president of the common council, a friend of the business community and himself a businessman, made public a plan which provided for a cooperative arrangement with the D.U.R., Couzens was vehemently opposed to it. He accused Lodge of surrendering to the street railway company. Lodge's immediate response was to call Couzens "a liar and a dirty cur." The two were barely separated before blows were exchanged.⁴⁵

In fall 1919, a split between Couzens and his hand-picked street railway commission on the issue of cooperation with the D.U.R. was made public. The commission had come out in support of a service-at-cost plan which would allow the street railway company to operate the lines and receive a guaranteed return on its service. Again Couzens sensed a trap to ensnare his plan for municipal ownership.

⁴⁵Detroit News, June 21, 1919, June 25, 1919.



He found himself in the position of fighting his own commission.⁴⁶

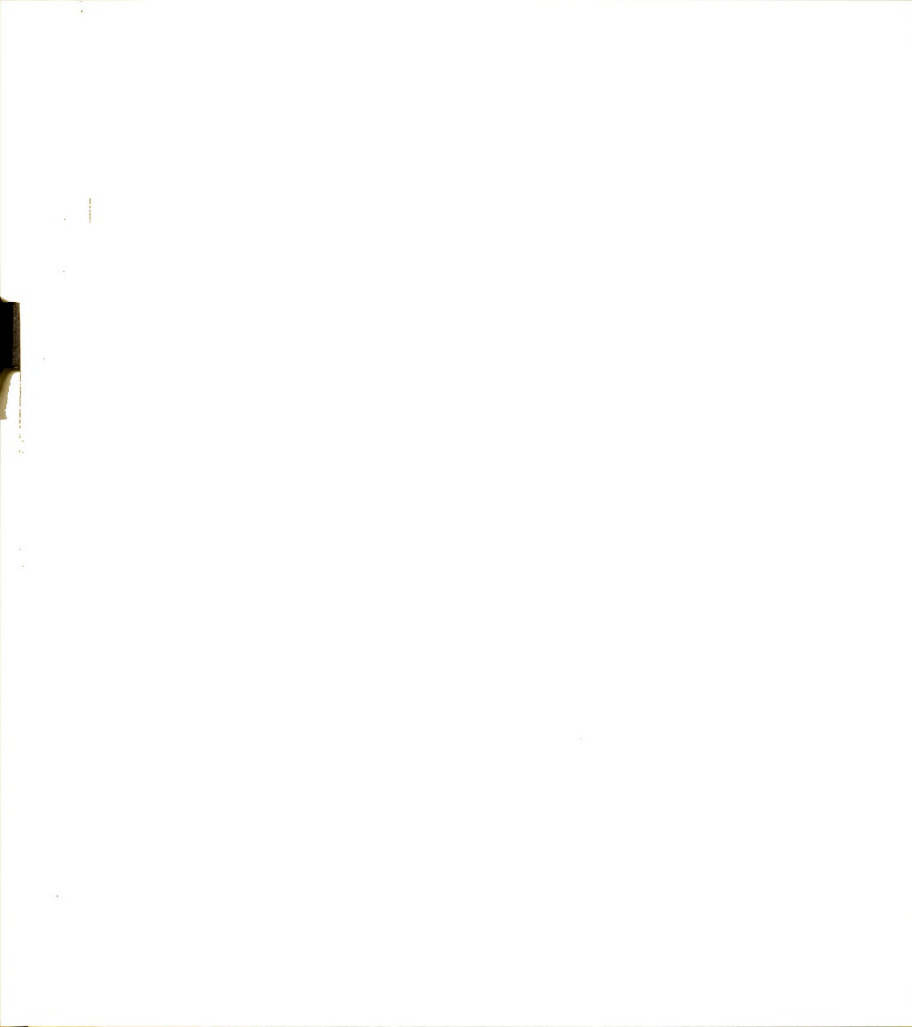
When the two factions could not reconcile their differences, Couzens accepted the resignation of the commission. On January 14, 1920, the appointment of a new commission was made public. The new members were: Attorney Ralph Wilkerson, chairman; G. O. Ellis; and William B. Mayo. Mayo, chief engineer at the Ford Motor Company, was a key member. Mayo's appointment indicated a change of relations between Henry Ford and Couzens which would be important to his plans for municipal ownership.⁴⁷

Harry Barnard noted in his biography that several months after the April 1919 election defeat, Couzens made a truce with Henry Ford. He and all holders of Ford Motor Company stock were approached by Ford agents and came to an agreement with Ford, allowing Ford to purchase all outstanding shares of Ford stock. As the major stockholder in the company, aside from Ford, his willingness to sell was crucial in and of itself, but it also influenced the other stockholders. Following his purchase of the stock, Ford abandoned the idea of producing a gasoline-engined street-car and came out in support of Couzens' plan for municipal ownership.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Detroit Free Press, November 5, 1919; Detroit News, November 11-17, 1919.

⁴⁷Ibid., January 14, 1920.

⁴⁸Barnard, p. 130; Keith Sward, The Legend of



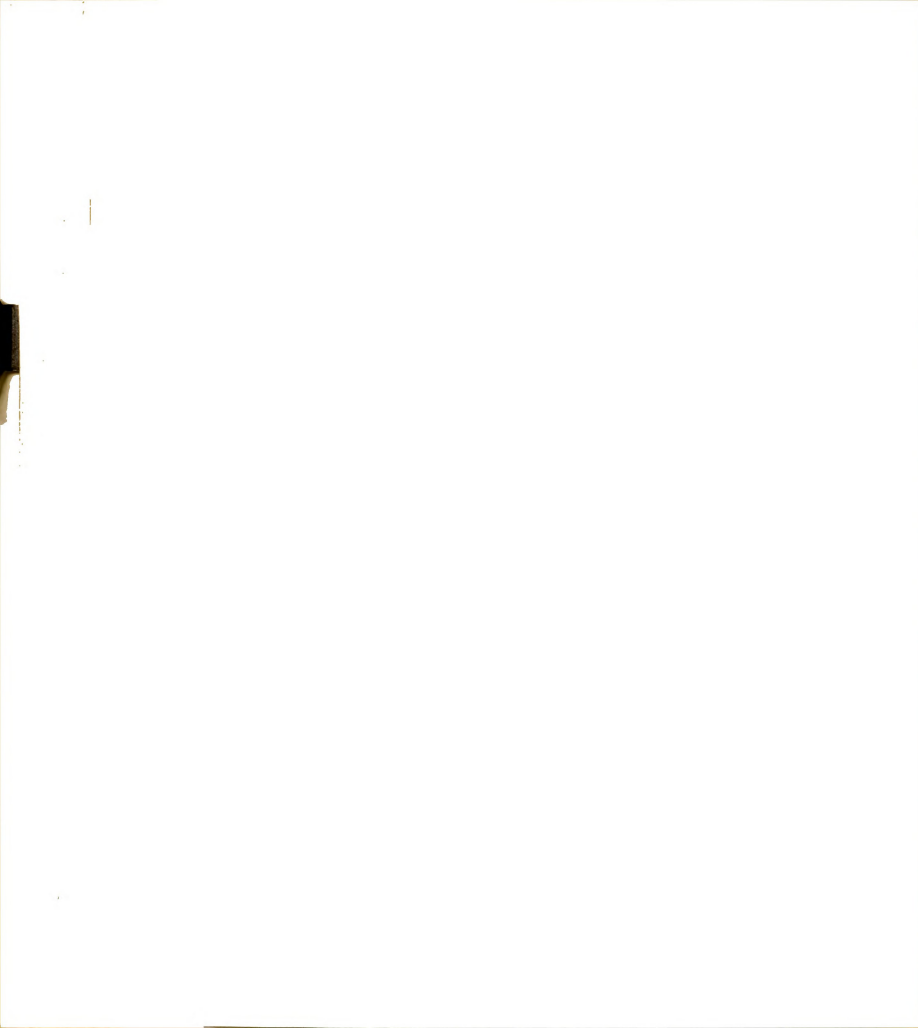
Making peace with Ford was vital to Couzens' program. Important, too, was the campaign which he conducted throughout the community to win acceptance of his plan and to put at rest the suspicions of the business community that he was in truth a socialist seeking to over-throw free enterprise.

In February 1920, Couzens spoke to the Grand River Improvement Association on his plan for municipal ownership of the street railway system. To this group of small businessmen, he offered assurance that he was not a socialist and that his goals would in no way jeopardize the dry goods stores, the grocery stores, and the butcher shops which they owned. Theirs were private rather than public businesses. "There is," he said, "a distinct difference between a monopoly granted by the people themselves and private industry, a very definite difference." Then, once again, as he had done so many times before and after, he stated that if it was proper for one organization to operate a particular service, and if it was proper for that service to be a monopoly, then the public should own it.⁴⁹

Couzens' efforts were rewarded with victory at the polls in April 1920. For the first time the city was

Henry Ford (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1948), pp. 73-74; Allan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), pp. 106-11.

⁴⁹Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Address, Couzens to Grand River Improvement Association, February 13, 1920.



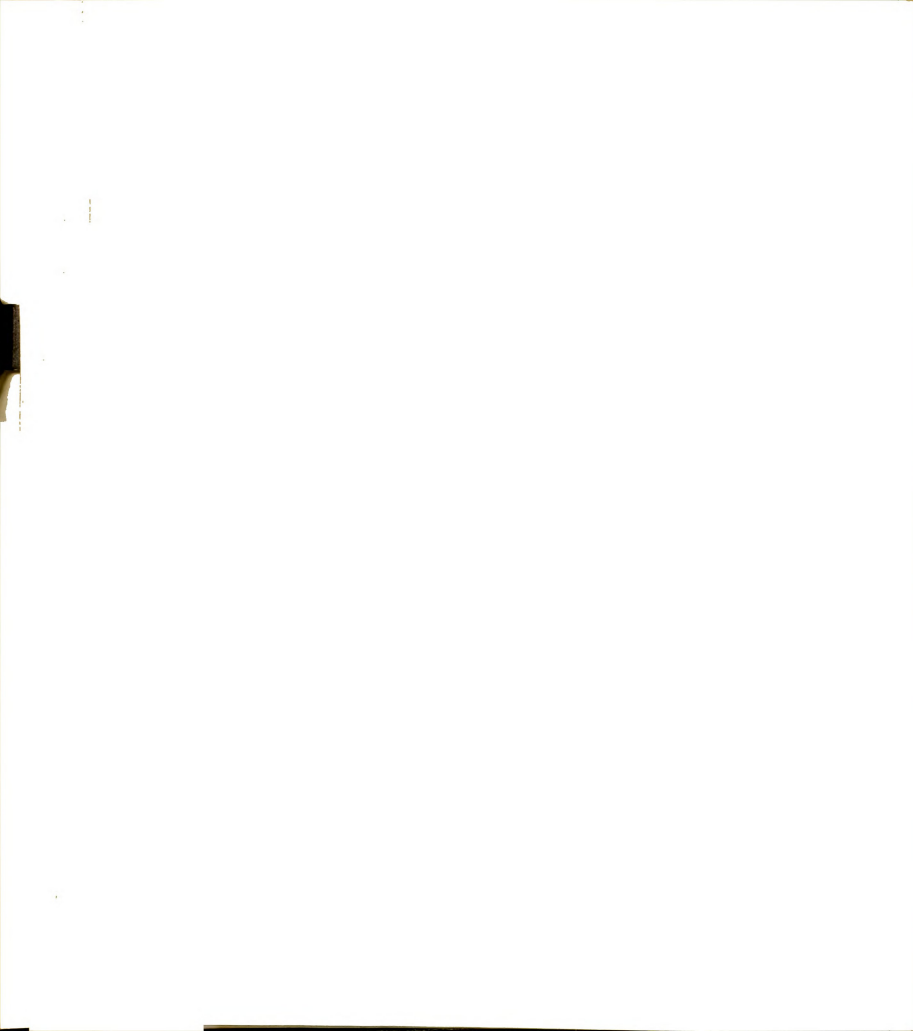
authorized by the voters to begin construction and Couzens was prepared. The day following the election he congratulated the people of Detroit and stated that excavation would begin within the next twenty-four hours. At noon, April 6, sixteen hours after the polls closed, he personally broke ground for the municipal system.⁵⁰

After the victory of April 1920, Couzens returned to the polls in 1921 and in 1922 and was victorious each time. He had long ago made up his mind that complete ownership and operation of the street railway system was essential for improved service and for the benefit of the public. In April 1921, the voters authorized the purchase from the D.U.R. of the day-to-day lines, i.e., the purchase of those streetcar lines within the private system on which franchises had expired and renewal had been refused. While the city was engaged in negotiating for these lines, work continued on the new construction authorized by the electorate in 1920.⁵¹

The D.U.R. and the opponents of municipal ownership continued to test, in court case after court case, the validity of Couzens' moves as he carried out the construction of the city's lines and took steps to oust the D.U.R. from those streets on which its franchises had expired.

⁵⁰O'Geran, pp. 342-44; Detroit News, April 7, 1920.

⁵¹Steffens, pp. 91-98.



The D.U.R. employed in its behalf some of the best and most expensive legal talent in the country including Charles Evans Hughes, the 1916 presidential candidate for whom Couzens had served as an elector.⁵² Nevertheless, Corporation Counsel Clarence Wilcox, hand-picked by Couzens for the job, was able to direct successfully the city's defense.⁵³

In March of 1922 once again Couzens and the D.U.R. came to an agreement on a purchase price. On April 17, 1922, the voters accepted the plan by a vote of more than four to one.⁵⁴ The battle of thirty years duration officially and finally ended. The Detroit News, exultant at the outcome of the election, wrote glowingly of the victory and Couzens' plans for the world's largest municipally owned street railway system.⁵⁵ The Detroit Free Press had refrained from active participation in the campaign, declaring simply that the people were well enough informed on the issue to make a decision. It accepted the outcome stoically.⁵⁶ Whatever the outcome of the

⁵²Detroit News, November 11, 1920.

⁵³Couzens Papers, Third Increment, Pamphlet, Ross Schram, assistant manager, Detroit Street Railway, "How Detroit Came to Run Its Own Street Car," c. 1922.

⁵⁴The New York Times, April 18, 1922.

⁵⁵Detroit News, April 18, 1922.

⁵⁶Detroit Free Press, April 17, 1922, May 15, 1922.

municipally owned system for the sake of the city's future the battle had to end. William F. Connolly, Democratic party leader and Couzens' opponent in the 1918 election, had said of the fight that when two people living in the same house cannot live together, someone has to move. Since the people could not move, he thought that the D.U.R. must.⁵⁷ But the issue was much more complex than a difference of points of view. The forces of urbanization, expansion, industrialization, heterogeneity of population, war, and high income were pitted against the investor and the guardian of the status quo. In this battle, the latter forces had been vanquished.

Couzens' major contribution to the municipalization of Detroit's street railway system was completed on May 15, 1922 when the street railway properties held by the D.U.R. in Detroit and several suburbs were turned over to the city.⁵⁸ Less than seven months later he had been appointed to the United States Senate and his responsibility as mayor for the operation of the Detroit street railway had ended. His peculiar contribution to the municipalization was his ability to organize effectively the resources of the city on his side of the struggle and to persist doggedly until victorious.

⁵⁷O'Geran, pp. 261-62.

⁵⁸Steffens, pp. 95-96.



CHAPTER V

SOCIETY'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE UNEMPLOYED

Unemployment in Detroit, 1919

On November 11, 1918, sixty-four days before Couzens took the office of mayor, the Armistice was signed and the war ended. It had raged across the world for four murderous years and had involved the efforts of millions upon millions of men, women, and children. Detroit, as many cities in the United States, had grown and her citizens had prospered on the wartime economy. Her great foundries and shops accustomed to the production of automobile parts, her great plants accustomed to the final assembly of automobiles, had been converted to produce the materials of war. Airplane engines, munitions, and military vehicles had rolled out the massive doors of Detroit's factories in the unending stream which characterized the mass production capabilities of Detroit. Henry Ford, whose sincere and naive efforts to end the war so riled Couzens, had turned his busy plants and his own engineering skill



to the task of war production.¹ The Armistice and the governmental decisions which followed quickly brought Detroit's wartime efforts and prosperity to a halt.

In the years prior to the United States' entry into the war, the growth in manufacturing and the recruitment efforts of Detroit's employers had drawn a steady flow of workers to Detroit to meet production quotas. Once the United States entered the war, the all-out war effort to meet the military needs of millions of American soldiers and Detroit's contribution of men to the military force--65,000 from Detroit and Wayne County alone in 1917-1918--meant even more jobs in Detroit and the influx of workers continued.² Simultaneously, the growth in demand for Michigan's agricultural products and the products of other midwestern states lessened the flow of farm workers from rural communities to the industry of Detroit.

The demand for war workers in Detroit and the demand for military personnel from Detroit and Michigan, made it essential that all able-bodied men and women in Detroit assist in the war effort of the community. Women were employed as mail carriers and streetcar conductors. In Wayne County some 200,000 women over sixteen years of

¹Nevins, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1922, pp. 55-85.

²Rae Elizabeth Rips, ed., Detroit In Its World Setting (Detroit: Detroit Public Library, 1953), p. 226.



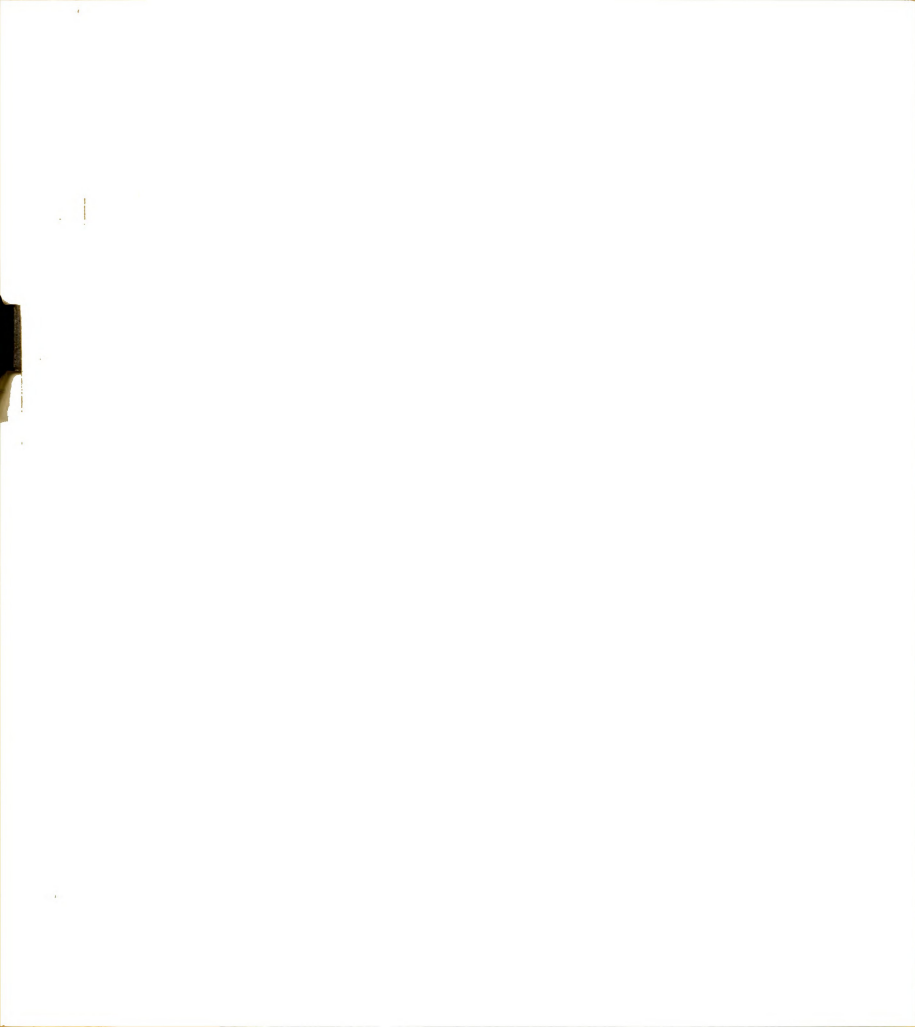
age registered for war work.³ Side by side with men, the women of Detroit entered the plants to make their contribution and to find freedom from the drudgery of domestic chores.

The need for war workers was so great, in spite of the recruitment of women, as well as the recruitment of southern whites and blacks, that in early October 1918 common council passed a "loafer law" which was intended to solve the labor problem. The law required that all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, regardless of level of income, be employed full-time six days a week or go to jail.⁴ When the war ended, just a month after the "loafer law" was enacted, the need for the mass production of military supplies and the need for the army of civilian workers ended. Unemployment was the initial result. Then for a time the unleashing of the patriotic restraint which had restricted the sales and manufacture of non-essential war goods, sent the economy up in a wild sellers' market.⁵ The lack of a plan to utilize the discharged war workers and the returning military men, led to an upswing in unemployment quite as troublesome as the rise in prices.

³Ibid., p. 228.

⁴Detroit News, October 9, 1918.

⁵George E. Mowry, The Urban Nation, 1920-1960 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 36.

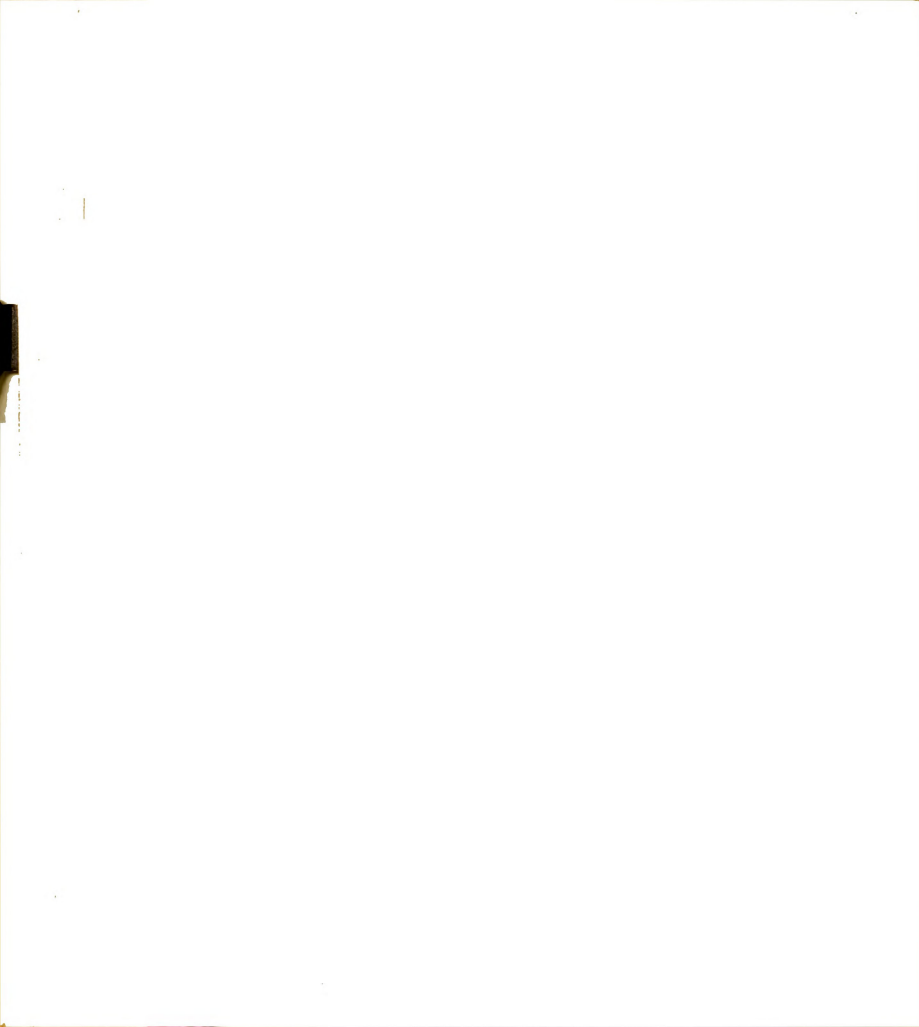


The Federal government had made few provisions to counter the harmful economic effects which were sure to follow the cessation of the war and readjustment of the manufacturing and agricultural industries to peacetime needs. The mistake of not providing for the orderly transition of thousands of military men from the armed forces to civilian life is unbelievable. Fifty-three years earlier when Civil War troops returned to civilian life, they were eligible to apply for 160 acres of land under the Homestead Act of 1862, with part of the five-year occupancy rule waived in accordance with the length of their military service.⁶ There was little land to distribute in this way by 1918; and almost none of it could support a family.

