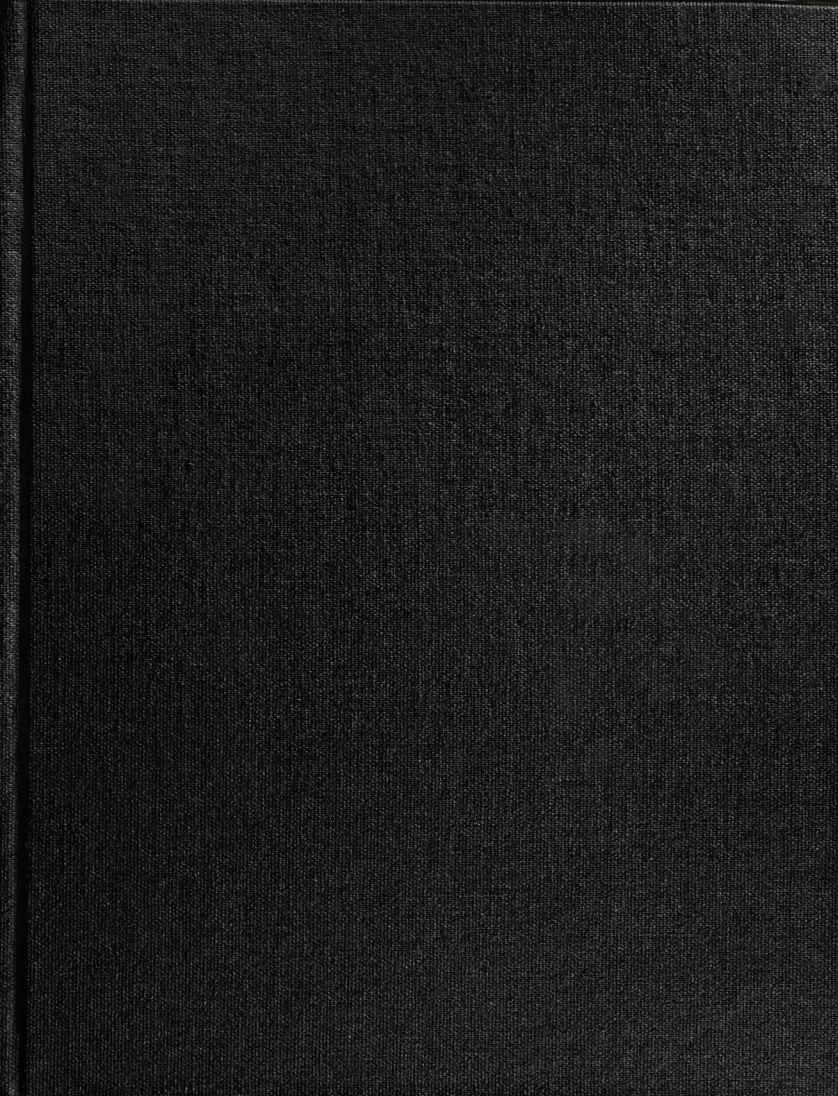




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**“A CHALLENGE AND A PROMISE”: THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF DETROIT
CLUBWOMEN IN THE 1920S**

VOLUME I

By

Jayne Morris-Crowther

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ABSTRACT

“A CHALLENGE AND A PROMISE”: THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF DETROIT CLUBWOMEN IN THE 1920S

By

Jayne Morris-Crowther

In the 1920s, the civic-minded club women of Detroit operated through their clubs and associations to change Detroit politics and living conditions in the city. Detroit had experienced unprecedented industrial and urban growth which rendered its nineteenth century institutions obsolete and the 1920s witnessed the final phase over the struggle for municipal reform that had begun in the Progressive Era. While they usually remained aloof from party politics, they continually sought to influence public policy at the municipal and state level as organized women in clubs that numbered more than 15,000 women. Since they were newly franchised, women faced many obstacles to equal participation in the political process. By 1920, that process involved male-dominated partisan politics and business-saturated city politics. Women exercised little influence over the male-run media which often portrayed them as silly and incompetent. Detroit women oftentimes advocated more modern attitudes about municipal problems but then left themselves vulnerable to accusations of radicalism. Consequently, Detroit clubwomen, while empowered by the vote, remained cautious about their political participation. They were both trying to fit into the political system and trying to change it simultaneously. As clubwomen, they were consistently involved with civic matters in Detroit but also aware of their precarious political position. Sometimes they preferred to make their presence known rather than advocate a particular program. They pioneered new lobbying

known rather than advocate a particular program. They pioneered new lobbying techniques, like personal interviews. Finally, Detroit club women understood the power of political education. They studied civic issues, held public lectures and disseminated this information in creative ways. Their organizational ability, at the community level helped bring Detroit politics to the neighborhood block. As women, they considered practical politics in Detroit their obligation in spite of the obstacles. In this regard, they considered their civic commitment to Detroit both a challenge and a promise.



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Finally, I wish to thank my family and friends who supported this effort. My sister, Judith Morris Mullen and my neighbor Susie Barr always encouraged my research. I am

grateful to my mother, Helen E. Morris who taught me to love history and my father, the late Herbert F. Morris who taught me to love books. I am most thankful for my family, John, Jack and Geoffrey Crowther. They all patiently contributed their technical assistance for my many computer needs. They facilitated the completion of this work by disregarding the idea of “women’s work” and joined in the cooking, cleaning and shopping for the household. My husband, John, always respected my work and made many sacrifices for my graduate research. His academic standards are the highest and I still aspire to emulate his scholarship.

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Introduction

In 1919, the Detroit Times reported that some City Councilmen showed their “temerity” by opposing the wishes of Detroit’s clubwomen. The Council voted to condemn the south and east additions of the Palmer Park property in spite of the presence of about forty clubwomen who wanted the south edition of Palmer Park retained by the Lizzie Merrill-Palmer estate for a girl’s home. The Times praised Councilmen, Fred W. Castator, Charles F. Bielman, Sherman Littlefield, David Simons and James Vernor who opposed the women as “bold, heroes of their convictions.”¹

The Times article reveals something of both the nature of the activities of Detroit’s clubwomen and the political atmosphere in which they worked. The Detroit Times showed a respect for the political influence of these women when they reported the “temerity” of those who opposed them. At the same time, the article praised those “heroes” for not yielding to the clubwomen’s wishes. The women might have political influence but were not in command. In the coming decade, Detroit clubwomen consistently made political demands on city, county and state officials. They wanted both to fit in and to alter the political landscape. As fully enfranchised citizens, they wanted their voices heard. They were cautious but persistent, politically innovative but rarely radical. As with the Palmer Park vote however, even with their high visibility, they often met with failure, or at best, limited success. This dissertation seeks to explain the reasons for these limits examining both the context of women’s activities in organized club work as well as the urban context of the city of Detroit.

¹ Detroit Times (February 21, 1919).

Specified clubs and their membership will be discussed as they appear in the dissertation. The focus here is on gender, not class. In general, the women who belonged to the clubs so discussed, were educated, middle-class to wealthy with leisure time for club activities. Club meeting times varied but were often twice per month, with additional meeting time for the various committees. Clubs met during the day and the many time-consuming club activities were unpaid. Additionally, clubwomen often had to pay for their own transportation or use their own automobiles for club business. The League of Women Voters' (LWV) magazine, The Michigan Woman reported that clubwomen came from the highest social strata. They were women of talent, education, refinement and wealth.² Many white women were related to business and civic leaders. For example, Delphine Dodge Ashbaugh was the sister of the automobile manufacturers, John and Horace Dodge. Dorothea Steffens was married to the City Comptroller, Henry Steffens, Jr. Black women's clubs also drew their membership from middle-class women with leisure time and significant social connections. Their husbands came from the business and professional ranks. For instance, Mary McCoy was married to the inventor, Elijah McCoy and Beulah Young's husband James, was Detroit's first black surgeon. African-American women oftentimes organized through their churches as well. John Reid observed that many prominent members of African-American women's clubs were teachers. Their education and privileged position in the community enabled them to wield great influence in their clubs.³

² "We Point With Pride," Michigan Woman 7 (January, 1929): 9.

³ John B. Reid, "'A Career to Build, a People to Serve, a Purpose to Accomplish': Race, Gender and Detroit's First Black Women Teachers, 1865-1916," Michigan Historical Review 1992 18(1): 22-23.

Much of the information here came from the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs' (DFWC) records. Primarily, but not exclusively, a white woman's organization, in the 1920s the DFWC represented 15,000 women in 107 clubs. These clubs were individually devoted to artistic, literary, philanthropic and civic agendas. They chose to become federated in order that they could, if so desired, speak with one voice. Its Constitution and By-law stated, "Its object is to bring into communication the various clubs of Detroit as a means of prosecuting any work of common interest, but no club entering the Federation shall thereby lose its independence in aim or method or be committed to any principles or method of any other club."⁴ The leadership of the DFWC came from the various member clubs but the individual clubs occasionally withheld support for DFWC decisions. The DFWC seldom advocated a radical political agenda nor did it support political apathy. Consequently, the membership composition of the DFWC provided a guideline for the political activities of Detroit's clubwomen.

The political activities of Detroit's middle class clubwomen illuminate the complexity of equal political participation for women after suffrage. A few women's historians have begun to investigate women's political culture and how gender separation in the nineteenth century created a situation that set patterns of political activity that endured after suffrage. For example, as this dissertation will explore, women throughout the United States developed their political sensibilities outside the franchise.⁵ Moreover,

⁴ Gladys E. Nauss, "Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs: A Study in Organizational Change," (MA Thesis, Wayne State University, 1949), p. 10.

⁵ Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois eds., Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History (New York, 1994), p. 97, Maureen A. Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective," Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society 2 (Fall, 1995): 305-330, Kathryn Kish Sklar, Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900 (New Haven, 1995), Sara M. Evans, "Women's

the context of urbanization structured the political work of women in their specific cities. Detroit offered its clubwomen an urban environment where municipal government was in flux. In 1918, charter reform centralized power with the mayor and a nine-man city council. At the same time, the definition of what constituted the legitimate concerns of the city government changed. Maureen Flanagan noted that in the early twentieth century, cities didn't just experience problems but the idea arose that these problems could be and should be solved by the municipal community.⁶ The political environment in Detroit was further influenced by the city's unique economic situation. Detroit had become the third largest city in the country for manufacturing and that manufacturing was dominated by the automobile industry. Powerful business leaders had commensurate political power.⁷ Lastly, the political milieu of the Progressive Era that sought municipal answers through impartial experts and scientific inquiry and viewed the political parties as self-serving rather than public-serving offered possibilities and limitations for the enfranchised clubwomen.

Detroit clubwomen reflected similar activities throughout the country. Clubwomen were advocating comparable solutions to municipal problems that often put them in conflict with urban men. Anne Firor Scott explained that women's work made towns and cities healthier and more attractive. In New Orleans, clubwomen persisted in participating in public life and thereby challenged the male dominance of power in the city.

History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life." Suzanne Leacock and Nancy Hewitt eds., Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism (Urbana, 1993), p. 119-139, Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History (Urbana, 1991).

⁶ Maureen Flanagan, Charter Reform in Chicago (Carbondale, 1987), p. 21.

⁷ Flanagan, Charter Reform, James J. Connolly, The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism - Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925 (Cambridge, 1998).

The women were instrumental in improving the city by advocating modern sewage removal. Elna Green understood southern women's experiences to lag behind those of northern women because the municipal problems that triggered northern women's involvement came later to the South. The growth of urbanization and an industrial economy, led educated, middle-class southern women to become civic activists.⁸ Kathryn Kish Sklar concluded that women believed an expanded state would also involve an expanded role for themselves. Women advocated gender-specific goals that resulted in class legislation. For example, maximum hour laws for women and child labor restrictions.⁹ Consequently, there was a consistent pattern of gendered ideas in the approach of women towards municipal problems. In Detroit as elsewhere, the perception of urban problems and the solutions women generated, have gendered connotations throughout this time period.

Until the recent interest in women's history, the political activities of clubwomen across the early decades of the twentieth century had been largely ignored in favor of investigating the activities of various groups of men, which historians have generally characterized as engaged in a political and economic struggle to control government. According to this work, in the early years of the twentieth century, a merger between economic and political interests produced what Gabriel Kolko has labeled political capitalism. In this system, businessmen banded together in voluntary groups to solve their common economic problems using the political system. Ellis Hawley concentrated on

⁸ Scott, Natural Allies p. 153, Elna C. Green, Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question (Chapel Hill, 1997), p. 2, Pamela Tyler, Silk Stockings and Ballot Boxes - Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963 (Athens, GA, 1996), p. 14.

⁹ Sklar, Florence Kelley, p. 233-236.

how business organizations even employed technical experts to influence political activities.¹⁰ According to Samuel P. Hays, Progressive Era upper-class municipal reformers were primarily interested in taking formal political power away from previously dominant lower- and middle-class elements in the city. Various work on reform crusades in specific cities followed Hays' lead.¹¹ Zane Miller's study of Cincinnati focused on tension between "bossism and reform" as supporters of both groups struggled with modern municipal problems, while James B. Crooks saw this tension between urban political bosses and progressive reformers in Baltimore.¹² In these and other now standard works on the first three decades of the century, the tension was seen as between middle- or upper-class male reformers trying to reconcile the modern political and economic needs of the city while maintaining capitalism and democracy, with working-class and ethnic groups opposed to both the means and ends of such reform. Later, urban scholars such as, John Buenker, Melvin Holli, Kenneth Finegold, James Connolly, Maureen Flanagan and others seriously modified these earlier interpretations, but with the exception of Flanagan and very recently Connolly, women still did not appear in the struggles over urban political reform.¹³

¹⁰ Gabriel Kolko, Main Currents in Modern American History (New York, 1984), Ellis W. Hawley, The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order, 2nd Edition, (New York, 1992).

¹¹ Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 54 (October, 1964): 157-169.

¹² Zane Miller, Boss Cox's Cincinnati - Urban Politics in the Progressive Era (New York, 1968), James B. Crooks, Politics and Progress - The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895-1911 (Baton Rouge, 1968), Martin Schiesl, The Politics of Efficiency - Municipal Administration and Reform in America (Berkeley, 1977).

¹³ John D. Buenker, Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform (New York, 1973), Melvin Holli, Reform in Detroit - Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics (New York, 1969), Kenneth Finegold, Experts and Politicians - Reform Challenges to Machine Politics in New York, Cleveland and Chicago (Princeton, 1995), Connolly, The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism, Flanagan Charter Reform in Chicago, Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," American Historical Review (October, 1990): 1032-1050.

In Detroit there was also a tension between the needs of a small, nineteenth century city and those of an enormous, urbanized, industrialized twentieth century one. Businessmen banded together in associations like the Detroit Board of Commerce, the Municipal League and the Detroit Citizens League. They used their substantial combined influence to refashion the municipal government into a more centralized and, they believed, a more efficient, business-oriented one. This was evident in the revised Detroit City Charter of 1918 which replaced the ward-based city council with a nine member at-large one and also gave enhanced powers to the mayor. Businessmen further joined together to create a more favorable working climate for business. The Employers' Association of Detroit, founded in 1902, strove to keep Detroit's workingmen union-free. Displaying the Progressive Era proclivity for scientific inquiry and technical experts, they formed the Detroit Bureau of Government Research to investigate municipal problems. As this research will demonstrate, the municipal needs of Detroit were not simply attended to by businessmen but by women, organized into their clubs and associations.

There has been little research on Detroit women and municipal politics in any era. The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit 1880-1920 by Olivier Zunz is primarily a history of spatial geography in Detroit.¹⁴ Melvin G. Holli wrote that mayor Hazen Pingree and Pingree's reforms in late nineteenth century Detroit popularized urban democracy and left a legacy of reform.¹⁵ Jack Delwyn Elenbaas' dissertation, "Detroit in the Progressive Era: A Study of Urban

¹⁴ Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality : Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit 1880-1920 (Chicago, 1982).

¹⁵ Melvin G. Holli, Reform in Detroit.

Reform 1900-1919” failed to note the influence of women and ends too early.¹⁶ An article by Elenbaas on Henry Leland and the Detroit Citizens League mentioned a letter from Leland to the Women’s Christian Temperance Union but never that there was cooperation between the two. He did not state that the League admitted women when they received the franchise.¹⁷ Raymond Fragnoli argued that charter revision in Detroit was not simply endorsed by businessmen but factory workers, church and ethnic groups, but ignored the support given by non-voting groups like women.¹⁸ Larry D. Engelmann described prohibition enforcement in the 1920s but concludes that it was only sporadically enforced in Detroit.¹⁹ Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years by Sidney Fine concentrated on the life of Frank Murphy and only dealt with civic minded Detroit women when they intersected with Murphy’s career.²⁰ Consequently, there has also been scant attention paid to municipally active clubwomen in Detroit. This has led to the erroneous conclusion that only men were active in Detroit politics. For example, Elenbaas claimed that the Municipal League and the Detroit News launched a crusade in 1912 to change the school board.²¹ He neglected the role played by Detroit clubwomen, headed by Laura Osborn, to reform the Detroit school board. Dr. J.M. Withrow, President of the Cincinnati Anti-tuberculosis League, credited the Detroit clubwomen for this change.²² Ignoring the role

¹⁶ Jack Delwyn Elenbaas, “Detroit in the Progressive Era: A Study of Urban Reform, 1900-1914,” (Ph.D. Diss., Wayne State University, 1968).

¹⁷ Jack D. Elenbaas, “The Boss of the Better Class: Henry Leland and the Detroit Citizens League, 1912-1924,” Michigan History 58 (Summer, 1974): 131-150.

¹⁸ Raymond R. Fragnoli, “Progressive Coalitions and Municipal Reform: Charter Revision in Detroit, 1912-1918,” Detroit in Perspective: A Journal of Regional History 4 (Spring, 1980): 119-142.

¹⁹ Larry D. Engelmann, “A Separate Peace: The Politics of Prohibition Enforcement in Detroit, 1920-1930,” Detroit in Perspective: A Journal of Regional History 1 (Autumn, 1972): 51-73.

²⁰ Sidney Fine, Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years (Ann Arbor, 1975).

²¹ Elenbaas, “Detroit in the Progressive Era,” p.120.

²² Letter to Osborn from J.M. Withrow (February 25, 1915), Box 16, Correspondence, Laura Osborn Papers, Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit Public Library.

of women in these efforts and many others in Detroit politics not only subtracts from their achievements, by default, it enhances the role of men in those activities.

As Detroit clubwomen inserted themselves in previously male-dominated public affairs, they contributed to an evolving concept of twentieth century politics.²³ In “Women’s History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life,” Sara Evans argued that late nineteenth century politics was mostly for economic goals and therefore had lost its participatory aspect. Using Jurgen Habermas’ model of the public sphere and Paula Baker’s research on “The Domestication of Politics,” Evans stated that women through their voluntary associations opened up new possibilities for civic action. Because these associations occupied a unique position between the state and domestic life, they offered opportunities for women to participate in public life even without suffrage. She concluded that “the importance of civil society understood as the locus of free spaces or democratic voluntary associations, where citizens draw on their private identities and practice the basic skills of public life” can offer the means to understand both the connection between the public and private. Activist clubwomen seized upon and developed their own political culture within these spaces that, in turn, led them to develop political ideas and actions that differed from those of men organized into male organizations.²⁴

In Detroit, clubwomen made a private-public connection in their voluntary clubs and the public work they undertook well before they could vote. Like the women of

²³ Scott, *Natural Allies*.

²⁴ Sara M. Evans, “Women’s History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life,” Suzanne Lebsock and Nancy Hewitt eds., *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* (Urbana, 1993) p. 119-139.

Chicago, they “translated a city-wide identity by gender into an understanding of metropolitan issues.”²⁵ They looked to the municipal government to provide services arising from private needs like recreation and personal hygiene. Between 1901 and 1903 the Detroit Branch of the Council of Women campaigned successfully for municipal playgrounds. Clara B. Arthur, who was the President of DFWC, and had been the President of the Twentieth Century Club, as well as a member of the Detroit Equal Suffrage Association (DESA), led the fight for public bath houses. She began this work in the early years of the twentieth century and it came to fruition in 1906. Consequently, women established themselves as legitimate political actors and they changed what constituted the concerns of the state and how people behaved politically. For example, in 1912, Detroit women added social welfare as a proper concern for public debate in their support for Mother’s Compensation.

While women of color were also connecting the private with the public, they could not depend on the government to provide social welfare for them. Their complex position regarding class, race and gender gave them a unique perspective on reform. Darlene Clark Hine stressed that black women took it upon themselves to prove they were worthy of respect. They believed that if they proved they were morally equal to other Victorian women, they would be able to press for social reform, as their white counterparts had done. In this effort, several of them established homes, like Detroit’s Second Baptist’s Big Sisters Auxiliary founded in 1919. African-American clubwomen enlisted volunteer services and money from the black community for these institutions.²⁶ Black reformers

²⁵ Flanagan, Charter Reform, p. 42.

²⁶ Darlene Clark Hine, “The Philanthropic Work of Black Women,” in Lebsock and Hewitt eds., Visible Women p. 70-93.

were often in organizations like the National Association of Colored Women. Their campaign for welfare was inextricably tied to equal rights. They therefore stressed economic independence and refused to commit women to domestic roles exclusively. Detroit clubwoman Elizabeth Gulley claimed that charity would not be necessary if black women worked for quality education. Consequently, African-American clubwomen focused less on charity and more on general uplifting programs in health, education and day care.²⁷ While racial uplift was a primary objective for black women club members, juggling class, gender and race produced tensions in the African American community. In "The Cost of Club Work, the Price of Black Feminism" Deborah Gray White demonstrated that black clubwomen were engaged in many of the same activities to enhance home and community as white clubwomen. The nature of American racism, however, placed black women in a far different position. They were slandered by negative sexual stereotypes but as privileged members of a small black middle class, they were confident in their abilities to uplift their race. In their enthusiasm to reform the African American community, they ran headlong into black male leadership. Where white women were denied the franchise, they established a separate political subculture. When black women strove for leadership, they threatened that of men. Additionally, black women wanted to assert their leadership because they felt African American men did little to alleviate the sexual exploitation of women. Some even subscribed to it. Black men held patriarchal notions that racial uplift began with them. Black clubwomen disagreed and felt only in ending their sexual exploitation could the race improve. Consistent with this belief,

²⁷ Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare (New York, 1994), p. 111-12, 124, 141-42.

black women had a class agenda as well. They worked to reform and educate rural and working class women. As Gray White noted, the National Association of Colored Women's motto "Lifting as we climb" denoted racial sameness but connoted social difference. Consequently, the feminist club work for black women, often put the members at odds with the community they served.²⁸

Female African American reformers in Detroit did social welfare work, often within Detroit's Second Baptist Church. Clubs like the American Beauty Club, founded in 1922, provided services for new members.²⁹ By the 1930s, reformers focused on black employment, youth delinquency and civil rights.³⁰ Detroit's black women were utilizing their economic resources to effect change in the city. Using the motto "Don't buy from where you can't work" The Housewives League of Detroit attempted to alleviate the disproportionate burden the Great Depression had on black Detroiters. This campaign also encouraged youth training programs.³¹

²⁸ Deborah Gray White, "The Cost of Club Work, the Price of Black Feminism," Lebsack and Hewitt, Visible Women p.247-264.

²⁹ One Hundred and Four Year History of the Second Baptist Church, 1836-1940 (Detroit, 1940), p. 77, 81.

³⁰ Victoria Widgeon Wolcott, "Remaking Respectability: African-American Women and the Politics of Identity in Interwar Detroit," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995).

³¹ Darlene Clark Hine, "The Housewives' League of Detroit: Black Women and Economic Nationalism," Lebsack and Hewitt, eds., Visible Women p.223-24, Anne Meis Knupfer sees black clubwomen in Chicago as creating a new fusion between politics and African-American traditions as she explores a cultural dimension in Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood. Black clubwomen in Chicago joined ideas of true womanhood, progressive maternalism, municipal housekeeping with their own African-American cultural beliefs. True womanhood was less about submissiveness and more about motherhood and home life. Black clubwomen's volunteer work kept them from visible leadership positions and they emphasized traditional family issues which limited their overall political influence. Nevertheless, they worked at voter education and registration campaigns for black women. They actively supported anti-lynching laws and provided legal help for prisoners from the East St. Louis riot. Anne Meis Knupfer, Toward A Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood: African-American Women's Clubs in Turn of the Century Chicago (New York, 1996).

As a growing body of work indicates, and this dissertation will confirm, research on enfranchised women in the 1920s must be connected to women's earlier activities. Nancy Cott emphasized the continuities between the women of the 1920s and their earlier sisters in "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics Before and After 1920." Cott claimed that women continued to work together in voluntary associations which must be considered, as they were intended, for political purposes. In Detroit, for instance, the DFWC formed a Legislative Committee when women received the franchise. Furthermore, Cott made it clear that women's voluntary associations multiplied during the time period. Women continued to pursue interest-group politics in a plethora of organizations. In Detroit, The Twentieth Century Club, The League of Women Voters, The Detroit League of Catholic Women, The Detroit New Century Club, The Progressive Civic League, and many other women's clubs were active politically before and after suffrage. While many women were in associations, no one group spoke for all on all occasions. In neither Cott's research, nor in Detroit, was there a "women's bloc" in politics. Cott concluded that the idea of a women's bloc denied individuality so women's political efforts were as varied as men's. Clubwomen often banded together to support issues of common interest, but did not always agree on the same policy. For example, in Michigan not all women supported women's suffrage and some club members resented the use of their clubs for political purposes.³²

Kristi Andersen agreed that women did not become less political in the 1920s, but that they failed to use the vote in predicted ways. But more importantly, according to

³² Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics Before and After 1920," Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin eds., Women, Politics and Change (New York, 1990), p. 154-172.

Andersen, they renegotiated the boundaries between male and female political activity. In After Suffrage- Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal, she argued that women's political participation in the 1920s was the bridge between the highly partisan nineteenth century politics and the interest group politics of the twentieth century. Detroit clubwomen did not always join the political parties and when they did, they chafed at party leaders' instructions on how to vote. In large part this situation had developed because of disfranchisement: lacking the power to vote, women had pioneered lobbying and pressure-group politics. Michigan women, for example, effectively used personal interviews with legislators in order to gain the legislation they wanted; they educated themselves and provided civic and issue education for both the public and political leaders. They then carried over their pre-suffrage political methods into the 1920s with their educational activities like the League of Women Voters' sponsorship of candidate debates, shifted attention away from the parties and towards the candidates, and massive "Get Out The Vote" drives. According to Andersen, in this renegotiation of political boundaries, women made significant contributions to evolving twentieth century politics and, in fact, altered it.³³

Several historians have concentrated on the period before suffrage to show how clubwomen behaved politically without the vote. Gayle Gullett wrote that California women injected themselves into politics and thereby changed both middle class politics and progressivism. They pursued a "womanly" politics that was independent from men but still necessary for democracy. Since industrial capitalism had changed the nature of

³³ Kristi Andersen, After Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal (Chicago, 1996), p. 1-18.

women's work, making it more public, they sought the vote. Women's work was outside the home in the waged work force. Those who remained in the home, still depended on public policies to provide services and protections for that home.³⁴ This research will demonstrate how Detroit clubwomen campaigned for similar programs throughout their city. They advocated government inspection of meat and clean food distribution.

Texas clubwomen were also concerned with the reordering of power in their state and local governments. Beginning in the 1890s, clubwomen expanded their traditional roles as wives and mothers into public ones. They felt that their unique feminine expertise couldn't be duplicated by men and therefore these women also pursued the vote. Judith McArthur concluded that the social reform of the Progressive Era was a "reconciliation between the ideology of domesticity and the demands of feminism." Texas women were both trying to preserve the home and expand women's activities beyond the home.³⁵

Other historians have placed women's political activity within a more specific urban context. Maureen Flanagan pointed out how male-defined political structures posed an impediment to women's efforts to gain political power in Chicago. In "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective," Flanagan explained how the structures of political institutions that were well-established before women were enfranchised constrained their activities. For example, ward-based municipal offices, the primary system, plus the fact that many key offices were appointed not elected, kept women out of the political loop. Additionally,

³⁴ Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's movement, 1880-1911 (Urbana, 2000).

³⁵ Judith N. McArthur, Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918 (Urbana, 1998), p. 143.

Flanagan noted, the lengthy gap between the all male suffrage and women's suffrage severely limited women's real political power.³⁶

Flanagan spoke of women's frustration with the political system, but acknowledged that they seldom advocated radical political change nor undertook a systematic assault on the unfairness of the wage system as did the Socialists. Rather, organized middle-class clubwomen across the country were concerned with how the wage system placed a disproportionate burden on women, a concern that led clubwomen to advocate social welfare in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁷ Theda Skocpol described how women, working through their voluntary clubs pushed for social welfare legislation that emanated from a gender-based vision of maternalism. Maternalists, according to Skocpol sought policies such as mother's pensions and minimum wage; they strongly supported the Children's Bureau and Skocpol believed they came close to establishing a maternalist welfare state.³⁸

It was this gendered-vision in Detroit and cities throughout the United States that clubwomen consequently translated into political action. Urban politics often provided the battleground on which men and women struggled for power and resources early in the twentieth century. In "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Women's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era" and in "The City Profitable, The City Livable" Flanagan described citizens advocating different gendered visions of Chicago. The men consistently advocated programs that would enhance business interests

³⁶ Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights," 305-330.

³⁷ Flanagan, "Predicament of New Rights."

³⁸ Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge, 1992), p.2-3.

in sanitation, education and police power while women promoted the well being of Chicago's citizens ahead of business needs. Women felt the city must work for human betterment. Consequently, they advocated recreation for the lakefront, urban rest rooms and trash receptacles, the cleaner burning of coal, and support for government led housing.³⁹ Anne Firor Scott described early female associations as church or charity based. By the twentieth century, "municipal housekeeping" gave an air of respectability to otherwise unseemly public or political activity. Women's clubs networked with one another and reached out to men's associations as well. By 1920, many women's associations were overtly political but seldom partisan.⁴⁰ Detroit clubwomen also practiced "municipal housekeeping," but their programs often ran counter to those of men's groups in Detroit who were mainly concerned with the financial bottom-line. When women in Detroit campaigned for public bath houses, aldermen were concerned with the expense. One saw no need for public baths when Detroit had a large river. Most importantly, the women in both cities display the political nature of their ideas. They were interested in the reordering of power within the city and the role of citizens in that effort. The women of Chicago and Detroit were making appeals to the municipal government and were therefore acting politically. They were taking their vision of their respective cities and translating it into public policy. It is this urban, political, policy-oriented vision that moves this research on Detroit clubwomen beyond merely relying on the maternalist idea to explain clubwomen's ideas.⁴¹

³⁹ Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable - Environmental Policy, Gender and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *The Journal of Urban History* 22 (January, 1996): 163-190 and Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform," p.1032-1050.

⁴⁰ Scott, *Natural Allies*, p.142.

⁴¹ See Joanne L. Goodwin, "An Experiment in Paid Motherhood: The Implementation of Mothers'

Other historians have also identified common municipal policy issues and how women tried to implement their ideas. Elisabeth Israels Perry described the club activities of the Women's City Club of New York from 1915-1990. She found there were great similarities between women's pre- and post-suffrage traditions, that women were politically effective even when denied public office and that, at the local level, women pursued different strategies to make their political voices heard. Likewise, in Detroit, women used similar strategies like public education both before and after suffrage and like the Women's City Club always found creative ways to effect change. Both New York and Detroit women expanded their original work for the welfare of women and children into a political reform program for general betterment for all citizens.⁴²

Women's particular reforming strategies often meant that they remained non-partisan. Skocpol claimed that men used the parties as their political base and therefore women tended to use their associations as an operating base.⁴³ Even when women abandoned their political neutrality and joined the political parties, they had a unique agenda and method of operation. Perry described women in 1920s' politics as committed to "private ideals and programs." In her study of New York Jewish activist Belle

Pensions in early Twentieth-Century Chicago," *Gender and History* 3 (Autumn, 1992): 323-343, Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward a Tenderer Humanity*, Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930," in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel eds., *Mothers of a New World* (New York, 1993), p. 43-93, Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

⁴² Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," *New York History* (October, 1990): 417-434. One of a few instances of a woman serving as mayor of a large city exposed a similar process among activist women in Seattle, Sandra Haarsager, *Bertha Knight Landes of Seattle: Big City Mayor* (Norman, OK, 1994).

⁴³ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers*, p.3, Manuela Thurner describes how the anti-suffrage women feared that the ballot would inevitably mean partisan politics. That in turn, would render women's social reforms less effective because they would lose their political neutrality. Manuela Thurner, "'Better Citizens Without the Ballot': Anti-suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era," Marjorie Spruill-Wheeler, ed., *One Woman, One Vote - Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OH, 1995), p. 203-217.

Moskowitz, Perry explored Moskowitz's idea that getting elected was not the goal of politics, rather, the goal was to establish successful reform programs. She believed men and women had different but complementary roles in politics. Moskowitz stayed in a gender-specific role, controlling through subtle manipulation, but remaining loyal and selfless.⁴⁴ Susan Ware, in her work on Molly Dewson, also examined women's alternative ways of wielding power through a series of networks that brought reformers, political activists and traditional women's organizations together on issues of common concern. The women in these networks stressed issues and not personalities. They were more issue oriented, more collaborative and less concerned with competition and prestige. They were also focused heavily in issues of economic security, peace, and humanitarian reform. In Detroit, the clubwomen followed a familiar pattern. They were rarely partisan, supporting candidates of both parties on the basis of their voting record. Detroit clubwomen worked for equal pay for equal work, international peace, and humane prison reform. Ware further claimed that women were not always trying to elect other women but concentrating on bringing women into existing institutional structures outside of electoral politics. Detroit women worked especially hard to secure the appointment of women to institutional boards, especially those boards concerned women and children. Lastly, Ware agreed with Cott that the 1920s were a continuation of women's political activities through their organizations.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Israels Perry, Belle Moskowitz - Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith (New York, 1987), p. xi, 78, 155.

⁴⁵ Susan Ware, Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics (New Haven, 1987), p. xii, xvi, xviii, 91.

The activities of all Detroit's clubwomen reveal their intense interest in the civic well-being of their city. The focus of this research is neither on charitable nor working women's issues. It is rather on the political activities of clubwomen in Detroit. Its purpose is to illuminate the complexity of equal political participation when viewed at the nexus of both urban and gendered variables. Effective political participation in 1920s Detroit went well beyond the franchise. Clubwomen had developed specific methodological and ideological patterns in their pre-franchise political cultures. They pioneered new lobbying techniques such as personal interviews and investigations and practiced grass-roots politics outside of the party system. Detroit clubwomen had their greatest success in public (not partisan) political education and grass-roots organizational activity. They studied civic issues, held public lectures and disseminated this information in creative ways. Their organizational ability, at the community level, helped bring Detroit politics into the neighborhood.

These enfranchised, thoughtful, educated, and well organized clubwomen tried to effect public policy but their success was limited. Lack of access to both political decision-making and business interests hurt their civic effectiveness. Also, the need to counter gendered or radical stereotypes, but lacking the media tools to do it, all combined to produce only this limited success. Their goals, as articulated in their writings, were often at odds with the newspaper presentation of them. The business influence in the city was pivotal to any civic program. Clubwomen for instance, could get school milk for poor children, but could not get state support for a national child labor amendment. When clubwomen's plans coincided with those of businessmen, they enjoyed success. For

example, clubwomen had campaigned for smoke abatement in the early 1920s but with limited success. When smoke abatement appeared financially favorable, clubwomen's demands for cleaner air were finally met. In sensitive issues like transportation, Detroit women prudently studied, but did not advocate policy. Political minded Detroit clubwomen, moreover, had only a limited access to the public media. Unless the newspaper supported the clubwomen's crusade, like anti-gambling, they printed club activities in the society section and usually only once a week. Still, Detroit clubwomen insisted on continuing their political participation. Their main interests were in issues regarding women and children, crime and punishment, and the problems of an urbanized, industrialized Detroit. As civic minded women, they considered their commitment to Detroit both a challenge and a promise.⁴⁶

A Note on Sources

In order to explore the activities of Detroit's clubwomen, it is necessary to investigate the sources written by the women themselves and those written about them. The Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library houses the minutes, correspondence and published works of many Detroit women's clubs. They also have extensive records of the Detroit Woman's Club (founded in 1873), the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs (founded in 1895), Twentieth Century Club (founded in 1894), Progressive Civic League (founded in 1912), and the League of Women Voters (founded in 1919). The collections are both manuscript and published materials. The Burton also holds biographical collections of significant Detroit clubwomen. The Bentley Historical

⁴⁶ "A Challenge and a Promise," 6 Michigan Woman (August, 1928): 5

Library holds the papers of the politically active, Lucia Voorheis Grimes. Lastly, the large Detroit newspapers published the activities of Detroit's clubwomen on a weekly basis.

African American women's clubs have only limited records at the Burton. Mrs. Senora D. Smith, the Historian for The Detroit Association of (Colored) Women's Clubs (DAWC) explained that there were few club records for the 1920s. Smith noted that the DAWC did not own a clubhouse until 1941 and therefore rarely maintained its manuscripts outside of individual presidents, secretaries, etc. The clubwomen saw needs in the community, and took care of them. At the time, they didn't think it was necessary to keep records.⁴⁷ The Michigan State Archives houses only basic biographical information of women in the Michigan State Association of Colored Women for the 1920s. The Second Baptist Church of Detroit has very few records for their many church affiliated women's clubs. The Burton Historical Collection holds some records of the Detroit Study Club and the New Era Study Club, as well as the papers of Lillian Bateman Johnson. The Michigan State Libraries Collection includes the records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The Detroit African American newspapers of the time have a few editions on microfilm at the Burton, but otherwise are not kept in area collections. Consequently, the description of African American women's club activities in Detroit is uneven and conclusions about these activities remain tenuous.

Investigating the activities of women during the 1920s presents problems identifying these women, as women. In the newspapers and official club publications, they are referred to by their husband's names, almost exclusively. The Directory Committee of

⁴⁷ Senora D. Smith, telephone conversation with author, January 22, 2001.

the DFWC admonished women not to use their female names. The Committee insisted that women use their husband's names (unless, they were not living with him) in order to keep its records straight.⁴⁸ This research has exhausted the opportunities to discover some women's names. Occasionally, a biography of a notable husband included, "he married the lovely" Cemeteries and obituaries have also proved useful. However, in the case of Mrs. Craig Miller, she remained just that, even in death.⁴⁹ Therefore, women's first names will be used, if possible. Otherwise, they will be listed under their husband's name, as was the custom at the time.

⁴⁸ "Directory Committee" (no date, ~April, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 573, Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library (BHC). In the 1928 Ruth Hanna McCormick Congressional campaign in Illinois, the post office would not deliver literature to a woman without her husband's name on the address. Kristie Miller, Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Life in Politics, 1880-1944 (Albuquerque, 1992), p. 187-188.

⁴⁹ Detroit News (September 6, 1941).

Chapter 1 - Early Twentieth Century Detroit

Detroit's early twentieth century history involves a dynamic city undergoing rapid industrialization. This industrialization, with its accompanying population boom, made the city more heterogeneous than it had been in the nineteenth century. Detroit encountered increased demands for city services and greater municipal responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. But, the decentralized, corrupt city government was poorly equipped to meet the challenges of its newly acquired urban and industrial condition. This led concerned individuals, like businessmen and clubwomen to organize for civic activism. Until fairly recently, historians concentrated their research on the activities of men's groups leaving the impression that it was only Detroit's males who sought reform in Detroit. While early twentieth century Detroit's municipal affairs were certainly male-dominated, this research will demonstrate Detroit's middle-class women, using their clubs and associations, injected their civic views. Disfranchised, but convinced that their gendered voices be heard, Detroit's clubwomen consistently, challenged both the male-dominated politics and historiography of the time period.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the City of Detroit experienced unprecedented growth. The phenomenal rise of the automobile industry and the increased industrial production of the First World War turned Detroit into an industrial giant. By the early 1920s, Detroit was third in the nation, after New York and Chicago, for the dollar value of its total manufactured goods. Correspondingly, the population had grown three fold since 1900 with almost half of that population being foreign born. In 1900, the city had a population of 285,704. By 1920, it was 993,678 within the city proper and another

171,475 in the metropolitan district (as defined by the 1920 census). The population had increased 528,000 between 1910 and 1920 and of this increase, 412,000 were migrants. These migrants included foreign immigrants, southern blacks and those leaving the lumber and copper work of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.¹ The population was to increase another fifty percent by 1930. The new jobs in the burgeoning auto factories acted like a magnet for newcomers. Historian Melvin Holli described Detroit in those years as the "foremost rank-jumping city in the nation."² The Detrouiter (weekly publication of the Detroit Board of Commerce) used the statistics from the 1930 Bureau of Census to report that from 1900 to 1920 the African American population grew from 4,110 to 40,838 and totaled 120,066 by 1930.³ Eighty-one percent of Detroit's Blacks were from the South. By 1919, the Michigan State Department of Labor listed approximately 138,834 auto related jobs in Detroit.⁴ When foreign immigration was cut short by World War I, recruiters were sent south by the Ford Motor Company and others to get southern black workers.⁵

By 1920, Detroit was vastly more urbanized, industrialized, class stratified and racially diversified that it had been only twenty years earlier. The city's industrial and urban realities created new challenges for the city. Historian Olivier Zunz claimed that "an entirely new society emerged in Detroit in the 1920s." Factory workers accounted for fifty-two percent of the Detroit working force. The majority of Poles (81%), Hungarians

¹ Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrant in Detroit 1818-1920 (Chicago, 1982), p.286-287.

² Melvin Holli, Ed, Detroit (New York, 1976), p.118.

³ "Detroit Population Statistics Reveal Many Unusual Facts," Detrouiter 22 (August 10, 1931): 8

⁴ Holli, Detroit, p.119.

⁵ Lynda Ann Ewen, Corporate Power and Urban Crisis in Detroit (Princeton, 1978), p.118.

(77%) and Austrians (81%) were factory workers. Zunz wrote that nineteenth century Detroit was characterized by cross-classed ethnic neighborhoods. By 1920, however, neighborhoods were more typified by class and race than ethnicity. Ethnicity was still evident but the ethnic clusters were of a narrower occupational range. Zunz concluded that by 1920 Detroit was divided more on class lines than ever before.⁶

The great industrialists of the late nineteenth century such as James McMillan, James Joy and John Newberry had made railroad fortunes in the late 1800s. McMillan headed the State Republican Central Committee from 1886-1896 and served as a U.S. Senator. He was chairman of American Car and Foundry, President of Seamless Steel Tube and Fulton Iron and Engine Works. Other industrialists were also involved in municipal affairs. George Barbour, co-founder of Ireland and Mathews Manufacturing Company, served as President of the Detroit City Council. Dexter Ferry, co-founder of D. M. Ferry and Company (grain) and Frederick Smith, founder of Wolverine Manufacturing Company (lumber) were on the Detroit Board of Estimates. Hamilton Carhartt, founder of Hamilton Carhartt and Sons (cotton mill) was on the Public Lighting Commission. W.J. Chittendon, investor in Hargreaver Manufacturing (lumber), served on the Board of the Detroit House of Correction and Frank Kirby, head of Detroit Boat Works, served as Water Commissioner. Theodore Buhl's father and uncle had both been mayors of Detroit. Buhl was an investor in Parke, Davis And Company (drugs). As a group, these big businessmen were predominately Republican (72%) and Protestant (87%). They were also very active in Republican state politics. McMillan, Joy and Russell Alger, investor in Detroit Electric Light Company, joined with other business leaders in January 1885 to

⁶ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.286, 327, 338, 358-59.

form the powerful Michigan Republican Club. The Club's purpose was to revitalize the Republican Party.⁷ In the late nineteenth century, James McMillan, along with his brother Hugh, Alger, Joy, George Hendrie, William Muir and Frank Hecker, "had a voice in almost every great industrial enterprise in Detroit."⁸

The Michigan Republican Club originally backed Hazen Pingree for mayor of Detroit in 1890. Pingree shared many of the characteristics of the Detroit industrial and political elite. He, too, was Republican and Protestant. He had started a shoe factory in Detroit after the Civil War with C.H. Smith.⁹ Pingree had been anti-union and only reluctantly signed a collective bargaining agreement in 1886. But after he had read the works of labor economist, Richard Ely, he became apprehensive about potential working class discontent. Consequently, he looked for cooperation between capital and labor once he became mayor.¹⁰

Detroit's laboring people, while racially and ethnically divided, had broadened expectations of an urbanized, industrialized Detroit to which Pingree, as Mayor from 1890 to 1897, responded with a type of urban populism that demanded the city address the needs of its people.¹¹ Pingree had promoted a vision of urban democracy where the masses had a stake in a better urban society. Detroit needed municipal services such as transportation and utilities, clean water and adequate sewage removal. Under Pingree, issues such as the municipal ownership of the street cars in particular, and reform, in

⁷ Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, p.204, 210-211, 213.

⁸ Marie Heyda, O.P., "Senator James McMillan and the Flowering of the Spoil's System," *Michigan History* 54 (Fall, 1970): 191.

⁹ Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, p.210.

¹⁰ Arthur E. DeMatteo, "Organized Labor Versus the Mayor: The Detroit Federation of Labor and the Revised City Charter of 1914," *Michigan Historical Review* 22 (Fall, 1995): 67.

¹¹ DeMatteo, "Organized Labor," p.67.

general, became popular political causes.¹² Zunz claimed that “Pingree is known as one of the first major urban reformers, able to combine prominent structural reforms with social goals in a spirit of social justice.”¹³ In an article originally published in Outlook, in 1897, Pingree described his reforms in Detroit. He understood that the geographically and demographically expanded Detroit needed transportation for its citizens. Consequently, when there was a street car strike, Pingree demanded arbitration and the strike was settled in one and one-half days. Although some of the city’s powerful aldermen, such as James Vernor, Charles Wright and Chris Jacob strongly supported the privately owned street car company, Pingree led a fight against granting of further franchise to this company. Eventually, on November 20, 1894, the Pack and Everett Company of Cleveland guaranteed cheap fares and received a competing franchise from the Detroit Council.¹⁴ This was the beginning of a long struggle between the City of Detroit and its private streetcar companies.

Pingree also understood the growing modern urban dependence on technological developments such as gas and clean water. Demonstrating that a company produced cheaper gas in Cleveland than Detroit, he lowered gas for fuel by half and gas for lighting by one third. Regarding Detroit’s water supply, Pingree believed that the expense of the water should be borne by the general taxation. The Detroit Water Works had been owned by the city since 1852. Pingree’s vision was that the city should provide for the general betterment of its citizens when he said “for the sake of a better civilization, to furnish free

¹² Melvin Holli, Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics (New York, 1969), p.ix, 220-221.

¹³ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.111.

¹⁴ Holli, Detroit, p.111-113.

schools, free libraries, free parks, it is right for the city to furnish free water for the promotion of cleanliness, comfort and self-respect in the homes of its citizens...”¹⁵

Referring to Pingree, historian Arthur DeMatteo concluded that, “He set a standard which his successors in Detroit’s city hall found necessary to emulate if they wished to survive politically.”¹⁶ Pingree’s successor, William C. Maybury, mayor from 1897 to 1904, was eventually defeated because he was out of tune with a new reform-minded Detroit. George P. Codd followed in 1904 on a pledge to improve the street railway system. The next three Detroit mayors, William E. Thompson (1907-08, 1911-12), Philip Breitmeyer (1909-10), and Oscar B. Marx (1913-1918) all promised and failed to deliver an improved street railway system.¹⁷ They were hampered by the Michigan Constitution which prevented municipal ownership of public utilities and transportation systems. Additionally, on January 12, 1901, all the streetcar lines, including Pingree’s rival Detroit Railway, became consolidated into the Detroit United Railway (DUR). For the next twenty-one years, the DUR operated on several track franchises, with varying expiration dates between 1906 and 1935. The city refused to renew franchises, but allowed the DUR to continue operations.¹⁸ In 1908 a new Michigan Constitution allowed municipal ownership. Shortly thereafter, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that cities could not simply add municipal ownership but rather needed completely new charters.¹⁹ The mayors of Detroit, following Pingree’s lead attempted to acquire municipal

¹⁵ Holli, Detroit, p.114.

¹⁶ DeMatteo, “Organized Labor,” p. 67.

¹⁷ Melvin G. Holli, “Mayoring in Detroit, 1824-1985: Is Upward Mobility the ‘Impossible Dream’?” Michigan History 13 (Spring, 1987): 3-5.

¹⁸ book review, Detroit Street Railways Volume I, 1863-1922, by Charles K. Hyde, Detroit in Perspective: Journal of Regional History 7 (Fall, 1983): 84-85.

¹⁹ DeMatteo, “Organized Labor,” p. 69.

ownership of the street railway system for the first twenty years of the century. In the meantime the public continued to battle with the DUR as both street railway service and equipment continued to deteriorate.²⁰

Pingree's ideas about the new relationship between citizens and the municipal government reflect similar tensions throughout U.S. cities in the Progressive Era. James B. Crooks saw this tension in Baltimore between a nineteenth century municipal government, which was unable to provide for urban growth and social justice and reformers who wanted the city to respond to its modern needs. In Baltimore, as in Detroit, the battle between the public control over street railways revealed deeper ideas about municipal ownership. These ideas concerned public authority over services, not socialism.²¹ Zane Miller understood that public utilities, and especially rapid mass transit, raised serious issues about the fate of Cincinnati. These issues also revolved around regulation and cost. In Cincinnati, the Progressive Era was a struggle between "bossism and reform" with the former bringing some order to the city but the latter providing more fundamental reforms.²²

Progressive reform can not be fully understood as the dichotomy between bosses and reformers. John Buenker used the term "urban liberalism" to embrace a civic vision where government intervenes to protect the less fortunate. He cited Hazen Pingree as an urban liberal who understood the needs of Detroit's working-class. Buenker's theory of

²⁰ Hyde, book review, p.84.

²¹ James B. Crooks, Politics and Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895-1911 (Baton Rouge, 1968), p.vii,viii,121.

²² Zane Miller, Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era (New York, 1968), p.vii,69-70, 241.

urban liberalism clarified the fact that progressive reform was so prominent in industrial cities.²³

Furthermore, urban liberalism was not only embraced by male reformers but by women who were increasingly convinced of their need to pursue civic activism. Maureen Flanagan has convincingly argued that in Chicago, clubwomen often opposed male-sponsored municipal reforms. The men consistently advocated programs that would enhance business interests in sanitation, education and police power. In contrast to this, the women's vision of the city government encompassed their perception of the well being of Chicago's citizens regardless of its effect on business. Chicago women wanted their city government to take responsibility for modern urban problems.²⁴ Judith McArthur explained that Texas women believed they provided a feminine expertise in matters of government. They joined the suffrage movement when they realized they could not depend on men to express this necessary feminine ability.²⁵ James Connolly added the influence of women in Boston politics as operating outside traditional partisan venues. Boston women also contributed their ideas about reform stemming from their roles as wives and mothers. In this way Boston politics became increasingly "domesticated."²⁶

Ironically as Pingree was promoting municipal responsibility that responded to the broader citizen needs, the industrialization of Detroit was spawning a new and powerful business elite determined to keep municipal responsibility in their hands, not let it spread

²³ John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York, 1973), p.viii, 27, 222.

²⁴ Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* (October, 1990): 1032-1050.

²⁵ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Urbana, 1998), p.33,107.

²⁶ James J. Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge, 1998), p.10,50-51.

down to the working-class. Prior to 1900, the majority of Detroit's mayors, had come from the merchant capitalists, lumber tycoons, and freight-car manufacturers. By 1920, automobile manufacturing was the main industry which dominated the business of Detroit. Consequently, the auto barons, along with other big businessmen held the great wealth and influence in Detroit's municipal affairs. Detroit had produced 4,192 cars in 1900 but in 1920, produced 1,905,560 cars and an additional 321,789 trucks.²⁷ Automobile manufacturers Henry Ford and John and Horace Dodge were powerful in the factory communities of Highland Park and Hamtramck, respectively. In 1922, when the City of Detroit tried to expand into Highland Park and Hamtramck, Ford and the Dodge brothers persuaded the people there to incorporate as separate municipalities. Both Highland Park and Hamtramck were surrounded by Detroit and received some city services. Still, neither Ford nor the Dodge brothers had to pay Detroit taxes.²⁸ Automobile manufacturers, such as Henry Leland of the Cadillac and the Lincoln Motor Car Companies, formed organizations such as the Municipal League in 1902 "to promote business-like, honest and efficient conduct in municipal affairs."²⁹

Increasing class stratification, the large numbers of migrants in Detroit and an exaggerated fear of socialism and labor radicalism, led the city's great industrialists to work together to impose social order on the community. In the early years of the century, the economic and population boom increased Detroit's union membership from 8,258 in

²⁷ Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, p. 292.

²⁸ Robert Conot, *American Odyssey: A Unique History of America Told Through the Life of a Great City* (New York, 1974) p.213.

²⁹ Jack D. Elenbaas, "Detroit and the Progressive Era: A Study of Urban Reform, 1900-1914," (Ph.D. Wayne State University, 1968) p.69.

1902 to 13,0794 in 1904.³⁰ Still, even though the Socialist party gained in popularity in Detroit until 1912, a large part of the working-class population was unorganized and Detroit was regarded as a nonunion town.³¹ As the automobile industry became more prevalent in Detroit, the city was filled with foreign, unskilled and semi-skilled workers.³² The big businessmen intended that this new social order be based on a unified work force. They used welfare capitalism and Americanization programs to effect this. Henry Ford's five dollar wage program was based on both ideas. These wages were only available to those who performed on the job and in the community. Attendance was mandatory at Ford's English school for those who wanted the five dollar daily wage. The Ford Sociology Department investigated workers for "manhood and thrift," checking churches, fraternal organizations, government records, etc. To qualify for the five dollar wage, workers had to come from clean, orderly houses and be the breadwinner of the home.³³ Temperance was also important and the Sociological Department opened the doors of the family icebox to check against liquor.³⁴

Americanization programs had been started by the Detroit schools but became widespread only when the manufacturers, led by the Detroit Board of Commerce, gave them full support. Author Gregory Mason, in the September 27, 1916 article in the New Outlook, claimed that, "until the interest of the great employers of labor was secured, the efforts of the Board of Education bore little fruit."³⁵ Detroit's big corporations

³⁰ DeMatteo, "Organized Labor," p. 72.

³¹ John C. Leggett, "Class Consciousness and Politics in Detroit: A Study in Change," Michigan History 48 (December, 1964): 291-92.

³² De Matteo, "Organized Labor," p. 87-89.

³³ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p. 311-312.

³⁴ Wilma Henderson, "The Progressives and Other Reformers," Detroit Perspectives - Crossroads and Turning Points Wilma Henderson ed., (Detroit, 1991): 218.

³⁵ Holli, Detroit, 137-138.

dominated the Americanization movement. Henry W. Hoyt, vice-president of Great Lakes Engineering Company, F.S. Bigler, President of Michigan Bolt and Nut Company, Ernest L. Lloyd, President of Lloyd Construction Company, John R. Lee, Director of Ford's Sociology Department, Horace Rackham, Legal Counsel for Ford, W. E. Scripps, of the Detroit News, Scripps Motor Company and Scripps-Booth Cycle Car Company, were all important supporters of the program.³⁶ These men promoted a social vision in which Americanization, which included a commitment to industrial discipline, predominated over ethnic ties. The Detroit Board of Commerce financed the Americanization Night Schools until July 1922 when the night school became part of the Detroit Community Union, a citywide private umbrella organization.³⁷

Business interests had many opportunities to make their terms clear in the City of Detroit. The Municipal League had among its members, J.L. Hudson (Hudson's Department Stores) and James E. Scripps (Detroit News).³⁸ These men joined with Progressive Republicans to direct political and economic reform in Detroit. They believed that efficient government would cut costs and create a better business climate by freeing capital for investment, thereby attracting industry and customers to Detroit. Threatening this vision, however, was a series of political scandals. These generally involved election fraud but sometimes involved graft. At that time, Detroit was governed by a weak mayor form of municipal government with a city council formed of two aldermen from each of the city's twenty-one wards elected on a partisan ballot. According to historian Sidney

³⁶ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.286, 306.

³⁷ Mary O'Donnel Turner, "Americanization Work Effective in 1925," Detroit 17 (February 15, 1927):

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³⁸ Elenbaas, "Detroit and the Progressive Era," p.69.

Fine, the dominant influence was “easy going, inefficient and in a petty way corrupt.”³⁹

There was a bi-partisan Voteswappers League that directed the elections by controlling precinct election inspectors. The election officials would hide concealed blue pencils to re-mark unfavorable ballots and thereby void them. The call to “let the bluebirds fly” instructed officials to do this while they were counting election results. Both the Democrats and Republicans cooperated to prevent the election of local reform candidates, especially in the Common Council. Urban bosses would mark blank ballots which were cast by voters. In a scheme involving two voters and an urban boss, the voter would provide the blank ballot to the boss, who marked it, and the second voter would cast it.⁴⁰ The system was supported by those who wanted to prevent reform, especially regarding prohibition and municipal ownership of the street railway. Consequently, the Voteswappers League was heavily influenced by the Knights of the Royal Ark, which comprised Detroit’s liquor dealers and by the Detroit United Railway.⁴¹

In addition to election fraud, there were scandals involving financial gains for officeholders and financial losses for the City. In 1901, Police Commissioner, Frank Andrews had lost about one million dollars of Detroit city money in his City Savings Bank. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison but was pardoned a year later by the governor.⁴² The Commissioner of Public Works, Dwight H. Moreland, went on trial for payroll padding and selling public property for gain. The trial resulted in a hung jury.

³⁹ Sidney Fine, Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years (Ann Arbor, 1975), p.91.

⁴⁰ Conot, American Odyssey, p.100.

⁴¹ Raymond R. Fragnoli, “Progressive Coalitions and Municipal Reform: Charter Revision in Detroit, 1912-1918” Detroit In Perspective: A Journal of Regional History 4 (Spring, 1980): 122 and Fine, Murphy, p.91.

⁴² Conot, American Odyssey, p.189.

There were additional scandals involving the bribery of school inspectors by book agents, furniture dealers and contractors, which led to support for school board reform.⁴³

In 1912 a scandal erupted when almost half of the city council was involved with accepting bribes from the Wabash Railroad. The railroad wanted to obtain a street closing near the Fort Street Union Station. Nineteen were arrested.⁴⁴ The only case that came to trial was that of Alderman Tom Glinnan. But, this scandal was hardly what it appeared. Jack Delwyn Elenbaas found that it involved, “ambitious politicians on the outside looking in, brutally competitive newspapers fighting for survival, plus influential businessmen with a desire for more political influence over city hall...” Throughout the trial, the defense attorney, James A. MacNamara, demonstrated heavy involvement with businessmen and Mayor Thompson. Thompson tried to salvage his sagging political career as a reformer. He informed Detroit businessman, Andrew H. Green, Jr. President of the Solvay Process Company, that nothing was accomplished in Detroit without the bribing of many aldermen in the city council. Green then decided to pay for bribes (about ten thousand dollars) and expose the bribe-takers. The scheme also involved a bogus petition sponsored by the Wabash railroad. Although the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, for Glinnan, the council was in disrepute. This paved the way for city charter reform heavily sponsored by the Detroit Citizens League. Elenbaas concluded that eventually reform would take power away from the wards and make it more accessible to organized civic groups and the newspapers.⁴⁵

⁴³ Elenbaas, “Detroit and the Progressive Era” p.89, 120.

⁴⁴ Fine, Murphy, p.91.

⁴⁵ Jack D. Elenbaas, “The Excess of Reform: The Day the Detroit Mayor Arrested the City Council,” Wilma Henderson ed., Detroit Perspectives: Crossroads and Turning Points (Detroit, 1991): 266-274.

Both municipal corruption and fears about the undue influence of lower social groups, had led to the founding of the Detroit Citizens League in 1912. The earlier Municipal League collapsed in 1912 because of conflict between its president, Joseph L. Hudson and its secretary Anthony Pratt. This left an organizational void for businessmen who supported reform. The Detroit Citizens League was then organized by Henry Leland. The League stood for prohibition and clean government. Leland also believed that immigrants were potentially dangerous and needed to be controlled and stated that the purpose of the League was “Increasing the activity of the better class of men in politics.”⁴⁶ The League was joined in its efforts by the Detroit Bureau of Government Research which surveyed municipal and administrative matters, and by the Detroit Board of Commerce. Their definition of clean government meant reducing the influence of the working-class, ward-based aldermanic system. The members of the Detroit Citizens League, Bureau of Government Research and the Board of Commerce supported a new city charter to break the old system.⁴⁷

The Detroit Citizens League original members were Protestant, upper and middle class businessmen. Leland encouraged business and professional people to join by sending the League’s newsletter, Civic Searchlight, to certain churches and businesses. While Leland provided substantial financial support for the League, he was joined by other prominent Detroit businessmen. S. S. Kresge, Joseph Boyer, president of Burroughs Adding Machine Company, C.R. Talbot, vice-president of the National Bank of Commerce, Solvay Process Company, and Timken-Detroit Axle were all important

⁴⁶ Jack D. Elenbaas, “The Boss of the Better Class: Henry Leland and the Detroit Citizens League, 1912-1924” Michigan History 58 (Summer, 1974): 132, 133, 148.

⁴⁷ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.323.

contributors. Originally, the League functioned as an anti-saloon lobby. It employed the services of Pliny W. Marsh, the former attorney for the Michigan Anti-Saloon League and William P. Lovett, a former Baptist minister and publicity director of the Michigan Dry Campaign. Charter reform became its focus from 1913 until 1918 when it was finally successful.⁴⁸

One early attempt at charter reform was slated for voter approval in February, 1914. At that time, the popular issue of municipal ownership of the street railway and the joining of organized labor with other reformers seemed to guarantee victory. Earlier, in April 1913, the voters overwhelmingly approved an amendment for municipal ownership, 40,531 to 9,542. Since the state law on municipal ownership was not entirely clear regarding charter revision and municipal ownership, a Charter Commission was also elected. The Commissioners were to integrate municipal ownership of the street railways, consolidate the city's governmental structure by granting the mayor appointment powers of city departments, reduce the size of the Common Council from two to one non-partisan alderman per ward and provide for civil service. The new charter had provisions for Detroit's laboring class such as maximum hours and minimum wages for city employees. It also included a Department of Labor Welfare to represent the interests of the working class. Although high-profile Detroit citizens like Leland, business newspaper publisher Henry Nimmo, former mayor Breitmeyer, municipal reformer Horace G. Williams, Ford Motor Company's James Couzens, local judge Edward J. Jeffries, coal and lumber dealer Thomas Anketell, realtor Homer Warren and powerful alderman John C. Lodge, joined with the Detroit Federation of Labor (DFL), to support the charter, it was defeated.

⁴⁸ Elenbaas, "Leland," p.133-142.

Arthur DeMatteo concluded that a combination of several factors contributed to the defeat. The Michigan Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of cities to effect municipal ownership without charter reform which led to the withdrawal of support from Mayor Oscar Marx and the Detroit News. Also, Detroit's labor force was largely semi-skilled and therefore not well represented by the DFL. Lastly, the charter was opposed by the anti-prohibition forces and those who benefited from the large ward-based system.⁴⁹

Both Lovett and Marsh reacted to this defeat by leading the League to become more popularly based, opening League membership to all Detroit voters and employing precinct-level volunteers to do grass-roots work. Inspired by the successful passage of the Michigan Scott-Flowers Honest Elections Law in 1915, the League set about reforming the election board in Detroit. They secured a charter amendment that abolished the old election boards and replaced them with a five member city election commission who chose election officials from the applicants. Raymond R. Fragnoli, writing about municipal reform in Detroit, claimed that the Voteswappers League was effectively dead at that point.⁵⁰

After the Voteswappers League was destroyed, the Detroit Citizens League strove for more structural reform in Detroit's municipal government. They successfully championed a revision of the Michigan Home Rule Act and streamlined charter reform from four separate elections to two (Scott Law, 1916). They then set about gathering 13,969 signatures to place Detroit's charter revision amendment on the ballot. It passed in April, 1917, 24,391 to 8,886.⁵¹

⁴⁹ DeMatteo, "Organized Labor," p.63-92.

⁵⁰ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.122-123.

⁵¹ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.123-124.

The large plurality in the charter revision vote shows the general popularity of the measure in Detroit. As Fragnoli noted, the Detroit Citizens League appealed not only to businessmen, but to labor and church groups as well. They championed the idea that a smaller, at-large council would be more modern and it would produce leaders with a city-wide vision as opposed to the narrow-minded, ward politicians. In order to enlist the support of Detroit's laboring men, William Lovett gave a series of lunch time addresses, to factory workers stressing the cooperation needed among all Detroit's citizens. Lastly, for the churches, the League stressed that in order to preserve election and temperance reform, Detroit needed a revised charter.⁵²

The charter supporters, led by the Detroit Citizens League, met with only a weak opposition consisting of some members of the old Common Council and the Detroit Federation of Labor. The Charter's central issue was whether the city was best served by people representing one of many diverse interests or people representing what was best for the city as a whole. The Detroit Labor News opposed the at-large council because it feared that the interests of workingmen and minorities would be lost. Still, The Detroit Labor News and the Detroit Federation of Labor only represented a small, weak organization of workingmen in Detroit.⁵³

Part of the explanation for the weakness of organized labor in Detroit can be seen in the strength of employer opposition. In 1902, the Employers' Association of Detroit

⁵² Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.125-126.

⁵³ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.128. Also see, Maureen A. Flanagan, Charter Reform in Chicago (Carbondale, 1987), Kenneth Finegold, Experts and Politicians: Reform Challenges to Machine Politics in New York, Cleveland and Chicago (Princeton, 1995), Martin Scheisl, The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1800-1920 (Berkeley, 1977) and Samuel Hays, "The Politics of Reform of Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 54 (October, 1964): 157-169.

(EAD) was founded, primarily as an anti-union organization to supply reliable, non-union labor for Detroit's industries. Its members were alarmed at the incidence of labor unrest, not only throughout the country but more specifically in Detroit. Detroit's skilled metal workers had been especially successful during the crucial early years of development in the auto industry. In union shops, certain tasks were paid definite amounts and the members themselves determined time and production rules. In 1901, the Machinists Union successfully struck to reduce the working day from ten to nine hours. Also in 1901, Detroit Spring and Steel and American Car and Foundry were forced by the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers Union to grant a five percent pay increase. On June second of the same year, after a six month strike, Buhl Malleable Iron gave the Iron Molders Union the right to set wages on new work. Detroit's union membership grew from 8,000 in 1901 to 14,000 in 1904.⁵⁴

In the wake of such labor successes, the EAD members were especially anxious about their diminished control within the union shops. They banded together to oppose organized labor claiming they were anti-union, not anti-worker, and that they wanted to protect the workers' right to work. The EAD's first secretary, John J. Whirl, said that there was no intentional discrimination against union men only against the closed shop.⁵⁵ One of the Employers' Association founders, Henry Leland claimed he was not against workers but only wanted to protect employers from what he called the "abuses of labor" Leland advised Burroughs Adding Machine to move to Detroit because Detroit labor was so "good." By 1904 workers called the EAD the Union Wreckers Association.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit* (New York, 1984), p.19.

⁵⁵ *Detroit Tribune* (January 29, 1904).

⁵⁶ Conot, *American Odyssey*, p.154.

The Employers' Association of Detroit was only one of many similar organizations throughout the country that ultimately merged into a national organization led by the National Association of Manufacturers. They were all pledged to the open shop, remained virulently anti-union, and employed a carrot and stick approach that advocated responsible behavior for management but employed brutal strike breaking tactics against labor organizations.⁵⁷ Between 1903 and 1907, the EAD urged members to fire union workers and hire non-union men. They were assisted by an economic slump in 1904 where laid off union people were easily replaced with unemployed non-union workers. The EAD supplied strikebreakers and sought the aid of the state with court injunctions. An 1898 Michigan Supreme Court ruling had declared picketing as a disruption of peace. The strikebreakers came from an EAD Labor Bureau where applicants were scrutinized for union activity. The EAD also employed spies in the factories to observe potential troublemakers. The 1907 metal workers' strike failed when Hungarian strikebreakers were escorted by police to the plants. Additionally, the EAD employed its connections to Detroit's banks to restrict credit and impose mortgage foreclosures to enforce the open shop. By 1911 only nine percent (15,000) of Detroit's 175,000 workers were unionized. Lastly, apprenticeship programs ended with the introduction of the EAD's controlled trade school. Workers, coming into the labor market would no longer be trained by other workers, but rather in a trade school which emphasized industrial discipline and company, not worker, loyalty.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Sidney Fine, The Automobile Under the Blue Eagle (Ann Arbor, 1963), p.21.

⁵⁸ Babson, Working Detroit, p.19-20.

While the Employers' Association was strangling the craft unions in Detroit, the International Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) made a valiant but futile attempt to organize the unskilled. The Wobblies advocated industry-wide unions and revolutionary tactics. In 1913, IWW organizer, Matilda Rabinowitz, came to Detroit and drew crowds of upwards of three thousand Ford workers at her lunch time speeches. Ford responded by having her arrested and canceling workers' outdoor lunch privileges. Still, the Wobblies made inroads at Studebaker and the workers called a plant strike on June 17, 1913, demanding the eight hour day and weekly paychecks. They were joined by workers at the Timken-Axle Plant and another Studebaker plant. Hoping to spread the strike to the Packard plant, two thousand marched there on June nineteenth. They were met, however, with mounted police who charged the crowd and clubbed the leaders. With the EAD supplying strikebreakers at Studebaker and many IWW leaders arrested, the strike ended. Workers were able to draw seventy percent of their pay before the bi-monthly checks but the eight hour day and union recognition were impossible.⁵⁹ Consequently, in spite of some early success among the skilled metal workers and the efforts of the Industrial Workers of the world, Detroit had the reputation as "the graveyard of organizers."⁶⁰

The large numbers of workers who voted for charter reform and opposed the advice of the Detroit Labor News also attests to the weakness of organized labor in Detroit. Organized labor had been unable to garner support for the earlier 1914 charter. There was plenty of publicity in favor of the 1918 charter. The city's largest newspaper,

⁵⁹ Babson, Working Detroit, p.32-33.

⁶⁰ Fine, Automobile, p.21.

the Detroit News agreed with the Detroit Citizen League on the need for charter reform.⁶¹

In the November 6, 1917 election, Detroiters endorsed charter revision in general 27,756 to 10,910. An advisory vote for the nine man council was approved in sixteen of the city's twenty-one wards including many which would be considered ethnic neighborhoods (sixty or more percent ethnic).⁶²

The charter commission consisting of, Sherman D. Callender, Eugene S. Clarkson, Divie B Duffied, Lee E. Joslyn, Paul H. King, J.C. Nagel, William A Petzold, Edward A. Van Husan and Richard M. Watson were chosen in the November election. The revised city charter was presented to the city clerk in March, 1918. The new charter included a strong mayor whose responsibility was to appoint or dismiss department heads and submit a budget. He was to administer the city along with the city clerk and the treasurer. The commission abolished the twenty-one ward-based city council and replaced it with a nine member, at-large council. Elections would be non-partisan and held in odd number years. Lastly, the city clerk scheduled a special election for charter approval on June 25, 1918.⁶³

The leadership and funding for the campaign to support the revised city charter came from big businessmen. Among the most influential were Leland, S.S. Kresge, businessmen Oscar Webber and Joseph Boyer, Fred G. Austin, Joseph Crowley, William H. Murphy, Henry G. Joy, A.H. Buhl and Louis Mendelsson. The automobile manufacturers were represented by John and Horace Dodge, Horace H. Rackham, C.

⁶¹ Fine, Murphy, p.96.

⁶² Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.129-130.

⁶³ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.131 and Detroit News (November 7, 1917).