The shutdown of the military machine in the winter of 1918-1919 was abrupt. The government terminated war orders and rescinded regulations without detectable concern for the consequences.⁷ One historian has contrasted the demobilization procedure carried out after the war with the procedure followed during mobilization for the war. "There were moments in the history of mobilization," he wrote, "in which the government of the United States looked

⁶Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, A History of the United States: A Study in American Civilization (New York: Macmillan Company, 1934), p. 467.

⁷Mowry, Urban Nation, p. 36.



like a madhouse; during demobilization there was lacking even the madhouse in which the crazy might be incarcerated. They were at large."⁸

Detroit as a major producer of goods for the war effort was severely affected by the cancellation of war orders. On January 9, 1919, the Free Press reported that a survey conducted by the Employers' Association showed that 25,000 men were unemployed in Detroit.⁹ On January 14, the deputy state labor commissioner estimated unemployment there had climbed to 50,000.¹⁰ Detroit's employment situation was far worse than major cities such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh which both reported unemployment at 10,000.¹¹ According to the News, as military camps opened their doors to release thousands of men, many of them were glutting the labor market in Detroit.¹² It was rapidly becoming clear that Michigan's hope that the surplus labor force could be absorbed was not being realized.¹³ The naive notion that

⁸Frederic L. Paxson, "The Great Demobilization," The Great Demobilization and Other Essays (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1941), p. 7.

⁹Detroit Free Press, January 9, 1919.

¹⁰Ibid., January 14, 1919.

¹¹Detroit News, January 22, 1919.

¹²Ibid., January 23, 1919.

¹³Ibid., February 2, 1919.



women employed in war industry would return to the hearth-side, that the rural population attracted to the city would take up the plow, that southern whites and blacks would return to the land of their birth, was a wish and never a reality. During this period, a move to replace Negro motormen on streetcars with white led to an expression of indignation. The News noted that Negro soldiers died at the front and asked why the Negro cannot earn his living during peacetime.¹⁴ In large measure, these persons--women, farmers, southern whites and blacks--would stay to fight as best they could for the jobs available in Detroit.

Couzens Confronts Unemployment

Even before Couzens took office as mayor in January 1919, he was faced with unemployment problems. In December 1918, he told the Detroit Building Trade Council that every construction project contemplated by the city should be started immediately, even before the first of the new year. Thousands of school children were then attending classes on half day, new market facilities were needed, paving was needed. He stated that the employment of a large number of workers on public construction would help to tide over the reconstruction period.¹⁵ He recognized the difficult

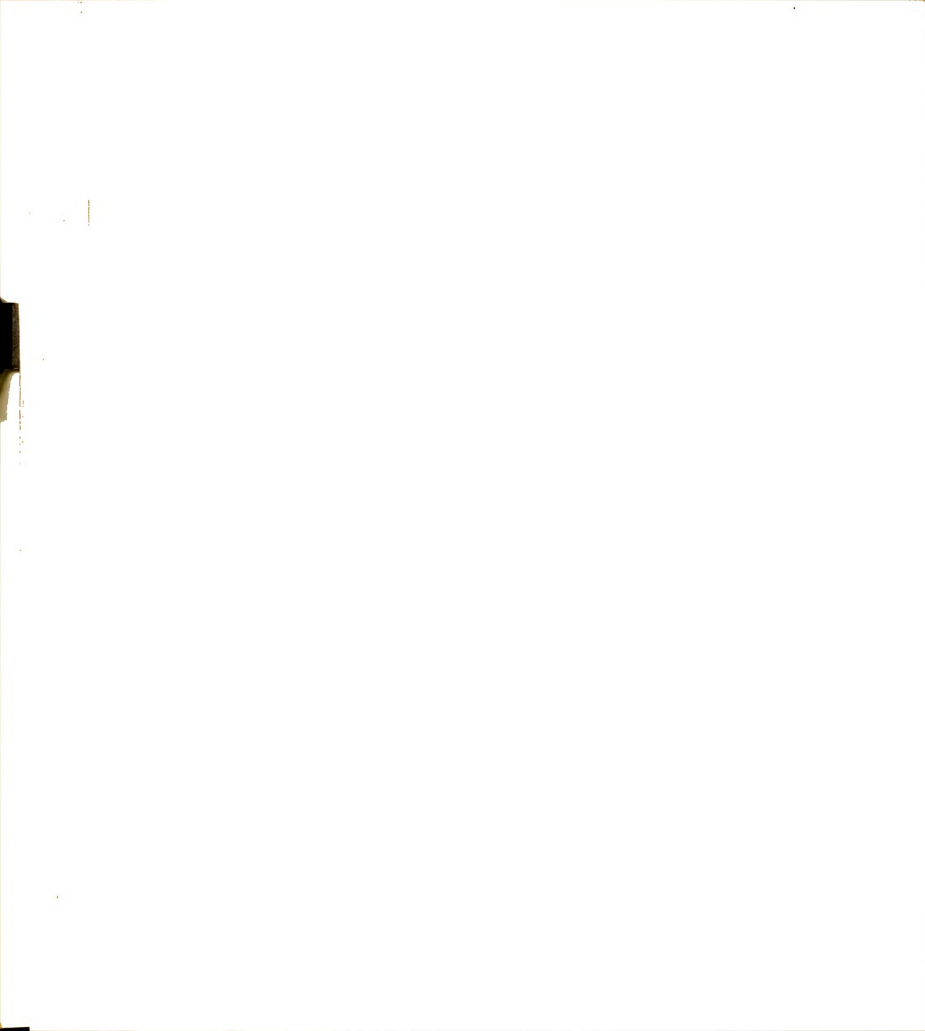
¹⁴Ibid., December 13, 1918.

¹⁵Ibid., December 14, 1918.



period of readjustment through which the nation's economic structure had to pass and, of course, was concerned for the local effects it would have. He believed that the local government ought to be concerned for the economic well-being of the people and ought to intercede when business showed itself incapable, or unwilling, to act in the best interest of the people. In this respect he differed from the conservative business segment of Detroit which remained suspicious of intervention in business by any governmental unit.

In the years of his mayoral administration, Couzens did not present original approaches to the problem of unemployment. He was not innovative in the modus operandi utilized in his areas of responsibility. As a doer he responded to existent conditions and theories. He was unusual only in espousing views, on occasion, generally thought to be inimical to the interest of his own economic class. Insofar as his support of public works, and the expansion and improvement of municipal services was concerned, he was responding in a manner which faced little, if any, public dissent. He was willing for political and practical reasons to develop a vigorous public works program to provide municipal services and employment, but he was not convinced even at the start that public works was the cure which national conferences on unemployment and



publications on municipal problems presented it to be.¹⁶ During his administration he returned again and again to the problem of unemployment and the obligation of the employer in the industrial society to provide for the economic needs of the employee. His experience with the Ford Motor Company's profit-sharing plan had convinced him not only of the employer's obligation to the employee, but that the plan was economically feasible and psychologically beneficial as well. A living annual wage was preferable to makeshift work such as public works, to public welfare, and to private philanthropy.¹⁷ However, it was his administration of the public works program both in its use as a response to municipal unemployment and in its use to meet the regular services performed by the department of public works, which brought him renown as a municipal administrator.

Two days after Couzens' inauguration in January 1919, he reasserted the need for the appropriation of big sums for improvements. As large as the new budget was to be, he assured the voters that every expenditure would be made on merit and surplus funds would not be spent.¹⁸ In

¹⁶The American City, XX (February, 1919), 129, 127-29; XX (March, 1919), 211.

¹⁷Detroit News, October 27, 1918; James Couzens, "Why I Believe in High Wages," The World's Work, XXXII (May, 1916), 81-85.

¹⁸Detroit News, January 16, 1919.



the four years to follow, \$72,000,000 were to be voted for public improvements, primarily for sewers, schools, water supply, street railways and parks.¹⁹ In the several years preceding 1919, similar expenditures had never exceeded \$5,000,000 in any year.²⁰ Couzens successfully pushed through the program he proposed. However, he had, as we have seen, wide support from the working people and the business community. Both groups wanted the needs of the city met in order to foster the continued growth and prosperity for which Detroit seemed destined, but which the war and subsequent unemployment had curtailed.

In the beginning days of his administration, however, Couzens had had to work within the budgetary limitations of the previous administration. He could propose and recommend, but until his own budget with its new and expanded programs was approved by the common council and funded, he could not begin the implementation of the programs. Until July 1, 1919, he had to be content with the development of the new budget, continued implementation of the 1918-1919 fiscal year budget, and administrative maneuvers directed at meeting the growing economic crisis of the period.

¹⁹Ibid., December 11, 1922.

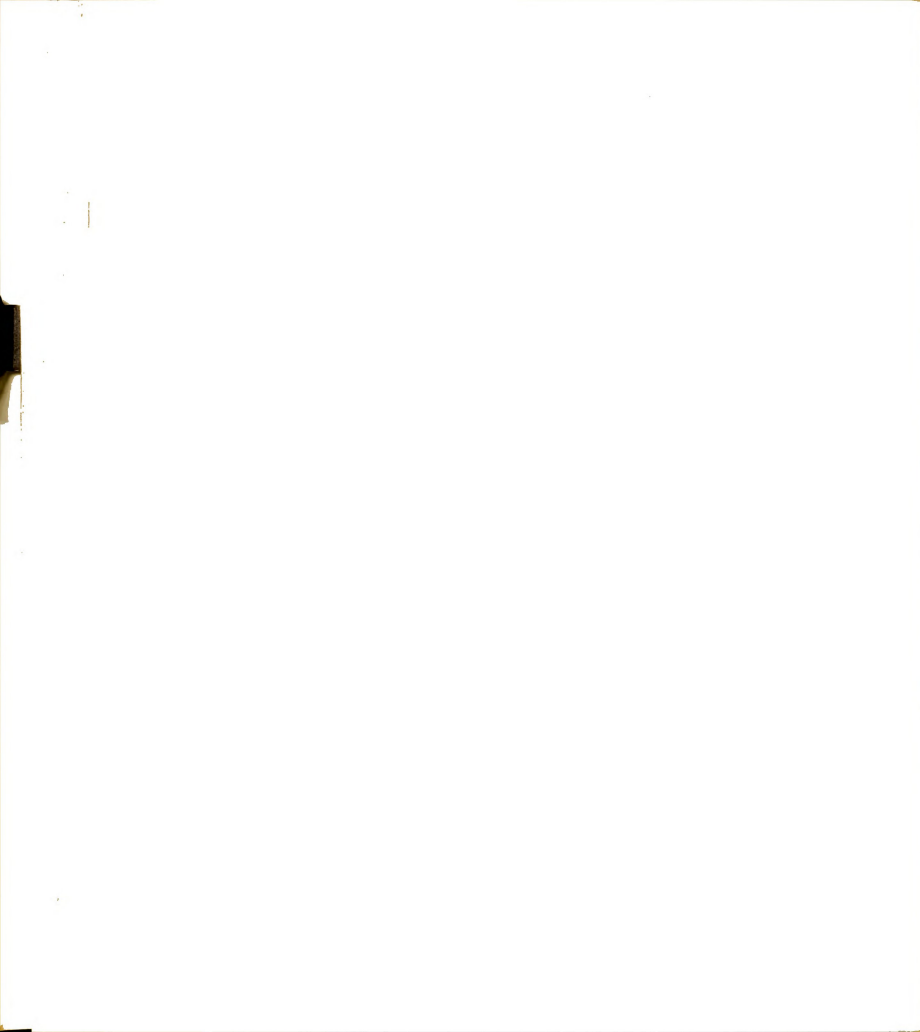
²⁰Public Business, III (November 20, 1933), 50, 58.



The returning servicemen presented an extremely delicate problem to the city and its chief administrator. Many national and local organizations and publications devoted to municipal improvement and promotion had un-animously and patriotically supported the obligation of employers to make room for those former employees who would return from war service. In the concluding section of his inaugural speech, Couzens had sought to capitalize on this sentiment and ease the pressure for employment from that source. He counseled that those men recently returned to Detroit should apply for the old jobs which they had left. Then, if they wanted new jobs, it could be arranged after they had had an opportunity to settle down.²¹ Of course, Couzens hoped that employers would accept their obligation to rehire the veterans; if they were reluctant to do so, he hoped that public pressure would convert them. Getting the veterans back in their old jobs, at least temporarily, would be less disruptive to the effort to meet the employment needs of the civilian workers.

Couzens' counsel was well meaning, but it was not appropriate to the needs of the time. With cancelled war contracts, there was little assurance that the old jobs would be there. Giving the old jobs back to returning servicemen would dislocate the persons who had them, and who were performing perhaps as well as or better than the

²¹Detroit News, January 15, 1919.



veterans.²² In February, Couzens stated that he had been informed that in Detroit 10,000 persons who had claimed exemption from military service because of their alien status were still working. He recommended that these men be replaced by citizen soldiers.²³ Although there was considerable expression in favor of placing returning servicemen in jobs on the part of local municipal officials and civic groups, Detroit's businessmen were not anxious to reorganize their work forces. The Detroit Free Press stated on January 31, that treatment of the servicemen was far from the high sentiments expressed. It reported that thousands of servicemen were looking for jobs while aliens were still working.²⁴ The returned hero was not always a welcome sight in Detroit.

As Couzens settled into office in the first weeks, he continued to search for other ways to meet growing unemployment. His official position did not provide him with any legal means for exerting control or sanction over private employers in the city. He sought, nevertheless, to gain their support through the prestige of his office and his own position in the community. At the same time that he was dealing with the problem of returning military

²²Ibid., January 4, 1919, January 23, 1919.

²³Ibid., February 6, 1919.

²⁴Detroit Free Press, January 31, 1919.



personnel, he proposed another scheme to Detroit's employers. This employment scheme, like the others he supported, had been widely reviewed in national publications. He proposed that employers in the city ration the hours of labor for ordinary laborers. In response to the criticism which followed, he offered personally to take over the operation of any of his critics, conduct the businesses himself under his plan, and guarantee them against loss. Again his reputation and his wealth were used to back up his proposal.²⁵ Neither proved powerful enough to force private businessmen to bend to his desires. Over a year and half later he was still pleading for the cooperation of the business community in rationing labor to Detroit's workers.²⁶

The Board of Commerce, representing the Detroit business community, was not insensitive to the employment situation. As an expression of its concern, the Board paid for the operation of a local employment bureau for returned military personnel.²⁷ Vested interest led its members to support full employment and contribute financially to carrying out a program for placement of unemployed servicemen. Vested interest also led its members to reject such a

²⁵Detroit News, February 6, 1919.

²⁶Ibid., October 18, 1920.

²⁷Ibid., March 17, 1919.



radical and suspect notion as rationing hours of labor and allowing Couzens, as the great administrator, to show them how to run their businesses.

With the onset of spring 1919, business conditions improved in Detroit. Both the director of the Federal employment service and the superintendent of the state's free employment bureau reported that the situation in Detroit looked good for the worker.²⁸ The Free Press stated that unemployment in Detroit had been reduced and there was enough jobs to go around.²⁹ Economic conditions continued to improve as the city gradually took on its new peacetime industrial role. However, with the coal strike in effect from September to December, by late fall over 50,000 men were unemployed and a complete shutdown of industry in Detroit was threatened.³⁰

In December, in spite of Couzens' call for forward movement on all city projects in the early days following his election, and even with growing unemployment, he was compelled to restrain the energetic department heads as they expanded their operations. He ordered payroll cuts and warned the department heads to keep only those employees

²⁸Ibid., April 2, 1919.

²⁹Detroit Free Press, April 12, 1919.

³⁰David A. Shannon, Between the Wars: America, 1919-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 25; Detroit News, December 7, 1919.



who were necessary. This was not the time to increase services to the public, he told his staff.³¹

The second year of Couzens' administration was a year of growing unemployment. In March 1920, the Employers' Association report, based on the employment level of seventy-nine of the major factories in the city, showed 200,765 employees on the payroll. During the summer months, the number of workers these factories employed was reduced nearly 20,000. By December, only 38,000 employees were on the payroll.³² In the fall of 1920, once again, Couzens turned to public works to ease the crisis. He issued orders to his department heads that during "this temporary unemployment and readjustment period" they should speed up all possible public construction. He estimated that 2,000 more men could be employed almost immediately and that the numbers could be greatly increased if the contract work then underway was hastened. "It is much better to give them work and let them earn a living," he said, "than to give them help through the public welfare department."³³ Even the police department was not overlooked as Couzens ordered the police commissioner to fill up his ranks. He directed the commissioner to accept every man who could

³¹Ibid., December 5, 1919.

³²Fred R. Johnson, "Detroit Out of Work," Survey, XLVI (April 23, 1921), 106-07.

³³Detroit News, October 19, 1920.



pass the test. Economy-minded Couzens then observed that with the police department the move would serve two purposes. It would give idle men employment and protect the city from the crime which might arise from unemployment.³⁴ Through the remainder of 1920 and the major part of 1921 unemployment continued as an issue of great public interest. However, by fall 1921, the situation had eased somewhat and Couzens moved once again to curtail expenditures.³⁵

During his administration of Detroit, Couzens tended to vacillate between emphasis on the use of the municipal payroll as a means for meeting employment needs and emphasis on holding to the budget. It appears that in periods of mass unemployment he emphasized the former alternative and that once the local economy appeared stronger, he would shift to the latter. Within him struggled the humanitarian and the accountant.

In September 1921, the program of public works administered in Detroit by Couzens was given national recognition when he was invited to participate in the President's Conference on Unemployment held in Washington, D.C. The conference was the work of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who had proposed it to President Harding.

³⁴Ibid., October 21, 1920.

³⁵Newton A. Fueesle, "Detroit Close-hauled," Outlook, CXX (June 15, 1921), 295; Detroit News, October 27, 1921, November 2, 1921.



Hoover had aided Harding in the selection of the conference members, and also announced to the press that the object of the conference was to inquire into the state of unemployment, its distribution, and to recommend measures that could be taken by industry and public bodies to ease the situation.³⁶ Couzens, one of two mayors listed as conference members, was part of a distinguished group which included such names as Ida M. Tarbell, Samuel Gompers, Charles M. Schwab, and Edwin R. A. Seligman. Assigned to the committees on public works, statistics, and civic emergency measures, he participated gladly in the work of the committee.³⁷

With customary zeal Couzens had set to work, prior to the conference, to bring together the record he had established in Detroit for the use of public works to meet municipal unemployment.³⁸ He was one of the few participants who had dealt with unemployment from the office of mayor. His experience and concern for industrial unemployment had extended from his days with the Ford Motor Company and its profit-sharing plan straight through the multifaceted unemployment woes of big-city mayor. He had strong views on the matter.

³⁶ Report on the President's Conference on Unemployment, September 26 to October 13, 1921 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 15.

³⁷ Couzens Papers, General Correspondence, Box 11, Letter, Edward E. Hunt to Couzens, December 3, 1921.

³⁸ Detroit News, September 20, 1921.



There is no evidence incorporated in the conference report, or in the detailed coverage of the conference by The New York Times, of Couzens' impact on the conference and its members. Nevertheless, the conference was a boon to Couzens. On his return in October 1921, he set to work to implement certain of the recommendations which came out of the meetings. He appointed a committee of fifty citizens to meet at City Hall and discuss the unemployment problem. He hoped that the conference would develop into an employment bureau to search the city for jobs. The President's Conference provided him with a talking point as he went about the city during the final days of October and the first days of November campaigning for re-election. He stated that "Detroit has made a national reputation. It is recognized that no other city in the United States has handled the unemployment problem as well as the city of Detroit."³⁹ When Mayor William Hale Thompson of Chicago, who had refused to attend the conference in Washington, declared that the conference was a capitalist move, a drive against union labor, and a conspiracy to lower wages, Couzens was offended and cancelled his prior acceptance of a speaking engagement in Chicago, calling Thompson "irresponsible."⁴⁰ One year later when Thompson visited Detroit,

³⁹ Ibid., November 2, 1921.

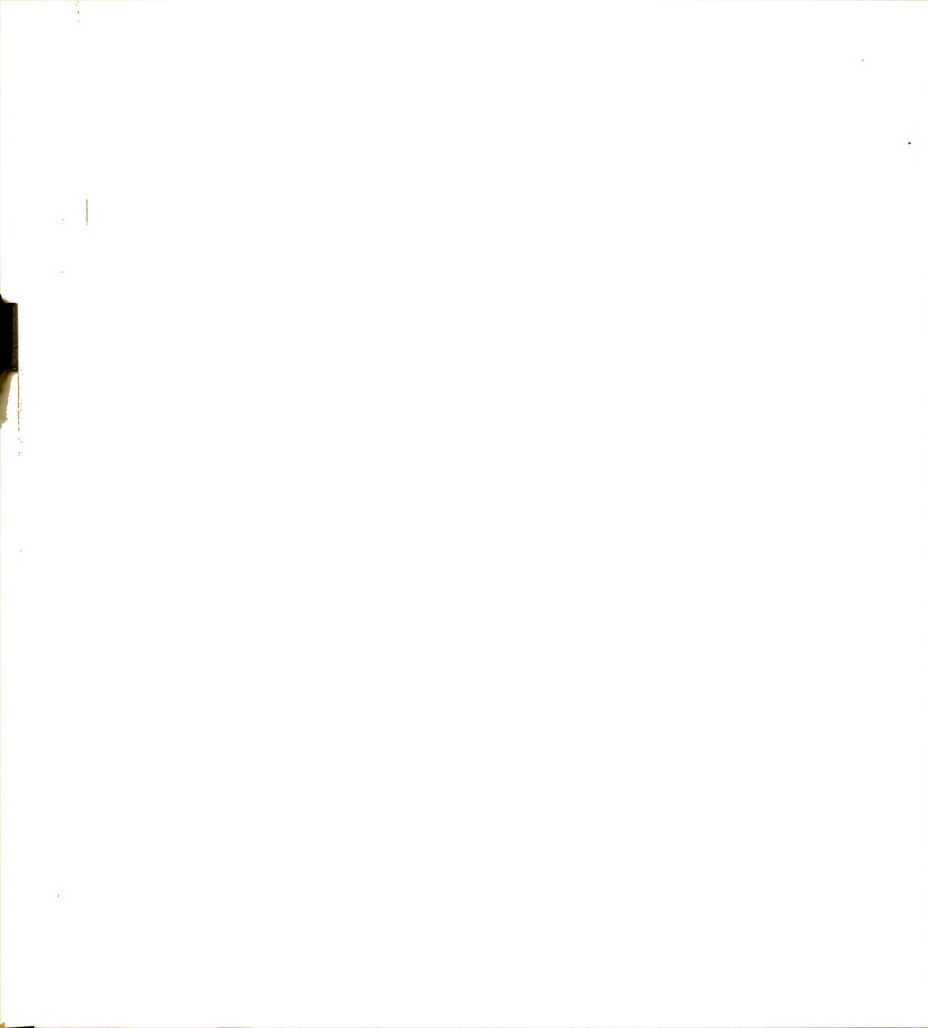
⁴⁰ Ibid., November 16, 1921, November 18, 1921.



he refused to clasp Couzens' outstretched hand and in his own way evened the score.⁴¹ There is little doubt that Herbert Hoover, as secretary of commerce and instigator of the conference, and President Harding were sensitive to and responsive to the needs of the businessmen of the nation, and that Thompson was correct in calling the conference a capitalist move. However, steps taken to relieve the economic depression which plagued businessmen would unavoidably ease the problem of unemployment and thereby lessen the suffering of the people. The interest of President Harding and Mayor Couzens might both be served by the same conference.