Harold Wills and Edsel Ford.⁶⁴ In addition to the large financial support of Detroit's big businessmen, the Detroit Citizens League employed volunteers to do the grass-roots work. Twenty-six percent of these volunteers were Detroit's laborers who, along with low white collar workers (another 26 percent) comprised two largest groups. Workingmen were attracted to the idea of enhanced democracy where a citizen would elect all nine representatives as well as argument that the old system was wasteful. The League also tried to secure approval from the African American and ethnic communities. Their success is apparent in the ethnic newspapers generally endorsing the charter. Even the Detroit Labor News, while still criticizing some aspects of the charter, made no recommendations. Fragnoli concluded that in the June twenty-fifth election, the League faced "virtually no opposition."⁶⁵ The Detroit voters approved the new city charter 32,690 to 4,587 (87.7% of the vote). It was approved in every ward and every precinct.⁶⁶

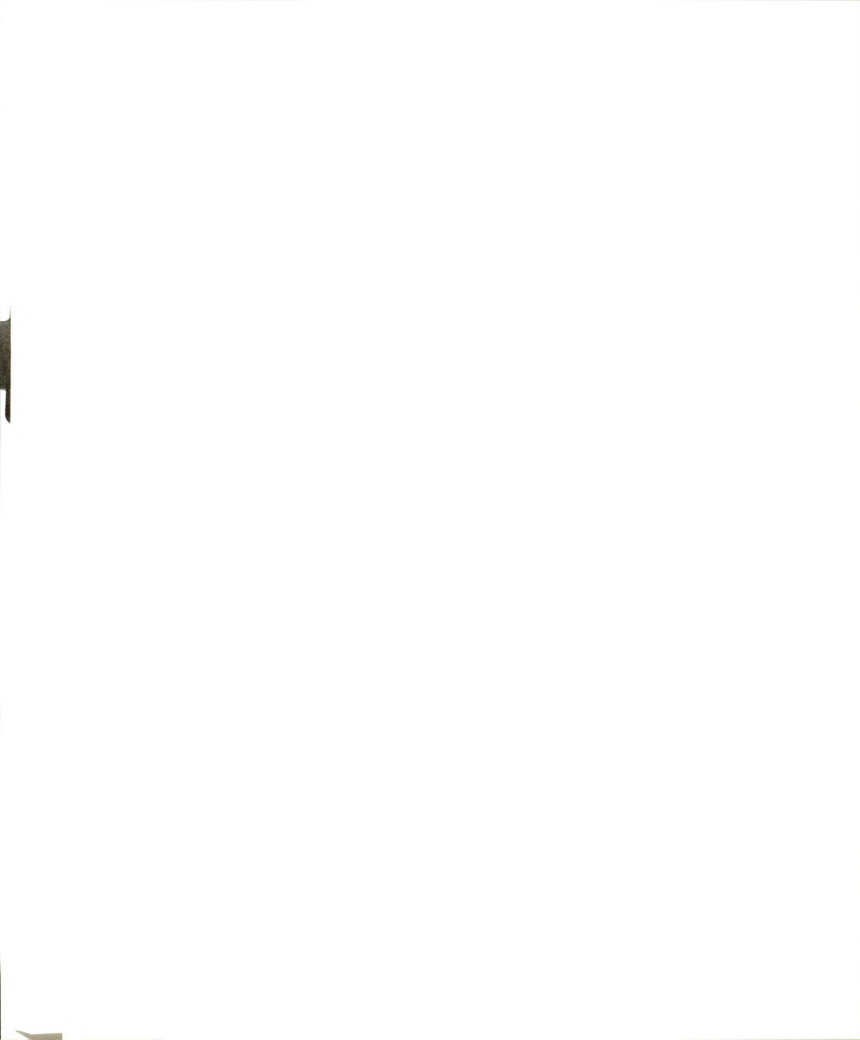
The Detroit Citizens League charter reform made profound changes in Detroit politics. In the pull away from partisanship, other pressure groups became important in sponsoring issues and candidates. Elenbaas noted that the League resembled another political machine with Henry Leland as its "boss." Leland's secretary Jonathan Bourne said the League was like "a regular Tammany organization."⁶⁷ Council candidates in a city-wide election had to have money, press coverage and endorsements. In the first election of the new council, eight of the nine elected were business or professional men. The last was a labor candidate who received the endorsement of the League. Between

⁶⁴ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.131-32.

⁶⁵ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.136.

⁶⁶ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.133-136.

⁶⁷ Elenbaas, "Leland," p.150.



1918-1933, sixteen of the twenty-four men elected to the common council had a business or professional background. The League approved of four of the seven mayors during the same time period. Finally, the voters turned down in 1921, 1929, and 1933 the opportunity to return to the old system.⁶⁸ The Detroit Citizen - A Progressive Community Magazine, (To Advance Democracy by Enabling the People to know and Apply the Truth about Local Conditions, Industrial, Political and Civic) opposing the influence of big business, wrote that the Detroit Citizens League had used the mask of civic welfare to “capture political power, to direct it into channels by which they may be politically glorified or sanctified, but through which they may best pressure and promote their own private business and varied enterprise.”⁶⁹

Some businessmen saw the political solution for Detroit in the centralization of decision making that would be accomplished by the new city charter. Elenbaas, writing about urban reform in the Progressive Era, believed Detroit reformers exemplified Samuel Hays’ assessment that businessmen used the centralization of decision making in a strong mayor, small council to effect municipal reform. These Detroit men, from organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Detroit Citizens League, the Detroit Uplift League and the Municipal League, wanted the municipal government to promote their interests, which they considered as co-terminus with the public interest. They wanted to establish an attractive business climate, expand markets, provide good transportation and collect adequate taxes. The at-large requirements for the city council promised that only those with significant resources could be elected. These people would come primarily

⁶⁸ Fragnoli, “Progressive Coalitions,” p.136-139.

⁶⁹ Detroit Citizen 1 (February 10, 1921): 3.

from the business and professional classes. The new charter seemed to be a triumph of those who wanted a business-oriented municipal government at the expense of a working class, immigrant one.⁷⁰

In examining the charter reform campaign, however, other scholars point to the voting behavior of Detroit voters to demonstrate that the campaign cannot be simply accepted as a businessman's triumph. Fragnoli emphasized that voters were not divided on class, or ethnic lines because the charter reform had support in all areas of the city.⁷¹ Connolly argued that progressive reform was really a broad term that was opened to interpretation. In Boston, there was a "sweeping promise of a more honest and effective government" which explained the support of Boston's working-class. If the interests of the whole city were addressed, then labor would get the attention it believed it deserved.⁷²

Still, the new charter reflected, not only the hopes of working-class people, but a new relationship which had developed between business and the state as employers in Detroit sought new ways to control the business environment. Businessmen had lost their absolute faith in *laissez-faire* individualism and formed new relationships with the state at local levels. The demands of a new, urbanized, industrialized society required an infrastructure for public utilities and transportation. Businessmen were discovering that the state could be a useful and profitable ally.⁷³ The Citizens Research Council of Michigan, founded in 1916 and funded by private gifts from influential firms, injected its views into

⁷⁰ Jack Elenbaas, "Detroit in the Progressive Era" and Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform," p.157-169.

⁷¹ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," 139.

⁷² Connolly, *Triumph of Ethnic*, p.94-96.

⁷³ David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge, 1987), p.176.

Michigan politics. The Research Council's purpose was to promote administration to "facilitate and control expanded public services and expenditures taking place."⁷⁴

By 1919, in spite of Americanization efforts, and charter reform, Detroit experienced the Red Scare. Both Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman spoke at the Auto Workers Hall on November 26, 1919. Berkman had already been notified by the government that he would soon be deported and Goldman expected a similar decision. In addition, IWW leader, Bill Hayward was scheduled to speak to Detroit workers several days later. Originally, the Police Commissioner, Dr. James W. Inches, granted permission for the meeting.⁷⁵ The Common Council approved Dr. Inches' decision with a vote of confidence believing that free speech was the best cure for radicalism.⁷⁶ However, two days later, while the IWW assembly was allowed, the Police Commissioner denied Hayward's permission to speak. Dr. Inches claimed that the "opposition to William Hayward had become so strong" that his speech would cause a serious disturbance.⁷⁷ Zunz explained that while Mayor James Couzens tried to maintain free speech in Detroit, the police department cooperated with Attorney General Mitchell Palmer's anti-Red tactics. The police raided Detroit's communist center, the House of Masses, and suspects were arrested and eventually deported.⁷⁸ Mayor Couzens protested to the Department of Justice to remove those arrested from city owned jails. Couzens claimed that the facilities were not sanitary, had too little food or medical care for such large numbers. He was joined in this protest by attorney Fred Butzel, Chemical Company president, Frederick

⁷⁴ Ewen, Corporate Power, p.204.

⁷⁵ Detroit News (November 27, 1919).

⁷⁶ Detroit News (November 28, 1919).

⁷⁷ Detroit News (November 30, 1919).

⁷⁸ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.324.

Stearns and Sebastian S. Kresge. These men eventually secured bail, attorneys and funds for the inmates' families. While Detroit employers has a general distrust of organized labor and they were committed to the open shop, some were shocked at the manner of arrests and confinement of prisoners.⁷⁹

In keeping with their carrot and stick approach of not totally alienating the city's working-class, Detroit businessmen supported certain popular measures while holding firm against others. They supported three cent fares for workingmen for example, but they opposed the municipal ownership of the street railway as an attack on private enterprise. They also opposed housing reform because it was too socialistic.⁸⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, a pastor in Detroit in the 1920s, believed that the auto executives of the age did not have a "highly developed social conscience." He worried about the future in a city like Detroit "in which wealth, suddenly acquired...is so little mellowed by social intelligence."⁸¹

Historians who have dealt specifically with Detroit generally agreed with a traditional Progressive Era interpretation. Elenbaas claimed that urban reform in early twentieth century Detroit mirrored Samuel Hays' findings that the municipal reform movements of the early twentieth century were intended to place the decision-making power in the hands of efficient businessmen. According to Hays, businessmen and professionals tried to take formal power from previously dominant lower and middle class politicians and political party machinery in order to advance their own policies.⁸² Fragnoli admitted that municipal reform was business-led in Detroit but it did have a popular

⁷⁹ Editor's Note, Wilma Henderson ed. Detroit in Perspective p.314.

⁸⁰ Elenbaas, "Detroit and the Progressive Era," p.165, 216.

⁸¹ Fine, Murphy, p.100.

⁸² Elenbaas, 12 and Hays, "The Politics of Reform," 157-169.

following.⁸³ Zunz believed Detroit industrialists were promoting a new, unified social order through welfare capitalism, using Americanization programs to encourage similar moral values and work habits.⁸⁴ Lastly, Sidney Fine saw the 1918 triumph of Progressive middle class values over ethnic ones as short lived. If Detroit businessmen, operating through the Detroit Citizens League and the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, imposed their political hegemony through the new City Charter, Fine claimed that hegemony was destroyed shortly thereafter in the Recorder's Court Election of 1923. In the Recorder's Court Election of 1923, four of the seven judges, Keiden, Cotter, Marsh and Heston were known as the "Bloc," and were not friendly to labor or to the poor. In the ensuing election, Frank Murphy got the largest number of votes although the Detroit Citizens League put him in the "not recommended" category. Both Judges Heston and Marsh were eliminated from the court. Consequently, the Detroit Citizens League sponsored "Bloc" was defeated.⁸⁵ Still, Fine continued to see that business driven Progressive reforms were achieved, albeit short-lived. It appeared that progressive reform in Detroit was promoted by business and supported by other men. But, Detroit was a complex city and its varying interests meant that business control was never consolidated.

One of those varying city interests was that of reform-minded women. Fine noted the influence of women but did not explore the full implications of their civic activism. No one looking at Detroit in the Progressive Era has ever examined the role of women in the civic life of the city. Although civic-minded women appear off the scope of Detroit's historians, they were contributing their own political vision to the city. While Detroit was

⁸³ Fragnoli, "Progressive Coalitions," p.139.

⁸⁴ Zunz, Changing Face of Inequality, p.309.

⁸⁵ Fine, Murphy, p.103, 111, 114, 116.

becoming urbanized and industrialized, the clubwomen of Detroit were becoming increasingly involved with the political affairs of their community. Using their voluntary associations which, as Sara Evans explained, are at the juncture between the public and private realms, they organized to inject a new voice in political affairs. Despite their position outside the franchise, they pioneered lobbying techniques and public relations campaigns to sponsor public baths, municipal playgrounds, woman's suffrage, and school board reform. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Detroit clubwomen pursued their civic activism where they worked not only for the betterment of women but for all the residents of Detroit.

Chapter 2 - The Beginning of Women's Activism

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women throughout Michigan and particularly within Detroit, were concerned with the welfare of the family and the home. As Paula Baker explained, “many nineteenth century women found this vision of the home congenial: it encouraged a sense of community and responsibility toward all women and it furnished a basis for political action.”¹ Women often stressed that they held a unique perspective between public and private and only they could provide this particular viewpoint. Detroit women originally founded their voluntary associations for cultural, literary and charitable purposes but found through cooperation that they could promote civic betterment.² In this regard, as Sara Evans noted, during the expansion of the market economy, women's and men's clubs provided an avenue for public action with women's clubs influencing public policy even before women had the franchise.³ According to Gayle Gullett, organized women were always political since they were involved with a struggle over power relations. Her work demonstrated that California women strove for recognition of their public work and for expanding women's opportunities before suffrage.⁴ Detroit women likewise expanded their public activity and civic activism as the city became industrialized and urbanized. Clara Arthur, a founding member of Detroit's Twentieth Century Club and president of the DFWC, said “We cannot enter kitchens

¹ Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois eds., Unequal Sisters: A MultiCultural Reader in U.S. Women's History 2nd Edition (New York, 1994), p.91.

² “A Brief History of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs,” 1918-1919 Directory of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs p.9-11 Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library (BHC).

³ Sara Evans, “Women's History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to a Public Life” Suzanne Lebsock and Nancy Hewitt, eds., Visible Women: News Essays on American Activism (Urbana, 1993), p.128.

⁴ Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911 (Urbana, 2000), p.3.

without coming in contact with the political side of domestic concerns. The water supply and our garbage pails remind us that something is managed for us, not by us.”⁵ Detroit clubwomen bear out the research of Paula Baker as they understood a rapidly industrialized city created social dislocations that were best managed by the state.⁶ They therefore championed protective labor legislation for women and children, educational reform, food inspection, and crime prevention all to be undertaken by government enactment of new public policies. Since they were outside of the franchise, Detroit women used their clubs and associations as vehicles for their civic action. In doing so, they created a separate political culture from that of men. Gullett called clubwomen’s politics “womanly” meaning altruistic and non-partisan. This was in sharp contrast to manly politics which was self-serving and partisan.⁷ In Detroit, women did not identify themselves as altruistic, but rather as concerned citizens. The city was the joint responsibility of both men and women, yet women believed that they offered a unique vision for Detroit. It was not altruistic because all residents benefited.

Men considered women to be political outsiders and often disparaged women’s political activity. Consequently, Detroit clubwomen’s political activism had to be creative and persistent for their municipal work. In Detroit, and in other U.S. cities, women pioneered non-voting political pressure techniques such as public education and petitions. They used scientific research and the advice of experts to substantiate their reforms. For example, when Detroit clubwomen advocated public baths, they cited favorable evidence

⁵ Alice Tarbell Crathern, In Detroit...Courage Was the Fashion: The Contribution of Women to the Development of Detroit, 1701 to 1951 (Detroit, 1953), p.123-124.

⁶ Baker, “Domestication,” p. 97.

⁷ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.2.

from public health officials. Women's clubs were also places where women could practice the skills necessary for public activism.⁸ In these venues, they developed leadership, organizational and communication skills.

The municipal activity of Detroit women was greatly influenced by the phenomenal economic and social changes of the early twentieth century as well as by the fact that the responsibilities of government were changing as federal, state and local governments increased their activity in economics and social welfare.⁹ Between 1900 and 1920, Detroit went from the thirteenth largest city in the country to the fourth. Increased numbers meant increased pressure on the city to provide adequate transportation, education and sanitation for all its citizens. These were new municipal concerns and there were debates over the legitimate extent of these services, as well as who and how these services would be financed. Additionally, large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, coming from different ethnic and racial groups, threatened to disrupt Detroit's old social order. Urban women were increasingly coming to believe they could mediate social problems through social services.¹⁰ Simultaneous with this shifting political and economic situation, Detroit was undergoing a shift in political power. Nineteenth century municipal politics had been dominated by a decentralized, wet, ward-based system that was giving way to a centralized, dry, business-dominated government. Amidst these changes, Detroit clubwomen were convinced they needed the franchise to effect their vision of needed political and social change in Detroit, a vision that often deviated from that of many Detroit men.

⁸ Evans, "Women's History," p.130.

⁹ Baker, "Domestication," p.85.

¹⁰ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.139.

Suffrage

Michigan women had a long history of female activism both in the suffrage campaign and within Detroit. Clara B. Arthur's pre-franchise booklet, Progress of Michigan Women, claimed that, within the state, "wise laws came from the untiring activity of Michigan women interested in the development of their sex and the need of the state for women's counsel."¹¹ Nevertheless, the battle for the franchise was slow and arduous.¹² In 1846, Ernestine L. Rose was the first woman to address a state legislature on the political needs of women. She stressed "the right and need of women to the elected franchise." Rose was politely received but nothing was done.¹³ In 1849, State Senators Dwight Webb, Edward H. Thompson and Rix Robinson reported favorably on Senate Document Number Ten regarding women and the franchise. But, only a few years later, in 1855, the Committee on Elections ridiculed a petition by Betsey P. Parker, Lucinda Knapp, Nancy Fleming and Electa Meyers of Lenawee County for the franchise by amendment to the State Constitution. In 1866, the state's first women's suffrage bill was defeated by only one vote but one year later, the legislature granted female taxpayers the

¹¹ Clara B. Arthur, Progress of Michigan Women pamphlet at BHC (Detroit, no date, no publisher), p.5

¹² For additional sources on local suffrage campaigns see: Stephen M. Buechler, The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920 (New Brunswick, 1986), Ellen Carol DuBois, "Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriot Stanton Blatch and the New York Suffrage Movement," in Majorie Spruill Wheeler ed., One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement (Troutdale, OH, 1995), p. 221-234, Wanda A. Hendricks, "Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the Alpha Suffrage Club," in Wheeler, One Woman, p. 264-273, Sherry J. Katz, "A Politics of Coalition: Socialist Women and the California Suffrage Movement, 1900-1911," in Wheeler, One Woman, p. 245-257, Judith N. McArthur, "Minnie Fisher Cunningham's Back Door Lobby in Texas: Political Maneuvering in a One-Party State," in Wheeler, One Woman, p. 315-329, Genevieve G. McBride, On Wisconsin Women: Working for Their Rights from Settlement to Suffrage (Madison, 1993). The southern experience is, of necessity different from that of other areas, for state work there see: Elna C. Green, Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question (Chapel Hill, 1997), Majorie Spruill Wheeler, New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States (New York, 1993).

¹³ Sharon E. McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," Michigan History Magazine 75 (March/April, 1991): 39.



right to vote in school elections.¹⁴ There were a few instances where Michigan women voted, such as in Sturgis in 1868 when they supported and passed prohibition for their town. In 1871 a Detroit widow and taxpayer, Nannette B. Gardner, voted in the First Precinct of the Ninth Ward for several years. The enrolling officer, Peter Hill, apparently had no objections. Other enrolling officers turned away Catherine Stebbins and Harriet J. Boutell.¹⁵

The Michigan State Suffrage Association (MSSA) was organized in Battle Creek on January 20, 1870 in an attempt to get the franchise for all Michigan women.¹⁶ Four years later, Michigan considered women's suffrage amendment and MSSA sought to take advantage of this opportunity. In Detroit, the Detroit Woman's Suffrage Association (DWSA) organized to champion this effort. They supported a resolution to strike the word "male" from the qualifications for electors. In spite of a semi-favorable press and national attention, the resolution lost overwhelmingly. The State Suffrage Association was temporarily demoralized and disbanded.¹⁷

When the effort for women's suffrage failed at the state convention, there was no state organization representing women's suffrage. In Detroit the DWSA and the Detroit Equal Suffrage Club (DESA), founded by Helen Jenkins in 1875, carried on the suffrage work. In 1884, woman's suffrage was reorganized state-wide into the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association (MESA). In 1885, under the leadership of Mary L. Doe of Bay City, women attempted to get a state law granting municipal suffrage. MESA argued that

¹⁴ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.39.

¹⁵ Arthur, Progress, p.5-8.

¹⁶ Arthur, Progress, p.5-8.

¹⁷ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.39.

women were taxpayers and that the municipal government directly affected women's concerns.¹⁸ The measure lost in the State Senate by one vote. The House never acted on it. In Detroit, the 1889 city charter amendment gave mothers of minor children the right to vote in school elections. State conferred municipal suffrage failed again in 1889, but in 1893, it passed and was signed by Governor John T. Rich. Doe promptly organized classes in city government in order that women might be prepared. Mayor Hazen Pingree of Detroit ordered additional registration books to carry the extra registrants. There was disagreement over what types of officials were considered municipal. Edward H. Kennedy and Henry S. Potter filed an injunction against Pingree and the Detroit Common Council. In turn, Mary Stuart Coffin and Mary E. Burnett filed a writ of mandamus to compel the election commissioners to carry out the law. Justice John W. McGrath of the Michigan State Supreme Court referred to Article Seven, Section One of the Michigan Constitution and denied the mandamus on the ground that "the Legislature had no right to create a new class of voters."¹⁹ Between 1897 and 1899, MESA was joined by women's clubs and other organizations to secure women on state boards. The legislation to appoint women failed, but Governor Pingree appointed Jane M. Kinney to the East Michigan Asylum for the Insane. His action was approved by the State Senate. Following that precedent, other women were successfully appointed.²⁰

Four years after Detroit women were granted the right to vote in school elections, they formed the Women's Independent Voters Association (1893). School board members were elected, one per ward and these women took an active part in all school

¹⁸ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.40.

¹⁹ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.41.

²⁰ Arthur, Progress, p.12.

elections.²¹ The Women's Independent Voters Association worked for better municipal politics, especially on the school board. These women protested undesirable candidates, and used their votes to defeat them. They also convinced their husbands and sons to join in the effort. Consequently, the Detroit Tribune believed that the clubwomen of Detroit were "earnest workers for city welfare."²² The 1908-1909 Annual Report of the Civic Improvement Committee of the DFWC claimed direct credit for the defeat of Anthony Treppa. Treppa was the school inspector of the Ninth Ward, but he was also a saloon keeper. Detroit clubwomen did not want saloon interests represented on the school board. The DFWC sent letters to city officials, raised money for advertising and solicited automobiles for election work at the polls. The report added "The importance of rescuing the public schools from politics is accentuated."²³

In 1907 there was a call to revise the 1850 state constitution in Michigan. Not surprisingly, MESA requested full franchise for women. They lobbied the constitutional convention with petitions, resolutions and endorsements; there were more petitions for women's suffrage than all other issues combined. At a hearing before the Committee on Elective Franchise in the state capital on January 8, 1908, clubwomen claimed to represent 175,000 women seeking the vote. Women from the State Grange, Farmers Clubs, Maccabees, the State Women's Christian Temperance Union, the State Federation of Labor, the Detroit Garment Workers, eight thousand clubwomen, and the Woman's Press Association presented their case. But, the effort ended in failure when the vote in the

²¹ Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Directory 1919-1920, p.107.

²² Detroit Sunday Tribune (February 18, 1906).

²³ Sarah A. Grindley, "Club History, Historical Sketch 1895-1935," Vol 73 Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, BHC.

Constitutional Convention denied the franchise to women. Clara Arthur believed that men were less worried about women voting than they were about women holding office.²⁴ The defeat was not total as women tax payers got partial suffrage to vote on matters relating to public expenditure of money, bonding issues and public utilities. In 1909, the National American Woman's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) received 135,000 names from Michigan on their petition to Congress. In 1911, Michigan suffragists mounted an unsuccessful attempt to strike the word "male" from the list of voter qualifications.²⁵

Before the franchise, Detroit women knew that educating voters was crucial to influencing the political system. For example, in 1910, two Detroit women ran on the Socialist ticket for local office. The women, Ida Krummerfeld and Nellie Knott, used their campaigns to educate the voters. They went house to house and helped organize those who were concerned about social conditions. They used the novelty of their campaign as a vehicle to bring attention to the voters about working class problems.²⁶

Both MESA and DESA expanded their activities for state suffrage. In 1912 Governor Chase Osborn convinced the legislature to put women's suffrage on the November, 1912 ballot. Detroit women such as Clara Avery, Harriet (Mrs. John) Trix, Minnie Stott (Mrs. Edward) Jeffries and Clara Arthur organized letter writing campaigns, passed out literature and sponsored lectures.²⁷ MESA activists criss-crossed the state passing out three tons of literature. Although MESA employed poll watchers to guard against fraud, there appeared to be grave discrepancies in the state-wide balloting. Original

²⁴ Crathern, In Detroit, p.188.

²⁵ Arthur, Progress, p.12-15.

²⁶ Detroit Journal (July 28, 1910).

²⁷ Crathern, In Detroit, p.188-89.

newspaper accounts claimed women's suffrage had passed by between three and twelve thousand votes. But, due to errors in ballot counting, the official count defeated the amendment by 762 votes. There was evidence of widespread fraud in Wayne, Kent, Saginaw and Bay Counties. Ballots disappeared, were burned before a recount, and were never handed out. Some areas had more votes cast than they had registered voters.²⁸

Not all Michigan women were in favor of women's suffrage. In 1913, the anti-suffragists organized the Michigan Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (MAOWS). They were joined in their efforts by the liquor interests represented by the Royal Ark, which was comprised of Detroit's liquor dealers. This connection resulted in the women being erroneously accused of being funded by the liquor dealers. The MAOWS believed that voting was a man's responsibility and that extending the vote to women would harm the family and the home. MESA supporters agreed that the home was important but they claimed that women needed the vote to protect it.²⁹

By 1914, thus, Michigan women could vote as mothers or guardians for school boards. Taxpaying women could vote on issues involving the direct spending of public money. They were, however, not allowed to choose who would spend their money and had only a secondary role in how such money was spent.³⁰ African-American women joined the suffrage battle and enumerated the reasons why women wanted the ballot: "Equal Suffrage is woman's desire to see in all walks of life, the honor, the virtue, the justice, the genuine human sympathy which she interprets as the foundation of any permanent social structure." African-American women also stressed that the ballot was

²⁸ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.42,43.

²⁹ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.44.

³⁰ Michigan Suffragist, 1 (February, 1914): 10.

not intended for women to rule over men but rather so they could keep “his city home and his nation’s home clean and wholesome.”³¹

Entrance of the United States into World War I made Michigan women more intent on directly influencing public policy. Clara Arthur and other suffragists believed “war with expenditure of life and treasure holds back civilization and the full citizenship of women.”³² As Susan Ware noted, World War I was especially troubling for pacifist women such as Jane Addams, and the members of Alice Paul’s Congressional Union who opposed the war and were jailed for their opposition.³³ Women believed that they had a responsibility to make their political voices heard in such an important issue as war. The clubwomen of Detroit supported the U.S. war effort with their extensive volunteer work but they noted the irony of working for democracy abroad while still striving for it at home. The Chairperson of the DFWC’s Legislative Department, Marjory Miller Whittemore criticized Detroit Congressmen Charles Nichols and Frank Doremus who supported the war but opposed women’s suffrage. She wrote that they “probably saw nothing inconsistent when they cast their vote in favor of this nation joining the great conflict in behalf of democracy. We can only sadly wish that while championing democracy abroad, the country might have created a real democracy at home.”³⁴ Detroit clubwomen emphasized the connection between their war work and the franchise. In a DFWC Board of Directors’ Resolution they explained that women needed

³¹ “The Awakening of Women,” (no author), National Association Notes 19 (January, 1917): 3, 13.

³² Arthur, Progress, p.16.

³³ Susan Ware, Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics (New Haven, 1987), p.74.

³⁴ “Legislative Report” (April, 1917), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 727, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

enfranchisement, “not only as a just privilege, but as an opportunity to serve the nation with the fullest patriotism at all times, but, especially during the present supreme test.”³⁵ At the Thirty-second Annual Convention of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association in March of 1918, Carrie Chapman Catt reminded Detroit women that purely knitting and making surgical dressings would not win the war. She advised them to continue their war work but “stick your knitting needles into the man who calls you pro-German for supporting suffrage at the same time.”³⁶

In November 1918, the state women’s suffrage referendum was slated to come before Michigan voters. Once more, organized women in MESA and DESA worked hard for its passage. The campaign was directed by Detroit clubwoman, Ida (Mrs. Arthur) Peppers of the DFWC. The Board of Directors of the DFWC issued a resolution pledging their support for “full patriotism” in the upcoming election.³⁷ Laura Cramer’s October Report of the Legislative Department stressed that clubwomen “must lend every energy for the next few weeks in getting every clubwoman in Detroit interested to the extent of seeing every voter favoring suffrage casts his vote.”³⁸ The lessons of past campaigns were well learned and clubwomen stayed at the polls to watch for irregularities. While influenza limited the numbers of poll watchers to only about one thousand, there was less fraud and women’s suffrage was passed with a majority of 34,506 out of 400,000 votes cast.³⁹

³⁵ “Resolution of Board of Directors of Detroit Federation of Women’s Clubs” (March 14, 1918), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 1245, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁶ Michigan Equal Suffrage Association, “Today in World War I,” unidentified newspaper clipping, (March 28, 1918) BHC.

³⁷ “Resolution by Board of Directors” (March 14, 1918), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 1249, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁸ “Report of the Legislative Department” (October 18, 1918), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 55-56, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁹ “Report of the Legislative Department” (November 14, 1918), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 93, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

Sharon McHaney attributed the 1918 success to four factors: an earlier adoption of Michigan prohibition separated women from that issue, politicians both nationally and state-wide had become amenable to woman suffrage, women's participation in war work, and the persistent efforts of MESA.⁴⁰

At the national level, clubwomen continued to work for suffrage. The Michigan State Federation of Women's Clubs (MSFWC) had officially endorsed suffrage in October of 1910. During 1918, the MSFWC representing 6,500 members, sent countless telegrams to Senators and the President endorsing suffrage. Senators William Allen Smith and Charles E. Townsend of Michigan were on record as supporting the Nineteenth Amendment by May of 1918.⁴¹ Additionally, clubwomen sent letters requesting suffrage support to key senators like Moses of New Hampshire, Borah of Idaho and Gay of Louisiana. They felt this was urgent in December, 1918 to facilitate the passage of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in that Congressional session.⁴² The Board of Directors of the MSFWC adopted a resolution supporting the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. The MSFWC forwarded this resolution to U.S. Congressmen, Frank Doremus, Charles Nichols and Patrick Kelly.⁴³ Detroit clubwomen Kathleen McGraw Hendrie, Marjory Miller Whittemore, Betsey Graves (Mrs. Paul) Reneau, Geraldine Sheehan, Lillian Snedcor, Lillian Ascough and Phoebe Munnecke picketed the White House. Whittemore and Reneau were among the women jailed for their efforts.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," 45.

⁴¹ "Minutes" (May 9, 1918), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 23, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴² "Report of the Legislative Committee" (December 6, 1918), Vol. 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 129, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴³ "Legislative Report" (no date either December 1917 or January 1918), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 1181, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴⁴ Crathern, In Detroit p.191.

The overall success of the drive toward suffrage for Michigan women could be seen in Governor Albert E. Sleeper's reaction to the Congressional passage of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. On June 5, 1919, Governor Sleeper wired the State Department in Washington asking that a certified copy of the amendment be sent to Michigan at once. Sleeper wanted the state legislature to vote before the adjournment of its special session. There had been a concurrent resolution passed unanimously by Michigan representatives urging their federal counterparts to support the amendment. There was hope that Michigan might be the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment.⁴⁵ Instead, Michigan was the third state to ratify on June 10, 1919.⁴⁶

Women's Club Work before Suffrage

The struggle for suffrage was one part of the growth of public activity of Detroit women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first Detroit women's club was founded in 1873 by Frances Newberry (Mrs. John) Bagley. The charter members were, Mrs. Brearley, Sarah Webster (Mrs. J.T.) Stevens, Elvira Wilkinson (Mrs. W.H.) Allen, Mrs. Albert Hill, Miss S.A. Brearley, Lydia Hopkins and Elizabeth Dwight. Twenty-one years later, the Twentieth Century Club was founded and produced some of the most civic minded clubwomen in early twentieth century Detroit. Its members included, Stella Krebs (Mrs. Carl) Brumme, Adaline Dunlap (Mrs. Charles Hague) Booth, Mrs. Hermon Sanderson, Mary Egan (Mrs. J. Hal) Livsey, Harriet Robinson (Mrs. William A) McGraw, Mrs. William Robinson, Clara Avery, Emma (Mrs. Charles) Fox and African American clubwoman Mary (Mrs. Elijah) McCoy.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Detroit News (June 5, 1919).

⁴⁶ McHaney, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," p.45.

⁴⁷ Crathern, In Detroit, p.117, 119.

In 1895, Detroit clubwoman Frances Margah, President of the Detroit Review Club thought women could be a greater power in the community if they banded together. She asked Frances Bagley, as a member of Detroit's oldest women's club, to propose a federation of women's clubs. Subsequently, the Detroit Review Club, Twentieth Century Club, Detroit Woman's Club, Woman's Historical Club, Clio Club, Wednesday History Club, Hypathia, and Zatema Club formed the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs.⁴⁸ Its by-laws simply stated that the women wanted to understand each others' work, to provide more unified thinking and consequently make their efforts more effective.⁴⁹

At the same time, African-American women were forming their clubs in Detroit. In 1885 Mary McCoy founded the first African-American women's club - In As Much Circle of King's Daughters and Sons Club. McCoy was known as the "Mother of Clubs" in Detroit and was also a member of the Lydian Association of Detroit, Guiding Star Chapter Order of the Eastern Star and the Willing Workers. Throughout the state, black women returning from the 1898 meeting of the National Association of Colored Women founded the Michigan State Association. Its first president was Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) member, Lucy Thurman. Other members included Mary McCoy, Delia Barrier, M.C. Johnson, Frances Preston, Elida Price, Veronica Lucas, Fanny Richards, Meta Pelham, Lola Gregory, Lucile Owen and Mollie Lewis. By the 1920s, there were eight African-American clubs in Detroit (Willing Workers, Detroit Study Club, Lydian Association, In As Much Circle of Kings Daughters, Labor of Love Circle of Kings Daughters, West Side Art and Literary Club, Altar Society of the Second Baptist Church

⁴⁸ Crathern, *In Detroit*, p.118.

⁴⁹ "Club History" Box 11, Manuscript Collection (MS) Emma A. Fox Papers BHC.

and the Earnest Workers of the Second Baptist Church) and they joined on April 8, 1921 to form the Detroit Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Their first president was Veronica Lucas.⁵⁰ Their purpose was to be of assistance to the black community. They stood for the black family, housing, employment, health, and orphans and against alcoholism and illiteracy.⁵¹

The DFWC originally endorsed proposals that had originated elsewhere. Gradually, club members found they could initiate proposals themselves and inject their own ideas about civic betterment for Detroit.⁵² One idea about civic betterment was to establish public playgrounds. In 1899, Clara Arthur presented a paper before the Philanthropy and Reform Department of the Twentieth Century Club about the need for playgrounds. Arthur explained that Detroit's poor children could only play in the streets and noted that some cities such as Boston already provided play areas for their children. The campaign for municipal playgrounds started two years later under the leadership of the Detroit Branch of the Council of Women. This Council was an eclectic group of women's clubs that did not include the DFWC but did include some of its members such as the DESA, the City Union of King's Daughters, the Women and Children's Protective Association, the La Tour Hive of the Lady Maccabees, the Mothers' Kindergarten Circle, the Women's Independent Voters' Association, the WCTU, the Mothers' Club of the Hancock School, Detroit Sorosis, Per Gradis and the Detroit Woman's Club. The

⁵⁰ Robin S. Peebles, "Detroit's Black Women's Clubs," Michigan History 70 (January-February, 1986): 48

⁵¹ Joyce Haynes-Brooks, "Message from the President," Fiftieth Rededication Celebration, Detroit Association of Women's Clubs, booklet at BHC For a comparison with Chicago black women's clubs see Anne Meis Knupfer, Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood - African-American Women's Clubs in Turn of the Century Chicago (New York, 1996).

⁵² "A Brief History of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs," p.11.

Council originally requested an empty city lot on Riopelle Street for a playground but the city council refused. The women then successfully appealed to the school board for the use of the Russell School yard and basement for the summer. Clara Talbot (Mrs. John) Hickey led a committee of women to go door to door soliciting the necessary twelve hundred dollars to run the playground. They had to secure funding again the next year because the city refused to provide money for a “fad.” Prevailing opinion held that playgrounds were part of private charity, but the playground crusaders believed it was the city’s responsibility. In the effort to change public opinion, the clubwomen launched an educational campaign. They wrote hundreds of letters and made numerous speeches. S.V. Tsaroff, a noted expert in playground education, lectured in Detroit, at their request. In 1903, the women presented a petition to the Board of Education with fourteen thousand names. The board finally acquiesced and procured money from the city council for playgrounds.⁵³ Clubwomen continued to assist the playground effort. The DFWC helped pay the salary for the first swim teacher. These women felt supervised play was the best way to head off juvenile crime. The campaign for playgrounds eventually evolved into the Detroit Municipal Recreation Committee in 1914 and had a national reputation for its quality.⁵⁴

In the early part of the twentieth century, the DFWC formed a committee to urge city officials to build a public bath house. Clubwomen, under the leadership of Clara Arthur faced formidable opposition regarding public baths. But Arthur was a leader in many of Detroit’s most civic minded women’s clubs: she was president of the DFWC and

⁵³ Crathern, In Detroit, p.124-126.

⁵⁴ “Thirty-five Years of Accomplishment 1895-1929,” pamphlet, Detroit Federation of Women’s Clubs, p.4.



the Twentieth Century Club, and a member of DESA. She therefore had significant networking ability with Detroit's clubwomen.⁵⁵ The Detroit Free Press supported the idea of public baths but felt the city should have a comprehensive plan for parks, playgrounds, convenience stations etc. These should be included in an annual budget and not simply be done piecemeal. The Free Press believed this was a better system than "the gratification of the personal desires of well-meaning individuals or organizations."⁵⁶ But the DFWC persevered and sent a letter to the City Common Council on behalf of 2,000 members, saying that thirty-six U.S. cities had public baths and were increasing their numbers. Additionally, the DFWC noted that the Federal Bureau of Labor claimed that baths elevated the material and moral tone of workers. The clubwomen stated that health officials agreed that inadequate bathing facilities were a public health menace.⁵⁷ When these women appealed to the aldermen for assistance they were told people could always use the river. After several years, the city fathers grew tired of the "pestering women" and in 1906 they appropriated \$20,000 for the first public bath house in Detroit. It opened in 1908 on Erskin Street, east of Russell, and was appropriately named the Clara Arthur Bath House. The women also successfully campaigned for showers in some of the public schools.⁵⁸

Clubwomen of Detroit also lobbied successfully to raise the working age from twelve to fourteen for children. When the working age was raised, clubwomen then had to raise the age for dismissal from the Coldwater State Public School for Dependent Children

⁵⁵ Crathern, In Detroit, p.127.

⁵⁶ Detroit Free Press (March 21, 1906).

⁵⁷ "Close Call for Bathhouse Item" unidentified newspaper clipping in the Clara B. Arthur Scrapbook , BHC.

⁵⁸ Grindly, "Historical Sketch," p. 8-10.

(for destitute, non-criminal children) as well.⁵⁹ The only choice these children had, was to enter a poorhouse or go to jail. The clubwomen of Detroit lobbied relentlessly to raise the dismissal age to fourteen. The legislators did not want to spend the extra money. One such Senator remarked as he saw the women returning to the capitol, “Well there are those women again. They do not know when they are insulted.” Still, the women kept working.⁶⁰ Clubwomen interviewed business and professional men and they secured favorable publicity in the Detroit Journal, Detroit Free Press and Detroit Tribune. They questioned the validity of the legislators’ claim that it would be too expensive to house children for another two years. Finally, in 1907 after seven years of lobbying, the dismissal age at Coldwater was raised to fourteen.⁶¹

By the early twentieth century, Detroit women, their clubs and organizations were recognized as having political clout especially in issues regarding women and children. The Centennial Edition of the Detroit Free Press reported about the Detroit Federation of Women’s Clubs saying it was, “difficult to find any civic project, relating to the welfare of women and children and even of general import which the City Federation had not helped to bring about.”⁶² In 1906, the Detroit News Tribune reported on “The Growing Power of Women’s Clubs in Detroit.” It claimed that the “power of clubwomen has been steadily growing.” The article was written in response to the recent assertion of an eastern college president who said that women’s clubs do more harm than good. The Detroit News

⁵⁹ Detroit News Tribune (Sunday, February 18, 1906).

⁶⁰ Grindly, “Historical Sketch,” p.9-10.

⁶¹ Gladys E. Nauss, “Detroit Federation of Women’s Clubs” (MA Thesis, Wayne State University, 1949), p. 93.

⁶² Detroit Free Press (May 10, 1931).

Tribune listed both the civic achievements of clubwomen as well as current projects on which the women were working.⁶³

As was the case with clubwomen across the country, Detroit clubwomen were consistently concerned with the quality of education for the city's children.⁶⁴ They worked for better enforcement of attendance laws and the lengthening of attendance requirements from age fourteen to age sixteen. Fourteen year olds could leave school for work if their family needed the income. The women campaigned for higher salaries for teachers as well as the retention of art and music teachers. While they were defending the creative arts teachers and endorsing better salaries, Detroit clubwomen realized that the city needed fundamental school board reform. The Board of Education for the City of Detroit was made up of eighteen school inspectors, one elected from each ward. The members were oftentimes uneducated and only interested in the bribes from the furniture and book dealers. In 1912, Laura (Mrs. Francis) Osborn, of the Twentieth Century Club led the way to reform the school board to a smaller, non-partisan, at-large one. She capitalized on the organization already set up by MESA to educate the public for reform. The women went door to door, made speeches and wrote letters. The Michigan State Legislature responded by passing a bill for small, non-partisan boards for cities. There was some question about the constitutionality of the bill, but the courts upheld it.⁶⁵ Within Detroit, Osborn also led the campaign to establish the small non-partisan board. Detroit

⁶³ Detroit News Tribune Sunday (February 18, 1906).

⁶⁴ Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," American Historical Review (October, 1990): 1032-1050, Judith N. McArthur, Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918 (Urbana, 1998), Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens, James J. Connolly, The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism - Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925 (Cambridge and London, 1998).

⁶⁵ Crathern, In Detroit, p.129-131.

women began a crusade to educate the public to the advantages of the smaller board working with the Municipal League and the Detroit News. They also successfully campaigned to have truant officers placed under the school board and not the city government.⁶⁶ The Detroit voters, perhaps aided by votes of those women eligible to vote as property owners and parents, approved the small board in a five to one victory in November, 1916.⁶⁷ Detroit clubwomen in general, and Laura Osborn in particular, were indeed credited with its success. The DFWC reported that the support of clubwomen for reform and later their election of board members “accounted for a large share of the victories.”⁶⁸ In the first election after the school board reform, Osborn was elected and she served until her death in 1949. When Osborn was considered for a position on the Detroit School Board, the Twentieth Century Club endorsed her because they believed that the education and character of children was best understood by mothers. Additionally, Osborn had been a teacher and as there were many women teachers, she could work well with them. Osborn was also endorsed by the Woman’s Historical Club, Women Taxpayers League, North Woodward Woman’s Club and the Congressional Union.⁶⁹

Clubwomen were not only interested in organizational reform for the well-being of students, but also in improved health standards for children. Along with playgrounds, they pioneered lunch programs. In 1911, the Jewish Women’s Club started a one-cent lunch project. This was the forerunner of later DFWC sponsored nutritional projects.

⁶⁶ “Thirty-five Years,” p. 6.

⁶⁷ Crathern, In Detroit, p.132.

⁶⁸ “Legislative Report” (Spring, 1917), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918p. 728, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁶⁹ Letter to Osborn from Mrs. George Johnston, President of the Twentieth Century Club, (February 23, 1917), Manuscript Collection (MS) Laura Osborn Papers, Box 16, Correspondence, BHC.

Clubwomen co-recruited important contributors, especially John F. Dodge. By 1921, when the Board of Education took over the program, it was serving milk and graham crackers to approximately 6,500 children. Gladys Nauss, writing a Master's Thesis in organizational change, claimed that the lunch program demonstrated the methods of the DFWC. The women became aware of a social need, networked with each other and used their influence with important people (i.e. Dodge) until finally their project was adopted by the larger society.⁷⁰ The Nauss conclusion is valid for many of the projects the DFWC adopted. Before and after the franchise, the Federation launched educational programs designed to heighten public awareness of municipal conditions. Their campaigns for suffrage, school board reform, playgrounds and public baths all follow this pattern. But Nauss implies that once a project was adopted by the larger society, the clubwomen's work was over. This does not seem to be the case. In the example of school board reform, Laura Osborn served for almost thirty nine years and clubwomen continued to nominate and help elect qualified board members. Clubwomen oftentimes served on municipal boards such as safety and recreation and monitored compliance with local ordinances for clean food, labor regulations and anti-vice programs. They brought their ideas about civic betterment to the public's attention but continued their own involvement as well, even after suffrage, as the following chapters will document in detail.

Along with their concern for child welfare, Detroit clubwomen worked to alleviate the harsh working conditions experienced by women and children workers. Regarding women, they worked to secure better sanitary conditions in Detroit's manufacturers and a woman factory inspector to oversee this. In 1915, the Civic Department of the DFWC

⁷⁰ Nauss, "Detroit Federation," p.68-73.

visited the city's merchants and retail clerks and worked on a publicity campaign to assist in the 6 o'clock Saturday closing movement.⁷¹ They campaigned for a half day holiday on Saturday in July and August.⁷²

According to the laws of Michigan, only qualified electors were eligible for an elected office, so before suffrage Michigan clubwomen fought for the opportunity to be appointed to specific positions, including those of notaries and factory inspectors. They could be appointed to the Board of Registration of Nurses and the State Board of Corrections and Charities. The Board for the Industrial Home for Girls had to have at least one of its three members be a woman. The governor could appoint women, on behalf of the State Board of Corrections and Charities, to personally visit and inspect state and county public institutions. These appointments were only temporary and women making those inspections were not to be compensated beyond traveling expenses.⁷³ By 1919, several DFWC women served on influential, appointed boards. Delphine Dodge Ashbaugh, chaired the Committee Governing the Adrian Industrial School; Martha (Mrs Frederick) Ray and Georgia A. Emery, served on the Board of the Merrill-Palmer School; and Edith (Mrs. William) Alvord was a member of the Highland Park School Board.⁷⁴

Detroit women sought other female board members or commissioners in institutions that had jurisdiction over women. For instance, in October, 1919, they requested that Mayor James Couzens appoint a female physician to the Public Health Commission. The DFWC,

⁷¹ Nauss, "Detroit Federation," p.94.

⁷² "Thirty-five Years," p.16.

⁷³ Laws of Michigan Relating to Women (Lansing, 1916): 11-12.

⁷⁴ Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Directory, 1919-1920, p.19.

on behalf of 7,000 women, explained that a woman physician could be of great aid to other women's organizations that worked on similar lines.⁷⁵

In November, 1917, Detroit voters were deciding whether to write a new city charter. Detroit clubwomen supported the Detroit Citizens League's plan to reduce the forty-two man common council to a nine man at-large one. The Common Council's alternative plan was to reduce the size of the council to only one alderman per ward, resulting in a twenty-one man council. The Legislative Department of the DFWC reported that the measure sponsored by the Common Council "could only more firmly fix the ward politics which are so generally deplored." The report went on to praise the Detroit Citizens League's proposal. DFWC Legislative Department Chairperson Marjory Miller Whittemore noted that while clubwomen could not vote in the election, they should exert an indirect influence by urging all the men they know to vote for the nine man City Council.⁷⁶

Detroit clubwomen tried to influence the charter's passage. In the April, 1918 DFWC Report of the Legislative Committee, members were warned that the upcoming charter was of vital importance to the city and not to let their preoccupation with war work distract them from important city needs.⁷⁷ Detroit clubwomen had reasons to endorse the City Charter in 1918. As earlier they had worked for a smaller, less corrupt school board, they now supported the proposed charter's plan to eliminate ward politics

⁷⁵ Letter to Mayor Couzens from Anna H. Ferry, Cor. Sec, (October 14, 1919) Vol. 66 Correspondence, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁷⁶ "Report of the Legislative Department" (no date, probably October, 1917 and November, 1917) Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 884, 921, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁷⁷ "Report of the Legislative Department" (April, 1918) Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p. 1343, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

with the smaller, non-partisan, nine man City Council. Thirty percent of Detroit's Aldermen were saloon keepers and the partisan nature of the elections had led to corruption. Consequently, Detroit clubwomen supported the 1918 charter reform for a variety of reasons and were gratified when Detroit voters approved the new city charter with its nine man council.⁷⁸

Entering the 1920s

In the 1920s, the Federation included 107 clubs and 15,000 members. The main reason for the Federation was service to the city and its residents. The standing committees of the DFWC had changed from mostly informative and cultural (Programs, Free Lectures, Music, Entertainment, Membership, Legislative and Industrial) to the predominantly public service oriented committees on Public Welfare, American Citizenship, and Applied Education and Fine Arts along with a Child Welfare Department and a Civic Department.⁷⁹ Member clubs sent their representatives to serve on the DFWC's various committees. In addition, activist Detroit women maintained specific clubs that devoted all their activities to promoting specific public policy, such as the Progressive Civic League, led by Ruby Zahn.⁸⁰ When Detroit women got the right to vote, the Michigan Equal Suffrage League and Wayne County Equal Suffrage League evolved, respectively into the Michigan League of Women Voters (LWV) and the Detroit League of Women Voters. The LWV remained non-partisan and its activities were to coordinate women's efforts on legislation. They were especially interested in legislation that affected

⁷⁸ "City Charter" Box 5, Manuscript Collection (MS) League of Women Voters Papers, BHC.

⁷⁹ 1900 Directory of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs, 1915-1916 Directory of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs, and Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Annual Report, 1927-1928.

⁸⁰ Detroit News (October 9, 1921).

women and children.⁸¹ The clubwomen of Detroit were themselves among the better educated women of the city. Consequently, this study is not one of all Detroit women but of organized, middle-class, educated women who when enfranchised, considered themselves full citizens entitled to full participation in the political affairs of Detroit.

By 1920, the political affairs of Detroit were increasingly complex. Many of the new demands being placed on the city did not simply reflect the additional numbers of inhabitants, but also a new interpretation of the responsibility a city had to its citizens. Before suffrage, Detroit clubwomen had had some influence in this changing interpretation through their campaigns for healthy recreation, public baths, and school board reform. In all these instances, they had had to convince the city fathers these projects or reforms were financially advantageous. Supervised play, they had argued, meant less juvenile delinquency; personal hygiene meant healthier workers; and school board reform meant less money wasted on corruption. Clubwomen had to launch massive educational efforts, using statistics and the advice of trained experts. They oftentimes fought uphill battles because the industrial and urban growth of Detroit occurred simultaneously with clubwomen's ideas about city responsibility. As Chicago activist Anna Nichols asserted, the municipal government, "must make the city work for human betterment."⁸² Across the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen took this message to heart.

In January 1920, the Detroit Chamber of Commerce's The Detrouiter described the many needs of the city. The unprecedented growth of Detroit led to increased demands for rapidly expanding services. Among these needs were new schools and playgrounds, a new

⁸¹ Detroit Free Press (November 13, 1919) and Detroit Free Press (March 8, 1919).

⁸² quoted in Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," Journal of Urban History 22 (January, 1996): 166-67.

main library, a museum of art, and a new prison. The Detroider believed the water supply was presently adequate but if the city's growth remained unabated, a new larger filtration plant would be needed. The city needed better garbage removal. Additional street paving and an extended street railway system were both necessary. The city's geographic and demographic increase meant that the fire and police departments required branch stations. Medical considerations meant that a one thousand bed municipal hospital had to be built. Immense bond issues had to be sold in order that these demands could be met. Additionally, Detroit needed to employ large amounts of labor to construct and service the many needs of the city.⁸³

This rapidly changing and increased need for municipal services provided the backdrop for the continuing political activities of Detroit clubwomen. They had learned much from their pre-suffrage political activism. Michigan men had been only recently converted to women's suffrage and their pejorative attitudes about women's political abilities had not disappeared. Clubwomen believed that an urbanized and industrialized Detroit needed social and industrial reform. They understood from their campaigns for playgrounds and public baths that their vision of civic betterment was often at odds with that of men. They therefore chose to remain within their clubs where they had been politically effective and where they could pool their organizational and networking skills. By 1920, they were fully franchised. But, they used their voting rights not exclusively, but as a supplement to their other political pressure tactics. Detroit clubwomen approached the 1920s, convinced of the necessity of their civic work, but mindful of the potential challenges ahead of them.

⁸³ "City Administrator Essays Solving Many Problems in 1920," Detroider 11 (January 3, 1920): 3.

Chapter 3 - Women at the Crossroads: Suffrage and the Possibilities for Municipal Action

Detroit clubwomen faced the post suffrage era with cautious optimism. When women in Michigan were on the verge of the franchise, the DFWC had organized a Legislative Committee within the Federation to study national, state and city legislation. This committee was to be particularly interested in child labor laws, compulsory education and the ratification of prohibition as well as women's suffrage. The committee believed that women needed human rights and that both industrial reform and social improvements were necessary to avoid being "hopelessly defeated in the competition of peace." Therefore they would support legislators who saw the value of community life and the necessity of protecting men, women and children from industrial economic and social evils. One thing women had learned from the war was that the men and women of a country were its most valuable assets, not simply property. They now sought social welfare legislation that would do away with the necessity for organized charity so that future generations would have a better social order.¹ Kathryn Kish Sklar wrote about how Josephine Shaw Lowell realized that charity alone was futile. Lowell concluded that real reform could only come when the causes of poverty were addressed.² Detroit clubwomen were obviously reacting to the massive industrial growth of Detroit during World War I.

¹ "Report of the Legislative Committee" (April 1, 1918 - March 31, 1919), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 399-403, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit in The Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library (BHC).

² Kathryn Kish Sklar. Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Public Culture, 1830-1900 (New Haven, 1995), p. 151.

They were seeing the social dislocation that accompanied it and looked to the political institutions to provide the solutions.³

The franchise was one more weapon for Detroit clubwomen to use in pursuit of their civic interests. In this regard they belonged to a larger women's movement of civic involvement, as several historians of women and politics have noted taking shape with suffrage, that attempted to integrate women's political culture into the previously all-male political process. Pamela Tyler stated that getting the vote only gave New Orleans women "the opportunity to define a new role for themselves."⁴ Nancy Cott explained that women, in general, relied on their clubs for civic activity rather than on electoral politics.⁵ Maureen Flanagan agreed and claimed that in Chicago, clubwomen continued to use their voluntary organizations but also used their franchise rights to elect people sympathetic to their agenda.⁶ Gayle Gullett noted that California women realized the vote did not immediately give women power. It was, however, a vehicle towards power.⁷ Civic minded clubwomen especially felt the time had come to turn their wishes into public policy. At the same time, both political parties made a show of welcoming women, but disparaging remarks from those quarters told women they would probably only be apprentice members

³ In this regard, Detroit clubwomen fit Paula Baker's description of how women appealed for state intervention to alleviate the problems of an industrial society. Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds., Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History 2nd Edition, (New York, 1994), p. 97.

⁴ Pamela Tyler, Silk Stockings and Ballot Boxes: Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963 (Athens, GA, 1996), p. 2.

⁵ Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in Politics Before and After 1920," Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., Women, Politics and Change (New York, 1990), p.161.

⁶ Maureen A. Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective" Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society (Fall, 1995): 308.

⁷ Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens: The Emergence of and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1922 (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), p. 201-202.

there. Kristi Andersen quoted Belle Moskowitz, advisor to Al Smith, as saying, “The major political parties are still man-made and man-controlled. Few of their leaders can work with women on a basis of equality.”⁸ Elisabeth Israels Perry explained that New York women faced obstacles to political power similar to those of Detroit women. When New York women got the right to vote and hold office, they were rarely elected. The vote had not altered traditional gendered ideas and they remained outside the circles of policy-making in the parties. According to Perry, “Society still expected men to lead and women to serve.”⁹

The political environment in which they were enfranchised opened new but limited possibilities for municipal activity. In Detroit, women had worked in their clubs and associations successfully appealing to their local and state governments before the franchise to secure public baths, playgrounds and school board reform. It stood to reason that they would continue doing political work within their organizations. Also, while most clubwomen were interested in general civic betterment, they were, like many Progressives, uncertain if this was best served in partisan politics.¹⁰ This was especially true in Detroit where the pre-1918 City Charter politics had abused the public trust. The noted exception to this skepticism about partisan politics was the experience of African-American clubwomen. The National Notes, the official organ of the National Association of

⁸ Kristi Andersen, “Women and Citizenship in the 1920s,” Tilly and Gurin, Women, Politics and Change, p.185.

⁹ Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Women’s Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women’s City Club of New York, 1915-1990,” New York History (October, 1990): 418.

¹⁰ Andersen, “Citizenship” p.183,187.

Colored Women, printed articles promoting the Republican Party, written by Detroit and Michigan women.¹¹

Men and women agreed that women offered a unique contribution to public office and Detroit women continued to be appointed to public boards. This seldom meant elected office because men were reluctant to share officeholders' patronage and many women lacked the confidence, as Kristi Andersen had noted, to bear the intense scrutiny of public office.¹² An example of men denigrating women as officeholders was their reaction to the absence of Senator Eva Hamilton as Ella (Mrs. F.C.) Aldinger, of the State Legislative Council of Women, wrote to Lucia Grimes, also of the State Legislative Council, when Senator Eva Hamilton had not been in her seat for a week, male legislators complained that it was "just like a woman."¹³

When women had used issues regarding the home as a wedge into municipal politics they had unwittingly reinforced the idea that a woman's expertise was only the home. To counter this image, clubwomen set up classes for political education. These women were products of the Progressive Era who supported their causes with copious statistics and trained experts. This was especially important in Detroit where big business thrived on scientific management and where businessmen were well-organized in civic groups such as the Detroit Citizens League, the Municipal League and the Board of Commerce.

¹¹ Elizabeth L. Gulley, "Education vs. Charity As A Club Woman's Program," and Savonia Carson, "Michigan," The National Notes 27 (April, 1925): 1-2, 13, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s," in Tilly and Gurin, Women, Politics and Change, p. 199-216.

¹² Andersen, "Citizenship," p.114.

¹³ Letter (no date ~1921) from Ella Aldinger to Lucia Grimes, Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 1, Correspondence 1921-1922, in the Michigan Historical Collections at the Bentley Historical Library (MHC).

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Finally, clubwomen lacked the media access to broadcast their own message or to counter pejorative stereotypes that portrayed women as political incompetents or marginalized their message. For these many reasons, it was both prudent and practical for Detroit clubwomen to continue their political work within their clubs where they had had previous success.

Across the country, as women received suffrage, they debated how best to serve their communities. California clubwoman Clara Burdette similarly felt that women should consider themselves “city mothers” and use their California Federation of Women’s Clubs to make themselves a powerful force in the community. She said, “to what end, [do we serve] if we do not reach out into the community and unite our strength for some betterment?”¹⁴ Mrs. Burritt Hamilton, President of the MFWC expressed a similar sentiment when she spoke as Michigan women were voting in their state’s first primary. She stressed the importance of the vote and women’s clubs unity of purpose. She explained that only by uniting and making a concentrated effort could women make themselves a national asset. She recognized the numerical strength of American clubwomen by stating that there were more clubwomen than there were American soldiers in Europe. She drew on a patriotic commitment by saying that the soldiers won the war but it was up to women to preserve the institutions for which they fought. She demonstrated a belief that citizenship for women was in a complementary, not secondary relationship to men. Both were necessary and had grave responsibilities. Women were

¹⁴ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.116.

interested in principles, not parties, and therefore must unite within their clubs to be effective.¹⁵

When Detroit women got the right to vote, the Wayne County Equal Suffrage League debated whether to continue or disband their organization. As early as March of 1919, they considered maintaining their club but changing their intent. In November, 1919 the organization evolved into the Detroit League of Women Voters (LWV). The members decided to keep their activities strictly non-partisan. They endorsed principles rather than specific issues and their purpose was to coordinate women's efforts on legislation particularly where it affected women and children.¹⁶

The women's clubs responded to the advent of women's suffrage by providing information to ensure new voters would vote thoughtfully and intelligently. In doing so, they were continuing some of their pre-suffrage tactics and trying to establish their political competency. Women had used pressure group lobbying that required educating both political leaders and the public. Helen (Mrs. Dorian) Russell, President the MFWC explained that men were experienced in politics and she felt a club was neglecting its duty when it failed to teach its members "the machinery of politics."¹⁷ The DFWC dedicated its March 19, 1919 meeting entirely to the upcoming municipal election. They also sent letters to the winners of the primary inviting them to come to the club and address the members.¹⁸ This was the start of a long tradition of women sponsored candidates' days.

¹⁵ Detroit News (February 23, 1919).

¹⁶ Detroit Free Press (March 8, 1919), Detroit Free Press (November 13, 1919), Detroit News (November 13, 1919).

¹⁷ Mrs. Dorian M. Russell, "Welfare for Women," Twentieth Century Club Magazine 8, (March, 1923): 6.

¹⁸ Detroit News (March 18, 1919).

Mrs. Joseph Anders, Chairman of the Courts Committee of the Wayne County LWV, was instrumental in arranging a meeting at the Board of Commerce for women to hear the candidates for local office. One candidate remarked that they used to speak to voters in bar rooms but now that women had entered the franchise, politics was on a higher level.¹⁹ In their search to be better informed, Detroit clubwomen forced candidates to pay heed to women's issues. Jo Freeman noted that women helped civilize politics. She explained that prior to woman suffrage, elections had been raucous affairs with threats and ballot box stuffing. The advent of women's suffrage changed that.²⁰

Perhaps women felt compelled to hone their analytical skills in politics because they were vulnerable to the interpretation and propaganda of the male dominated political scene. For example, Judsen Grennell, editor of the Detroit Journal issued a pamphlet in 1919 entitled "What Michigan Women Should Know About Voting" He received a commendation from the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association and dedicated the piece to the suffragists who struggled for equal political, social and economic rights for women. Grennell provided necessary information regarding legal requirements and advice against being intimidated at the polls. He also supported the idea that women were equal partners with men regulating the civic affairs of the community. He advised women to be wary of newspapers that had a pronounced bias. Nevertheless, he took the opportunity to advocate his own ideas. For example, he advised women to support education and oppose child

¹⁹ Detroit News (March 16, 1919).

²⁰ Jo Freeman, A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics (New York, 2000) p.234 and Kristi Andersen, After Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics before the New Deal (Chicago, 1996), p. 143-144.



labor. He cautioned them always to avoid a “pronounced class candidate.”²¹ When he spoke about how pure water and better sewers meant better health, he commented that better paved roads meant cheaper potatoes. Consequently, Grennell saw the opportunity to promote his political message between the lines of his instruction to the new female voter.²²

The Detroit newspapers believed that women took advantage of their enfranchised citizenship. In the first primary to include women in 1919, the Detroit Times reported that women were as numerous as men at the polls.²³ The Detroit News noted that since Michigan women received the vote in November, 1918, women’s clubs throughout the city studied the upcoming election. The women showed their interest by voting in proportionally larger numbers than men. Women made up only twenty-five percent of the registered voters, but cast forty percent of the vote in the March primary.²⁴ Elizabeth Gulley claimed that in Detroit it was much easier to get African-American women registered than it was for men.²⁵

On the other hand, when the News ran two first page accounts of Detroit women’s first election, they both disparaged the new woman voter. The first account praised the high voter turnout but stated that many election officials were “surprised” at the knowledge female voters possessed. The second described a woman who had lost her husband’s list and was therefore unable to vote and another who didn’t know enough to

²¹ Judson Grennell, “What Michigan Women Should Know About Voting” pamphlet, (Waterford, 1919): 30.

²² Grennell, “What Michigan Women Should Know.”

²³ Detroit Times (March 5, 1919).

²⁴ Detroit News (March 5, 1919).

²⁵ Gulley and Johnson, “Citizenship Activities of Some Detroit Women,” The National Notes 27 (April, 1925): 9. She gave no explanation or evidence for this statement.

mark the ballot. The News concluded that every precinct where women voted, “reported some humorous touch.”²⁶

Although the News wrote that female voters were humorous, the potential high number of women voters was taken seriously by campaigners in the general election the following April where the main issues were municipal ownership of street cars and keeping Michigan a totally dry state. Women comprised a smaller number of the registered voters but since they registered for this particular election and many servicemen were still away (an estimated 60,000 in 1918), women’s votes were considered important. Both wets and dries used the sacredness of the home for their cases. The dries said total prohibition would help preserve the home while the wets said prohibition would be an infringement on the home. Both sides had an eye on an argument directed at the women’s vote. Additionally, those for and against municipal ownership of the street cars appealed to the female voters. Those against municipal ownership sent circulars around the city entitled “The Home Saver - Principally for Women Voters, But Good for Men, Too.” They painted municipal ownership as outrageously expensive and socialistic. Those in favor of ownership claimed that Detroit was moving away from “saloon politics” and the scandal ridden old Common Council. The only obstacle to ongoing reform was the Detroit United Railway and bad old partisan politics. Therefore municipal ownership was seen as a final element toward eradicating corrupt politics.²⁷

There was evidence, claimed the Michigan Citizen, the Democratic mouthpiece, that Michigan women were not content to simply “vote as husband does” and that they

²⁶ Detroit News (March 5, 1919), Detroit News (March 9, 1919).

²⁷ Detroit News (April 6, 1919).

made intelligent inquiries about taxes, services, etc.²⁸ The Detroit News continued to be impressed with the numbers of women voting and said the tremendous registration has “shown conclusively that the new woman voter is taking her duties most seriously and is determined to do her best by the city and state.”²⁹ African-American clubwomen in Detroit, under the leadership of Elizabeth Gulley, organized the Women’s Political League in 1923. It was independent from men’s organizations and clubwomen made their own investigations about voting records and issued letters with their endorsements³⁰

While the press reported women voting in the same proportion as men, they failed to note the 1920s were a period of declining voter participation in general. The Chairperson of the Colored Women Voters of Michigan, Savonia Carson, thought women were voting in ever larger numbers but that some still believed that the ballot was useless and politics of little interest.³¹ Early in 1920, Professor Otto C. Marckwardt of the University of Michigan spoke to the New Century Club about “The Woman Citizen.” He claimed that women got the vote at a time when it was increasingly useless. The change from an agricultural economy to an industrial one presented challenges that made the old school politicians unable to cope. Marckwardt advised the clubwomen to seek solutions which embraced the new economic realities of the day.³² Women’s use of the franchise in the 1920s was in the context of declining voter participation and it appears that nationally,

²⁸ “Michigan Women Showing Keen Interest,” Michigan Citizen 1 (January 10, 1920): 7.

²⁹ Detroit News (March 8, 1919).

³⁰ Gulley and Johnson, “Citizenship Activities of Some Detroit Women,” p. 9.

³¹ Savonia Carson, “Michigan,” The National Notes 27 (January, 1925): 13.

³² Detroit News (February 22, 1920). Until the passage of the Cable Act in 1922, women were not eligible to be citizens if their husbands were not citizens thereby possibly diminishing the pool of eligible women voters.

fewer women than men voted.³³ The number of votes cast in 1920 were only a thirty percent increase over that of 1916. While acknowledging that in some areas, women voted at the same rate as men, Andersen noted that attitudes, ethnicity, class and organizations affected women's voting behavior. Lingering anti-suffrage ideas stopped some women from voting. There was additional evidence that foreign extraction and poverty made women less likely to vote.³⁴ Cott explained that women received voting rights at a time when government sought solutions from experts and those who claimed management efficiency rather than political leaders.³⁵ The leaders of women's clubs often expressed disappointment with women's light voter turnout. In 1922, Jennie Patton (Mrs. Robert) Beattie, President of the Women's Citizen League claimed that the legislature was less likely to listen to women when they realized only 30% of them voted.³⁶ The League of Women Voters feared that after seventy-five years of agitating for the vote, women might be ignoring their franchise responsibilities.³⁷ The News noted that only 32% of the registered women voted in the October, 1926 election.³⁸ Savonia Carson felt certain that women were voting in larger numbers but admitted that few people answered her inquiry and therefore she was unable to give an exact estimate of voter participation.³⁹ There was evidence, on the other hand, that clubwomen were voting in larger percentages. In a 1922 DFWC survey of twenty-one member clubs, they reported that 65% of their

³³ Cott, "Across the Great Divide," p.159-160. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

³⁴ Andersen, "Citizenship," p.189-193.

³⁵ Cott, "Across the Great Divide," p.160.

³⁶ Detroit News (November 7, 1922).

³⁷ Detroit News (May 11, 1924).

³⁸ Detroit News (November 7, 1926).

³⁹ Carson, "Michigan," p.13.



members were registered and voting.⁴⁰ Detroit clubwomen not only continued to pursue their civic work in the city but to take advantage of all available political tools.

There was an acute awareness among clubwomen that, with the franchise, they were embarking on a new relationship to government that required them to be conscientious and diligent. Lillian Mathews, President of the DFWC spoke in 1922 of “Woman As A Working Power.” Her remarks were reported in the Detroit News as saying that women had a new relationship to public life and that they realized this. Therefore, as women they must take part in the social and economic life of their communities. The DFWC acknowledged its responsibility and was, in turn, stressing citizenship through the exercise of the franchise and within its various departments.⁴¹ Elizabeth Gulley explained that black clubwomen were also “learning the power of the ballot.” Consequently, black women felt that they could alter their club programs in light of this new political tool.⁴² African-American club leader Lillian Johnson addressed the Detroit Study Club about the needs of women and how they could be achieved with the ballot. She echoed the concerns of all Detroit clubwomen when she said that they wanted cleaner streets, better sanitation in bakeries and meat shops, better milk inspection, adequate fire protection, cheaper food, better housing, protection for women and children in industry, better child labor laws and better institutions for those incarcerated. Johnson admonished women for not pulling together to get other women elected to anything other than school boards or prison commissions. She also stressed that it was a crucial time for women because, with unity, they could make politics “an instrument of service to the

⁴⁰ Minutes 1922-1924, Vol 13 p. 282, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴¹ Detroit News (September 1, 1922).

⁴² Gulley, “Education vs. Charity As A Club Woman’s Program,” p.2.



community and not just a man's game.”⁴³ For these clubwomen, women's civic power would be more efficient if it remained organized within women's clubs.

Club civic effectiveness through unity was also stressed in the early years of full franchise at the local level. Dora MacDonough, Chairwoman of the Civic Department of the DFWC reported in January, 1921 that office holders understood that requests from the DFWC represented a potential 10,000 female votes. The DFWC could not guarantee those 10,000 votes. Women, even politically active clubwomen, seldom voted as a bloc.⁴⁴ Andersen explained that with the acquisition of the franchise, there were expectations that women would uniformly vote for political reform or prohibition. Although women did join together and defeated certain politicians, these expectations of bloc voting proved false.⁴⁵ Jo Freeman demonstrated that from the start the women's voting bloc was a political myth. Those who had studied women's voting behavior before the nineteenth amendment, understood that at the time.⁴⁶ Rather than relying on all women voting the same, Dora MacDonough believed if clubwomen in Detroit established their sincerity about civic betterment, a precedent would be set and officeholders would take notice.⁴⁷

The Detroit LWV members also recognized that with the franchise, women experienced a new relationship to public life. This relationship could strengthen women's civic work if they remained unified within their clubs. Ida Peppers, President of the Detroit

⁴³ Lillian Johnson, "How Municipal Government is Effected by the Entrance of Women into Politics," (January, 1923), Box 1, Folder 3, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Detroit Study Club, BHC.