Though much renown came to Couzens because of his handling of the unemployment problems of his administration, his view that it was really the employers' responsibility to provide for his employees during depressions was not nearly as widely publicized. It appears quite clear that such a view was contrary to the free enterprise doctrines of private industry. Personal initiative, frugality, hard work, and self-sufficiency were virtues to be commended and encouraged in the workingman. The local businessman in Detroit as elsewhere was slow to see that in the urban, industrial community, economic disruption was often the consequence of events tied into a complex web of relationships throughout the

⁴¹Ibid., October 9, 1922.



nation and the world. How could he see that all the virtues which had been supposed to guarantee success might not protect the industrial worker against failure and unemployment in Detroit? Or that he, the employer, shared responsibility for his workers unemployment? Through all of Couzens' talk about public works, employment bureaus, and welfare assistance ran the thread of employer responsibility, and this was the real message he had to bring. He was preaching to the heathen.

As early as 1914 with the profit-sharing plan at the Ford Motor Company, Couzens had shown an awareness of the ability of the businessman to adjust compensation and production to better meet the needs of the employee. There is little merit in discussing whether the origin of the profit-sharing plan rested with Couzens, or Ford, or another. Whoever introduced the idea, Couzens and Ford had to agree before it could be implemented. The essential point is that Couzens, like Ford, received international recognition as the result of the plan.⁴² In his position as head of the business operation at the Ford Motor Company, Couzens had to defend the plan as economically feasible. He defended the plan with force. Rightly or wrongly, he received credit for playing a leading role in the development and implementation of the plan. This fact

⁴² Nevins, Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company, pp. 532-41.



in itself gave his argument for employer involvement considerable weight.

Over the years following the announcement of the plan, Couzens jabbed the business community again and again with sharp reminders of its obligation. In the winter of 1914 he told members of the Board of Commerce that it was as right for them to protect their employers from economic hardship as it was to maintain their plants against deterioration during disuse.⁴³ When, in November 1915, the merchant S. S. Kresge invited him to contribute to the support of a rescue home for girls and women, Couzens responded that no doubt the project was worthy and he did not wish to neglect his duty, but he was more interested "in getting at the cause which necessitates rescue houses." Then he continued with the statement that as president of the Board of Commerce in 1913, he had received information on the wages paid the girls in the stores operated by Kresge and he had had it on his mind since then. Kresge replied that he paid the average girl at the Woodward and State store \$7.52 a week. He added that his company sought girls who lived at home, and hence would not have to pay room and board. Couzens was piqued at this reply and asked, if \$7.52 is the average, what is the minimum? Besides, he wondered why parents should have to contribute to the support of daughters working in Kresge's stores.

⁴³Detroit News, October 18, 1915.



Couzens concluded the exchange with the sentence, "I do not want to criticize but want you to see the light, for I am convinced when you do you will look at the matter as I do."⁴⁴

In January 1916, Couzens set his sights on the Mulkey Salt Company in Detroit. He castigated it for paying an employee, who had seven in his family, including a sick child who was a charity patient at the Children's Free Hospital, \$1.90 a day for ten hours of work. Couzens fumed that companies expected employees to work overtime in time of trouble and it was reasonable to expect the companies to look after them in their times of trouble. He offered to instruct the owner of the company on the welfare work at Ford's.⁴⁵ There is no record of conversion for the Board of Commerce, Kresge, or the management of the Mulkey Salt Company. However, another correspondent admitted that "we are now doing some splendid work in looking after our men in a way which we never dreamed of a few years ago and no small part of this reformation is due to some of the hard knocks which you have given us."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Couzens Papers, Letter, Kresge to Couzens, November 5, 1915; Letter, Couzens to Kresge, November 8, 1915; Letter, Kresge to Couzens, November 10, 1915; Letter, Couzens to Kresge, November 10, 1915.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, General Correspondence, Box 2, Letter, to J. M. Mulkey from Couzens, January 28, 1916.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter, James Inglis to Couzens, January 31, 1916.



Much of what Couzens pushed for in his efforts to meet the tragedy of unemployment during his office as mayor fitted into his scheme for the regularization of employment. In his view every self-respecting man wanted a job which would allow him to support his family in a decent manner. Unemployment destroyed self-respect and endangered the stability of the family. Charity and makeshift work were only a little better. His pleas to employers to ration hours of labor and pay decent wages were efforts to provide the unemployed with dignified employment. He was most concerned that the head of the household should receive adequate compensation for his labors. As Kresge depended on the families of his employees to contribute to their support and thereby subsidize his business, other employers hired married women whose husbands were employed and for that reason were able to work for less. In addition, these women were holding jobs that unemployed males could use. In 1921, Couzens suggested that during the period of unemployment women whose husbands were employed and persons of independent means give up their jobs. He did not propose that these persons be forced to give up their jobs, for it was a matter of conscience. "There is," he continued, "great unemployment and many families through no fault of their own are suffering."⁴⁷

⁴⁷Detroit News, October 28, 1921, November 4, 1921.



As I have shown, Couzens did not hesitate to use governmental resources to meet the employment needs of the community. Yet throughout his mayoral career, and for many years which followed, until the hopelessness of the Great Depression, he persisted in his belief that the employers of the city and the nation had it within their power and were morally obligated to provide support for their employees for all times better and worse. Through setting aside funds for periods of economic disorder, payment of adequate wages, and the regularization of work schedules to avoid seasonal layoffs, employers could solve the problem of unemployment. It was not a matter of paternalism. It was one of duty.⁴⁸ During his first mayoral campaign, Couzens wrote an article he called "Providing for the Depreciation of Human Earning Power." In this article, directed at the readership of the Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record, he outlined a plan to assure all employees of a "living wage." In addition to the "living wage," a reserve fund would be either paid to the employee, or retained by the employer, so that during periods of unemployment, or retirement, the employee would be assured of the continuance of adequate income.⁴⁹ "The more I study

⁴⁸ Mayors Papers, Letter, Couzens to F. G. Swanson, April 12, 1922.

⁴⁹ James Couzens, "Providing for the Depreciation of Human Earning Power," Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record, XXII (October 26, 1918), 22-23.



the situation and the more I come in contact with the problems," Couzen wrote in April 1922, "the more I am convinced that industry as a whole has to take care of this unemployment condition."⁵⁰

Few men of wealth and power have tried as hard as Couzens to combat unemployment. Couzens found his solution not in a welfare state but within the capitalistic system which had rewarded him so abundantly. He appealed to men of his economic class to assume the responsibility for stabilizing the economy of the city and the nation by structuring their operations to provide for the maintenance of their employees. This was, in Couzens' view, their duty. Ironically, those men of power and wealth chose to turn the problem of unemployment over to the government. And the man who sought to show them how to adjust free enterprise to meet the needs of modern America was called a "socialist."

Eight years after he resigned from the office of mayor, Couzens was still trying to awaken his colleagues to the obligations owed their employees. The Great Depression had struck and millions of workers were without jobs. Couzens said in words that crossed the years between and reiterated the teachings of his mayoralty: "Many think I am opposing big business and that I am

⁵⁰ Mayors Papers, Letter, Couzens to Otto Mallory, April 12, 1922.



against big business. As a matter of fact, I am trying to help maintain the capitalistic system and that is why I am warning them that, unless they change their attitude toward the common herd their system is going to be wiped out, because the people who have suffered so much under this terrible depression will not stand for it. I am not talking destruction," he asserted, "I am talking construction."⁵¹

⁵¹Detroit News, September 5, 1930.



CHAPTER VI

THE UNIVERSALITY OF LAW AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Detroit: Hotbed of Radicalism

As anarchist Emma Goldman prepared for her deportation from the United States in December 1919, aboard A. Mitchell Palmer's "Ark" (the Buford), she commented to a Detroit News reporter: "Give Mayor Couzens and Dr. Inches [the commissioner of police] my compliments; say to them for me that everybody in Detroit should be proud of them for Detroit is the only city in the United States today where a citizen may exercise his or her constitutional right of free speech." She said that she believed that the devil should have his due even when it came to public officials. "I thank God," she continued, "there are at least two officials in the United States who have courage to stand up for free speech."¹ There were, of course, other public officials in the United States who stood up for free speech. However, the position which Couzens and his

¹Detroit News, December 6, 1919; Robert K. Murray, Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria, 1919-1920 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955), pp. 207-09; The New York Times, December 21, 1919.



commissioner of police took in permitting and protecting several well-publicized radical meetings in Detroit during the period of hysteria which followed the war gave them national prominence as men with special sensitivity to the constitutional guarantee of free speech.

The first year and a half of Couzens' mayoralty coincided with the years of political hysteria which swept the country at the close of the war. The war had served to bind together diverse groups in an all-out effort for victory. Detroiters had responded nobly to the demands of the war. With the end of the war the insistence on united effort and unmitigated patriotism was no longer defensible by arguing the presence of a military threat to the national security. But with the communist takeover in Russia and the incendiary preachings in the United States of radicals such as Emma Goldman and William D. Haywood, the national security appeared, in the eyes of many Americans, to be perhaps in greater danger than ever before. This situation seemed to many to call for the reassertion of loyalty and to justify the harsh handling of those who would subvert the government. With a large pre-war influx of foreigners from parts of Europe unfamiliar with the traditions of America, and a large influx of southern Negroes barred from first class participation in the institutions of America, Detroit was a community where the constitutional rights of these newcomers were likely to be violated by those in positions of power in the city.



Violation of the civil rights of Detroit residents, however, was not at issue in the early months of Couzens' administration. True, Detroit ministers, in their pulpits, warned of the danger of communism to the peace, and former President William H. Taft was reported in the Detroit Times to have remarked to an audience that the one way to argue with bolsheviks was to kill them.² There had been the detention in Detroit during the war of a numerically small radical element whose freedom was thought by the United States Department of Immigration to have been inimical to the best interest of the nation. But the overwhelming sentiment in Detroit was for presenting a united front for victory, and if there was an increasing readiness to sacrifice the individual civil rights of the proponent of unpopular views, there was very little occasion to practice it.

Even before the Federal government reached into the city to pluck from its masses those they thought capable of subverting the national effort, the business and civic leaders of Detroit had taken steps to guard Detroit from the violent acts of the foreign element. As early as 1915 the Board of Commerce had organized a committee to develop a campaign to get non-English-speaking foreigners into night school. The Ford Motor Company, while Couzens was still vice president, developed an Americanization program

²Detroit Times, January 10, 1919; Detroit News, January 1, 1919.



for its employees.³ Not only were these individuals to benefit from these programs: businessmen stood to gain advantages from a labor force which understood English and accepted middle-class values.⁴ Property holders in general were to benefit from the Americanization of what was thought to be a potentially radical and disloyal throng.

As the public sentiment for 100 per cent Americanism among all residents grew, incidents occurred which revealed the pressure for social conformity which is part of extreme patriotism. When a passenger on the Jefferson streetcar was seen reading George B. Shaw's An Unsocial Socialist and Michael Bakunin's God and the State, he was questioned about what he was. Unwisely, perhaps, he replied that he was a revolutionist and believed in elevating his fellow man through organization and education. For these remarks he was arrested and held on a charge of "seditious utterances."⁵ Another resident who refused to buy insurance and told the salesman that he did not need it because the Emperor would soon rule this country found

³Higham, p. 244.

⁴Hays, Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914, p. 103; Nevins, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933, p. 338.

⁵Detroit News, December 4, 1918.



himself one of eighteen aliens arrested in a raid carried out by the Federal government.⁶

In early May 1918, the Detroit police joined the Michigan State troopers and members of the American Protective League in a raid on a meeting in which 1,200 men thought to be radicals were transported for examination to rooms set up for that purpose at police headquarters and the armory.⁷ Under the Michigan State prohibition law, the home of the owner of a German newspaper, the Detroit Abendpost, was raided and 6,000 bottles of beer confiscated. During the raid a picture of Bismarck was seen hanging on the wall. Shortly thereafter a state liquor inspector led a second raid on the home and confiscated the picture. The Detroit press raised no issue of harassment when the rights of the Abendpost's owner, August Marxhausen, Jr., were violated. The Detroit News reported the incident in a matter-of-fact way. No public outcry against this petty behavior was sounded.⁸

By this time, the superintendent of public schools recognized the weight of public sentiment against the German foe and in August 1918, he announced that German language courses had been eliminated from the curriculum.

⁶Ibid., May 19, 1918.

⁷Ibid., May 2, 1918.

⁸Ibid., August 8, 1918.



Almost apologetically he stated that advanced reading courses in German would still be available for students preparing for entrance to universities. In place of the elementary German courses, a course in patriotism was offered.⁹ These examples of official and public reaction to un-Americanism occurred during Couzens' administration of the police department and his campaign for mayor, and he was silent. On the day that the Board of Education cancelled elementary instruction in German, the News observed that under Couzens the police department did not interfere with free speech, but it performed its duty in seeing that no breach of the peace occurred.¹⁰ Of course, Couzens was responsible for the behavior of the Detroit police department which cooperated willingly in the mass arrest of suspected radicals well before the Federal Department of Justice began making mass arrests.

In December 1918, after his election to the mayoralty, Couzens did make a plea for justice in the city's life to the Board of Commerce. He said that only through care of the strong for the weak can bolshevism, anarchy, and socialism be restrained and the structure of our civilization remain strong.¹¹ This principle was reiterated by Couzens again and again to meet the human

⁹Ibid., August 24, 1918.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Detroit Times, December 19, 1918.

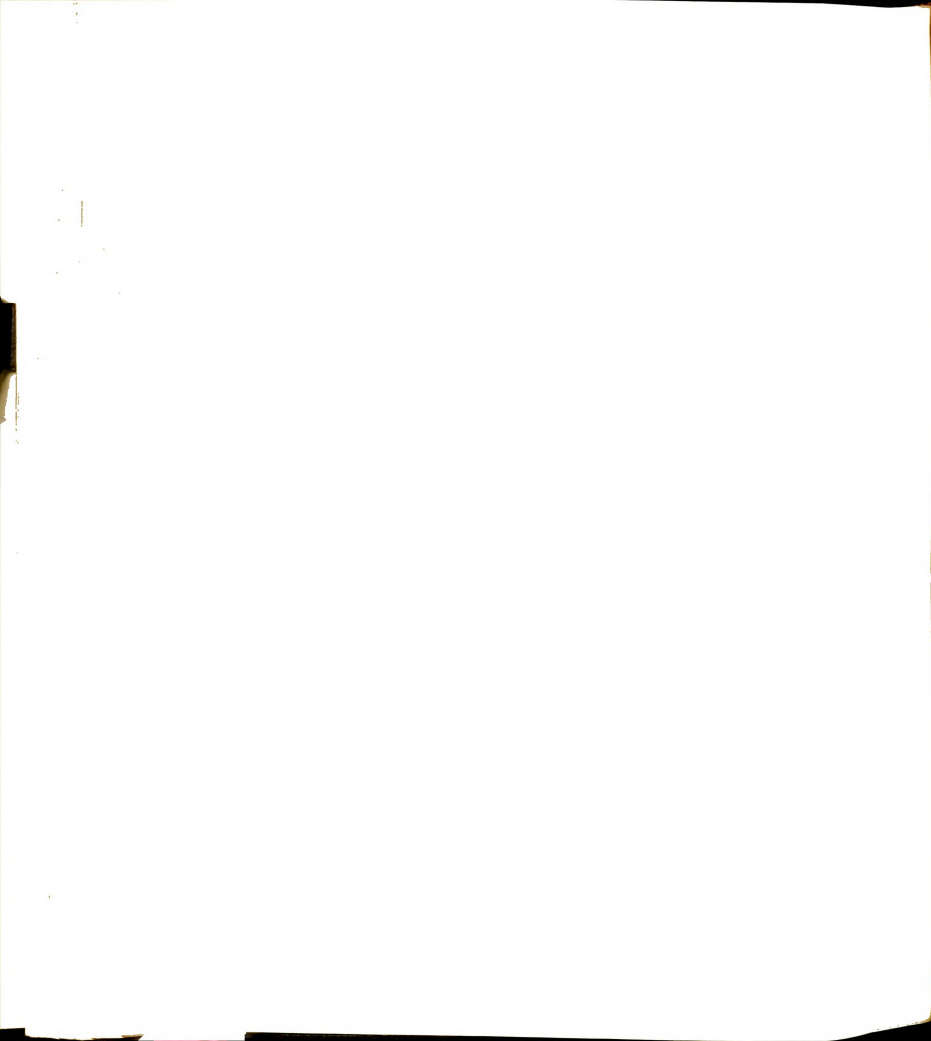


problems of his day. The privileged class was going to have to serve the needs of the masses, if the structure in which they prospered was to survive.

Among those who heard Couzens warn of the destructive forces which endangered their society were members of the local chapter of the American Protective League. These business and professional men saw little connection between care for the weak by the strong and acts of un-Americanism. Their role as members of the League was to guard the city against harm by the radical element. By the time of their forced disbandment in the winter of 1919 by the United States Department of Justice, to which they had a semi-official tie, the Detroit chapter of the American Protective League announced that more than 30,000 complaints had been processed and not one plant in Detroit had been disabled by the radical element during the entire war. The News proudly referred to the League as "an indirect outgrowth of the 'Vigilante' and the 'Ku Klux Klan.'" According to that newspaper, the League had the good points of those old-time organizations, but possessed none of their bad points.¹²

Not everyone in Detroit agreed with the appraisal of the American Protective League. Some thought that, to the contrary, it possessed none of the good points of the "Vigilante" and the "Ku Klux Klan," whatever they may have

¹²Detroit News, December 28, 1918, February 2, 1918.



been.¹³ Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, who rode to fame and back again in vigorous pursuit of un-Americanism, declared that the files of the various branches of the League in the possession of the Justice Department consisted primarily of "gossip, hearsay information, conclusions, and inferences." He went on to say that it was the opinion of the Department that the use of such material could lead to serious wrong to innocent individuals.¹⁴

If political unrest in Detroit seemed a dire threat, directly related to the low level of Americanization achieved by Detroit's foreign born laborers, Couzens failed to see it. He felt obligated to respond to Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, who declared that the ban on beer had caused unrest in Detroit and made it a hotbed of bolsheviks. The line of reasoning which carried Gompers to that conclusion is not clear. However, Gompers, himself an immigrant, was at the time he made the statement busily engaged in promoting a four-year restriction on further immigration into the United States. This would allow, he maintained, adequate time for thoroughly Americanizing those aliens already here. Although he did not say as much, it would also ease the unemployment which during early 1919 plagued the nation's

¹³Detroit Times, February 17, 1919.

¹⁴Stanley Coben, A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 200.



labor force. On July 7, 1919, Couzens replied to Gompers' charge. He pointed out that no disturbances had occurred in the city either on May Day or on Independence Day, when they might have been expected. "We have had no disturbances and no evidence," he said, "that what Mr. Gompers says is correct. . . ." ¹⁵

Attorney General Palmer's discrediting of the American Protective League's files as sketchy, incomplete, and gossipy did not mean that he would not himself act on similarly inadequate data when he struck at radical groups in the major urban centers of the United States in late 1919 and again in early 1920. Nor did Couzens' failure to find reason for alarm prevent the Detroit police department from joining Palmer's raids on Detroit area residents. In a series of raids which began late Friday night, November 7, 1919, and continued until early the following Sunday, members of the Detroit police department, including Superintendent William P. Rutledge, directed by Department of Justice agents, descended on gatherings of persons thought to be radicals. A Russian play being presented by the Union of Russian Workers before hundreds of persons was interrupted. All the men present were lined up and searched, and 250 men who were suspected of anarchistic tendencies were detained. Of those held, according to the chief of the Detroit office of the Department of

¹⁵ Detroit News, July 7, 1919, July 11, 1919.



Justice, many would be deported. Not until November 11 were warrants for arrest received from Washington and then for only 25.¹⁶

In disregard of this careless treatment of individual rights, the Detroit News supported the raids, asserting that if foreigners are dissatisfied with American institutions, they should leave.¹⁷ Commissioner Inches told the Men's Club of the First Congregational Church that he was well satisfied with the manner in which the bolshevik situation was being handled. "Washington gives Detroit credit for better work than any other large city," he said, "and this is known as the Bolshevik headquarters of the United States."¹⁸ It appears that Inches was not as concerned with civil rights as Emma Goldman remarked a month later, nor did his actions and comments support the mayor's pronouncement of social and political equanimity in Detroit. The mayor was silent.

However, Couzens was not allowed to remain silent on such matters for long. The announcement that William D. Haywood was coming to Detroit to speak before a public gathering on November 30, 1919, stirred the blood of veterans' groups in the city. Haywood, the general

¹⁶ Ibid., November 11, 1919.

¹⁷ Ibid., November 10, 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid., November 17, 1919.



secretary and treasurer of the radical labor group, the Industrial Workers of the World, was then appealing a twenty-year prison sentence for subversive activities.¹⁹ He had particularly rankled American Legion members by referring to them as "useless cooties." In response to the challenge, Detroit's Charles A. Learned Post of the American Legion organized a vigilance committee to fight radicalism in Detroit and made plans to prevent Haywood from speaking. Three steps were proposed: First, they would petition Mayor Couzens and the commissioner of police to refuse a permit for the meeting. If that failed, they would seek an injunction against the meeting. If, unsuccessful there, they would attend the meeting in a body and, should incendiary or disloyal statements be made by the speaker, he would be escorted out of the hall.²⁰ This position was supported by the United Spanish War Veterans.

Couzens moved quickly in response to the Legion's decision to stop Haywood's speech. He ruled that Haywood would be allowed to appear as scheduled.²¹ Ostensibly, the Legion accepted the decision. Its executive committee expressed complete confidence in the ability of the police department to handle the situation. The radical clergyman

¹⁹ Ibid., August 31, 1918, September 1, 1918.

²⁰ Ibid., November 20, 1919.

²¹ Detroit Free Press, November 22, 1919.



I. Paul Taylor, then a leader in the Detroit Labor Forum, expressed surprise at the threat to law and order posed by the Legion. He said that such action as the Legion proposed could but lead to mob rule, violence, and possibly even bloodshed.²²

Three days prior to the scheduled meeting Commissioner Inches assured the Legion that the law would be upheld. There would be no interference with the meeting as long as the speaker stayed within the law, but the utterance of seditious statements would terminate the meeting. Inches warned that the suppression of freedom of speech would lead to martyrdom and to sympathy for the views propounded.²³

From New York, on November 28, Couzens cautioned that the public made too much of radicalism. He had given Haywood permission to speak, he explained, and he had ordered the police to provide sufficient manpower to maintain order and to allow Haywood to speak unmolested. There was no law, he noted, which would permit him to stop anyone from speaking. However, he asserted, if any seditious utterances were made by Haywood, he had directed the police to arrest him.²⁴

²²Detroit News, November 22, 1919.

²³Ibid., November 28, 1919.

²⁴Ibid.



In spite of the mayor's emphatic statements, Inches suddenly withdraw the permit on the day before the meeting. He forbade the appearance of Haywood but authorized the meeting to take place under police protection without him. In a telegram sent to Haywood, Inches warned that his appearance in Detroit would cause serious disorder because of his record in violent labor disputes, his opposition to American participation in the war, and because of his criticism of ex-servicemen. Clearly the Legion had not accepted Couzens' decision.²⁵

Haywood was scheduled to speak in Detroit again in December. This time the Charles A. Learned Post of the American Legion was joined by the Berle V. Pittneger Post in opposing the visit. The mayor and the chief of police were once again petitioned to deny permission for the meeting, and the Federal judge sitting in Chicago who had sentenced Haywood was asked to limit his movements to the jurisdiction of the court, pending the Supreme Court's opinion on his appeal. In Chicago, Federal Judge K. M. Landis said that he could do nothing to prevent Haywood from speaking in Detroit.²⁶ This time Haywood was allowed to speak. The police commissioner announced to those

²⁵Detroit Free Press, November 30, 1919.