⁴⁴ "Report of the Civics Department" (January 28, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 333, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴⁵ Andersen, "Citizenship," 189.

⁴⁶ Freeman, *A Room at a Time*, p.2.

⁴⁷ "Report of the Civics Department" (January 28, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 333, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, BHC.



LWV in 1922, said that the League existed for “uniting the country’s woman power into a new force for the humanizing of government.”⁴⁸

The mobilization efforts of women’s organizations tended to have a favorable impact on female voter turnout.⁴⁹ Part of this mobilization concerned political education. Women’s clubs were especially good at educating the public and networking among themselves. Detroit clubwomen often spent several weeks studying one particular issue. Early in the decade, the Board of Directors of the DFWC carried a motion that “sufficient printed material be provided for information regarding all legislation the Federation is supporting; That this winter all clubs be urged to study these bills so that all will be well-informed.”⁵⁰ In an era where the trained expert had enhanced status, Detroit clubwomen invited learned speakers to explain civic issues. For example, in 1920 the Women Citizen’s League invited Sherman T. Handy of the newly reorganized Michigan Utilities Commission to explain the manner in which the state regulated public utilities. Many members of the League had requested this information and were especially concerned about the street railway and telephone services in Detroit.⁵¹

Over ninety leading organizations used the Women’s City Club Lecture Information Bureau Committee to announce their lectures. The Women’s City Club published a bulletin with all the lectures, talks and art exhibits for a certain time period. The information was classified according to subject, lecturer, time and place, fee, free to the public or to members and guests etc. This was put in poster form for the bulletin board

⁴⁸ “Detroit League of Women Voters,” Detroit Federation of Women’s Clubs - Directory 1921-1922 p.67

⁴⁹ Andersen, “Citizenship,” p.189-193.

⁵⁰ “Report of the Board of Directors” (October 6, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 783, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵¹ Detroit News (April 18, 1920).



of the subscribing clubs and furnished bi-monthly. Delegates had been appointed from all the cooperating organizations and they would supply the advance notice of lectures and exhibits. Individuals could be informed by a postal card for the same one dollar per year fee. This service appeared necessary because many lectures were inadequately advertised and therefore poorly attended.⁵²

Working on educating the community and networking, however, did not necessarily translate into political power. In 1919, Laura Cramer was so discouraged about the legislative success of the DFWC that she thought legislative work would soon be discontinued. She felt that legislation would only be passed if the clubs were very aggressive. She added that this was not in keeping with the ideals of the DFWC.⁵³ Her successor, Della Kilburn, believed that the legislative department would continue but the DFWC had to be focused and unified for success.⁵⁴

Success could not simply be achieved at the municipal level. The DFWC understood that many issues affecting Detroit were decided in the state capitol at Lansing. Consequently, they made their presence known at state legislative hearings as often as possible. They understood that their presence would only be effective if they were represented by articulate, learned women. The DFWC Legislative Department requested that a list be kept of informed women who could go to Lansing on short notice. The department would pay for the travel expenses. The important element about this list of women was that they kept themselves up-to-date on important issues. If a hearing was

⁵² Detroit News (November 12, 1922).

⁵³ "Report of the Legislative Department" (April 10, 1920), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 509, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵⁴ "Report of the Legislative Department" (November 19, 1919), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p. 660, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



suddenly scheduled, the department might not have the time to educate them.

Additionally, the department understood that only well-informed women would help their objectives. This placed the burden of keeping current in civic affairs on the shoulders of these women. They believed they had valuable contributions to make in government, but this value was not always accepted by male politicians. Women felt constantly pressured to prove they were equal, learned, members of the voting public to the skeptical male legislators.⁵⁵ The DFWC also felt it needed additional money to keep a member in Lansing to monitor women's legislation. In 1920, the club proposed that each member give one dollar a year to maintain the civic, legislative and welfare work of the Federation.⁵⁶

In addition to the DFWC effort in Lansing, the LWV joined with other state wide women's groups to form a State Legislative Council in 1921. In this way, women could have the greatest impact and focus their political attention. The Michigan State Legislative Council consisted of the MLWV, WCTU, MFWC, the State Nurses Association, the Women's Department of the Grange, the State Sunday School Association, the State Teacher's Association, the Michigan Branch of the National Woman's Party, the American Association of University Women, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. The purpose of the Council was to act as a clearing house for proposed legislation and its president was the very politically active Lucia Grimes. The Council received drafts of any bills pertaining to women and children, evaluated them, and molded the most important into a form required for legislative consideration. It was hoped this system would weed out those bills that were ineffective or were doomed to

⁵⁵ "Report of the Legislative Department" (March 10, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 507, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵⁶ Detroit News (February 15, 1920).



failure. It would also give the Council's endorsement for a select number of bills⁵⁷ The State Legislative Council provided member organizations with a graph showing how every elected official voted on bills of interest to women. As a result of these efforts, the Council was more than fifty percent successful in its legislative program⁵⁸

Within Wayne County, activist women also set up a Legislative Council. Its purpose was to include women's organizations that did not have state-wide affiliation. It too, worked for the benefit of women and children and had the advantage of being compact but representing many women's organizations. Both the State and Wayne County councils were organized to emphasize a common women's agenda and "prevent a constant hectoring of the legislators by various small groups of women, each one clamoring for different legislative measures." Also clubwomen were worried about their political effectiveness. They hoped that with new organizations for pressure, the 1921 Legislature would not "refuse to pass every measure urged by female citizens as was the case in 1919."⁵⁹ In Illinois, activist women also failed to significantly achieve their legislative programs. In spite of their organization, dedication and political knowledge, Illinois women remained without solid party endorsement and therefore, experienced only limited success.⁶⁰

The creation of these Legislative Councils raises several points. One was about practical politics. Civic-minded women understood that only if they were well organized could their numbers be translated into legislative strength. They could not hope to

⁵⁷ Detroit News (March 26, 1922).

⁵⁸ Helen Cary Russell, "State Legislative Council," The Club Women 16 (September, 1923): 9.

⁵⁹ "State Legislative Program of Michigan Women," The Club Woman 13 (February, 1921): 331.

⁶⁰ Flanagan, "Predicament," p.321.



accomplish much by, as one woman put it, the “constant hectoring” of small groups. Another point was that the issues that pertained to women and children did not have steadfast allies in other civic groups. Politically active Michigan women believed they needed to speak for themselves. The Detroit News quoted Edith Alvord as saying that Michigan clubwomen felt their sex was entitled to a greater representation in Lansing. In 1922, there was only one female legislator, State Senator Eva Hamilton of Grand Rapids.⁶¹

The Club Woman listed the state legislative programs supported by Michigan clubwomen for 1921. Among their proposed legislation were bills for health, education, women’s rights as mothers and wives, and state censorship for moving pictures.⁶² Later, in 1921, Ida Peppers reported that Michigan women were successful in raising common law marriage to age sixteen, funding mother’s pensions, raising qualifications for teachers and nurses, and securing free diphtheria shots. They had legislatively lost movie censorship and raising the age of consent. Peppers felt the report seemed discouraging but she rationalized that the men were testing the women’s endurance. She encouraged clubwomen to keep on trying.⁶³ In spite of their limited success, the Legislative Department of the DFWC believed that Detroit clubwomen did as well and often better legislatively than other women in other states. Elisabeth Israels Perry noted that the women of the Women’s City Club of New York City remained optimistic even when a particular policy failed. They felt successful if they were accorded respect.⁶⁴ The African-

⁶¹ Detroit News (March 26, 1922).

⁶² “State Legislative Program of Michigan Women,” p.331

⁶³ “Report of the Legislative Department” (April 29, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p.623-625, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁶⁴ Perry, “Women’s Political Choices,” p.420.



American New Era Study Club in Detroit reflected a similar attitude in its motto, "No effort is in vain; the reward is in the doing."⁶⁵

Although the clubwomen enjoyed moderate political success in Detroit, there was disagreement about whether to use their clubs as political vehicles. In August, 1920 the Club Woman allowed political advertising for the first time. It was very careful to state that advertising did not mean endorsement.⁶⁶ Many clubwomen were able to combine political business with other club activities, but the marriage of these was sometimes a rocky one. Shortly after achieving the franchise, DFWC President, Pearl G. Novak linked the Federation's worth with what it could accomplish politically. Novak noted that some Detroit women were criticized for a lack of political enthusiasm but she believed the DFWC had to participate in politics as well as other endeavors. Novak understood that many issues about the home and family needed public attention. Organized women must pursue those issues and make their voices heard.⁶⁷

As Detroit clubwomen expanded their original club to include political work, they continued to struggle with this issue. The separate political culture they had developed before the franchise led logically to using clubs to do political work. Still, women maintained their club's cultural, social, intellectual and recreational activities. In doing so, they often spread themselves too thin for action and they produced internecine friction among the members themselves. When Professor William D. Henderson of the University of Michigan spoke to the Detroit Review Club, he posited that the great variety of club

⁶⁵ "Early History of the New Era Study Club," (typed manuscript, no author, no date), Box 1, Club History, Club Song, Manuscript Collection (MS) of New Era Study Club, BHC.

⁶⁶ "On Political Advertising," The Club Woman 12 (August, 1920): 153.

⁶⁷ Pearl G. Novak, "Prospects," The Club Woman 13 (October, 1920): 72.



programs, as well as members, made women less politically effective. He added, however, that women were coming into their own as a factor in the world and they would grow politically with experience.⁶⁸

The most extreme example of this internecine conflict was the Clubwoman's Protective Committee formed in 1920. Chaired by Mrs. Henry Clark Coe, the aim of this committee was to be a watchdog over the political activity of women's clubs in Detroit. In particular, the Protective Committee feared that women's clubs were being manipulated by clever and possibly subversive politicians. Furthermore, the Protective Committee insisted that a powerful clique of women had advocated some legislation that had origins in communist theory. The Committee believed that this same clique crowded club programs with political messages that were inappropriate. While there is no evidence that they had any effect, the Protective Committee set about to investigate local schools, teachers and texts to ensure subversive doctrines were eliminated. They kept lists of the various organizations to which different clubwomen belonged. The Committee believed that since the Nineteenth Amendment, every women's club was a political unit. The clubs sometimes professed not to be political but they really meant they are not partisan. When they sponsor a speaker or a resolution, they are acting politically. Lastly, the Clubwomen's Protective Committee believed the only way to avoid being manipulated by clever politicians was to return to the non-political women's clubs.⁶⁹

One problem for women's clubs being politically effective was that they could not always translate their programs into solid voter support. While Detroit women were

⁶⁸ Detroit News (October 22, 1922).

⁶⁹ "Clubwoman's Protective Committee" (January 1, 1926), Box 9, Correspondence, Manuscript Collection (MS) Emma A. Fox Papers BHC.



certainly reported as going to the polls in equal numbers as men, voting participation itself was down. In addition, “women voters” was a broad definition which did not indicate how many clubwomen were among them. At a Detroit Review Club in 1922, the speakers, Mary V.(Mrs. Ralph E.) Collins and Harriet Meader (Mrs. Lawrence) Hickey asked all members to rise if they voted in the last election. “A great number remained seated,” it was reported.⁷⁰

While the DFWC and other women’s clubs still did literary, cultural and social welfare work, devoting special time to civic matters, the Detroit Community Club, founded in March 1911, discussed political matters exclusively. Its members were among the many very active Detroit clubwomen such as Edith Alvord, Elizabeth M. (Mrs. A.H.) Holman, and Pearl Novak. The Detroit News praised the Detroit Community Club as having “one of the best and most public spirited programs” in spite of its small size. The club used almost no outside speakers but instead relied on individual club members to do their own research. They believed that individual responsibility encouraged a thorough, conscientious study and avoided the expert who embodied certain prejudices about the issue. Examples of issues the club investigated were: “Society’s Duty to the Child,” “Our Municipal Problems” and “What Was Accomplished in the Last Session of the Michigan Legislature,” “Naturalization and Citizenship,” “Discussion of the Qualifications of a Public Official,” and “Municipal Elections.”⁷¹ Every member had the opportunity to research a civic issue and in doing so, gained added insight into the political process.⁷²

African-American clubwoman Geraldine Reddick founded the Las (sic) Cheres Amies club

⁷⁰ Detroit News (November 19, 1922).

⁷¹ Detroit Community Club, Annual Program, 1919-1920, 1923-1924, 1926-1927.

⁷² Detroit News (October 12, 1924).



devoted to discussing civic problems. An example of one of their programs was, “The Learning Ability of the Negro Child.”⁷³

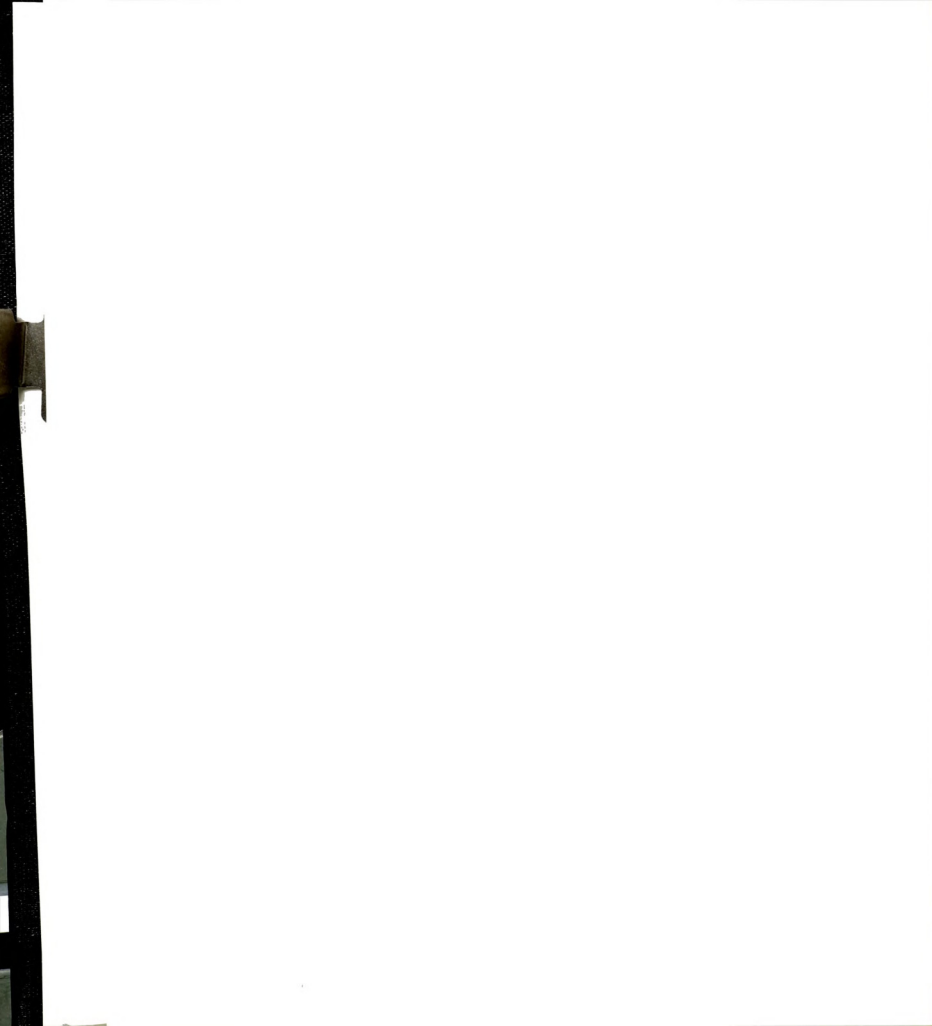
Some women chose to study issues and create clubs exclusively for political work. Flanagan noted that with the franchise, one line of political activism for women was to form new political groups. Some were partisan and some were not.⁷⁴ Gayle Gullett described the activities of the Women’s Progressive League in California as an organizational attempt to protect women’s interests. The league was not a political party but rather a group which sought to educate the public on legislation and candidates.⁷⁵ A similar club in Detroit was the Progressive Civic League. When the Political and Civic League was founded by Ruby Zahn in 1912, its purpose was to study political problems and further reform. After women were enfranchised, the members felt the name was misleading and therefore the Political and Civic League became the Progressive Civic League in October, 1921.⁷⁶ The Detroit Citizen countered an indictment against Detroit’s lack of social and civic conscience with the example of Zahn and the Progressive Civic League and what it called the League’s sensible, practical, preventative measures. The Progressive Civic League initiated the campaign for a public defender and secured the Mothers’ Compensation Bill. Additionally, they campaigned for social welfare work among the women in the county jail. The Wayne County Board of Supervisors accepted the League’s recommendation for Mrs. R.H. Lathers, a nurse who worked with Pathfinders, to be appointed to the Wayne County Jail. The League also urged Mayor

⁷³ Detroit Independent (October 14, 1927).

⁷⁴ Flanagan, “Predicament” p.315.

⁷⁵ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.198.

⁷⁶ Detroit News (October 9, 1921).



Couzens to appoint a newspaper woman who had done years of prison welfare work, Elizabeth S. Hitchcock, to the Detroit House of Correction. These appointments helped bring a more humane administration of the prison. According to the Detroit Citizen, "The Progressive Civic League members are serious minded and intelligent women, who are imbued with a deep sense of civic duty, which they discharge consistent with the principles of higher citizenship." ⁷⁷

Under the leadership of Elizabeth Gulley, African-American clubwomen were organized in the Women's Political League. The club met throughout the entire year and actively promoted voting registration. They made house visits and even provided transportation to City Hall for registration. Writing in the National Notes, Gulley explained that Michigan women worked quietly, behind the scenes because they were more interested in results than publicity. Still, they took a lively interest in Detroit's contemporary political affairs. ⁷⁸

Mayor James Couzens claimed that the high standards of municipal government depended on the interest of women voters. Furthermore, he believed that they were most effective in their clubs. He said, "Thanks to these clubs, the women of Detroit are becoming as fully conversant with our public affairs as our men." ⁷⁹ The Detroit Citizen reported that politically active clubwomen displayed "a shrewdness which surprised even the most seasoned freebooters in the legislature." The Citizen went on to warn the

⁷⁷ "Women Do Real Social Welfare Work" Detroit Citizen 2 (March/April, 1922): 8-9.

⁷⁸ Gulley and Johnson, "Citizenship Activities," p.9.

⁷⁹ James Couzens, "Comments," The Club Woman 13 (August, 1921): 698.

politicians to pay attention to these women because they would be formidable opponents.⁸⁰

Partisanship

While clubwomen were studying the issues within their clubs, working with the State Legislature, they also grappled with the issue of partisan politics. Partisan politics had a bad name in Detroit and there was a general Progressive distrust of the political parties as well. Detroit clubwomen, as was the case with many U.S. women right after suffrage, had trouble accepting the old, blind loyalty of partisan politics because they felt that it put party before principles. Carrie Chapman Catt advised male politicians to accept that the introduction of women into the franchise had rendered the old ways obsolete. She claimed “a new world order has been established.” She explained that women support principles first and later support candidates who embody those principles. The message to the men was clear - if they want party loyalty from women, they must nominate candidates who were approved by women.⁸¹

Professor Charles Zueblin, of the University of Chicago, a well-known speaker, political scientist, and anti-party progressive, addressed the Detroit New Century Club. He advised women to remain aloof from the political parties. He noted that both the Republicans and Democrats gave women a great reception at their respective national conventions, but they gave the women no say in the nomination of candidates. Zueblin believed that the two major political parties no longer stood for identifiable political positions and if women withheld support, the parties would then collapse. In their place

⁸⁰ Detroit Citizen 1, (May, 1921): 6.

⁸¹ “Democratic Women Soul of Loyalty to Party,” Michigan Citizen 4, (December 3, 1923): 3.

another two party system would arise based on liberal or conservative views. He advised women to use their votes as leverage until the parties established solid principles.⁸²

The decline of partisanship and women's role in that decline was addressed by Anna Dickie (Mrs. Peter) Oleson, Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate from Minnesota. She said that party lines were falling away and people were exercising independent thought. She claimed that women might have used men's advice when the first voted but only two years later, women were exercising their conscience. She attributed this to organizations like the LWV which educated voters in an unselfish, intelligent way. She concluded by noting that there was no similar male organization and the LWV "stands for what is best in civic life."⁸³

In Detroit, both political parties had hoped or feared women would upset the Republican hold on Michigan. This was not the case. In 1919, the Detroit News reported, "The advent of women in politics did not disturb the traditional monopoly of the Republican Party of state offices."⁸⁴ Detroit clubwomen did join the Democratic and Republican parties but simultaneously pursued political work within their women's clubs. Gullett explained that California women believed they pursued "womanly politics" which was moral, altruistic and civic minded whereas partisan politics was male, amoral and self-seeking.⁸⁵ Freeman noted that within the political parties, women who had been suffragists or reformers, were not always welcomed.⁸⁶ Clubwomen already had their

⁸² Detroit News (October 24, 1920).

⁸³ Mrs. P. Oleson, "The Women's Vote Will Play A Greater Part in National Elections," Michigan Citizen 3 (June 24, 1922): 8.

⁸⁴ Detroit News (April 14, 1919).

⁸⁵ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.2.

⁸⁶ Freeman, A Room at a Time, p.63.

female organizations within which they did political work and they were reluctant to put the party before their principles. Dorothea (Mrs. Henry, Jr) Steffens, President of the Wayne County LWW believed, that because a woman tried to steer clear of a blind, partisan vote, she was a great influence toward intelligent voting.⁸⁷ As Kristi Andersen pointed out, both major parties wanted to make a show of welcoming women to the fold. The Michigan Democrats were a real minority party during the 1920s and perhaps were that much more eager for women's votes. There were, thus, legitimate arguments for both playing partisan politics and for staying out. On the positive side for participating in partisan politics and as a counter position to that of Professor Zueblin, many activist women believed that as a gender, they might bring a woman's vision into party politics.

Republicans and Democrats courted the newly enfranchised women voters.

Women were viewed cautiously because as Elizabeth Bass, an important Chicago clubwoman and Chair of the Women's Bureau of the Democratic National Committee explained to Michigan women in early 1920, they had no partisan tradition and therefore were an unclassified mass politically.⁸⁸ There was a feeling among Democrats that women could be a potent political factor because they had votes to swing the elections.⁸⁹

Investigating women's entry into party politics, Jo Freeman generalized that where a political party was weak, such as the Democrats in Michigan, its members accepted help from suffragists or reform women and even let those women organize on their own. Such acceptance was, however, short-lived. If those women were successful and made demands

⁸⁷ "Detroit Women of Prominence," Woman's Bulletin (June, 1928).

⁸⁸ "Wayne Women's Luncheon A Success," Michigan Citizen (January 31, 1920): 7.

⁸⁹ "What the Women Are Doing," Michigan Citizen (September 27, 1924):4



on the party, they were weeded out. When men appointed suffragists to committees, they soon regretted it.⁹⁰

The Republicans likewise were watching and made a show of welcoming women into their fold. In November, 1919, the Grand Old Party re-organized to “provide for full participation of women in the future affairs of the party” and into their national organizations. Their pledge was to include women as citizens with all the rights and responsibilities thereof. They claimed that the women’s work was not auxiliary but on an equal basis with men.⁹¹ Still, Michigan Republicans showed little evidence of putting women on “an equal basis as men.” While the Wayne County Woman’s Republican Club had office seekers among them, like Lucia Grimes and Laura Cramer, there were no women listed as policy makers among the Detroit Republicans in September, 1920.⁹²

Many Michigan women did regard the political parties as the inevitable “next step” for female citizens. Julia L. Haller of the Ladies Literary Club of Mount Clemens, wrote that there should not be two classes of citizens - male or female. Instead, both were citizens and she instructed women to “go into the parties, become a part of the machinery, fight out battles on the level with the veterans of the ranks.” She acknowledged the partisan inexperience of women and furthermore admonished those who believed that women could only be politically effective by remaining aloof from the political fray. She urged women to “make it clear that we have left the ‘Holier than Thou’ image on the dressing table.”⁹³ Haller expressed her belief that party politics was the center of political

⁹⁰ Freeman, *A Room at a Time*, p.150.

⁹¹ *Detroit News* (November 11, 1919).

⁹² “To the Loyal Republicans of Detroit,” *Detroit Republican Party Brochure*, (September 13, 1920).

⁹³ Julia L. Haller, “Women in Politics,” *Michigan Citizen* 1 (May 8, 1920): 4.



action. Women would be less effective if they stayed out of partisan affairs. Her advice, “Get into the game. Learn the party, develop expertise in shuffling and dealing; take every trick we can, and if we lose today, learn a new point ... resolve to win tomorrow” revealed that effective politics required shrewd calculation and a certain merciless determination.⁹⁴

In a like manner, Chicago club leader Louise DeKoven Bowen advised Chicago women that politics had always meant parties. Women must join the parties to effect change. Bowen noted that if women refused to participate in the political parties, they would be merely stuck with the plans and candidates on which men had already decided.⁹⁵

Carrie Chapman Catt spoke at the last meeting of the National American Suffrage Association and the first meeting of the NLWV in February, 1920. At that time, she admitted that while the political parties needed reform, women should join them and become part of that reform.⁹⁶

Elizabeth Bass urged Michigan women to join the Democratic Party. She explained that women think if they remain non-partisan, then they will hold the balance of power between the two major parties. Echoing Louise Bowen, Bass claimed that an independent voter could only then decide between candidates and platforms that were already chosen. That strategy was therefore not effective.⁹⁷ The partisan views of these women were seen by Susan Ware as a strand of mainstream feminism because they sought

⁹⁴ Haller, “Women in Politics,” p.4.

⁹⁵ Flanagan, “Predicament,” p.316.

⁹⁶ Andersen, “Citizenship,” p.182

⁹⁷ Elizabeth (Mrs. George) Bass, “Non-Partisanship and Partisanship,” Michigan Citizen 2 (December 20, 1919): 7.



to bring women into existing political structures. They were dedicated to raising women's issues but inside, not outside, the dominant political system.⁹⁸

The major parties wanted women's votes, but not usually women's voice in the running of the party. The real usefulness of Michigan women to both major parties rested in women's organizational abilities and their aptitude for grass-roots politics. The Woman's Republican Club appointed ward chairmen to canvas their area for registration and to pass out literature. In turn, these ward chairmen reported their activities to the club.⁹⁹ The Democrats also employed their female members for grass-roots work. Grace Stephens Jobe, Corresponding Secretary of the State Federation of Democratic Women's Clubs, claimed that Democratic women had shown a "knowledge of the practical end of the work" which the party deeply appreciated.¹⁰⁰ There was also a difference between committee women who were appointed and club leaders who were elected by their members. Both parties wanted to strongly supervise women's activities and discourage organizations with another agenda. Consequently, as Jo Freeman put it, "their public image was one of worker bees who gratefully made coffee not policy."¹⁰¹

In spite of the promises of partisan equality for women in both the Republican and Democratic parties, they were treated more like apprentice members than full members. Both parties accepted pejorative stereotypes about women. When women got the vote in Michigan, The Michigan Citizen wrote of them, "Taken as a whole, their

⁹⁸ Susan Ware, Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics (New Haven, 1987), p. xviii

⁹⁹ Detroit News (October 17, 1920).

¹⁰⁰ Grace Stephens (Mrs. W.H.) Jobe, "Democratic Women's Clubs Determined to Carry On," Michigan Citizen (January, 1925): 5.

¹⁰¹ Freeman, A Room at a Time, p. 225.



knowledge of party principles and accomplishments has been confined to the table utterances by the head of the family, and the more or less confused review of facts and fancies as have come from over the garden wall.”¹⁰² In the same issue of the Michigan Citizen in an article entitled “The Michigan Woman in Politics” by Cecille Pratt was more flattering to women’s political abilities. It claimed that women were actually more analytical about party platforms. Women injected a spiritual and principled element into politics. Still, with all these fine attributes, “political knowledge and training is needed as ballast.” Furthermore, women were all voting in one fell swoop not like men who enter gradually at age twenty-one¹⁰³

Freeman explained that there were serious structural obstacles to women’s equal participation in the parties. Until the 1960s, real political power was not in the parties’ formal structure, but rather in informal networks that were male dominated. Women were readily appointed to committees because those committees brought them little power. Freeman described how committee members would meet privately, without their female members, to decide issues. Additionally, women were appointed because they were considered “safe.” They therefore, would lack a constituency and be beholden to the man who appointed them. In the 1920s, women had little choice in candidate selection, patronage or access to political deals.¹⁰⁴

Detroit clubwomen were aware that city policy was often made outside the usual public channels. Marjory Miller Whittemore reported that while clubwomen regularly

¹⁰² “New Voters - Should Not Be Deceived By the Methods of the Republicans,” Michigan Citizen 3 (December 13, 1919): 3.

¹⁰³ Cecille Pratt, “The Michigan Woman in Politics,” Michigan Citizen 1, (December 13, 1919): 7.

¹⁰⁴ Freeman, A Room at a Time, p.7, 109, 110, 119.

attended City Council meetings, important decisions were made in committees. She said, "If our visits to City Council have done nothing else, they have proved conclusively that all work of any importance is done in Committee." The Legislative Department believed that they must therefore have access to the committees. This was difficult because committee meetings were often called without advance warning. Still, Whittemore insisted their civic effectiveness would only be enhanced if they penetrated the political committees.¹⁰⁵

After only a few years of suffrage, in 1924, the Michigan Citizen made the message perfectly clear - men had been in charge of the party for so long they were naturally "more conversant" with the operations. This bears out the research of Flanagan who explained that in Chicago, the political institutions had certain male dominated structures that were well established before the enfranchisement of women.¹⁰⁶ Partisan politics involved great patronage that men did not want to share with women.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, women would be a small minority at conventions for many years to come. Granted, some women earned the right to act as delegates and women would continue to co-operate in campaign activities.¹⁰⁸ But, the message was clear: party work for women was to organize and publicize; policy making in the Democratic party in Michigan would rest primarily with the men.

¹⁰⁵ "Report of the Legislative Department" (no date, probably June, 1917 and October 1917), Vol 10 Minutes 1917-1918, p.841, 883, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁰⁶ Flanagan, "Predicament," p.305-330.

¹⁰⁷ Kristi Andersen, After Suffrage, p. 114.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Holland Kinkaid, "Democrats Give Women Full Share in Party," Michigan Citizen 5 (February 2, 1924): 4.



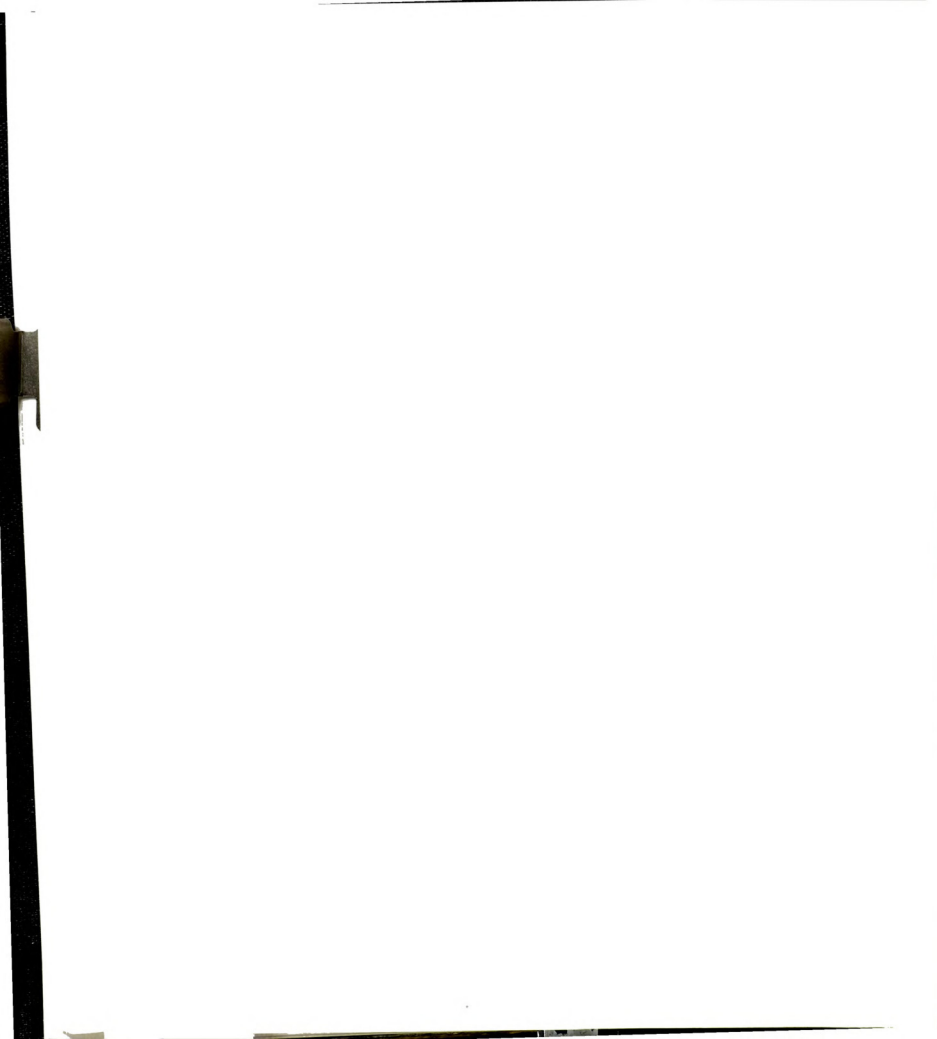
Even when public office touched the home, the public hesitated to accept women in elected positions. In 1919, the Republican candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Fred L. Keeler, died after the filing time for candidacy. That situation left only one living candidate, the Democratic nominee, Dr. Mary L. Hinsdale. Hinsdale's name was wrongly printed on some ballots leading to some confusion and Thomas E. Johnson ran in the election although the ballots had already been printed. His name was put on adhesive labels for the ballots. Johnson received 280,000 more votes and was elected.¹⁰⁹ The Michigan Citizen called this a "monstrous violation" of political rights and unsuccessfully ran Hinsdale in 1921 for the same position. Also at that time, the Democrats unsuccessfully ran Nellie Sawyer Clark for the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan. The Michigan Citizen reported that Clark was opposed for this election by her brother.¹¹⁰

Both Hinsdale and Clark had extensive women's clubs affiliations. Clark had been the President of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association between 1913-1918. She edited their publication, Michigan Suffragist, for four years. In 1917 she was appointed by Governor Sleeper to the Woman's War Preparedness Committee.¹¹¹ Dr. Hinsdale was a member of the Daughters of American Revolution (D.A.R.) She was forceful in rallying teachers to prevent the repeal, by business interests, of the Teacher's Pension Act. This act had been widely supported by the Michigan Federation of Women's Clubs. By directing an alliance of MFWC, the Michigan DAR and the Michigan Association of Collegiate Alumnae, Hinsdale was influential in helping pass an Act Establishing the

¹⁰⁹ Detroit News (April 28, 1919).

¹¹⁰ Michigan Citizen 2 (March 19, 1921): 2.

¹¹¹ Michigan Citizen 2 (March 19, 1921): 2.



Commission School Board. In spite of these affiliations and endorsements by women's clubs, both Clark and Hinsdale were defeated in the general election of 1921.

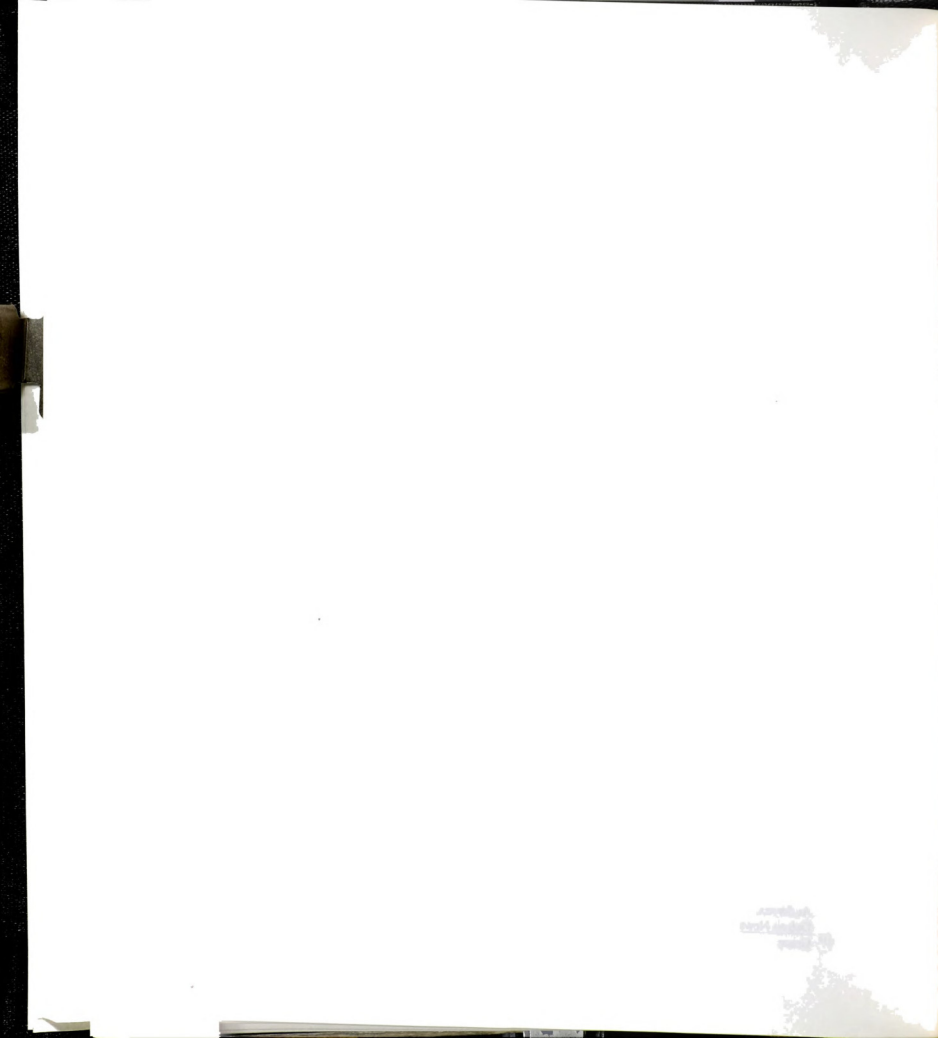
Throughout the 1920s, the debate continued for women between partisanship and non-partisanship. They generally denounced the old time party follower who put the party before the civic good. Andersen noted that lingering anti-party sentiment from the Progressive Era meant that when women did join, they exhibited an independent streak.¹¹² Some women were convinced, as Julia Haller, that a political party was the best vehicle to accomplish their civic agenda. Many other Detroit women, however, continued to urge caution before jumping into party politics. Edith Alvord, Chairman of the Citizenship Committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) felt that political parties were established facts in political life and should be chosen after they had been carefully studied. Alvord displayed her apprehension when she said that the parties had been controlled by a minority who might be undesirable so she pleaded with clubwomen to use their leisure time to scrutinize political questions.¹¹³ Grace Stephens Jobe echoed the idea about women purifying politics when she claimed that politics was not a dirty business but rather a modern imperative. She said "Clean politics is a high calling to the womanhood of America for it means interest in our U.S. Government."¹¹⁴

Since the political parties were cautious about nominating women for political office, female candidacy was rare and mostly unsuccessful. In 1919, the DFWC secured the nomination and endorsed the candidacy of Lucia Grimes and Cora A. Maybee for school inspectors. Laura Osborn, already a member of the school board, urged women to

¹¹² Andersen, "Citizenship," p.183, 186, 187.

¹¹³ Detroit News (February 17, 1924).

¹¹⁴ Grace Stephens Jobe, "A Message to Women," Michigan Citizen 4 (February 17, 1923): 7.



support other women, adding that her ideas were continually met by hostility from the male board members.¹¹⁵ Osborn championed some controversial policies like the single-salary schedule for teachers. She also believed that the best equipped school buildings should be located in the poorest sections of the city. Her reasoning was that the wealthier children have warm homes and meals whereas the poorer children do not.¹¹⁶

Maybee and Grimes came in third and fourth, respectively, in the primary. The top four vote getters were on the election ballot. The Detroit News reported the election as “Women Vs. Men in School Issue.” Both men, Edward D. Divine and Andrew P. Biddle had been incumbents on the School Board. Although the DFWC worked for the election of Maybee and Grimes, the female candidates received far fewer votes than their male counterparts, and as only two positions were open, neither Maybee nor Grimes were successful in the general election.¹¹⁷ Osborn was already serving on the school board, but when Grimes and Maybee were defeated, the Detroit News reported the defeat in gendered terms. They wrote that the “campaign of woman vs. man for the two school board places ended in victory for man.”¹¹⁸ The Detroit News was reporting the election involving women like a zero-sum game.¹¹⁹

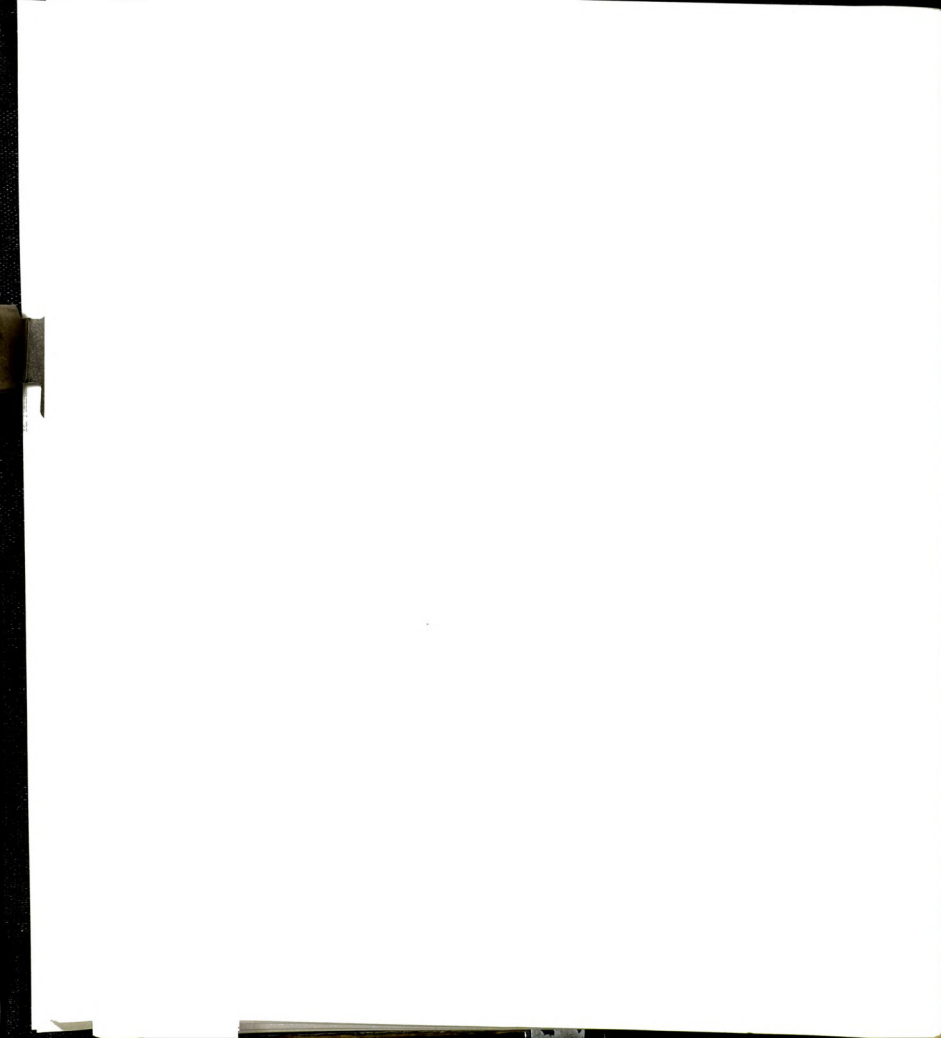
¹¹⁵ Detroit News (March 29, 1919).

¹¹⁶ pamphlet “Laura Freele Osborn,” Box 20, Biography Folder, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Laura Osborn Papers, BHC.

¹¹⁷ Detroit News (March 6, and 29, 1919), “Report of the Legislative Department” Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹¹⁸ Detroit News (April 18, 1919).

¹¹⁹ At the state level, however, Michigan elected the only female member to a State Agricultural Board in April, 1919 - Mrs. Dora Stockman. Mrs. Stockman was a farm woman living about a mile northwest of Lansing. She was also the first woman elected to a state office in Michigan. She believed her success lay in the fact that women were the prime consumers in the family. They spent ninety cents of every dollar making the connection between home and public policy. Mrs. Stockman said women were, “practically, therefore politically, interested in health, education and wages.” Her academic training was in nutrition and home economics and she went on to say that women’s interest in wages was not simply an urban problem. She hoped to educate city women so they would pay a price for food which allowed her farm counterpart to have the same standard of living. She believed that the overarching agenda for Michigan



Since many women believed that women had a special contribution to make to politics, they continued to support other female candidates. In 1920, the clubwomen supported Republican Edith Watkins Dunk for Congress. Dunk had been active in the Political and Civic League, DFWC and Detroit Housewives League (for the protection of food). She was appalled that the Federal Government spent only 1% of the national budget on women's issues like health, education and the labor of women and children, libraries etc. In spite of her endorsement from women's clubs, she too was defeated. Dunk explained that the cost of a congressional campaign ranged from five to fifty thousand dollars.¹²⁰

After only a few years of suffrage, some Detroit women were dissatisfied with the response of male politicians to their needs. Jennie Patton Beattie of the Detroit Women's Citizen League insisted that women had to seek and attain office and "play politics from the inside and not send men back to the legislature who treat women like yellow dogs. The women voters are the last thing the legislators at Lansing consider."¹²¹ In 1922, in an effort to discern why female candidates failed in elections, the DLWV solicited advice from every group of organized women in Detroit. The League survey wanted to know if clubwomen would support female candidates and if so, for what position and with what qualifications. Since most women running for office in Detroit had met defeat despite women's suffrage, the League was actually urging women to vote for women.¹²² By mid-

women was to provide a healthy, economical diet for their homes. Additionally, since women spent a large percentage of male earned income, they needed to be politically involved with issues that ultimately affected the home. Detroit News (May 18, 1919).

¹²⁰ Edith Watkins Dunk, "Why a Woman Should Be Sent to Congress," The Club Woman 12 (August, 1920): 158-164.

¹²¹ Mrs. Robert Beattie, "The Women Are Shabbily Treated by the One Party Legislature Leaders Declare," Michigan Citizen 2 (May 7, 1921): 3.

¹²² Detroit News (February 22, 1922).



decade, however, the situation had changed little in Detroit. In the October 1925 primary for City Council, none of the four female candidates made the top eighteen positions (Ida Peppers received 10,635 votes, Harriet R. McGraw received 8,374 votes and Catherine Tattan received 3,648 votes) and therefore were not on the general election ballot.¹²³ The failure of Detroit women in elective office can, in some part, be attributed to the nature of their political experience. As Andersen has noted that the central goal of the suffrage movement was the franchise and not office holding.¹²⁴ Thus, with the franchise, women did not necessarily try to get women elected to office, but often concentrated on issues of access with women appointed to prominent positions.¹²⁵

The issue of women's candidacy for both elective and appointed municipal offices remained a problem for Detroit women throughout the 1920s. Even clubwomen who saw the merits of women in office, seemed to be cautious about placing them there. The DFWC's Legislative Department urged clubwomen to work for "the placing of the best men in charge of city affairs."¹²⁶ At their Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting, MFWC members were urged to support women on boards of institutions governing women, but Mrs. Burritt Hamilton, President of MFWC, urged women to go slowly in seeking office because she was worried that as officeholders women might not be qualified. The Michigan Citizen published a denouncement of the National Woman's Party's request that a woman be included at the Washington Naval Conference. U.S. Representative Alice Robertson of Oklahoma claimed that there was no qualified woman who had either

¹²³ Detroit News (October 7, 1925).

¹²⁴ Andersen, After Suffrage, p.111.

¹²⁵ Ware, Dewson, xii.

¹²⁶ "Legislative Department" Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Directory 1919-1920 p.19.



diplomatic or international experience. She wrote that conference participants must know foreign languages and the conditions in foreign countries and that the conferees must listen much and talk very little. Representative Robertson claimed that there simply was no woman with those qualifications.¹²⁷

Corrine Roosevelt Robinson, sister of Theodore Roosevelt, was one of those who believed women should not hold public office. She spoke to the Northwestern Women's Club in Detroit in 1924. Her topic was "The Place of Women in Politics." She explained that citizenship was different for men and women raising the old qualification for citizenship, military service, to make her point. She claimed that women in politics should be like a woman's place in time of war - always ready, but behind the lines. If a woman took her place in the front lines, Robinson argued, she would then be neglecting the support role. Lastly, she doubted that a woman would have enough physical endurance. All the time spent on political campaigns would mean time taken away from her home duties. Robinson concluded that a woman's place was as a voter. She should be knowledgeable, active, alert and open-minded and wise to the campaign tricks of the unworthy candidates. In summary, Robinson answered the question, "Has the woman a place in politics?" with a resounding, "Yes, at the polls, not in office."¹²⁸ In many states, women still had to overcome legal and cultural barriers for public office; some states even denied that suffrage also granted the right to hold office. Male intransigence continued. A disgruntled male voter from Illinois wrote congressional candidate Ruth Hanna

¹²⁷ Alice Robertson, "What No One U.S. Woman Has," Michigan Citizen 2 (September 17, 1921): 8.

¹²⁸ Detroit News (November 2, 1924).



McCormick “I would not think of voting for a woman for Congressman-at-Large any more than to vote for one of my cows for such a responsible office.” ¹²⁹

Appointed Office

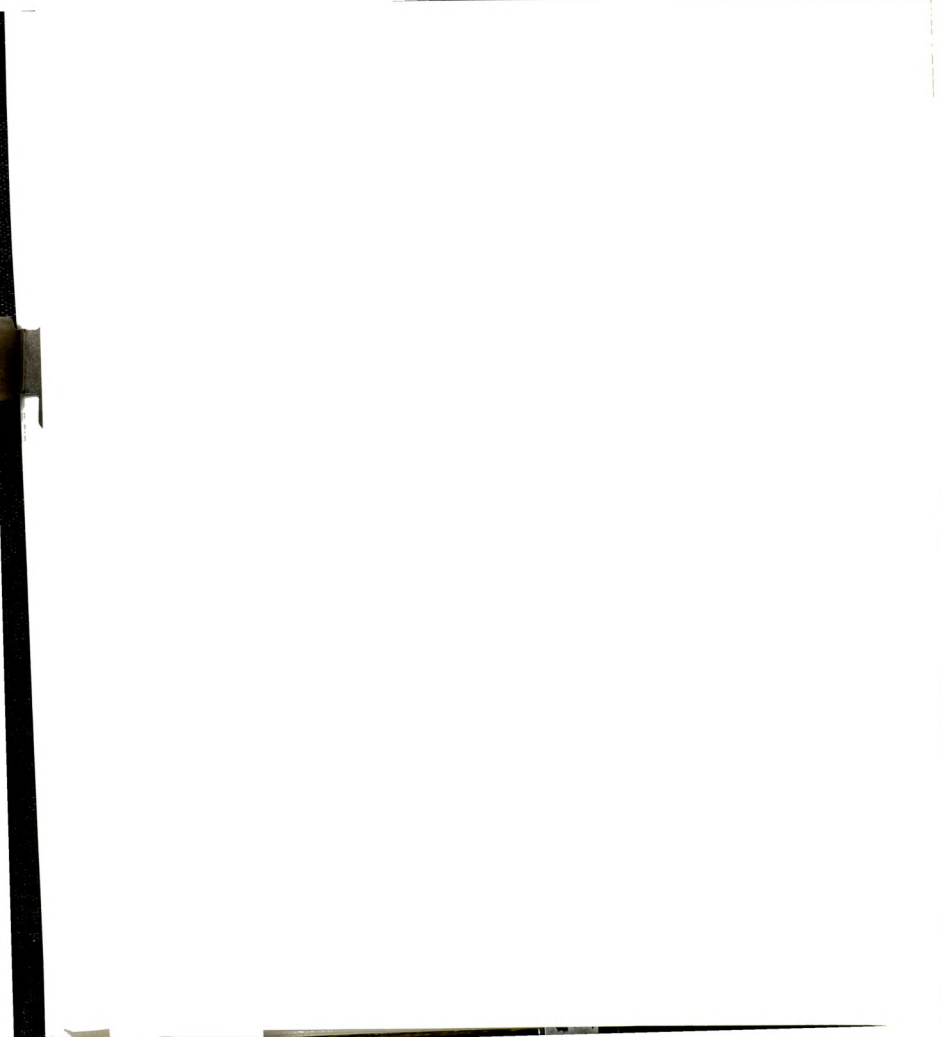
While elected office usually proved elusive, clubwomen continued to serve their community in appointed and in a few cases, elected offices. Minnie Stott Jeffries was requested to preside over the Wayne County Board of Supervisors when William P. Bradley, Chairman, retired in 1921. The Board of Supervisors was the legislative branch of the Wayne County Government. The 1918 City Charter replaced the Board of Poor Commissioners with a Public Welfare Commission which included four unpaid commissioners, appointed by the mayor for four-year terms. Jeffries was appointed to the Public Welfare Commission where she served for eleven years. ¹³⁰ The following spring, The Detroit Citizen wrote about Jeffries in an article entitled, “A Life Rich With Service to Humankind.” It reported that she was the only woman on the Public Welfare Committee and was re-appointed for another term. She was President of the County Supervisors of the Poor and was elected for two years in succession. The article concluded that Jeffries tireless work had been very helpful to the destitute. ¹³¹

The DWFC was so well known for producing well-versed, civic-minded women that their members were sought out for positions on municipal boards. In 1921, the Consultant and Secretary of the Detroit City Planning Commission, T. Glenn Phillips was searching for members for a new Zoning Board. The Common Council had asked the City Planning Commission to draft a Zoning Ordinance and to appoint a committee on zoning.

¹²⁹ Letter quoted in Andersen, After Suffrage, p.124-125.

¹³⁰ The Club Woman 14 (September, 1921): 128.

¹³¹ Detroit Citizen 2, (March/April, 1922): 11.



Phillips requested the DFWC to forward the names and addresses of potential women board members. The DFWC replied with the names of Lila Pigott (Mrs. G. Leon)Haywood and Clara Downey.¹³² The Annual Report for the City of Detroit failed to note a specific Zoning Board for the next few years. Zoning issues were decided instead by the entire City Planning Commission which had no female members.¹³³

In 1922, the DFWC following its policy of advocating women on institutional boards wherever possible, requested that Mayor Couzens replace the position vacated by Dr. Mary L. Stevens on the House of Corrections Board with another woman. The DFWC “further suggested that she be a woman free of all political affiliations.”¹³⁴ While Mayor Couzens agreed to consider a woman, he claimed ignorance to what “free from political affiliation” meant. He believed partisan politics belonged to the past in Detroit.¹³⁵ More importantly, the DFWC indicated that part of their preference for women came from the hope to escape the snarls of partisan politics.

In addition to the appointment of clubwomen on institutional boards, several thousand women held other municipal positions in the early 1920s. The Detroit News reported that about three thousand women supervised a variety of municipal activities and had a hand in all branches of city government. Virginia Mae Murray was the director of the Women’s Division of the Police Department and Frances Knight was the Chief of the

¹³² Letter from T. Glenn Phillips, Consultant and Secretary, City of Detroit Office of City Plan Commission of Detroit to DFWC, (June 17, 1921) Vol 67 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹³³ Annual Report - City of Detroit 1922 (no publisher, no date), p. 219, and Annual Report - City of Detroit 1923 (no publisher, no date), p. 207.

¹³⁴ Letter to Hon. James Couzens, Mayor, from Mrs. Charles Novak (February 1, 1922). Vol 67 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹³⁵ Letter to Mrs. Charles Novack from Mayor Couzens (February 8, 1922) Vol. 67 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



Women's Division of the Probation Department. Mary McGill was the head of the complaint department of the municipal courts building and Mary Breen was in charge of the Women's Detention Home. Numerous other women worked in City Hall as clerks, stenographers, and telephone operators.¹³⁶

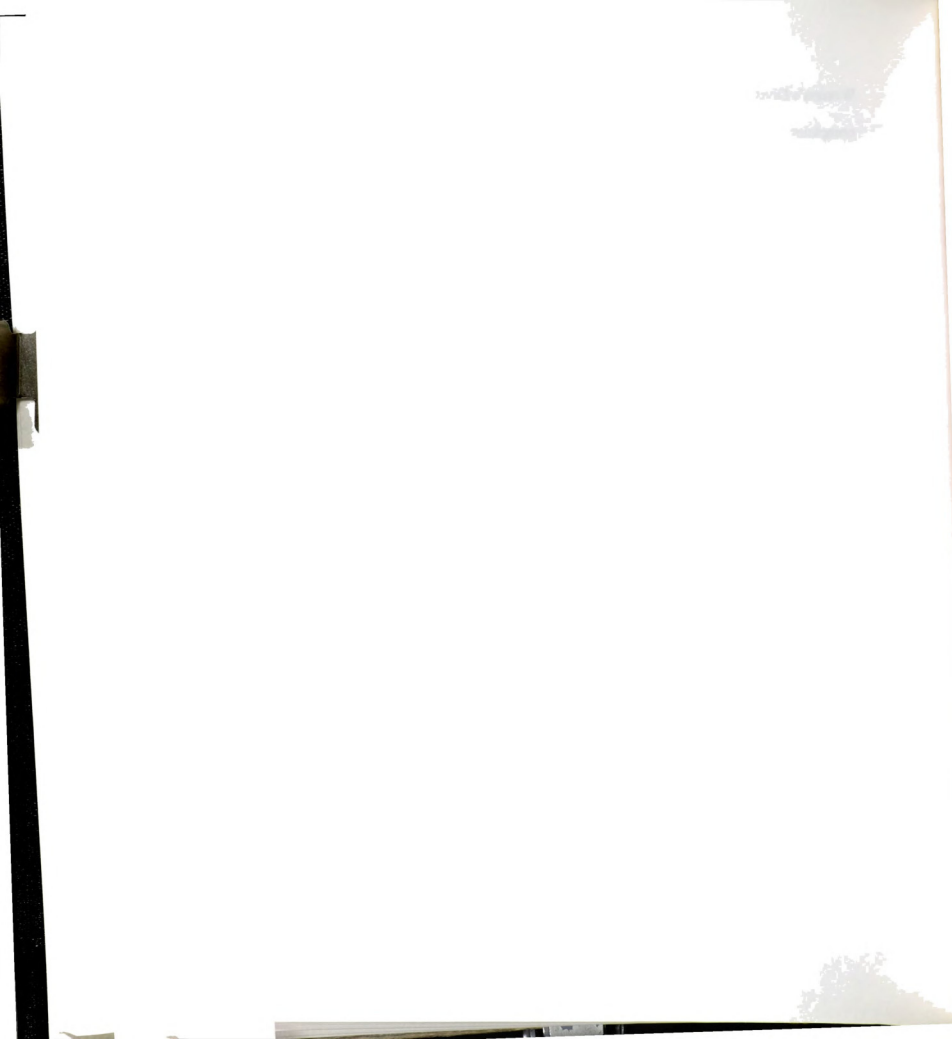
Detroit women were hindered in politics also because the public was extremely uneasy about women in public office feeling that a woman's place was quite literally in the home. In Detroit during the 1920 Presidential election, the 250 women employed as registration clerks, were asked who was taking care of the house in their absence. They constantly had to refute accusations that husbands were left at home to care for their children and make the dinner.¹³⁷ Traditional ideas about the home made the public uncomfortable with the visibility of women in public roles. Detroit women also had to counter stereotypes about what kind of politics was right for them. Some men believed that women had a special talent for social welfare work. When that work intersected with the political realm, as it increasingly did, women's input was more acceptable. Helen Russell, President of the MFWC said "When men cease to regard us as tepid philanthropists and receive us a fellow workers, we can sooner accomplish our aims and society will benefit."¹³⁸

Clubwomen faced a dilemma. As American women emphasized the home to justify and protect their political activism, the concomitantly perpetuated traditional gendered roles. Judith McArthur had described a strong connection between the home and

¹³⁶ Ruda Stephens Baker, "Three Thousand Women Work for the City of Detroit," Detroit News (January 1, 1922).

¹³⁷ Detroit News (November 20, 1920).

¹³⁸ Detroit News (October 2, 1923).



the civic activities of Texas clubwomen. She argued that clubwomen believed “the science of motherhood” led to social activism. Texas clubwomen tried to extend the cleanliness and comfort of their homes into the public space. This led to campaigns for playgrounds and building inspectors.¹³⁹ Emphasizing the home potentially limited women’s political activism in male and female eyes. Edith Alvord confronted this dilemma by declaring that if voting interfered with jelly-making, let the jelly go. She continued saying that the home should be the “cradle of citizenship.” In this way, a wife and mother should always behave like a good citizen. Mothers should impress on their children their dependence on society and their obligation as citizens. Alvord emphasized the interdependence of modern society by saying women as citizens should make the world a “fit place for the education of their children.”¹⁴⁰

How Detroit women sometimes depicted themselves contributed to charges that they were too silly or self-centered for serious politics. Janie Porter Barrett’s Report of the National Executive Board Meeting for the National Association of Colored Women described the appearance of the members. “They were well-dressed, stylish, conservative, well-groomed and well shod.”¹⁴¹ African-American women were in a bind: respectability was important, but men could then use it against them.¹⁴² Ida Peppers, President of the

¹³⁹ Baker, “Domestication,” Judith N. McArthur, Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918 (Urbana and Chicago, 1998), p.55-56, Sonya Michel, “The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era,” Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., Mothers of a New World (New York, 1993), p.277-320.

¹⁴⁰ Detroit News (November 30, 1923).

¹⁴¹ Janie Porter Barrett, “National Executive Board Meeting, May 2, 1925,” The National Notes 27 (June, 1925): 1.

¹⁴² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge, 1993), Victoria Widgeon Wolcott, “Remaking Respectability: African-American Women and the Politics of Identity in Interwar Detroit,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995).



Detroit LWV, attended the first Pan American Conference of Women in 1922. Her convention report was full of descriptions of what people wore and how charming they were. Peppers said it was a woman's duty to society to always look her best. She mentioned that women were interested in social service, disarmament, and getting at the root of problems. But, the bulk of her report was devoted to the dignitaries and their hospitality.¹⁴³ Since this article was on the clubwoman page of the Detroit News, it may have been skewed to what the editor thought clubwomen wanted to read. Majorie Elaine Porter, Club Editor for the Detroit News, noted that it was difficult to discern what women wanted to read even in the DFWC magazine The Club Woman. She believed articles should always be included at the discretion of the editor.¹⁴⁴ Most of the club news was reported on the Home Pages of the newspaper. It was possible that the editor's selection catered to what he/she thought was of most interest to the reader. This raises the problem that women had in controlling their press. While their own magazines such as the Club Woman, Michigan Woman, The Magazine of the Woman's City Club etc., were directed primarily at women, Detroit's largest newspaper, the Detroit News, was owned by Scripps who usually tucked clubwomen's news on the Clubwoman's pages. Consequently, Detroit women had only a limited access to getting their message out to all of Detroit's residents and certainly could not control what the daily newspapers chose to report about their political activities. In 1924, the Detroit News ran a front page story about two women, who had been friends for years but the mayoralty election caused a brawl between them. The article explained what close friends the women were and how

¹⁴³ Detroit News (March 7, 1922).

¹⁴⁴ Majorie Elaine Porter, "What Do Women Want in the Club Magazine?" Detroit News (December 26, 1926).



they had a peaceful difference of opinion regarding the upcoming election for mayor of Detroit. Then “as men understand it” the argument descended into a fist fight. The brawl attracted about fifty spectators and eventually the police were called in. The article never chastised the women for their behavior but it did state that at one time, people believed that women would raise the moral tone of politics. By the end of the piece, it was apparent that the author believed that women had failed to elevate the tone of politics and in fact, had descended to the worst forms of male behavior.¹⁴⁵

Despite all the external obstacles and their own limitations, Detroit’s women’s groups were intent on having women’s political voices heard. They established “Get Out The Vote Campaigns.” In 1920, the DFWC joined with the LWV, Woman’s Republican Club, Women’s Democratic Club, WCTU, Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) and Eastern Star to get women out to vote in the election. As part of this campaign, the women conducted a house-to-house canvas of wards and voting districts.

¹⁴⁶ Still, only 54.7 percent of all the total eligible voting population of Wayne County voted in the 1920 election. The LWV took voting seriously and labeled those who did not “traitors.” They added that there were several ways to betray one’s country in war time but only one in peace time - failure to vote.¹⁴⁷ The Chicago Tribune claimed “Indifferent voters are more dangerous than communists or kings. They are passive resistance to government.”¹⁴⁸ The LWV feared a low-voter turnout meant the “rule of the indifferent many, by the selfish few” and added that every women should help to get out the vote.

¹⁴⁵ Detroit News (October 4, 1924).

¹⁴⁶ “The Drive to Register Women,” The Club Women 13 (October, 1920).

¹⁴⁷ “Non-Voters are Traitors Says Clubwomen” Michigan Citizen 3 (September 23, 1922): 5.

¹⁴⁸ Michael McGerr, The Decline of Popular Politics - The American North, 1865-1928 (New York, 1986), p. 191.



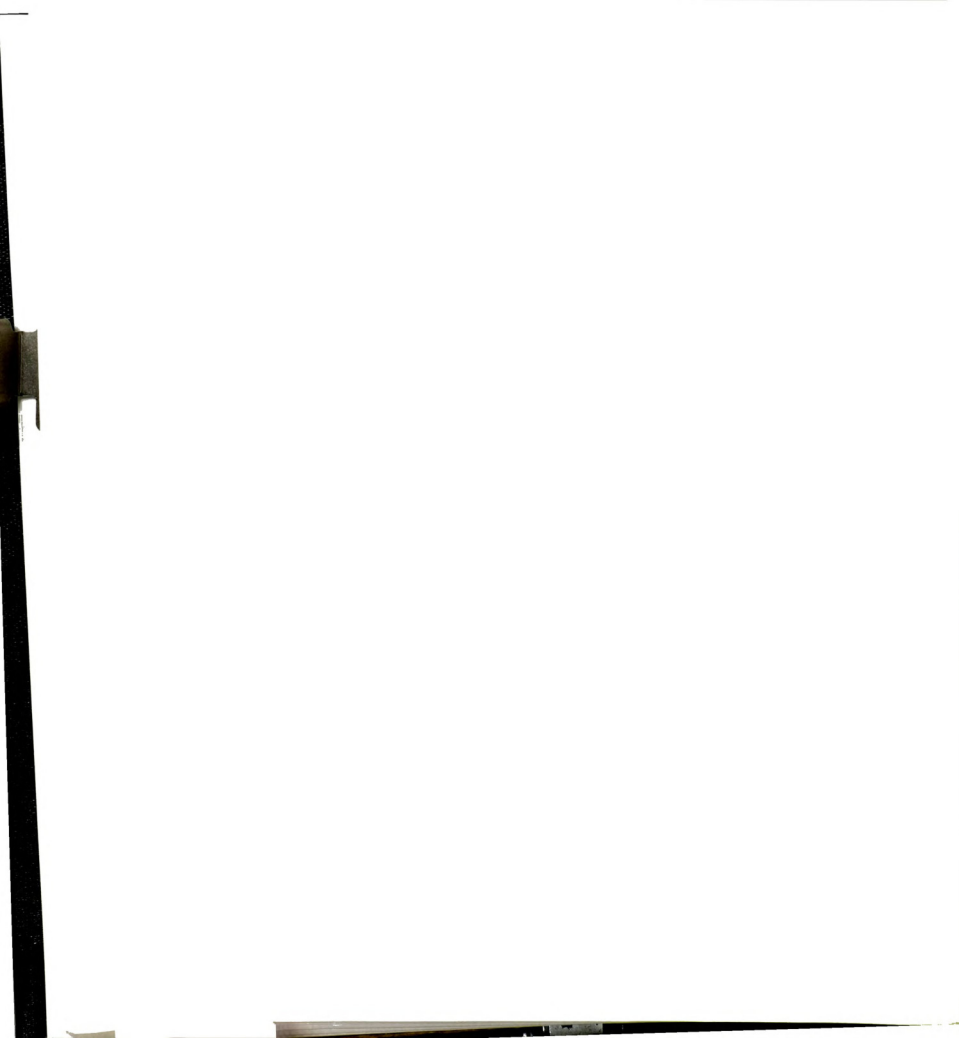
They understood that women exercising their franchise was a powerful political weapon.¹⁴⁹

Detroit clubwomen also sponsored Candidates' Day in order to see that women's issues were addressed. These meetings were for voter education and were usually opened to all club members. Candidates were allotted only a specific amount of time (usually five to ten minutes) to state their qualifications. The Wayne County LWV, Northwestern Women's Club, Women's Citizen League and DFWC held these Candidates Days throughout the 1920s, sometimes co-sponsored with the Detroit Citizens League. While these meetings were well attended by the women, they were not always taken seriously by the candidates. In August 1920, at a meeting before the municipal primaries, candidates came before women who were interested in good government, but the candidates spoke little about women's concerns such as mothers' pensions, Equal Guardianship, and the eight hour working day. It was left to politically minded Detroit women to see that these issues were addressed.¹⁵⁰ Throughout the country and in Detroit, clubwomen forced the airing and attention to issues of concern to them and other women. Freeman noted that this attention to issues signaled a shift in campaign appeals from an emotional to a factual one. She quoted Louis Howe as saying that men accept leaders' statements whereas women required an argument. When candidates spoke, women demanded a question period afterwards.¹⁵¹ The importance of these meetings to the candidates themselves varied. Nonetheless, in 1923 for example, candidates spoke to Wayne County Woman's Republican Club, the Woman's Citizen League, the Progressive Civic League, and the

¹⁴⁹ "Non-Voters Are Traitors," Michigan Citizen 3 (September 23, 1922): 5.

¹⁵⁰ "A Woman's Viewpoint," The Club Woman 13 (September, 1920): 46.

¹⁵¹ Freeman, A Room at a Time, p.235.



LWV and The Detroit News claimed that candidates were eager to capture the female vote.¹⁵²

Detroit clubwomen wanted to strengthen their new position as enfranchised voters and therefore cooperated with male organizations. Elisabeth Perry noted that women became skilled at political influence through a variety of organizations, using their women's organizations simultaneously with men's organizations to enhance their political effectiveness.¹⁵³ Women were wary, though, about how men's groups might receive them. Mildred Lane Simpson asserted that women would not be dictated to in previously male dominated organizations. In a letter to the Executive Secretary of the Detroit Citizens League, Pliny Marsh, Simpson insisted that a woman must be included on the Executive Board. Otherwise, Simpson claimed that women would shun men's organizations; they might pursue similar aims but arrive at them independently of men's organizations. As there was already a movement to bring Detroit women whose husbands supported the Detroit Citizens League values together to discuss civic matters, Simpson ended by saying since women were enfranchised they would lose confidence in the Detroit Citizens League if membership and council seats were not offered to them.¹⁵⁴ Marsh replied that the by-laws would be amended appropriately to increase the size of the Executive Board so women could take new places. He added that every effort was made

¹⁵² Detroit News (March 4, 1923).

¹⁵³ Perry, "Women's Political Choices," p.421.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Mrs. Mildred Lane Simpson to Pliny Marsh, (March 23, 1919), Box 2, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Detroit Citizens League Additional Papers, BHC.



to give "public evidence" that the Citizens League advocated cooperation between men and women in civic matters.¹⁵⁵

And there is evidence of cooperation between the Detroit Citizens League and women's clubs. The Detroit Citizens League handled publicity for the voting registration of women in 1920.¹⁵⁶ On several occasions, during the 1920s, the Detroit Citizens League sponsored a Candidates Day with the LWV. These Candidates Days were considered a great successes. In 1924, the Citizens League claimed they had never had such a large attendance as when they sponsored Candidates Day with the LWV.¹⁵⁷

Male organizations were cooperative, but cautious, about their association with women. Members of the Detroit Citizens League often spoke to women's clubs especially the DFWC. The Detroit Citizens League worked with many women's groups like the LWV, WCTU, YWCA, Eastern Star, Women's Republican and Democratic Clubs, in an effort to register clubwomen.¹⁵⁸ But when the Woman's First Campaign League wanted to maintain their political work under the name Women Citizen's League, the Detroit Citizens League objected. Pliny J. Marsh, attorney for the Detroit Citizens League, argued that Women Citizen's League would be associated in people's minds with the Detroit Citizens. Marsh claimed that since the Detroit Citizens League had that title for many years, the women should be the ones to change.¹⁵⁹ The Board of the Women Citizen's League considered Marsh's request and refused when Marsh then suggested the women

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Pliny Marsh to Mrs. Mildred Lane Simpson, (May 26, 1919), Box 2, MS Detroit Citizens League Additional Papers.

¹⁵⁶ "Drive to Register Women," The Club Woman 13 (October, 1920): 17.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from William P. Lovett to Executive Board of Detroit Citizens League, (September 9, 1924), Box 3, MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers.

¹⁵⁸ "The Drive to Register Women," p.16-17.

¹⁵⁹ Detroit News (May 14, 1919).



adopt the name, “Good Government League.” The women directors knew that an earlier organization by that name had some unfavorable publicity and they “smiled at the proposal.” The women held that there was a significant difference between Detroit Citizens and Women Citizen’s to prevent misunderstanding. The organization was therefore incorporated under state law as Women Citizen’s League.¹⁶⁰

But, the Woman’s Citizen League realized that if it were to carry on with political work, it needed money and that would entail admitting male members. The club was apprehensive though. They considered limiting their membership to only the husbands of members and refusing them voting privileges. The most serious objections, though, were around the issues of objectivity and agenda. There were fears that politicians might use the League for propaganda or that their agenda of women and children might be compromised. Lastly, Chairwoman Jessie (Mrs. Alexander) MacDonald reminded the members that men never asked women to join their organizations.¹⁶¹ The Progressive (formerly Political) Civic League also admitted men for financial and active support. The leadership of the Progressive Civic League remained in the hands of women.¹⁶²

The result of both women’s past history and men’s lukewarm support for their ideas was that women’s groups persisted in their political work usually without the help of male organizations. The Legislative Council which had been organized to decide what bills women would unite behind, appeared somewhat successful for a time. The September, 1924 Wayne County Educational Bulletin of the Michigan LWV reported that during 1921-1923 fifty percent of the bills the Council favored were passed. In addition,

¹⁶⁰ Detroit News (May 14, 1919).

¹⁶¹ Detroit News (April 24, 1919).

¹⁶² Detroit News (October 9, 1921).



the Council actively opposed the bill for the return of capital punishment in Michigan and it failed.¹⁶³

While there is scant evidence of cross-race cooperation between the women's clubs in Detroit, there was some cooperation. In 1917, the National Association of Colored Women advised members to seek cooperation with white women's clubs. It emphasized that white women were also campaigning for the civic and moral good of the country.¹⁶⁴ Mary McCoy had been a charter member of the Twentieth Century Club. The African-American clubs, the Detroit Study Club and the Entre Nous Clubs were admitted to the Detroit Federation of Women's clubs. When the Detroit Study Club was admitted in 1916, there was some controversy whether the General Federation of Women's Clubs would allow it. African-American clubwomen in Minnesota praised the Detroit Federation for its "noble stand" in opposing the GFWC's segregationist policies. The National Association of Colored Women's Club stated it "does hereby commend the action of this magnanimous body of women engaged as they are in an effort to uplift all (their underline) women without respect to race or color, and to wish them success in this praiseworthy effort to break through the wall of discrimination which the white women of the country have erected between their deliberation and those of their colored sisters." The DFWC replied that the newspaper accounts were wrong and it hadn't been officially rejected by the GFWC. All evidence supports that the DFWC was not rejected and the federation admitted the Entre Nous club in 1922 as well.¹⁶⁵ Dorothy Salem claimed that the GFWC

¹⁶³ "A History of the Michigan State Federation of Women's Clubs, 1895-1953," Pamphlet, (Ann Arbor, 1953), p.97.

¹⁶⁴ "The Awakening of Women," (no author) The National Association Notes 19 (January, 1917): 4.

¹⁶⁵ Letter to DFWC from Mrs. W.T. Francis, Chairman Press Committee of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, (May 5, 1916), Vol 73 Club History, letter from Hester Keyes of Minnesota



had a “subtle evasion clause” but this was not always used at the local level.¹⁶⁶ Meta E. Pelham who was active in the Michigan State Association of Colored Women was also in the DFWC. She served on the building committee when the new clubhouse was built in the early 1920s.¹⁶⁷

Women’s groups, doing civic work, continued to receive praise for their organization and efficiency. Majorie Elaine Porter wrote that the Detroit clubwomen shared “This vision of women united, working with concerted effort toward the same goal of betterment of self, home, community, nation and the world, promises advancement and accomplishment.”¹⁶⁸ Within this unity of vision, the clubwomen stressed the importance of learning a woman’s rightful place in the new scheme of things as well as a higher sense of patriotism. While the article continued with the specific programs of a variety of women’s clubs, they had the underlying idea that the world, and especially Detroit, was changing rapidly. Women needed to establish their rightful place in intellectual, political, economic, and social matters. Women were equal civic partners and simply had to establish where they would be the most effective for the most good.¹⁶⁹ Lillian Mathews, President of the DFWC, epitomized the attitude of Detroit women when she said that women had always felt a responsibility toward the preservation of the nation but now with

State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs (May 9, 1916) Minutes 1917-1918, Vol 10 MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁶⁶ Dorothy Salem, To Better Our World - Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920 (Brooklyn, 1990), p. 42.

¹⁶⁷ Michigan Colored Women’s Club, Meta E. Pelham (biographical sketch) Box 1, Record Group 60-14, State Archives of Michigan.

¹⁶⁸ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Club Programs Disclose Their Unity of Purpose,” Detroit News (October 5, 1924).

¹⁶⁹ Porter, “Club Programs.”

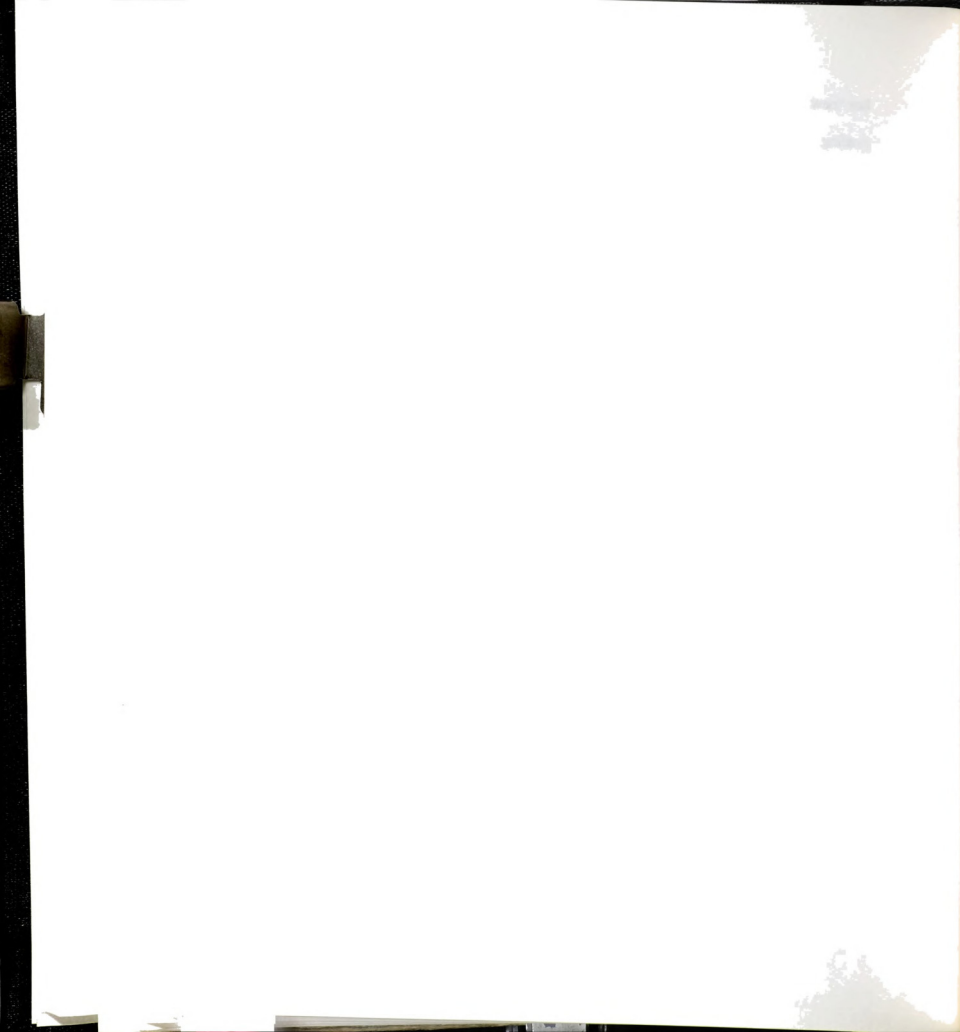


her “new public position and civic duties, she has greater opportunities than ever before in dealing with national progress and security.”¹⁷⁰

Throughout the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen continued their civic work within the political context established in the first few years after full suffrage. Rarely achieving decision-making positions in elected office or the political parties, they continued using many of their effective pre-suffrage strategies. Consequently, they used their clubs as an organizational base from which to educate and influence public policy. As Elizabeth Perry noted, such a strategy “is not always equivalent to power, but neither is it equivalent to powerlessness.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ “Annual Address of President Lillian Mathews” (April 15, 1924) Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 1701, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁷¹ Perry, “Women’s Political Choices,” p.433.



Chapter 4 - Settling In

By the early part of the 1920s, thus, many Detroit clubwomen had established patterns for their enfranchised political activities which would continue for the rest of the decade. While they used their newly acquired voting rights, they did so in combination with other political tools they had developed in their pre-franchise political culture. But, their civic intrusion was continually disparaged by men who claimed to respect them for their civic conscience but denied them leadership positions in party politics or public office. Organized clubwomen settled in across the 1920s to promote a civic agenda and to push at the constraints which hindered their political effectiveness. These clubwomen pursued their political work through the networking and grass-roots methods they had perfected across the previous decades outside of the political party system. Their strategy for political work involved not only the study of issues but the dissemination of information for public education. Using study and education, clubwomen worked to make Detroit politics more accessible to the public through pre-primary conventions and permanent voting registration. Detroit clubwomen had carved out a place for themselves in Detroit politics but throughout the rest of the 1920s, they strove to enlarge their political space.

As noted in the previous chapter, the 1920s saw falling vote totals throughout the country. A variety of explanations have been advanced by historians and political scientists as to why this happened. According to Michael McGerr, voting declined throughout the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century. It stood at only forty-nine percent in the Presidential elections of 1920 and 1924. This trend held for local elections as well with



only forty-two percent turnout in 1922 and 1926. While there were several contemporary explanations for this decline, McGerr attributed it to the transformation of political style from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The partisan political culture of the nineteenth century had simplified politics and provided for the initiation of new members. By the twentieth century, liberal reform, journalism and educational campaigns weakened party bonds and made politics more complex. Additionally, the rise of pressure groups and government by experts added to the decline.¹ Women, thus, entered the voting polity in a transitional period: early attempts to account for falling totals even alarmed women.² Edith Alvord understood women were caught in the general political apathy that affected the whole country in the mid-1920s. Alvord suggested that joining the political parties would create more interest in politics among women, and she criticized women for retaining too much of the non-partisan attitude in their political viewpoint.³

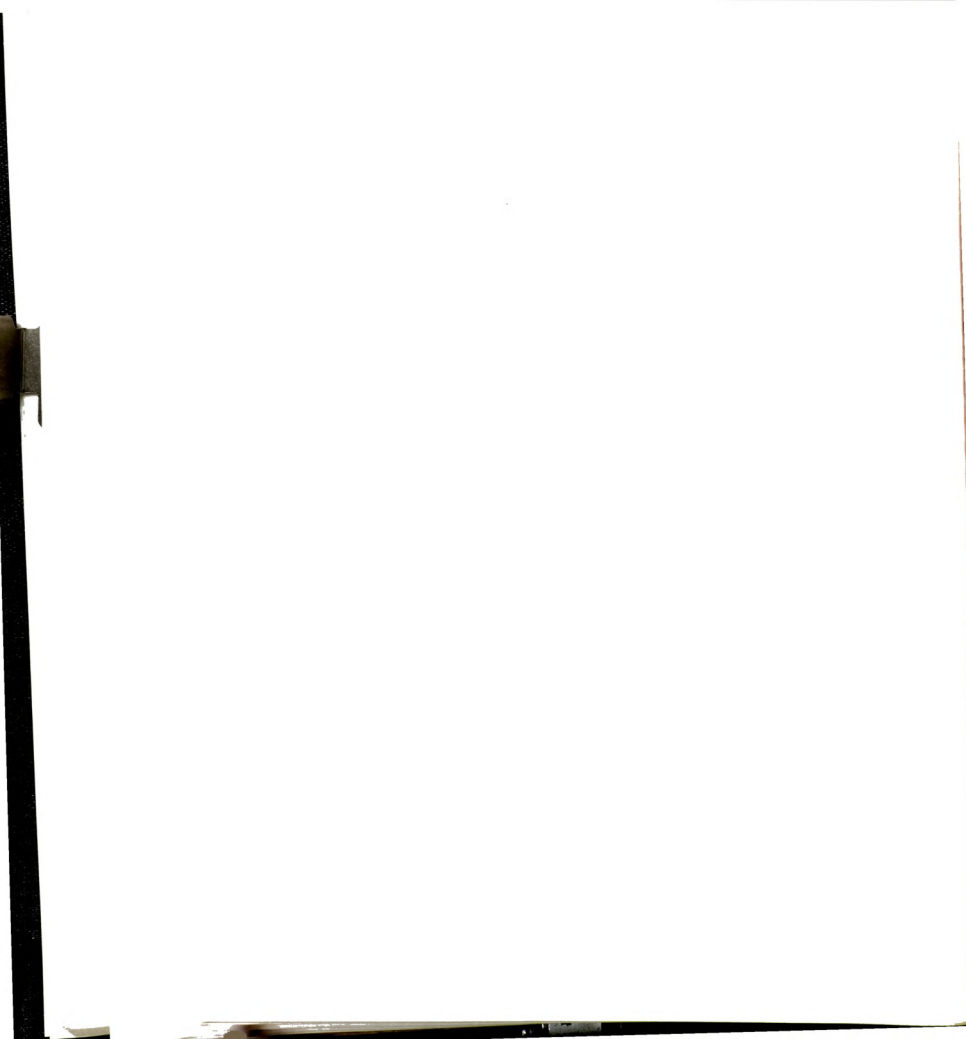
New voters in the twentieth century such as women, the young, immigrants or the poor did not experience the intense partisan socialization undergone by voters in the nineteenth century.⁴ This situation affected new women voters in several ways. Louise E. (Mrs. Harry V.) Woodhouse, of the Wayne County Republican Committee, observed that women were still novices in political affairs and whereas men traditionally joined the party of their fathers, women had no such precedent. Moreover, these women had grown up in an era of entirely male political party culture within which they were not, as yet,

¹ Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics* (New York, 1986), p.184, 205-207. See also Mark Lawrence Kornbluh, *Why America Stopped Voting: The Decline of Participatory Democracy and the Emergence of American Politics* (New York, 2000).

² For an overview of this issue and the historiography see Kristi Andersen, "Women and the Vote in the 1920s: What Happened in Oregon," *Women and Politics* 14 (4): 43-56.

³ *Detroit News* (November 7, 1926).

⁴ McGerr, *Decline of Popular*, p.185, 186, 205-208



comfortable.⁵ As women's political socialization was outside of partisan politics, they retained their ambivalence toward the political parties after suffrage.⁶ But, there were other reasons. In "The Vanishing Voter," Arthur M. Schlesinger and Erik M Eriksson saw political apathy stemming from the lessening of differences between the two parties.⁷ Edith Alvord, for example, criticized the parties for offering lackluster candidates and watered-down platforms.⁸ In addition to blurred party differences, Schlesinger and Eriksson believed "the complexity of modern life" contributed to political apathy. In the nineteenth century, politics had been recreation but the new interests of business and commercial recreation of the twentieth century precluded that.⁹ Dorothea Steffens agreed that government issues were subordinate to personal issues. She also believed that some women did not yet have the political vision to see the connection between government issues and their daily lives. Steffens added that women, like men, responded to election interest. If there was a close fight, more women and men voted.¹⁰ For example, in the hotly contested municipal elections of 1925, women showed an eager interest to practice the franchise. In some wards, the women outnumbered the men in the total vote cast (16th Ward, 4th District). In 1928, reflecting a great Detroit interest in the Presidential election, many districts reported fifty-fifty registration, meaning as many men as women

⁵ Detroit News (November 7, 1926).

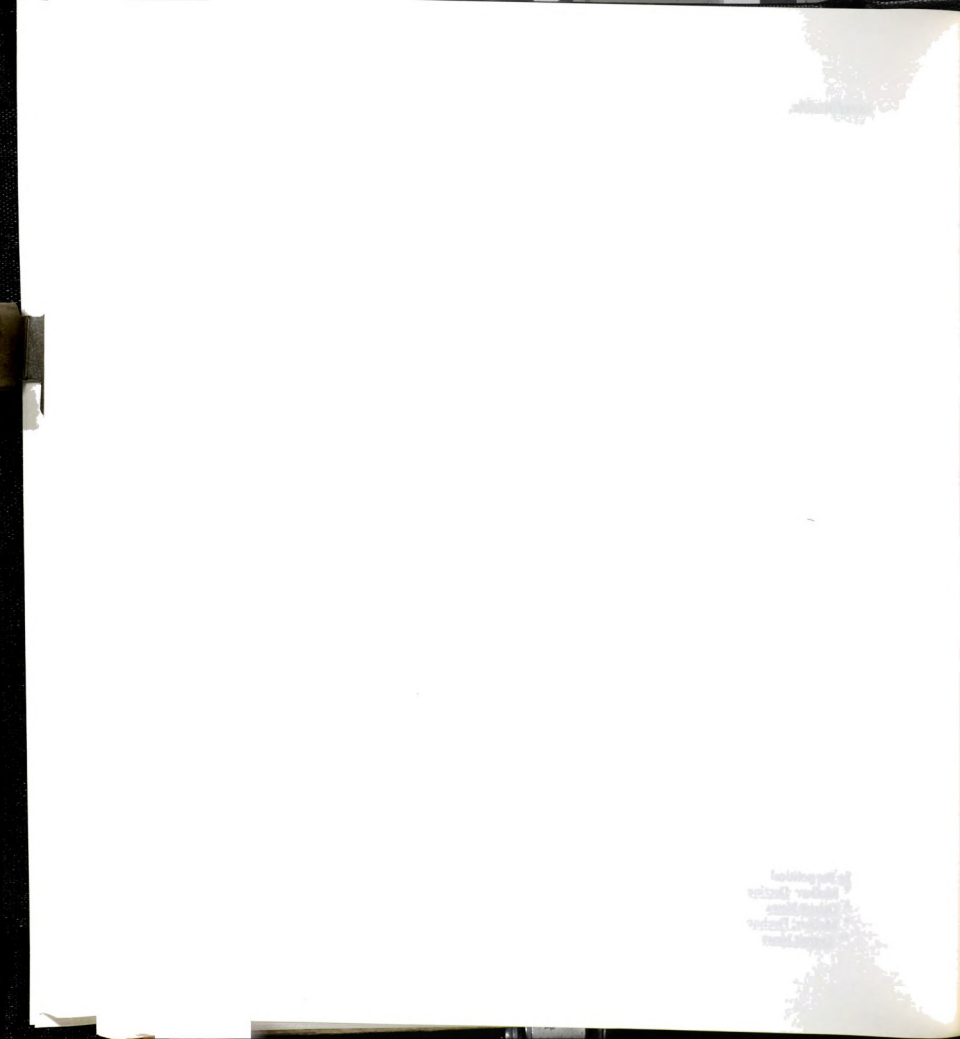
⁶ Using data from Illinois, Kleppner found that being a woman in 1920 reduced the chances of voting by two thirds. Noted in Glenn Firebaugh and Kevin Chen, "Vote Turnout of Nineteenth Amendment Women: The Enduring Effect of Disfranchisement," American Journal of Sociology 100 (January, 1995): 972-996, also "In Oregon as in other states, women were differentially attended to and mobilized by the political parties." in Andersen, "Oregon," p. 52

⁷ McGerr, Decline of Popular, p.188-189.

⁸ Detroit News (November 7, 1926).

⁹ McGerr, Decline of Popular, p.189.

¹⁰ Detroit News (November 7, 1926).



were registered.¹¹ McGerr posited that nationwide voting was up from forty-nine percent in 1924 to fifty-six percent in 1928 because the parties displayed sharper differences in their candidates, Herbert Hoover and Al Smith.¹² Kristi Andersen explained that contemporaries believed women had a greater interest in the 1928 election because social issues such as prohibition, ethnic and religious toleration were more at the forefront. Andersen added that astute writers noted that the entry of immigrant women into the electorate negated the simple assumption that women would vote for a dry Hoover over a wet Smith.¹³

Clubwomen sometimes sent mixed signals about the franchise. According to Gayle Gullett, women often saw their civic roles as an extension of their domestic ones. Their realm was that of “city mothers” where the realm of men was in the franchise.¹⁴ Still, as Andersen noted, the low turnout for female voters did not necessarily mean political apathy but really a reluctance to behave politically the same as men.¹⁵ Pamela Tyler explained that voting was only one facet of political communication. Women expressed themselves politically when they attended rallies or meetings, spoke with influential people and raised money.¹⁶

African-American women felt that voting was especially important for their race. Mary Church Terrell encouraged the members of the National Association of Colored

¹¹ Detroit News (November 13, 1925), Detroit News (August 18, 1928).

¹² McGerr, Decline of Popular, p.204-205.

¹³ Kristi Andersen, “Women and Citizenship in the 1920s” in Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin eds. Women, Politics and Change (New York, 1990), p.193.

¹⁴ Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens - The Emergence and Development of the California Women’s Movement (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), p. 5, 11.

¹⁵ Andersen, “Citizenship,” p.190-192.

¹⁶ Pamela Tyler, Silk Stockings and Ballot Boxes - Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963 (Athens, GA, 1996), p. 3.



Women to vote wisely and seek out women who don't vote to educate them to their duty. Terrell believed the falling voter participation was dangerous to the country. She stressed that it was important for all women to elect the best leaders. "But owing to the conditions which confront us as colored women all over the United States, it means more to us than it does to any of our sisters in the other racial groups."¹⁷ The Detroit Independent echoed a similar thought when they published "Why the Negro Should Register and Vote" by a schoolgirl named Ida Mae Bell. Bell admitted she was young but she opposed the segregation in movie theaters. She claimed this condition could be rectified if people used the power of the ballot. Bell ended by supporting African-American candidate George H. Green for City Council.¹⁸

While many clubwomen were political, others still believed that politics was only for men. Even after the Nineteenth Amendment, there was a cultural persistence of opposition to women's suffrage for both genders. But, according to Andersen, stated that mobilization efforts on the part of the political parties and women's organizations did have an impact on politics.¹⁹ One such effort at political mobilization in Detroit was the "Get Out the Vote Campaigns." Prior to the 1924 presidential election the Wayne County LWV engaged other clubs like the DFWC, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), YWCA, American Legion Auxiliary, the Detroit Board of Education, Detroit Federation of Churches and the Boy Scouts in a general campaign to all help get out the vote. Each organization had a representative on a general committee with Dorothea

¹⁷ Mary Church Terrell, "Report of the National Chairman on Legislation," Convention Minutes 1926 National Association of Colored Women Fifteenth Biennial Session, Oakland, California, August 1-5, 1926, p. 76, 78.

¹⁸ Ida Mae Bell, "Why the Negro Should Register and Vote," Detroit Independent (June 10, 1927).

¹⁹ Andersen, "Citizenship," p.190-192.

Steffens of the Wayne County LWV as chairman. Automobile caravans traveled throughout the city encouraging people to vote. Within the clubs themselves, there was a plan to have all those who voted to stand at the meeting after the election. The drive was to have one hundred percent of all club members standing. The Board of Education instructed children to urge their parents to vote and church bulletins included election calendars. Lastly, five thousand Boy Scouts went door-to-door with campaign literature encouraging the householders to vote.²⁰

McGerr explained that the “Get Out the Vote” campaigns were nation-wide. He claimed they stemmed from a fear that upper and middle class voters were abstaining while radicals were all voting. He noted that working-class organizations were not prominent in the campaign. While McGerr recognized the participation of the League of Women Voters, he emphasized that the thrust of the movement was primarily class driven.²¹ There was no evidence among Detroit clubwomen that they held fears of radicalism. They were civic-minded themselves and encouraged greater participation among Detroit voters. The Detroit News noted that before women were given the franchise, no one had heard of a Get Out the Vote drive.²²

Liette Gidlow researched the Get Out the Vote campaigns and agreed that middle-class women were prominent in the movement, especially in the East and the Midwest. She explained that the LWV was alarmed that the 1920 election did not elicit a massive female turnout and therefore, the League was among the most committed supporters of the Get Out the Vote drive. These drives utilized a variety of techniques including

²⁰ Detroit News (October 19, 1924).

²¹ McGerr, Decline of Popular, p.196.

²² Detroit News (October 19, 1924).

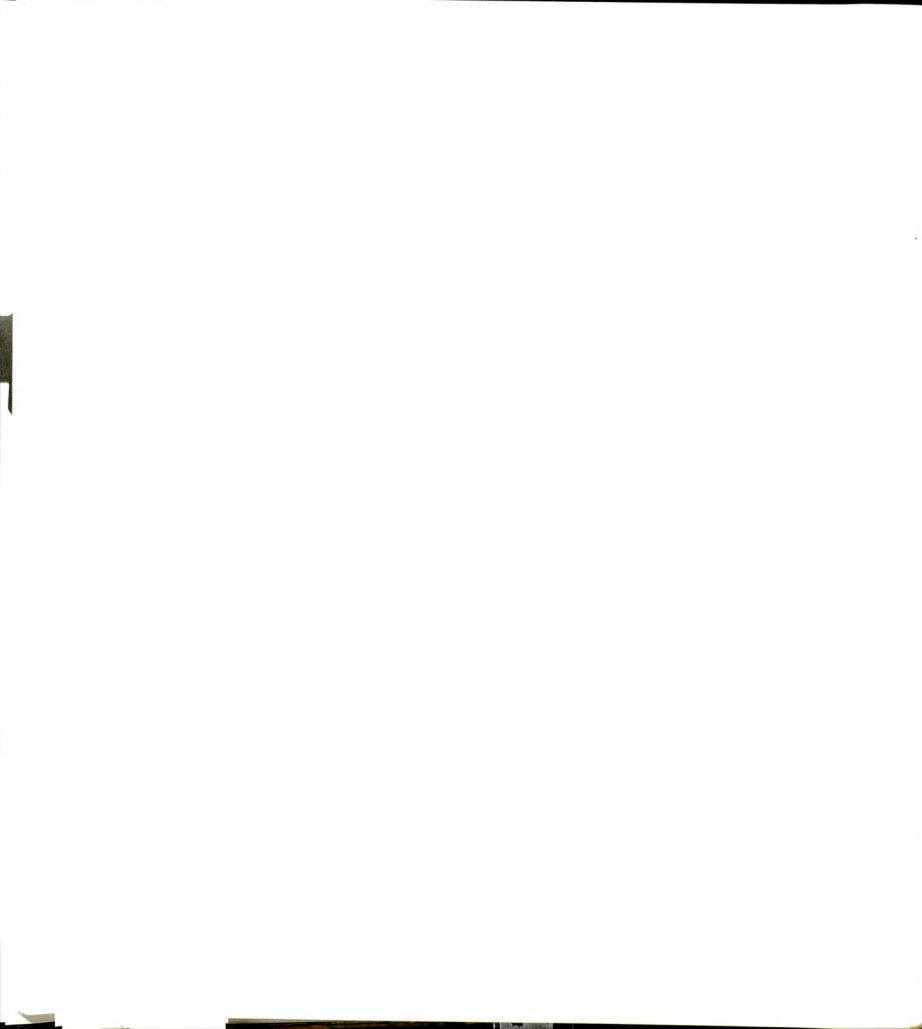
commercial advertising, movies and stickers on automobiles. The underlying fear that drove the Get Out the Vote campaigns was that “solid citizens” were no longer voting. Throughout the nineteenth century, the franchise had been closely identified with citizenship but if citizens no longer voted, what was the meaning of citizenship?²³ The League of Women Voters feared that after seventy-five years of agitating for the vote, women might be ignoring their franchise responsibilities.²⁴

In an effort to encourage greater participation, the LWV changed its organization to better serve the voters of the Detroit area. In January, 1924, the increasing population and geographical size of metropolitan Detroit encouraged the LWV to expand its organization into the Wayne County LWV. At that time, they began an educational campaign to encourage the most intelligent voting among women. They understood that women were young in the political field and inexperienced. They further understood that this inexperience might lead to poor voting and the defeat of important legislation. All women entitled to vote were entitled to membership in the Wayne County LWV.²⁵ Although the LWV had expanded to reach the suburbs, it realized that its strength lay in an organization which was responsive to the local level. A year later, the Wayne County LWV re-organized to become a more grassroots organization. The larger districts were divided into precincts and the precincts were sub-divided into blocks. Each block had a LWV captain who was responsible for the members there. They understood that women

²³ Liette Patricia Gidlow, “Getting Out the Vote: Gender and Citizenship in An Age of Consumer Culture.” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1997).

²⁴ Detroit News (May 11, 1924).

²⁵ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Will Organize County League of Women Voters,” Detroit News (January 13, 1924).



often worked well with personal relationships and the block captains would be neighbors of the people they served.²⁶

Another response to the falling vote totals was the need for voting reforms. Detroit clubwomen advocated reforms that included both primaries for candidate selection and permanent registration. Politicians, journalists and scholars like Schlesinger and Eriksson agreed that cumbersome voting laws contributed to low voter turnout.²⁷ Detroit clubwomen sought these reforms because they wanted to open up the choices in the electoral system, stimulate civic interest and make voting easier. Furthermore, while these reforms were supported by men and the community, in Detroit, they were primarily initiated by women.

In 1923, the Legislative Council of Michigan Women reported that the convention system of nominating candidates was controlled entirely by the political bosses.²⁸ The Highland Park Women's Club believed this closed system led to indifference. They sought to address this apathy with a pre-primary convention to which every Highland Park organization would be invited, including church organizations, women's clubs, commercial organizations, trade unions, noonday luncheon clubs, and fraternal organizations. The sponsor of this idea was Laura Cramer, Chair of the Citizenship Committee of the Highland Park Women's Club. The meeting would discuss the apathy surrounding Highland Park politics with Mayor Clarence E. Gittins addressing the assembly about the problems facing the Highland Park government. The meeting was the result of the previous election when so few candidates were nominated that there were no primary

²⁶ Detroit News (March 8, 1925).

²⁷ McGerr, Decline of Popular, p.189-190.

²⁸ "Legislative Council of Michigan Women," The Club Woman 15 (March, 1923): 422.

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elections. Cramer was inspired by the idea of the old town meeting and her suggestion was backed unanimously by the Highland Park Women's Club. The President, Mrs. J.J. Livingstone said, "Everyone is veering off from politics through fear of being called a politician, and by doing so, is playing directly into the hands of the politicians who have everything their own way!!"²⁹ Mrs. Livingstone emphasized that the town meeting was not an affair of the women's club but rather one of the whole city, but that the Highland Park Women's Club was taking the initiative because no one else would. No matter what the outcome, there was a feeling among the women that raising the issue contributed to raising the civic conscience of Highland Park residents.³⁰

At the town meeting, in December 1925, a resolution was unanimously adopted to call a town convention the following January, and to have the Highland Park clubwomen assume this responsibility. In the interim, the attending clubs and organizations would return to their own groups and discuss who would be the best choices for public office. At the convention in January they could present those names. The December town meeting was attended by prominent people representing professional and social groups and presided over by Mrs. Livingstone. In an effort to alleviate the fear of a political meeting initiated and led by women, she felt obligated to state that the women were not going to "do anything emotional or anything to embarrass you."³¹ Laura Cramer, the first speaker, stated that the intent of the plan was not to promote any one individual, class or group, but rather provide quantity and quality of people for public office. She claimed that it was difficult to encourage voting when people felt that everything was already organized.

²⁹ Detroit News (November 29, 1925).

³⁰ Detroit News (November 29, 1925).

³¹ Detroit News (December 4, 1925).

Edith Alvord, Chair of the Citizenship Committee of the DFWC, spoke and said that politics was respectable because it meant citizenship. It should not be confused with partisan politics. She described how women fought for the franchise because they thought they could do some good. Some were disappointed now to find out that women could be as indifferent as men. Alvord acknowledged that there was a nation-wide trend towards apathy in politics and she challenged the Highland Park community to lead the way in arresting that apathy. The women's pre-primary plan was adopted.³²

The Highland Park pre-primary convention in January, 1926 was headlined as making civic history. The convention received the names of fifty-one eligible, desirable nominees for mayor and the city commission. These nominees would be investigated by a committee and their sponsors. The response from the various civic, fraternal, religious and other organized groups was better than expected. The News reported that the meeting held none of the "steam roller" tactics associated with partisan conventions. Furthermore, the usual bickering was replaced by a community spirit. The News claimed that the meeting was the result of intelligent men and women without personal agendas and only the community well-being at heart. Livingstone was unanimously chosen as chairman and former Michigan Representative, Fred E. Dunn, for secretary.³³

The convention itself was short and efficient. Livingstone called the session to order promptly at eight o'clock. The sponsors of the fifty-one candidates were to issue reports on their nominees. The Chairman of the Committee on Candidates, George Bohm reported that six nominees had withdrawn their names. Of the remainder, fourteen

³² Detroit News (December 4, 1925).

³³ Detroit News (January 15, 1926).

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sponsors issued reports for their candidates. Laura Cramer was nominated for City Commission. The reports were read and the meeting was adjourned. Some people arrived late after the speedy adjournment and claimed it had been a “crooked” meeting. Mrs. Livingstone replied that the convention was only to read the issued reports and adjourn. There were no endorsements and if persons arrived late, unable to submit a report, it was unfortunate. Mrs. Livingstone stressed that all the rules had been laid out and were followed to keep the convention as fair as possible.³⁴

By the March primary, the pre-primary convention was viewed as a success. The object of the convention had been to arouse interest and present a primary slate of qualified nominees from which the voters could choose. Mrs. Livingstone claimed that because some of Highland Park’s best citizens were nominated, the system had been a great success. Additionally, the opening of grass roots nominations through various clubs gave added interest to the whole political process.³⁵

Stimulating interest in candidates was one way Detroit clubwomen tried to raise election interest. Another was to lessen the voting burden. One of the most prominent and successful reforms advocated by the clubwomen of Michigan was the system of permanent

³⁴ Detroit News (January 22, 1926).

³⁵ Detroit News (February 17, 1926) The Highland Park Women’s initiative inspired others but failed to follow important parts of the women’s initiative. A proposal for a similar convention for the City of Detroit was made by John B. Corliss, Jr. Unlike the Highland Park convention, this one did not depend on clubs to bring the names of nominees forward. Instead, it used delegates, elected by each election district for two year terms, to vote by secret ballot on candidates for various offices. Those not nominated, but still desiring to run, would have to then file petitions signed by one hundred citizens. Corliss believed that this nominating procedure would arouse interest in the elections. He likened this process, as Laura Cramer did, to an old town meeting. The Corliss Plan, however, was not well-received. William P. Lovett, Executive Secretary of the Detroit Citizen’s League claimed that the plan did not inherently inspire interest. More importantly, Lovett feared the convention, by receiving nominations by precinct, not clubs, would allow small groups to predominate. The Detroit Citizen League had been instrumental in securing the 1918 City Charter that drew power from the neighborhoods and centralized it in the city and it did not want to give back that power.

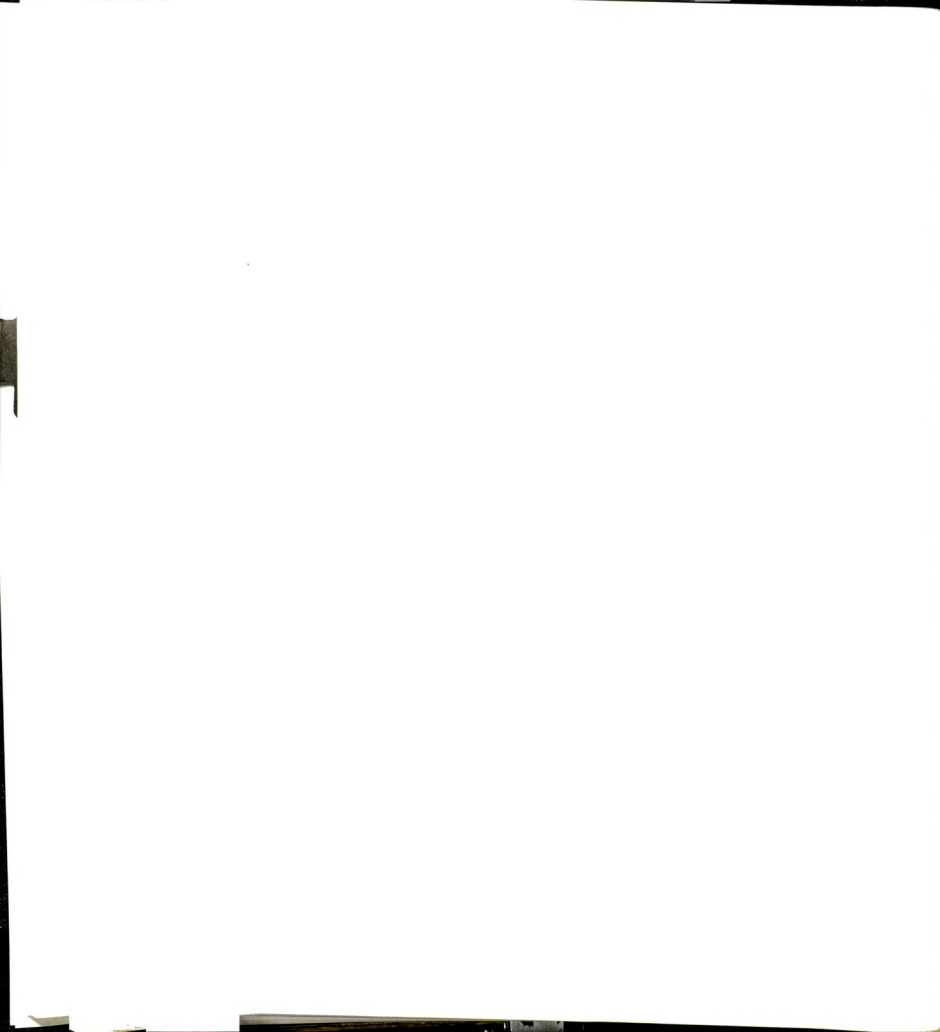


registration for voters. In establishing permanent registration, the clubwomen of Wayne County, and later of the state, joined forces with other civic groups, scholarly and administrative experts and male legislators to successfully institute permanent voter registration in Michigan. Michigan law required complete re-registration every Presidential election for communities of five thousand or more. Otherwise, the issue was up to local discretion. A report by the National League of Municipalities claimed that Detroit had one of the best election systems, but was handicapped by poor registration facilities. Voters could only register at City Hall which served those going downtown, but was a disproportional burden for women, factory workers and those from the outlying areas. By the late 1920s, many Detroit residents could not vote because of registration difficulties. In 1927, there were 456,937 registered voters in Detroit, an increase of 28,206 new voters and 22,092 address changes.³⁶ On the last registration day, in 1928, twenty-one thousand citizens lined up to register. The Election Commission had 130 clerks on hand and practically the entire City Hall was given over to the work of registration but the situation remained impossible. The unprecedented growth of the city increased the population and meant that people had to wait for hours; some were turned away.³⁷

The MLWV was assisted in the permanent registration campaign throughout the decade by other civic-minded organizations. William Lovett wrote to the Executive Board of the Detroit Citizens League in June of 1921 explaining that he had spoken to the MLWV about a permanent registration law and it was decided that the LWV should take

³⁶ Detroit News (October 23, 1927).

³⁷ "Our Poor Registration System," Detroit Citizen (May, 1928).



the lead on this issue and only use the Citizens League behind the scenes.³⁸ Throughout the decade, the Detroit Citizens League worked with the Wayne and Michigan LWV on permanent registration with Lovett speaking several times before the LWV. Clubwomen Mrs. Edgar B. Cooper, Ruth Huston-Whipple and Dorothy Pudrith were appointed by the Wayne LWV to serve with a committee from the Detroit Citizens League to pursue the different plans for permanent registration.³⁹

In 1925 the National Convention of the LWV studied registration laws throughout the country. Continuous registration first appeared as a reform in the LWV Efficiency in Government Department. During the Summer and Fall of 1928, the Wayne County LWV studied the permanent registration program. The activity was centered there because the state league could not operate until the State Convention in late October. At that time, however, the convention supported a model registration law for the 1929 legislature. They also voted appropriations for the work. In December of 1928, the MLWV President and Chairman of the Department of Efficiency in Government conferred with Governor Fred Green about permanent registration. Green allowed the LWV to have a hearing on December 11, 1928 with the Commission for the Revision of Election Laws composed of Roy Bronal of Flint, Dennis Alward of Lansing, and Edward Frensdorf of Hudson. At this hearing, the Commission was convinced of the benefits and asked the LWV to draft a bill. The LWV turned to Senator Claude Stevens, Dr. Harris and Professor James L. Pollock, Jr. of the Political Science Department at the University of Wisconsin to draft the

³⁸ Letter from William Lovett to Executive Board (June 4, 1921) Box 3, Correspondence, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library (BHC).

³⁹ "Bill For Permanent Registration," Michigan Woman 6 (September, 1928): 26.

bill. The LWV developed favorable public opinion through promotional campaigns.⁴⁰ The bill stipulated that a voter need only register once in a lifetime rather than every four years. The voter would be checked by his signature. The voting registers would be purged of dead weight by the periodic checking of the election commission in cooperation with utility companies and the post office. The cost of the original change over to the permanent system was high but cheaper to maintain over time. Permanent registration had already been in use in sixteen states.⁴¹ Although the LWV had worked with others, the Michigan State Legislators gave it full credit for the passage.⁴² The Detroit News reported that the MLWV had realized its political opportunity and offered a constructive piece of legislation. The News believed that it was a fine example of civic spirit.⁴³

In addition to the LWV being the major promoter of permanent registration, they were also quite instrumental in the installation and operation of the law. They educated voters by making speeches, showing exhibits, sponsoring newspaper and radio publicity. They also answered an unfavorable press by defending permanent registration against attacks. The League enlisted people and organizations in an effort to get one hundred percent registration in the original list. Lastly, they saw to it that the system was properly administered by closely cooperating with the chief registration officials. They remained resource people by demonstrating their significant knowledge of the law and constant willingness to help.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ "History of the Passage of the Law in Michigan," Box 4, Manuscript Collection (MS) of the League of Women Voters, BHC.

⁴¹ Detroit News (November 18, 1928).

⁴² "History of the Passage of the Law in Michigan."

⁴³ Detroit News (November 18, 1928).

⁴⁴ "History of the Passage of the Law in Michigan."

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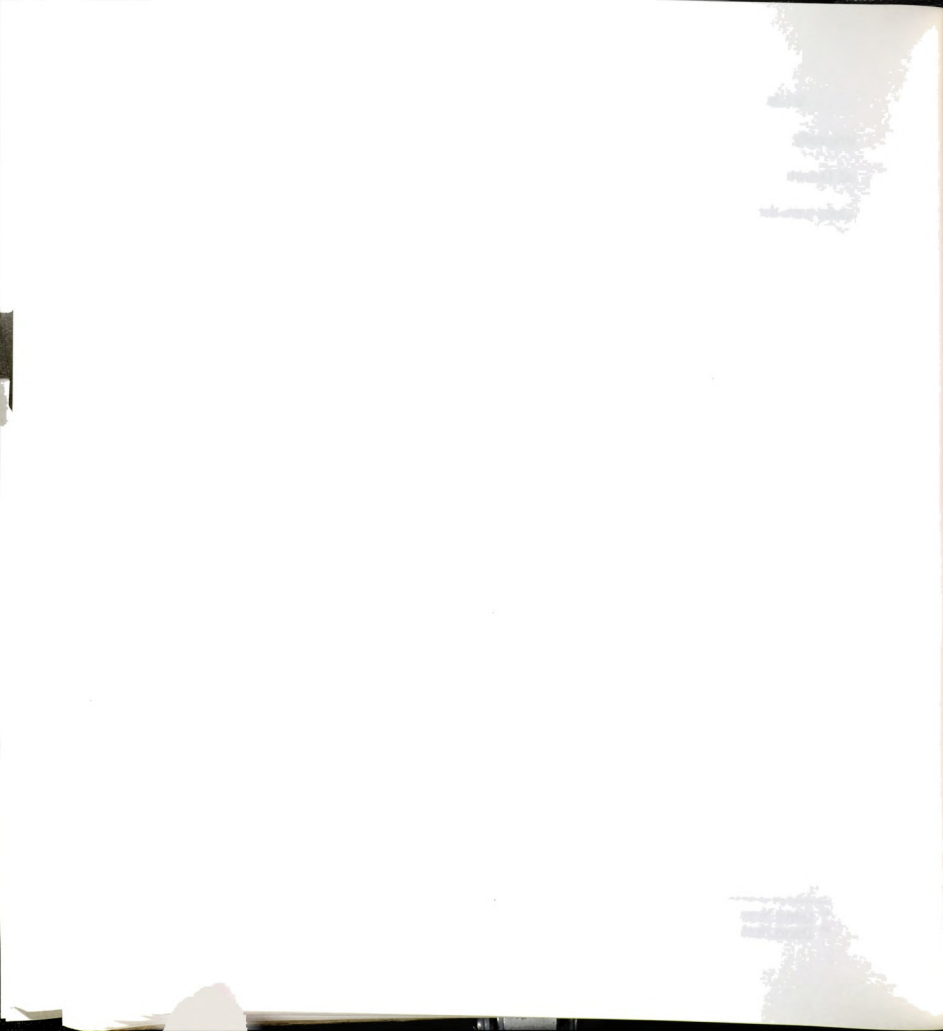
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While the LWV's interest in electoral reform was logical in that its members came originally from the Michigan Equal Suffrage League and were thus politically minded, not all Detroit women's clubs included women dedicated to civic work. Before the franchise, clubs were the organizations through which women conducted their political activities, but not all clubwomen shared this enthusiasm for political work. Edith Alvord claimed that many women were "Still unaccustomed to active participation in the government of the community."⁴⁵ Laura Cramer, speaking for the use of clubs for political business, said that if clubs were strictly for pleasure, the departments should be dismantled and they could then all play bridge. But, she added that if they chose to keep their departments, then the clubwomen should support them wholeheartedly.⁴⁶

Wholehearted support on every issue was difficult to solicit because the women's clubs had diverse membership. The leadership of the DFWC made decisions and undertook various civic programs that may not have been supported equally by each of the one hundred and seven clubs. Each member club had its own agenda and consequently the DFWC represented a diversity in aims. Usually their traditional departments were maintained alongside the newer, more civic-minded ones. This led to a problem with an overcrowded agenda. Majorie Elaine Porter, felt that by 1924 it was apparent that clubwomen were dissipating their energies in too many directions. She wrote that clubwomen were an influence and power in the community who could exert great sway on a piece of legislation when aroused or interested. The problem was that there were too many items which required attention. Clubwomen in general, listened to a variety of

⁴⁵ Detroit News (November 7, 1926).

⁴⁶ Detroit News (October 18, 1925).



speakers, on a variety of topics but could not possibly act “with courage, conviction, enthusiasm” on all the addressed subjects. The result she believed, was that there were few substantive accomplishments.⁴⁷ Moreover, even though women of vision had enlarged club duties to include civic and political departments, they were held back by others who wanted a return to a self-improvement or literary club. Porter claimed the “stand patter” types objected to discussions that were political because they only wanted literature.⁴⁸ Apparently, there were plenty of “stand patters” which created a perpetual struggle between themselves and the progressives. The yearly programs were the battlefield on which these two sides fought. Porter stated that she would rather have any job in a club than program chairman.⁴⁹

In 1924, The Twentieth Century Club experienced a rebellion within its ranks over the civic direction for the club. There was a split in the organization reflecting the new idea of club business versus the old. Nettie Clark (Mrs. George) Caron, a former president of the DFWC, felt the club could not go on with all its civic projects. She and her followers sought to restore the club to its cultural roots. They were concerned for example, that the Saturday evening dances admitted an undesirable element and they claimed the clubhouse shouldn’t be used as a settlement. The club was faced with the use of the newly proposed clubhouse building. Stella Krebs (Mrs. Carl) Brumme wanted the first four floors of the proposed clubhouse for club business and the other eight stories for a dormitory. Additionally, she wanted the new building to be on the site of the old one.

⁴⁷ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Are Women Interested And If So, Just What?” Detroit News (March 2, 1924).

⁴⁸ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Why Not Open Club Door and Let Life Come In?” Detroit News (April 25, 1926).

⁴⁹ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Thankless Job at End: Club Programs Ready,” Detroit News, (September 26, 1926).

Some members objected that the neighborhood had deteriorated. Those members wanted the new building around the Detroit arts center and used only for literary purposes. The Detroit News claimed that the three hour club debate on this issue “culminated in a general uproar.”⁵⁰ Brumme represented the civic-minded club members and she opposed Caron for the club’s presidency. Caron’s faction insisted that social service did not go with culture and the administration and cost of a dormitory would be prohibitive.⁵¹ The issue was decided in April, 1924 when Brumme was elected president. Consequently, the Twentieth Century club maintained its interest in politics, social reform, finance and economics and the Saturday evening dances remained opened to working people.⁵² This was an interesting controversy because Nettie Caron, the opposition candidate, was in her own right a civic-minded Detroit clubwoman. She and her followers simply objected to using the Twentieth Century Club for other purposes. Their defeat showed how political even the culturally based clubs had become in Detroit by the 1920s.

The controversy in the Twentieth Century club reflected the question that women’s clubs throughout the country were debating: whether to remain cultural/study clubs or move into public work. Earlier in 1910, in a speech before the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, Mrs. J. S. Washburn of Minnesota, had argued against using clubs for reform work. She claimed that a shift to more public work might jeopardize the real foundation for women’s clubs. The switch to political work would take women away from the private purposes of the club. As the Twentieth Century Club in Detroit demonstrates,

⁵⁰ Detroit News (March 21, 1924).

⁵¹ Majorie Elaine Porter, “20th Century Club Fate Hangs in Balance,” Detroit News (March 23, 1924).

⁵² Detroit News (April 4, 1924).



it would lead to dissension within the club itself.⁵³ The New Era Study Club, on the other hand, originated as study and fellowship club for African-American women in 1926. But the members felt that their work should bring them into the community. They “eagerly accepted the responsibilities of citizenship, namely working for the betterment of the community, therefore, New Era.”⁵⁴

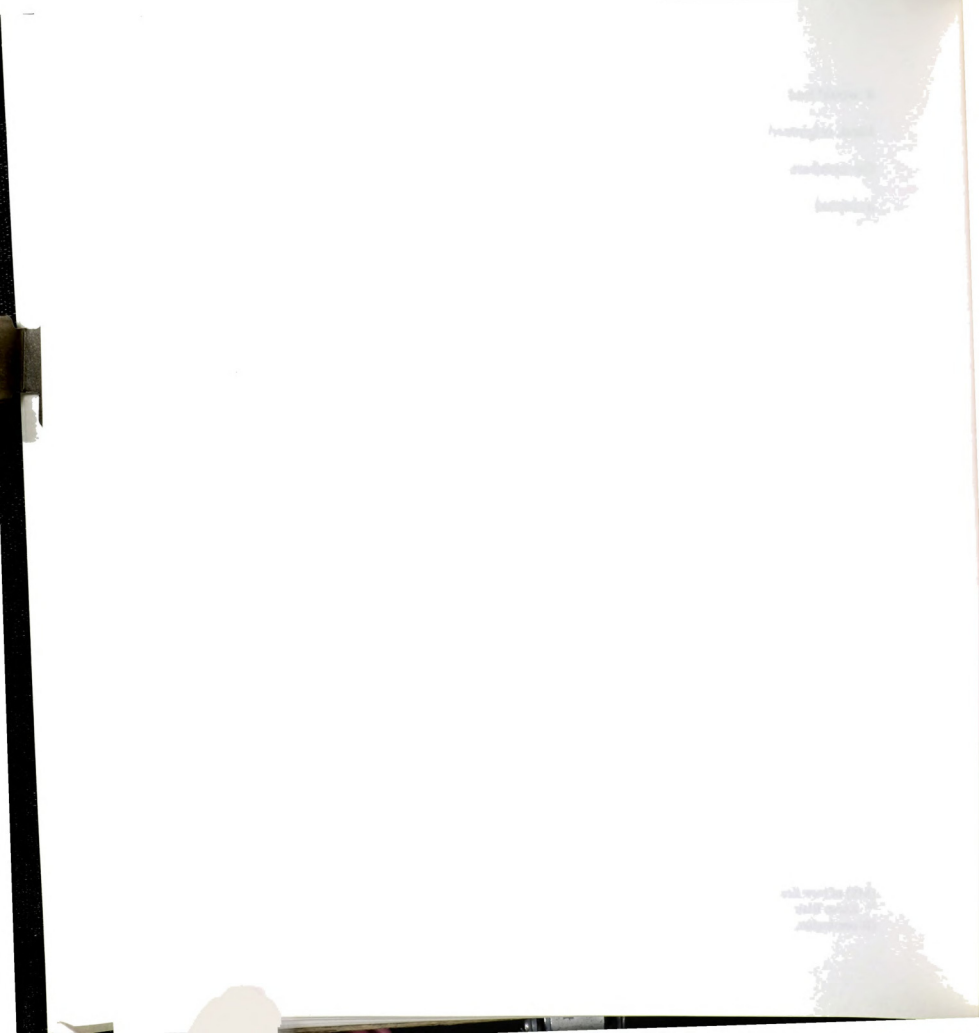
According to Karen Blair, the conflict between cultural or civic work was experienced in many clubs but that it need not have been a divisive issue. She noted similarities between the way both aesthetic and politically minded clubwomen operated. Both subscribed to the idea that women should serve others and both used similar strategies for fundraising and lobbying. Their goals were to improve American life for all citizens. Blair claimed that many clubs (like the DFWC) expanded their organizations into different departments with members spending their time where they felt it was most useful to them. They would attend monthly business and social meetings with the whole group. Blair celebrated how women’s clubs accommodated a great range of interests but it was just this arrangement that Majorie Elaine Porter believed led to an overcrowded agenda.⁵⁵

An overcrowded agenda did dissipate energies and produce what looked like a lukewarm commitment. At the District Convention of the MFWC, the program was jammed with greetings, reports and addresses. The result was a superficial treatment of all the departments. The Detroit News asked “What can be done for legislation in ten to

⁵³ Leigh Ann Wheeler, “From Reading Shakespeare to Reforming Burlesque; The Minneapolis Woman’s Club and the Women’s Welfare League, 1907-1920” Michigan Historical Review 25 (Spring, 1999): 44-75.

⁵⁴ “Early History of New Era,” (typed manuscript, no date, no author), Box 1, Manuscript Collection (MS) of New Era Study Club, BHC.

⁵⁵ Karen Blair, The Torchbearers: Women and Their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930 (Bloomington, 1994), p. 33,36.



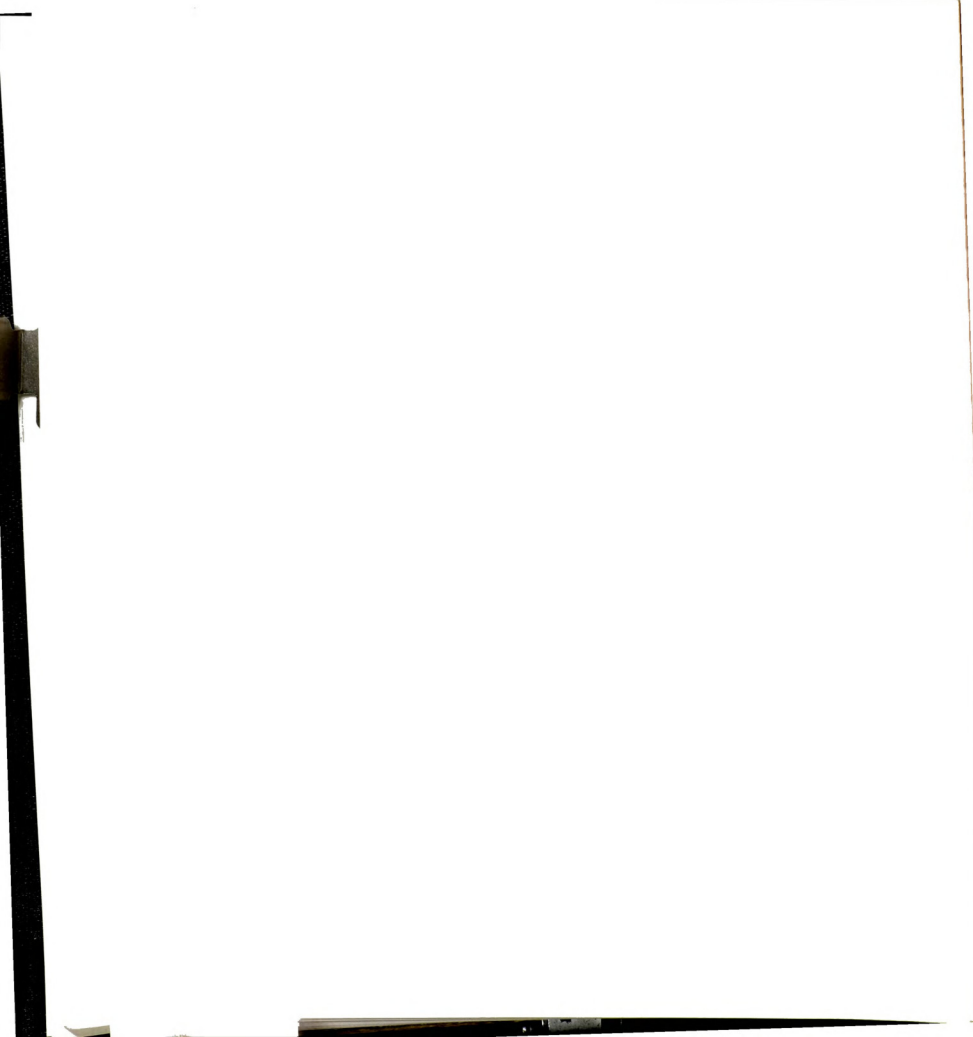
twenty minutes?"⁵⁶ Although many women's associations evolved from small, self-improvement or charity clubs to very large political and civic-minded clubs, their old traditions slowed their civic progress.

Clubwomen also found themselves being criticized for the way they went about their political business. After Norman Angell spoke to the Detroit Section of the National Council of Jewish Women complaining about the "Babbitts" who were more interested in trivial things and voted without knowledge of issues or candidates, Marjorie Elaine Porter compared Mr. Babbitt with Mrs. Babbitt - the average clubwoman. Porter complained that most clubwomen were sheltered from the real affairs of the world. Consequently, they were even less sophisticated politically than Mr. Babbitt. Porter went on to say that if emotionally aroused, the clubwoman would go running headlong into any political quick fix, no matter how ill-conceived. She also accused the clubwoman of failing to listen to opposing viewpoints, which they labeled treasonous, of preferring bridge to lectures, and reporting about conventions by describing what the members were wearing.⁵⁷

Additionally, she lambasted the clubwoman for passing many resolutions but never following up on them. She claimed that oftentimes, a public speaker would make an appeal and the clubwomen would endorse his program. Later, the same speaker might inquire about the club's action regarding the endorsement only to find that nothing had been done. Porter suggested that the clubwomen approve less and act more. She believed

⁵⁶ Detroit News (March 31, 1929).

⁵⁷ Marjorie Elaine Porter, "Men Have No Monopoly on American Babbitry," Detroit News (February 28, 1926).



that clubwomen had an important opportunity to do community work but oftentimes failed to commit.⁵⁸

The DFWC responded to this dilemma by reorganizing toward the end of the decade. Jean Chamberlain, President of the DFWC promised new changes for 1929. She said that the DFWC would conduct its affairs on a business-like basis. Moreover, it would employ selling methods to get its message out to the public.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the strain between the conservatives and progressives was seen at the end of the decade as the attendance dropped off at the annual luncheon. These luncheons, which ended the club year, were traditional. Their format had hardly changed by 1929 and the progressives were attending them in fewer numbers.⁶⁰

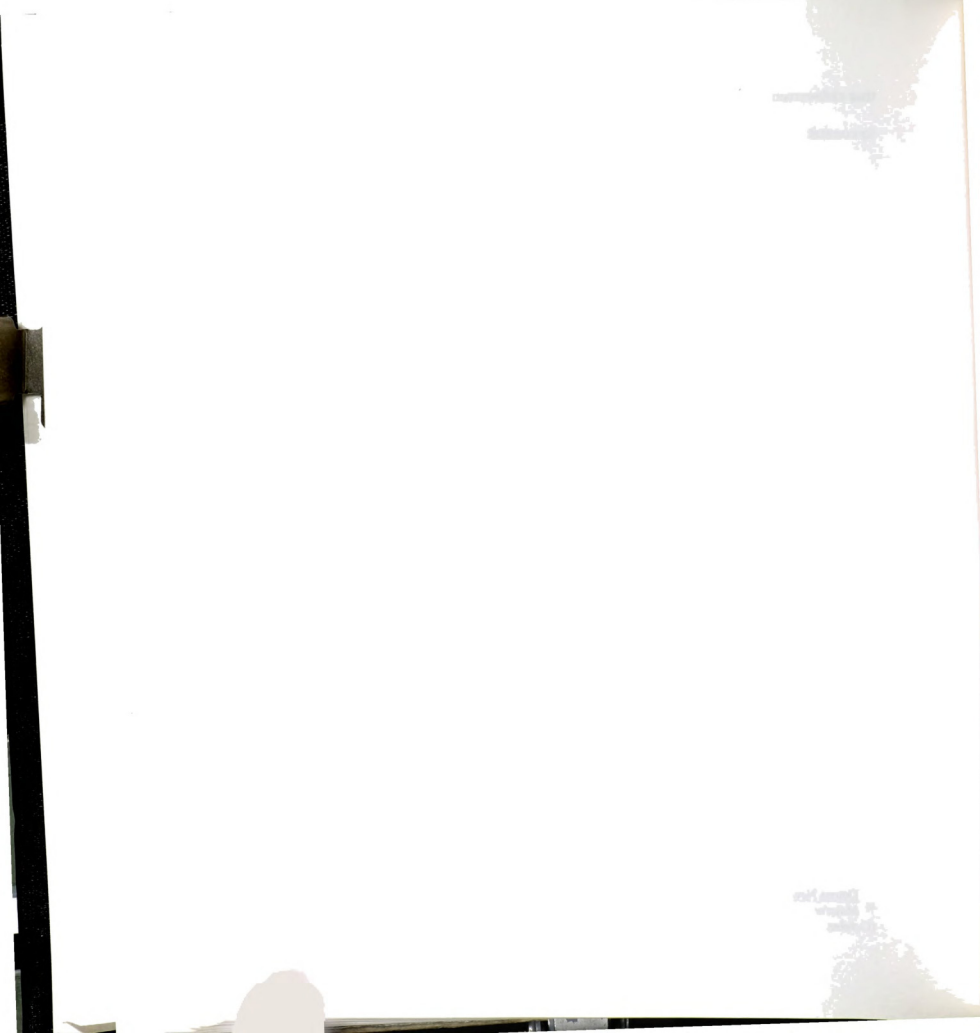
While the debate within the clubs over a cultural/intellectual versus a political direction continued, the Detroit News believed the clubs had become decidedly political. In 1928, the Detroit News reported that since Detroit clubwomen devoted so much of their time to civic matters the “the old-fashioned literary club is doomed.” The News made an erroneous comparison between clubwomen having no political, only ornamental significance before the franchise. While this was false, it was true that many otherwise cultural or literary clubs were also including a political agenda in the 1920s. Many clubs sponsored candidates as well as issues days where their members could become better versed with contemporary political viewpoints.⁶¹ The Detroit News also recognized that

⁵⁸ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Endorsement Means End of Effort, Results Show,” Detroit News (January 27, 1928).

⁵⁹ Detroit News (December 20, 1928).

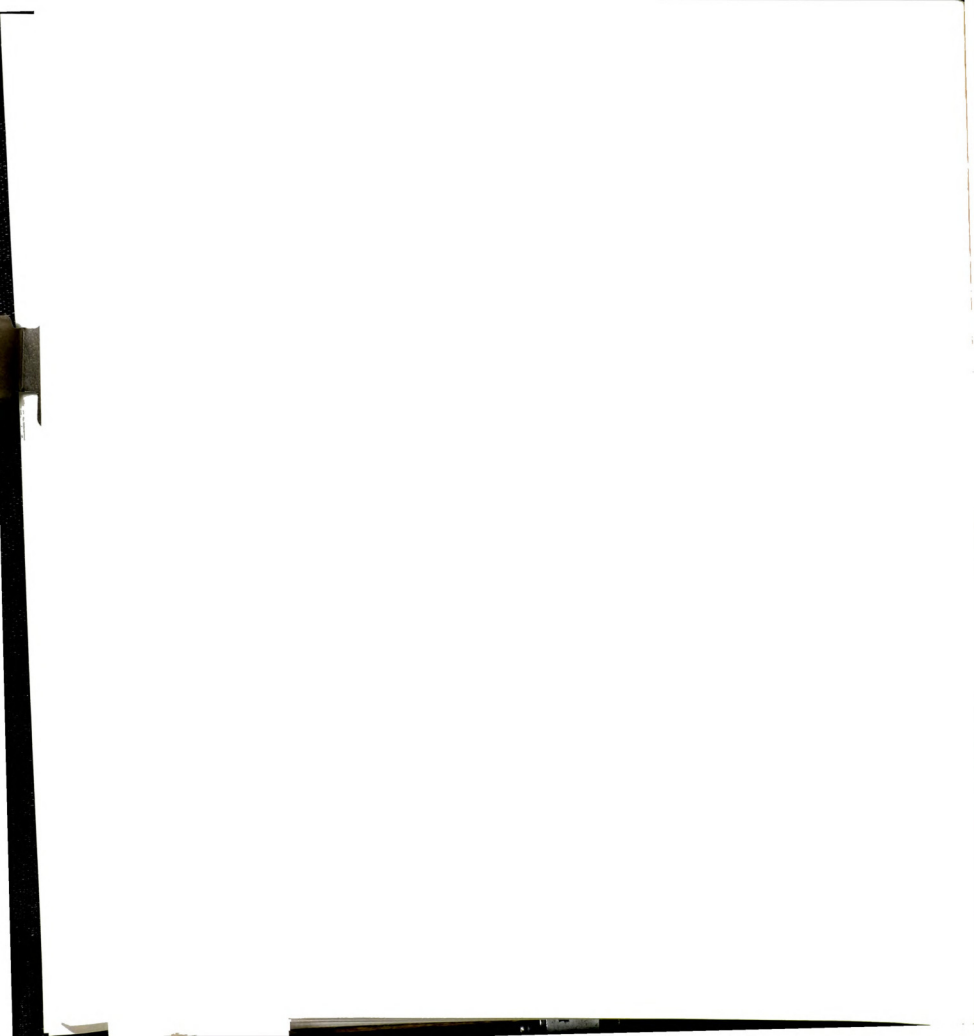
⁶⁰ Detroit News (March 29, 1929).

⁶¹ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Civic Minded Women Doom Old Fashioned Literary Club,” Detroit News (October 28, 1928).



women's club responsibilities produced workers for the community. The News refuted the notion that women's clubs were simply pastimes for women with leisure. While admitting that might have been the case fifty years ago, the News said: "But since then, the woman's club has taken root in community life, and its product, the trained clubwoman, is more than justifying its existence by public service."⁶² The women's club connection to the community was well understood because, as the News explained, one of its chief functions was to train women for service to the community. The article stated that Pearl Novak, Edith Alvord and Ethel L. Thomas, who were the Executive Secretary of the International Institute for the YWCA, Treasurer of the Highland Park Board of Education, and the Lunch Room conductor for the Detroit Schools respectively, were all past presidents of the DFWC. It explained that the clubs acquainted women with the needs of the community, gave them contact with the public and helped develop self-confidence. The article made the point that the knowledge and ideals of women's clubs were consequently applied in a practical way. Novak explained in an interview that her experience as president of the DFWC was a "second college education" and that it was the mission of the women's clubs to stimulate interest in the community. She claimed that clubs stressed not only information, but action as well. The days were long past when a woman's responsibility was strictly within the home. Ethel Thomas saw her luncheon responsibilities in a maternalistic way by saying her work was "like a busy mother with 8,000 children in her family." She looked for quick, nutritious, inexpensive food for them all. While Alvord agreed with the others that club training helped train her for her position on the Highland Park School Board, she cautioned against the idea that some of these

⁶² Detroit News (February 7, 1926).



community positions were therefore best served by women. She stressed that the best community service was possible through the collaborative interests of men and women.⁶³

While some Detroit women certainly took their community service work seriously, there was some question as to how representative they were of the large body politic. In the March 1927 issue of Century Magazine, Ida Clyde Clark, a New York magazine editor, wrote about the chances of a woman becoming President. She concluded that such a candidate would not come from women's clubs because the clubs did not hold the balance of power in politics. In spite of all the political activity of women, the political parties and businessmen still were powerful. Consequently, a woman candidate would come from the non-club ranks or from the political parties. She added however, that there was little hope that either political party would nominate a woman in the near future.⁶⁴

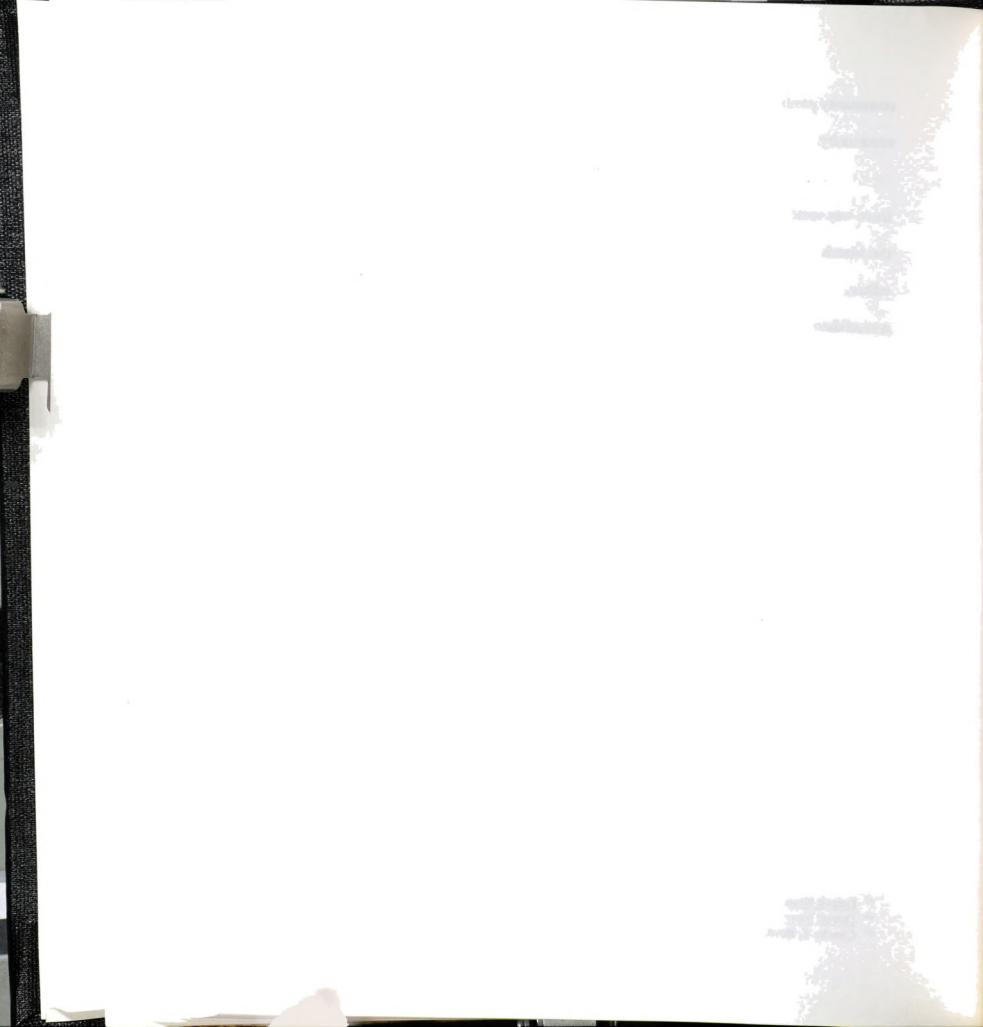
This belief raised some important issues. Clark apparently felt that clubwomen were not representative enough of the larger body of citizens. Clark might have believed that the clubs were not preparing their members for higher office, although she did not state that.