²⁶The New York Times, December 18, 1919; Detroit News, December 17, 1919.



gathered for the meeting that it could continue as long as the speaker's words were within the law.²⁷

At the same time that Couzens and Commissioner Inches were meeting the crisis precipitated by Haywood's proposed visit, another radical meeting was scheduled for November 23, 1919. The public was promised that either Emma Goldman or Alexander Berkman would appear. Both had only recently completed jail sentences for obstructing the draft law and the appearance of either in Detroit was sure to further roil the Legionnaires and other middle-class citizens of Detroit.²⁸ Both Goldman and Berkman had had long experience in the give-and-take of radical politics, and when asked whether they feared interference by the Legion, they answered by raising questions about its conduct. Miss Goldman replied that interference by the Legion "wouldn't be Americanism. Those men are patriots, aren't they? Surely they would not break the law." Berkman simply replied, "they believe in free speech. So do we."²⁹ Although so many persons came to hear Miss Goldman that the police thought it wise to disperse those unable to get into the hall, there was no trouble.³⁰ Little wonder that two weeks later as she was being deported, Miss Goldman praised the courage of Couzens and Inches.

²⁷ Ibid., December 22, 1919.

²⁸ Ibid., November 22, 1919.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., November 24, 1919.



The appearance of Haywood, Goldman, and Berkman in Detroit seems to have had little more impact on the community than already recounted. At a clamer time the actions of Couzens and his commissioner of police would have gone unnoticed. Goldman's compliment to them indicated how unusual their position was, even though it was the only legal position they could have taken. She had experienced the restrictions on freedom of speech in other communities of the nation.³¹

Just seven months earlier, the mayor of Toledo forbade Eugene Debs to speak there. It turned out that Debs was too ill to speak. However, when a crowd tried to enter the hall to hear a substitute, the police interfered and 300 policemen restored order. Toledo's mayor subsequently announced that he would not allow anyone to speak publically who was even "suspected of radical tendencies."³² This kind of official posture, coupled with the raids directed by the Justice Department and pronouncements by civic and quasi-military organizations, created an atmosphere in which the individual's constitutional rights were severely restricted. The instances of mayors and police commissioners guaranteeing free speech to radicals were few indeed. The stand which Couzens, as mayor of Detroit, took

³¹Barnard, pp. 123-24.

³²Detroit News, April 1, 1919.



in defense of freedom of speech in these several instances, brought him national recognition once again. This time it came as a protector of the constitutional rights of all men regardless of beliefs and position.

But yet another test of his position on individual rights was shortly to follow. On January 2, 1920, the Justice Department conducted raids on radical groups in dozens of cities across the country. In Detroit the raids were conducted, as in November 1919, by the Detroit police, the State Constabulary, and the Department of Justice. Couzens later was to deny he had advance knowledge of the raid.³³ Nevertheless, Commissioner Inches, along with Superintendent of Police William P. Rutledge, the chief of detectives, and other police officials had directed 250 Detroit detectives and patrolmen in helping the Justice Department "break the back of radicalism" as expressed by the Department's chief agent in Detroit.³⁴

The major thrust in Detroit was directed at the House of the Masses which was a communist center. At the time of the first raid of that building on January 2, classes in physical geography and other sciences were being held in some of the rooms and a dance was going on in another. Ironically, the day before the raids, Couzens

³³Detroit Free Press, January 9, 1920.

³⁴Detroit News, January 3, 1920.



had been quoted as saying that "too much time and money is being spent to ward off the theoretical peril of an imported revolution and not enough to get at the root of the causes of the present social discontent." Annoyingly accurate in his appraisal of the situation, he had declared, "bolshevism is being used too much as a definition for anything disturbing our present social viewpoints." He continued, "I have no right, as mayor, to throttle free speech, here in Detroit. Indeed, criticism of the government is needful."³⁵

The officers who conducted the raids were indiscriminating. As they tightened the net, anyone caught therein was suspect. Hundreds of men were taken from the House of Masses into detention. Men drinking near-beer in a cafe located in the building were held. A nearby hall which was said to house the local office for the Industrial Workers of the World was raided and twenty-two men were held. By Sunday, January 5, 1920, 800 men were being detained for investigation. Many of them were citizens; many of them were innocent of radical interests; most of them were victims of illegal acts performed by law enforcement officers.³⁶

The men were largely confined in the fifth floor corridor of the old and outmoded Federal building. The

³⁶Detroit Free Press; Detroit News, January 5, 1920; Frederick R. Barkley, "Jailing Radicals in Detroit," Nation, CX (January 31, 1920), 136-37; Murray, pp. 212-22.



orders to raid radical headquarters in Detroit and elsewhere had not been preceded by preparation for the housing, feeding, and processing of those caught up in the raids. The fifth floor corridor was oppressively hot, ventilation was poor, no windows were in the corridor, the only light came through a skylight, only one drinking fountain was available to the hundreds of prisoners, sanitation facilities were inadequate, the families of the men had to provide most of the food for them once they were able to locate them, and the men were forced to sleep in their clothing on the floor.³⁷ This intolerable lack of concern for basic human needs and constitutional rights was not peculiar to Detroit. Federal Judge George W. Anderson of Boston spoke out against the raids with harsh and telling words: "A more lawless proceeding it is hard for anyone to conceive. Talk about Americanization! What we need is to Americanize people that are carrying on such proceedings as this."³⁸

By January 6, 1920, the Detroit News in editorial comment was reacting caustically to the raids, whereas earlier it had simply reported the raids without criticism. The editorial chided the Justice Department for its conduct, claiming that the raids were unwarranted. It was not

³⁷Barkley, p. 137; Detroit News, January 6, 1920.

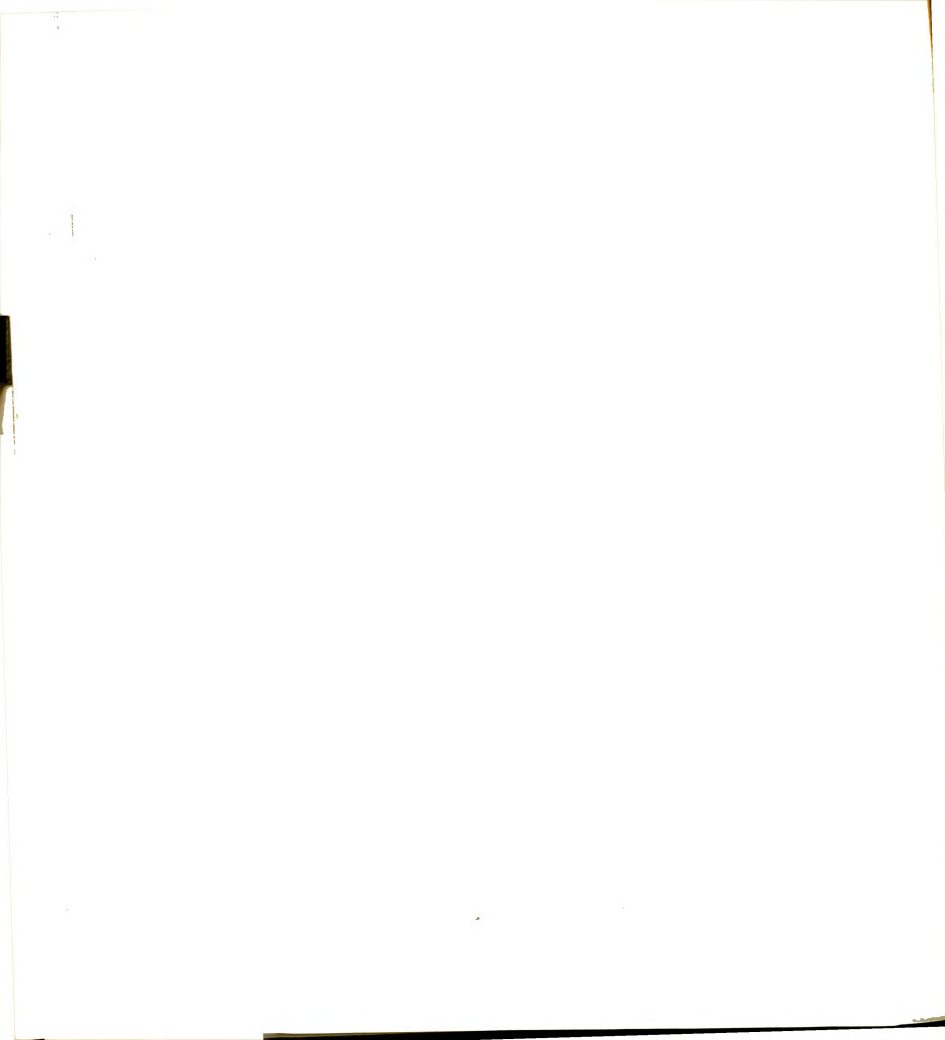
³⁸Coben, p. 238.



until January 7, 1920, that Couzens spoke out against the raids, some five days after they had begun. He stated that the Detroit police would not be used in any future raids by the Justice Department on radical groups in Detroit without his specific consent. He had not been consulted on the House of the Masses raid, he said. Now he had an understanding with Commissioner Inches. Couzens failed to comment on the November raids in which the police department had participated without reaction from him. Nor did he comment on the raids of May 1918, which were carried out in part by the Detroit police department when he was the police commissioner. Couzens had probably been either insensitive to or in accord with those raids; but the adverse reaction now setting in throughout the country as well as in Detroit may have awakened him to the need for action consistent with his January 1, 1920, pronouncements.³⁹

By January 13, the city council, at the suggestion of Mayor Couzens, called on the United States officials responsible for the prisoners to remove them from city buildings to the Fort Wayne Military Post located downriver from the business and governmental center of Detroit. Couzens had reported to the council on the deplorable conditions under which some prisoners were being held. He told the council that in one city building 128 men,

³⁹Detroit Free Press, January 7, 1920.



some of whom were diseased, had been held for five days in a basement room 24x30 feet. In this room, as in the Federal building, the men were forced to sleep on the floor, and were largely fed by contributions from relatives and friends. Returning to his old form, Couzens declared that the conditions were intolerable for a civilized city. On January 14, the men were transferred to Fort Wayne.⁴⁰

With these events the "Red Scare," evidenced in the spectacular occurrences of November, December, and early January, had spent itself in Detroit. By the latter part of January 1920, a new policy had been undertaken there by the Justice Department in the continuing effort to protect the country against subversive activities. The mass raids of November 1919, and early January 1920, which drew so much criticism, were abandoned for the individual detention of suspected persons. Nor was this change peculiar to Detroit. The raids had drawn fire throughout the country. By spring 1920, most Americans were ready to re-evaluate the significance of the threat of radicalism to the country. The Attorney General's effort to grind radicalism into the dust and rise victoriously into the White House had been misdirected. The honest concern of many Americans for the rights guaranteed by the nation's Constitution would not bow to one man's ambitions, nor

⁴⁰Detroit News, January 13, 1920, January 14, 1920.



bow to the unthinking actions of groups of frightened patriots.⁴¹

It appears from the evidence available on Couzens' performance during this period of reaction that he was often more willing to take a public stand on the abstract notion of individual rights than he was on concrete issues. While he talked about constitutional rights in the forum, the police department over which he had authority violated these rights in the marketplace. Although he announced that he had ordered his police department to protect Haywood and guarantee his right to speak, his police commissioner quietly forbade Haywood to appear in Detroit. Emma Goldman's evaluation was indeed relative to the times and her personal experiences in Detroit.

To a large extent Couzens was in the position of having to defend individual rights. He had built his political strength as a man of the people, a representative of the working people. So many of the working people were foreign born and not unfamiliar with nor frightened by the radical doctrines espoused by the speakers. In addition, it was they, the working-class foreign born, who were being singled out for Americanization and were being faced with deportation. Couzens did not jeopardize the support of his constituents by promoting freedom of speech.

⁴¹Ibid., January 21, 1920; Barkley, p. 137; Coben, p. 236; Robert D. Warth, "The Palmer Raids," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVIII (January, 1949), 1, 18.



Human Relations and the Negro
in Detroit

That Couzens' stated views on free speech served his political ambitions is not to argue insincerity on his part. It is possible, of course, to express one's sincere views and to further one's personal interests at the same time. That the actions of his police department were at times contrary to his views cannot be denied. The gap between pronouncement and performance bedevils more than a few administrators. However, the record which Couzens established in the area of human relations, particularly as it involved the Negro newcomer, shows that his commitment was genuine. One of the most difficult problems in the United States since the Civil War has been the task of providing the Negro with the same guarantees and opportunities which are given to others. The distance between pronouncement and performance has been oceanic. In the area of human relations as in no other the acid test of personal commitment is the stand and the actions which one is willing to take on matters which relate to the Negro. Here Couzens was able to reduce the distance between pronouncement and performance and bring the two closer together than they had ever been in the office of the mayor of Detroit.

Detroit had had Negro residents from the late 1700's on, but the number had been small. First they were brought as slaves, then they came as freedmen. Whatever



the paths which led them there, the few who came were able to fit into the community without notable resistance. Indeed, in the middle 1800's Detroit gained stature in the eyes of Negroes as a terminus of the underground railroad to Canada, and as such it was thought that the attitude of the community was not hostile to the Negro. The security of Canadian shores was close in any emergency. However, in the second decade of the twentieth century, the residents of Detroit, like the residents of other northern cities, were not prepared to accommodate the thousands of Negroes who came to work in the war industries and to take up a new life as Detroiters.⁴²

The Negro community took an interest in the Couzens' mayoral campaign from the start. It was felt that a man with the reputation he had for humanitarian concern could also be sympathetic with the needs of the growing Negro community in Detroit. In 1918, when the pastor of the Institutional Baptist Church asked simply that one colored girl be employed in Couzens' campaign headquarters, Couzens' campaign manager replied that he would be glad to take up the matter with Couzens. "Mr. Couzens, as you know," he continued, "will be Mayor of all the people and therefore you can depend on him looking after the interests of our

⁴²Henderson H. Donald, "The Negro Migration of 1916-1918," The Journal of Negro History, VI (October, 1921), 436.



colored people as well as any others."⁴³ This response may be interpreted as being harmless, certainly noncommittal. No evidence is available about the action Couzens took. The point is, however, that Couzens was being looked to by the Negro community for more than had been allowed it before, and both he and his campaign workers were carrying the Negro community along in that belief.

Shortly after his mayoral victory, another Negro resident of Detroit wrote Couzens, asking him to give Negroes the opportunity to serve on committees. He responded that he had already been in contact with John Dancy of the Detroit Urban League for the names of colored people to serve on the welcome home committee for the troops. "I am going to do all I can to see that the colored people get proper recognition while I am Mayor," he added. "I was very much interested in the development of the Negro race and in their assimilation with the rest of our people here. I had particular reference to those who were coming from the South in such large numbers."⁴⁴ True to his word the mayor did, for the first time in Detroit's history, name Negroes to city citizen committees;

⁴³Couzens Papers, Special Correspondence, Box 6, Letter, E. Wendell Edwards to H. G. Morgan, August 7, 1918. Letter, Frank Randell to Edwards, August 9, 1918.

⁴⁴Ibid., General Correspondence, Box 7, Letter, Couzens to George H. Green, December 1918.



he supported their employment efforts, and he contributed financially to the agencies working for the betterment of the Negro in Detroit.⁴⁵

The golden promise of the North was not realized by many of the Negroes who came to Detroit. Forrester B. Washington, John Dancy's predecessor as head of the Detroit Urban League, wrote in 1919 that housing in the several Negro sections was so scarce that "stables, garages and cellars have been converted into homes for Negroes." He went on to say that "the pool-rooms and gambling clubs are beginning to charge for the privilege of sleeping on pool-room tables over night."⁴⁶ One resident, severely agitated, wrote in the Detroit News Letter Box that her brother had been ordered to get into essential war work. When he applied at one factory, he was informed that he could not be employed because the other men would not work with him.⁴⁷ Another female correspondent of the Letter Box expressed her annoyance at the lack of employment opportunities for Negro girls. In addition, she was disturbed by the common belief in the white community that all, or most, Negroes were ignorant and that those who were educated were

⁴⁵ John C. Dancy, Sand Against the Wind (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1966), pp. 104-06, 138.

⁴⁶ Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, "Section V, Housing," The Negro In Detroit (Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, 1926), p. 1.

⁴⁷ Detroit News, September 16, 1918.



exceptions.⁴⁸ The fact was that, as the industrial cities of mid-west America attracted the unskilled and the semi-skilled Negro from the rural South, the middle-class Negro found his status threatened by the tendency of the white community to judge all Negroes alike, and that on the basis of the poorest and least educated segment of the population. The middle-class Negro was therefore as critical of lower-class Negroes as the whites, and disapproved of and was frustrated by the continued migration to Detroit of southern Negroes--much like Gompers vis-a-vis continued European immigration. It is interesting that Couzens singled out the welfare of the southern newcomers as of special interest to him. Obviously the problem of acculturation would be most pronounced for that group.

John Dancy, who pessimistically entitled the record of his forty years of effort for the betterment of the Negro in Detroit Sand Against the Wind, wrote movingly of his efforts to find employment for Negroes with the city government during the post-war years. Without official authority of any kind, he was forced to base his work on personality and persuasion. It was a tedious and extremely slow job which carried him from city department to city department. Patiently he talked to commissioners and department superintendents of the need for employing Negroes. In spite of the slow pace, he had begun to feel

⁴⁸Ibid., August 28, 1918.



that he was making some progress when he encountered a department head who said that he had no intentions of ever employing a Negro in his department as long as he was in charge. Patience would serve no purpose; it was time to test the principles of the mayor. Dancy spoke to Couzens about the matter and was in turn invited to visit with him the next day. On his way into the mayor's office he met the same department head coming out. The man stopped Dancy and said that on giving Dancy's request a second thought, he had concluded that it would be a good thing for him to employ some of those people. That Couzens had intervened in the matter appears clear.

Dancy reported a similar experience in connection with the Detroit Street Railway where only the most menial jobs were available to Negroes. In general, the employment office was closed to them. When he told the mayor that discrimination was being practiced there, he was instructed to get an affidavit. Going to the employment office, he applied for a job and was told that Negroes were not employed there. With this first-hand experience recorded, he went back to Couzens who picked up the phone, called the D.S.R., "and fairly lifted the roof off the place. Negroes started to work there right away after that."⁴⁹

The promises of the politician as politician are made for the vote-attracting qualities they are hoped to

⁴⁹Dancy, p. 108.



possess. They may be fulfilled and then post-election conditions may dictate that they not be fulfilled. The politician as administrator, which was the role which Couzens played so successfully, is faced not only with the demands of practical politics, but also with the problem of implementing the policies which he supports. He must see that the policies of his administration are in fact being implemented at the lower levels where the public encounters the city government and experiences the frustration of inaction or abuse. In spite of Couzens' position that department heads, once he had selected them, were to run their own departments, he was willing in the sensitive area of race relations to involve himself directly. The Negro community was grateful for this.

But there were considerations other than simple justice which led Couzens to take the position he did. The war period and the post-war period saw much racial disorder in America. Residents of East St. Louis, Chicago, and other major urban centers of the North saw Negro and white blood shed in their streets.⁵⁰ The carnage of the summer of 1919 was so great that it earned the title of the "red summer," "red" not in political doctrine, but in human blood. Couzens was deeply concerned lest similar disorder befall Detroit.

⁵⁰ George E. Mowry, ed., The Twenties: Fords, Flappers, and Fanatics (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 126-29.



His concern was clearly revealed in statements and actions during his mayoralty and, of course, particularly during the period of national racial unrest. In his report on the first year of his administration he specifically cited the fact that during the turmoil of 1919, Detroit had experienced no racial outbreaks. In September 1921, he forbade the showing in Detroit of the film Birth of a Nation. The film portrayed the rise of the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War, presenting it as a noble group of dedicated men organized to defend the Southern Way of Life against the outlandish, corrupt, and bestial behavior of emancipated Negro slaves. Couzens' action was prompted by protests against the showing of the film by local Negro organizations. The basis for his ban against the film was that it would stir racial prejudice to the point where disorder would result. The tensions of the time no doubt prompted both the Negro community and Couzens to react adversely to the film, but another factor may have been Couzens' willingness to respond positively to requests from the Negro community. For, during 1918, prior to Couzens' mayoralty, the same film had been featured in Detroit for a fourteen-week run without record of public reaction.⁵¹

In the fall of 1922, Couzens was once again asked to correct discrimination against Detroit's Negroes. It

⁵¹Detroit Free Press, September 18, 1921, September 23, 1921.



was reported to him that Negroes were being shunted into segregated sections in Detroit theaters. Again, as with John Dancy's charge against the D.S.R. Couzens asked for a documentation of the charges. After this was provided, he wrote an official of the Orpheum Theatre that charges of racial discrimination had been placed against the theater and its license would be revoked unless the treatment of Negroes could be shown to be in compliance with the law against racial discrimination.⁵²

I have discovered only one lapse of sensitivity to the problems of the Negro community which would raise serious question about Couzens' genuine concern for the welfare of all the people, including Negroes. In a letter to the general manager of the Employers' Association of Detroit in the spring of 1921, he expressed concern for the incendiary effect statements published in a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People pamphlet might have on the races in Detroit. The pamphlet asserted that at the January 1921, annual meeting of the Employers' Association, it had been recommended that no more Negroes be employed in Detroit's industrial plants and that the employers get rid of all Negro employees as soon as possible because they had failed to perform adequately. Couzens asked the manager whether this particular statement was

⁵² Mayors Papers, Box 4, Letter, Couzens to J. W. Rawlins, November 1, 1922. Letter, Couzens to Charles Miles, November 3, 1922.



true, for if it was not true he wanted to stop that sort of propaganda. Then he wrote: "If your Association did take such an action you may be at liberty to say without my using it, if that is your request, and I will just drop the matter." He offered no condemnation of the act charged to the Employers' Association by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

As chief custodian of the peace of the city, Couzens' desire to crush propaganda which might be harmful to the city is understandable. However, his willingness to drop the matter was inconsistent with the humanitarian face he displayed to his Negro correspondents. His stand shows him in the service of several masters in the effort to keep the city operating and the interest groups at ease. Surely the loss of employment to thousands of Negroes would have been more explosive than was the NAACP's charge, true or not, against the Employers' Association of Detroit. There is no record of a response to Couzens by the Employers' Association, nor is there evidence that the Employers' Association acted on the proposal.⁵³

The Negro community, far removed from the action of the inner circles in government and industry, was not to know of the compromises which Couzens made in his day-to-day administration of the city government. From its viewpoint out on the edges, Couzens' responses to its

⁵³ Ibid., Letter, Couzens to Chester M. Culver, May 10, 1921; Scott pp. 130-33.



requests were favorable. To the newcomers who made up the majority of the Negro population, conditions in the North, though less than desired and expected, were an improvement. In this situation legitimate grievances may not have been recognized by them or may have been written off.

Couzens' actions in behalf of the Negro community were restricted to responses to charges of discrimination made to him by Negroes and requests for employment opportunities made by Negroes. He did not initiate actions to benefit the Negro or right wrongs suffered by him. In this latter instance, he was no different from his predecessors. His uniqueness in the area of race relations was that, when he was presented with cases of discrimination by members of the Negro community, those involved could count on a fair decision. In those days in Detroit a fair decision was a decided improvement over the inaction or rejection experienced in the past. Couzens did not fear to take the socially unpopular position when he believed that it was the right position.

John Dancy, who had a friendly working relationship with Couzens and received financial support from him for the work of the Urban League, thought him to be one of the finest men he ever met. "Couzens was to all appearances a cold, austere type of individual," Dancy has observed. "But he had a heart of pure gold. He would do things for people; he was interested."⁵⁴

⁵⁴Dancy, p. 138.



Conclusion

Emma Goldman's evaluation of Commissioner Inches and Mayor Couzens as protectors of individual freedom is valid, when measured by the times and her personal experiences in Detroit. But of the two city officials, Inches seems much less deserving of the compliment than Couzens. Inches' ready participation in raids which violated individual rights, his abrupt cancellation of the speech scheduled for William D. Haywood after repeated public statement that it would be allowed, indicate that he was more concerned with peace than with principle.

As for Couzens, he was never in his pronouncements or in his actions able to resolve the conflict between individual rights and the social good. He recognized that individual rights may not be in the best interest of the greatest number. What seems to have eluded his grasp is that the greatest good for the greatest number may not be to the best interest of the individual. Yet, ironically, as an individual he could stolidly withstand the censure of the majority.

It may have been due to his concern for the majority in society which led him to ignore the individual. For in every instance I have examined which involves his taking a stand on individual rights, he became involved only when the matter was brought to his attention by a private source or after it had become a public issue.



When he made a decision, however, he acted with meticulous concern for the legal rights of the individual. It is on this basis that his reputation can be sustained. When he applied the law, he applied it universally and with impartiality.



CHAPTER VII

MAYOR TO SENATOR: A DREAM FULFILLED

The Mayoral Election of 1921

In 1921, Couzens ran for re-election as mayor of Detroit for a second term. He assured the voters that he would be there two years hence to finish the job he had started in January 1918, when he first undertook to set aright the municipal services of the city which had been strained nearly to the breaking point by the sacrifices demanded by the war effort and the unregulated growth of population.¹ This promise was not fulfilled. One year after he had begun his second term as mayor, the opportunity of which he had dreamed came. In spite of friendly, and unfriendly, reminders that Detroit needed him to carry it into prosperity and order in a peaceful world, he left.² The election of 1921 had served him well.

Early in 1921 it seemed doubtful whether he would be physically able to withstand the rigors of even another

¹Detroit Free Press, May 18, 1921.

²Detroit News, November 28, 1922; Detroit Free Press, November 30, 1922.

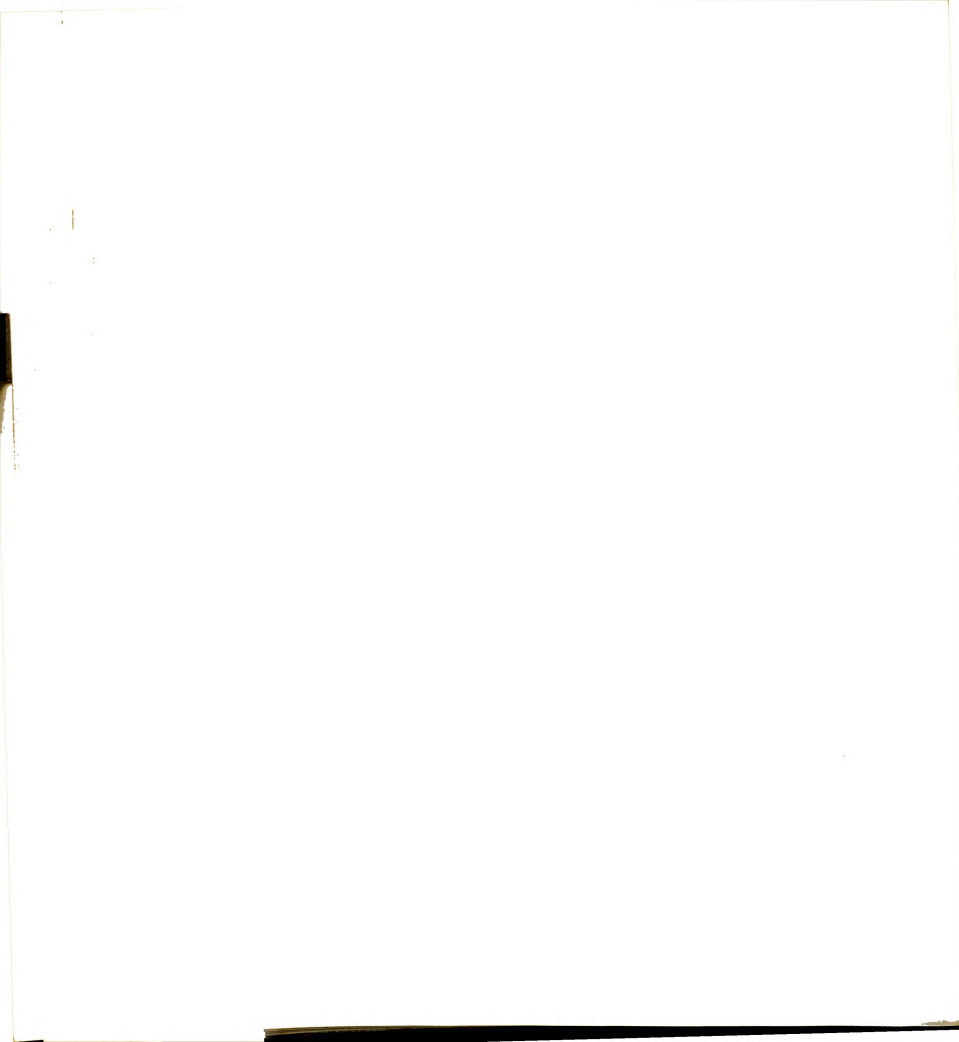


two-year term as mayor. Illness plagued him increasingly and necessitated long absences from his office. At the end of December 1920, he had undergone a gallstone operation; his surgeon had predicted that no more than a fortnight would be required for recuperation.³ Instead, complications developed which required weeks of additional medical treatment and rehabilitation.⁴ The seriousness of the illness led observers to believe that he would be incapable of returning to the full responsibilities of the mayor's office. With the publicity attendant to a mayor of Detroit, it was inevitable that his political future would become a topic of discussion by the newspapers and thus by their readers. In those early days of the election year prior to any official word from the mayor, speculation grew about the candidates who would struggle to succeed him. Commissioner Inches appeared to be a strong contender, as well as did Oscar Marx, Couzens' predecessor. Whatever Couzens thought of Inches, the threat of a return of the city to Marx and his supporters was nearly enough in and of itself to raise Couzens from his bed of affliction. However, at this time he did not respond personally to efforts made to force him to declare his intentions.⁵

³Ibid., January 1, 1921.

⁴Ibid., January 14, 1921, January 25, 1921.

⁵Ibid., January 26, 1921.



During the winter weeks of January and February 1921, he was a very sick man. His political future may have looked dim even to him. But under the healing rays of the Florida sun and with the onset of spring, he came around. Soon reports were coming back that fitted the well-publicized super-human role which he had played so long. Whether contrived for political expediency or not, he was pictured as an uncontrollably active patient vigorously going through rehabilitation activities as if to guarantee an extra measure of good health for the years ahead.⁶ Finally, then, on May 17, he officially announced his decision to become a candidate for re-election, took out the required nominating petitions, and asserted that his health was sufficiently improved to allow him to serve for another term.⁷ With this, the political figures who were rumored to aspire to the mayor's office did not declare their candidacy. In fact, not one first-rate candidate declared; not one dared to risk political defeat by Couzens.

As the incumbent, he was in a very strong position.⁸ Not insignificantly, he had five years of full-time public

⁶Detroit News Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 4, p. 196.

⁷Detroit Free Press, May 18, 1921.

⁸Donald S. Hecock, Detroit Voters and Recent Elections (Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., 1938), p. 66.



office behind him and three years of service as a member of the Detroit Street Railway Commission. The great political strength which he had built was not based on a political machine, party support, or even the support of the wealthy and privileged class of Detroit.⁹ His strength, as was Hazen Pingree's, was based on the support of the people, the masses of workers who swelled Detroit's population and felt alien to and uncared for in the inner offices of Detroit's policy makers. He was not a ward or precinct boss, but he was as close to one as the reform charter would allow. He could deliver the vote.

Couzens' major opponent in the election was Daniel W. Smith, president of a company which produced heaters for streetcars.¹⁰ Smith was willing to face the formidable candidacy of Couzens because he had nothing to lose politically, but a great deal to lose economically. A political nonentity whose company was likely to suffer from municipalization of Detroit's street railway company, he was in the untenable position of being beholden to the Detroit United Railway Company for sale of his heaters and having to deal effectively with the municipal ownership issue which had strong public support without upsetting the Detroit United Railway and his own company. The

⁹Barnard, p. 121.

¹⁰"Mayor Couzens' Re-election," National Municipal Review, XI (January, 1922), 12.



municipally owned street railway system had been in operation since February.¹¹ Now in fall 1921, Couzens was pushing the D.U.R. In fact, an ordinance to oust the company from key portions of the Woodward and Fort Street lines was submitted to the voters for their approval at the same election that the mayor's race was to be decided.¹² Smith was ill-prepared for the contest.

Throughout the campaign Couzens spent considerable effort in challenging Smith to debate the issues and Smith showed considerable skill in dodging face-to-face confrontation with Couzens.¹³ It was not until the week before the November election that Couzens and Smith appeared on the same platform. The meeting was held in the new General Motors Company building on West Grand Boulevard and was sponsored by the North End Republican Club. Couzens had a decided advantage over Smith. He had the record of years in public office which Smith was unable to discredit and a large and loyal following.¹⁴ Smith's campaign was guided by Edward T. Fitzgerald, the political manager, who served Couzens in 1918 and Oscar Marx in the years preceding.

¹¹O'Geran, p. 345.

¹²Ibid., pp. 354-55.

¹³Detroit News, October 25, 1921, October 27, 1921.

¹⁴Ibid., November 4, 1921.



As skillful as Fitzgerald was at hopping from one administration to another, he was not skillful enough to raise Smith above political incompetence.

One of the major issues of the campaign discussed by Smith was a \$100,000 payment made to engineer H. P. Hevenor by the city for his work related to the construction of the municipally owned street railway system. Smith stated that the fee was exorbitant. Couzens disagreed. He outlined the services rendered and the expense to Hevenor for the services. In Couzens' estimation the fee was equitable.¹⁵ Couzens argued that Smith was a tool of the Detroit United Railway, declaring that the heaters Smith made were outmoded and unsuitable for use in the city's system. He pressed Smith to declare for the municipal ownership of all street railway lines in Detroit.¹⁶ He used his record as the independent, fearless, and incorruptible administrator to meet the charges laid against him by Smith.¹⁷ To the charge that the Detroit News controlled him, he said, much to the delight of husbands and newly enfranchised females that he had only one boss and that was his wife.¹⁸ On another occasion he responded

¹⁵Ibid., November 4, 1921.

¹⁶Ibid., November 2, 1921.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.



to the same charge with the statement: "I have only one boss and that boss is the people."¹⁹ He had indeed become a fine in-fighter in the vicious arena of municipal politics.

Smith's campaign in no way endangered his re-election. In November, Couzens polled 65 per cent of the mayoral vote--72,198 to 38,895. Just three years earlier he had defeated William J. Connolly for the mayoral post 45,013 to 36,405. In 1921, Smith polled 2,490 votes more than Connolly had in 1918. Whereas, Couzens received 27,185 more votes than he had previously received. Understandably gratified by this show of voter support, he declared himself encouraged to finish the job he had started in 1919.²⁰

The political strength which he revealed did not go unnoticed by Republican party leaders in the state. With this second mayoral victory, he had shown himself to be a winning politician.²¹ He was no freak reformer to be turned out of office after the public indignation which had spawned him had subsided. Based on his fight for municipal ownership as a D.S.R. commissioner, 1913-1916;

¹⁹Detroit Times, September 17, 1922.

²⁰Detroit News, November 9, 1921; "Mayor Couzens' Re-election," National Municipal Review, XI (January, 1922), 12.

²¹Woodford, p. 190.



his salvaging of Oscar Marx in the mayoral election of 1916; and his two victorious mayoral campaigns, in 1918 and 1921, by fall 1921, he was a strong political figure.²² This record would stand him in good stead when in the fall of the following year United States Senator Truman H. Newberry, a wealthy Detroit industrialist, handed his resignation to Governor Alexander J. Groesbeck.

Newberry had been under attack since his primary campaign for the senate seat of William Alden Smith in 1918. Anti-Newberry forces had sought to discredit him for violation of legislation restricting the personal contributions of candidates to their own campaigns. The Detroit News had conducted a persistent struggle to unseat him, alleging that money had been spent freely to buy the support of influential men and secure the primary election victory. Over the years that the battle was fought, aspirants for Newberry's post had not been hard to find. But Couzens, although aware of the issue, refrained from commenting on it.

The charges of corruption placed against Newberry were in direct contrast to the wide reputation which Couzens had built for incorruptibility. Increasingly the issue of Newberryism which reverberated through the state from fall 1918 through 1922 resembled the issues of machine

²²William Hard, "Coming: Couzens of Detroit," Hearst's International, XLI (May, 1922), 22-23, 69-70.



politics and corruption in Detroit government raised by the municipal reform movement which had swept Couzens into power. Perhaps the same man who had brought honest administration to Detroit could replace Newberry and redeem Michigan's honor in the United States Senate. It was undoubtedly a thought in the minds of many Michiganians as they read of Newberryism and Michigan's disgrace.

Events Leading to Newberry's Resignation

More than any other individual, Henry Ford contributed to the downfall of Truman H. Newberry. Ford possessed the personal resources, the righteousness, and the motivation to press the charge of corruption to its bitter end. The Newberry campaign was said to have cost more than \$176,000 a figure far in excess of the \$3,750, i.e., half the senatorial salary for one year, authorized by the Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1911. However, the sum spent by Ford to bring Newberry to bay may have rivaled the expenditures of the Newberry campaign.²³ Whatever the cost to Ford, it was worth it to him to see that justice was done.²⁴

As honorable as Ford's intentions may in fact have been, his personal involvement in the senatorial election

²³Ervin, pp. 43-44, 70.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 21-25, 30, 50, 106.



of 1918 gives support to the belief that he was seeking revenge for the defeat he suffered in that race. He believed that his campaign for the Senate had had the personal endorsement of President Wilson.²⁵ Indeed, the Democratic State conference had called for Ford as a compromise candidate for both parties. This, of course, would have assured Ford of the office. Not only was this request rejected by the Republicans but he was beaten, unfairly he thought, in the Republican primary election race. As the victor in the Democratic primary, he faced Newberry in the November election for the office and was again defeated. If he could not have the senatorial office, his subsequent action showed that he was determined that Newberry would not keep it.²⁶

As early as August 1918, reaction was noted to the expenditures being made by the Newberry group. Spencer Ervin, in his study of the contest, reported that on September 2, 1918, the Escanaba Journal called the Newberry campaign one which "outclasses the money barrel campaigns of 20 and 30 years ago, and if the campaign is to continue unchallenged it will create a condition which must evitably [sic] mean the debauchery of Michigan politics." The same newspaper commented that, "if Newberry were elected he would be denied a seat in the Senate because the Democrats would have no difficulty in proving illegal use of

²⁵Ibid., p. 39.

²⁶Ibid., p. 18.



money."²⁷ According to Ervin's account, newspaper commentary on the Newberry campaign expenditures continued throughout the campaign. The filing of the Newberry Committee's report of contributions and expenditures in early September, officially stated to be \$178,856 in contributions and \$176,568.08 in expenditures, only served to intensify the feeling that the Newberry group was corrupt.²⁸

In looking back at the years of political and legal fighting which followed the elections, the student of the period may wonder at the stupid arrogance and blatancy with which the Newberry group conducted its campaign, persisting on a course clearly contrary to the reform sentiment of the time. How ironic that Paul H. King, chairman of the charter commission which drew up the good government charter of 1918 for Detroit, should serve as manager of the Newberry campaign, which was characterized as corrupt machine politics.²⁹

Ervin has shown that in the days which immediately followed the primary election, Ford appeared to accept the defeat. A company spokesman explained that he was not so well known in the out-state areas as in Wayne County; otherwise, he would have won easily. The absurdity

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 21-26, 78-79.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.



of this response is so obvious that its sincerity is placed in question.³⁰ Ford was not merely well known in Wayne County and in Michigan, he was well known throughout the world. If either of the candidates suffered from anonymity, it had to be Newberry. What may have seemed to be the spokesman's sportsmanlike acceptance of defeat was quickly reversed when, on November 15, 1918, the secretary of Ford's campaign club requested that a Congressional committee investigate the Newberry primary campaign.³¹

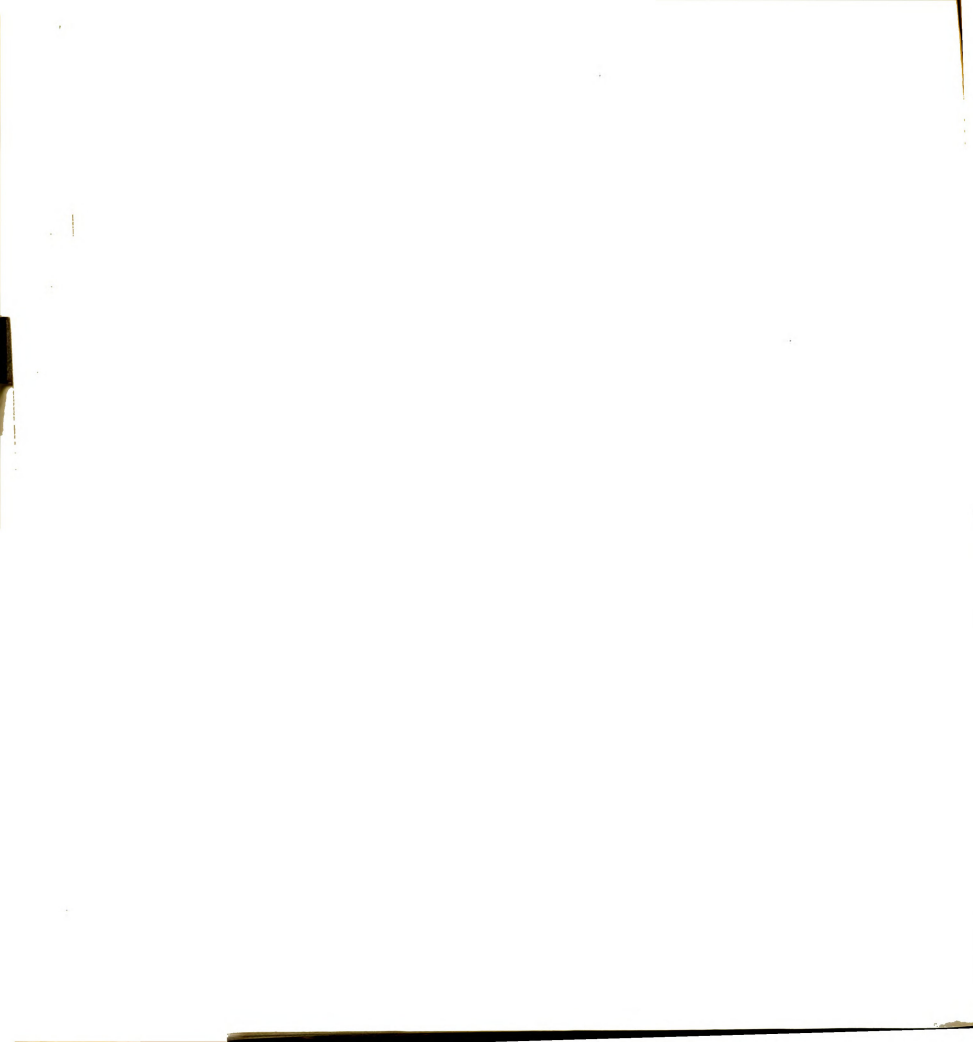
According to Ervin, the action requested of Congress was still in the legislative mill when in October 1918, the Federal Department of Justice announced that after investigation "it had decided to bring before a Federal grand jury in Grand Rapids, Michigan fraud charges arising out of the nomination and election of Mr. Newberry." Based on evidence disclosed before this grand jury, Newberry and 134 others were bound over for trial.³² The court found Newberry guilty and on March 20, 1920, he was sentenced to two years in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary and fined \$10,000 for violation of the State and Federal Corrupt Practices Acts.³³ That decision was later

³⁰Ibid., p. 29.

³¹Ibid., pp. 29, 38-39.

³²Ibid., p. 41.

³³Detroit News, March 21, 1920.



overthrown when the United States Supreme Court declared that Congress did not have the "constitutional power to enact a law governing primary elections, in the several states, for the election of Federal officers." With this Newberry was cleared of any criminal act. Decisive legislative action regarding his seat in the Senate had yet to be taken, although the 65th Congress had seated him as a matter of due procedure pending investigation.³⁴

Finally on January 12, 1922, the issue involving the seating of Newberry was brought to a vote in the Senate. After acrimonious and heated debate, he was seated, but for that Congress only. Even after the decision to seat him there was talk about displacing him. He was not allowed to merge into the busy world of Senate activities.³⁵

Over the years following Newberry's election, Michigan's senior senator, Charles E. Townsend, had been placed in the unenviable position of defending his Republican colleague. Townsend was not wealthy, and depended on the party machinery to support his political activities in the state. Unfortunately, the year which saw the seating of Newberry in the Senate, and Townsend voting in support of Newberry, was an election year for Townsend. Voters

³⁴Ervin, p. 76, n. 4.

³⁵Ibid., p. 99.



had no time to forget and forgive as they became immersed in new issues. In 1922, Newberryism was a national political issue; any Republican who had voted to seat him was vulnerable. In Michigan, as in several other states, it was the issue which decided the senatorial contest.³⁶

As early as May 1922, Hearst's International magazine, a publication owned by William Randolph Hearst, who also owned the Detroit Times, declared to its American audience that "if your Senator is up for re-election, and if he supported Newberry vote against him. That Newberry owes his presence in Washington to illegal use of money cannot be disputed."³⁷ Not only had Newberryism become an issue for the 1922 senatorial election in Michigan, it was being made an issue in state elections across the nation. Coincidentally, perhaps, in the same copy of Hearst's International which urged the defeat of Newberry, an article appeared on Couzens. Entitled "Coming: Couzens of Detroit," the author described Couzens' physical vigor, his incorruptibility, and the outstanding record he had made in his administration of Detroit's city government. The author stated that if anybody wanted to support Couzens in a bid for the Senate, he could be sure that he would fare no better than the man who spent a million

³⁶Detroit Free Press, November 20, 1922.

³⁷Hearst's International, XLI (May, 1922), 6.



to keep him from becoming a senator.³⁸ The allusion to Newberryism was unmistakable.

Whatever Couzens' plans for the Senate, the summer of 1922 was not the time for him to launch his campaign. In spite of the unbounded vigor and physical stamina described in the Hearst's article on Couzens, he was again experiencing intense suffering and had to undergo surgery once again.³⁹ As it shaped up, the November election was between Townsend, the incumbent, and Woodbridge N. Ferris, the Democrat ex-reform governor of Michigan (1913-1916).

Townsend, as he travelled throughout the state, sought to avoid the Newberry issue. At no time did he voluntarily discuss the issue and defend the support he had given to Newberry. For Ferris "Newberryism" was the cry. The Detroit News lent its powerful voice to Ferris' cry and Henry Ford, unflagging in his pursuit of Newberry, appeared on the public platform in support of Ferris.

Couzens, safe in the non-partisan pose he presented as mayor of Detroit and isolated from the events by illness and a long period of recuperation, did not participate in the partisan struggle. Yet Couzens, who in 1918 had aspired to the senatorial post which Newberryism had dishonored, was not one whit less ambitious than he had always

³⁸Hard, p. 69.

³⁹Detroit News, June 10, 1922, June 25, 1922, August 1, 1922.