Throughout the 1920s, this business/political connection identified by Clark remained strong in Detroit. The Detroit Board of Commerce boasted that Detroit was the only large American city where "the businessmen meet regularly each year to thresh out their common problems with the public office holders"⁶⁵ At the 1928 Annual Officials Dinner, the President of the Common Council spoke about what city officials expected from the business community regarding cooperation on civic projects. The Council even allowed the businessmen to study the city budget. Dr. Lent D. Upson, Director of the

⁶³ Detroit News (February 7, 1926).

⁶⁴ Detroit News (February 20, 1927).

⁶⁵ Charles E. Boyd, "The City's Problems," Detroiter 19 (January 9, 1928): 5.



Bureau of Government Research, claimed that cooperation had been a “feature of the pleasant relationship between the business executives of Detroit and the public officials.”⁶⁶ Consequently, the powerful Detroit business community sought public policies and candidates upon which they could rely.

If women remained outside the business/political loop in Detroit, the possibility arose of merging women’s with men’s clubs. Ida Clark believed this was a good policy because the usefulness of a purely women’s organization was on the wane. She implied that women’s clubs would be enhanced by the admission of men.⁶⁷ The subject came up again when Mary Belle King (Mrs. John Dickinson) Sherman, President of the GFWC stated that the future would have men and women in the same organizations. The advantage of both sexes in the same club lay chiefly in the more ready availability of money and better political connections.⁶⁸ The club editor for the Detroit News admitted that for specific kinds of clubs like art, or music, that might be so. Marjorie Elaine Porter, however, believed that women joined clubs to be with other women and vice-versa. She added that both sexes had different social styles that might be difficult to reconcile in a general club format.⁶⁹

Most Detroit clubwomen agreed with Porter and in spite of the problems with an exclusively female club, chose to maintain them. They also continued to do their political work there, setting up programs for educational study and persisting in pre-suffrage tactics such as letter writing. African-American women also used letter writing campaigns to

⁶⁶ Boyd, “City’s Problems,” p.5.

⁶⁷ Marjorie Elaine Porter, “Merging Women’s Clubs With Men’s Is Odd Idea,” Detroit News (April 16, 1926).

⁶⁸ Detroit News (January 23, 1927).

⁶⁹ Porter, “Merging Women’s Clubs.”

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the project, which includes a brief history of the project and a statement of the objectives.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methodology used in the study, which includes a description of the data collection methods and the statistical analysis techniques.

influence national policy. Mary Church Terrell, the National Chairperson on Legislation for the National Association of Colored Women, advised members to write their respective Senators to vote for the Dyer Anti-Lynching, and for the Child Labor Amendment. She requested that members write to their congressmen to vote against the bill prohibiting intermarriage of people in the District of Columbia.⁷⁰

While clubwomen's methods of careful study produced successful results, Marjorie Elaine Porter complained that the DFWC was perhaps too cautious and analytical. She believed this caution reflected their fear of failure.⁷¹ Reacting to that criticism, the DFWC streamlined its organization. The Directors decided to meet earlier than the Federation so that if there were policies for the club to act upon, this could be done immediately.⁷² In June, 1928 the DFWC abolished the multi-department/division organization in favor of divisions with standing committees. The division heads could meet with the chief officers and the committee members thereby trimming the number of people needed to operate. The divisions were composed from individual clubs.⁷³ To bring politics to the neighborhood block and make the organization more effective, the LWV likewise streamlined its operations. It developed the small suburban group in 1929. Previously the LWV had large informational meetings but felt these were no longer effective. Instead,

⁷⁰ Mary Church Terrell, "Report of the National Chairman on Legislation," Convention Minutes, 1926, National Association of Colored Women, Fifteenth Biennial Session, Oakland, California (August 1-5, 1926), p. 74-78.

⁷¹ Detroit News (December 27, 1925).

⁷² Detroit News (December 30, 1928).

⁷³ Detroit News (June 17, 1928). This criticism of the DFWC was in sharp contrast to the experience of the Women's City Club of New York where that group's intense study before recommending support or opposition for legislation, earned it much praise. The Perry study continues until 1990 and perhaps the merits of slow deliberation were apparent by then. Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," New York History (October, 1990): 423.



there would be smaller, community-based meetings with a Board of Directors to carry out the League's programs.⁷⁴

As the DFWC streamlined its organization, it maintained many of the same educational programs such as Candidates Day, often sponsored with the Detroit Citizens League. These Candidates Days, however, were not always treated with the same seriousness by male candidates. The Detroit News in 1924, for example, reported that many times male candidates addressed the particular club by using the wrong name. This problem persisted throughout the decade.⁷⁵ Another article, later in the decade, noted that female candidates were courteous and accurate when they spoke to club members and distinguished themselves by speaking succinctly and forcefully. The News declared that the female candidates addressed their audience and finished their speeches before the men finished their "glad to be here" preliminaries.⁷⁶ These gender differences displayed how male and female candidates perceived clubwomen. Women candidates, who regarded clubwomen as astute voters, took their speaking obligations seriously and were well-prepared. Men were oftentimes neither serious nor prepared and this reflected their pejorative view of enfranchised clubwomen.

In close elections, such as the mayoralty election of 1926, however, Candidates Days were well attended by the candidates who perceived that they needed all possible votes.⁷⁷ Candidates Days were opened to all candidates and in 1927, John Dancy of the Detroit Urban League, addressed a DFWC gathering on behalf of George H. Green, the

⁷⁴ Detroit News (December 30, 1928).

⁷⁵ Detroit News (October 26, 1924).

⁷⁶ Garnet Warfel, "Women Candidates Talk Short and to the Point," Detroit News (August 15, 1930).

⁷⁷ DFWC Directory (1926), p. 21 BHC.



first African-American nominee for City Council.⁷⁸ African-American clubwomen also had candidates address their clubs. At the September meeting of the New Idea Social Club, Reverend F. Daniel spoke in the interest of Green's candidacy. The clubwomen promised their support.⁷⁹ By 1929, underdog candidates were still appearing before women's clubs but others were sending substitute spokesmen. In April, 1929, the Democratic candidates for governor and lieutenant governor spoke before the DFWC while the Governor Fred Green sent a spokesman.⁸⁰ In the Fall mayoralty election that year, neither candidate showed up. They both claimed they were exhausted from campaigning. Also, as the City Council was holding a meeting at the same time, as the DFWC meeting, incumbent council members did not appear. Only those opposition candidates for the Council spoke.⁸¹ Apparently, candidates weighed their time carefully and if a slight to the women voters would not hurt their campaign, they stayed away.

When candidates did appear, moreover, they often ridiculed clubwomen's political intelligence. The News criticized male candidates who unduly flattered or were humorous with the women. The women, who were serious-minded about educating themselves politically were turned-off by these candidates.⁸² Additionally, clubwomen were offended by some candidates' obvious insincerity when they insisted they did not want the office and they were only running as a duty. Still, others addressed the women in such ungrammatical ways that the women thought those candidates would not even be

⁷⁸ "Report of the Legislative Division" Vol. 17 Minutes 1927-1928, p.104, Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, BHC.

⁷⁹ Detroit Independent (September 10, 1927).

⁸⁰ "Annual Legislative Division Minutes" (May 7, 1928- May 7, 1929), Vol. 18 Minutes 1928-1929, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸¹ "Report of the Legislative Division Minutes" (1929-1930), Vol. 19 Minutes 1929-1930, MS Federation of Women's Clubs Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸² Detroit News (October 26, 1924).



considered for a high school debating team. One candidate protested for two and a half minutes that he was not allotted enough time, while another one manicured his nails while others spoke!⁸³ These candidates obviously felt ambivalent about the women voters; they were willing to speak, but not to take these women voters as a serious political audience.

Candidates Days were important to clubwomen, but they also understood the merits of broad voter education for the wider community. They encouraged women to be not only intelligent voters and citizens but also responsible to the community at large.⁸⁴ Consequently, they made many of their study programs available to the public and not just their members. In order to serve better the Metropolitan Detroit area, the Wayne County LWV formed and ran “Citizenship Schools” for women. These women studied many of the most important issues of the day, listened to invited speakers discuss the child labor amendment, women’s relation to the three branches of the government, how taxes fund the government, international relations, and the process of nominations and elections. Speakers also discussed the 1920s controversy between faith and reason, while representatives of commerce, labor, religious and women’s interests spoke about international peace.⁸⁵

As the decade wore on, clubwomen’s political classes became more sophisticated. For example, in 1928, the Wayne County LWV conducted a three-day citizenship class that focused on the experiences of women in party caucuses, conventions and direct primaries. They investigated the nomination process and more particularly the role of women in that process. Clubwomen understood the importance of the nomination

⁸³ Detroit News (November 4, 1928).

⁸⁴ Detroit News (January 13, 1924).

⁸⁵ Detroit News (January 27, 1924).



process and wanted their voices heard.⁸⁶ The LWV feared that voters turned down propositions simply because they did not understand them, as in 1929, when voters rejected the potential rapid transit system. In response, the Wayne Council of LWV organized a two week seminar to discuss area transportation problems.⁸⁷

In this effort at voter education, the Wayne County LWV pioneered a new communication technique: a question and answer column in the Detroit Sunday News. A voter would send the questions to the League and the Sunday News would publish the questions.⁸⁸ By 1930, the National LWV teamed up with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to disperse a “Voter’s Service” to provide information on issues likely to dominate in the current election campaigns. In May of that year, the program dealt with the new tariff (Hawley-Smoot) and its duties relating to agriculture, industry and foreign trade and included speakers from Congress, industry and the Foreign Policy Association.⁸⁹

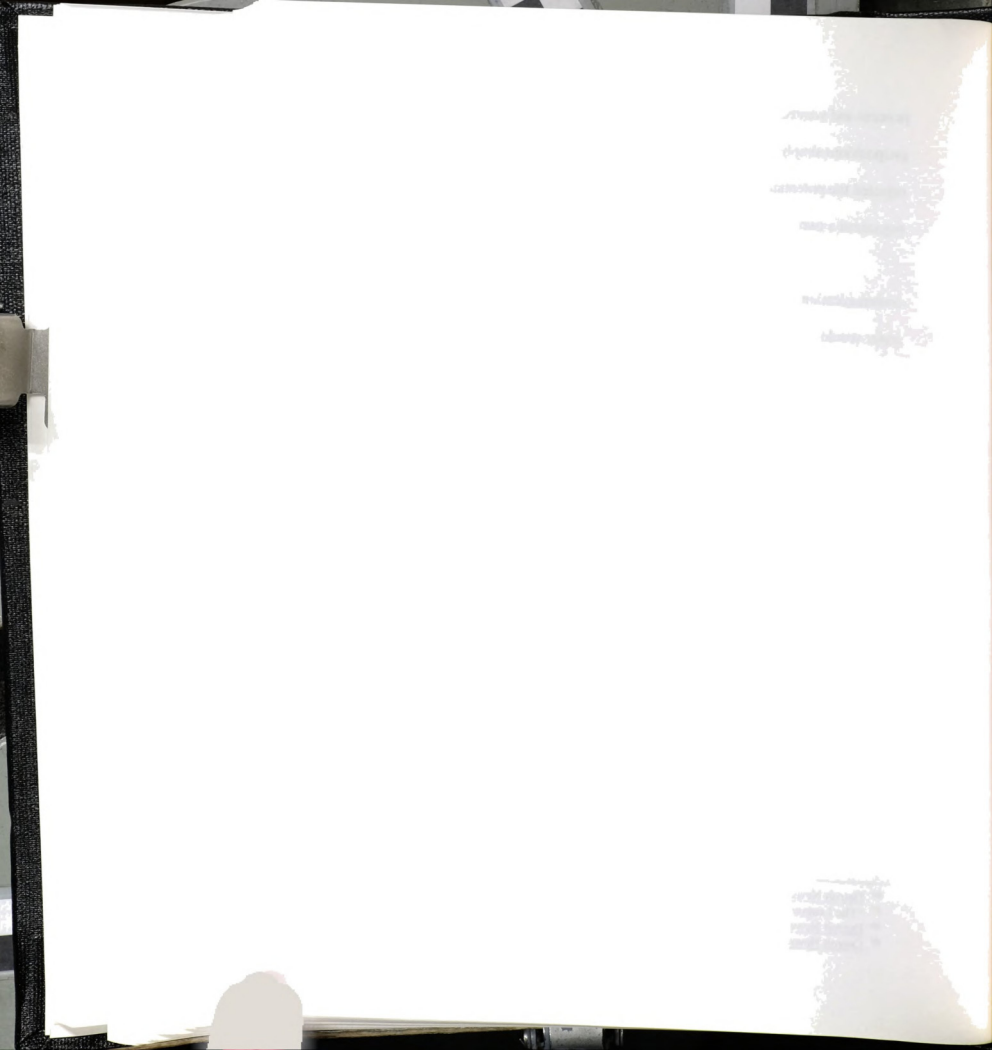
This belief in civic education reflected two strains in clubwomen’s political activities. One was their belief that an educated public served the public interest; the other was their own fear of criticism. In 1926, Edna Prescott, the President of the DFWC, noted the importance of the DFWC’s political education programs in preparing women for public office. “Since women’s qualifications for participation in public office have sometimes been questioned,” she said, “it behooves every woman’s organization to furnish programs of study which shall properly equip its members with a knowledge of the

⁸⁶ Detroit News (July 22, 1928).

⁸⁷ “The League Looks Ahead,” The Courier of the Wayne County LWV (May, 1929).

⁸⁸ Detroit News (October 12, 1924).

⁸⁹ Detroit News (May 18, 1930).



events of the day. This had been the aim of the Federation for some time and we may well term our departments a college of the study of current events.”⁹⁰ Women needed a political education because, according to Edith Alvord, by 1924 men were used to women voting but not yet used to women playing an active role in party issues.⁹¹ Some clubwomen felt that many women were indifferent to politics. Ethel B. Thomas, a member of the Business and Professional Women’s Club of Royal Oak, believed the obstacle towards women’s political progress was not men but rather women. In 1924, Thomas managed the successful campaign for Mabel Baldwin, Royal Oak’s first woman council member. Thomas explained to the Highland Park LWV that women displayed lethargy and even opposition to women candidates. She believed that clubwomen, especially those with a business interest, did see the value of women in politics. The average housewife, however, was barely lukewarm to the idea. Thomas’ solution was one of education so all women, organized or not, would take an active interest in civic affairs.⁹²

On the other hand, more clubwomen were beginning to demand a place in the parties. Mrs. Myron B. Vorce, a prominent member of the Wayne Co. LWV, urged women to join the political parties and do some “necessary house cleaning.” She cautioned them to join on an equal basis as men, not as some auxiliary group, and to join in great numbers. Anne (Mrs. Frederick) Brandes Lee, Associated Editor of the Club Woman, believed that women had no voting strength without belonging to a political party but they

⁹⁰ “Annual Address of Mrs. Edna Prescott April 30, 1926” Vol. 16 Minutes 1926-1927, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹¹ Detroit News (February 17, 1924).

⁹² Detroit News (March 2, 1924).

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the various methods which have been proposed for the determination of the rate of reaction between a radical and a molecule. The methods are classified into two groups: (a) methods based on the measurement of the rate of disappearance of the radical, and (b) methods based on the measurement of the rate of appearance of the product. The first group includes the methods of the half-life, the induction period, and the steady-state concentration. The second group includes the methods of the initial rate, the rate of reaction at a fixed concentration of the radical, and the rate of reaction at a fixed concentration of the product.

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the various factors which influence the rate of reaction between a radical and a molecule. The factors are classified into two groups: (a) factors which influence the rate of reaction between a radical and a molecule, and (b) factors which influence the rate of reaction between a radical and a molecule.

should also work to improve those parties and weed out the objectionable parts. Louise Woodhouse, member of the Wayne County LWV, felt that women should join the political parties in an equal partnership with the men. She added that women should be diligent in their party work because indifference was the worst evil in politics.⁹³ Detroit clubwomen wanted to remain engaged in political work and some felt that the strategy of shunning the political parties was ineffective.

Detroit clubwomen did work for the political parties but found they were generally relegated to marginal positions. Susan Ware noted the bind in which politically active women found themselves in the 1920s: women wanted to be treated as political equals, wanted integration into a previously male dominated world, but in doing so, they lost the power base they had enjoyed within their women's organizations. In partisan politics, they were literally "outmanned."⁹⁴ Both Democrats and Republicans recruited women to do local work but seldom gave them leadership positions. Local Democratic Clubs of Women were confined to wards or precincts. Despite the situation, activist women pursued party politics. Democratic women organized about sixty clubs between August and November of 1924.⁹⁵ Although as Richard Thomas noted, it was almost a disgrace to vote Democratic in Detroit before 1932, under the direction of Katherine Keefe (Mrs. W.W.) Warren, groups of African-American women were being organized for the Democratic Party.⁹⁶ Democratic women were credited with educating non-Democratic women to vote

⁹³ Detroit News (February 17, 1924).

⁹⁴ Susan Ware, Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics (New Haven, 1987), p. xviii, 149-150

⁹⁵ "The Women Have Set An Example," Michigan Citizen (November 8, 1924): 1.

⁹⁶ Richard W. Thomas, Life For Us Is What We Make It - Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945 (Bloomington, 1992), p. 262. The nature of urban politics in other cities resulted in a difference in political party affiliation. In Chicago, for instance, from the early twentieth century, there was always a small number of African-Americans voting Democratic and contested elections also drew some African-

1. The first part of the book is a general introduction to the subject of the history of the United States. It covers the period from the discovery of the continent to the present time. It discusses the various stages of the country's development, from the early years of exploration and settlement to the present day. It also touches upon the major events and figures that have shaped the nation's history.

2. The second part of the book is a detailed account of the American Revolution. It describes the events leading up to the war, the course of the conflict, and the final outcome. It also discusses the impact of the Revolution on the young nation and the role of the Founding Fathers in establishing the new government.

and elect Woodbridge Ferris to the U.S. Senate in 1922. They helped organize all thirteen Congressional districts in Michigan by going into each county and listing the names and addresses of all Democrats and independent women voters. The list was forwarded to the state Democratic Headquarters. Lastly, the Michigan female Democrats provided an intensive county distribution of the Democratic mouthpiece. - The Michigan Citizen. Showing their aptitude for grass-roots work, the women helped edit the county editions which included special pages devoted to that particular county's needs.⁹⁷

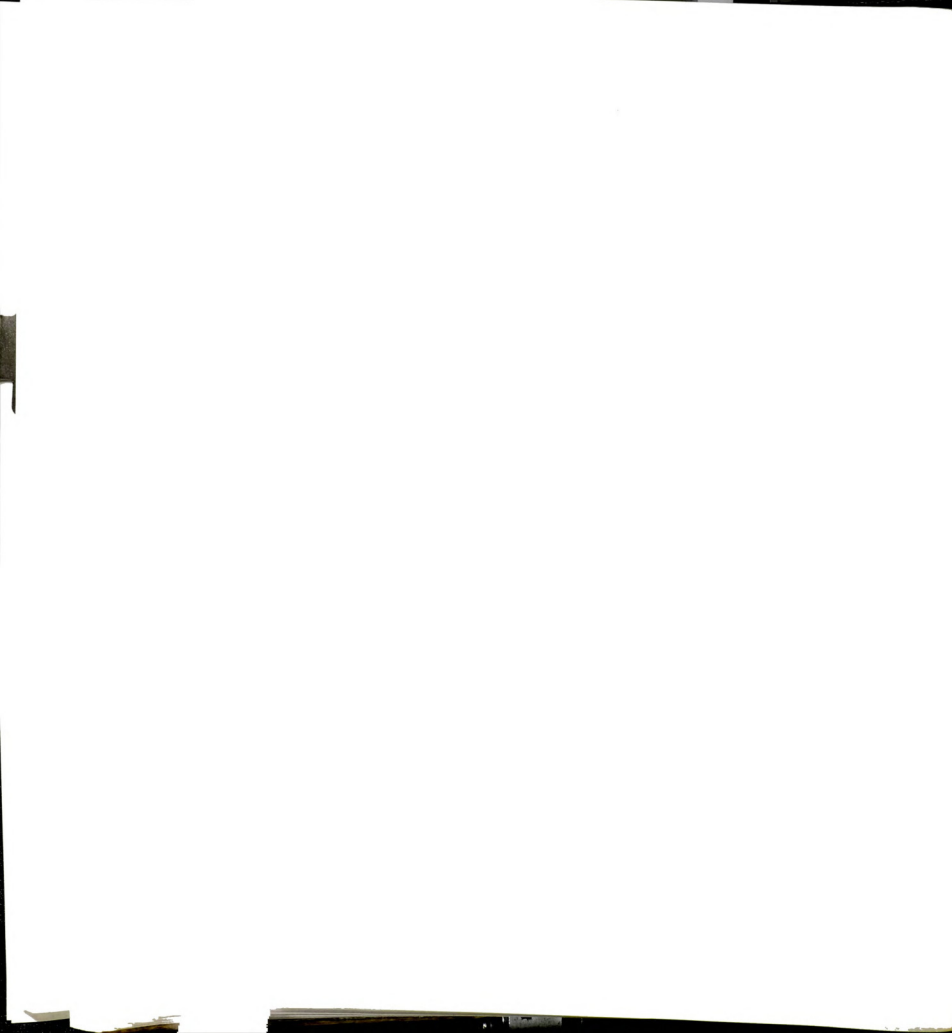
The Republican Party continued to be the party of choice for African-Americans during the 1920s in Detroit and throughout Michigan. Hallie Q. Brown, Director of Colored Women's Activities of the Republican National Committee, praised the "excellent work the women of my race have accomplished during the [1924] campaign." She claimed that black Republican women had become an important factor in the party.⁹⁸ Savonia Carson described how Michigan women began campaigning for Calvin Coolidge in July, 1924 by informing registrants and voters. She claimed that the women were eager but in need of better political education. She believed that a permanent women's organization would help in that regard. Carson ended by saying that "We will stand with our friends, the Republican party, until we achieve our full measure of liberty."⁹⁹ In Detroit, led by Elizabeth Gulley, African-American women formed the Women's Political League. Its

Americans into voting Democratic. See, Douglas Bukowski, Big Bill Thompson, Chicago and the Politics of Image (DeKalb, IL, 1998). Michigan Woman 3 (Spring Election, 1925): 14.

⁹⁷ "Democratic Women of State Federation Hold Inspiring Meeting at Lansing, October 13th", Michigan Citizen (May, 1926): 8. Nationally, the Democrats had women do work within the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. Under the leadership of Molly Dewson, local women reported to their clubs about what was happening nationally. It was called the Reporter Plan and it linked women's issue-oriented approach to active grassroots organizations., Ware, Partner and I, p. 169, 198

⁹⁸ Hallie Q. Brown, "Republican Colored Women of America," The National Notes 27 (December, 1924): 1.

⁹⁹ Savonia Carson, "Michigan," The National Notes 27 (January, 1925): 13.



leadership consisted of prominent black women like Veronica Lucas (founder of the Detroit Association of (Colored) Women's Clubs) and Lillian Johnson (member of the Detroit Study Club and Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). In 1924, on behalf of the Women's Political League, Gulley pledged support for the candidacy of Lucia Grimes for the state legislature. Gulley added that she was the chair of the Michigan State Association of Colored Women's Clubs and would "be glad to help you in any way possible."¹⁰⁰ Gulley remained prominent in state and national Republican clubs throughout the decade. In April, 1928 she attended the Republican Women's Federation of Michigan meeting when it was held in Detroit.¹⁰¹ A month later, as the Director of the Colored Women's Republican Clubs of Michigan, she attended the National League of Republican Clubs in Washington D.C.¹⁰²

In spite of the glowing reports of Brown, Carson and Gulley, there was evidence of some dissension among Republicans regarding black women. Detroit Lillian Johnson addressed the Detroit Study Club 1928 on colored women in politics. She claimed that Republican women's leader, Mabel Willebrandt spoke of unity but implied unity under white leadership. Willebrandt had conducted unjust investigations against African-American Republicans, Ben Davis, Bob Church and Walter Cohen. Johnson said Willebrandt was encouraged in this by southern "lily whites" but it looked as if it was the first move to rid the party of black leaders.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Letter to Grimes from Elizabeth L. Gulley, dated August 26, 1924, Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 1, Correspondence 1924, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library (MHC).

¹⁰¹ Detroit News (April, 22, 1928).

¹⁰² The Owl (no date, 1928) personal collection by permission of Mr. Arthur LaBrew.

¹⁰³ Lillian Johnson, "Report on Colored Women in Politics," (October 28, 1924), Manuscript Collection (MS) of the Detroit Study Club, Box 2, Folder 3, BHC.

The Republican Party in Michigan enlisted women into supportive Republican Clubs, but still considered them to be novices in party politics. Women's uncomfortable political position was apparent in Republican Party politics when the Republican Women's Study Club issued a bulletin for Republican women that claimed that women were not "learning the game as it is played." It went on to state that it was no wonder that the men "snicker" at women because club work or being a politician's widow did not make a woman qualified for public office. Since women continued to push for female candidates, they were only "petty and childish." The article ended by reminding them that husbands of club members, Ethel Walters (Mrs. George A.) Grace Boland (Mrs. Bernie) and Mary Howe Murphy (Mrs. James J.) were running for office and worthy of support!¹⁰⁴ In December 1931, the Republican Woman's Study Club not only questioned the wisdom of women candidates, but appeared to ridicule women who supported them. Apparently, some clubwomen were especially angry when no woman was nominated for the Detroit Common Council. The Republican Woman's Study Club claimed those angry women "think men folks real mean" and it was a "downright shame" that women were not nominated.¹⁰⁵ The Republican Party, being an overwhelming majority in Michigan throughout the 1920s, apparently felt that fewer concessions had to be made to their female party members. They were comfortable enough to even ridicule the advocacy of female candidates.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Women in Politics A Bulletin of Information for Its Members by Republican Woman's Study Club (August, 1931): 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ "A Word to the Women," Women in Politics (December, 1931), no page number.

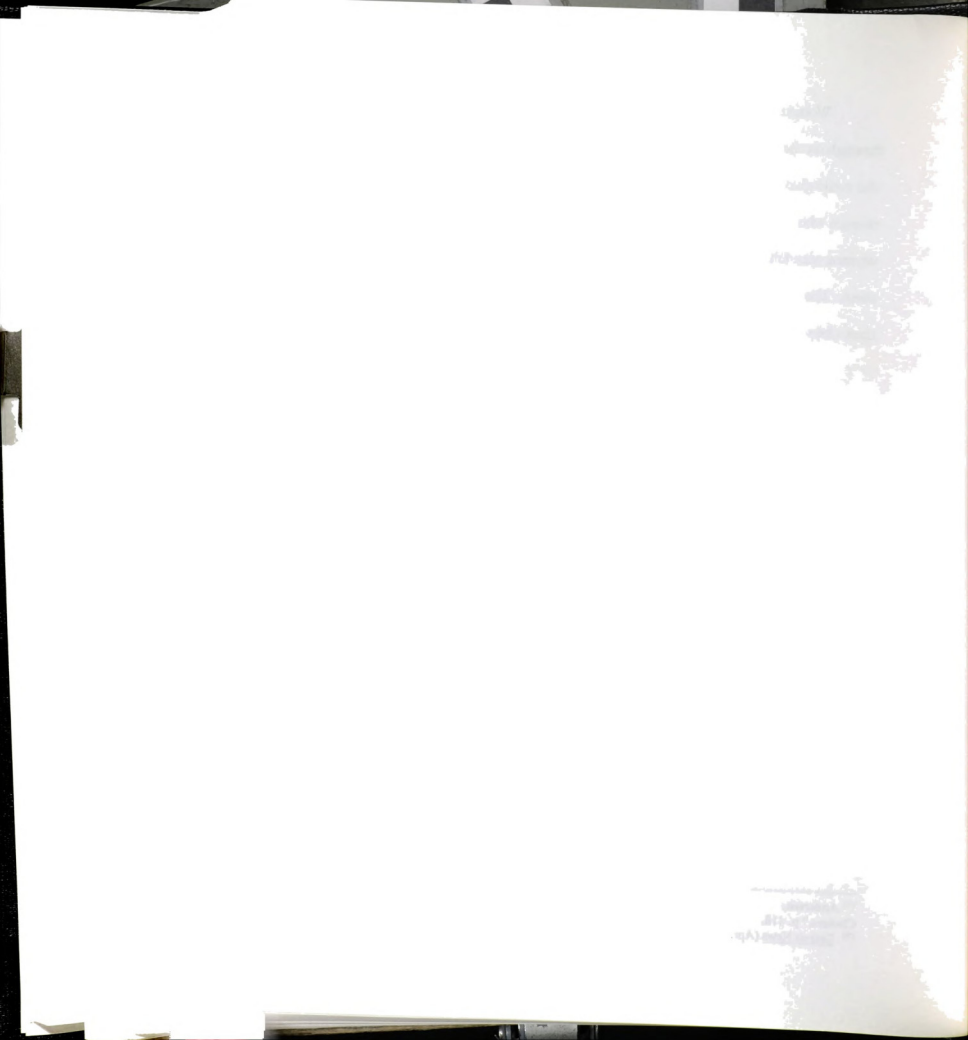
¹⁰⁶ The Michigan Republicans were in sharp contrast to the national Republicans, as described by Freeman. She claims that, in general, before 1970, the Republican Party gave women a better reception than the Democratic Party. Jo Freeman, A Room at a Time - How Women Entered Party Politics (New York, 2000).

Women continued to debate the effectiveness of the non-partisan strategy throughout the 1920s. Some women felt that a woman should be elected simply because she could give a woman's viewpoint, whether she was a Republican or Democrat. While women who thought this way were arguing that women must stand together to elect women, men felt that women would not stick together in politics so they disregarded them. The DFWC Club Woman advised women to show their ability to work together in their clubs and put women into office.

The position of women in partisan politics in Detroit seems to bear out the work of Kristi Andersen. She noted that women were included on committees in both the Democratic and Republican parties, but that these women complained that they were not included in policy meetings. They worked hard but had very little real power in the parties, especially since the real power in the parties often lay outside the formal party structure and in these other venues women were excluded. Freeman described how party committees would meet separately without their female members to make decisions.¹⁰⁷ By 1928, the Republican Women's Federation of Michigan included important club members such as Elizabeth Gulley, Louise Woodhouse, Clara Downey, Laura Osborn, Jean Chamberlain, Ethel Walters, Grace Krolik and Emma Fox, but they were included on Reception, Music and other social committees, never on civic, or policy ones.¹⁰⁸ The Michigan Republican paper The Courier aired its disparaging view of women's equal participation in 1928. The Courier explained that a new law in Wayne County provided opportunities for women to become delegates to the party's state convention. The women

¹⁰⁷ Andersen, "Citizenship," p.184, Freeman, A Room at a Time, p. 110, 119, Perry, "Women's Political Choices," p. 418.

¹⁰⁸ Detroit News (April 22, 1928).



responded by only accumulating enough signatures on fifty petitions. Consequently, there would be only twelve women among the 270 delegates from Wayne County at the convention. The Courier concluded that, "Women politicians proved that they were not even in the amateur class so far as producing results are concerned." On the same page, however, there was an article entitled "G.O.P. Women are Busy" which praised the women's organizational work. The implication was that women were in the "amateur class" regarding the running of the party but they still did valuable "women's work."¹⁰⁹

Throughout her book A Room at a Time - How Women Entered Party Politics, Jo Freeman discussed how party men regarded the entry of women. In 1928, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Beneath the veneer of courtesy and outward show of consideration universally accorded women, there is a widespread male hostility - age old perhaps - against sharing with them any actual control." Roy Peel, Professor of Political Science at New York University, found male attitudes to be even more disparaging. He studied the political clubs of New York City between 1927 and 1932 and concluded, "Publicly, male politicians are reconciled to woman suffrage. Privately, they consider all women politicians as unmitigated nuisances and all women voters as utterly unreasonable and stupid additions to the electorate."¹¹⁰

The position of Michigan women in partisan politics was complicated by the nature of Michigan politics in the 1920s. Between 1876 and 1928, Michigan had gone Republican in every presidential election except 1912, when it went for Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party (there was a divided vote in 1892). Additionally, the Republicans had

¹⁰⁹ The Courier (August 10, 1928).

¹¹⁰ Freeman, A Room at A Time, p.149, 158.



control of the State House and Legislature throughout the decade. For example, the 1927 legislative session included 130 Republicans and only 2 Democrats.¹¹¹ Consequently, the Democrats made a better show of appealing to women because they needed all available allies, a tactic practiced by both parties when they thought it was advantageous.¹¹² The Michigan Republicans had little incentive to change. In the final analysis, both parties seemed to be willing to admit women for organizational work but seemed reluctant to admit them to decision-making positions in the party or to nominate them for political office. In addition, party politics had been the sole dominion of men for so long that they were at a distinct advantage. By 1928, the Detroit News was still uncertain if women could compete with the “skilled policies of men who have long been familiar with the business of electing favorite sons.”¹¹³

Detroit men’s connection to municipal affairs was different from that of women. Clubwomen emphasized the importance of the home and its connection to city hall. In “The City Profitable, The City Livable,” Maureen Flanagan demonstrated how the clubwomen of Chicago envisioned a livable environment which worked for the betterment of all citizens. This was similar to how women ran the home for all family members. In pursuing “municipal housekeeping” these women were really challenging the idea of business efficiency as the highest goal for municipal government policy. Women used the metaphor of home as men used the metaphor of business for how to run the city government. In using the home metaphor, however, Chicago women indicated different

¹¹¹ Detroit News (December 26, 1927).

¹¹² Kristi Andersen, After Suffrage - Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal (Chicago, 1996), p.157.

¹¹³ Vera Brown, “Detroit Organizer Defined Ability of Women Politicians,” Detroit News (December 2, 1928).

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priorities from their male counterparts.¹¹⁴ The National Association Notes emphasized the connection for African-American women between home and municipal affairs when it asked, “How can she make the home atmosphere helpful, if she does not reach out to an understanding of conditions which encompass their social and civic environments?”¹¹⁵ The Detroit News claimed that the role of clubwomen in the 1920s was to bring the “progressive” world to the home. The clubwoman was the link between the two.¹¹⁶ McArthur described Texas clubwomen as taking a scientific approach to homemaking and therefore linking the private home to the greater community. Texas women felt that trained housewives could make cities cleaner and healthier.¹¹⁷ DFWC President Jessie A. Hancock said that as clubwomen, a common interest in the home led members to search for answers to all political questions.¹¹⁸ The DFWC recognized that a homemaker had a commercial value, not in wages earned but rather, in the important place she filled economically. Consequently, the DFWC programs for 1925, 1926 and 1927 centered on the primacy of the home in American life.¹¹⁹

By the 1920s, the home was a more complex place than in the pre-industrial days. In response to a common criticism of “Let women mind their business,” Katherine Goode of the Illinois State Legislature claimed that politics *was* the business of women. She

¹¹⁴ Maureen A. Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman’s City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era,” American Historical Review (October, 1990): 1046, 1049 and “The City Profitable, The City Livable - Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s,” Journal of Urban History 22 (January, 1996): 165-167.

¹¹⁵ (no author) National Association Notes 19 (January, 1917): 13.

¹¹⁶ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Glorifying the Home This Year’s Club Aim,” Detroit News, (September 20, 1928)

¹¹⁷ Judith N. McArthur, Creating the New Woman - The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918 (Urbana and Chicago, 1998), p.31-33.

¹¹⁸ Jessie A. Hancock, “The President’s Page,” The Club Woman 22 (August, 1930): 11.

¹¹⁹ Majorie Elaine Porter, “Glorifying the Home.”



argued that home production of cloth and food had gone outside the house, but women were still responsible for these things. In an article reminiscent of Jane Addams' "Municipal Housekeeping," Goode believed that the ballot must be used to protect the home. Furthermore, women with similar objectives must unite to effect change. She insisted that "the business of government, our government, the game of promoting the general welfare" was of paramount importance to women.¹²⁰

The emphasis on the home continued into 1928 but had a new urgency because of the rapid urbanization of Detroit. The MFWC State Meeting discussed the pressures on the American family as a result of rapid industrialization. They believed families were suffering from nervous tension and feared that the new urban environment was especially frightening to children who must be given the mental and physical stamina to survive. As clubwomen who took their maternal responsibilities seriously, they wanted to create the best home environment possible. To address this issue, Mrs. John F. Sippel, President of the GFWC even suggested a movement back to the farm and when that was not possible, at least a move to the suburbs.¹²¹ But, clubwomen were aware that overplaying maternalism alone, could be overbearing. Ruth Mosher Place, writing for the Detroit News, in "The Hand That Wields the Ballot," noted that women transformed politics only when they were united. Also, their position in the home made them masters at human relations so they could be masters at politics as well.¹²²

Despite clubwomen's clear and overt message about the inexorable connections between home and city in the modern industrial environment, they continued to encounter

¹²⁰ Mrs. J. Paul Goode, "Let Women Mind Their Business," Michigan Woman 5 (March, 1927): 26-30.

¹²¹ Detroit News (September 30, 1928).

¹²² Ruth Mosher Place, "The Hand That Wields the Ballot," The Club Woman 19 (September, 1926).

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marked hostility to their civic intrusion. The Detroit News reported that many clubwomen were discouraged in their plans by husbands who failed to take their club plans seriously. Women went home and explained with great enthusiasm some upcoming civic project. Their husbands greeted those ideas condescendingly and said our “ plan is not practical, that it is just like a woman.” Furthermore, men seemed to complain that women did not know about politics but the same men were unwilling to teach them. One politically active Detroit woman believed all men were reactionary towards women’s progress and if women wanted to accomplish anything, “they must have the courage to carry on without the men.”¹²³ Civic minded Detroit women had to be especially courageous because they were also subject to negative gender stereotypes. When Judge Lila M. Neuenfelt was elected Michigan’s youngest Justice of the Peace, the Detroit News announced it on the front page. The News included a large picture of the very attractive Miss Neuenfelt captioned “‘Baby’ of the Bench.” The word baby was in quotations giving the impression that it referred to a slang expression for females and not simply to her young age. Before describing Miss Neuenfelt’s qualifications, the article spoke of her “auburn hair, blue eyes and a smile that helped her campaign enormously. She wears pretty clothes and is ‘thrilled to death’ today.” Almost half the article was devoted to her appearance and spirited campaign. Her policies and issues were secondary.¹²⁴ While the article reported the event, its emphasis on attractive female attributes detracts from the seriousness of Judge Neuenfelt’s position and achievement. Even the Michigan Citizen, which was full of political articles for issues facing Michigan Democrats, had whole pages dedicated to

¹²³ Detroit News (December 20, 1925).

¹²⁴ Detroit News (April 6, 1926).

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women's fashion. Articles entitled, "Bloomer Suit for Sports" and "How To Make a Smart Bow" implied that women who subscribed to a partisan political newspaper were still looking for fashion news.¹²⁵

African-American clubwomen, aware that the large newspapers seldom printed positive stories about their race, wrote for several of the Detroit black newspapers. The Detroit Study Club's Lillian Johnson addressed the members on the importance of newspapers for the black community. She said that every racial group needed its own paper to keep in touch and express the needs of its community. Johnson noted that it was especially important for African-Americans because they needed to be united against prejudice and they seldom got a fair press otherwise.¹²⁶ Clubwoman, Meta E. Pelham advised African-American women to join, or help finance a black newspaper. She claimed that there was always newspaper space for negative news about black Detroiters but "the good things we do too often fail to bring to us the respect and consideration due us because they do not reach the public eye."¹²⁷ Isabelle Carter was the Vice President of the Detroit Independent.¹²⁸ Clubwoman Margaret (Mrs. James) McCall also wrote for the Detroit Independent during the 1920s. In 1933 she and her husband joined the staff for the Detroit Tribune. Bettie Elizabeth Ellington was the Vice -President, Managing Editor for the Tribune. The paper was dedicated to breaking down barriers which prevented the progress of minorities in Detroit. It crusaded for better jobs, equal wage scales,

¹²⁵ Michigan Citizen 2 (February 12, 1921): 6.

¹²⁶ Lillian Johnson, "The Newspaper's Part in the Life of Detroit," (November 13, 1925), MS Detroit Study Club, Box 2, Folder 3.

¹²⁷ Meta E. Pelham, "Miss Meta Pelham, Custodian of Douglass Funds, Expresses Sound Sentiment," The National Notes 27 (April, 1925): 6.

¹²⁸ Colored Detroit, 1924 - A Brief History of Detroit's Colored Population (Detroit, 1924), p. 68.

1. The first step is to identify the problem.

2. The second step is to define the problem.

3. The third step is to analyze the problem.

4. The fourth step is to develop a solution.

5. The fifth step is to implement the solution.

6. The sixth step is to evaluate the solution.

7. The seventh step is to monitor the solution.

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9. The ninth step is to review the solution.

10. The tenth step is to conclude the solution.

11. The eleventh step is to document the solution.

12. The twelfth step is to disseminate the solution.

promotions and more positions in fire and police departments, African-American teachers and positions in city, county and state governments.¹²⁹ Lastly, Beulah (Mrs. James) Young established the Detroit People's News in 1924 and published it until 1930.¹³⁰

Detroit women also had to counter negative stereotypes about being too silly, irrationally emotional, or entirely too self-centered to be taken seriously in politics. According to Dorothy Brown, a 1920s an article in Harpers claimed that regarding women, the old prejudices remained. Contemporary literature on intelligence, character and temperament, all claimed women as dominated by feeling and men by reason.¹³¹ In 1928, the Detroit News printed an artistic rendition covering an entire newspaper page about women voters entitled "Political Views." There was a stylish flapper at the center musing over a ballot box. All around the ballot box were other equally stylish women looking at candidates' positions. Their remarks were "Such eyes," "He's so adorable looking," "He has the most charming manners," and "What a wonderful physique." The message was quite clear that women (or least young women) voted for candidates because of their good looks and charm. Their dilemma at the ballot box had nothing to do with issues but rather with the superficial attributes of candidates.¹³²

While the Detroit News "Political Views" of women was certainly unfair to civic minded clubwomen, these clubwomen themselves sometimes generated negative comments. It certainly did not help the argument that women were serious, intelligent voters in 1928 when the Wayne County LWV held a fashion show so the well-dressed

¹²⁹ Michigan Colored Women's Club, Box 1, Record Group 60-14, State Archives of Michigan.

¹³⁰ Michigan Chronicle (June 28, 1986). Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham noted the importance of the black press and women in, "In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics," p.203-205.

¹³¹ Dorothy M. Brown, Setting A Course - American Women in the 1920s (Boston, 1987), p.40.

¹³² Detroit News (December 2, 1928).

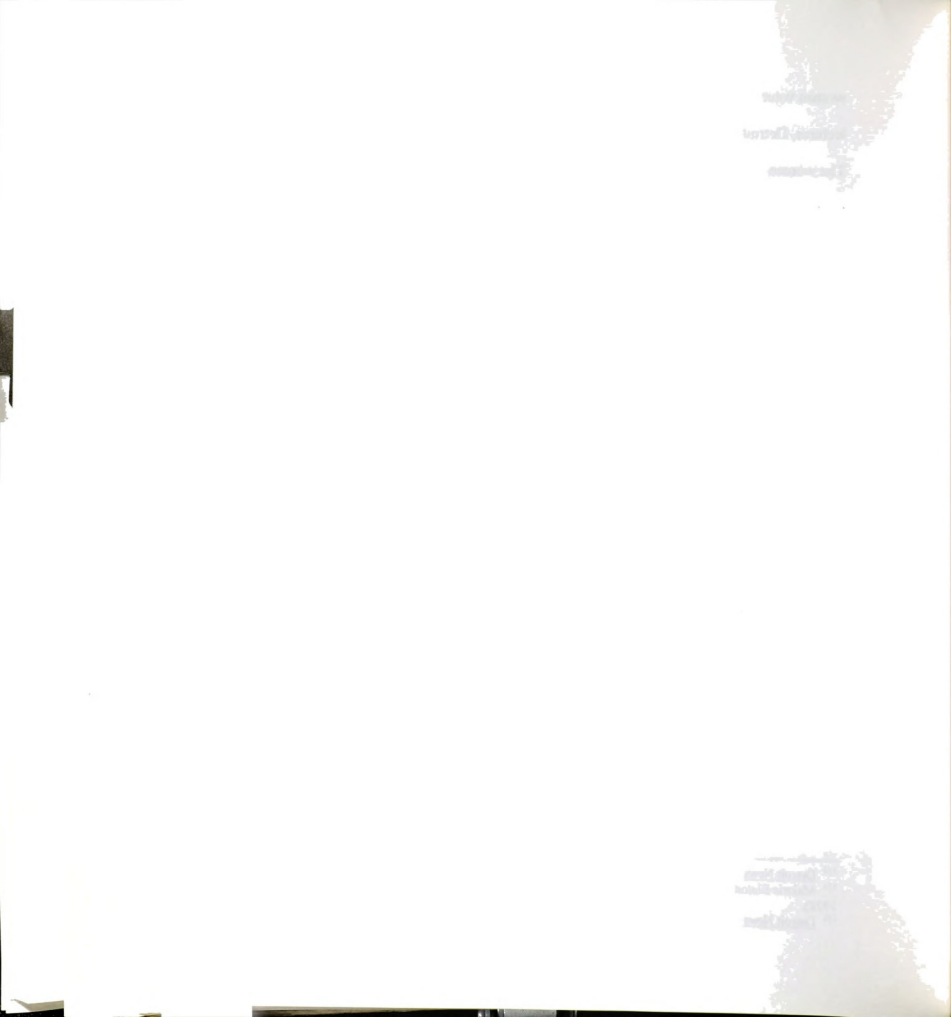
woman voter would know what to wear.¹³³ Marjorie Elaine Porter reported that at some lectures, Detroit women behaved like adoring school girls before prominent celebrities. The women lowered their self-respect by making inane comments like “How can you remember all those words without getting mixed up?” Miss Porter advised clubwomen to feel at ease with any celebrity. It would reflect well on the club and the clubwomen alike.¹³⁴

Such incidents, however, were anomalies. Most clubwomen were interested in informative, intellectual presentations. When male speakers simply complimented them or presented material in a simplistic manner, they were insulted. Mary (Mrs. J. Nelson) Lewis, President of the DFWC, explained that when men failed to believe that women could grasp intellectual facts, they not only wasted the women’s time but insulted them as well. While not all clubs had negative experiences with male speakers, many prominent ones did. Louise Woodhouse believed that hundreds of votes had been lost because of the shallowness of a speaker’s presentation.¹³⁵ This speaker problem presents an interesting way in which men viewed clubwomen. They must have thought it was important to address women voters. At the same time, they believed the women were not politically astute and should not be given an intellectually rigorous presentation. As Woodhouse suggested, the men thought they could gain women’s votes by simply showing up. In their erroneous assumption that women were civic morons, those men lost women’s votes.

¹³³ Detroit News (December 9, 1928).

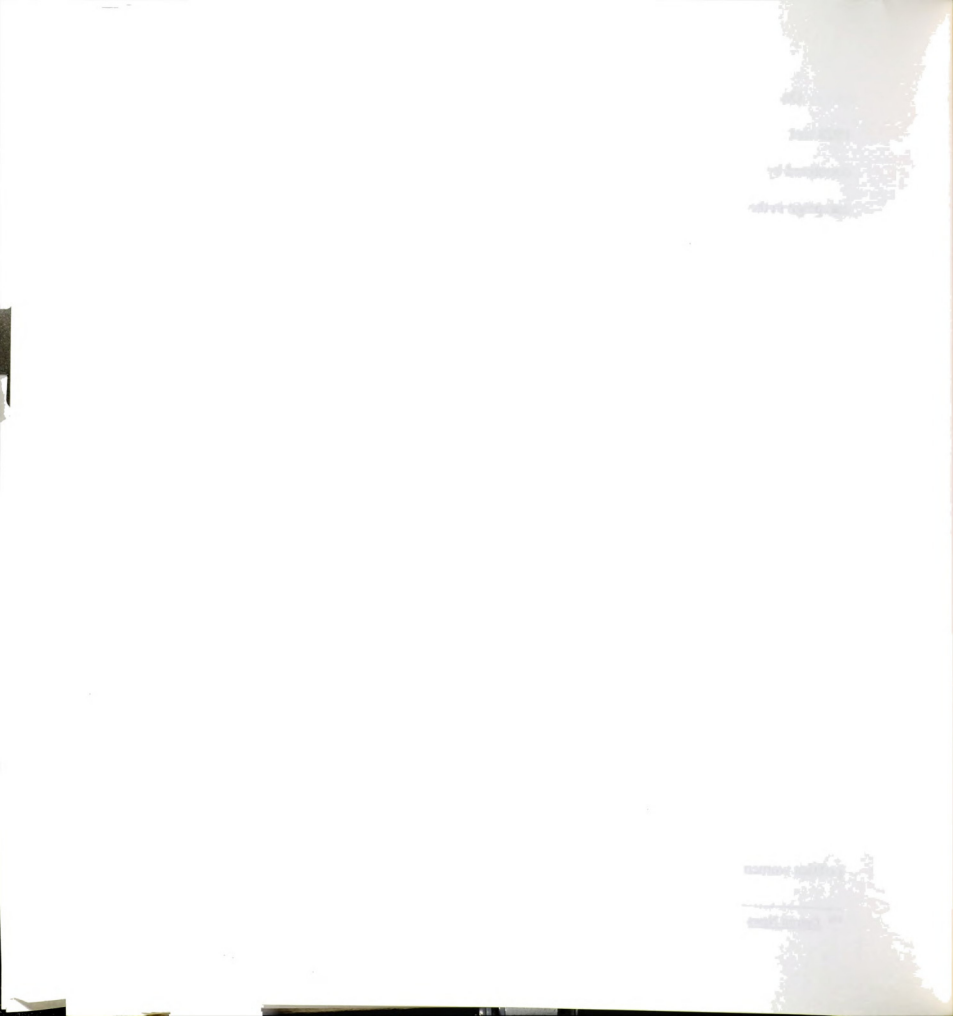
¹³⁴ Marjorie Elaine Porter, “Undue Flattery Costly to Givers Self-Respect,” Detroit News (November 18, 1928).

¹³⁵ Detroit News (December 4, 1927).



On the other hand, a high profile Detroit clubwomen, Clara Downey, declared in 1928 that she was completely disillusioned with women in politics. Her opinions were countered by Zalie B. Clago, who ran the Hoover (for President) - Green (for Governor) campaign in the Fall, 1928. He really praised the organizational abilities of Detroit women. He mentioned Republican organizer Clara Messmore (Mrs. Charles) Brunk and Louise Woodhouse and "scores of women" who were politically successful. Downey's criticism was not about success but sincerity. She feared that women were working for "personal glorification" and no longer for the common good. She claimed that when she first entered politics, she was asked to "double-cross" her best friend. She soon discovered that politics meant making deals not living ideals. She thoroughly lambasted political women as failing to work together and letting their personal preferences supersede the common good. She thought women were "selfish, ignorant of national, state and city politics and are interested just for their own glorification and popularity." While she believed that women could make a positive, political difference if they had competent leaders and worked for the common good, she despaired that there was no one able to do that at that time. Downey had been a member of the State Republican Committee for three successive terms (six years) and concluded, "To my mind, Detroit women in politics are an absolute flop."¹³⁶ It is important to note that Downey wasn't necessarily condemning clubwomen who were politically active. She herself intended to remain doing safety work with the Detroit Police Department, work she had begun in the early 1920s as part of the DFWC. Rather, she was making the argument that in party politics women were self-interested rather than community interested.

¹³⁶ Detroit News (December 2, 1928).



Lastly, politically active clubwomen had to counter negative stereotypes about radicalism. Jane Addams captured the paranoia of the times when she said “Any proposed change was suspect, even those efforts that had been considered praiseworthy before the war. To advance new ideas was to be radical or even a bolshevist.”¹³⁷ The Dearborn Independent wrote that the leadership of women’s organizations had fallen into the hands of radicals. The article was entitled “Are Women’s Clubs ‘Used’ by Bolsheviks” run by Socialist Florence Kelly?¹³⁸ The newspaper claimed that this bad turn threatened to ruin all the previous accomplishments of women’s clubs. Alice Ames Winter, President of the GFWC responded by saying that the GFWC sponsored nothing contrary to the U.S. Constitution. She also countered the accusation about there being interlocking directorates by stating that individual clubs elect their own.¹³⁹

Again, in 1927 women had to explain their support for the Children’s Bureau as growing out of American needs and not Soviet inspired.¹⁴⁰ Gullett noted that California clubwomen believed America could only be a full democracy if there was social justice. These women wanted social services, not a socialist state.¹⁴¹ Clubwomen, by their active interest in many civic projects, as well as their advocacy of social welfare measures, found themselves vulnerable to criticism about their motives in the context of the 1920s.

The clubwomen of both Michigan and Detroit continued throughout the 1920s to pursue civic objectives within their clubs. This had been their modus operandi before the

¹³⁷ Addams quoted in Freeman, A Room at A Time, p.143.

¹³⁸ Freeman, A Room at A Time, p.144-145.

¹³⁹ Mrs. Thomas Winter, “Mrs. Winter Replies to Dearborn Independent,” The Club Woman 16, (May, 1924): 524-526.

¹⁴⁰ “Mrs. Sherman Denounces Propaganda Against Children’s Bureau,” The Club Woman 19, (July, 1927): 638.

¹⁴¹ Gullett, Becoming Citizens, p.190.

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject of the study. It discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. It includes information about the sample size, the data collection methods, and the statistical analysis techniques.

franchise. Considering their pre-suffrage success, it made sense to continue to do so. As Kristi Andersen noted, women's non-partisan but civic interest shifted attention from the parties and towards issues and candidates. Women in general renegotiated the boundaries of male and female political activity.¹⁴² Women had pioneered alternative forms of political persuasion before they had the vote. They simply added the franchise to their other strategies. They maintained a Progressive tradition by the constant study of political issues. Even though they emphasized the home in municipal affairs, they sometimes encountered opposition within their own ranks. While they were ambivalent about joining the political parties, they were brought into conflict with them when they offered voter education. Their sponsorship of Candidates Days and civic lectures offered citizens a non-partisan venue for political education. Throughout these programs, clubwomen were successful at airing political issues and bringing them to the neighborhood block. Women's civic intrusion was continually disparaged by men who portrayed them as silly and politically incompetent. Although women lacked the tools to counter these negative stereotypes, they did pioneer new communication techniques in print and broadcast media.

In spite of the negative press and disparaging attitude of men, clubwomen believed that they had made a positive difference in Detroit politics. By the end of the decade, Mary Lewis, President of the DFWC claimed that the attitude of men in high places had changed towards the Federation. They were once looked down upon as merely tea drinkers but as the 1920s wore on, they were pressed into service for help in any big community undertaking.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Andersen, *After Suffrage*, p.1-18.

¹⁴³ "Detroit Women of Prominence," *Woman's Bulletin*, Edith M. Rose, ed., (April, 1928)

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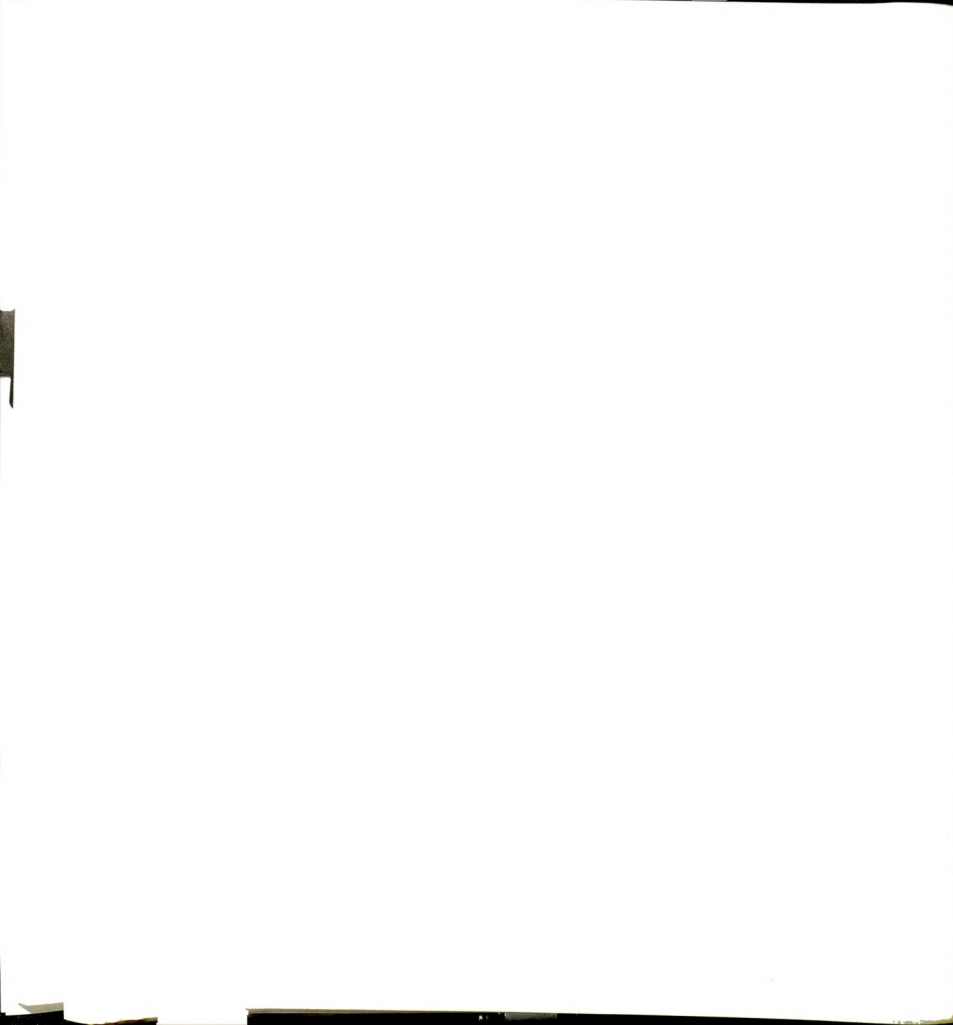
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Beulah Young, organized the African-American community with the Political Leaders Assembly which included men and women but highlighted women in prominent executive positions. Young was President; Eva Jackson, First Vice President; Eleanor Saunders, Second Vice President; and Mary Rhodes, Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The purpose of the Political Leaders Assembly was to promote a better community, government, and one hundred percent registration and voting. The organization was divided into neighborhoods with assembly presidents and assembly members. On the first and third Mondays of every month, the neighborhood groups met and discussed local issues. These meetings were for serious political work and “no social atmosphere permitted.” On the second Monday, the assembly presidents and recording secretaries convened with the President and officers of the general body at the offices of the Detroit Peoples News. Led by Young, they discussed psychology, Americanization, good public behavior, social ethics, home economics, parliamentary law, good political leadership and other community issues. On the fourth Monday, a general mass meeting was held. Special speakers were invited and assembly presidents presented their block reports. There was an open forum for common problems. In this way Young, attached a grass-roots organization to a larger body for more political clout in the African-American community.¹⁴⁴ The Political Leaders Assembly helped elect Charles D. Diggs, Senior to the State Senate in 1936.¹⁴⁵

Throughout the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen were both settling in and contesting Detroit’s political environment. They believed themselves to be enfranchised and

¹⁴⁴ Detroit Peoples News (December 28, 1930).

¹⁴⁵ Michigan Chronicle (June 28, 1986).



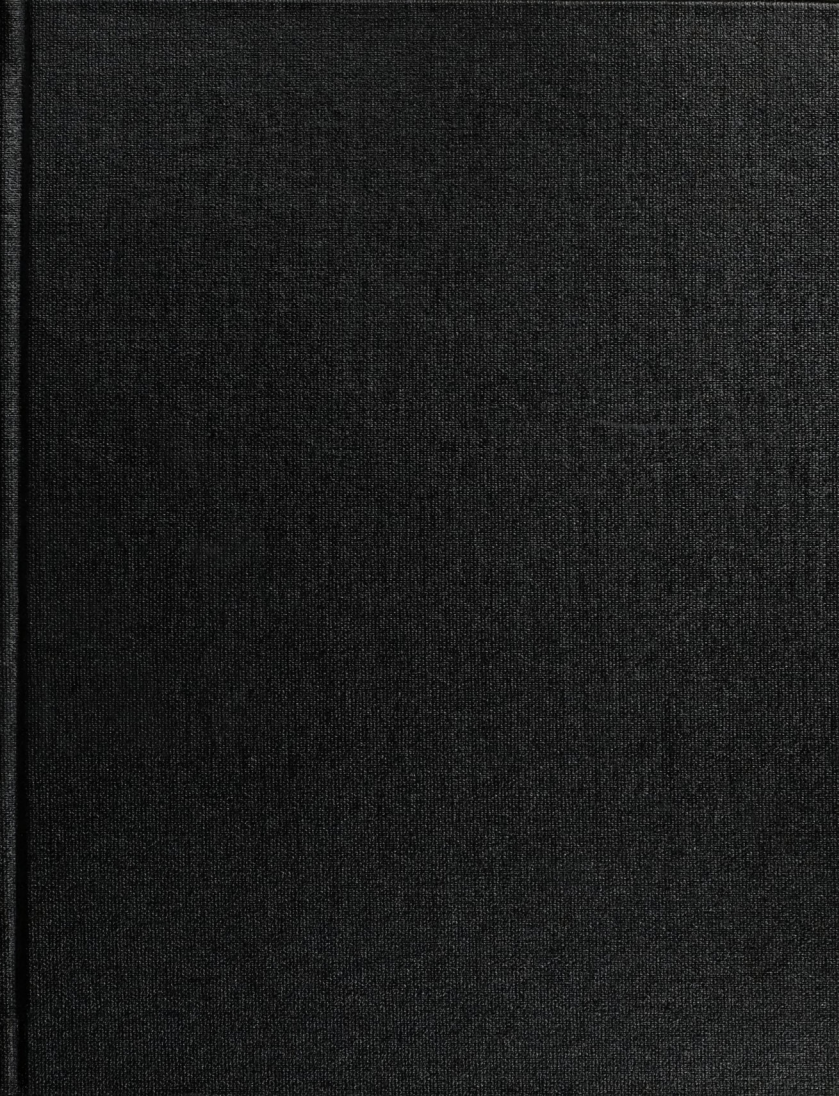
therefore equal citizens. They discovered that persistent gendered ideas held by men and women qualified that equality. Additionally, the closed access to the decision-making power in the political parties and Detroit politics encouraged them to remain in their clubs for their municipal activism. They persisted in pursuing their civic agenda. This agenda especially concerned issues relating to women and children, crime and punishment, and the problems of an urban environment. The clubwomen of Detroit would insist on injecting their political voice in the affairs of Detroit throughout the decade.



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**“A CHALLENGE AND A PROMISE”: THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF DETROIT
CLUBWOMEN IN THE 1920S**

VOLUME II

By

Jayne Morris-Crowther

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2001

Chapter 5 - Women and Children

As discussed in previous chapters, having come to politics from outside the system, clubwomen continued to use their organizations as their primary venue for urban activism. But, the concept of a women's political culture had ideological, as well as methodological consequences for Detroit clubwomen's work through the 1920s that, when combined with Detroit's urban context, helps explain what municipal issues were most important for these women and why. Unfortunately, for Detroit clubwomen, working within a women's political culture, also gave Detroit men the opportunity to disparage both women's concerns and abilities as political actors.

As Sara Evans has convincingly argued, by the late nineteenth century American politics was mainly centered around economic goals and therefore had lost much of its participatory aspect. But, at the same time, there arose voluntary associations which provided new avenues for citizenship. Evans stated that women, through these voluntary associations, opened up new possibilities for civic action for themselves. These voluntary associations were located at the juncture between the public and private realms. They occupied a unique position between the state and domestic life, thereby offering women opportunities to participate in public life, to establish themselves as political actors and to change what should constitute the legitimate concerns of the state and appropriate political behavior. Issues that addressed basic human needs, such as food and safety, became legitimate subjects for public debate and action. Most importantly, the women emphasized the connection between private and public life.¹

¹ Sara M. Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life" in Suzanne Lebsock and Nancy Hewitt, eds., Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism (Urbana, 1993), p.119-139.

Other historians have approached women's early twentieth century urban club work within a similar conceptual framework. Maureen Flanagan described Chicago clubwomen as having a gendered vision for their city that differed from that of men of their status. While these men consistently advocated urban programs to enhance business interests in sanitation, education and police power, the women's vision of the city encompassed their perception of the well being of Chicago's citizens regardless of its affect on business. Flanagan concluded that the different relationship that middle-class men and women had to the municipal government accounts for the different visions. Men dealt with the city through the conduit of business, while women's contact with city hall came primarily through the home.² Judith McArthur explained that during the Progressive Era, Texas clubwomen linked the private to the public through their idea of "scientific homemaking." They believed that educated, organized housewives could raise the level of public health and make cities cleaner. Their position as mothers prompted them to campaign for playgrounds, building inspectors and classroom supplies. They established a women's public culture for community improvement that included projects like library construction. In this way, they also established female dominated public spaces.³ Kathryn Kish Sklar argued that women's middle-class activism filled the vacuum left by only sporadic working-class activism. Poverty, disease and ignorance were a menace to the middle as well as to the working-class. Women used motherhood as a wedge into civic activism. But, while motherhood and family were important, women reformers advanced

² Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* (October, 1990): 1032-1050.

³ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Urbana, 1998), p. 31, 33, 55-56, 77-79.

policies that were really class oriented.⁴ The members of the New York City Women's City Club emphasized the connection between family and community in their reform work. Perry loosely described their work as surrounding "social" or "human" issues. Clubwomen in New York, like clubwomen in other American cities, sought to improve the quality of life for all the city's residents.⁵

Detroit clubwomen stressed this connection between home and community. In 1923, President Lillian Smith Mathews, in an address titled "Woman as a Working Power," declared that DFWC was of great importance to Detroit, because its activities proved that home and community were one and the same. She believed that women were becoming a "working power" in the world through a new type of relationship to public life. This relationship stressed the interconnectedness of public and private realms. Women's civic activity was the bridge between the two and therefore, women understood they must take part in the economic and social life of their communities.⁶ As Detroit clubwomen took an active part in the economic and social parts of their communities, they were especially sensitive to issues concerning women and children. This led them to approach the economic and social conditions of Detroit in a certain way. It also involved them in issues that were not entirely municipal, but that concerned protecting the family and home of Detroit's citizens. Flanagan described how Chicago clubwomen felt the city must work for human betterment. This philosophy often put them at odds with men who

⁴ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State," in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel eds., Mothers of a New World (New York, 1993), p. 68.

⁵ Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," New York History (October, 1990): 417-434.

⁶ Lillian Mathews, "Woman as a Working Power," Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs -Directory 1923, 5.

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⁶ Lillian Mathews, "Woman as a Working Power," Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs -Directory 1923, 5.

were most concerned with financial saving as this chapter and the following will illustrate.⁷ Detroit clubwomen, in all their activities, would agree with Louise deKoven Bowen who believed that women of a city had to make a civic commitment to that city. She stated that people should realize that in municipal affairs, the “safety of family, honor of wife and children and even our own happiness may be involved.”⁸

The October 1921 Club Woman cover stated, “The position of the modern woman is parallel to that of the automobile; we meet her at every turn and whether we like her or not, if we get in the way, we are likely to be run over.”⁹ The engagement of Detroit clubwomen with a broad range of issues that affected women and children across the 1920s proves the correctness of this metaphor.

Women’s Rights in Michigan

Once they had become political equals with the vote, some Detroit clubwomen pressed immediately to alter women’s legal position. In 1923, led by the President of the Women Citizen’s League, Jennie Patton Beattie, Detroit’s State Senators, George M. Condon and Donald A Wallace drew up a bill which recognized the legal equality between husbands and wives. Senator Condon said the woman’s rights bill rested on two assumptions: that a husband and wife were equal partners and entitled to rule the house and share the responsibility for it, and that a woman marries to better, not hinder, her condition. The bill introduced by Condon declared that a married woman should have all

⁷ Maureen A. Flanagan, “The City Profitable, The City Livable - Environmental Policy, Gender and Power in Chicago in the 1910s,” Journal of Urban History 22 (January, 1996): 163-190.

⁸ Louise deKoven Bowen, Growing Up With a City (New York, 1926), p.24.

⁹ The Club Woman 14 (October, 1921): cover.

the rights of a single woman to sue and be sued, make contracts, seek employment and even choose to establish her own domicile. Furthermore, both husband and wife were head of the household and both were entitled to the earnings of their minor children. Detroit clubwomen were especially concerned with the potential loss of protective labor legislation, so the Michigan law was an attempt to stop the common law disabilities of women and provide the same rights, privileges and immunities as men while avoiding the protective legislation dilemma, by including a special section saying it did not affect the employment of women in industry. The nationally prominent Elsie Hill, Chairman of the National Council of the National Woman's Party (NWP), came to Michigan to urge support for the measure.¹⁰ The Women's Bill of Rights had some high-profile supporters among Detroit clubwomen such as Emma A. Fox and Harriet Robinson McGraw (Twentieth Century Club), Lillian Ascough (Vice President of the Michigan Branch of the NWP), and Lucia Grimes (President, State Legislative Council of Women).¹¹ In spite of this support the bill met a great deal of opposition among women in general. They feared the bill would not only remove the common law disabilities of married women, but eventually remove protective legislation.¹² Although Senator Condon pledged his complete support for these measures, both in the Judiciary committee of which he was chairman and on the Senate floor, they failed in 1923.¹³

In 1925, the Board of Directors of the DFWC adopted a resolution (47/7) regarding women's rights that was an eloquent statement of their ideas about equality and

¹⁰ Detroit News (January 8, 1922).

¹¹ Detroit News (October 29, 1922).

¹² Detroit News (February 11, 1923).