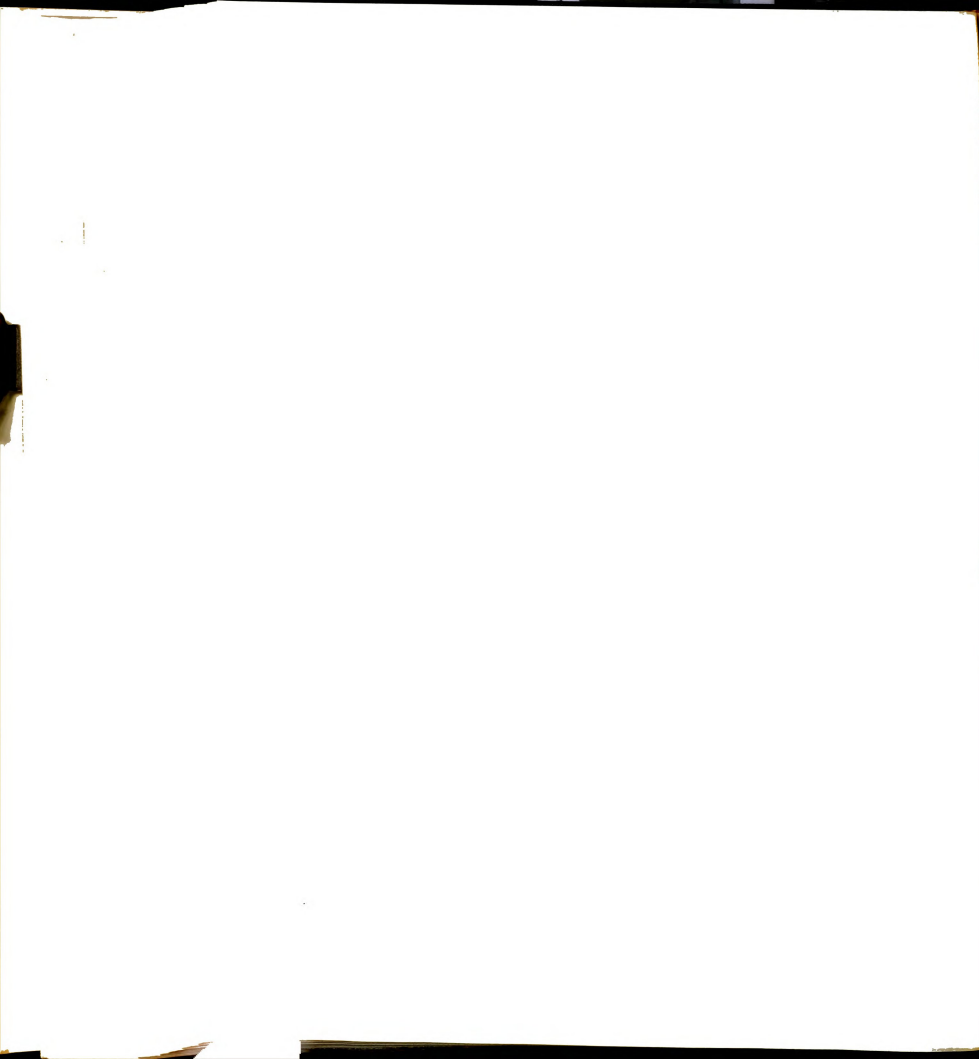


been. Politically, he was riding high in the wake of the successful termination of the thirty-year battle for municipalization of the street railway system. This had been accomplished effective May 15, 1922. He had won the battle, and now the summer of 1922, as he lay fighting illness, his victory over machine politics and corruption in the country's fourth largest city was reviewed by newspapers and magazines throughout the state and the nation.

During the summer and into the fall, individuals personally interested in Newberry's post and others with candidates they wished to sponsor for it brought this information to Governor Groesbeck's attention. Groesbeck was in no position either to comment or to act since Newberry was declared to be a duly elected senator. Yet in spite of Groesbeck's and Newberry's inaction, rumors persisted that Newberry would resign from office.

On election day, November 7, 1922, the issue was settled and Newberry's course was clear. His supporter, Charles E. Townsend, was defeated by Ferris, the first Democrat elected to the Senate from Michigan in seventy years.⁴⁰ In seven other states Democrats succeeded to senate seats formerly held by Republicans. At least eight Newberry supporters had been defeated, and in their defeat so had he been defeated. In a letter dated November 18, 1922, addressed to Governor Groesbeck, he resigned. He

⁴⁰ "What Happened in Michigan," Nation, CXV (November 22, 1922), 544.



said that the motivating force for his action was the defeat of Senator Townsend. Bitterly he recounted the four years of legal, and political action which had been conducted against him. He said that he believed that the Supreme Court's reversal of his conviction and the decision of the Senate that he was entitled to his seat had shown him innocent of the charges. "If in the future there seems to be opportunities for public service," he concluded, "I shall not hesitate to offer my service to the State which I love and the country I revere."⁴¹

Groesbeck Chooses Couzens

No evidence has been found to show that Couzens initiated contact with Governor Groesbeck concerning the senatorial seat vacated by the Newberry resignation. There was hardly need for him to review his qualifications; they were already well known. He had never denied his interest in the Senate. During his years of full-time public service his name had been prominently placed on all lists of potential Republican candidates for senatorial seats. In 1918, he had talked to a number of associates about the contest of that year to replace William Alden Smith. Wisely, in view of the outcome, he had drawn back from that contest and successfully pursued the office of mayor of Detroit. In 1922, when the Republican incumbent of the

⁴¹Ervin, pp. 101-02.



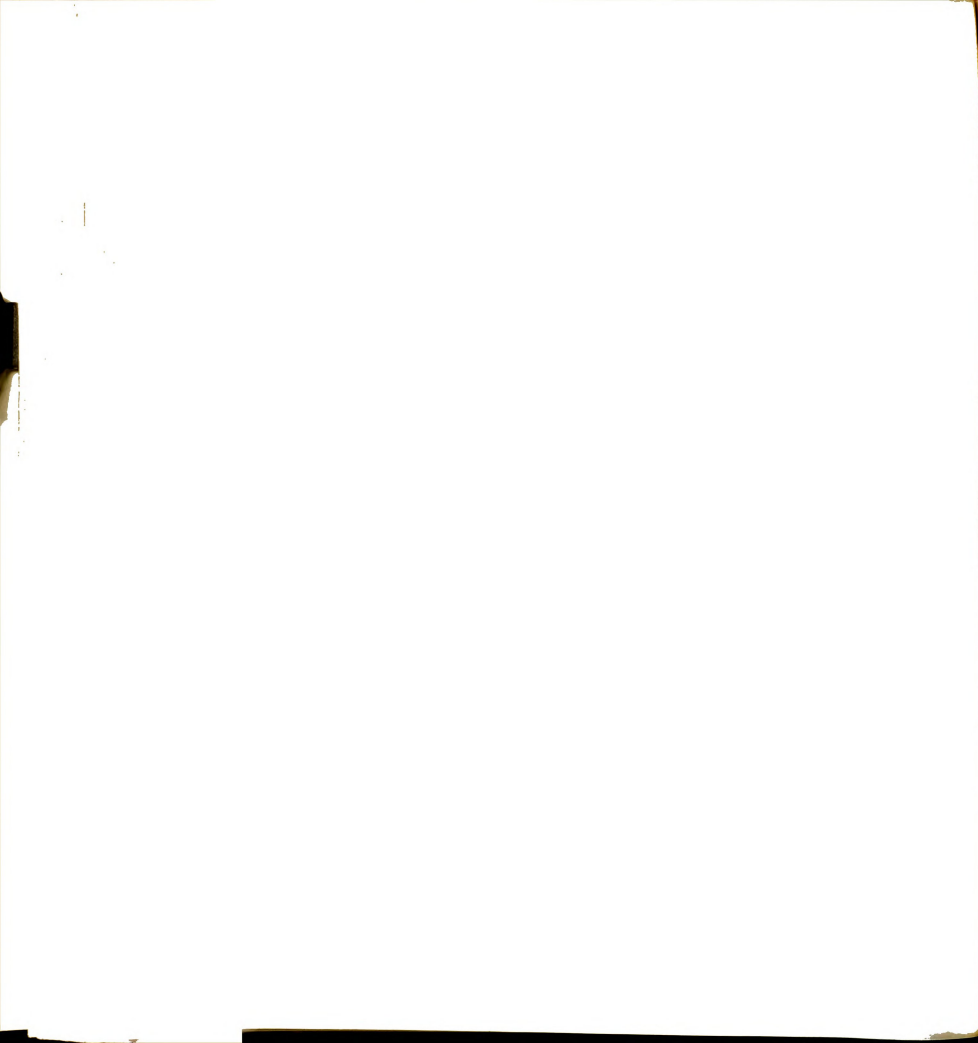
other senatorial seat was seeking re-election, with all the advantages usually enjoyed by the incumbent, Couzens was physically indisposed anyway. But now in November he was back in the mayor's office flexing his muscles and asserting his physical fitness. Groesbeck was well aware that he was a candidate for the appointment.

The pressure placed on Groesbeck to appoint particular candidates grew so heavy in the days which immediately followed Newberry's resignation that he announced some of the qualifications he would seek in the man he appointed. No doubt concerned with the persistent allegations that he would resign and accept the appointment, or that he would appoint a weak man who would be expected not to run for re-election, Groesbeck stated that he would appoint Newberry's successor and the man appointed would be expected to run for re-election in 1924. He went on to say that the appointee would be a man satisfactory to the people, one whose stand on public issues qualified him to deal with the problems before the Senate.⁴² In addition, the appointee had to be above the control of big business and favorable to labor.⁴³ Another requirement, though unspoken at this time, was that the appointee believe in Republican party government.⁴⁴ With a Democrat reformer in one of

⁴²Detroit News, November 20, 1922.

⁴³Ibid., November 22, 1922, November 23, 1922.

⁴⁴Barnard, p. 137.



Michigan's senatorial seats, Republican Groesbeck may have wanted a reformer to replace Newberry, but hardly a Democratic one.

Public awareness that Couzens was a serious candidate for the post led some of his Detroit associates to present an unusual argument in opposition to his appointment. It was said that there was still too much work to be done in Detroit for Couzens to leave. The city, they argued, could ill afford to lose him. Even the Common Council, including its president, John C. Lodge, voiced support of the plea. When Couzens learned that Councilman Fred W. Castator was preparing to present a resolution to council calling for him to continue as mayor, he was forced to take positive action to prevent the killing of his dream. Expression of sentiment of this kind might be helpful, but a public pronouncement against his appointment, whatever the motivation, would more likely be harmful. Castator was persuaded not to introduce the resolution.⁴⁵ Couzens was fully prepared to break his promise to the people of Detroit that, if elected for a second term, he would serve a full term.

Groesbeck's task of selecting the right man for the job was greatly affected by his need to consider the political consequences of his action. He believed that the man would have to be selected from southeastern

⁴⁵Detroit News, November 28, 1922.



Michigan. This consideration in itself eliminated many of the aspirants for the post. Chase S. Osborn, the former governor, 1911-1912, was apparently a strong candidate with respect to the organized drive to gain the appointment for him. However, not only was he from the Upper Peninsular, but he had been defeated in the preceding primary election and stood little chance of receiving the appointment.⁴⁶

Couzens was not a strong contender for the appointment with respect to organized and vocal party support. He was a strong contender based on the personal qualifications sought and he was an acceptable Republican.

As Groesbeck carried out his selection process, Couzens' strength as a contender was recognized and reported in the local press. His major opponent in the contest emerged as Marion L. Burton, president of The University of Michigan. Both the work of Burton at the University and the governor's affection for his alma mater made Burton a strong contender for the appointment, though his background as an educator had hardly equipped him for a political role. As with Couzens, some of Burton's friends (in this instance certain regents of the University) argued that his departure would hamper programs underway at Michigan. They voiced the sentiment that he should not leave at such a crucial time. To allay those fears, Burton seemingly a vain and confident man, announced that

⁴⁶Keen, pp. 66-67.



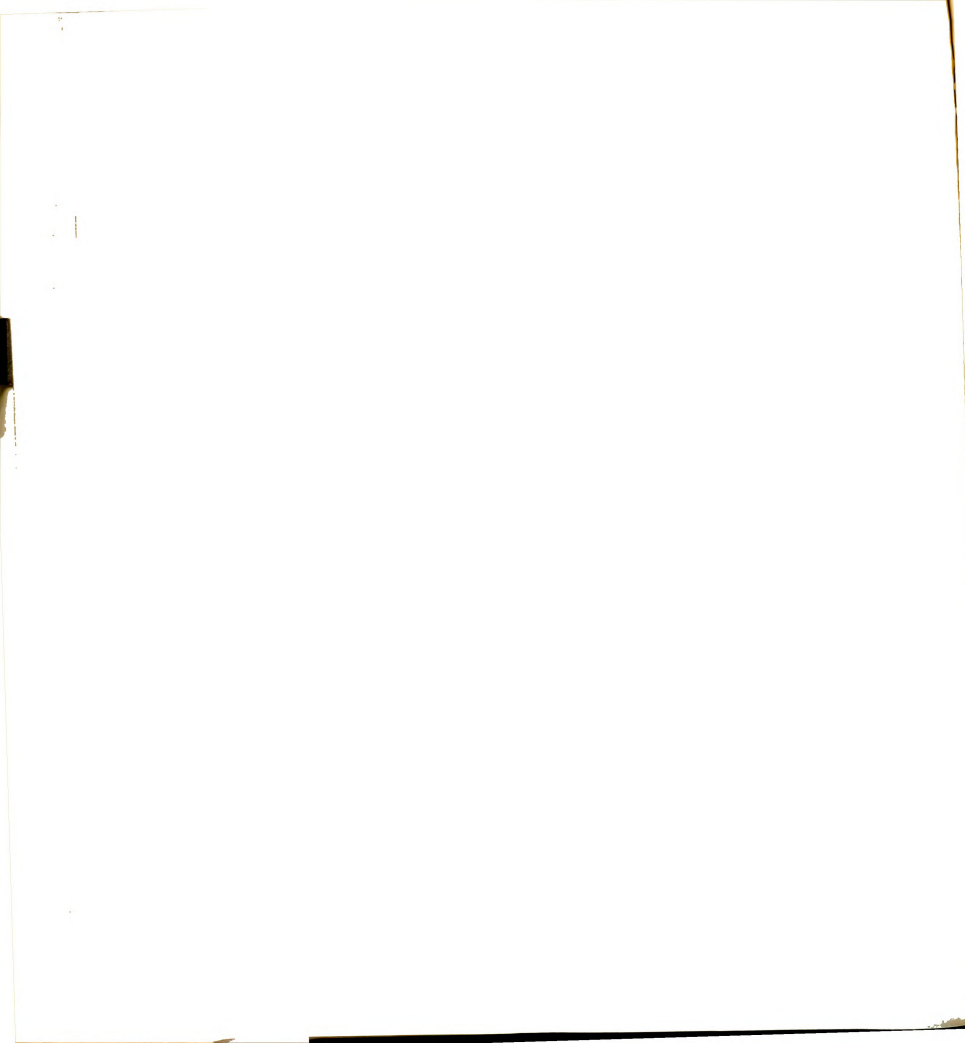
if appointed he would keep both jobs. Several of his admirers disagreed. The problems of The University of Michigan alone were too big for one man, they contended.⁴⁷

As the two front runners in the contest to be decided by Governor Groesbeck approached the finish line, the spectators were unsure about the outcome. There was no real clue yet whether it would be Couzens, Burton, or perhaps some unnoticed sprinter suddenly surging ahead of the faltering leaders. The long-time newsman and observer of Detroit's political life, Frank Woodford, has described the days which preceded Groesbeck's decision. According to Woodford, on Friday, November 24, Groesbeck and three associates drove to Ann Arbor to discuss with Burton his views on matters relating to the senatorship. Burton was in a talkative mood and proceeded to talk himself out of the senatorial appointment as he let it be known that he would be doing the state a favor in accepting the post.⁴⁸ Couzens, a taciturn, straight-to-the-point businessman, would not make this blunder when his turn came.

The next day, Woodford has written, Groesbeck visited Couzens in his home and asked his views on matters relating to the post. Couzens appears to have impressed him with his answers, particularly after he had convinced

⁴⁷Detroit News, November 25, 1922.

⁴⁸Woodford, pp. 187-89.



him of his party loyalty. However, the announcement of Couzens' appointment was not made at this time and speculation continued. Groesbeck held a second meeting with Couzens and several top-level executives of the News and the Free Press at the exclusive Detroit Club on November 27, 1922. After discussion with these men about the appointment, Groesbeck is reported to have stated that he would appoint Couzens on his return to Lansing.⁴⁹ Couzens did not remain in Detroit for the forthcoming announcement. He had planned to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with a daughter in New York. The pending appointment did not stop him and on Tuesday, November 28, he and members of his family left for New York.⁵⁰

Following Groesbeck's appearance with Couzens and his statement to the newspaper executives, it had become fairly well-known that Couzens was his choice, though the official announcement had not been made. Reporters and the public besieged Couzens, demanding a statement, but he adamantly refused to acknowledge the appointment. On Wednesday, November 29, Groesbeck telephoned Couzens at his New York hotel to announce that his appointment had been signed and was now official; Couzens was now officially at the end of his long and subtle quest for

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 189-90.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 190; Barnard, p. 138.



the highest political post for which he was eligible.⁵¹ For nearly a decade his name had been associated with this high political office, and now the post was his.

Burton had allowed his notion that he was capable of holding his post as president of The University of Michigan and simultaneously serving as a United States senator to be well-publicized. For several weeks prior to the senate appointment, Couzens was spending his mornings as manager of the Detroit Street Railway in the absence of the ailing general manager and his afternoons as mayor. Burton's arrogance and Couzens' performance gave rise to the suggestion that the latter might continue to serve Detroit as manager of the D.S.R. even after he took his senate seat. Council President Lodge, who dealt harshly and unfairly with Couzens when he looked back at Couzens' mayoralty from the vantage point of the late 1940's, sent a telegram to Couzens asking him to consider staying on as the manager of the D.S.R.⁵²

Couzens was obviously pleased with the recognition of his managerial skills. He declared that he would thoroughly enjoy working half days for the D.S.R. and the city, if the public saw need for his services. He said that he would discuss the matter with the city's corporation

⁵¹Detroit News, November 29, 1922; Woodford, p. 190.

⁵²Detroit News, December 1, 1922.



counsel and if he did continue as head of the D.S.R., he would not accept one penny of salary.⁵³ After further review of the matter and the expression of some sentiment in opposition to the proposal, Couzens made no further reference to it, and he was not called on to sacrifice his time to the operational needs of the city. On December 5, his official resignation was accepted by the common council. His nine years of service to the city of Detroit was over.⁵⁴

The Detroit Free Press had not spoken strongly for or against the contenders for the Newberry senatorial seat. However, when the Couzens' appointment was made, it stated that Couzens, by his acceptance of the post, had broken faith with the voters of Detroit who had returned him to office on his plea to be allowed to finish the job of municipalization of the street railway system which he had started. Although the system had been municipalized there remained the job of extending and improving service to complete the project. On this issue the Detroit News was in agreement with the Free Press.⁵⁵ Couzens did not debate the issue with the press. His willingness to continue as the general manager of the railway system

⁵³The New York Times, December 1, 1922; Detroit News, December 1, 1922, December 2, 1922.

⁵⁴Ibid., December 6, 1922.

⁵⁵Detroit Free Press, November 30, 1922; Detroit News, November 28, 1922, December 3, 1922.



after his senatorial appointment would allow him to fulfill his obligation to the people to complete the development of the street railway system.⁵⁶

As Couzens rose to high political office, those who knew him as relative, friend, or simply as acquaintance were invited to recall the path which led him to wealth and political power. His father recounted the oft-told story of his diligence and ambition as a boy. The old man said his wife had chastised him for not bringing her from England to the United States rather than to Canada, for then as a native born American Jim would have been eligible for the presidency of the United States.⁵⁷ Canadians attributed Couzens' success to qualities possessed by the people of Canada, insisting that he came from the strong, reliable, intelligent Canadian middle-class which was so important to the growth of that country.⁵⁸

Political observers of the period of his rise to power have conjectured about the motives which led Groesbeck to appoint him instead of Marion L. Burton, Chase S. Osborn, Charles B. Warren, or another well-known candidate. There is nothing to indicate that there was any

⁵⁶The New York Times, December 1, 1922.

⁵⁷Ibid., December 1, 1922.

⁵⁸Detroit News Couzens Collection, Scrapbook 1, p. 15.



special pressure from Couzens to influence the decision. If there was hope that Couzens' appointment would loosen his purse strings to contributions for support of the party, there is no evidence that that strategy was successful. I agree with Woodford that neither Couzens' record nor Groesbeck's reveal men who would resort to or accept political pressure or bribery in such an instance.⁵⁹ Aside from their impeccable characters in such matters, the whole issue of Newberryism had done much to assure that the appointment would be honest. As closely as this event was being observed, it would have been foolhardy, indeed suicidal, to allow corruption to enter into the decision-making process. Groesbeck, a strong and loyal Republican, would seek to redeem the party through the selection of a strong, incorruptible man. The basis for Groesbeck's selection of Couzens cannot be found in the area of political influence.

More significantly, Couzens and Groesbeck were markedly similar. It was this similarity and the objectives both men served which weighed heavily in Couzens' favor. As noted previously, this case was special. After nearly four years of charges, court actions, and legislative deliberations involving corruption and machine politics, and at the end the political defeat of Senator Townsend, the

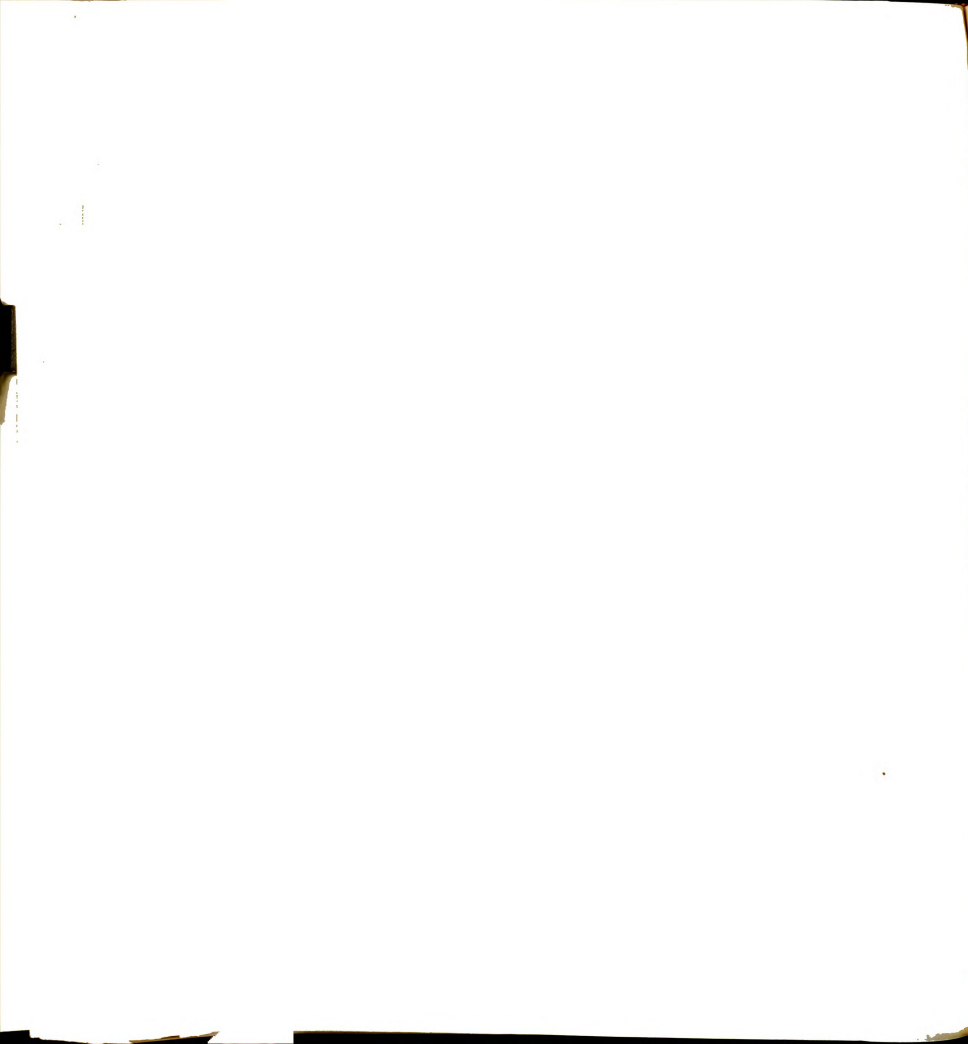
⁵⁹Woodford, p. 191.



gubernatorial appointee for the post vacated by Newberry could be only a man invulnerable to charges of corruption and political machine control. Couzens met these standards. In addition, he had been a successful politician, he had a large following from the working class and was supported by organized labor, he was his own man, and he was a Republican. Groesbeck said that Couzens' selection showed that Michigan would do her part in advocating clean and wholesome government.⁶⁰ Once again in his life, and similarly to his 1918 candidacy for Detroit's mayor under the reform charter, he met the qualifications without reservation. The job sought the man.

The evening of December 5, after he had resigned from the mayoralty for which he had done so much and which had done so much for him, Couzens joined the common council at a banquet held in his honor. He listened to the adulatory comments of friends and foes as he sat with the men he had worked with for the last four years. Before the banquet was through he hurried from the room to sit before the microphone of radio station WWJ. He was sad and tense. In a friendly voice, he talked to the Detroiters who had supported him for almost a decade of public service. He talked about his years of service and the problems which he and his fellow Detroiters had faced. He thanked them for the opportunity he had had to serve

⁶⁰Detroit News, November 30, 1922.



them. The compensation of public good will for his work had been an ample reward, he said. Turning from the microphone he left the studio. He did not go back to the council banquet, but went home. His day had been long and very sad.⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid., December 6, 1922.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY



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Manuscripts

One of the basic sources for the study of James Couzens as mayor of Detroit, 1919-1922, has been his personal papers housed in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. Any detailed study of his life will require the use of these papers. The collection begins in 1905 and runs through 1936, the year of his death. Even though the papers are heaviest after 1922, when he served in the United States Senate, important materials are preserved from the earlier years.

They were presented to the Library of Congress in three increments and this has affected their organization. Increments one and two are assembled in 120 letter boxes of general correspondence, 18 boxes of special correspondence, and 201 scrapbooks. The third increment, which was chronologically the last received at the Library, contains approximately 2,100 items covering the same period (1905-1936) as the former increments and includes notebooks, correspondence, clippings, and some other printed matter.

The fact that Couzens subscribed to a newspaper clipping service and maintained scrapbooks covering his



public life provides the researcher with a valuable resource. The advantage of finding in topical order and in close proximity clippings on Couzens from newspapers across the country should be obvious. This fine collection of scrapbooks on file in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress clearly does not relieve the reader of further work in newspaper files; it does, however, give a sweeping, organized account of events in the life of a prominent public figure.

The Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library has the next most significant collection of documentary material from the Couzens' era. These papers are part of the collection of the papers of mayors of Detroit. Unfortunately, the collection is heaviest for those mayors who succeeded Couzens. The Couzens' material is, in large measure, from the last year of his mayoralty, 1922, and consists primarily of routine office correspondence. Even though this be the case, an element of distinctiveness is noted in some pieces in that the writers not merely sent correspondence to Couzens as mayor of Detroit, but included sentiments which suggest that they were addressing a particular individual who had a reputation as a fair, incorruptible man. In addition to the Mayors Papers, the Burton Historical Collection has a reading room file and a few catalog cards listing Couzens' items. Aside from the Couzens' material, the Burton



Historical Collection has the best collection of Detroit material for the period 1919-1922, and for most others, as well.

It is unfortunate that although the Burton Historical Collection is the official repository of departmental records for the city of Detroit, few files have been preserved by the departments and made available to the Collection for the early decades of the 1900's. The Mayors Papers referred to above is the major collection of municipal records presently available to researchers in the period.

The George B. Catlin Memorial Library of the Detroit News has compiled five scrapbooks of news clippings on James Couzens. The clippings are mainly Detroit News's items, but not exclusively. It was the News which supported Couzens and gave him wide coverage and for these reasons the collection is impressive. Although Couzens' own collection of scrapbooks is much larger and much more inclusive, the News's Couzens Collection is useful and accessible.

The holdings of the Manuscript Division, the Burton Historical Collection, and the Detroit News exhaust the list of systematically gathered and organized collections of material related to Couzens. Neither the Ford Archives of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village nor the Michigan Historical Collections of The



University of Michigan report significant Couzens' material for the period treated in this thesis.

Books

There are two works which deal with Couzens:

Harry Barnard, Independent Man: The Life of Senator James Couzens (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), and Carl L. Keen, "Groesbeck's Senatorial Appointment of Couzens to Fill the Newberry Vacancy: A Study of Individualism and the Republican Party in Michigan, 1918-1922." Barnard's emphasis was on Couzens' senatorial career and focused primarily on the bank crisis of 1933. The emphasis of Keen's work, an M.A. thesis in 1957 at Michigan State University, is clearly stated in the title. Barnard's volume is based on extensive examination of the source material related to Couzens and interviews with many persons who had known him. Indeed, one of Barnard's major contributions to the student who would study the public life of Couzens, is his exhaustive list of published and unpublished Couzens' material.

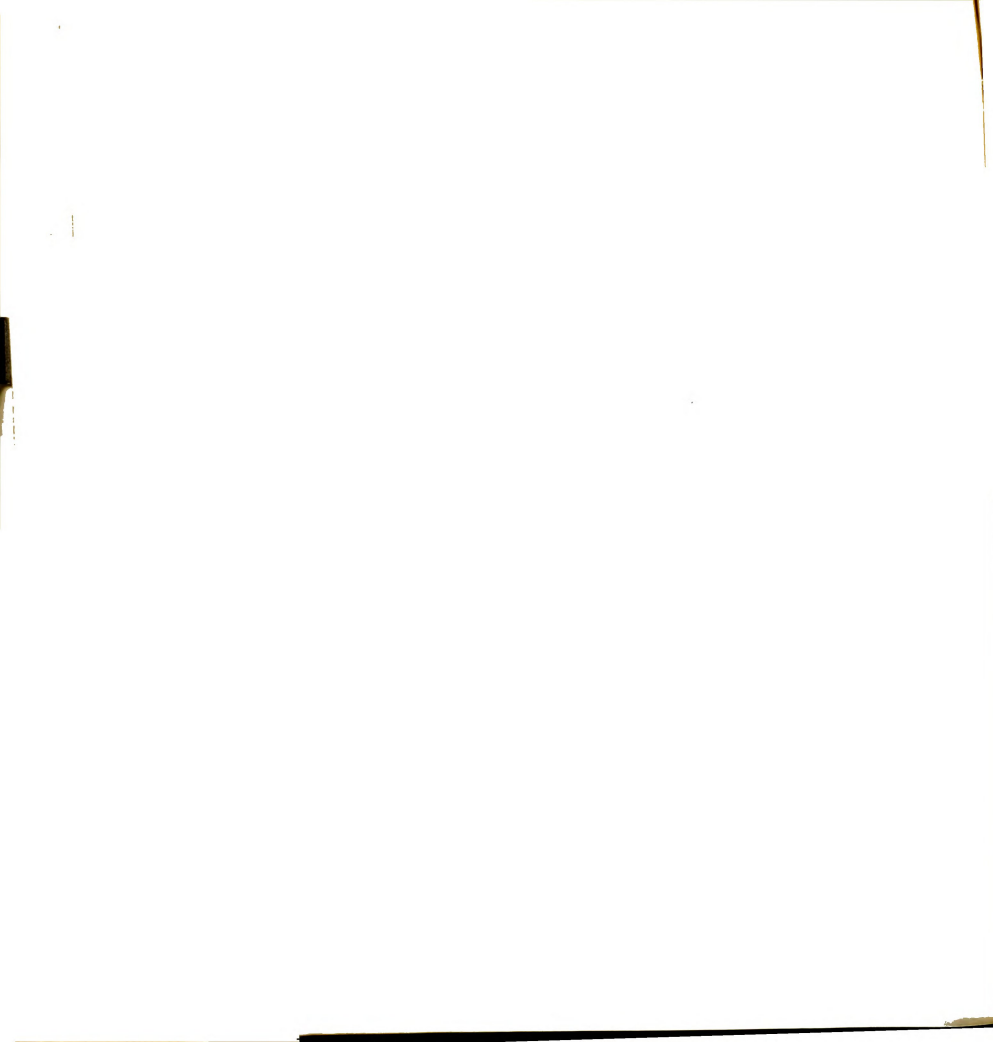
Graeme O'Geran, A History of the Detroit Street Railways (Detroit: The Conover Press, 1931), must, by reason of the subject alone, review one of the major contributions Couzens made to Detroit as mayor. In fact, O'Geran states that it was at Couzens' suggestion that he undertook the research for the book which initially was submitted as a Ph.D. thesis at The University of Michigan.

The book is essential reading on the matter of municipalization of the street railway, although it tends to be more encyclopedic than interpretive.

Newspapermen have had an impact on Detroit in ways other than through the articles which appeared in the local press. The local newsman often becomes the chronicler of local events. He lives close to the heartbeat of the city as it is sounded through the press. He often feels compelled to set down his own interpretation of what he has heard. Often it is the major source, if not the only one, of a community's written history. Detroit has had its share of newsmen--historians. From the list of books on Detroit by newsmen, or former newsmen, I have profited from several of them.

George B. Catlin, The Story of Detroit (Detroit: Detroit News, 1923), is a collection of newspaper articles originally published in the News during 1923. The articles were presented to "stimulate a proper civic pride, and develop high ideals of citizenship," among Detroit's new residents and younger generation. Written in a popular style and undocumented, the articles are factual and reasonably accurate. His accounts of the Hazen S. Pingree mayoralty and the municipal ownership struggle are valuable.

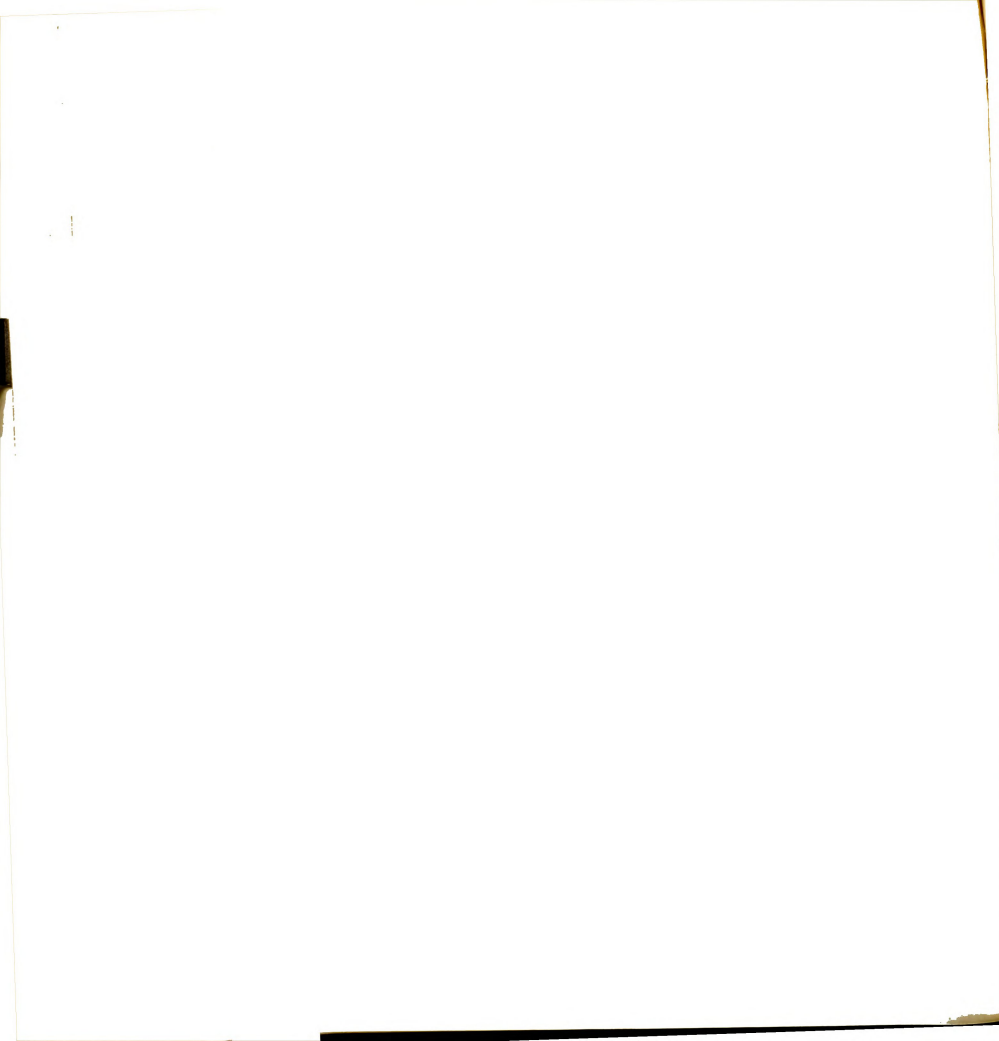
Malcolm Bingay, Detroit Is My Own Home Town (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946), is as biased and uncomplimentary a book on matters dealing with



Couzens as one can find. In correspondence with Couzens, Bingay feigned friendship. However, when he wrote of him following his death, the bitterness of his feelings toward him surfaced quickly. The value in this book and in his Of Me I Sing (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1949) rests in his familiarity with Detroit and the men behind the scene during the period of my concern.

In Milton A. McRae, Forty Years of Newspaperdom: The Autobiography of a Newspaperman (New York: Brentano's, 1924), the reader finds valuable information on the newspaper business in Detroit. McRae, who served as a top-level executive at the News, takes credit for launching Couzens into public life. It is questionable that McRae's impact on Couzens was as crucial as he views it, nevertheless, correspondence in the Couzens Papers discloses a sizable and friendly exchange of letters between the two during Couzens' public life.

John C. Lodge, I Remember Detroit (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1949), written in collaboration with Milo M. Quaife, long-time secretary of the Burton Historical Collection, presents the reminiscences of Lodge over a period of eighty-six years. A newspaper reporter, later president of the city council during Couzens' mayoralty, Lodge was an observer of Detroit politics for his lifetime. Memory fades in time and though unusually alert in his last years, Lodge's description of Couzens' role in the municipal ownership battle is not consistent

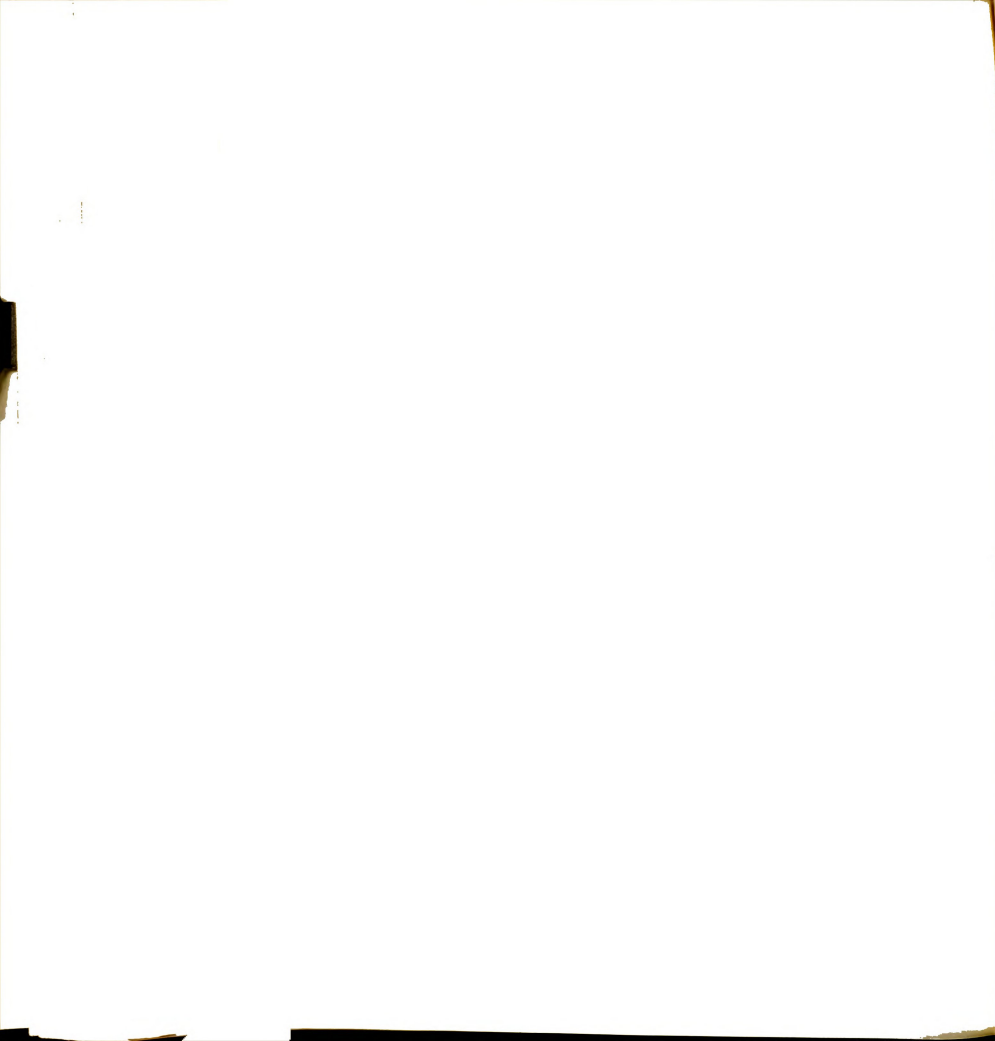


with the evidence found in other sources. However, Lodge's recollections of prominent Detroiters of the 1900-1930 period, coupled with Quaife's careful footnoting, make the book both informative and useful as a reference work.

Arthur Pound, Detroit: Dynamic City (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940), is another newsman's account of the growth and development of the bustling, energetic city which became the automotive center of the world. Readable and insightful the book seeks to identify the reasons for Detroit's greatness.

Frank B. Woodford was one of Detroit's most scholarly and perceptive newsmen-historians. A newsman who wrote about politics and personalities for a living, he developed an easy and penetrating style which made his work readable and instructive. Chapter VII of his Alex J. Groesbeck: Portrait of a Public Man (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), which considers both Newberry's resignation from the Senate and Couzens' appointment to the Senate, is insightful and a valuable contribution to the literature of the period.

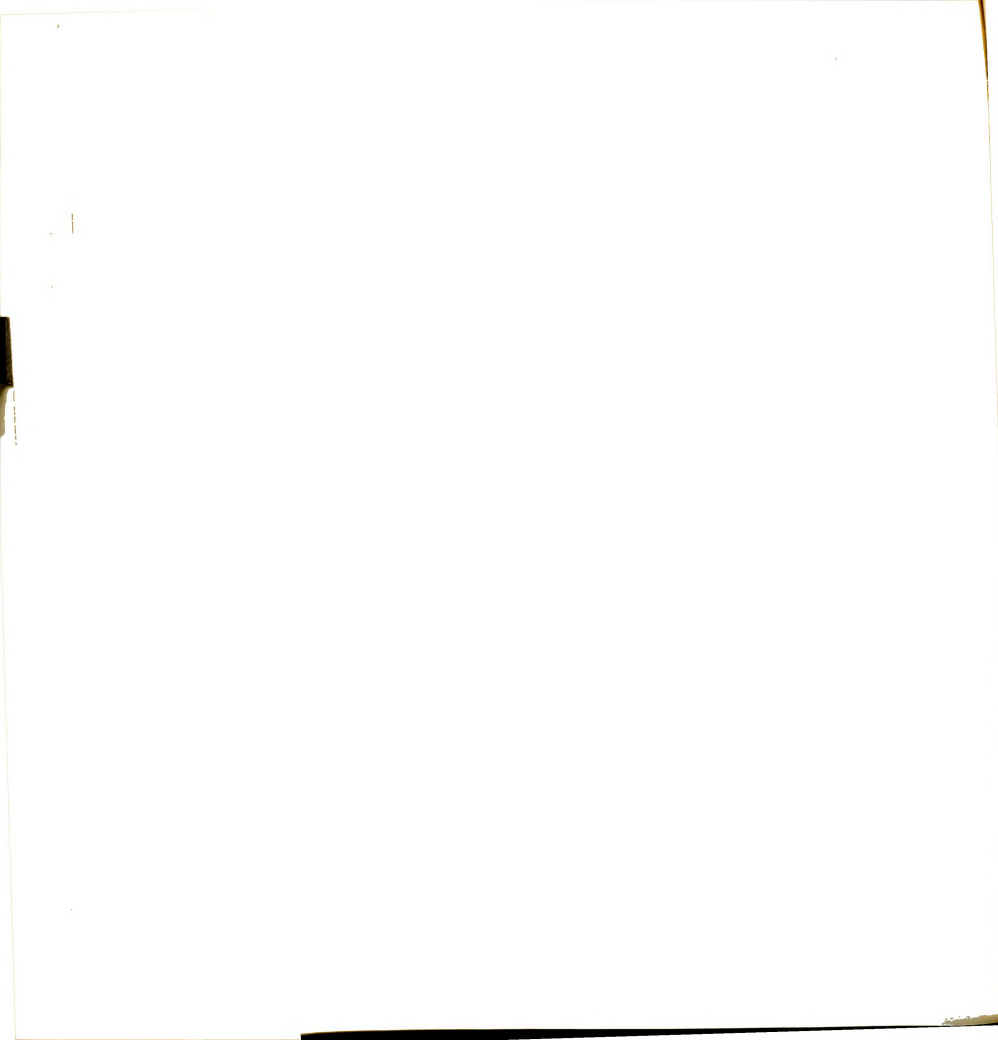
In further recognition of the historian's debt to men who were first trained as journalists both Harry Barnard, Independent Man: The Life of Senator James Couzens, and Allan Nevins, Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), and Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), are from this tradition.



The above volumes provide both a general view of Detroit in the first two decades of the present century as well as information on events related to the Couzens' era. In this regard two other works should be consulted. Clarence M. Burton, ed., The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922 (Detroit: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922), is a five-volume work. The first two of the volumes are historical narratives covering a broad range of municipal services in Detroit. The remaining three are biographical. Burton, an amateur historian, was the founder of the Burton Historical Collection and figured prominently in the organization and development of the Detroit Historical Society. The volumes serve best as introductory statements to further research. F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), is a compact and sweeping survey of Michigan history. Its value to the researcher in the era of this thesis is based primarily on providing a sense of continuity and an awareness of the broad state-wide issues of the time.