¹³ Detroit News (January 19, 1923).

difference. It declared that the family was a social unit in which women had natural duties as wives and mothers. The law, the DFWC proposed, should reflect those differences. Consequently, absolute equality would be of no benefit, yet, women were neither inferior nor superior to men.¹⁴

Detroit clubwomen's understanding of women's equality and difference demonstrated a commitment to a broader definition of full citizenship. In "Beyond the Difference versus Equality Policy Debate: Postsuffrage Feminism, Citizenship and their Quest for a Feminist State," Wendy Sarvasy explained that the goals of full citizenship and a feminist welfare state were interdependent. She claims that post-suffrage female reformers wanted public policy to allow for equality and difference. They sought to expand the notion of citizenship beyond gendered limitations. Sarvasy noted that mothers' pensions were supported by both pro and anti Equal Rights Amendment groups. Both envisioned an enlarged women's public role in public policy and saw women's contributions to society and the state as different from men's but nonetheless equal.¹⁵

Clubwomen wanted to improve the status of women and children especially regarding support. They believed attention should be paid to the deficiencies. They, therefore, wanted to safeguard a wife's separate property from the undue coercion of her husband. They thought a husband should be prevented from contracting to his wife's disadvantage. Furthermore, both husband and wife should be protected from the liability

¹⁴ "Report of the Executive Committee" (March 30, 1925), Vol 14 Minutes 1924-1925, p. 727-733, Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, in the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library (BHC).

¹⁵ Wendy Sarvasy, "Beyond the Difference versus Equality Policy Debate: Postsuffrage Feminism, Citizenship, and the Quest for a Feminist Welfare State," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 17 (Winter, 1992): 329-362.

of the other. Lastly, the DFWC Directors felt that both husband and wife should have reciprocal and fairly balanced rights.¹⁶

The issue of women's rights arose again in Michigan in 1925 because Frances Florer, authored a bill to give women full contractual privileges and protect them from the undue influence of their husbands. Having received the endorsement of Detroit's Judge Ira W. Jayne, Florer sought, but failed to receive the support of the DFWC. Florer was urged to offer her bill by Professor Herbert F. Goodrich, Secretary of the Michigan Bar Association. A law student herself, Florer was interested in raising the status of married women in Michigan. Florer claimed that married women in Michigan had not materially advanced much since 1855 with the Married Women's Act. This act allowed married women to own a separate estate. In 1911, a married woman in Michigan could contract for her services and collect her own wages but, to quote the 1911 law, was not "competent to enter into any engagement, transaction or contract the same as if unmarried." The 1925 Florer Bill attempted to end that disability for married women by granting them full contractual privileges. It would also protect married women who were coerced into signing notes with their husbands.¹⁷

While the DFWC supported the safeguarding of a wife's separate property and undue coercion from her husband, the Board of Directors did not endorse full contractual privileges. The Lucia Grimes Papers contained a letter to DFWC's President Edna Prescott protesting this narrow view. Grimes' letter claimed that if the Board were against equal rights, then it must also be against women voting, serving on juries and equal

¹⁶ "Report of the Executive Committee" (March 30, 1925), Vol 14 Minutes 1924-1925, p.727-733, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁷ Detroit News (January 25, 1925).

guardianship. The letter went on to protest both the article in the Detroit Free Press denouncing the bill, signed by DFWC members Grace Krolik and Gertrude Wallace and the sending of that article to all the senators in Michigan. It was assumed the DFWC reacted vigorously against the bill because the Board felt it was highly endorsed by the National Woman's Party . The DFWC leadership wanted to divorce themselves from the Florer Bill and voice their disapproval. The letter ended by claiming that the signed and distributed Free Press article killed the measure.¹⁸ Ella (Mrs. F.C.) Aldinger of the State Legislative Council of Women reported in summer of 1925, that the bill had passed in the state House but failed in the Senate.¹⁹

In 1927, the Legislative Council of Michigan Women reported that Senator George Condon had introduced a bill granting a married woman's right to contract in the previous five legislative sessions. They all met with defeat because, according to Ella Aldinger, "Few men are willing to give the right to women after they are married to conduct their own business."²⁰

In 1929, as the MLWV was reporting on the State Legislature, Beth Fay Adams stated that the bill on women's right to contract was vetoed by the Governor Fred Green. His veto offers some insight on the reasons why equal rights legislation was difficult to pass in Michigan. The Governor said "In these days of installment buying and high pressure salesmen we need all the protection we can get not only for the wives but for the

¹⁸ Letter to Edna Prescott from unnamed (perhaps Kathleen Hendrie McGraw, President of the Michigan Branch of the National Woman's Party), no date, ~1925, Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 1, Correspondence 1925-1928, in the Michigan Historical Collections at the Bentley Historical Library (MHC).

¹⁹ Mrs. F. C. Aldinger, "What the 1925 Legislature Did," Michigan Woman 3 (Summer, 1925): 26, 27.

²⁰ "Report to the Members of the Legislative Council of Michigan Women" (May 28, 1927), Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 2, Papers 1912-1932, MHC.

husbands as well.” Apparently, Governor Green believed that women were vulnerable to “high pressure salesmen” and susceptible to living beyond their means. The protection for husbands, came in the form of keeping their wives from foolish consumerism. He claimed that the number of women who might suffer without the bill would be very small compared to the number who would be adversely affected “if all protection were removed as in the proposed bill.” The Florer Bill had proposed that a woman was competent, which was clearly not universally accepted in Michigan in the 1920s. Adams concluded that in the first half of 1929, there were almost no bills passed that were important to women as women.²¹

Equal contractual rights for married women also drew heavy criticism in the press. The Michigan State Digest claimed that the Condon Bill was really “smashing equal rights.” According to the article, the supporters of equal rights for women were the descendants of “White House picketers and window breakers” and now these lawless women wanted to smash the laws which protect married women. This was perhaps all right for business women but it would deprive the homemaker. The Condon Bill would ultimately only give women the right to be robbed.²²

Most Detroit clubwomen believed in full citizenship, but they opposed the Equal Rights (ERA) or Lucretia Mott Amendment. In spite of the many appearances by nationally prominent NWP members in Detroit, clubwomen generally remained opposed to the ERA. In April 1920, Rheta Childe Dorr came to Detroit and spoke to the Twentieth Century Club to promote the ERA. She explained that the guiding philosophy of the NWP

²¹ Beth Fay Adams, “What Was Done By The State Legislature,” Michigan Woman 7 (July/August, 1929): 26.

²² Michigan State Digest (May 30, 1929).

was one of no special privileges for men or women. She believed, moreover, that protective legislation denied opportunities for women.²³ At the 1922 meeting of the MFWC, Marjory Wittemore presented NWP research that concluded that Michigan women were legally almost slaves. Married women were encumbered by laws that hindered their freedom to contract and control their wages.²⁴ In spite of the attention the NWP gave Detroit, clubwomen in the city remained divided over the merits of the Equal Rights Amendment. The Detroit News reported that many women's clubs were opposed to or remained silent on the amendment. When the Detroit Sorosis held a formal debate on the subject in late 1923, a majority of its members voted for defeat.²⁵ Even the Zonta Club whose members were professional and business women did not support the ERA. In 1923, the NWP State Chairman, Gertrude Pelletin, wrote to the President of the Zonta Club asking for a Detroit branch of the NWP among professional and business women. The letter emphasized the necessity of clubwomen's cooperation with professional and business women for equal rights. When the Zonta Club met to discuss the letter, they refused to go on record as favoring the Lucretia Mott Amendment. Several club members spoke in favor of it, but there were so many different opinions that the club voted to debate the matter again at its next business meeting. At that time, a debate was not formally held, although papers were read for both sides. Finally, it was moved, seconded and carried that at the National Zonta Convention, the Detroit chapter would vote against the ERA.²⁶ In the Summer of 1925, the NWP held its mid-western conference in suburban

²³ "Women's Place in Industry," Twentieth Century Club Magazine (April, 1920):11

²⁴ Detroit News (October 21, 1922).

²⁵ Detroit News (November 25, 1923).

²⁶ Zonta Club Monthly Business Meeting, (May 3, 1928, June 7, 1928), Manuscript Collection (MS) of The Zonta Club, BHC.

Detroit providing ample opportunity for speakers and mass meetings.²⁷ The Executive Committee of the DFWC issued a statement saying it did not oppose all the policies of the NWP even though it did not support ERA.²⁸

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF DETROIT

Working Women

Detroit clubwomen's concern that ERA might affect the protective legislation that they believed was important for working women was their primary objection to it. By 1920, Detroit was the third largest U.S. city for manufacturing. As such, its huge industrial base presented various problems and opportunities for working women. The DFWC Club Directory for 1920/21 was sprinkled throughout with quotes revealing the clubwomen's concern for this as a women's issue. Among them was: "The time has passed when women, protected in their homes from conditions that surround other women, can remain passive, untouched and disinterested."²⁹ The clubwomen of Detroit recognized the changing economic status of both Detroit and Detroit's working women. Clubwomen were advised that the problems of an industrialized, urbanized Detroit required both political and economic solutions. Still, clubwomen were in a dilemma. They were seldom wage earners themselves so they directed their policies on the basis of what they thought was best for families. This led them to seek policies for working women that may have been at odds with the actual needs of working women.

²⁷ Detroit News (June 4, 1925).

²⁸ "Report of the Executive Committee" (March 30, 1925), Vol 14 Minutes 1924-1925, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²⁹ Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Directory, 1920-1921 p.21.

There were more women wage earners in Michigan than ever before. An article in The Magazine of the Women's City Club, called "Women Workers of Michigan" by Clara Mengler claimed that one sixth of all Michigan wage earners were women. One fifth of those were married. A high percentage were gainfully employed until age forty-four (37% of female workers were between 20 and 24, 18% were between 25-44). Consequently, when women had the greatest responsibility in the home, they were also employed. She emphasized that this was a gradual, steady trend since 1890. The increase in women in waged work was not just a temporary reaction to abnormal conditions.³⁰ The women were in the work force to stay. Edith Alvord agreed and added that women were in the work force as important wage earners for their families. They did not simply work for "pin money."³¹

With more women in the work force, Detroit clubwomen sponsored legislation to make the work place suit female needs. In 1919, the Political and Civic League (whose name changed shortly thereafter to Progressive Civic League) had worked to establish rest rooms for women on each floor of a large office building. Earlier, two young Detroit women, rushing from the rest room back to the office, had misstepped and fallen to their deaths in an elevator shaft.³² The Board of Directors of the DFWC sent letters to downtown department stores urging them to provide rest rooms for their sales ladies.³³ Additionally, the Political and Civic League had tried also to establish lunchrooms for

³⁰ Clara Mengler, "Women Workers of Michigan," The Magazine of the Women's City Club 5 (January, 1926): 35.

³¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping dated April 13, 1920, Box 3, Folder 3, Manuscript Collection (MS) of Detroit Sorosis Club, BHC.

³² Detroit News (November 23, 1919).

³³ "Report of the Public Health Committee" (December 11, 1924), Vol 14 Minutes 1924-1925, p.367, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

business women in the downtown district. Clubwomen asked their Michigan Senators to support the federal Hawes-Cooper Bill which required merchants to provide chairs for female clerks. They subsequently monitored compliance with the bill because they felt the law had loopholes.³⁴

Within the workplace, Detroit clubwomen championed equality. In 1919, the Legislative Department of the DFWC supported a bill prohibiting discrimination in wages for men and women in the manufacture of any article.³⁵ The DFWC also supported legislation to make hospital facilities available for all armed service people, including women, who were honorably discharged.³⁶ In 1930 when budgetary restrictions caused by the Depression led to the laying off of married, female teachers, Laura Osborn defended keeping these teachers in the educational system. Teacher H.C. Heinzelman wrote Osborn in confidence about heavy responsibilities and her fears that she would lose her job with her upcoming marriage. Heinzelman thanked Osborn for “your defense of keeping married women in our system.” Osborn understood that married teachers had responsibilities and the fine teachers should remain, regardless of their marital status.³⁷ Marjorie Murphy wrote that many school boards prohibited married women teachers. This condition became exacerbated during the Depression and she cited a 1930 study that showed one-third of large cities barred married female teachers.³⁸ In this regard, Detroit women were

³⁴ “Annual Report of the American Citizenship Department” (April, 27, 1928), Vol 17 Minutes 1927-1928, p.298, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁵ “Annual Report of the Legislative Department” (March 31, 1919), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p.402, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁶ “Report of the Legislative Department” (January, 1930), Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁷ Letter to Laura Osborn from H.C. Heinzelman, (January 25, 1930) Manuscript Collection (MS) Laura Osborn Papers, Box 20, BHC.

³⁸ Marjorie Murphy, Blackboard Unions - The AFT and the NEA 1900-1980 (Ithaca, 1990), p. 177-178.



contributing to a national women's response protesting discrimination against married working women as when they opposed Section 213 of the 1932 National Economic Act prohibiting husbands and wives from both working for the federal government.³⁹

Detroit clubwomen generally agreed on a woman's right to work as well as a right to equal pay. At the same time, they usually supported protective legislation for women. Edith Alvord, addressed this dilemma in an article in The Club Woman entitled, "Equal Opportunities for Women Wage Earners." She stated that the GFWC supported protective legislation for women but that the Women's Equal Opportunity League opposed it. Alvord pointed out that "the effective field for women's work is broadened by protective legislation."⁴⁰ She understood that industry leaders would not voluntarily institute maximum hours and the alternative only led to exhaustion. Working women in Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) supported the eight hour day and even businessmen such as Edward A. Filene said that the minimum wage was good for business. Alvord concluded that a *laissez-faire* policy towards a women in industry only made oppressive, exploitative conditions for those women.⁴¹

Alvord's article was an appeal for women as wage earners and not for women as mothers. Other women saw the combination of wage earner and mother as complicating the matter. In discussing the prohibition of night work for women, the Woman's City Club recognized that some women with children might prefer night work. Work at night allowed them to be at home with their children during the day. Michigan had prohibited

³⁹ Susan Ware, Beyond Suffrage (Cambridge, 1991), p.79.

⁴⁰ E.V. Alvord, "Equal Opportunities for Women Wage Earners," The Club Woman (November, 1920) 150.

⁴¹ E.V. Alvord, "Equal Opportunities for Women," 148-153.

night work for women under age eighteen, but this did not apply to ninety-five percent of the working women in the state.⁴² Although, it was understood that this might present problems for some mothers, the City Club believed, without further explanation, that no protective legislation would do more harm. Consequently, they supported, but did not achieve, the night work prohibition for women.⁴³

The issue of protective legislation regarding women's work was a thorny one where working women also disagreed. The Club Woman published an article about the International Congress of Working Women whose members believed that they should not simply seek protection for women alone but rather use their position to remove some of the evils of the industry. Women should work to guarantee all workers an eight hour day with at least one and one-half interrupted rest days. These women were not seeking protection as women but rather as workers.⁴⁴ The DFWC did work to improve general working conditions for all laborers. Within the City of Detroit, they were responsible for six o'clock Saturday closings and a half holiday on Saturday in July and August. They also requested that factories not pay their employees on Saturday but earlier.⁴⁵

Detroit clubwomen also endorsed the idea of an employment bureau dedicated to the concerns of women. In November, 1920, the DFWC Special Committee on Women's Employment met with Perry J. Ward, the Michigan Deputy Commissioner of Labor, regarding a women's employment bureau in Detroit. He was in sympathy with the idea but

⁴² James C. Cahill, Michigan Compiled Laws of 1915, Annotated Supplement 1922 (Chicago, 1922), p.522, "Employment of Males and Females Under 18 - Hours of labor, 5330, Act #341 as amended August 14, 1919.

⁴³ Clara Mengler, "Night Work for Women in Industry," The Magazine of the Women's City Club (May, 1926): 35, 41.

⁴⁴ "International Congress of Working Women," The Club Woman (January, 1920): 264-265.

⁴⁵ Thirty-five Years of Accomplishment, 1895-1929, Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs, pamphlet, BHC

needed twenty thousand dollars from the State Budget Committee. If the money was appropriated there, he believed the women's employment bureau would probably pass the legislature. Ward urged the women to send letters to Lansing urging the appropriation. He believed the women's pressure was crucial to the bureau's success by ending, "Your failure to do this may mean the failure of the whole plan."⁴⁶

The DFWC urged state appropriations for the women's employment bureau, but when the state did not establish one in 1920, the DFWC set up its own free women's employment bureau in 1921. Agnes Palmer was in charge of the bureau which opened in October. A Committee on Women's Employment was set-up with thirteen members, four of whom were women. In addition to Palmer, the female members were Pearl Novak of the DFWC, Laura Cramer of the Free Employment Bureau, and Luella Bouton of Parke, Davis and Company.⁴⁷

In addition to providing for women's employment, Detroit clubwomen were interested in vocational guidance for young women. The Zonta Club, whose members were executive women either in firms or self-employed, was especially interested in women in business. They worked with schools to establish vocational training facilities where none existed and they provided scholarships and loans for women with ability but no money. They worked to expand business opportunities for women. They educated

⁴⁶ Letter to Mrs. C.M. Novak from Mrs. A.B. Cramer, (November 23, 1920) Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit and Detroit News (October 9, 1921).

⁴⁷ "Committee of Women's Employment" no date, Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

older business women about investments and retirement. Being business women themselves, the Zontians understood the problems and potential of women in business.⁴⁸

There was evidence that clubwomen did not always understand the position of working women. Theresa Doland had advocated equal pay for equal work with the Women Citizens League in April of 1919. At that time, the League passed a resolution supporting women's rights to do any work for which they were qualified with no disability because of sex.⁴⁹ When Doland charged a fee for her services to the League, a fundamental difference between clubwomen and working women was apparent. The League had asked Doland, an attorney, to draft the articles of incorporation for the League. She did so, and paid the franchise fee as well. She sent the bill for her services to the League but the League never paid it. She later brought suit against them for this debt. She was distressed by the Women Citizen's League neglect of businesslike methods. Doland complained that the clubwomen had no sense of responsibility. Jennie Beattie protested that oftentimes women gave their money and services gladly, for the benefit of all. She and other members believed that, as a member, Doland should follow suit. Harriet McGraw summed up the problem by saying this was a case of the old-fashioned girl versus the new. Old-fashioned women think women never get paid for club work. They should not expect busy professional and business women to do the same. Times had changed.⁵⁰

While many Detroit clubwomen were not engaged in waged work, they tried to encourage an "enlightened conscience." An article entitled "Reform Begins At Home" in the DFWC's The Club Woman, spoke about the Consumers' League and how it strove to

⁴⁸ "Report on the National Service Committee for the Year 1927-1928" MS Zonta Club, Box 1.

⁴⁹ Detroit News (April 11, 1919).

⁵⁰ Detroit News (April 8, 1922).

establish standards in industry. The article cautioned the readers to practice what they preached regarding maximum hours for women, emphasizing that domestic servants were workers employed by women. Therefore, the employer-housewife should maintain the same standards of hours, labor and work conditions that they urged on shops and industries.⁵¹ Lastly, Dora Stockman, the first woman on the State Board of Agriculture made the point that decent wages were not only for city workers. Stockman urged city women to be willing to pay a price for food that guaranteed an adequate standard of living for the country woman as well.⁵²

Woman as employer versus woman as worker was only one aspect of the dilemma facing women club members. Non-wage earning women were sometimes referred to as women of leisure and accused of not truly understanding the position of working women. Ella Lee Cowgill, Executive Secretary of the YWCA, was frustrated because the organization's Board of Directors was adhering to the ideals of the organization while disregarding the very real financial plight of its clients. Cowgill's long experience working with wage earning women made her realize that religion alone would not help poor women eat and sleep. In 1924 she resigned because of the unresolved tension between her understanding of working women's plight and that of the Board of Directors.⁵³

High Cost of Living

Detroit clubwomen understood that women were not only wage earners but the predominant consumers for home goods. In the early 1920s, Detroit women were on the front lines battling the high cost of living. They worked with the fair price commission,

⁵¹ "Reform Begins at Home," The Club Woman (September, 1924): 38-40, 105-106.

⁵² Detroit News (May 16, 1919).

⁵³ Detroit News (April 13, 1924).

offered suggestions to cut corners, joined boycotts and studied the economic factors which increased living costs.

The high cost of living had troubled clubwomen since the end of the war. By December 1919, Martha Ray, President of the DFWC wrote to Mayor James Couzens to request a meeting of representatives of civic organizations and city departments to consider the means of reducing the high cost of living. She offered the DFWC Club House for the meeting.⁵⁴ Replying to Ray a month later, Mayor Couzens agreed with clubwomen's concerns and complained that Michigan was perhaps the only state that did not have a Fair Price Commission. He thought the DFWC should take up the matter with Edith Strauss, who was in charge of the High Cost of Living Campaign for the Department of Justice, in Washington, D.C. She could assist in the appointment of a Fair Price Commissioner and help conduct a campaign such as the one operating in Illinois. The Fair Price Commissioner of Illinois, Major Albert A. Sprague advised Mayor Couzens, "That it was much better that these matters be handled through women's clubs than through political offices."⁵⁵

Although Major Sprague believed women's clubs were the best for leading high cost of living campaigns, a committee of men in Michigan from thirty-nine counties had already begun that activity without the DFWC. A Fair Price Commissioner, Judge William F. Connally had been appointed by the Attorney General, Alex Groesbeck. Martha Ray was eager to have the DFWC assist in an intelligent effort to reduce the cost of

⁵⁴ Letter from Martha Ray (Mrs. F.G.) to Mayor James Couzens, dated only December, 19th, Vol 66 Correspondence 1919-1920, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵⁵ Letter to Martha Ray from Mayor Couzens, January 19, 1920, Vol 66 Correspondence 1918-1976, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

necessities, and Edith Watkins Dunk served on the Fair Price Committee from 1919 to 1920.⁵⁶

Despite being anxious to help reduce the high cost of living, the DFWC was particular about what groups it wanted to enlist in that effort. The DFWC welcomed the resolution of the Twentieth Century Club to help with the campaign and to expose the price gougers.⁵⁷ But, when the Consumers League offered to join the campaign, the DFWC was apprehensive. Ray wrote to Michigan Fair Price Commissioner, Judge William F. Connolly and asked if charges of "unsavory advertising" against the Consumer's League had been proven. She did not want the DFWC associated with organizations "whose integrity is questioned."⁵⁸ Ray was even leery of accepting the offer of Clara Kennedy of the Consumer's League to address the DFWC on the high cost of living.

Nevertheless, the high cost of living continued to be a problem for Detroiters. In 1922 an investigation by the Detroit News reported that the price of bread was less everywhere in the state than in Detroit. Furthermore, the ingredients only accounted for 2 1/3 cents per loaf and Detroiters were paying 8 2/3 cents per pound.⁵⁹ The News proposed to sponsor a bread making contest and the DFWC enthusiastically took up the

⁵⁶ Letter to Mayor James Couzens from Martha Ray, January 25, 1920, Vol 66 Correspondence 1918-1976, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, and Edith Watkins Dunk, "Why A Woman Should be Sent to Congress," Club Woman 12 (August, 1920): 159.

⁵⁷ Detroit News (January 18, 1920). Groesbeck headed the Price Investigation and Legislative Program which conducted hearings before Judge Howard Weist in the Ingram County Court. There was only one case of price fixing in defiance of the law, that of Lansing bakers. The butchers and wholesale grocers were in federal violation of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Lastly, the shoe manufacturers charged exorbitant prices but couldn't be prosecuted under existing statutes.

⁵⁸ Letter to Judge William F. Connolly from Martha Ray, no date, Vol. 66 Correspondence 1919-1920, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵⁹ Detroit News (January 7, 1922).

challenge. The Federation provided the three judges. The bread was to be ordinary table bread and only one entry per person. The grand prize was \$250. All entered bread would be distributed to charity. The clubwomen felt that this new spirit of homemaking bread would lower the commercial price. Minnie Jeffries claimed the contest would bring back the lost art of bread making.⁶⁰

The bread making contest seems to have been inspired by a Jessie (Mrs. Alexander) MacDonald, who claimed to have always baked her own bread and saved money. MacDonald, a leader in local club circles, added that it was more wholesome for her children. She went so far as to say mothers who “have any regard” for their children’s health should bake their own bread. It was cleaner and had no chemicals added.⁶¹ Perhaps if all the women baked their own bread, the commercial price might have dropped. Homemade bread, however, was not always a possible solution for working women. MacDonald’s husband was a doctor and she admitted that bread making was her hobby. She conceded that the smaller apartment kitchens might make baking difficult but still well-worth it. She failed almost completely to understand that many women, who have no time for clubs, also have jobs outside the home which made time consuming bread making impossible.

Women understood that their pivotal economic position as consumers could enable them to use a boycott to control high prices and they used this weapon in several instances. In April 1920, the DFWC initiated a boycott of potatoes. Its members pledged not to purchase potatoes for two weeks. Otto H. Eberhardt of the Metropolitan Club

⁶⁰ Detroit News (January 22, 1922).

⁶¹ Detroit News (January 7, 1922).

wrote to Martha Ray praising the DFWC's movement to break the high cost of living.⁶²

The women themselves were beginning to realize their tremendous power in economic and political ways.⁶³ In April 1920 also, the Political and Civic League pledged to refrain from buying clothes until the prices came down. These Detroit clubwomen were joining other women's organizations throughout the country in a boycott against "exorbitant" prices. The Detroit News reported that some organizations in the country were protesting by wearing overalls. The Political and Civic League organized the "Buy Nothing New Club" where each member pledged to restrain from clothes purchases until prices became normal. The League encouraged other women's organizations to join this movement.⁶⁴

Again, in 1923, when the price of sugar went up one hundred percent, Detroit clubwomen joined an economic boycott. Mayor Frank E. Doremus joined other mayors in issuing a proclamation calling on Detroit housewives to refrain from sugar unless absolutely necessary. The Detroit Visiting Housekeepers Association cooperated and promised to publish in the Detroit News appetizing menus with little or no sugar. Representative-elect Robert H. Clancy, urged by Detroit women's civic organizations, sent a telegram to Federal officials to prosecute profiteers. Apparently, Herbert Hoover had made a statement earlier that there was a shortage of sugar and the speculators jumped on it. Ida Peppers of the DLWV wanted to take the boycott to the confectioners and bakers. The DLWV wanted them to use sugar sparingly as they did during wartime.

⁶² Letter to Martha Ray from Otto H. Eberhardt, (April 14, 1920), Vol. 66 Correspondence 1918-1976, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁶³ "The Boycott" The Club Woman (May, 1920): 554.

⁶⁴ Detroit News (April 21, 1920).

The rationale was that if the large consumers of sugar like the bakers and confectioners joined the boycott, it would enhance its effectiveness.⁶⁵

I have found no additional discussion as to what results these boycotts had. Most of the effort against the high cost of living took place from 1919 until 1920. Afterwards, a national deflationary period resulted in declining prices. The clubwomen's efforts against high bread and sugar prices came later and were a response to particular needs. These incidents of themselves provide insight into women's understanding of the interconnectedness between the economy and the home. Once the concept of the economic boycott had begun with women's organizations, it was then possible for all groups of women to use it as a weapon for a variety of purposes. Darlene Clark Hine's study of "The Housewives' League of Detroit" described the black female community of Detroit using consumer activism among their many programs for racial uplift. The members of the Housewives' League pledged to patronize black business and firms that employed African-Americans. Reflecting similar programs in other major cities, their motto was "Don't buy from where you can't work." Their boycott was a protest to the narrow range of employment opportunities for blacks. They viewed their greatest success in their vision of self-help. Hine concluded that the Housewives' League gave confidence to black businesses and courage to the next generation striving for greater economic independence.⁶⁶

Detroit clubwomen understood that the necessities for the home were involved in a complex economic web that involved production, refinement, transportation and

⁶⁵ *Detroit News* (April, 28, 1923).

⁶⁶ Darlene Clark Hine, "The Housewives' League of Detroit: Black Woman and Economic Nationalism," in Leacock and Hewitt eds., *Visible Women*, p. 223-241.

legislative problems. In 1923, Florence King, a longtime clubwoman activist in Chicago, addressed the Wayne County Woman's Republican Club. She explained that an important element in the high cost of living was the tariff. She stated that manufacturers and producers were always represented at tariff hearings but consumers never were. She suggested that the Consumer's League could fill this position.⁶⁷ King addressed her remarks to the Republican Women, but the Democratic Party also appealed to Detroit women to protest the current tariff. The Democratic mouthpiece, The Michigan Citizen claimed the average family spent \$160 more on necessities in 1923 than in 1922. They blamed this on the Fordney-McCumber Tariff and appealed to a woman's sense of justice to protest this. They claimed the women's sugar boycott was actually a protest against the tariff and it had G.O.P. leaders alarmed. Lastly, the Michigan Citizen encouraged women to vote independent of their husbands or fathers. Women had the franchise and could use it for their own advantage.⁶⁸

Finally, Detroit clubwomen monitored other elements of the cost of living. In 1920, Dr. Prices Cream Baking Powder promised a lower price because it had substituted some ingredients. When the DFWC members failed to see this price reduction, they complained to the state food commissioner. The women demanded not only a reduction in price, but also the proper labeling of the product which accurately reflected its ingredients.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Detroit News (April 1, 1923).

⁶⁸ "The Tariff in the House," and "Women's Tariff Protest Alarms G.O.P. Leaders," Michigan Citizen (June 23, 1923): 5,6.

⁶⁹ Detroit News (February 15, 1920).



When Detroit women protested the high cost of living, they were demonstrating one of the fundamental elements of “municipal housekeeping” - the connection between home and the city. In the 1920s, if the housewife’s concern was still the home, she had to go to outside sources to protect that home. Detroit clubwomen understood the changing economic conditions of a rapidly industrialized city which, in turn, affected the home. As citizens and consumers, they inserted themselves into the economic life of the city advocating policies for working women and for consumer protection.

WOMEN AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF DETROIT

Detroit clubwomen were aware that their position as organized women could be a powerful factor for influencing the economic life of the community. But, the economic life of Detroit had drastically changed in the early decades of the twentieth century, causing social dislocation as well. Clubwomen, socialized in the Progressive Era, believed that mother’s love and education would produce a healthier society. As a result, in Detroit, clubwomen advocated both mothers’ pensions and the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act. Mothers’ pensions supposedly allowed destitute mothers to remain at home and avoid the break-up of the family. The Sheppard-Towner program provided education for pre and post-natal care for mothers and babies. Mothers’ pensions involved state support and the possibility of state dependency. Most Detroit clubwomen gave support but were tempered in their enthusiasm for pensions. The noted exception was Ruby Zahn and the Progressive Civic League. The nature of the Sheppard-Towner program was informative and educational and Detroit clubwomen gave it their wholehearted support.

Mothers' Pensions

Detroit clubwomen were especially sensitive to the needs of mothers without support. As Kristi Andersen noted, in the decade after suffrage, activist women were instrumental in changing the nature of the social contract between the people and their government, championing greater government responsibility for the welfare of all citizens.⁷⁰ Theda Skocpol argued that American women came close to establishing a maternalist welfare state, as organizations such as the GFWC championed mothers' pensions, a minimum wage and the Children's Bureau. According to Skocpol, unlike Europe, the U.S. had a weak class consciousness. This helped allow middle-class women in the U.S. to develop a gender based consciousness which in turn, made them pursue a maternalist program.⁷¹ While Skocpol's was basically a positive analysis of this maternalism, Sonya Michel charged that it tended to reinforce traditional gendered roles. Mothers' pensions, for example underscored the idea that the "family wage" was for men only. The pensions were basically to keep a family together until a better arrangement (meaning permanent attachment to a male breadwinner) could be worked out. Pensions were possible because they were advocated as a cost-effective measure compared to institutionalization. They were kept at a minimum to highlight the savings. They were promoted as preventing delinquency. The prominent supporters of pensions, such as the GFWC and the National Congress of Mothers certainly wanted to help poor people, but at the same time they promoted the social importance of motherhood. Motherhood,

⁷⁰ Kristi Andersen, After Suffrage - Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal (Chicago, 1996), p.161.

⁷¹ Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers - The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge, 1992), p.2, 48.

according to Michel, was the *raison d'être* for their political activities. Consequently, the advocacy of mothers' pensions enhanced the political authority of the GFWC and the National Congress of Mothers, but, the limited scope of the argument that a mother's place was in the home, kept working women in the least skilled and poorest paying jobs.⁷² Wendy Sarvasy, on the other hand, saw the advocacy of mothers' pensions, by some groups, as championing wider social and economic reform. She used arguments by Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge who made the connection between women's low wages and pensions. They advocated broad social and economic change to address gender inequality. Abbott and Breckinridge further understood that until all wage earners made a decent living, relief would remain inadequate.⁷³ Joanne Goodwin used the Abbott and Breckinridge research to show that there was a fundamental contradiction in the mothers' pension programs. This contradiction was between the mother's value as child care giver versus the value of self-support. Goodwin explained that there was plenty of rhetoric about the primacy of mother care for the psychological and physical health of her children, but the pensions were kept to a minimum and forced many mothers into waged work. The ability of older children to work and provide potential income also prevented benefits. Additionally, African American women and those who were stigmatized by desertion or were unwed were also denied benefits. Goodwin concluded that mothers'

⁷² Sonya Michel, "The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era," in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of A New World*, (New York, 1993), p.299-307.

⁷³ Sarvasy, "Beyond Difference," p.341.

pensions demonstrated an apprehension about expanded state service. Organized women who supported mothers' pensions sought state intervention but feared it as well.⁷⁴

Detroit clubwomen generally agreed that their primary responsibilities concerned the home and so they strove to keep mothers and children together. They had been urging support for mothers even before they had the franchise. In 1912, Detroit Ruby Zahn founded the Political and Civic League and immediately set out to secure a Mothers' Compensation Bill for Michigan. This was accomplished in 1913, but enlarging the program was debated in January 1921. At that time, organized women, meeting in Lansing, complained that the Mothers' Compensation Law was not mandatory because it was up to the discretion of a judge who could deny relief. The 150 women at the meeting represented more than 100,000 organized women and were united in their complaints about the Mothers' Compensation Law in Michigan. They complained that some judges did not use the law at all. An Oakland County judge even stated that it was unconstitutional, although the State Supreme Court affirmed its constitutionality. Zahn reminded these judges that the people of Michigan supported provisions for the compensation of widowed mothers and that home life must be preserved. She felt women were now empowered by the vote and declared "We are going to get a more just and sympathetic interpretation and application of these laws or we are going to chase some of the judges in Michigan off the bench."⁷⁵

Other speakers at the January 1921 meeting revealed their knowledge of the laws that applied to women and children. Furthermore, they understood how these laws were

⁷⁴ Joanne L. Goodwin, "An American Experiment in Paid Motherhood: The Implementation of Mothers' Pensions in Early Twentieth-Century Chicago," *Gender and History* (Autumn, 1992): 321-338.

⁷⁵ *Detroit News* (January 19, 1921).

administered by courts and executive officers. They were conscious of their numbers and their power as new voters. The women wanted payments to be on a cost of living basis, not simply a flat rate. Zahn's statistics showed a mother and child needed twelve dollars per week. This compensation could involve other factors such as wage-earning, help from relatives and charities to bring the total up to that amount. Zahn agreed that judges could decide whether a mother was qualified or not but, if qualified, he must order payment. Some county's payments were characterized as stingy. Minnie Jeffries of Detroit said that Wayne County payments were liberal. The secretary of the Board of Corrections and Charities, Marl T. Murray added that they were among the most liberal in the country.⁷⁶ The women meeting in Lansing wanted that generosity extended to all counties in Michigan. These women faced opposition from the Michigan representatives of the northern counties. Representative Ewing of Marquette felt the bill was all right for Detroit, but would bankrupt the northern areas where large families were common. He further stated the pensions were more generous than most breadwinners in his district make. Ewing feared that the women would "fire their men" for such a pension.⁷⁷

By 1921, the battle over Mothers' Compensation in Michigan continued to be centered on the amount of payments and the discretion of probate judges. The clubwomen wanted a minimum of twelve dollars but found the legislature discussing twelve dollars as a maximum with no minimum. The women then supported the McArthur Bill which stipulated not only a six dollar maximum but also a four dollar minimum. Weighing their chances for success, the women were forced to compromise further by

⁷⁶ *Detroit News* (January 19, 1921).

⁷⁷ Letter to Grimes from Ella Aldinger (no date), Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 1 Correspondence 1919-1920, MHC.

accepting a two to ten dollar a week stipend. They feared that if they forced a fight in the legislature, they might lose altogether.⁷⁸ The final bill allowed the probate judges to fix any amount between two and ten dollars if there was only one child.

The probate judges were afterwards reported as trying to bury the Mothers' Pension Bill in the Judiciary Committee. Consequently, the Progressive Civic League sent a letter to Representative Ralph Liddy, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee advising him that the people of Detroit supported mothers' pensions and to release the bill. Zahn planned to see Representative Liddy in person to urge the same.⁷⁹ Finally, two years later, in January 1923, the clubwomen supported the Hense Amendment which would limit the absolute power of the probate judges in administering the provisions of mothers' pensions.⁸⁰

Mothers' pensions would only be granted if there had been no support for two years due to death, divorce, desertion, husband in a mental or tuberculosis institution or if the mother was unmarried. The program rested on the assumption that the mother was the child's best guardian. If the mother had only one child who was fit to work, there was no eligibility. Boarders were discouraged but money from relatives was encouraged. The pensions were according to needs and the idea was to maintain 65% of their normal condition.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Detroit News (February 9, 1921 and February 25, 1921).

⁷⁹ Detroit News (March 20, 1921).

⁸⁰ "Report of the Legislative Department" (January 10, 1923), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 325, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸¹ "Report of the Civic Division" (February 26, 1926), Vol 15 Minutes 1925-1926, p. 545-547, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

Clara Saunders of the Juvenile Court spoke about mothers' pensions to the Civic Department of the DFWC. She explained that 1,059 families applied for pensions in 1923. The mothers were allowed a bank account for house payments. There was a strict accountability of their expenses and the mothers' pension program tried to make up the deficit. There were strange stipulations, such as Italians getting ten percent less for food because their diets required less and tubercular families getting ten percent more for greater nutrition. Also, there was a fear of fraud especially with immigrants. There were eight to ten fraudulent cases every month by foreigners so careful investigations were carried out. Additionally, the pension officer dispensed discipline and advice.⁸²

In 1925, a new bill restricted mothers' pensions to only those who had resided in Michigan for two years and within the county for one year. Governor Alex Groesbeck vetoed the measure at the time and got a favorable response from women for having done so. His motives were questioned, however, by Zahn who believed he was never in sympathy with the agenda of progressive women. Zahn claimed that Groesbeck had altered the facts to make himself look better to voting women in the upcoming election. Zahn reminded people that in 1921 Groesbeck had signed an altered version of mothers' pensions despite the protests of organized women.⁸³

Although Detroit clubwomen did not always frame their arguments in maternalistic terms, they were conscious that women had unique roles as mothers. Therefore, beyond securing mothers' pensions, they wanted to secure equal guardianship

⁸² "Report of the Civic Department" (March 13, 1924), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 1427-1434, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸³ "Pensions Note Rouses Women," unidentified newspaper clipping, (September 14, 1926) Reading Room File - Zahn.

of women over their children. When Michigan women first received the franchise, they went to Lansing seeking a bill giving such equal guardianship rights to women. They met with failure.⁸⁴ By 1925, Michigan clubwomen were still trying but failing to get an equal guardianship bill out of the Judiciary Committee. Ruby Zahn wrote, "When the Law Calls Children 'His'" and reported that the National Congress of Mothers supported mothers having equal rights to their children.⁸⁵ Michigan clubwomen also tried unsuccessfully to secure a mother's right to a child's earnings.⁸⁶

While equal guardianship was not realized until 1929, the DFWC did have some success with a new Adoption Act. This new act was to insure justice for the mother and the adopting parents. It allowed the birth mother one year to recover her child but not afterwards. Additionally, a Power of Attorney was required to keep records of all parentage and was executed by an accredited person who advised the mother of her rights. It was felt that the mother might not always be exercising the best judgment due to her anxiety and embarrassment of having an illegitimate child.⁸⁷ Consequently, clubwomen wanted the birth mother protected legally and from the unwanted separation from her child.

Sheppard- Towner

While Detroit women were fighting the arbitrary power of judges over mothers' pensions, the Sheppard-Towner Infancy and Maternity Protection Act was being debated in Congress. Detroit clubwomen wanted this legislation, which would provide federal and

⁸⁴ "Department of Legislation, MFWC," The Club Woman (November, 1919): 123.

⁸⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, Reading Room File - Zahn.

⁸⁶ F.C. Aldinger, "What the 1925 Legislature Did," Michigan Woman (Summer, 1925):27.

⁸⁷ "Report of the Legislative Department" (January 10, 1923), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p.323, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



state subsidies for clinics for educating mothers about health care for their babies, in the hope that it would lower infant mortality. The Report of the Legislative Department of the DFWC listed at least six Michigan Congressmen in favor of it. Representatives John Esch, Edward L Hamellin and Frank E. Doremus were actively seeking its passage. Representative Esch informed the DFWC that while Sheppard-Towner was favorably reported out of committee, an organization of pseudo doctors called the Liberty Medical League was trying to defeat it. The clubwomen responded by a letter campaign to the Honorable Phillip Campbell, Chairman of the Rules Committee, House of Representatives, demanding a date for a vote.⁸⁸

When Sheppard-Towner was finally passed and signed into law on November 23, 1921, Michigan women lobbied to get its passage in Michigan as well. The federal law provided funds, but each state had to pass enabling legislation. It was originally signed into law by Governor Groesbeck because the Michigan legislature was not in session. Dr. Blanche M. Haines, Director of the Bureau of Child Hygiene and Public Nursing, claimed the passage of Sheppard-Towner was largely due to organized women in Michigan. She congratulated them for their efforts and solidarity.⁸⁹

In spite of the enthusiasm of Michigan clubwomen, there was opposition to Sheppard-Towner appropriations.. The Wayne County Medical Society for example, urged the legislature not to pass the Sheppard-Towner appropriations. Once more, the clubwomen took an active role. At a meeting of the DFWC, Dr. Haines emphasized that

⁸⁸ "Report of the Legislative Department" and "Report of the Legislative Department, Special Meeting" (January 28, 1921 and February 9, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes, 1920-1922, p.327, 399-403, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸⁹ Blanche M. Haines, "Work in Michigan Under Sheppard-Towner Act," The Club Woman (November, 1923): 151.

Sheppard-Towner provided education and infant clinics where the poor might seek advice. The DFWC women were quite vocal about their indignation against the Wayne County Medical Society.⁹⁰ Some in the medical profession claimed that Sheppard-Towner would place state money under federal control and violate states rights. Others claimed it would involve birth control. Prior to the acceptance of Sheppard-Towner, Michigan had spent \$29,000 per year through different state bureaus for infant and maternal health. Gertrude Wallace, Chairman for the Legislative Department of the DFWC, felt that with the increased revenue of federal matching funds, there was the opportunity to make a real difference for needy mothers.⁹¹

Another method used and pioneered by clubwomen to secure desired reforms such as Sheppard-Towner was the personal interview with a legislator. In March, 1923 the Sheppard-Towner appropriations passed the Senate in Lansing, but were held up in the House Ways and Means Committee. Dr. Blanche M. Haines turned to women's organizations for their support. She wanted representatives of women's clubs to confer with Farrier, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, to get the bill reported out. There were strong political forces to kill the bill but personal conferences with members of the committee and added public pressure forced the appropriation.⁹²

Women's groups met in Lansing to discuss Sheppard-Towner acceptance and implementation in Michigan. Among those present were representatives of the MFWC, LWV, WCTU Congress of Mothers and Parent Teacher Association, Ladies of the

⁹⁰ Detroit News (February 11, 1923).

⁹¹ "Report of the Legislative Department" no date, Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹² Mrs. Arthur Wallace, "Annual Report of the Department of Legislation," The Club Woman 15 (June, 1923): 610,627,628.

Maccabees, Woman's Benefit Association of the Maccabees and the Michigan Agricultural College Extension Division. These representatives made up the tentative organization plans for co-operating with the State Health Committee. Dr. Haines wanted a state health committee with members from women's organizations to coordinate and disseminate information.⁹³ She suggested that further groups might be needed for work with committees on recreation. A census of pre-school children was needed as well as potential buildings and equipment. Ultimately, the civic-minded women prevailed and Michigan voted funds (\$30,000 in 1923, by 1929, \$65,000) for Sheppard-Towner. Dr. Richard Olin, Commissioner of the Michigan Department of Health wrote to the DFWC members to thank and congratulate them. He said, "There is not the slightest doubt but that the affirmative vote in both the Senate and House was due entirely to the unremitting efforts of the organized women of the state."⁹⁴ For example, Gertrude Wallace, as President of the DFWC, had been placed on the State Health Committee. She had written 107 letters and attended 55 meetings to support the program.⁹⁵ The personal interview with a legislator, a technique pioneered by clubwomen in which the clubwoman would sit privately with the legislator and make a personal plea, differed from traditional lobbying by making the contact more personal and not simply business. Edith Alvord advised civic-minded clubwomen to attend public hearings and have personal interviews with legislators.⁹⁶

⁹³ Haines, "Work in Michigan."

⁹⁴ Letter from Dr. Richard Olin to Mrs. Arthur Wallace, (May 5, 1923), Vol. 13 Minutes 1922-1924, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹⁵ Letter read from Dr. Haines. Board of Directors, Vol. 14 Minutes 1924-1925, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹⁶ Detroit Times,

Although the clubwomen got Michigan funding for Sheppard-Towner in 1923, the bill had to be renewed every two years. Consequently, in 1925, Dr. Blanche M. Haines called on organized women to circulate a petition for the continuance of Sheppard-Towner. The petition stated that Michigan had accepted the Federal Act for the Promotion of Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy in 1923 by appropriating \$30,000 for its implementation. The undersigned, as legally qualified voters petition to pass Public Act 97, as passed by the 67th Congress of the United States. It was to be mailed to the MFWC who would forward it to Washington.⁹⁷ In Michigan, Sheppard-Towner appropriations were extended again in 1925, 1927 and 1929. By 1929, Michigan was appropriating \$65,000 for Sheppard-Towner funds.⁹⁸ But, in June of 1929 the federal legislation was due to end. Clubwomen therefore supported the Newton Bill which had the same aim. Newton of Minnesota introduced one million dollars for the Children's Bureau, but the Seventieth Congress adjourned and the bill was dead. So a new measure was introduced in the Seventy-First Congress. The Wayne County LWV requested that Representatives Clarence McLeod and Robert Clancy give it special attention.⁹⁹ Michigan clubwomen felt that the previous work for mothers and babies had been so successful that there was no doubt the program would be continued. In an article written for the Michigan Woman, Dr. Lillian Smith, Director of the State Bureau of Child Hygiene, described the many Sheppard-Towner successes over the decade: there were Infant and Pre-school

⁹⁷ Letter to Emma S. Fox from Blanche Haines, February 22, 1925, Box 11, Manuscript Collection Emma A. Fox Papers BHC.

⁹⁸ see also, Robyn Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform 1890-1935 (New York, 1991), Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers, Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930" in Koven and Michel eds. Mothers of a New World, p. 43-78.

⁹⁹ "Women's Organization Triumph," Michigan Woman (April, 1929): 26.

Clinics where 21,000 children were examined; lessons in child and infant care for adolescent girls called the Little Mother's League had been established in all counties as well as women's classes in pre-natal, infant and child care. These classes were supplemented with literature and county demonstrations. Dr. Smith added statistics which showed infant mortality dropping in Michigan from 88/1,000 in the five years preceding Sheppard-Towner, to 76/1,000 for the first five years and 67/1,000 for 1927. Maternal mortality dropped from 7/1,000 before Sheppard-Towner to 6/1,000 afterwards. She concluded that if there had been no Sheppard-Towner funding in Michigan, there would have been 415 more maternal deaths and 5,680 more infant deaths.¹⁰⁰

In terms of what organized clubwomen had set out to secure, their work for both mothers' pensions and Sheppard-Towner appropriations was a success. Clubwomen had used their votes as well as lobbying techniques to garner the legislative support for these programs. In addition, they successfully used their technique of personal interviews with legislators to influence the outcome. They were consistent and persistent and this time, at least, legislators had listened to them.

Eugenics and Birth Control

Detroit clubwomen wholeheartedly supported Sheppard-Towner but other social issues and reform proposals caused them more concern. They were even markedly less enthusiastic about mothers' pensions because they raised the issue of state responsibility for what had been strictly a private family concern.¹⁰¹ Apprehension also about blurring

¹⁰⁰ Lillian Smith, "What Michigan Has Done For Its Babies - The Scope and Result of the Work Done With Sheppard-Towner Funds," Michigan Woman (January, 1929): 21-24.

¹⁰¹ As Goodwin explains, Chicago clubwomen wanted both an expanded state and feared that expansion. Goodwin, "An American Experiment," p.338.



the boundaries between private and public was evident in their position regarding eugenics and birth control. Eugenics, some clubwomen believed, was potentially good for society while birth control threatened the family. But, the issues were not so easily separated. While women in Detroit supported eugenics, they did so inconspicuously. They agreed to study birth control but never supported it.

While conceding that people should be free to marry whomever they wanted, the DFWC's position was that if the state must care for its people, then it followed logically that the state had an interest in marriage. The state also had an interest in the standard of living for its people.¹⁰² The DFWC joined others like the Social Workers Club and sponsored eugenic bills. Other female activists like Molly Dewson held similar views. Dewson's experience at the Massachusetts State Industrial School for Girls convinced her that some girls were too feeble-minded to be trained. She therefore supported the eugenics movement.¹⁰³

Lynne Curry explained the consistency between those who supported health education and eugenics. Basically, Progressive Era health reformers strove to educate people about health and hygiene. They believed that education regarding health would lead to the lessening of disease and increased general public health. Curry separated these health reformers from the "strictest eugenicists" who had fears about preserving the unfit.¹⁰⁴ Detroit clubwomen also believed in the potential of health education. They

¹⁰² "Report of the Legislative Department" (February 8, 1922), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 1164, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁰³ Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism and New Deal Politics* (New Haven, 1987), p.2.

¹⁰⁴ Lynne Curry, *Modern Mothers in the Heartland: Gender, Health, and Progress in Illinois, 1900-1930* (Columbus, 1999), p. 8-9.

campaigns for public baths, clean food and general personal hygiene. Their efforts in the eugenic movement reflect this strain of public health.

A bill for the sterilization of idiots, imbeciles and the feeble-minded had been sponsored by Detroit's Twentieth Century Club in 1921 but no action was taken on it. In 1923, however, the Twentieth Century Club got Senator Sligh of Grand Rapids to introduce the bill again. The Detroit News reported that the bill had been thoroughly investigated and shown to have no loopholes, yet guaranteed the right of individuals to justice. It included feeble-minded, imbeciles and mental deficients but not the insane. Apparently, while the bill was supported by the MFWC, and especially the DFWC, clubwomen did not lobby for the passage of the bill. Because this subject was considered delicate, the women decided the high-profile work should be done by men; also, clubwomen were afraid that public speaking about reproduction was improper.¹⁰⁵ The bill passed but proved difficult to enforce. It was suggested that perhaps every Marriage License clerk have a file on mental defectives, a system used in New York.¹⁰⁶ Later, in 1929, the MFWC supported a bill for mandatory sterilization of mental defectives by court order.¹⁰⁷

Michigan clubwomen appeared to take contradictory positions on population control. They were quite uneasy about birth control, although clubwomen supported eugenics. In November, 1921, there was a birth control conference scheduled in New York. At the Twenty-seventh Annual Meeting of the MFWC, Harriet McGraw introduced

¹⁰⁵ Detroit News (May 13, 1923).

¹⁰⁶ "Report of the Legislative Department" (February 8, 1922), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 1164, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁰⁷ Beth Fay Adams, "What Was Done by the State Legislature," Michigan Woman (July/August, 1929): 26.

a resolution saying the members should form an intelligent opinion on the matter. A lively debate ensued where some women believed those matters were best left in God's hands and others disagreed. Social workers discussed foreign and poor families who suffered the tragedy of a high infant mortality. As the debate hardened into two opposing sides, Pearl Novak offered a compromise. The MFWC agreed that they would not favor or oppose birth control but simply inform themselves about the debate.¹⁰⁸ Birth control was seen as threatening a stable family life. Additionally there were fears about the declining birthrate among the "better" people.¹⁰⁹ Linda Gordon noted that even those associated with the voluntary motherhood movement were primarily interested in the welfare of children. They believed that unwanted children might be morally or physically defective. On the other hand, they supported sterilization. Eventually male eugenists joined the previously female birth control movement.¹¹⁰ Detroit clubwomen's position on population control reflects those trends. Motherhood continued to be a high calling for women, but only for the genetically "fit".

Child Labor

Along with their concern for mothers, clubwomen wanted more societal protections for children. The campaign by clubwomen to prohibit child labor was as unsuccessful in Michigan as it was nationally. The Federal Child Labor Laws of 1916 and

¹⁰⁸ "Report of the Twenty-seventh Meeting of the MFWC" (October 11, 1921) Minutes 1918-1923, Manuscript Collection (MS) Detroit Women's Club, BHC.

¹⁰⁹ James Reed, "Doctors, Birth Control and Social Values, 1830-1970" in Judith Walzer Leavitt ed., Women and Health in America (Madison, 1984), p.125.

¹¹⁰ Linda Gordon, Woman's Body, Woman's Right - A Social History of Birth Control in America (New York, 1974), p.120, 286.

1919 had both been ruled unconstitutional by 1922. Consequently, there was a national effort to establish a Child Labor Amendment. The Legislative Department Chairman of the DFWC, Gertrude Wallace, wrote that the Federation supported arguments against child labor.¹¹¹ Mary Church Terrell advised the members of the National Association of Colored Women to support the Child Labor Amendment. Terrell claimed that this was “humane and beneficent legislation” and was of vital interest to all women. She appealed to women in states where the legislation had only been rejected (like Michigan) by one house, to write to their representatives to support it.¹¹² Still, in Detroit, the membership campaign for the National Child Labor Committee was disappointing. While there were a good number of Detroit women’s clubs who gave generous gifts, this support was lukewarm. There were few clubwomen committing their names and effort to child labor prevention. Although, the DFWC was the first Michigan organization to vote for membership in the National Child Labor Committee, DFWC President Pearl Novak noted that clubwomen were good at helping needy children but not as good at passing preventive measures for the future.¹¹³

Detroit clubwomen did maintain a lively interest in the debate over the National Child Labor Amendment. Since clubwomen remained dedicated to educating themselves

¹¹¹ “Report of the Legislative Department” (November 1, 1923 and November 9, 1923), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 963, 1013-1015, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹¹² Mary Church Terrell, “Report of the National Chairman on Legislation,” Convention Minutes, 1926, National Association of Colored Women Fifteenth Biennial Session, Oakland, California, August 1-5, 1926), p. 75-76.

¹¹³ The Club Woman (May, 1922): 477. During this time in Michigan, there was legislation regulating child labor. Children less than eighteen could not work more than nine hours for six days nor ten hours in any one day. Furthermore, under the age of sixteen, children could not work in factories or canneries between six p.m. and six a.m. These laws did not apply to agriculture or household labor. “Report of the Legislative Special Meeting” (February 9, 1921) Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 403 and “Report of the Legislative Department” (November 1, 1923), Vol. 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 963 and (November, 9, 1923), p. 1013-1015 Federation of Women’s Clubs Metropolitan Detroit.

on public issues, they set up mock debates regarding child labor. These debates mimicked those in Congress. Clubwomen wanted to familiarize themselves with both sides of the issue. They were eager to disprove the accusation that they were opposed to child labor because of sentimentality. They therefore studied the legal ramifications of child labor. They invited speakers from the Detroit School System, since the issue involved the Compulsory Education Laws, as well as the State Department of Labor and Industry.¹¹⁴

While the DFWC members sought to educate themselves thoroughly about the upcoming Child Labor Amendment, the MLWV turned to civic action in support of it. Both Carrie Chapman Catt, (former head of NAWSA) and Julia Lathrop, (former head of the Children's Bureau and outgoing president of the Illinois LWV) spoke to the Michigan League urging support.¹¹⁵ The MLWV joined the nation-wide effort to exert pressure on U.S. Senators and Congressmen for the best bill and sought to frustrate efforts to weaken it. They maintained a campaign for favorable public opinion and closely monitored political candidates for their opinions. In spite of this effort, the Michigan legislators were lukewarm about opposing child labor. In April, 1924, both Michigan Senators Woodbridge Ferris and James Couzens voted for the amendment in the Education and Labor Committee. Neither of them voted for it in a June Senate vote. They did not offer other amendments. In the House, only seven of the twelve Michigan Congressmen voted for passage.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Detroit News (December 9, 1923).

¹¹⁵ Detroit News (December 7, 1924).

¹¹⁶ "Child Labor," handwritten, no name, also letter from Mrs. Craig Miller to Julia Lathrop, September 30, 1924, Box 4, Manuscript Collection (MS) League of Women Voters, BHC.

The passage of a Child Labor Amendment proved problematic for Michigan clubwomen for several reasons. Mrs. Craig Miller of the State Legislative Council of Michigan claimed that the Booth Syndicate controlled the powerful newspapers in the state. This syndicate followed the lead of the National Manufacturers Association in issuing editorials against the amendment. In Michigan, these editorials especially targeted the farmers. Although the MLWV sent counter circulars in favor of the amendment, they lost the media war.¹¹⁷

Child labor also brought up sensitive issues about the home. In Michigan some state senators opposed it because they felt it would destroy parental authority and responsibility. This, in turn, would make children more rebellious and give tyrannical, centralized, authority to Congress.¹¹⁸ Michigan women were not taken by arguments of tyrannical federal power. In a report on the 1925 Legislature, Ella Aldinger of the State Legislative Council noted sarcastically, that while the fish of Michigan were fed and protected, a federal amendment for the protection of children was considered communist propaganda.¹¹⁹ With media opposition reflecting Michigan's big business, clubwomen were unable to get state support for a national child labor amendment

Disarmament

Detroit clubwomen understood that all their efforts to help women and children would be useless if war destroyed them. Throughout the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen joined women around the world in the cause of peace and international cooperation. Some

¹¹⁷ "Child Labor," handwritten, no name, MS League of Women Voters, Box 4.

¹¹⁸ "The Children's Amendment in Michigan by Bulletin #2 of Legislative Council of Michigan Women," *The Club Women* (April, 1925): 495.

¹¹⁹ Aldinger, "What the 1925 Legislature Did" p.16.

organizations like the Detroit Women's Committee for World Disarmament and the International League for Peace and Freedom were devoted to peace. Otherwise, Detroit clubwomen were consistent about disarmament, but international peace was never the centerpiece of their political agenda. The women made their greatest efforts when there was national attention on the subject such as the Washington Naval Conference in 1921 and the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928.

Detroit women were committed to peace strongly enough that they were not intimidated by prominent speakers and personalities. Michigan resident Edwin Denby became Secretary of the Navy in 1921. When he was visiting Detroit in May of that year, the Women's Committee on World Disarmament requested an interview. Secretary Denby replied that his time had already been previously arranged and therefore an interview was impossible. The women then decided to corner him as he left a public reception at City Hall. They wanted to surround Denby as he left the speakers platform and present their resolutions. The Committee drew up resolutions stating that the U.S. had always been peaceful and now Europe, devastated by World War I, might be willing to accept peace as well. They said that the cost of war had financially ruined Europe and was claiming too much of the federal budget in the United States. Because this cost was postponing necessary social and industrial improvements, the enfranchised women wanted it stopped. The Detroit women were confident that this was the wish of women around the world. Lastly, the resolution called upon Denby to halt his requests for additional appropriations for armaments.¹²⁰ The women got their desired interview.

¹²⁰ Detroit News (May 8, 1921).



Elizabeth Stocking declared in her report of the Twenty-seventh Annual Meeting of the MFWC, that Michigan women felt citizenship and improved moral standards were useless unless a world order was established to prevent another great war. In 1921 she asked, prophetically, “Why save babies today if twenty years from now they are to be sacrificed on the altar of the War-God?”¹²¹ The Federation then encouraged Michigan clubwomen to join others throughout the country in endorsing the upcoming Naval Conference.

Prior to the Washington Naval Conference, the Detroit Women’s Committee for World Disarmament campaigned throughout the lower peninsular in an effort to educate people about disarmament. In September, 1921, they traveled eight days and spoke in twenty-six cities and towns. The Detroit News quoted a letter written by Emma Weld, National Executive Secretary of Women’s Committee for World Disarmament, declaring “Michigan women have proved themselves makers of history by their recent dash for peace through their state.” The disarmament committee hoped, by propaganda and literature to encourage disarmament among nations. It also hoped to make disarmament a popular cause where citizens would demand it. They encouraged people to go to their churches and pray for peace. Clubwomen, in particular, were urged by the GFWC to notify delegates to the Naval Conference, the President, and Congressmen of the dire need to prevent another war.¹²² The 1921 Washington Navel Conference was closely watched and supported by Michigan women. The DFWC representing 14,000 women, wrote to

¹²¹ “Report the Twenty-seventh Meeting of the MFWC” Detroit Woman’s Club Minutes 1918-1920, (October 11, 1921), Manuscript Collection (MS)Detroit Woman’s Club, BHC.

¹²² Detroit News (September 25, 1921).

President Warren G. Harding, declaring their “wholehearted support for arms limitation to the fullest extent possible.”¹²³

In 1922, Colonel Guy M. Wilson spoke to the MFWC. His message, entitled “How Women May Be of Service to the Ex-service Men,” consisted of two parts. The first was to support veterans’ hospitals. This was already being done in Michigan by clubwomen. The second part of the message was to keep arming the country for its protection. He labeled the disarmament supporters as “sissy mollicoddles” and the only real protection was to maintain a big army. At his conclusion, Edith Alvord, retiring President of the MFWC eloquently stated, “We pledge our undying loyalty to the boys who fought for us, but we shall work for peace.”¹²⁴

In their work for peace, the Wayne County LWV supported the entry of the United States into the World Court. They translated their endorsement into action by setting up an educational campaign to inform voters of the benefits of international cooperation.¹²⁵ Gertrude Wallace, Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the DFWC, requested that club members send letters to the Foreign Relations Committee of the Sixty-eighth Congress supporting U.S. entry into the World Court.¹²⁶

The LWV was joined in its support of the Kellogg Multi-lateral Treaty by other groups in Michigan. The DFWC urged the ratification of the treaty and felt it was a woman’s duty to educate the public to the ideal of world peace and the appropriate

¹²³ Letter from club to Honorable W.G. Harding, (November 11, 1921), Vol 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹²⁴ Detroit News (October 21, 1922).

¹²⁵ Detroit News (May 17, 1925).

¹²⁶ “Report of the International Relations” (January 30, 1925), Vol 14 Minutes 1924-1925, p. 533, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

institutions to avoid war.¹²⁷ Consequently, there was a conference for this purpose sponsored by the Michigan State Conference on the Cause and Cure for War. This conference engaged professors, as well as ministers, to explain the treaty. There was time available to answer questions. Also, in January 1928, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr spoke on disarmament and international organizations before the Women's Council for Education on International Relations.¹²⁸

In 1928, the Wayne County LWV's Department on International Cooperation to Prevent War, began working for the ratification of the Kellogg Multi-lateral Treaty. They had studied international peace movements dating back to the nineteenth century and they were especially interested in the role the United States had in those movements. They also paid particular attention to the influence of women in those movements. Lastly, the Wayne County LWV knew that the ratification of the treaty was coming up shortly after the Senate convened in December. Consequently, they felt the urgency to make their support immediate and clear.¹²⁹

At the end of the decade in October, 1929, Detroit clubwomen sponsored the Woman's International Exposition. The purpose of the exposition was to display "Virtually everything under the sun to which modern women has set her hands and about which she has woven her affections." The opening ceremonies brought Governor and Mrs. Fred Green, Mayor John C. Lodge, various City Councilmen, and prominent members of Michigan women's clubs. Governor Green opened the exposition with a brief address. He

¹²⁷ "Report of American Citizenship Department" (January 27, 1928), Vol 17 Minutes 1927-1928, p.165, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹²⁸ "The Kellogg Multi-lateral Treaty" Woman's Bulletin (November, 1928) and "Two Lectures by Dr. Niebuhr" (January, 1929).

¹²⁹ Detroit News (November 18, 1928).

was amazed at the scope of the exhibition which was given for women and by women. The exhibit ran from October fourteenth, to October eighteenth. There was a different daily theme, like Aviation, Fashion, Church and Club Days. Women's achievements in business, the professions, the arts and the home were exhibited at many booths. Foreign Counsels from the thirty Detroit ethnic groups were also in attendance. The opening ceremonies included a parade of nations to emphasize the main object of the exposition - world peace. Jean Chamberlain, President of DFWC said the exposition had been planned for about one year. It was the result of the DFWC's vision that the way to world peace would be through women who care for each other regardless of nationality. It was the first Woman's International Exposition in the U.S. and the only one ever put on by clubwomen exclusively, for women.¹³⁰

During the entire week of the exposition, the Detroit News held front page coverage of it. The exhibits were well patronized during all the opened times. Chamberlain said the exposition demonstrated that women's clubs were pursuing important public welfare. The Board of Education endorsed the exposition because it offered an educational experience. For example, the Detroit Community Fund, an umbrella charity organization, showed how their funds were spent. Detroit merchants had been lukewarm about the idea but reversed themselves when the exposition brought in added revenue.¹³¹

Thus, as the 1920s ended, Detroit women held an exposition that embodied many of the campaigns they supported throughout the decade. Women were portrayed as

¹³⁰ Detroit News (October 15, 1929) Chicago clubwomen had held a Women's World Fair in the city in 1925, 1926, and 1927 to exhibit women's work and achievements, but these fairs did not emphasize peace

¹³¹ Detroit News (October, 20, 1929).

making significant contributions to the economic and social lives of the community. Clubwomen felt this was especially crucial in Detroit where rapid industrialization and urbanization had changed the city in unprecedented ways. Women's organizations, standing at the juncture between public and private could offer social stability and promote necessary change. The exhibition noted the achievements of working women in and outside the home. In their pursuit of women's rights, Detroit clubwomen were advocating more just and humane rights for all. They envisioned themselves as mothers and educators and used these ideas to promote the civic good for the public's welfare. This belief prompted support for mothers' pensions and Sheppard-Towner as well as child labor and disarmament. The underlying theme of world peace through the community of women, was prompted by an idealistic, rather than realistic perception of Detroit. Clubwomen believed the multi-ethnic diversity of Detroit could be transcended by the universality of motherhood. Their success was inextricably tied to the economic and social conditions of Detroit. Educational programs were more successful than social welfare. Disarmament was sadly drowned out by the militarism of the 1930s. Still, the women of Michigan, operating through their clubs and associations had affected significant changes in the condition of mothers and working women.

Chapter 6 - Crime and Punishment

The 1920s were a time of rising crime in Detroit. The City of Detroit, with its burgeoning population and proximity to Canada, faced grave issues of crime and punishment. The city's rapid industrialization and urbanization created new temptations and at the same time caused it to outgrow the communal and institutional restraints under which earlier Detroit had functioned. Paula Baker explained that some of the earliest women's organizations such as the WCTU promoted moral reform by capitalizing on the popular notion that women had a special moral nature and using that notion to gain access to public space. Organizations like the WCTU then expanded beyond prohibition and into other areas of social and political concern.¹ Contemporary female activists like Anna Shaw and Frances Willard argued that women's moral nature and domesticity propelled them into civic activism to represent those interests. Those women had transformed their roles as moral guardians in the home to moral guardians in the public realm.² In doing so, they were expanding their potential public power. Nancy Cott stated "the language of moral reform evoked women's power: power to revenge, power to control and reform."³ Detroit clubwomen took their position as moral guardians seriously and tried to create a more moral environment through temperance and censorship. But, they also believed in crime prevention and rehabilitation and therefore championed a Women's Division of the Police Department, court and prison reform, and opposed capital

¹ Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," in Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois eds. Unequal Sisters 2nd edition (New York, 1994), p.91, 92, 95, 97.

² Gayle Gullett, Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911 (Urbana, 2000), p. 99, 107.

³ Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England 1780-1835 (New Haven, 1977), p.153.

punishment. Elisabeth Perry claimed that clubwomen in New York City tried to balance “Both the welfare of the individuals involved and the city’s need for social order and fiscal responsibility.”⁴ Kenneth Rose noted that even in 1930, “women found that the application of their traditional moral sources of strength through the agency of a women’s organization still empowered them more politically than any other approach.”⁵ Using their clubs for political work sometimes attracted powerful allies such as the Detroit News in the anti-gambling crusade, but powerful enemies such as the Detroit Citizens League in the Recorders Court Election of 1923.⁶ When it came to issues of crime and punishment clubwomen were, as always, especially sensitive to the plight of women and children.

The clubwomen of Detroit shared the concern of other Detroiters over the rising crime in the city. By the mid-1920s, the recently enlarged Recorder’s Court was already too small for the court load (see ahead to page 22 for explanation of Recorder’s Court). The Detroit News reported that in October, 1925, there were 3,537 cases awaiting final disposition. Of these, almost one thousand were felonies awaiting trial for a year, but there simply were not enough judges to try them. Almost half of the untried cases (409) were for violation of the prohibition law. Furthermore, struggles between the operators of blind pigs (illegal drinking establishments) and the hijackers of liquor had produced gang wars and feuds between opposite factions of the underworld. Between March and July of

⁴ Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Women’s Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women’s City Club of New York, 1915-1990,” New York History (October, 1990): 434.

⁵ Kenneth D. Rose, American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition (New York, 1996), p.138.

⁶ The Detroit Citizens League admitted women after they achieved suffrage. The Executive Board was enlarged on June 10, 1919 to include Mrs. Frank S. Bigler and Mrs. Charles A. Strelinger as members. The board continued to be dominated by men throughout the 1920s. Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 2, Manuscript Collection (MS) Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers in the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library (BHC). In their membership drive of January, 1919, while admitting women, they emphasized that four hundred men were listed as new members. “Big League Meeting Thursday January 16th” Civic Searchlight 6 (January, 1919), no page numbers BHC.

1926, fifteen gang slayings occurred leaving few clues and only two arrests.⁷ The Detroit Citizens League stated that all crime, including banditry, burglary, and larceny were the highest in Detroit's history. Banks were arming their clerks to shoot. The League criticized the lack of coordination among law enforcement agencies and court administration. Inadequate records and cumbersome procedures gave clever lawyers and organized crime an advantage. Clerks and probation officers were selected by politics and not by merit.⁸ Since one judge tried misdemeanors, one did traffic and ordinances, a third handled arraignments and examinations, that left only four judges to try the felony cases.⁹

Vice, Prohibition and Censorship

As a result of this situation, the Detroit Bureau of Government Research hired a crime expert, August Vollmer, of Berkeley California, to make an investigation.¹⁰ Vollmer joined Police Commissioner William P. Rutledge, to discuss law enforcement at the November meeting of the DFWC.¹¹ Despite the public interest and public outcry, crime kept increasing throughout the decade in Detroit. In January 1927, the Detroit News reported, "Killing, Crime, Gain in Unison - Slayings in Robberies Jump From Five in 1922 to Twenty-eight in 1926."¹² The following year a headline read, newly elected Mayor Lodge "Serves Crime Warning - New Mayor Expects Rutledge to Drive Out Gunmen and Reckless Drivers."¹³ By March, 1928, the headlines claimed "Terror Reign Marks

⁷ Detroit News (July 24, 1926).

⁸ MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 14, BHC.

⁹ Detroit News (October 25, 1925).

¹⁰ Detroit News (October 1, 1926).

¹¹ Detroit News (October 31, 1926).

¹² Detroit News (January 1, 1927).

¹³ Detroit News (January 11, 1928).