Newspapers

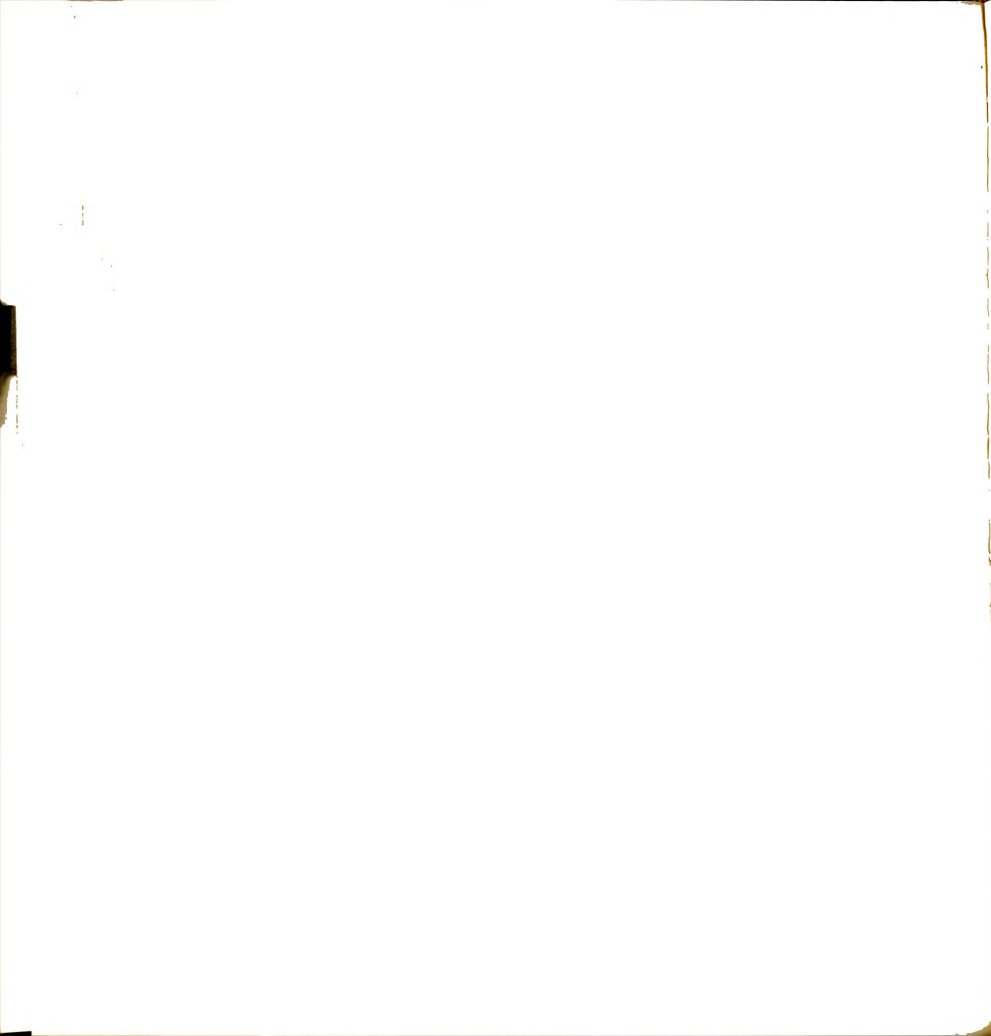
Besides offering the most complete reporting of any newspaper in the city the Detroit News was a rather consistent supporter of Couzens and as such printed more lines on Couzens than all other papers combined. So often did the causes he supported parallel the causes championed in the News that his detractors accused him of being



controlled by that newspaper. There is no evidence of any illegal ties between the two. The Detroit Free Press, the Detroit Journal, and the Detroit Times were other daily newspapers of the period which reported on city hall.

The Detroit Free Press was the strongest rival of the News in the Couzens' era in terms of circulation. It was not a supporter of Couzens, although as mayor he could not be ignored. The Free Press endorsed both Couzens and Connolly in the campaign for mayor in 1918. It supported changes in the D.U.R. but did not approve the take over by the city. On this issue then it differed with Couzens. The Journal opposed Couzens from time to time. It was absorbed by the News in 1922. The Times was generally a supporter of Couzens. It suffered grave financial problems during its lifetime. It became noticeably pro-Couzens after it was purchased by William Randolph Hearst in 1921.

Two weekly Detroit papers are valuable sources for insight into the other side of the argument. The Detroit Saturday Night was directed at the business community with items of interest to the boosters of a bigger and better Detroit. During the Couzens mayoralty it was decidedly anti-Couzens registering the conservative businessman revulsion for the presumed radical doctrines of Couzens. It published biographies of successful businessmen and social leaders, as well as weekly news items and occasional stories on topics of interest to the community such as the



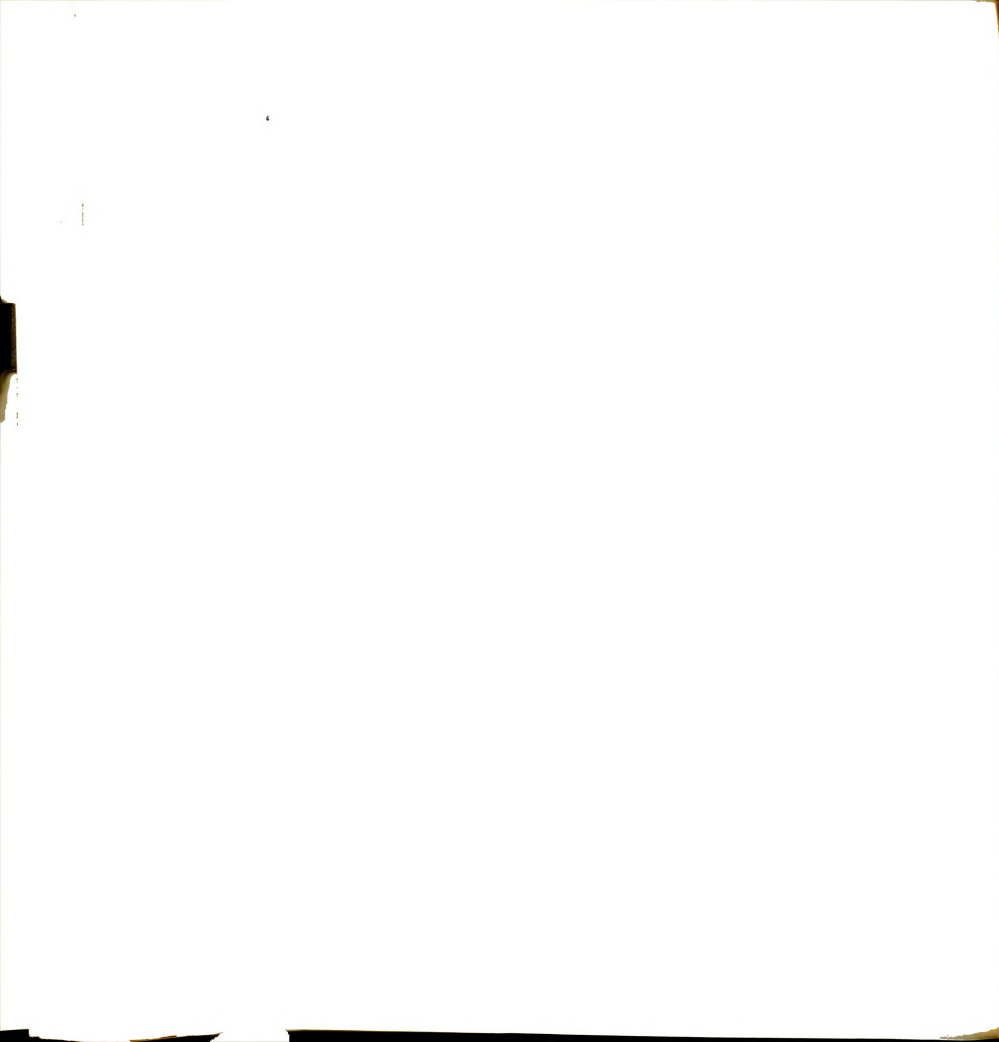
virtue of organized charity and the vice of indiscriminate philanthropy.

The second weekly was first published in 1920 by Edwin Pipp who had been editor of the Detroit News and later the Ford owned Dearborn Independent. Pipp was usually anti-Couzens and pro-Ford whether Couzens and Ford agreed or disagreed.

These six newspapers served the local needs of the community and will meet the needs of the researcher. However, Couzens was a national figure even when mayor of Detroit. The New York Times contains articles on Couzens as early as 1914 and throughout the remainder of his life. For the nationally important events which involved Couzens The New York Times is an important source of newspaper coverage. However, the local press is by far superior to any outside newspaper in its coverage of local events. In most such instances the out-of-town papers which reported on events local to Detroit drew on the Detroit News's press service which as the United Press Association, later the United Press International, served newspapers throughout the country.

Periodicals

The periodical literature which relates to Couzens and his mayoralty is adequately cataloged in the bibliographies of Barnard and Keen. Outlook, System, Survey, Printers' Ink, Saturday Evening Post, Nation, New Republic



all carry articles of interest and relevance. However, two periodical publications which provided me with a comprehensive view of the municipal needs and concerns of the period were American City and the National Municipal Review. The issues which are discussed, and often the accompanying pictures, gave me the sense of being part of the period and experiencing the concerns of that day. These two magazines are invaluable reservoirs of information on the urban development of the time. Detroit as one of America's major cities is frequently referred to. The editorial slant of the two magazines is that of the chamber of commerce reformer.

Examination of Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt conjointly with the reading of American City and the National Municipal Review revealed to me the careful research which Lewis conducted in his preparation for the writing of his outstanding work on post-World War I, urban America. What was true of Zenith was so often true of the Detroit of Couzens' time.

Topical Material

The preceding discussion of source material has been directed primarily at providing a general and categorized view of the available material. Each chapter, of course, draws on these resources as interrelated sources of fact and interpretation, and each chapter requires the utilization of more specialized material. In my study of recent urban growth in America, the decennial and special



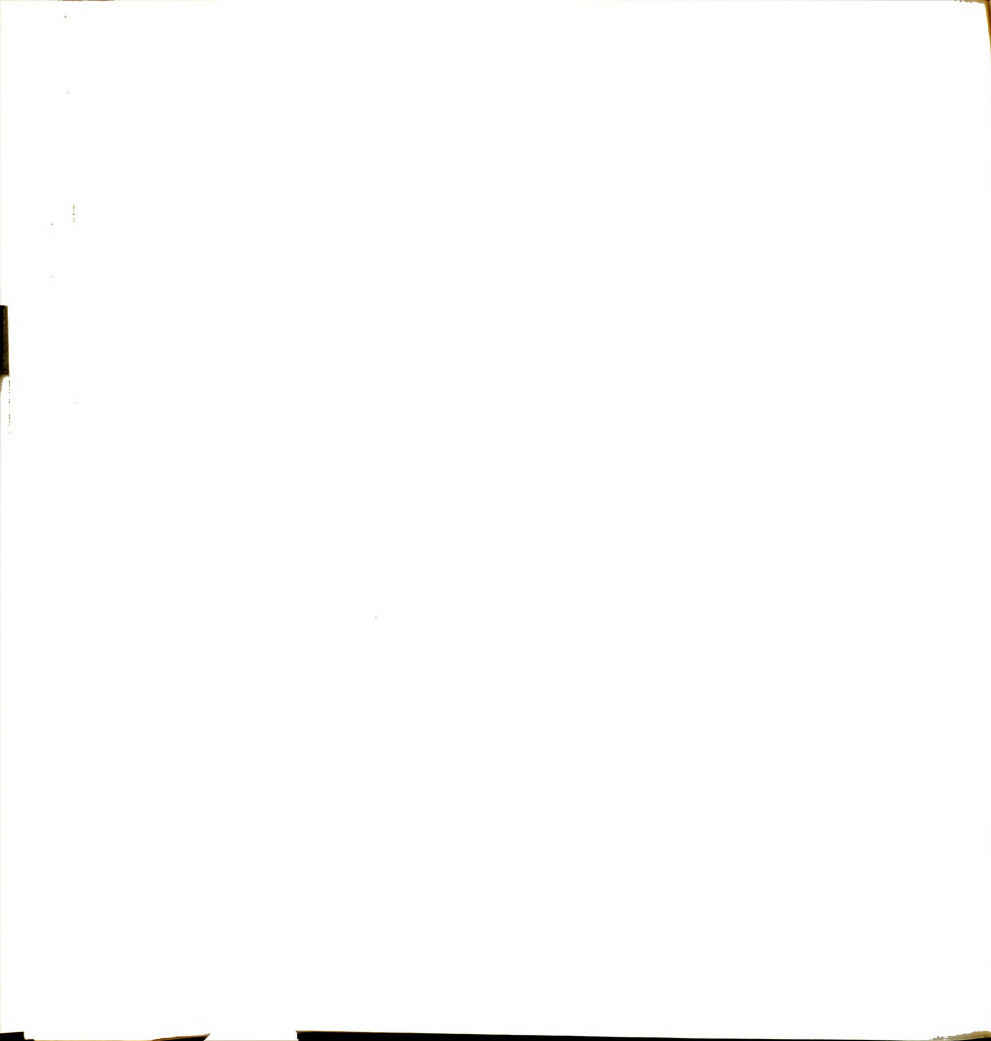
publications of the U.S. Bureau of the Census are invaluable. For the period 1910-1920, William S. Rossiter of the Bureau has prepared a monograph. The study, Increase of Population in the United States, 1910-1920 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), utilized Census Bureau data and interpreted it. The study shows, without question, the tremendous change in size of population, race, and industry which brought great and disruptive changes to Detroit. In conjunction with this study, local research on the changes in Detroit is available. Eric Kocher, Economic and Physical Growth of Detroit, 1701-1935 (Washington: Federal Housing Administration, 1936); Albert Mayer, A Study of the Foreign Born Population of Detroit, 1870-1950 (Detroit: Wayne University, 1951); and Lois Rankin, "Detroit Nationality Groups," Michigan History, XXII (Spring, 1939), are valuable. The saga of the Negro migration to Detroit from the south is movingly reported in Henderson H. Donald, "The Negro Migration of 1916-1918," The Journal of Negro History, VI (October, 1921). John C. Dancy, Sand Against the Wind (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), is the account of Dancy's more than forty years of work among the Negroes of Detroit. Dancy served as director of the Urban League in Detroit and in that capacity had intimate knowledge of the Negro community and the white business community.

Couzens' rise to political power is best reconstructed from newspaper files, and periodical literature.



Barnard's work on Couzens should also be examined. Keith Sward, The Legend of Henry Ford (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1948), provides an interesting and colorful description of the Couzens' personality. Background data on the political pressures of the period are found in the literature published by the good government groups in Detroit. Public Business presents the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research view; the Civic Searchlight presents the Detroit Citizens League view; and the Detroit Saturday Night, while not a publication of the Board of Commerce, presents its point of view. David Greenstone, A Report on the Politics of Detroit (Cambridge: Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1961), provides exploratory, though sound, examination of the interrelations between the major political interest groups in Detroit. William P. Lovett, Detroit Rules Itself (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1930), is an unscholarly work, yet one which is valuable as a first hand report of the strategies and purposes of the Detroit Citizens League. Lovett served as executive secretary of the League.

Municipalization of the street railway as a topic of broad public interest is widely reported in newspapers and periodicals. Among periodicals, the American City and the National Municipal Review provide continuing and extensive coverage of the issue. Barnard's study of Couzens devotes eight pages to his municipal ownership



views and actions as mayor of Detroit. It is desirable to refer to Barnard, however, O'Geran's work, described above, is required reading.

Delos F. Wilcox, Analysis of the Electric Railway Problem (New York: privately printed, 1921), was an expert on municipal ownership and participated in Couzens' municipalization efforts in Detroit. Wilcox' works in the area are valuable. In addition, the Barclay Parsons and Klapp reports, Report on Detroit Railway Traffic and Proposed Subway (New York: Barclay Parsons and Klapp, 1915), and Report on a Rapid Transit System for the City of Detroit (New York: Barclay Parsons and Klapp, 1918), are required reading to grasp the dimensions of the urbanization process and its impact on public transportation. Finally, Jere C. Hutchins, Jere C. Hutchins: A Personal Story (Detroit: privately printed, 1938), helps to give balance to the research. Hutchins, a key executive in the private street railway system, defends the actions of his company in a chatty exposition of the railway problem from his point of view.

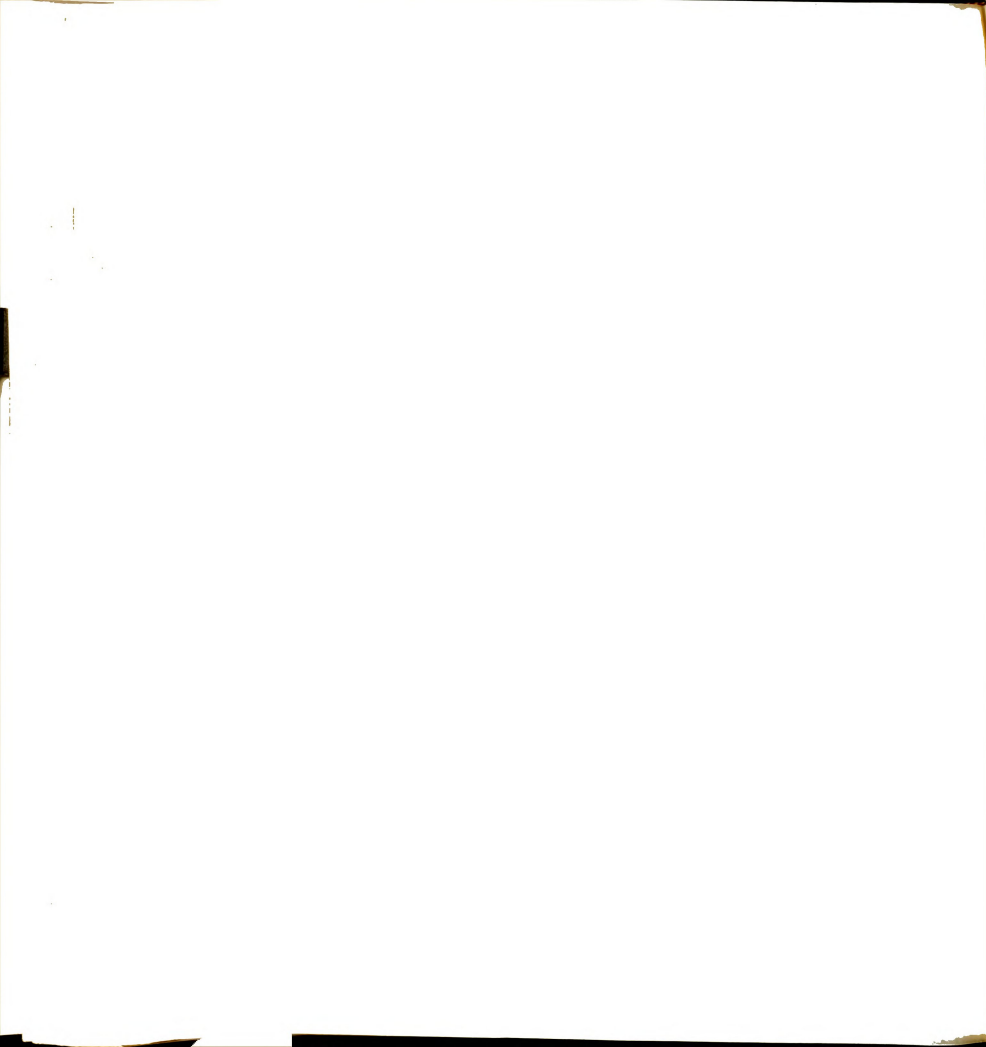
Again much of the material on Couzens' views and actions on unemployment are reported in the press of the period. The journals on municipal administration, the American City and the National Municipal Review, are invaluable for general conditions on unemployment in the cities of America and for specific conditions in Detroit. The Report on the President's Conference on Unemployment,



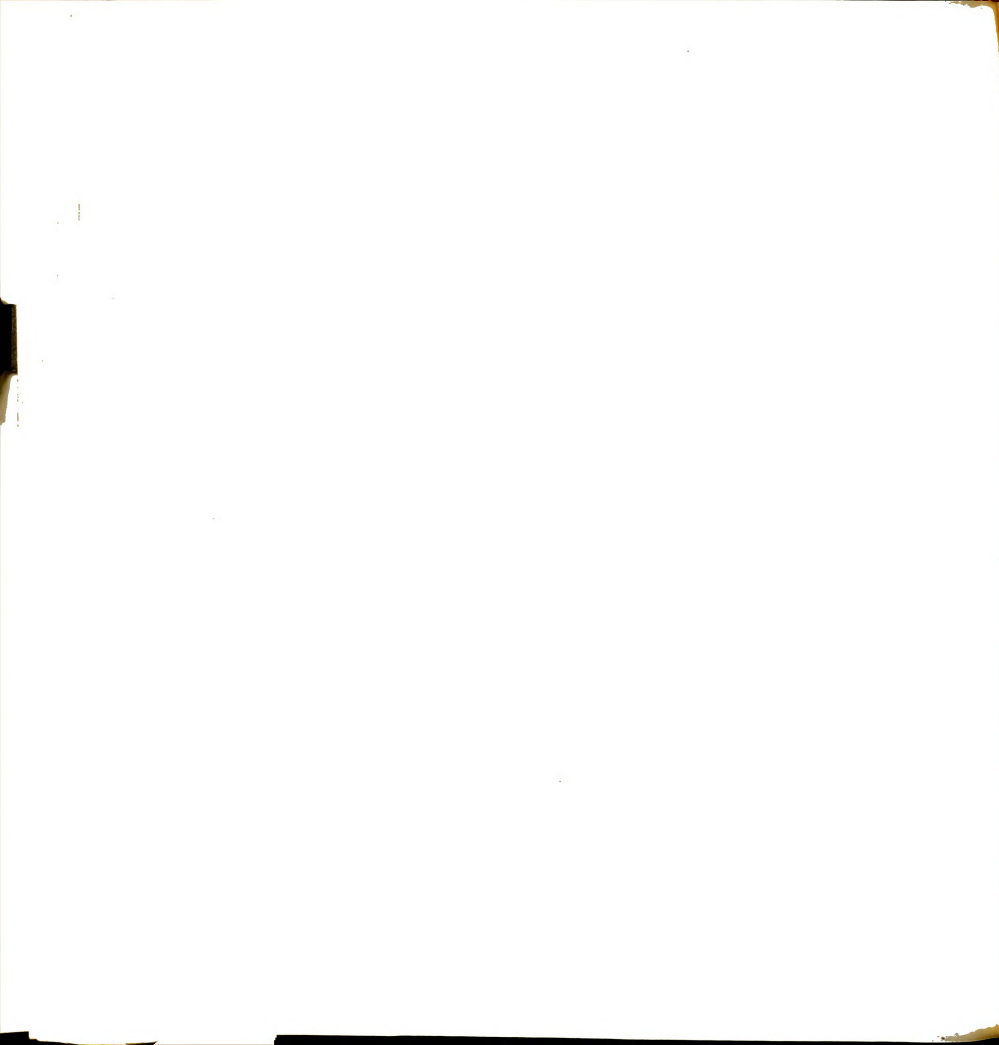
September 26 to October 13, 1921 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), provides a formal record of the conference. The conference brought Couzens publicity and he used it to bolster his political status. The New York Times reported detailedly on the conference.

In the study of radicalism of the era, newspaper and periodical files are the strongest sources. The Nation and the South Atlantic Quarterly both contain illuminating articles. Robert K. Murray, Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria, 1919-1920 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955), is a survey of this tragic period in the nation's political and social history. Stanley Coben, A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), traces the shift of Palmer from what seemed to be a progressive philosophy to a conservative one. Also, the pressures which provoked his decision as attorney general of the United States to order the raids of late 1919 and early 1920 are discussed. This decision stirred Americans and strongly affected Detroit's political life.

The senatorial appointment of Couzens has been studied most thoroughly in Keen's work on Groesbeck and Couzens. As noted above Woodford, Alex J. Groesbeck: Portrait of a Public Man is required reading. Spencer Ervin, Henry Ford vs. Truman H. Newberry: The Famous Senate Election Contest; A Study in American Politics, Legislation and Justice (New York: R. R. Smith, 1935), is



a defense of Truman H. Newberry. The work served as a basic source for Keen's study. The volume contains reprints of documentary material basic to the Newberry case.





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