Cleaners - Dyers War” and described a gangster-ridden Detroit with assassins, and racketeers, reminiscent of Chicago.¹⁴

African-American clubwomen had additional concerns about crime. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn explained how the black clubwomen’s interests were often similar to those of white women’s clubs. However, the issue of lynching was crucial for African-American women and they sought interracial assistance from white women’s organizations.¹⁵ They lobbied extensively for the Dyer Anti-lynching Bill and had some cooperation in that regard from the DFWC. Mary Church Terrell stressed the importance of the bill when she said, “..for there is nothing now pending which affects the colored people of the country more deeply, directly and vitally than does this bill.”¹⁶ In Detroit, African-American clubwomen appealed to the DFWC to send a petition to Congress supporting the Dyer Anti-lynching Bill. Martha Ray asked, and the motion carried that the club would do just this. The petition was sent to the club office so the Board of Directors could get signatures.¹⁷

Civic-minded men and women both studied crime and advocated programs to reduce it in Detroit. The primarily male Detroit Citizens League urged clubs not only to advocate legislative action, but also to enforce vigorous and effective administration against organized criminals.¹⁸ The civic-minded clubwomen, for their part wanted the

¹⁴ Detroit News (March 30, 1928).

¹⁵ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “African-American Women’s Networks in the Anti-Lynching Crusade,” in Noralee Frankel and Nancy Dye eds., Gender, Class Race and Reform in the Progressive Era (Lexington, 1991), p. 148-159.

¹⁶ Mary Church Terrell, “Report of the National Chairman on Legislation,” Convention Minutes, 1926 National Association of Colored Women Fifteenth Biennial Session, Oakland, California, (August 1-5, 1926): 74-75.

¹⁷ “Meeting of the Executive Committee” Vol 13 Minutes, 1922-1924 (December 11, 1921), p. 245, Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, BHC.

¹⁸ “Facts to Be Faced” no date, no name, Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 14, BHC.

necessary legislation and the zealous enforcement of present legislation, but they also wanted to secure a more moral Detroit and believed that the reduction of temptation would result in a reduction in crime. One example of how clubwomen saw these two elements connect was in the successful campaign for playgrounds in Detroit. This campaign was motivated in part because these women felt that supervised play was the best remedy to head off juvenile crime. By 1926, their efforts in this regard resulted in Detroit having 124 playgrounds and fifteen municipal swimming pools.¹⁹

Detroit clubwomen continued their crusade to provide wholesome recreation areas throughout the 1920s. The first President of Minneapolis' Women's Welfare League, Gratia Countryman, said that the League's purpose was, "to awaken among all women a strong protective sentiment toward the young women of the city, to modify or change the conditions under which young women and girls live, as regards their living places and the recreations."²⁰ In February 1921, when fire destroyed the dance halls and wooden amusement rides located at the approach to Belle Isle, and the owners of the "Coney Island" amusements announced plans to rebuild, representatives of 11,000 clubwomen used the occasion to endorse a plan to have the city acquire the property so as not to blight the area with cheap amusements.²¹ Councilman Richard M. Watson drew up a resolution to this effect and the City Council passed it.

While the DFWC made a stand against rebuilding the questionable amusements at Belle Isle, they did not condemn all entertainment there. In 1923, Victor T. Wilson, a

¹⁹ "Club History," Vol 73 p. 4, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²⁰ Leigh Ann Wheeler, "From Reading Shakespeare to Reforming Burlesque: The Minneapolis Woman's Club and the Women's Welfare League, 1907-1920," *Michigan Historical Review* 25 (Spring, 1999): 57.

²¹ *Detroit News* (February 10, 1921)

member of the Christian Scientist Church, wrote to the DFWC asking for their help in censoring a caterpillar ride. According to Wilson, wind was blasted from under the floor of the cars and a shining light then illuminated the result. He seemed to be saying that the light would shine up the ladies blowing skirts. Edna (Mrs. H.F.) Prescott wrote back saying the club was always careful to make judicious decisions in these matters before it acted. Accordingly, three clubwomen and their husbands rode the caterpillar and found nothing objectionable there. Prescott thanked Wilson for coming to the club and assured him “of our interest and cooperation in civic matters.”²²

Detroit clubwomen also sought censorship throughout the 1920s because they were alarmed at the immoral potential of the motion pictures. Educators, speaking at a Parent Teacher Association Meeting, agreed that the pictures “depict in glaring colors, all the sensuality of Ancient Roman History.”²³ At a general meeting of clubwomen and others, in January 1921, there was a plan introduced for moving picture censorship for the City of Detroit. The clubwomen felt that because the motion picture industry had become the fourth largest in the country and because parents, teachers, civic leaders and social workers wanted an efficient plan of censorship against immoral, obscene and vicious pictures, a petition stating that should be sent to Mayor James Couzens. The plan had been devised by Dr. Pierson of the Council of Churches. It called for a three person Board of Motion Picture Censors, of two men and one women, all appointed by the mayor. The official censor at that time was Lieutenant Baker of the Detroit Police

²² Letter from Victor T. Wilson to Mrs. H.F. Prescott (May 24, 1923), letter from Mrs. H.F. Prescott to Victor T. Wilson, (June 5, 1923) Vol 68 Correspondence 1922-1924, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²³ Detroit News (December 3, 1920).

Department, and he would be one of the men on the board. The female member would be nominated by the DFWC because it represented all the women's clubs of the city. The additional male member was to be nominated by the President of the Social Worker's Club, William J. Norton, in conjunction with the Executive Secretary of the Michigan Motion Picture Exhibitors and the Detroit Council of Churches. The membership therefore included a policeman, a clubwoman, and another, possibly a social worker, acceptable to the church and motion picture people. The censors would be part of the Detroit Department of Recreation and be included on the city payroll. They would set certain standards and report once per month to the Recreation Department. No film would be shown without two thirds approval and when approved, a statement would be attached to the film. Ninety-nine percent of all films in the state first came through Detroit so the Board of Censors could really, in effect, operate for the entire state. The Detroit clubwomen also pledged themselves to be fair to all parties concerned in this matter.²⁴ The DFWC nominated Frances B. (Mrs. W. I) Richardson, who had been on a similar board in New York City. C.E. Brewer, the Recreation Commissioner, wrote back and asked for more names. Pearl Novak, President, replied that she could not just name anyone because it was outside the DFWC constitution.²⁵

There was no evidence that this local Board of Motion Picture Censorship, as proposed by Dr. Pierson and supported by Detroit clubwomen, came to fruition. Censorship for theaters and movies remained part of the Police Department. In addition to

²⁴ Minutes 1920-1922, p.243, 291-295 MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²⁵ Letter to C.E. Brewer from P. Novak (February 12, 1921), letter to P. Novak from C.E. Brewer (February 12, 1921) Vol. 67 Correspondence, 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

Lieutenant Baker, another police censor was added. They viewed films at a film house eliminating the need to travel to each theater. The censors passed on “all films and entertainments” in theaters. They passed approximately two-thirds of all films without elimination.²⁶ Some groups in Detroit protested that objectionable films were still shown. In March 1921, the General Manager of Motion Picture Theater Owners of Michigan, Inc., H.M. Richey wrote to Clara Downey and informed her that the film, “A Man in a Million” was pulled from the Fox-Washington Theater. The Michigan Association took a stand against the picture even though it was approved by the Board of Censors because of its association with some Hollywood murder trials.²⁷ In September, 1921 Mayor Couzens threatened to revoke the license of the New Detroit Opera House for showing “The Birth of a Nation” which investigations revealed to be “indecent and immoral.”²⁸

Detroit clubwomen were finding it difficult to define objectionable and by 1922 they were turning toward the federal level for a solution. They wrote letters to Congress urging the passage of House Bill 10577 - the Appleby Bill - creating a Federal Motion Pictures Commission as a new division in the Bureau of Education. Furthermore, the Postmaster General should prohibit objectionable films going through the mails. The Motion Pictures Commission would license every film and prohibit the transport of unlicensed films. In this effort, telegrams were sent to Michigan Representatives, Earl Michner, George Codd, Vincent Brennan and Patrick Kelley. Additional telegrams were sent to the Chairman of the Education Committee, who was holding the bill, and to

²⁶ Annual Report - City of Detroit 1919-1920, (no publisher, no date) p. 110, Annual Report - City of Detroit 1921 (no publisher, no date) p. 178, and Annual Report - City of Detroit 1922, p. 238.

²⁷ Letter from H.M. Richey to Mrs. J.B. Downey, (March 21, no year) Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²⁸ Detroit News (September 22, 1921).



Representative Appleby who introduced it. This federal solution seemed preferable because efforts at local and state censorship were not only costly, but generated animosity among legislators which hampered the passage of other bills.²⁹ Although the federal approach to censorship was also endorsed by the Michigan branch of the National Congress of Mothers and Parent Teacher Association, it also failed.³⁰ At the national level, in 1926, the GFWC still held out hope for the motion picture industry to self-regulate. They advised local groups to postpone affiliation with regulating groups in the meantime.³¹ But, in 1929, the GFWC representative had withdrawn from the Public Relations Committee of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America because so little had been done. Later, in 1930, Alice Ames (Mrs. Thomas O.) Winter of Minneapolis, was chosen to give women's views at a meeting of the Motion Picture Producers in New York. When Winter was chosen, she encouraged clubwomen to write to her expressing their likes and dislikes.³² By the end of the decade, Detroit clubwomen were still unsatisfied and were looking for legislation to prohibit obscene, indecent, immoral or impure shows and to provide penalties for offenders.³³ Having failed in those attempts, they hoped for a cooperative venture between themselves and the motion picture producers.

The experience of Detroit clubwomen with movie censorship was similar to the experiences of Minneapolis women in the Women's Welfare League. The Welfare League

²⁹ "Reports of the Legislative Department" Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, (March 9, 1922 and April 12, 1922), p. 1278,1378-1380, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁰ Detroit News (May 15, 1924).

³¹ Executive Committee to Board of Directors, (March 11, 1926), Vol 15 Minutes 1925-1926, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³² Detroit News (January 25, 1931).

³³ Minutes 1928-1929, Vol. 18 p.263, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

tried to get a Board of Censorship Bill passed in 1913. When that attempt failed, they resorted to consumerist pressure. They used the New York-based National Board of Censorship as a model for their program. This National Board established voluntary censorship which encouraged moral films and was enforced by the women's patronage. As the 1910s wore on, movie theater owners responded to the clubwomen's campaign for reform but also their imminent threat as voters.³⁴ Detroit clubwomen also tried to use their power as consumers and voters to support what they considered clean, moral films but the issue remained a slippery one. The definition of clean, moral films proved to be subjective and censorship raised sensitive civil liberties questions. In retrospect, it seems these women were narrow-minded, but when their actions are placed in the context of massively changing urban conditions they can be viewed as representing a legitimate concern, if not formulating the best response.

Concerns about censorship took another form among African-American women in Detroit. Because of their ongoing concern with respectability, African-American clubwomen, Geraldine Bledsoe and Nellie Watts believed that their racial situation in Detroit required a form of self-censorship in African-American newspapers. Richard Thomas reported that later in the 1930s, they complained to the Detroit Tribune about its coverage of black crime. The women believed that since the paper was owned and edited in Detroit, it had an obligation to print the "progressive" news about the race. Instead, the women accused the Tribune of sensationalizing the negative news. The Tribune replied that newspapers were a business and the sensational reports sell better than others.³⁵

³⁴ Wheeler, "From Reading Shakespeare," p.64-71.

³⁵ Richard W. Thomas, Life For Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945 (Bloomington, 1992), p. 115.



Immorality on the motion picture screen was not the only source of vice in Detroit in the 1920s. McArthur noted that Texas women believed that social hygiene was not simply a matter of private immorality. Prostitution was a public health problem and needed public discussion. Texas clubwomen wanted to protect their middle class families from this menace.³⁶ Detroit clubwomen were equally concerned about prostitution. Mrs. Craig Miller had written a letter to Mayor Couzens about the conditions in the massage parlors. Mayor Couzens sent a letter to DFWC President Novak, seeking the help of clubwomen in routing out illicit massage parlors. The Police Commissioner, James W. Inches believed immorality was going on in massage parlors but he was unable to get sufficient evidence. The Mayor was inquiring if Mrs. Miller could provide evidence.³⁷

African-American clubwomen in Detroit and elsewhere were also concerned about the proliferation of vice and crime in the large cities. The National Association Notes explained that vice was continuing to grow and it would have deleterious effects on young people. The Notes advised its readers, "Women, fight it, march if need be to the City Hall, conduct a campaign, a YWCA and with all the energies of our souls let us stop the advance of this evil."³⁸ African-American clubwoman, Elizabeth Gulley saw the congested housing conditions as provoking an unacceptable level of vice. She encouraged all women to work against it.³⁹

³⁶ Judith N. McArthur, Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918 (Urbana, 1998), p.85.

³⁷ Letter Couzens to Novak, Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

³⁸ "The Awakening of Woman,"(no author) National Association Notes , 19 (January, 1917): 4.

³⁹ Elizabeth L. Gulley, "Education vs. Charity As A Club Woman's Program," The National Notes 27 (April, 1925): 1.

When Detroit clubwomen investigated the Age of Consent Law, they discovered what they considered shocking news regarding sexual offenses. The Michigan Age of Consent Law said that a woman had to be over age sixteen to have consensual sex. Between January 1, 1920 and January 1, 1921, there were four hundred cases of offenses against girls under age sixteen which came before Judge Hulbert of the Juvenile Court. Of these there were twenty-nine warrants for statutory rape, only fifteen went to trial and only ten convictions were secured. Judge Hulbert explained that the average jurymen would not convict on statutory rape and send another man to prison for five to ten years if the girl was mature or was delinquent. Consequently, clubwomen felt that the public must be educated and public opinion should be changed. Judge Hulbert stated that men were always worried about property crimes and sent offenders to jail. Although all twenty-nine cases were aggravated and constituted a threat against the community, more men considered sexual offenses against those under sixteen as merely a nuisance. Judge Hulbert did not think raising the age of consent would help this situation and perhaps only aggravate it. He suggested a solution was stricter enforcement of the sixteen year old law like the Juvenile Protection Association had effected in Chicago. This organization had once been headed by Julia Lathrop and had Jane Addams among its Directors. In statutory rape cases, the Juvenile Protection Association employed the best lawyers and aided officials to see that cases were well tried. Also, Judge Hulbert suggested that the use of female jurors might help.⁴⁰ The DFWC Legislative Department worked with welfare workers, lawyers, judges, Doctors Dixon, and Jacoby and Judge Hulbert for a law to make

⁴⁰ LaVerne Lane Betts, "Concerning the Age of Consent," The Club Woman (April, 1922): 425-426.



men as guilty as women in prostitution. The Governor was willing to get the bill into the Criminal Code but there was not enough legislative support.⁴¹

In spite of the activities of civic-minded men and women to reduce vice, by 1926, Detroit was declared “the blackest, vilest city in the United States so far as vice is concerned.”⁴² At the request of the Detroit Citizen’s Committee, but financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, George E Worthington of the American Social Hygiene Association had conducted an investigation of Detroit in the first half of 1926. Worthington concluded that because of the city’s rapid growth, industrial property, laxity of the local police and the widespread belief that toleration and medical regulation existed, prostitutes from all over the country flocked to Detroit. In Detroit, prostitutes were merely fined, not jailed. Prostitution flourished within one mile of Cadillac Square, the main business district. Worthington continued, saying that Detroit was a wide-open town for vice. Prostitution was openly tolerated, there was much venereal disease and men even made indecent proposals to respectable women. Some prostitution was flourishing in the vicinity of Detroit’s large schools. Although the Women’s Division of the Police Department recorded an increase in prostitution of over fifty percent between 1923 and 1925, there were many more cases. The number of women who were arrested and listed their occupation as prostitute was up from ninety-three in 1923 to 204 in 1925. Between December 1925 and June 1926, Worthington discovered 3,215 cases. Official handling of this issue was complicated: the over-burdened Recorder’s Court handled prostitution cases as well as other criminal cases and the police under Commissioner William P.

⁴¹ “Report of the Legislative Department” (April 12, 1923), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1923, p.664, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴² Detroit News (June 27, 1926).

Rutledge were uninterested or even tolerant of this problem. Worthington concluded that the laws were sufficient to close houses of prostitution but that individual prostitutes presented a bigger problem. He felt that those who exploited these women should be prosecuted. He recommended improved administration in the Recorder's Court plus a Wayward Minor Law to help the situation.⁴³

The report of the American Social Hygiene Association generated great interest among Detroiters. A Committee of Citizens, representing major civic organizations and the city as a whole sent a letter to Mayor John W. Smith calling for him to take some action on the matter. G.D. Pope from the Community Fund, T.S. Merrill from the Board of Commerce, F.C. Gilbert from the Detroit Citizens League, C.B. VanDusen from the Young Men's Christian Association, Margaretta W. H. Morgan from the YWCA, Florence Hammond Skael from the League of Catholic Women, and first Vice President of the DFWC, Jean Chamberlain complained to Mayor Smith.⁴⁴ Mayor Smith pledged his support for their concern but he also outlined his differences with the American Social Hygiene Survey. Smith claimed that enforcement was not simply the province of the police but also needed citizen cooperation and an informed public opinion. The problem of vice had such varying views and there was an absence of informed support. Smith felt the Committee of Citizens would be of particular service if it drew up a practical program received the endorsement of citizens.⁴⁵

⁴³ George E. Worthington, "Prostitution in Detroit," MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 14.

⁴⁴ Letter to Smith from Committee of Citizens, (June 23, 1926), MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 14.

⁴⁵ Letter to Detroit Citizens League from Smith, (July 1, 1926), MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers, Box 14.



The endorsement of citizens would prove difficult because few agreed on the solution to vice in Detroit. Dr. Edward G. Martin, editor of the Wayne County Medical Society Bulletin, suggested a segregated vice district that was licensed and certified by the Board of Health. Prior to 1916, Detroit had a separate vice district but the then Police Commissioner, James Couzens, broke it up. Martin claimed there had consequently been a three hundred percent increase in vice since.⁴⁶ The idea of a “red-light district” was not widely supported. The Detroit News commented that a more rigorous enforcement of the law by police, rather than segregation would curb vice in Detroit.⁴⁷

The diligence of police in the enforcement of laws against vice was a subject upon which Detroit clubwomen disagreed. The Progressive Civic League had formed a dance-cafe committee at the request of the Detroit Road Patrol. The Road Patrol was founded by Lieutenant Colonel Joe T. Blythe in 1923 to keep armed robbery down. The dance-cafe committee was to enforce the ordinance against serving liquor at the cafes.⁴⁸ The Progressive Civic League provided chaperones but found there was so much drinking that their task was really impossible. Under the city ordinance, it was the responsibility of the Women’s Division of the Police Department to enforce the city dance laws. Eleanor Hutzel of the Women’s Division declared that she was fully cognizant of the violations.⁴⁹ Historian Larry Engelmann suggested that given the proliferation of drinking establishments, the city government only cracked down on the most flagrant violators.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Detroit News (June 27, 1926).

⁴⁷ Detroit News (July 11, 1926).

⁴⁸ “Progressive Civic League,” The Club Woman (July, 1926): 704-705.

⁴⁹ Detroit Free Press (June 26, 1926).

⁵⁰ Larry D. Engelmann, “A Separate Peace: The Politics of Prohibition Enforcement in Detroit, 1920-1930,” Detroit In Perspective, W. Sprague Holder ed., (Autumn, 1972), p.54.

The DFWC disagreed with the accusations of the Progressive Civic League and sent a letter to Police Commissioner Frank Croul commending Hutzel. The DFWC also commended Croul for his refusal to issue licenses to undesirable dance cafes.⁵¹ By November, 1926, the DFWC's Civic Division declared that the report issued by the American Social Hygiene Investigation was so appalling that it generated public outrage and had resulted in houses of ill-repute being padlocked and soliciting taxi drivers being brought to justice.⁵²

While the burgeoning size of Detroit made the vice laws difficult to enforce, the proximity of Detroit to Canada made the Volstead Act almost impossible to enforce. Detroit clubwomen began the 1920s supporting prohibition, but many ended the decade advocating prohibition reform. In the earlier part of the decade, many agreed with Nathan W. MacChesney, President of the National Conference of Commissions of Uniform State Laws, that a serious contributor to lax discipline was the open flaunting of the Volstead Act.⁵³ In 1919, the proposition came before Michigan Voters to allow beer and wine. The DFWC opposed this exception and gave all assistance to defeat this.⁵⁴

In spite of the efforts to enlist private citizens in the battle against prohibition violators, Detroit continued to lose the temperance battle. Engelmann wrote that the politics of prohibition enforcement precluded total success. In 1918, prohibition defenders like Police Commissioner, James Couzens, pledged stringent enforcement. By 1920, when

⁵¹ Minutes Special Meeting, (June 26, 1926), Vol 16 Minutes 1926-1927, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵² "Report of the Civic Division" (November 12, 1926), Vol 16 Minutes 1926-1927, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵³ Detroit News (September 2, 1925).

⁵⁴ "Report of the Legislative Department" (March 13, 1919), Vol 11 Minutes 1918-1920, p.239-240, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

Couzens became Mayor of Detroit, he was forced to admit that a wet Detroit could not be dried out very easily. Urban problems like transportation, education, sanitation and other public services were the chief concerns of the city government. Consequently, Couzens and the mayors who followed him, practiced what Engelmann called regulation, not strangulation of the liquor traffic.⁵⁵ For example, after New Year's 1924, the problem made front-page newspaper headlines describing "Detroit's most hilarious New Year's Eve celebration since the coming of prohibition in 1918."⁵⁶ Federal authorities claimed the city's police were lax and Police Commissioner, Frank Croul conceded that stopping the flow of liquor into Detroit was proving to be an impossible task. There was the added scandal that Detroit policemen were extorting money from saloon keepers for protection against prosecution.⁵⁷ Two weeks after the News Years accusation, law enforcement officials promised a renewed cooperation among themselves and a fresh attack on the city's wet spots.⁵⁸

Still, the continuing difficulty in enforcing the Volstead Act disturbed some clubwomen. As late as 1928, the Northwestern Women's Club found evidence that cigar and confectionery stores were really blind pigs. This especially alarmed the women because some of these stores were in the vicinity of Northwestern High School. They used their club as an investigating committee which inquired at the Better Business Bureau to find if these stores were legitimate candy stores.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Engelmann, "A Separate Peace," p. 54.

⁵⁶ Detroit News (January 2, 1924). Other big city mayors suffered political defeat when they tried actively to enforce prohibition. See John R. Schmidt, The Mayor Who Cleaned Up Chicago: A Political Biography of William E. Dever (Dekalb, 1989).

⁵⁷ Detroit News (January 2, 1924).

⁵⁸ Detroit News (January 14, 1924).

⁵⁹ Detroit News (November 6, 1928).



By the end of the decade, some Detroit women admitted that the Eighteenth Amendment proved impossible to enforce and failed in its purpose. Engelmann stated, “By 1928 smuggling, manufacturing and distributing liquor was Detroit’s second largest industry, exceeded in size only by the production of automobiles.”⁶⁰ In December of 1929, women founded a Michigan branch of the Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) in Detroit.⁶¹ Six months later, the Michigan branch was soliciting money and explaining the differences between women who oppose prohibition and those who support it. Those who sought reform, according to Mrs. James Holden, Chairman of the Finance Committee, still hated the saloon but feared the speakeasy more.⁶² Kenneth Rose explained how the WONPR used the argument that the home would be better protected without prohibition. These women believed that prohibition had encouraged criminals, corrupted public officials and encouraged the breaking of the law. Furthermore, by their own admission, they made a mistake and tried to rectify it. Helen Joy, (wife of Henry Bourne Joy, founder of Packard Motor Car Company), Regent of the Louisa St.Clair Chapter of the D.A.R., Detroit and WONPR National Vice-Chairman, said that if Prohibition had succeeded, she would have no problem with it. It, however had not.⁶³ Mrs. Holden challenged every woman who complained about the evils of prohibition to take a stand against it. She said that women who only complain, do not contribute to the solution. She added that it was the duty of every woman and especially of mothers to seek an acceptable solution.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Engelmann, “A Separate Peace,” p.53.

⁶¹ Detroit News (December 12, 1929).

⁶² Detroit News (June 28, 1930).

⁶³ Rose, American Women and Repeal, p.2, 91.

⁶⁴ Detroit News (June 28, 1930).



Rose noted that WONPR women used strategies that had been pioneered by women's groups; they made person-to-person contact, sent volumes of letters, and appealed directly to other women and officials. He emphasized the crucial role women played in repeal because the WONPR women dispelled the myth that all women were dry and only women could give the necessary moral clout to the movement.⁶⁵

By 1931 Michigan, second only to New York, enrolled 45,000 WONPR. They were severely criticized by Methodist minister, Robert Atklins of Birmingham, Michigan who said, "It is notorious that in their homes and clubs liquors are served with impunity and immunity and that there are drunkards in Bloomfield Hills whose debauches would disgrace a pagan social order."⁶⁶ But, their influence and cause were significant enough that Michigan's two Senators, James Couzens and Arthur Vandenberg, and six Representatives (out of thirteen) were considering repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.⁶⁷

Grace Root who wrote the authorized (by Pauline Sabin) story of the WONPR, claims that, "Those who knew the record of the Michigan WONPR were not surprised at the news that Michigan was to be first in the Ratification process."⁶⁸ In February 1933, steps were made to provide a ratification convention as soon as possible in Michigan. The resulting delegates included five WONPR members; Mary Eldridge (Mrs. Frederick) Alger, State Chairman, Catherine Doran, Mrs. Davis MacMorran, Dorothy Smith (Mrs. Thomas) McAllister and Helen Ryan (Mrs. C.A.) Dean. The convention met on April 10, 1933 and elected Alger president. She was the first woman to preside in the Legislative

⁶⁵ Rose, American Women and Repeal, p.96, 146

⁶⁶ Rose, American Women and Repeal, p.79.

⁶⁷ Detroit Free Press (September 18, 1931).

⁶⁸ Grace C. Root, Women and Repeal - The Story of the Women's Organization For National Prohibition Reform (New York, 1934), p.140.

Chamber of Michigan. The convention, with ninety-nine delegates for repeal and only one opposed voted overwhelmingly for repeal at that time.⁶⁹ Rose concluded that Prohibition repeal fell solidly in the tradition of American women's reform politics because it emphasized the home, was basically non-partisan and employed women's political culture and style.⁷⁰

The Detroit women who championed prohibition reform still believed in temperance and self control as these efforts to guard the home against the pernicious effects of gambling showed. Ethel (Mrs. George) Walters likened the addiction of gambling to that of alcohol. Referring to "dope sheets," she said "The hold that they seem to get on the men who follow them is only comparable to the vicious influence of drink or drugs; it is 'dope' indeed, poison of the worst kind, which seem (sic) to get into the veins of the men who play the races and are the dupes of the bookmakers."⁷¹ Lillian Mathews, President of the DFWC said, "If there is one thing that clubwomen the country over stand for more than another, it is the American home. Anything which threatens or attacks it, we are ready to fight to the last ditch, and we look upon the race track evil as one of the enemies of the home which we as clubwomen must pledge ourselves to fight to the limit."⁷² Clubwomen, therefore advocated strong anti-gambling legislation. In 1922, Detroit legislation declared it illegal to use a game or betting handbook for gain, hire or reward. This law proved difficult to prosecute. Ministers joined clubwomen and law enforcement agencies in supporting candidates for the 1922 elections who opposed

⁶⁹ Root, Women and Repeal, p.140-141.

⁷⁰ Rose, American Women and Repeal, p.147.

⁷¹ Detroit News (March 4, 1922).

⁷² Detroit News (March 4, 1922).



gambling and supported stronger legislation. By September, there were a total of 107 Wayne County candidates (for all offices) pledged to work for anti-gambling legislation.⁷³ Shortly afterwards, Dr. James W. Inches, Police Commissioner and Mayor James Couzens endorsed an ordinance to impose heavy fines and jail sentences for gamblers. There was a similar law in Highland Park which Couzens and Inches felt was successful.⁷⁴

Detroit clubwomen supported the municipal ordinance against gambling but believed state legislative action was also needed. Creating front page news three days in a row in the Detroit News, clubwomen made their opposition to race track betting clear. The Board of Directors of the DFWC met in March 1923 to issue a unanimous resolution to Governor Alex. J. Groesbeck and the Michigan State Legislature. This resolution stated that the gambling evil had been increasing in Detroit and made innocent women and children its victims. It praised the Detroit News for its stand against gambling and the publishing of racing odds and finally pledged its endorsement of all anti-gambling legislation. The Detroit clubwomen were planning to go in person to Lansing to show their support for the Voorheis-Bahorski Anti-Handbook Bill. DFWC club leaders like Lillian Mathews, President, Martha Ray, past President, Ethel Walters, Second Vice President, Claire E. Swain, Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Harriet Meader Hickey, Treasurer, Edna Prescott, First Vice President, Emma (Mrs. Remley) Weeks, Recording Secretary, along with Justina (Mrs. Harry) Robbins of the Highland Park Women's Club, all stressed the importance of this legislation. To the legislators, Ethel Walters spoke of a real home tragedy where a young expectant bride was left destitute because her gambling-

⁷³ Detroit News (September 7, 1922).

⁷⁴ Detroit News (October 4, 1922).



addicted husband had been sent to jail. As a result of this concern, the women agreed that they needed representatives to attend the legislative session regarding the Voorheis-Bahorski Bill and to represent their views.⁷⁵ Shortly afterwards, Gertrude Wallace, Chairman of the Legislative Committee of DFWC, Grace Krolik, Chairman of the Twentieth Century Club Legislative Committee, and Ethel Walters, of the Executive Committee of the DFWC, went to Lansing to join other women representing MFWC in support of the anti-gambling bill.⁷⁶ The Voorheis-Bahorski Bill was passed on April 20, 1923. It was hoped that the proximity to the track in Windsor would not simply take the race track gamblers across the river.⁷⁷

The organized women of Michigan were joined in the anti-gambling effort by prominent members of the clergy and newspapers like the Detroit News. The News gave clubwomen's anti-gambling activities more publicity than their other activities, giving them front page headlines. Generally, the activities of the clubwomen appeared in the Society or Home pages. The Detroit News gave the anti-gambling work of clubwomen such high media coverage because they, too, supported it. This extra publicity was helpful in this instance, but women could not count on this kind of support for all their campaigns.

Although the Voorheis-Bahorski anti-gambling law passed, the Michigan Supreme Court overturned it on a technicality. Therefore, in 1925, a revised Bahorski Anti-Gambling Bill was passed with a unanimous vote in the state house and senate.⁷⁸ Still, enforcement of that legislation was only half-hearted. Throughout the decade, a lax

⁷⁵ Detroit News (March 4, 1923).

⁷⁶ Detroit News (March 5, 1923).

⁷⁷ Mrs. Arthur Wallace, "Annual Report of the Legislative Department," The Club Woman (June, 1923): 610.

⁷⁸ Detroit News (April 15, 1925).



attitude on the part of Detroit's law enforcement was evident. Police Commissioner, William Rutledge deflected criticism by saying that the legislation allowed for injunctions and legal technicalities. Consequently, his hands were tied.⁷⁹ More damaging was evidence by 1930 that gambling in Detroit was part of an organized underworld of bootlegging, vice and racketeering. Judge Edward J. Jeffries of the Recorder's Court explained that organized crime in Chicago was founded on an alliance between the underworld and politics. Jeffries believed that such an alliance was being formed in Detroit. Certain handbooks appeared to be immune to prosecution and there was evidence that a "trust" had taken over the handbook racket in Detroit. While Mayor Bowles was in Louisville for the Kentucky Derby, there was a huge police raid on the city's big downtown handbooks and 276 men were arrested.⁸⁰

In spite of the fact that clubwomen were joined by powerful groups such as the Detroit Citizens League, the Detroit Council of Churches and the Detroit News, they experienced little success in the fight against crime and vice. They often secured appropriate legislation but this was then poorly enforced. They therefore also focused their attention to reforming the police department to secure both better law enforcement and crime prevention.

Police

The creation of a Women's Division for the Police Department would, many Detroit clubwomen believed, result in crime prevention and criminal rehabilitation. Clubwomen had successfully campaigned for a woman police officer in Detroit in 1919.

⁷⁹ Detroit News (September 7, 1927).

⁸⁰ Detroit News (May 18, 1930).

As part of their anti-crime initiative, the Political and Civic League invited Miss Josephine Davis, Detroit's first policewoman, to their meeting to explain the purpose of the proposed Women's Division in 1920. She explained that policewomen were valuable in warning young girls of the dangers of the city. Policewomen could also accompany women and girls who had contact with the law by attending trials, houses of correction and hospitals. Policewomen helped limit temptations by keeping petty gambling and the selling of tobacco away from minors. They could cooperate closely with travelers' aid and protective leagues. Davis advocated that Detroit adopt a special Women's Department with an experienced, trained woman at the head. She further suggested that the division include both uniformed and non-uniformed women officers. These officers should be on the same footing as their male counterparts with all the same rights and responsibilities.⁸¹

This Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department was organized in January of 1920, but not by Davis or any other Detroit policewoman. Instead, after a nation-wide search, Police Commissioner Dr. James W. Inches appointed Virginia May Murray of New York City to undertake this task. While there was some criticism of a non-Detroit choice, the decision was generally greeted with enthusiasm.⁸² Murray was and remained the head of the Travelers' Aid Society of New York. She spent the first six months of 1920 organizing the Women's Bureau of the Detroit Police Department and thereafter divided her time equally with her New York responsibilities.⁸³

Murray's ideas about the function of the Women's Bureau emulated those articulated by Davis at the Political and Civic League earlier. She wanted such a bureau to

⁸¹ Detroit News (November 16, 1920).

⁸² Detroit Citizen (April, 1921): 9.

⁸³ Detroit News (January 2, 1921).



offer protection and guidance for all Detroit woman but especially young women. She declared that there would be cooperation within the Police Department, between social welfare organizations and the Recreation Commission. In fact, Murray's policewomen would enforce the Commission's standards at dance halls and other places of amusement. While the female officers would have the title "Policewoman," they would not carry weapons or wear uniforms. Murray preferred to think of them as "municipal welfare workers" who supervise women and girls who need attention. This attention might mean entry into the courts, reform or social agencies of the city. In those cases, an officer would accompany the woman through a trial or simply refer her to an appropriate social welfare organization. Murray concluded "With the organization of the Women's Division, the day when a woman or a girl is brought into court, fined, sentenced or freed and then lost sight of, is past."⁸⁴

In an early interview, Murray echoed the feelings of many Detroit clubwomen about criminal prevention and rehabilitation when she said that she treated every case individually. She did not believe in categorizing women as fallen or wayward but as human beings who suffered from broken homes or unwise parents. She believed that each case had a unique personal history and that each should be treated as an individual. The new Women's Division worked with both women and girls. But Murray believed a crucial component of her police work was educational and therefore reaching potential problems earlier was preferred. Since she understood that girls who need the attention of the Women's Division came from disadvantaged homes, Murray believed that parents should be made aware of their mistakes in child rearing, and how to correct them. Additionally,

⁸⁴ Detroit News (January 5, 1921).



Murray advocated a program, supported by the Detroit clubwomen, for farm colonies for troubled girls. Murray's work in New York led her to conclude that many delinquent women were in fact mentally deficient. They should therefore be trained in a separate facility. In a farm colony, the girls would develop skills or trades so they could function in society. This would benefit society with a productive citizen and the individual by increasing her self-esteem. Murray's plans about plainclothes policewomen patrolling danger areas for young girls and investigating troubled girls, completed her design for prevention and rehabilitation.⁸⁵

The Detroit clubwomen's opinion of the Women's Division was so valued that it was sought out by Commissioner James Inches as he decided whether to keep the division permanently. In a letter dated June 24, 1921, from Inches to Novak, President of the DFWC, he requested the DFWC to appoint a committee to thoroughly examine the Women's Division and report whether its results justified keeping the Women's Division on a permanent basis.⁸⁶ In October, 1921, the Committee to Investigate the Work of the Women's Division of the Police Department, composed of Clara J. Downey, Lillian Mathews and Edna H. Prescott issued a ringing endorsement. The women praised Dr. Inches as being in sympathy, so therefore cooperative with, the Women's Bureau. Additionally, they felt Murray was a wonderful Superintendent, whose preventive work was well done. The Women's Division cooperated with all city welfare organizations like the Girl's Protective League, YWCA, United Jewish Charities, Bureau of Catholic Schools etc. If a girl did not respond to these, she was sent to the Police Department. The

⁸⁵ Detroit News (February 17, 1921).

⁸⁶ Letter from James D. Inches to Mrs. Pearl Novak, (June 24, 1921), Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



committee reported that of the two thousand girls who came to the attention of the Women's Division, only three percent were committed to penal institutions. They felt the bureau's work was indicative of the most progressive and effective lines of "social betterment" and Detroit was pre-eminent among U.S. cities for its work. Consequently, the committee recommended that Dr. Inches make the Women's Division a permanent part of the Police Department. The Detroit clubwomen endorsed the Women's Division because they felt that work with women and girls was best carried out by women. Their report requested that the division be always headed by a woman and that future matrons be qualified to teach vocational training. Lastly, since clubwomen also supported equal working rights for women, they requested that women who retired from these positions, be awarded pensions.⁸⁷

The DFWC report of the Committee to Investigate the Women's Division made the front page of the Detroit News in October 1921. The News gave a detailed account of the conditions prior to the creation of the Women's Division and how that division alleviated those circumstances. The article quoted Pearl Novak, President of the DFWC in describing the Federation's investigation. The overall article was favorable to the findings of the DFWC regarding the Women's Division. The News once more showed its support for a DFWC position by giving it front page coverage.⁸⁸

Detroit clubwomen gave strong support to both the Women's Division and the choice of Virginia Mae Murray as its head. When Daniel W. Smith, candidate for Mayor, appeared before the Detroit LWV in November, 1921, he was heckled by the women for

⁸⁷ "Club History," Vol 73 p.41-42, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁸⁸ Detroit News (October 9, 1921).



his criticism of Murray. According to the Detroit News, “The attack was so spirited and successful, that before the chairman had restored order, Mr. Smith admitted the city administration was justified in hiring Miss Murray.”⁸⁹ Along with the other candidates, Smith had been invited to address the DLWV. While Mayor Couzens arrived and spoke on time, Smith came two hours late and then gave the same speech he had delivered at the other meetings, denouncing the recruitment of city personnel, including Murray, from outside Detroit. Smith insisted that a Detroit choice should have been sought, but the women claimed that none was qualified. Smith conceded the point but as he tried to move the debate away from the Women’s Division and Murray, the female audience insisted that more be said. Although the discussion eventually went on to prohibition and the transportation problems in Detroit, the women of the DLWV had forced a complete airing of the candidates’ views on the Women’s Police Division. Clubwomen’s unwillingness to end the debate until the issues had been thoroughly discussed and their insistence that the candidates speak specifically and not in glossed-over generalities demonstrated one way in which they were attempting to influence Detroit politics. It also demonstrated their determination to influence Detroit politics. Their resolve, in fact, forced Candidate Smith to change his views.⁹⁰

While clubwomen defended the work of the Women’s Police Division, their motives were perceived as voyeuristic, not civic, by the city’s other major newspaper, the Detroit Free Press. In November 1921, fifty Detroit clubwomen went to Judge Heston’s criminal court to witness a sensational case. The Free Press claimed that although the

⁸⁹ Detroit News (November 3, 1921).

⁹⁰ Detroit News (November 3, 1921).



clubwomen said they were there to support the female policewoman, they had really come to hear the salacious details of the case. Judge Heston had been vocally opposed to Detroit policewomen but, the Free Press stated that the policewoman needed no support and that the clubwomen were demeaning the process. While the article admitted that women had a stake in maintaining good public morals, this did not include hanging around criminal courts listening to sensational cases.⁹¹ This pejorative article drew heavy protest from the DFWC. It sent a letter condemning the article to the Free Press, as well as another letter to Judge William Heston, condemning the same. Detroit clubwomen protested that the newspaper had a greater commitment to sales than to accurately reflecting the work of clubwomen.⁹² Despite the attempt to impugn the motivation of Detroit clubwomen, their advocacy of the Women's Police Division helped establish the organization as permanent. While the favorable report of the DFWC would help secure the permanent status for the Women's Division, Detroit clubwomen understood that any such change in public policy needed the support of elected officials. Accordingly, they voted to endorse an amendment to the city charter establishing the Women's Division of the Police Department with a woman at the head. They sent their recommendation to Mayor Couzens and the President of the Common Council, John C. Lodge in March of 1922.⁹³ The DFWC's endorsed amendment to the City Charter required a municipal vote as it would reorganize the Detroit Police Department. On March 7, 1923, the amendment passed and thereafter, the Police Commissioner would appoint four Deputy

⁹¹ Detroit Free Press (November 8, 1921).

⁹² Letter to Detroit Free Press and Judge Heston from DFWC (November 11, 1921), letter to Miss Minnie Cage, Detroit Journal from Pearl Novak, (March 27, 1922), Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

Commissioners for police knowledge, administration, public safety, and a woman to head the Women's Division.⁹⁴ The Detroit News praised the effort the DFWC when they stated that this amendment was: "Due to the efforts of the Civic Department of the Federation and was taken to ensure the permanence of the Women's Division." This time, however, the praise was tucked away in the Sunday Home Section.⁹⁵

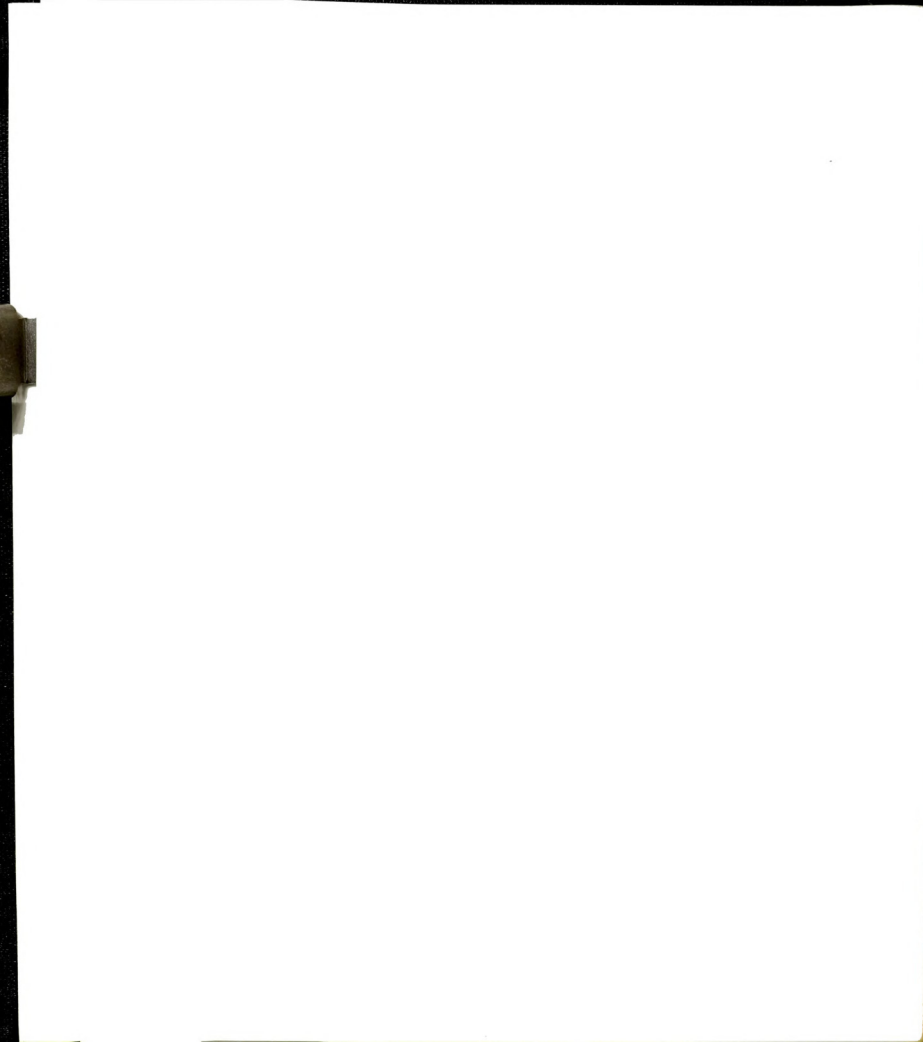
Throughout the 1920s, the productive work of the Women's Division was being reported in a variety of women's publications. The Magazine of the Woman's City Club reported that the division was effective in preventive, protective work for women. It gave impressive statistics regarding the return of runaways with 95% of Detroit girls returned, and 70% of outside girls returned. Additionally, the division provided women to counsel girls who had had crimes committed against them in order to cushion the shock to the victimized girl. According to The Woman's Bulletin, the female officers who increased in number throughout the decade considered themselves to be "social diagnosticians" who discovered the causes of crime, immorality and social maladjustment.⁹⁶ The Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department was held up as a model for others throughout the country. Its widespread acceptance could be seen in the responses given by mayoral candidates in 1929 to questions from clubwomen who wanted to know how the candidates felt about the Women's Police Division. Charles Bowles said no changes were

⁹³ Recommendation to Mayor Couzens from DFWC, Vol. 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹⁴ "Minutes," (January 30, 1923), Vol. 13 Minutes 1922-1924, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, p.460.

⁹⁵ Detroit News (February 11, 1923).

⁹⁶ The Magazine of the Woman's City Club (March, 1926): 8,25 and Edith M. Rose, ed., Woman's Bulletin (February, 1928), no pages.



necessary. Candidate John W. Smith stated that the Division was well run and needed no changes.⁹⁷

Court Reform

The enforcement of ordinances in Detroit not only rested with the police of course, but also with the courts. Following suffrage, Detroit women were sought out by civic groups such as the Detroit Citizens League to support efforts toward court reform. In the early twentieth century, justice in Detroit operated through two different courts. The Police Court included three judges and handled misdemeanor cases. The Recorder's Court had two judges and heard felony cases. There was no presiding judge to direct the flow of work and the system was woefully inadequate for a city of Detroit's size.⁹⁸ In February, 1920 The Detroit Citizens League circulated a petition with 29,000 signatures to bring the matter of court reform before the voters in the April election.⁹⁹ The Citizens League had also enlisted help from the newly enfranchised Detroit women. In November 1919, they had invited over five hundred clubwomen to hear Judge Mary Bartelme of Chicago advocate court reform in Detroit.¹⁰⁰ Additionally Pliny W. Marsh, Attorney for the Citizens League, and William P. Lovett, Executive Secretary for the League, wrote articles for The Club Woman advocating court reform.¹⁰¹ The Citizens League sent copies of letters with court reform questions to The Club Woman and The Catholic Business Woman as well as businesses and factories. Clara Livermore, formerly a Probation Officer

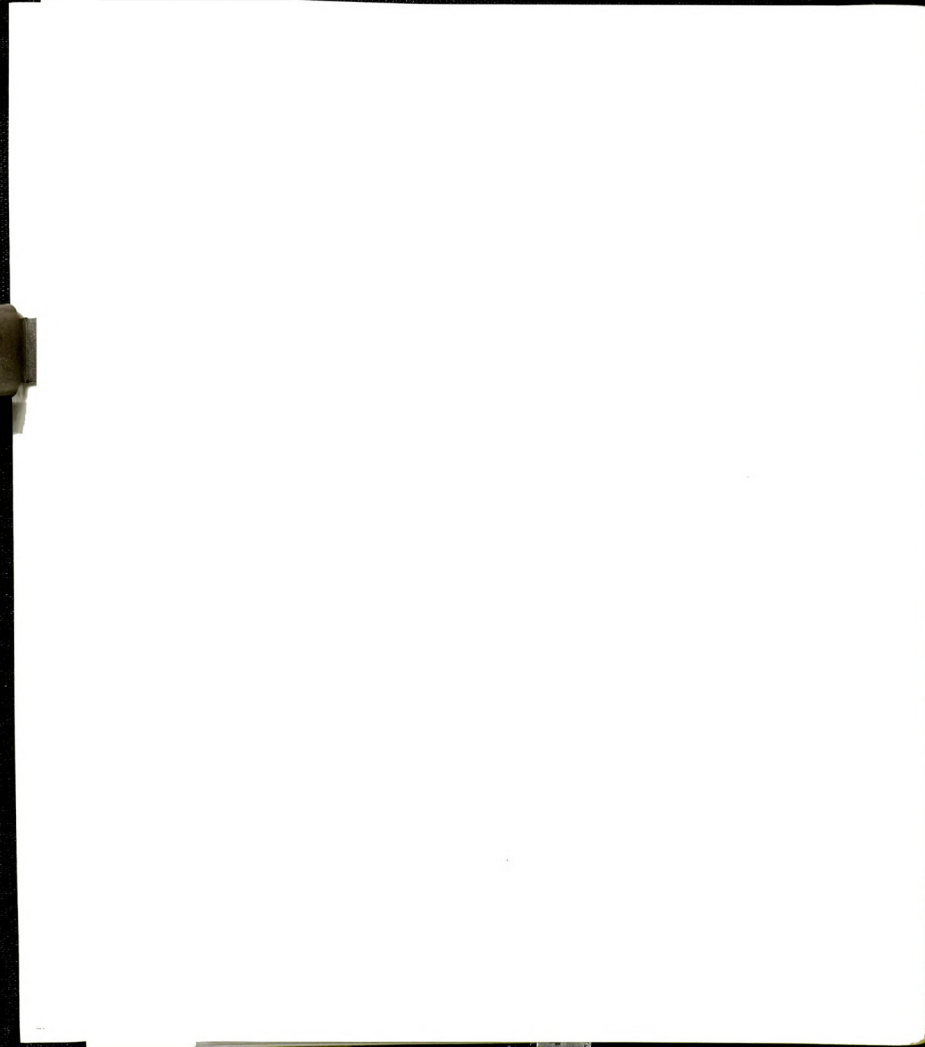
⁹⁷ Board of Directors Meeting, Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, (October 31, 1929), MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁹⁸ Sidney Fine, Frank Murphy the Detroit Years (Ann Arbor, 1975), p.92-93.

⁹⁹ Detroit News (March 13, 1920). The Detroit Council of Churches supported the Court Reform Bill and urged its pastors to the same. Detroit News (March 13, 1920).

¹⁰⁰ "Municipal Court Reform in Detroit," The Club Woman (December, 1919): 199-201.

¹⁰¹ William Lovett, "Women and the City Courts," The Club Woman (November, 1919): 144-147 and Pliny Marsh, "Court Reform for Detroit," The Club Woman (March, 1920): 393-395.



of the Juvenile Court addressed women employees of various industrial concerns.¹⁰² As a result of this campaign, on April 5, 1920, the voters of Detroit abolished the Police Court and expanded the Recorder's Court to have all jurisdiction over criminal cases and up to seven judges. An enabling statute was later needed and passed by the Michigan Legislature.¹⁰³

Five months later, the newly appointed Recorder's Judge, Pliny W. Marsh, wrote an article in The Club Woman in which he claimed that the jails were no longer crowded with people waiting for trial. The Night Court disposed of petty offenders and false arrests were down because the new court was equipped with an investigation staff which double-checked reports. Marsh went on to acknowledge the important support of Detroit women in this effort. He claimed that while there was a majority vote of four to one for the new system, women were an important factor in that vote and he made an appeal to women to continue to support the new municipal judicial system.¹⁰⁴

While Detroit clubwomen were interested in greater justice, they were also aware that women's judicial needs were different from men's. The DFWC's Juvenile Court Committee had worked for a female probation officer in Detroit. In November 1909, Judge Henry Hulbert, Juvenile Court Judge, had appointed Ada Freeman to this position.¹⁰⁵ Now, in 1920 the Recorder's Court under the leadership of Judge Harry B. Keiden and Judge William Heston (who had been opposed to the Women's Division of the Police Department) organized a Women's Court Division. This division handled an

¹⁰² Letter from Pliny Marsh to Executive Board of Detroit Citizens League, (March 9, 1920), Box 3, MS Detroit Citizens League, Additional Papers.

¹⁰³ Fine, Murphy, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Pliny Marsh, "Court Reform for Detroit," The Club Woman (September, 1920): 18-20.

¹⁰⁵ "Club History," Vol 73, p.12, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



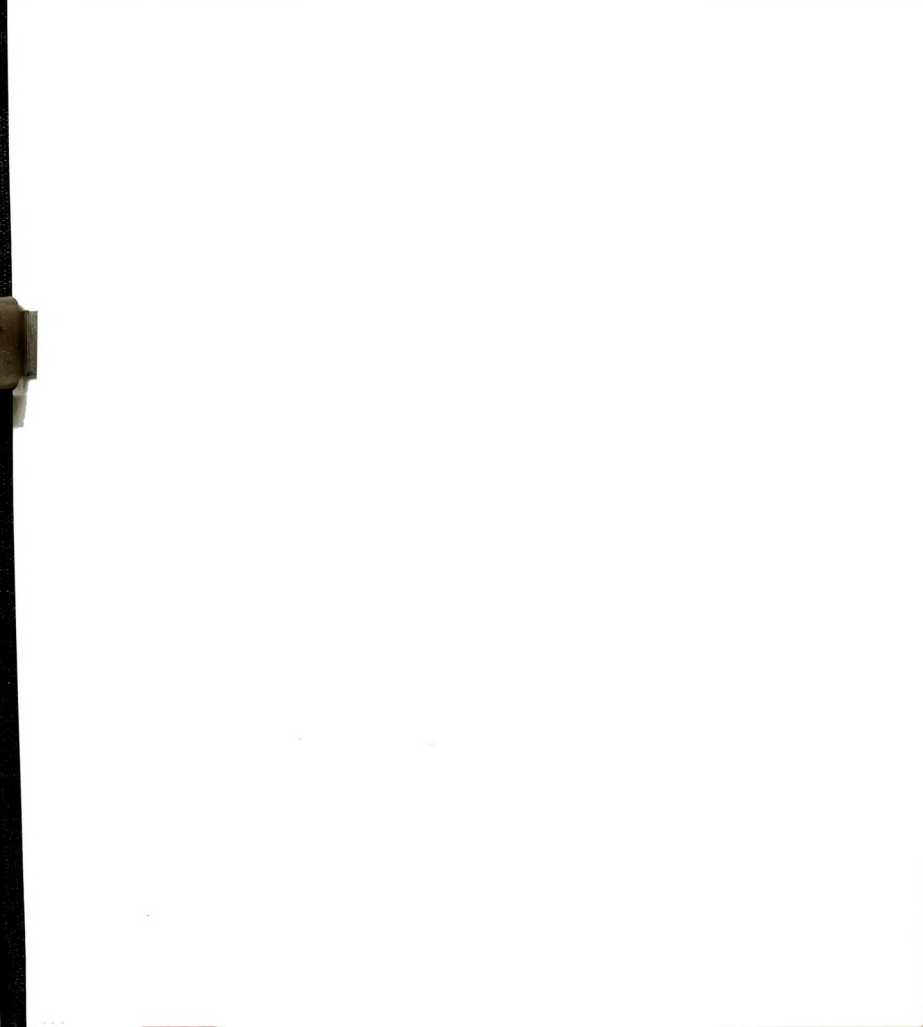
average of two hundred women per month on charges of larceny, drunkenness, and disturbing the peace. An effort was made to investigate the mental and physical health and social history of the offender. The objective was not only to protect the interest of the women, but also to return a worthwhile person to society. Judge Marsh believed that the Women's Division should continue and that a separate prison facility was needed for women with venereal disease, as well a separate institution for detained women.¹⁰⁶

The judicial system continued to attract the interest of clubwomen throughout the decade, but they did not always endorse the Detroit Citizens League candidates. Women's "social vision" wasn't always shared by the Detroit Citizens League. According to the Detroit News, clubwomen's perspective was a "battle for humanity and social vision on the bench."¹⁰⁷ The Records Court election of 1923 was a chance for these women to elect representatives who shared their philosophy. The big issue of the 1923 Recorder's Court election was the control of the "bloc" meaning Judges Keiden, Cotter, Marsh and Heston. These men were not friendly to labor or the poor but they had the endorsement of the Detroit Citizens League. The bloc was also supported by the Michigan Manufacturers Association, the Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, and big business in general. Both Heston and Marsh prevented Mrs. R.H. Lathers, the social service director of the county jail, from fulfilling her job. Mrs. Lathers, at the suggestion of the Progressive Civic League had been appointed by Sheriff Coffin.¹⁰⁸ Heston had also incurred the wrath of civic-minded women because he opposed the Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department. There had also been the incident when clubwomen were criticized for

¹⁰⁶ Frances Knight, "The Law and the Woman," The Club Woman (February, 1922: 281-82).

¹⁰⁷ Detroit News (April 1, 1922).

¹⁰⁸ "Court Social Worker Mistreats Is Charged," unidentified newspaper, Reading Room File - Zahn BHC.



attending his court during a sensational case. Socially prominent clubwomen, furthermore, felt Heston was incompetent and dogmatic. The Detroit Citizens League endorsed judges who believed crime was deterred by punishing the criminal, not rehabilitating him and achieving desired social reforms.¹⁰⁹ Detroit's clubwomen would agree with Reinhold Niebuhr, a Detroit pastor in 1926, that "undisciplined and chaotic souls emancipated from the traditions which guided their fathers and incapable of forming new and equally potent cultural and moral restraint" needed social concern not just punishment.¹¹⁰ Emma Fox, who the Detroit News called the "dean of Detroit clubwomen," Pearl Novak, Past President of the DFWC, Ida Peppers, President of the LWV, and Edith Alvord, all worked for candidates Frank Murphy and Edward Jeffries who supported their vision of justice in Detroit that included maintaining psychiatric and probation departments. This did not apply to Judges Heston or Marsh.¹¹¹

All candidates, representing the bloc and otherwise, appeared before clubwomen to explain their views.¹¹² One candidate for the Recorder's Court who embodied many of the women's concerns was Frank Murphy. Murphy was neither a machine nor a business-interest politician. He endorsed many reforms such as psychiatric and probation departments and public defenders and he opposed the death penalty.¹¹³ Ruby Zahn, President of the Progressive Civic League called Murphy, "that splendid young man" and

¹⁰⁹ Fine, Murphy, 94, 104, 108.

¹¹⁰ Fine, Murphy, 100.

¹¹¹ Detroit News (April 1, 1923).

¹¹² Detroit News (April 1, 1923).

¹¹³ Fine, Murphy, 123, 126, 137.



socially prominent Detroit clubwomen, in their effort to defeat Heston, had urged Murphy to run.¹¹⁴

In endorsing Murphy, the municipally active Detroit women were opposing the policies of the Detroit Citizens League. The League had put Murphy in the “not recommended” category, because Murphy had a different vision of crime and punishment, and also because they feared losing their bloc control.¹¹⁵ It was just this bloc control which civic minded Detroit clubwomen opposed. Zahn referred to the bloc judges, Keiden, Cotter Heston and Marsh, as “czars.” The Progressive Civic League had previously protested to the Lawyer’s Club that the Recorder’s Court did not appoint counsel for all needy cases. Zahn specifically appealed to women to see that justice was done and the bloc was defeated.¹¹⁶ The Recorder’s Court bloc was defeated in 1923. Although Keiden and Cotter were re-elected, Heston and Marsh got the least votes and were eliminated from the court. Frank Murphy got the most votes.¹¹⁷

In his biography of Murphy, Sidney Fine claimed that the Recorder’s Election of 1923 showed that the City Charter changes and the 1918 triumph of middle-class ethos over immigrant ethos was short-lived in Detroit. The day after the 1923 Recorder’s election, the Secretary of the Detroit Citizens League wrote, “The old Detroit is disappearing and a new Detroit is arising. What it will be, nobody knows.”¹¹⁸ Those who had supported the bloc were the Detroit Citizens League, the Michigan Manufacturers

¹¹⁴ Fine, Murphy, 104, 111.

¹¹⁵ Fine, Murphy, 111.

¹¹⁶ “Civic League Urges Women to Beat Bloc,” unidentified newspaper, Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹¹⁷ Detroit News (April 3, 1923). Recorder’s Court results - First six elected, Murphy-77,444; Jeffries-71,635; Faust-71,621; Keiden-71,088; Cotter-69,871; Stein-60,639; Heston-52,806; Marsh-51,674; Kent-46,230; Speed-35,508; Baxter-31,784; Lee-31,336. Detroit News (April 3, 1923).

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Fine, Murphy, 116.

Association, the Detroit News, The Detroit Free Press and big business. According to Fine, only the Detroit Times stood against the bloc.¹¹⁹ But, this assessment totally disregards the influence of civic-minded clubwomen. Municipal politics in Detroit in the 1920s was not simply a class struggle or a contest of interest-group politics. The influence of politically active women who campaigned hard against the bloc and helped elect Frank Murphy, a candidate who shared their vision of the way the city's justice system should work, was certainly a factor in the 1923 shake-up at the Recorder's Court.

The shake-up at the Recorder's Court also reflected the acceptance of new ideas about crime and punishment. Civic minded clubwomen were aware that the judicial system was unfairly harsh on poor people but it was the Progressive Civic League who, in 1921, championed a public defender in Wayne County for those accused of crimes and unable to secure counsel. While, there is evidence to show that the Progressive Civic League got assistance on this issue from Detroit's major women's organizations, most clubwomen did not share the same enthusiasm as Zahn for public defenders. In April 1923, when Ruby Zahn wrote to the Michigan legislature advocating this she cited jurists such as William H. Taft and Hon. Wesley O. Howard (Justice of Supreme Court of New York) as to the need for a public defender. They claimed that a public defender provided justice and was economical because the innocent do not need to be imprisoned. Additionally, Zahn continued, the system would promote more equal justice between the rich and poor. It would expedite trials and allow for a better appeals process. Nationally, the Public Defender Movement began in 1911 and by 1915, twelve states were considering it. In

¹¹⁹ Fine, Murphy, 116.



1919, with the endorsement of Charles Evans Hughes, New York adopted it. Zahn believed that Michigan should join other progressive states who had public defender programs.¹²⁰

Zahn was supported in this cause by Circuit Judge Harry J. Dingeman who spoke to the Progressive Civic League about this matter in January of 1922.¹²¹ In 1923, Judge-elect Frank Murphy also spoke before the Progressive Civic League endorsing a public defender. He claimed that big criminals had big lawyers and the poorer people did not get a “square deal.” Murphy also stressed that the public defender would restore faith in the courts and establish respect among the foreign population whose homeland experience with courts was only corrupt and bribe-ridden.¹²²

Throughout 1924, the Progressive Civic League concentrated on getting the Public Defender bill through the Michigan State Legislature. Two years earlier, the League tried but could not get it out of committee. In 1924, it was introduced by State Senator George M. Condon and had been prepared by Judge Frank Murphy and Attorney Alvin D. Hersh. Hersh claimed that most offenders were poor and did not know to ask for an attorney. If they did ask, they were assigned law students or “hangers-on” who simply went through the motions. Hersh asserted that the state had the obligation to prove the innocence of a man. Also, the system of assigning counsel was neither cheap, approximately \$50,000 per year, nor did it ensure justice. Hersh praised the Progressive Civic League for raising a matter that was surely a necessity.¹²³

¹²⁰ Letter from Zahn to Michigan State Legislature, (April 18, 1923), Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹²¹ Detroit News (January 7, 1922).

¹²² “Civic League Hears Pleas for Public Defender,” unidentified newspaper, Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹²³ “Public Lawyer Bill Asked,” (November 26, 1924), unidentified newspaper, Reading Room File - Zahn.



The Condon Public Defender Bill, advocated by Judges Dingeman, Murphy, Ira Jayne and others, stated that counties with populations of 900,000 or more, must elect a public defender. Before this election, one would be appointed. To qualify as a public defender, a person must have practiced law in Michigan for at least five years. Their assistants must also have been practicing attorneys. They were to represent those unable to retain counsel, conduct appeals and seek pardons or paroles.¹²⁴ At a public hearing in Wayne County, there was no solid support for the bill. Detroit clubwomen presented a list of prominent Detroiters who supported the measure but failed to attend the hearing. Additionally, three of the Wayne county senators opposed the legislation and another was halfhearted. When the hearing decided to allow a public referendum on the measure, the bill was sent to the Committee on Elections. The chairman of that committee, Arthur E. Wood opposed the legislation. The Detroit News concluded that move was like "sending it to the boneyard." The bill never got out of the Committee on Elections.¹²⁵

Detroit clubwomen campaigned for more lenient legislation for wayward minors between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. Detroit women knew that in New York, if boys or girls were in places of ill-repute or associated with undesirable persons, they could be charged with being Wayward Minors. They then went before a Juvenile Court and avoided contact with hardened criminals.¹²⁶ Leta (Mrs. Irving) Maurer of the DFWC's Legislative Division explained that young adults between 17 and 21 should not be tried in the same court as hardened criminals. Furthermore, to throw young offenders with men

¹²⁴ "Wage Public Defender Bill in Senate This Week," unidentified newspaper, Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹²⁵ Detroit News (April 8, 1925).

¹²⁶ Elinor (sic) M. Hutzel, "Probation for the Wayward Minor Over Seventeen Years of Age," Michigan Woman (November, 1926): 26,28.



and women who were experienced criminals, would lead to further trouble and not rehabilitation. The DFWC made a careful investigation of the Wayward Minor Bill in Michigan and then gave it their support. Maurer and Mary (Mrs. James) Nelson, President of the DFWC were members of a committee investigating the bill along with Robert T. Toms, Dr. Arnold L. Jacoby and Eleanor Hutzel.¹²⁷ The Wayward Minor Bill was passed in Michigan in the Spring of 1927.

Two years later, Eleanor L. Hutzel reported the working of the court in the Michigan Woman. She explained that the Wayward Minor Court, a division of the Probate Court, was only for problems that had not yet become criminal. If someone over seventeen committed a felony, he would go to a criminal court. Between Jan 1 - May 15, 1923, there were three hundred cases before the Wayward Court. They were mostly out-of-towners, looking for work but when finding none, they drifted into the bad areas of the city. Between December, 1927 and December, 1928, there were 126 cases of female Wayward Minors. Many of these showed signs of willful disobedience and were in danger of committing immoral acts. Hutzel felt that the Wayward Minor provisions had taken people “off the wrong track” and hopefully on the right one.¹²⁸

Women also influenced the courts with their participation as jurors. In 1918, when the franchise was achieved for Michigan women, they acquired the right to sit on juries. The first woman juror was in judge Edward J. Jeffries case of *People vs. Bartz*, 212,

¹²⁷ Detroit News (January 2, 1927).

¹²⁸ Eleanor L. Hutzel, “The Wayward Minor Court - Is Helping the Problem Boy and Girl in Wayne County,” Michigan Woman (June, 1929): 27-32.

Michigan. This woman juror was challenged and the case went to the Michigan Supreme Court. The Court affirmed a woman's right to serve as a juror.¹²⁹

In March of 1919, Justice Felix Lempkie, running for re-election, with an eye to the newly enfranchised women voters, chose the first three women to sit on a Detroit jury. They were joined by three men and actually never registered a verdict. The event was preceded by a phone call to reporters so Justice Lempkie could take full public credit for the addition of women to the jury. Justice Bolton, also running for election, followed suit and employed six prominent suffragists to sit on his jury.¹³⁰ Immediately after the introduction of women to Detroit juries the question arose about how, when, and where women might influence the verdict. In Justice Theodore J. Richter's court, Mrs. Peter Wilhelmsen, for example, demanded a female jury. In a case involving non-payment of coal which had ruined Mrs. Wilhelmsen's wallpaper, curtains, rugs and table linen, she claimed only a woman jury could do justice in the case.¹³¹ The advent of women on juries therefore presented a dilemma for the judicial system of Detroit. The gender of the jury might influence the verdict. Mrs. Wilhelmsen, for example, wanted to appeal to women as homemakers and she feared a more business-minded male jury would simply require that the coal company be paid. Later, in 1921, a Prohibition violation case was scheduled to be heard by six prominent women of the Highland Park Women's Club. Deputy Sheriff George Voorheis named the jurors and perhaps drew criticism. He stated that he would

¹²⁹ Alice Tarbell Cathern, In Detroit...Courage Was the Fashion: The Contribution of Women to the Development of Detroit, 1701-1951 (Detroit, 1953), p.241.

¹³⁰ Detroit News (March 21, 1919).

¹³¹ Detroit News (March 23, 1919).



thereafter make juries gender equal.¹³² Voorheis would avoid the “gender verdict” problem by balancing his choices between both sexes.

In 1927, Grace H. Brown of the Detroit Bar Association compiled the results of questionnaires sent to judges regarding women on juries. The results were that women were “honest, dispassionate, and intelligent members of both district and federal panels.”¹³³ Some women jurors had the advantage of being in the leisure class with the time necessary for jury duty. The subject of women on Grand Juries was addressed in the Michigan Woman by Edith A. Butler. Butler had served on the U.S. Grand Jury herself and she felt that while jury duty was a patriotic duty, it was also time consuming. She concluded that women with mature families were ideally suited to help. She also believed that women should be on juries when women were accused or used as witnesses. Women had already been on county and municipal juries and Butler believed they should be jurors for U.S. Courts as well.¹³⁴

While there was positive evidence, there was negative evidence as well about attitudes toward women as jurors. Marjorie Elaine Porter wrote about the experiences of Mrs. Philip Foisy and Mrs. B.L. Howes who spent one month on the Circuit Court. These women jurors claimed that they were never called for important cases, only petty damage suits. The Deputy Sheriff explained that women were conscientious jurors and weighed all the points. Men, especially at meal times, simply wanted to be done with it. He added that Foisy and Howes looked too intelligent and would be better suited to Federal Courts. At the Circuit Court level, especially when a corporation was fighting a claim, they wanted

¹³² Detroit News (January 9, 1921).

¹³³ Detroit News (October 27, 1927).

¹³⁴ Edith A. Butler, “A Woman on the Grand Jury,” Michigan Woman (October, 1926): 26.



ignorant, expeditious jurors.¹³⁵ Although Foisy and Howes were insulted at being passed over for the important cases, their conscientious deliberation was simply not appreciated by those seeking speedy “justice.”

By the end of the decade, the policy was to simply draw the jurors by chance and see if they were challenged. In 1930, for the first time in the history of the Recorder’s Court, there was a random selection of an all female jury. None of those women were challenged and they therefore heard the case in Judge Frank Murphy’s court and rendered a verdict.¹³⁶

Throughout the 1920s, the Detroit clubwomen maintained their concern with court proceedings. The courts in Detroit were crucial to law enforcement and since the judges were elected, Detroit’s citizens had the periodic opportunity to influence the style and philosophy of the courts. Clubwomen took a lively interest in those elections and the proceedings of the courts. They believed the courts must address the special needs of women and young adults. They expected the courts to protect society, not by simply punishing the criminal, but also by rehabilitating him. They supported those judges like Frank Murphy who shared their vision of justice for the poor and rehabilitation of offenders.

Prison

In regard to this last issue Detroit clubwomen also looked to the correctional institutions to protect young people and to rehabilitate offenders. They supported psychiatric and environmental investigations for first offenders and believed that

¹³⁵ Marjorie Elaine Porter, “The One Way to Jury Duty,” The Club Woman (January, 1926): 298-300.

¹³⁶ Detroit News (August 17, 1930).



incarceration should return a person who was better for society than he was before that imprisonment. They wanted to change the old nineteenth century, Dickensian prisons into modern rehabilitators and were sensitive to the special needs of women and children. For example, Ruby Zahn claimed that while women were interested in modern prison reform, they were also interested in reforming the environment which caused the criminal behavior of the investigation's findings.¹³⁷ The Progressive Civic League led the crusade for better prison conditions. But modern prison reform prompted various groups of Detroit clubwomen to investigate prisons, campaign for prisons which suited the unique needs of women, urge more modern incarceration arrangements and sponsor legislation to help prevent juvenile, first offender, crime. Their work reflected a belief that more modern ideas about prison reform would help lower crime by producing fewer criminals.

Women weren't the only Detroiters who investigated prisons and sought reforms but they certainly were among the most vocal of those who did. In 1920, after complaints of negligence about Dr. Isadore Towlin at the County Jail, Judge Henry S. Hulbert, Minnie Jeffries and Orrin Gulley, the Poor Commissioner, made their semi-annual investigation. They were appalled to find evidence of gross negligence on the part of Dr. Towlin. His appointment was by the county auditors who were notified of the investigation's findings.¹³⁸

In addition to official routine investigations, women like Zahn of the Progressive Civic League forced public attention on prison abuse. In early 1921, Zahn was alerted to the problem by a newspaper article.¹³⁹ She insisted on an investigation about alleged

¹³⁷ Lansing Journal (June 26, 1923).

¹³⁸ Detroit News (September 17, 1920).

¹³⁹ Detroit News (January 27, 1920).



floggings at the Jackson State Prison. She wrote to John A. Russell, President of the Detroit Board of Control and asked probing questions. She inquired why the prison at Jackson spent two million dollars in the current administration of six years when that was more than the total expense for the previous forty years. She asked why the prison at Jackson was no longer self-supporting as it had been until the present administration. She cited evidence by the Bureau of Government Research that claimed the Detroit House of Correction was self-supporting and even sent benefits to dependents. Lastly, she inquired about the reported floggings. Russell replied by appointing a committee to investigate the situation.¹⁴⁰

Zahn and the Progressive Civic League were especially active in an educational campaign and distributed 20,000 flyers to influential persons. They used the newspaper title "Brutal Floggings at Jackson Prison." The flyer showed Dr. Robert McGregor, the prison physician holding the pulse of a man who had just been flogged. It added that there were three new cases of insane inmates from the Ionia State Asylum who were also flogged. The last sentence said that if you were upset about this situation, bring the matter before your clubs and organizations and send telegrams to Governor Alex Groesbeck.¹⁴¹ The Governor was also requested to dismiss Warden Harry L. Hulbert, Dr. McGregor and the Board of Control at Jackson State Prison. By 1921, Michigan had an anti-flogging law in its prisons.¹⁴² Jennie Beattie of the Woman Citizens League joined the campaign and charged that flogging was common in the Industrial School for boys. She also complained

¹⁴⁰ Letter to Mr. John A. Russell, President of Detroit Board of Commerce from R. Zahn, (no date) Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹⁴¹ Circular, (no date), Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹⁴² Detroit News (February 2, 1924)



that the boys were treated like hardened criminals. The Detroit Federation of Labor requested an investigation.¹⁴³ But not all clubwomen supported the Progressive Civic League crusade. While she did not elaborate further, Ella Aldinger of the State Legislative Council of Women was afraid that the leaflet campaign and the dismissal of Warden Hulbert might make men more likely to support capital punishment.¹⁴⁴

In addition to the campaign against flogging, the Progressive Civic League made and investigation of the women's facilities at the county jail in 1922. The women went at the request of Sheriff Coffin. They found the jail officers efficient and kindly. They also found the prison was spotlessly clean although conditions were spartan. Zahn went before the auditors, William Gutman and John Cowen with the League's requests. The Progressive Civic League demanded mattresses, sanitary tables, upholstered benches, and better lighting. The auditors made excuses that these things had not been requested earlier. The women received the mattresses, lighting, new, but not sanitary, tables and new, but not upholstered, benches. Additionally, the clubwomen requested a female physician and some privacy for examining. Dr. L.B. Carroll, a female physician was appointed, but there was no privacy screen. Zahn wanted the inmates separated by age as well as race. Lastly, they demanded the auditors paint, linoleum floors, provide lockers for clothes and provide a better diet for the inmates. Five months later, there was a tour by prominent Detroit clubwomen who had themselves contributed an electric stove, aluminum utensils and a new Victrola.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Detroit News (January 27, 1922).

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Grimes from Ella Aldinger, (no date), Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 1, Correspondence 1918-1919, in the Michigan Historical Collections at the Bentley Historical Library (MHC).

¹⁴⁵ Ruby Zahn, "Club Members Visit Jail," Twentieth Century Club Magazine (January, 1927): 3-8.

In spite of the agitation for better living conditions for women at the county jail, only a portion of the demands were met. The racial segregation of inmates was achieved but the Progressive Civic League continued to agitate for all their demands through the summer of 1926. Once more, the place was clean but shabby. The mattresses, secured several years earlier by the League, were in need of repair. There were few sanitary toilets and one leaked so badly, it soaked through the ceiling. Again, the Progressive Civic League sent their list of requirements to the auditors who slowly complied. This required constant agitation on the part of the League and a contribution of \$3,500 from them for the painting. New linoleum was laid on the floors, clothes lockers were added, the mattresses and beds were renovated. The League also contributed waste paper baskets, bread boxes, soap, curtains and bed spreads. The privacy screen was added to the health room along with an instrument cabinet. Additionally, there were donations of kitchen equipment. Flowers, candy and fruit were regularly supplied by sympathetic organizations. Attempts by the League to get better food like sugar for coffee, dried fruits and vegetables, and additional milk for drug addicts, met with some success. The League secured Mrs. Rexford, a social worker to buy necessary supplies for the Women's Division.¹⁴⁶

In 1926, Mrs. Kenneth G. Smith, Chairman of Institutional Relations of the MFWC, made a survey of Michigan Jails. She visited fifty-four institutions, fifty of which were county jails and four were in Detroit. The Michigan jails were relatively good. Most were clean, well lit, had heating and plumbing and decent food. The women were protected in all but eleven jails and children were housed separately in twenty three jails.

¹⁴⁶ Mary E. O'Brien, "Progressive Civic League," The Club Woman (January, 1927): 288-289, 295-296.

But, the report went on to list abuses like housing the accused, witnesses, and convicted people altogether as well as insane people. It was suggested that meaningful work, like on the roads, be sought. Most medical care was inadequate and not enough was done about infectious diseases. Inmates had little spiritual guidance, recreation and few libraries. It was advised that the system be run on a strict accounting basis. The conclusion was that the county jail system was outdated. The Club Woman suggested a more modern system of farm colonies or cottages where prisoners were better protected against disease and had the chance for some vocational training.¹⁴⁷ The MFWC supported a bill for the governor to appoint a commission to investigate prison conditions. Mrs. Smith, Laura Cramer and Estelle Jamieson entertained the members of the Senate Committee on Penal Institutions at a luncheon to encourage the passage of the bill. The bill passed the Senate but was defeated in the House.¹⁴⁸

The cottage plan was a relatively modern one, although Detroit clubwomen were aware of it for some time. The findings of the National Prison Conference in 1922 were relayed to the DFWC in a letter from the Girl's Protective League. The conference concluded that the cottage system was the best one because it kept first offenders from repeat ones. It also afforded a more homelike atmosphere and gave the opportunity to learn a career or family work.¹⁴⁹ It was this kind of facility for women that Detroit clubwomen campaigned unsuccessfully for throughout the 1920s. In 1917, the state legislature had provided for the establishment of the Michigan Training School for Women

¹⁴⁷ Julia K. Jaffray, "The Michigan Jails," The Club Woman (June, 1927): 658-661.

¹⁴⁸ Letter to Grimes from Ella Aldinger (May 28, 1927), Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 2, Papers 1912-1932, MHC.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Girl's Protective League to DFWC, (November 9, 1922), Vol. 68 Correspondence 1922-1924, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



at Okemos. The land was purchased, but no buildings were built and in 1921, appropriations were canceled.¹⁵⁰ Some believed the facility was too close to the Michigan Agricultural College and the State School for Boys. Also, the Red Cedar River ran through the property.

In 1926, Laura Cramer, a representative of the State Legislative Council of Women, spoke at the MFWC and indicted clubwomen for failing in the Okemos venture. Cramer put the blame squarely on clubwomen's shoulders as she said they had originally won support for the institution but then never followed up. She complained that the women should have kept close tabs on their legislators and insisted upon completion for the Okemos Reformatory. Mrs. Smith erroneously thought the women's prison was at Adrian (an industrial school for girls). Cramer felt this raised two important problems. The first was that clubwomen needed to follow up on their projects and the second was that those in leadership had a duty to study their departmental problems and keep the club further informed. Cramer felt that Michigan clubwomen had failed in both instances regarding the reformatory at Okemos.¹⁵¹

In the same year, the clubwomen began another campaign for the women's reformatory. The appropriation bill for this women's reformatory had passed the Senate. The Chairman of the Rules Committee, Senator George G. Hunter's wife, Esther Smith Hunter, was the President of the MFWC. The bill could not pass the House because so many legislators had gone home. MFWC lobbyists watched helplessly as they left. Mrs.

¹⁵⁰ Michigan Woman (December, 1924): 223. See also Estelle B. Freedman, Their Sister's Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930 (Ann Arbor, 1981).

¹⁵¹ Detroit News (October 18, 1925).

Hunter issued a frantic appeal to the Governor who summoned the legislators to return and the bill was passed.¹⁵²

In addition to the physical plant facilities for those incarcerated, clubwomen were interested in providing a rehabilitating atmosphere. Joseph Strutsman, the Superintendent of the Detroit House of Correction spoke to the Jewish Woman's Club in late 1920. He believed that industrial injustice had a tendency to produce criminals. He felt that rehabilitation was therefore of the utmost importance. He stated that at the Detroit House of Correction, the staff was creating conditions as normal as possible to facilitate rehabilitation.¹⁵³

While clubwomen were especially concerned about women's prisons, they also felt they possessed particular insights as women which were valuable for men as well. Dr. Mary Thompson Stevens was the first woman to have charge of a prison in Michigan. She was appointed as the acting Superintendent of the Detroit House of Correction pending the appointment of a permanent one. Dr. Stevens replaced Dr. Bernhardt Jacob after an investigation disclosed horrific conditions at the prison.¹⁵⁴ The Assistant Superintendent, Frank Fitzpatrick also resigned because of his health. The Detroit News reported that Dr. Stevens would stay until an appropriate man could be found.¹⁵⁵ Apparently, in spite of the terrible conditions in the prison at the hands of male administrators, the News preferred a male superintendent over a female one.

¹⁵² "Women's First Lesson in Crafty Politics," Michigan Citizen (April, 1926): 5-6.

¹⁵³ Detroit News (December 12, 1920).

¹⁵⁴ Detroit News (April 6, 1919).

¹⁵⁵ Detroit News (April 14, 1919).

Dr. Stevens invited clubwomen and led them around the facility. She pointed out various improvements which were a result of women's input.¹⁵⁶ Detroit clubwomen agreed and when Dr. Stevens resigned from the House of Correction Board, the DFWC requested that she be replaced by another woman. Oftentimes, clubwomen wanted non-partisan women placed on institutional boards.¹⁵⁷ This demonstrates two of the most important contributions women added to public office. One was their unique vantage point as women, and the other was their tendency toward non-partisanship when attempting to address social problems that they wanted government to resolve.

In addition to seeking alternative forms of incarceration, Detroit clubwomen were also interested in alternatives to imprisonment as a solution. In 1920, Detroit reorganized its probation system. Earlier, offenders had been placed on probation but with little follow-up or evaluations of their hope for success. Now, a new system equipped with a psychiatric clinic attempted to bring unity and efficiency to the probation system. Thereafter, offenders would undergo psychiatric exams and extensive interviews which would show the history of the offender's behavior. On this information, it would be determined if an offender was mentally, morally, and physically capable of surviving without committing crime.¹⁵⁸

Since it was believed that the nature of women's crime might be different from that of men, a Woman's Division of the Probation Department had been evolving since 1909. At that time, Judge Henry Hulbert appointed Miss Ada Freeman as the first female

¹⁵⁶ Detroit News (April 27, 1919).

¹⁵⁷ Letter from DFWC to James Couzens, Mayor (February 1, 1922), Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, no page number.

¹⁵⁸ Detroit News (December 20, 1920).

probation officer. By the mid 1920s, the Woman's Division was under the direction of Kathleen Lowrie and handled over three thousand cases of sex offenses in a six month period. Lowrie described her job as trying to find the most workable solution which suited the offender and society. After a thorough investigation of the accused, a convicted offender was given some sentence. Although fines for sex offenders did not usually work, sex offenders were usually fined (61% of all cases) and were charged with drunkenness, disturbing the peace, malicious destruction of property, larceny, drug addiction etc. The Women's Probation Division was capable of placing offenders in a variety of different institutions or programs. Lowrie believed the flexibility of the system was beneficial. She did believe, however, that Detroit needed more modern ideas about treating sex offenders. She suggested a New York law where partners and those who got financial gain were criminally responsible, not just the prostitute.¹⁵⁹ A bill was introduced in Michigan making men as guilty as women in prostitution but the measure died in committee.¹⁶⁰

Clubwomen not only supported the rehabilitation of offenders, but also paid close attention to the Michigan Industrial Home for Girls at Adrian. In February, 1919, Jessie MacDonald, President of the Woman's First Campaign League had investigated of the conditions at Adrian. She was appalled that it was not run with twentieth century, enlightened ideas but "an institution which rivals Dickens notorious Dotheboys Hall in its callous indifference to the rights of childhood." MacDonald felt the rules of the institution made the girls sullen and downcast. They were not allowed to talk to each other and

¹⁵⁹ Kathleen Lowrie, "Shall Detroit Have a Women's Court?" Michigan Woman 5 (May, 1927): 23-26. and "Club History," Vol 73 p. 12, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁶⁰ Letter to Grimes from Ella Aldinger (May 28, 1927), Lucia Voorheis Grimes Papers, Box 2, Papers 1912-1932, MHC.



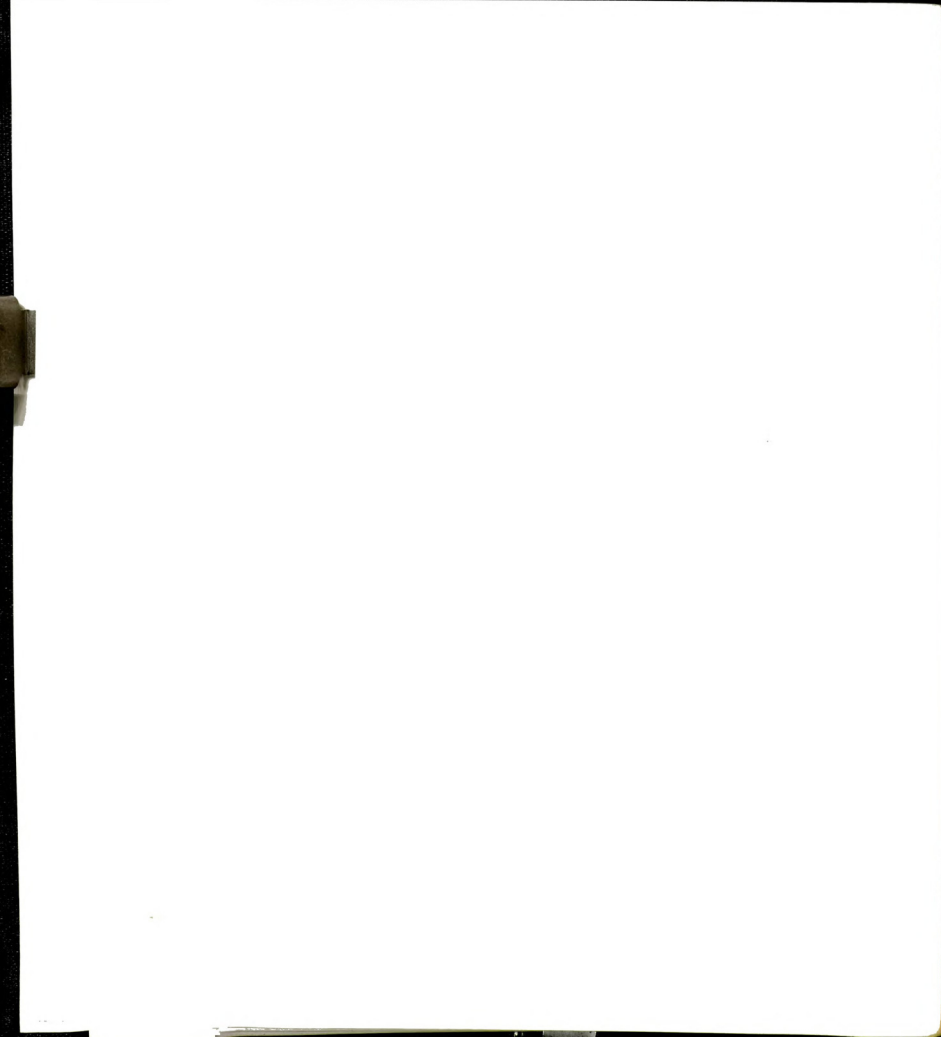
MacDonald thought laughter was discouraged. She blamed this deplorable state of affairs on the fact that enlightened women were not consulted about the management of the school. Furthermore, the legislators, being male and elected by men, were indifferent to the views of modern women. MacDonald thought this situation highlighted the vast difference between men and women's ideas about public policy and warranted a new woman's political party.¹⁶¹

As a result of MacDonald's investigation, the superintendent, cottage managers and institutional staff were discharged or quit. The new superintendent was Detroit clubwoman, Delphine Dodge Ashbaugh who employed graduates of colleges and training schools, students of disciplinary problems, dietitians etc. The Detroit News reported the new regime was impressing visitors as embodying motherly instincts. Most of the staff was inspired by idealism and willing to work for less than their usual pay. For the very wealthy Ashbaugh, salary was of no consideration. Ashbaugh did manage to get the State Legislature to quadruple the previous appropriation they gave the Adrian School. Ashbaugh reversed previous policy and allowed the girls to converse with each other and to make friends. The News concluded that the rule of Ashbaugh looked entirely satisfactory and her idealism, along with that of her staff, promised a better future for the girls at Adrian.¹⁶²

Ashbaugh spoke before the Women's Citizen League in March of 1920 impressing upon them the necessity for more policewomen to watch over paroled or discharged girls. The Women's Citizen League was the organization that made the original complaint about

¹⁶¹ Detroit Times (February 10, 1919).

¹⁶² Detroit News (May 18, 1919).



the administration at Adrian before Ashbaugh's arrival. They pledged themselves to try to obtain legislative measures that would ensure more complete guardianship.¹⁶³

Clubwomen therefore, experienced some success in prison reform. Since they were especially sensitive to issues of rehabilitation, prison reform was important. Still, it required tireless effort and plenty of publicity. When women failed to commit to both, as in the Okemos Reformatory, they failed. Nevertheless, they worked to improve the environmental as well as physical conditions of prison inmates in Michigan.

Capital Punishment

In keeping with their beliefs about crime prevention and rehabilitation, Detroit clubwomen opposed capital punishment. In 1846, Michigan was the first state to abolish capital punishment. In Detroit during the 1920s, the growing population and increased crime rate raised the issue again. When the death penalty came up, clubwomen worked against it. Dr. Mary Thompson Stevens, the female member of the House of Correction, claimed that capital punishment did not keep crime down. In 1921 the DFWC wanted to clearly state that clubwomen opposed the return of capital punishment.¹⁶⁴ The Progressive Civic League was especially intent on defeating the death penalty in Michigan. In an effort to educate the public, they launched an intensive campaign sending letters to one hundred newspapers in the state and handing out 200,000 circulars. They believed that while a small percentage of Michigan residents favored capital punishment, the majority did not.

¹⁶³ Detroit News (March 7, 1920).

¹⁶⁴ "Minutes" (January 28, 1921), Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 309, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



The Progressive Civic League thought most people believed it was backward and they wanted to mobilize those who opposed it.¹⁶⁵

In 1923, Harriet McGraw founded an association opposed to capital punishment which brought pressure to bear against legislators.¹⁶⁶ Although the Pitkin Capital Punishment bill was defeated in 1923, forty-six to fifty-four, the issue was raised again in 1925. Once more, the clubwomen of Detroit were a factor in its defeat. They went in large numbers to Lansing to hear the debate, make their presence known and listen to the voting on the measure. Known as the McEachron Capital Punishment Bill, it also lost forty-six to fifty-four. Believing this was an issue especially sensitive to women The Michigan Woman declared that all women could then rejoice.¹⁶⁷

Two years later, the immense crime wave in Detroit saw the vacillation of clubwomen on the issue. At that time, Dorothea Steffens, President of the Wayne County LWV said that while she was always opposed to capital punishment, she admitted the crime wave in Detroit had driven her to question her earlier views. She did not immediately approve of capital punishment but also did not rule it out. Katherine Warren, President of the Catholic Study Group, also began thinking of capital punishment more seriously. Warren was especially disturbed by the criminals' lack of respect for human life. She felt that perhaps a greater fear of the law might help prevent crime.¹⁶⁸

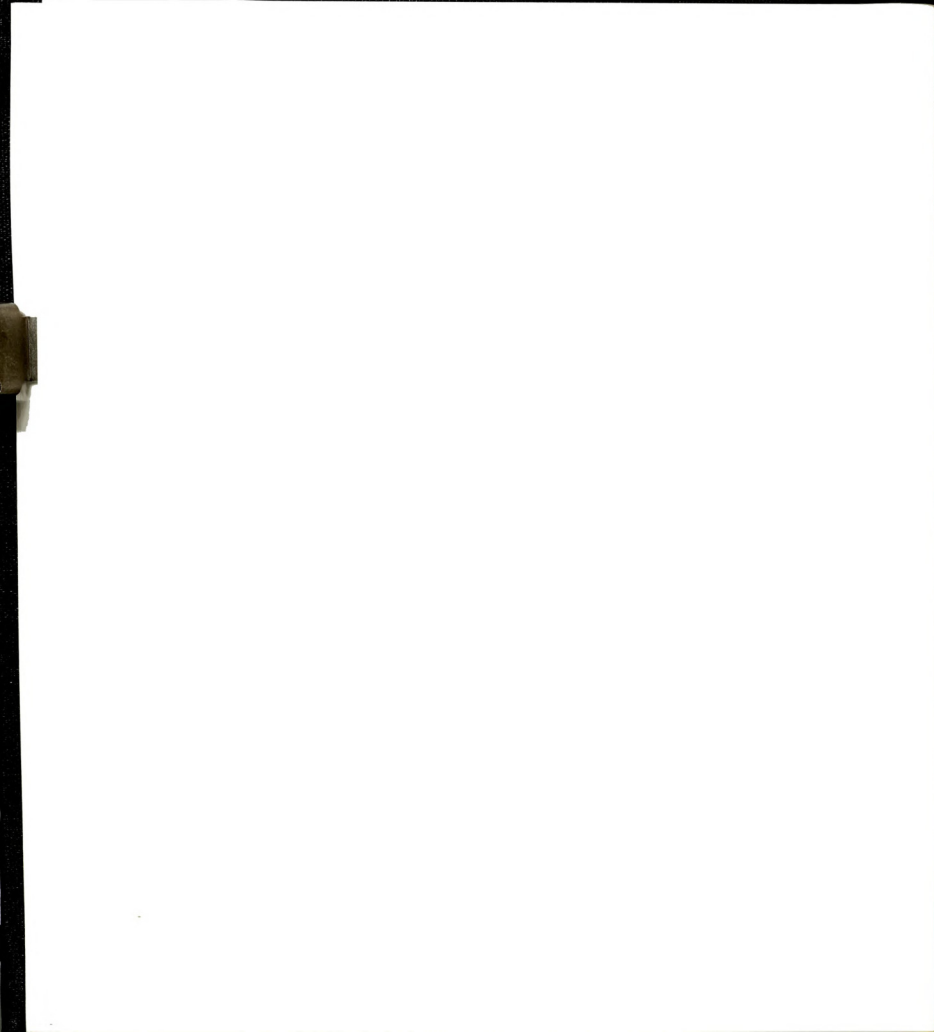
Despite the wavering stand by Steffens and Warren, clubwomen generally opposed capital punishment. The Michigan Legislature was unable to pass a capital punishment bill

¹⁶⁵ "Campaign Against Capital Punishment - Progressive Civic League of Detroit Waging Battle Against Bill in Legislature," unidentified newspaper clipping, Reading Room File - Zahn.

¹⁶⁶ Detroit News (February 11, 1923).

¹⁶⁷ Michigan Woman (Spring, 1925), 25, and Detroit News (March 13, 1925).

¹⁶⁸ Detroit News (January 25, 1927).

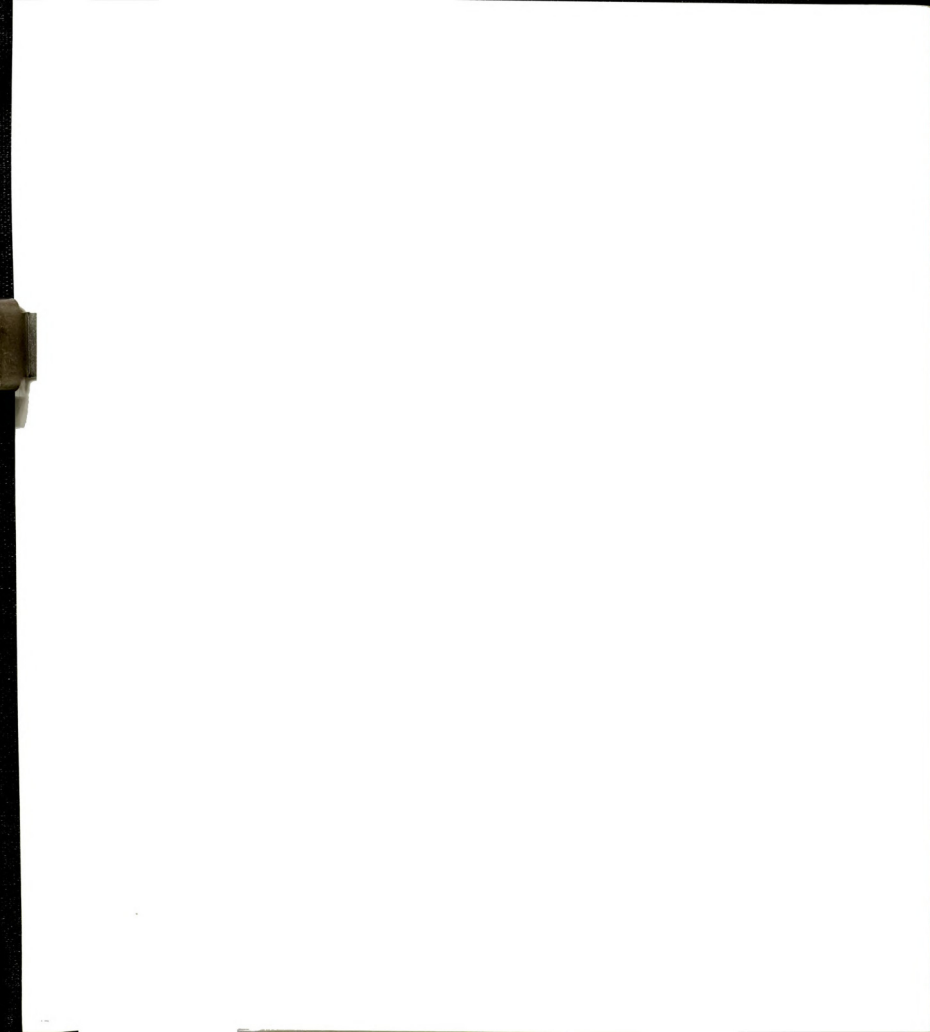


in 1927. But 1929, the issue was once more raised. The Detroit News described the issue in gendered terms as “Women pleaded for a sane, scientific, humanitarian attitude toward the criminal and the opposing men with the fervor of a deep-seated belief in the justice of their stand, demanded the rope or electric chair for those who kill.”¹⁶⁹ At the Board of Directors Meeting in April, 1929, the MFWC went on record as opposing capital punishment.¹⁷⁰ But, in spite of women’s protest, the capital punishment bill was passed. While the News article showed the emotional commitment the opposing sides had in the issue, it also noted that interest in capital punishment had died down in Michigan. The debate over the 1927 bill lasted eight hours and was conducted before packed galleries. In 1929, the debate was still heavily attended but lasted only three hours. The bill was vetoed by Governor Fred Green who believed that it was too harsh and inflexible and because it did not provide for a referendum.

Detroit clubwomen experienced limited success with the issues of crime and punishment. Since so much of their efforts were directed at prevention, it is difficult to quantify. They worked to improve the moral environment and supported the Women’s Division of the Police Department. They pursued their own ideas which sometimes attracted allies but also made enemies with the Detroit Citizens League and the Detroit News. Although they had limited control over the mass media, they cleverly targeted certain groups with pamphlets and generated their own publicity. Their concern with rehabilitation and a moral environment led to significant prison reform. Lastly, in the issue

¹⁶⁹ Detroit News (February 27, 1929).

¹⁷⁰ “Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting” (April, 1929), Vol. 18 Minutes 1928-1929, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit and Detroit News (February 27, 1929).



of capital punishment, they may have lost the legislation but won the public relations battle. Governor Green was impressed with the arguments about the harshness of capital punishment and vetoed the measure. Earlier interest in capital punishment, as the cure for crime in Detroit, had waned by the end of the decade.



Chapter 7 - Urbanized, Industrialized Detroit

Pure Food, Smoke, Sewers and Water

Detroit clubwomen understood that a large urban, industrial city presented many hazards for the health and safety of its citizens. They expressed concern over clean food and water, as well as proper sanitation. They campaigned against urban hazards like air pollution and automobile traffic. Clubwomen believed these issues could not be segregated from their traditional concerns for their families. Health and safety issues were inextricably linked to conditions outside the home in an urbanized environment. They believed that the hazards of the modern city made all residents of the city mutually dependent on each other. Anna Nicholes, a Chicago clubwoman and secretary of the Civil Service Commission, had illuminated this condition when she wrote in 1913, that within a city there was, “a common dependency from which there is no escape.”¹ The clubwomen of Detroit were consistently interested in a cleaner and therefore healthier city. Detroit clubwomen carried out their public activities in this regard. All of the civic improvements advocated by these women touched directly on their domestic domain. Additionally, they felt that the responsibility for maintaining healthy conditions in neighborhoods remained on women.² Sara Evans explained that women’s political culture, standing at the juncture between public and private, brought issues previously associated with private life, into the realm of public life.³ They challenged old notions of not only who participated in public

¹ Quoted in Maureen A. Flanagan, “The City Profitable, The City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender and Power in Chicago in the 1910s,” *Journal of Urban History* 22 (January, 1996): 175.

² Annual Report, Civics Department, *The Club Woman* 13, (June, 1921): 585.

³ Sara Evans, “Women’s History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life,” in Suzanne Lebsock and Nancy Hewitt eds., *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* (Urbana, 1993), p.129.



life, but what the concerns of public life were. Thus, through the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen sought sanitary food, elimination of rats, alleviating smoke, and home safety. But, these were not Detroit's only problems. Water, sewage, and transportation were hotly contested throughout the decade. Clubwomen did not seem to have entered into these issues in the same way. Urban infrastructure problems raised sensitive questions about public and private responsibility and oftentimes incurred the powerful opposition of Detroit's business community. Clubwomen chose to remain knowledgeable and informed on these issues but not to become policy advocates.

Since women were concerned with the quality of their families' food, clubwomen mounted clean food campaigns. In this regard, they experienced varying degrees of success. In 1919 the Civic Committee of the Twentieth Century Club suggested that since the Board of Health only had two investigators, club members would begin investigating cafeterias, candy stores and bakeries. The Board of Health responded by saying they would appreciate the reports of club members about unsanitary conditions.⁴ By January 1920, the Detroit Health Commissioner, Dr. Henry F. Vaughan reported to the Political and Civic League that 1919 was marked by the lowest death rate the city had ever known. He believed that the condition of restaurants was much better than it had been a year earlier. This clean-up campaign was supported by the Political and Civic League, the Twentieth Century Club and the D.A.R. Dr. Vaughan also attributed the low death rate to public health information, especially the sanitation lessons men learned in the army.⁵

⁴ Twentieth Century Club of Detroit Bulletin 3 (April, 1919) Manuscript Collection (MS) Emma Fox Papers in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library (BHC).

⁵ Detroit News (January 11, 1920).

Dr. Vaughan believed the meat inspection was, however, totally inadequate. He explained that government inspection applied to only four of the forty-four meat packing houses that did interstate business. Dr. Vaughan estimated that fifty percent of Detroiters ate meat that was unexamined. He supported a plan where trained veterinarians would inspect the meat.⁶ The DFWC shared Dr. Vaughan's concern. In the DFWC 1919-1920 Annual Report of the Legislative Committee, Della Kilburn reported that the DFWC's investigation into food market conditions had improved them greatly.⁷ Still, in spite of this perceived improvement, there was no state meat inspection law in 1926. In an article entitled "Uncle Sam Serves Breakfast" in the Michigan Woman, author Sofronia (Mrs. O.G.) Brown stressed the dependency the housewife had on the inspection system for the health of her family. Brown noted that the current legislation still only applied to those firms dealing in interstate commerce. The State of Michigan could use its Department of Agriculture to implement an inspection system, though. Brown emphasized the civic/home connection by encouraging housewives to send "proper men" to the legislature. In this way, the necessary laws would be passed and administered in order to protect the consumer.⁸

As consumers, Detroit clubwomen were also concerned with the cleanliness of markets in the handling of fruit. In this regard, the clubwomen's alarm did not appear to be shared by the public. In the Fall of 1920, the Civic Department of the DFWC believed the practice of leaving fruit in receptacles on the ground where animals had access to them

⁶ Detroit News (January 11, 1920).

⁷ "Annual Report of the Legislative Committee" Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 855, Manuscript Collection (MS) Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, BHC.

⁸ O.G. Brown, "Uncle Sam Serves Breakfast," Michigan Woman 4 (June, 1926): 23,32.



was unacceptable. Upon an initial investigation, there appeared to be no city ordinance to keep food off the ground and in a sanitary condition and a committee was set up to draft a fruit ordinance.⁹ By early 1921, it was discovered that an ordinance did exist in the last city charter that covered the cleanliness of food. The DFWC set up a complaint department to help enforce this ordinance. The DFWC's Civic Chairman, Dora MacDonough reported that there were very few complaints.¹⁰ Either few people knew about the complaint department, or the concern of clubwomen regarding this food problem was not shared by others in significant numbers. The DFWC did see that city ordinances were passed so that bread was wrapped and they sponsored a woman food inspector who found approximately two thousand pure food and weight violations in Detroit in six months. The DFWC helped establish enforcement of legal weights and measures.¹¹

The effort on the part of Detroit clubwomen for the cleaner handling of food was part of a larger clean-up effort. Commissioner of Public Works, George Engel described Detroit as an overgrown village with a population that multiplied so fast it was almost uncontrollable. He claimed the Department of Public Works could not keep up and they needed the ladies in this effort.¹² The Political and Civic League launched a program where the city was divided into zones which, in turn, had a captain to supervise clean-up. An educational campaign was set up with moving pictures which described the problems.

⁹ "Reports of the Civics Department" (October 6, 1920, November 4, 1920, and December 8, 1920), Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922 p. 6, 103, 221, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹⁰ "Report of the Civics Department" (January 28, 1921), Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 335, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹¹ "Thirty-five Years of Accomplishment, 1895-1929" Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs, pamphlet, p.16 BHC.

¹² George Engel, "Spring is Here - Clean Up," The Club Woman 12 (April, 1920).

In addition, a competition among high school students and newsboys to keep their areas clean was started. At that time, the city was planning an ordinance to enforce a cleaner city. It included Commissioner Engel's plan to establish four, two thousand ton incinerators for burning garbage. This would render obsolete the transfer stations and reduce the leaking wagons. The Political and Civic League heartily endorsed the plan and Engel claimed their help was invaluable.¹³

The extent of the clean-up program was reported in The Club Woman in May of 1920. Health Commissioner Vaughan reported that foreigners needed the most help in this regard. It was pointed out, however, that the Davison District which housed thirty nationalities, had no sewers, city water, nor gas in homes or schools, nor any pavement. Adeline Dunlap (Mrs. Charles Hague) Booth, President of the Political and Civic League stated that the condition of this district should "put Detroit to shame."¹⁴ Dr. Vaughan explained that the problem of Detroit was one of high factory wages which increased the trash removal expense because the sanitation workers salaries needed to be competitive. He added, however, that industry was generally interested in this effort because better sanitation meant better health conditions for workers.¹⁵

In spite of the efforts and support of clubwomen to clean-up Detroit in the early 1920s, the problems persisted and even worsened. Detroit clubwomen understood that the problem required a civic response and had become a political issue. Anne Little Brandes reported on the MFWC Convention of 1923 by saying "Rats become politics if

¹³ Detroit News (December 7, 1919).

¹⁴ Detroit News (November 23, 1919).

¹⁵ "The Size of the Clean-up Job," The Club Woman 12 (May, 1920): 513-516.

the garbage is not collected and the city becomes over-run with disease-carrying rats as a consequence.”¹⁶

By 1925, the Twentieth Century Club Civic Committee joined with the Board of Commerce to exterminate the thriving rat population of Detroit. The Detroit News reported that the rats were leaving the congested sections of the city and migrating to the better residential areas. Since these areas had fewer alleys for shelter, the rats were going into homes. A meeting at the Twentieth Century Club, attended by not only clubwomen but representatives of the Police and Health Departments, Board of Commerce and food industries, decided that rats posed an economic and health problem. Dr. Paul E. Buck of the Department of Health said the problem was not acute but likely to become so. The unprecedented growth of the city already increased the rat population which could spread a number of diseases. The extermination campaign had two parts. The first was to clean up the garbage in the streets and the second was to set traps to prevent their entry into homes. Leaving rat poison around was against a city ordinance and considered too dangerous. The Department of Health, joined by the Boy Scouts and the Police Department cleaned alleys, while the Board of Commerce screened-up potential rat entries. The clubwomen participated by educating the public in a city-wide campaign. The women used their clubs to spread the word about rat prevention and extermination to all women of the city. In this way, Detroit clubwomen reached out to other women emphasizing their common concern with home cleanliness.¹⁷

¹⁶ Anne Little Brandes, “Highlights of the Convention - Michigan State Federation of Women’s Clubs,” The Club Woman 16 (November, 1923): 148.

¹⁷ Detroit News (March 22, 1925).



Home cleanliness was not only threatened by a thriving rat population, but also by excessive urban smoke. The worst offenders were industrial manufacturers, who contributed ninety percent of the smoke. The residential smoke still caused damage but only accounted for ten percent of the total. The pollution came from coal burned in industrial operations, large heating plants, stoves and furnaces. The soot carried carbon, tarry products of distillation, sulfur acids and ash.¹⁸ Once more, Detroit clubwomen joined with other civic groups to combat this menace. They wanted the city smoke ordinance enforced because Detroit was gaining a reputation as bad as Pittsburgh. The city ordinance, dating back to 1917, stated “the emission of dense black or gray smoke” was a public nuisance. There were fines or imprisonment for violators. Conditions during and after the World War led to leniency in enforcing this ordinance. By 1923, Frank Burton, Detroit Commissioner of Building and Safety Engineering asked for the help of clubwomen in curbing the smoke nuisance. Burton claimed that the appropriation for his work was inadequate and he appealed to the clubwomen to report cases of smoke violations. These observations were supposed to be reported accurately. In addition, Burton appealed to women for an educational campaign. He stated that smoke was not only a health hazard but a costly waste to those burning it. Additionally it involved extensive cleaning costs.¹⁹

In spite of the efforts of clubwomen and other concerned Detroiters, the smoke ordinance continued to be difficult to prosecute. In January 1925, the DFWC felt there should be more action on the issue and members were encouraged to write letters

¹⁸ “Save Detroit from Smoke Loses,” The Club Woman 19 (November, 1926).

¹⁹ Detroit News December 16, 1923).



advocating this to the Board of Commerce. Additionally, a letter was sent to Judge Cotter, commending him for imposing severe fines on smoke violators.²⁰

David Stradling researched the smoke problem during the Progressive Era and noted that women were an integral part of the smoke abatement crusade. He claimed that women associated beauty, health and cleanliness with a better quality of life. The problem with smoke was that it was also a by-product of industrialization which was associated with progress. The smoke abatement campaigners had to frame their arguments in terms of denouncing smoke, not industrialization.²¹

In the winter and spring of 1925, there were articles in both men's and women's civic publications reflecting a general concern over the smoke nuisance. The Club Woman felt that Detroit's reputation for being "City Beautiful" was lost to the dirt generated by industry. They joined with the Detroit Board of Commerce's Smoke Abatement Committee to alleviate the problem.²² According to Stradling, urban reformers believed a filthy environment encouraged immorality. He quoted Mrs. John B. Sherwood of the Chicago Women's Club as saying, "A dirty city is an immoral city, because dirt breeds immorality."²³ The Michigan Woman urged club members to support an amendment to the City Charter for an Anti-Smoke Bureau. The article agreed that smoke was bad for housekeeping and health but added that it was a menace to morals as well.²⁴ Lastly, The Detrouiter (of the Board of Commerce) and the Detroit News reported a mass meeting on

²⁰ "Report of Community Service" (January 15, 1925), Vol. 14 Minutes 1924-1925, p.433, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

²¹ David Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers and Air Quality in America, 1881- 1951 (Baltimore, 1999) p. 3-4.

²² The Club Woman 17 (February, 1925): 342.

²³ Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives, p.28, 45.

²⁴ Nina Humphrey Varnum, "Smoke!Smoke!Smoke! - The Slave Driver of Housekeepers," Michigan Woman 3 (Spring Election, 1925): 6.



the smoke nuisance. The Board of Commerce enlisted the services of H.B. Meller to be the principal speaker at a public meeting. Meller was the Bureau Chief of Smoke Regulation in Pittsburgh's Department of Public Health. He was a Senior Fellow in charge of Air Pollution Investigation of the Mellon Institute and President of Smoke Prevention Association of America. His lecture was titled "Turning Smoke into Money." Invitations went to luncheon clubs, women's clubs, commercial and civic organizations. It was the contention of the Board of Commerce and Meller that fuel waste and improper combustion actually cost more than smoke abatement. The Detroit Association of Sanitary and Heating Contractors agreed that efficient boilers and chimneys would keep the city clean and be more efficient financially for heating plants.²⁵

Smoke continued to be a serious problem for Detroit well into 1927 and the arguments against excessive smoke remained the same. In November 1912, 117 hours of sunshine came through 294 days. In November, 1927, that was reduced to only 84 hours of sunshine in 294 days.²⁶ The Detroit News ran an article about smoke in the Realty Section. It advised parents to move to smoke-free developments for immediate protection.²⁷ While the article was not an advertisement, it suggests that the problem was conspicuous enough to get some commercial gain.

The Board of Commerce studied fuel combustion and coal. It consulted experts throughout the country. The Board of Commerce went before the City Council for an amendment to the City Charter which would reorganize the Bureau of Smoke Inspection

²⁵ H.B. Meller, "Turning Smoke Into Money," The Detroider 16 (February 9, 1925): 1 and Detroit News (February 8, 1925).

²⁶ Dorothy Pudrith, "To Smoke or Not To Smoke," Michigan Woman 6 (February, 1928): 25-27.

²⁷ Detroit News (November 16, 1926).

and Abatement into the Department of Building and Safety Engineering. The amendment passed with an easy three to one margin. Harry L. Shearer, Secretary of the Smoke Abatement Committee of the Board of Commerce, said, "The women's organizations stood solidly behind the committee all through its investigation and great deal of credit for the passage of the amendment and creation of the department must be given to the women of Detroit who got out in large numbers to vote."²⁸

Charles J. McCabe was appointed chief smoke inspector for the Department of Buildings and Safety Engineering two years earlier. He claimed that in those two years, the smoke ordinance was being enforced, his department provided free advice, and penalties were imposed on violators. The Detroit smoke ordinance allowed for emission of a certain density of smoke for only two minutes during every twenty as measured by an Umbrascopes. Additionally, mechanical stokers produced less smoke, although there was no ordinance to enforce this. Householders were advised never to cover the entire grate with fresh fuel. Lastly, the introduction of smokeless combustion with gas and oil made for less pollution.²⁹

By 1928, a combination of education, ordinance enforcement and technological changes, alleviated the smoke problem in Detroit. The Smoke Abatement Committee of the Board of Commerce got cooperation from newspapers and other publications. The battle over smoke abatement did not seem to draw the sharp gendered lines in Detroit as it did in Chicago in an earlier decade.³⁰ While clubwomen in both places stressed the health

²⁸ Pudrith, "To Smoke," p.25.

²⁹ Pudrith, "To Smoke," p.25.

³⁰ Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives.

benefits of cleaner air, Chicago businessmen failed to see its cost benefit.³¹ Stradling concluded that smoke abatement campaigns, led by non-professionals, had only limited success. The real results came when there was technical research and education was readily available.³² By the 1920s, smoke was a major problem in Detroit, but a combination of technological changes and advanced processes for burning fuel made cleaner air for all. Detroit clubwomen therefore made allies of the Board of Commerce and Detroit News in their anti-pollution campaign.

Along with the increase of smoke, the unprecedented growth of Detroit brought problems in delivering clean water and removing sewage. Throughout the 1920s, the city grappled with the expense of providing clean water. In 1925, the Water Commissioners requested a budget of an additional nine million dollars over the previous year to meet the city's water needs. In 1926, after a heavy rainfall, there was widespread illness attributed to water quality. Once more, in 1927, city water recipients were cautioned to boil all city water because the filtration plant had been temporarily closed down.³³

Since the population growth of Detroit had exploded, there was also a sewage problem throughout the 1920s. In 1921, the Detroit News announced that Detroit had built more sewers at a cheaper cost than any other city in the world during the same time period.³⁴ By 1928, more city growth demanded more sewers and in April of that year, Detroiters approved a thirty million dollar bond issue for the construction of public sewers.³⁵ By 1930, one of the new sewers built with the 1928 bond issue at Southfield

³¹ Flanagan, "City Profitable," p.174-175.

³² Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives, p.154.

³³ Detroit News (January 13, 1925, February 6, 1927, and March 10, 1926).

³⁴ Detroit News (September 25, 1921).

³⁵ Detroit News (April 3, 1928).



Road had collapsed and an investigation ensued. The investigation was hardly impartial using the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, John Gillespie, to investigate his own department.³⁶ The sewer scandal and other city corruption eventually led to the recall of Mayor Bowles. The Michigan Woman stressed civic housekeeping and claimed that a new sewage disposal plant was needed because Detroit had been pouring the untreated sewage of one million people, plus industrial waste into the water.³⁷

Perhaps an explanation to their apparent silence on the part of the women's clubs to the issues of water and sewage can be found in the nature of Detroit's business/political relationship. The Detroit claimed that there was considerable dissatisfaction expressed by businessmen about the increasing cost of municipal activity. They were especially concerned over accommodating a growing population with expanded water services and scientific sewage disposal for surrounding areas.³⁸ Detroit's businessmen were not happy about providing these services. Perhaps Detroit clubwomen understood this formidable opposition and remained considerably less vocal on these issues. Concerns like clean food did not confront powerful Detroit business interests. Smoke abatement promised to save businessmen money. But the issues of water and sewage decidedly annoyed Detroit's businessmen and left little negotiating room for concerned clubwomen.

Safety

Detroit clubwomen were increasingly aware that as Detroit became more urban and industrial, it posed additional hazards for its population. They wanted to protect the

³⁶ Detroit News (April 5, 1930).

³⁷ Harry L. Shearer, "The Civic Housekeeping of Mrs. Detroit Taxpayer," Michigan Woman 8 (January, 1930): 17,28.

³⁸ Charles E. Boyd, "The City's Problems," The Detroit 19 (January 9, 1928): 5.



lives of those in this dangerous urban environment and responded increasing urban dangers by launching safety campaigns to acquire appropriate legislation as well as to educate the public. These campaigns involved hazards in and around the home and most importantly on the congested streets of the “Motor City.” The unprecedented growth of Detroit’s population and automobile industry outpaced its laws and roads. Detroit clubwomen were at the forefront of the safety campaigns both within and outside the home. They believed that safety was a social obligation.

A Safety-First Week was held in May 1919, under the auspices of the Detroit Police Department, Automobile Club, Local Safety Council, women’s and other organizations. The campaign was endorsed county-wide as well as by Mayor Couzens. The movement sought to decrease the street accidents in Detroit. Its main focus was on education and it used Italian, Hebrew, Polish, and Hungarian on its posters to reach all Detroit’s citizens. After a parade, a variety of speakers including Martha Ray, President of the DFWC, addressed the crowd. The need for safety awareness was especially acute in Detroit because the city’s growth, and lack of public transportation to the outskirts, made Detroit’s streets more congested than most. Alarming, the casualties for street accidents for 1918 were 2,769. Of these, 1,018 were children. One hundred ninety two people were killed, and 479 seriously injured. Women responded to this appalling loss of life by wholeheartedly joining in the Safety-First Campaign.³⁹

During the Safety Week activities in Detroit, clubwomen were speakers and organizers.⁴⁰ Their slogan was “not one accident by one Detroit clubwoman.”⁴¹ The

³⁹ Detroit News (May 18, 1919).

⁴⁰ Detroit News (May 23, 1923).

⁴¹ Detroit News (June 22, 1919).



clubwomen further supported a permanent Public Safety Committee and reported in April 1920, that this would involve an executive committee of one hundred businessmen and seventy-five representatives of other useful agencies. Another ten thousand members of a Public Safety Auxiliary would be used to report violations to the committee. Women's clubs were to take a prominent role. Martha Ray was the chairman of the committee of club presidents. Their mission was to educate the public, encourage law enforcement, and organize neighborhood meetings.⁴² The Public Safety Committee of the DFWC acted as a connecting link between homes and the Executive Committee of the city's Public Safety Bureau.⁴³ Clubwomen also sought to enforce the already existing safety legislation. Pearl Novak, President of the DFWC, wrote a letter of commendation to Judge Bartlett for his firm handling of speed violators.⁴⁴ The DFWC also visited Judge Bartlett's court in order to understand how traffic cases were decided.⁴⁵ By October of 1920, there was evidence of street safety progress. Fatal accidents were down from seventy-nine to forty and serious accidents down 140 to seventy-one. Minor ones were down 591 to 342 compared to a similar period in 1919. George A. Walters, Deputy Commissioner of Police claimed it could go down further and clubwomen agreed. The DFWC joined in the Accident Prevention Drive, October 1-7, 1920.⁴⁶

In 1921, Detroit clubwoman, Clara Downey began her decade long commitment to making Detroit safer by chairing the DFWC's Public Safety Committee. In her January

⁴² "Saving Lives of Children," The Club Woman 8 (April, 1920): 444-446.

⁴³ "Public Safety," Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs Directory 1920-1921 p.33, BHC.

⁴⁴ Letter to Hon. Judge Bartlett from Mrs. Charles Novak, (January 12, 1922), Vol 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴⁵ Detroit News (March 16, 1924).

⁴⁶ "Public Safety Progress," The Club Woman 13 (October, 1922): 113-114.

1921 report, Downey pledged the cooperation of the DFWC to safety. She wanted to arouse interest in harsher legislation for drivers who kill people. Only ten drivers in ten years had been cited for manslaughter. The committee advocated raised concrete safety zones for street crossing in the business districts and presented lectures on safe driving. Downey concluded her report by saying that the men of the city recognize what a power the DFWC really was. The DFWC had been included among the Detroit Police Department, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Board of Education, and Detroit Automobile Club members at a recent meeting of the National Safety Council.⁴⁷ At the January 1921 meeting of the Detroit Safety Council, in cooperation with the National Safety Council, Captain Robbins set up the Women's Committee of the Council. Captain Robbins was the manager of the Detroit Safety Council and he wanted a female representative of all women's clubs. Downey was a member of this committee and became chairman of it in October of 1925.⁴⁸ She was also chief speaker at the Safety Week evening schedule the following May.⁴⁹

Downey and the other members of DFWC had been praised for their contribution in reducing accidents by George A. Walters, Deputy Police Commissioner. He told the delegates to the National Safety Congress how the DFWC was instrumental in reducing street traffic killings in Detroit.⁵⁰ Commissioner Walters also thanked the DFWC for their assistance in getting legislation for taxi cab drivers, auto licenses and the Negligent

⁴⁷ "Report of the Public Safety Committee" (January 13, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 279, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴⁸ "Report of the Public Safety Committee" (January 28, 1921), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p.349-351, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁴⁹ Detroit News (May 23, 1921)

⁵⁰ "Federation Aids Safety," The Club Woman 14 (August, 1922): 677.

Homicide Bill. He especially appreciated the cooperation of the Civic Department under Downey and the Police Department.⁵¹

Detroit clubwomen helped lessen accidents in Detroit by advocating safety zones for pedestrian use. In a series of letters to various city departments, the DFWC requested one hundred safety zones. Police Commissioner Rutledge explained that City Council appropriations would not be sufficient. Joseph A. Martin, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works wrote that the Council only appropriated \$10,000 and one hundred could not be built for that amount. He noted that if there was more money, in the next year's budget, more safety zones would be built. While he was unable to grant the DFWC's request he "appreciates your Clubs (sic) evidence of interest in civic matters in intelligently arriving at sound conclusions." In addition to helping establish pedestrian safety zones, the DFWC worked to keep them safe with stringent legislation. In December 1922, the DFWC launched a letter writing campaign urging that the penalty for injuring someone in a safety zone be a felony, not a misdemeanor. These letters went locally to people like Lieutenant Bates of the Public Safety Division of the Detroit Police and state-wide to Hon. Charles S. Deland, Secretary of State for Michigan.⁵²

The Public Safety Division of the DFWC also worked in cooperation with Harriet E. Beard, Chairman and Superintendent of Public Safety for the Board of Education. Together, they worked for safety education. Their first and most important message was

⁵¹ Meeting Minutes, (February 24, 1922), Vol. 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p.119, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵² Letter from DFWC to Lieutenant Bates, and Hon. Charles S. Deland (December 15, 1922), letter from Joseph A. Martin to Mrs. Pearl Novak, (January 14, 1922) and letter from Police Commissioner Rutledge to DFWC, (January 16, 1922), Vol 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



to dissuade people from the idea that “accidents must happen.” In this effort, the members took this message to their clubs, neighborhoods and homes. As part of a larger safety effort, the DFWC set up a driving school for women. This continued throughout the 1920s and was expanded to include women from all parts of the city by 1930.⁵³

In spite of the efforts of Detroit clubwomen and other civic and business groups, a rising population and more automobiles on the roads caused traffic safety to worsen in the 1920s. Still, the safety efforts continued.⁵⁴ A Michigan Safety Congress was held in 1929 under the auspices of the Michigan Department of Labor and the National Safety Council. Detroit clubwomen held prominent positions in the Michigan Safety Council and it was headed by Clara Downey.⁵⁵ As 1929 drew to a close, Mayor John C. Lodge reorganized the Safety and Traffic Committee into a Public Safety League. This League consisted primarily of businessmen and city officials. Jean Chamberlain, President of the DFWC was included on the Executive Committee. This group was formed in response to the alarming gain in street fatalities, up thirteen percent from 1928, as well as a belief that street safety must include a vast array of government, industry, business and civic figures to be successful. The Public Works Commissioner, John W. Reid, explained the problem was not simply one of police enforcement but went into individual homes in the education of pedestrians. Additionally, the statistics showed that the overwhelming number of fatalities involved pedestrians and not auto collisions. An estimated sixty percent of those

⁵³ Letter to Hon. Judge Bartlett from Mrs. Charles Novak, (January 12, 1922), Vol 67 Correspondence 1920-1922, “Report of the Public Safety Committee,” (December 8, 1920), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p.233 and “Annual Report of Safety,” (April 24, 1930), Vol 19, Minutes 1929-1930, no pages, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁵⁴ Detroit News (October 14, 1928).

⁵⁵ Detroit News (May 5, 1929).

were deemed to be the pedestrians fault. The safety campaigns, therefore, targeted children and elderly people who were the most vulnerable on the streets.⁵⁶

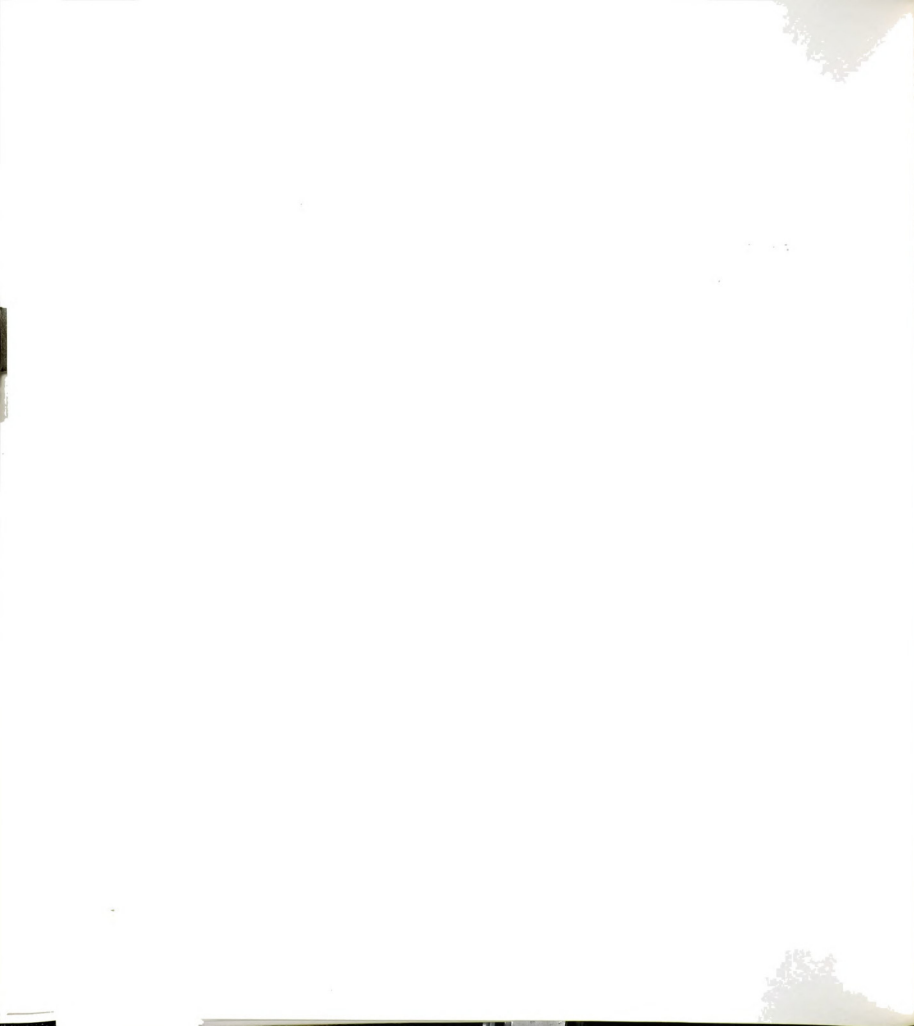
While there was little progress in reducing street killings, Detroit clubwomen did contribute to other successful safety programs throughout the decade. When the clubwomen cooperated with the schools, their educational programs accomplished much. The Detroit News reported favorably on the educational work done by the DFWC regarding safety. The Women's Safety Council published pamphlets asking women about various safety issues. These ranged from running a car in the garage to fastening rugs on stairway landings. The questions were written by Clara Downey, Chairman of the Women's Safety Committee and Harriet E. Beard. They were written to provoke women into examining their homes and lifestyles for safety. The answers provided were to explain the dangers involved with home and street practices.⁵⁷

The Detroit News emphasized the most productive work done by the Detroit clubwomen was in educating mothers and children about safety. There were warnings about poison tablets, scalding hot fluids, dangerous acids, washing fluids, sharp knives etc. Lottie McDermott, Supervisor of the Girl's Division, Detroit Recreation Commission, established safety clubs for the city's playgrounds. As proof of the importance of the women's safety work, the Detroit News cited smaller towns in Michigan beginning similar programs. Outside the state, Cleveland organized a safety committee with its Federation of Women's Clubs along the same lines as Detroit.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Detroit News (October 14, 1928, November 17, 1929 and November 22, 1929).

⁵⁷ Detroit News (January 27, 1924).

⁵⁸ Detroit News (April 18, 1926).



During Safety Week in 1924, President elect of the DFWC, Edna Prescott broadcast a safety talk on WWJ and the head of the Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department, Eleanor Hutzel, spoke on station KOP. Through DFWC funding, safety pamphlets were translated into Italian, Polish, Bohemian, Slovak, Croatian, Rumanian, Hungarian and Lithuanian. In turn, these were distributed by members of the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Visiting Nurses, American Red Cross and women's clubs.⁵⁹

The threat of fire also drew the attention of Detroit clubwomen. Clara Downey and Harriet Beard were appointed members of the Fire Prevention Committee of the Board of Commerce. As part of their educational campaign for safety, Detroit clubwomen provided assistance for keeping homes safe. The DFWC provided wire baskets for housekeepers who burned their own rubbish. They endorsed artificial Christmas trees and the elimination of the danger of gas fumes in the kitchen.⁶⁰

In addition to the serious educational work regarding safety, Detroit clubwomen campaigned for safer legislation for homes and children. The DFWC supported a city ordinance to clear snow within twenty-four hours or sprinkle ashes to keep people from slipping.⁶¹ They worked at the state and local level for a fireworks ordinance. The DFWC not only sent letters to Lansing and the City Council, they attended the Council meeting in which a fireworks ordinance was discussed.⁶² The Michigan Woman reported that Detroit

⁵⁹ Detroit News (May 18, 1924).

⁶⁰ "Minutes, Regular Meeting," (March 1, 1922), Vol 12 Minutes 1920-1922, p. 1246 and Board of Directors, (November 21, 1929), Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, no page numbers, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit

⁶¹ "Report of the Civic Department," (February 23, 1923), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 531, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁶² Mrs. I.V. Maurer, "Department Notes - Legislative Division," The Club Woman 19 (June, 1927): 593. and Executive Committee, (April 10, 1928), Vol 17 Minutes 1927-1928, p. 260, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit, Minutes.

women should receive credit for the fireworks ordinance “whereby the children of the city were safeguarded.”⁶³

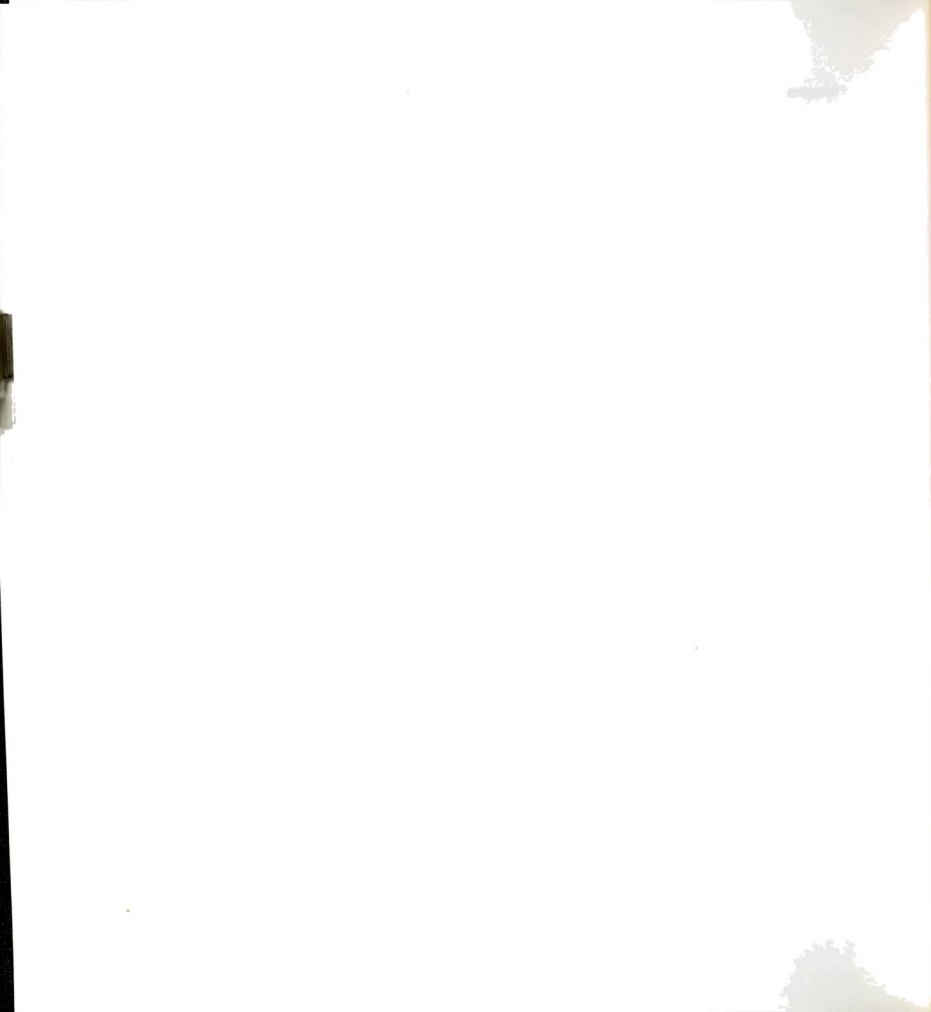
Lastly, Detroit clubwomen campaigned, successfully for state gun control. In 1924, they endorsed the McLeod Bill to prohibit sending revolvers and pistols through the mail in unlabeled packages. They believed the packages should be labeled and only delivered to someone with a gun permit.⁶⁴ Again, in 1926 Police Superintendent William P. Rutledge spoke to the DFWC about the dangers of firearms through the mail. While the McLeod Bill passed in Lansing it was only state-wide. Clubwomen therefore supported a federal law prohibiting interstate commerce in pistols or revolvers. A bill sponsored by Tennessee Democrat, Joseph Byrns, in the U.S. House would forbid such commerce by forbidding railroads from accepting them for shipment.⁶⁵

In conclusion, the safety campaigns, endorsed by Detroit clubwomen were part of a larger effort to protect lives in an urban environment using the various strategies employed for so many other women’s campaigns. Women’s efforts were channeled into awareness and educational campaigns; they used print and broadcast media to caution other women about home and street dangers; they campaigned for more stringent safety legislation and enforcement of that legislation. While there was certainly a heightened awareness of safety issues in Detroit, the overly congested streets made street accidents only more prevalent throughout the decade, confounding women’s efforts in this regard but simultaneously raising the issue of transportation in public awareness.

⁶³ The Michigan Woman 8 (February, 1930): 28.

⁶⁴ “Report of Public Safety Division” (April 10, 1924), Vol 13 Minutes 1922-1924, p. 1501, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

⁶⁵ “Report of Public Safety Division” (April 4, 1926), Vol 15 Minutes 1925-1926, p.471, MS Federation of Women’s Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



Transportation

Detroit's massive population growth between 1910 and 1930, as well as the phenomenal rise of the auto industry during and after World War I, resulted in a city plagued by enormous transportation problems.⁶⁶ Registered automobiles in Wayne County increased 150% between 1920-1925. In 1925, one thousand more per week were registered. There were estimates that there would be one million automobiles in Detroit by 1930.⁶⁷ As early as 1920, the Detroit News called the main street in Detroit, Woodward Avenue, "the highway of catastrophe" where "passenger cars struggle for a perilous hold."⁶⁸ Only eighteen feet wide, with two way traffic, it carried approximately seventeen vehicles every minute. The News reported that there was more traffic on North Woodward than any other road of its size in the country.⁶⁹ Paul Barrett, researching similar transportation problems in Chicago, discerned a fundamental public/private difference between mass transit and the automobile. He said mass transportation was a regulated business while providing for the automobile became a public responsibility.⁷⁰ In addition, complex factors involving franchise contracts and Detroiters willingness to have municipal ownership of public transportation but unwillingness to buy out the old franchise until 1922, led to a woefully inadequate system of public transportation. In responding to these issues, Detroit clubwomen took the position of active, well-informed citizens but rarely advocated action as an organization. The clubwomen heard various

⁶⁶ Michigan Woman 6, (January 1928): 23.

⁶⁷ John W. Chandler, "The Widening of Woodward Avenue," Michigan Woman, Vol 4, (January/February 1926): 8, 9, 22-23.

⁶⁸ Detroit News (June 23, 1920).

⁶⁹ Detroit News (June 23, 1920).

⁷⁰ Paul Barrett, The Automobile and Urban Transit - The Formulation of Public Policy in Chicago, 1900-1930 (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 7-8.



political and professional lectures on transportation issues but did not endorse one proposal or the other as a club. Flanagan noted that in Chicago, municipal ownership raised touchy issues. it meant that the city's power would be enhanced at the expense of private business.⁷¹ Detroit clubwomen did not campaign for one transportation plan, although they did advocate raised pedestrian crossing areas as a matter of safety. The transportation problems of Detroit were pressing, complex, and of real interest to Detroit clubwomen. They were not, however, usually on the club's agenda except for educational study.

The Detroit United Railway (DUR) had operated on several track franchises with various expiration dates between 1906 and 1935. Amidst continuous public agitation with the system, the city allowed the DUR to continue but threatened municipal ownership. As detailed in Chapter One, the street railway issue had been central to the political success of Detroit's mayors since Hazen Pingree.⁷² In the Spring of 1919, Detroit women were facing their first full municipal election and the ballot included municipal ownership of the street railway. The Michigan Home Rule Act stipulated that all taxpayers needed to vote in order for a municipality to possess a public utility. The new 1918 city charter, stated that the city would acquire, construct and own a street railway system. Women, did not vote in the charter election, but had gained the right to vote by state law since then. Consequently, Detroit, in keeping with the Michigan Home Rule Act, had to have another election where all taxpayers, including women, voted in order to have municipal

⁷¹ Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," American Historical Review (October, 1990): 1036.

⁷² Book review of Charles K. Hyde, Detroit Street Railways Volume I 1863-1922, in Detroit in Perspective - Journal of Regional History, Vol 7 (Fall, 1983): 84. For continuation of this contestation in Chicago in the 1920s, see, Paul Barrett, The Automobile and Urban Transit.

ownership. The purchase of the DUR required the votes of its taxpaying women to own the street railway.⁷³ Mayor James Couzens advocated a plan of ownership and spoke before the Women's Political League, the Detroit Board of Commerce and Real Estate. The Detroit News reported that the women were very inquisitive and showed a keen interest in the Mayor's plan.⁷⁴ One week later, the Women's Campaign League heard George W. Moore, who opposed the Municipal Ownership Plan. He claimed that the purchase plan would give Detroit United Railway a perpetual franchise and it would be no good for the city.⁷⁵

While Mayor Couzens spoke in glowing terms about the inquisitive nature of the clubwomen, the Detroit News ran a front page article that made them look like inept voters. The article claimed that the Women's First Campaign League listened to Judge Edward J. Jeffries who encouraged them not to vote for the DUR purchase. They all agreed with him. At the same time, in another room at the Hotel Statler, the Wayne County Equal Suffrage league listened to Abner E. Larned encourage them to vote for the DUR purchase and, again according to the paper, the women all agreed with Larned. The article displayed its disparaging view of female judgment when it claimed that women, since the time of the cave men would follow any influential speaker. Judge Jeffries spoke with the conviction of his cause and Larned had a soft-spoken persuasion. The message in this article was that in approaching their first general municipal election, clubwomen

⁷³ Detroit News (March 24, 1919).

⁷⁴ Detroit News (March 20, 1919).

⁷⁵ Detroit News (March 27, 1919).



lacked the skills of critical analysis. It perhaps suggests more male apprehension about women's suffrage.⁷⁶

The Couzens plan to buy the DUR was defeated at the polls in 1919, with only 47% voting in favor. The defeat was probably due to the exorbitant price the DUR asked, rather than a defeat for municipal ownership. Mayor Couzens started a rival system called the Municipal Operation, but a city owned system needed voter approval and this came up in the April, 1920 election. Once more, Mayor Couzens appealed to clubwomen to approve the plan. He spoke to the Political and Civic League on February third. The League felt the subject was of such interest it extended invitations to other women's clubs of the city. The women attended the meeting in large numbers and reacted favorably to the plan proposed by the Mayor. Once more, the women showed their "keen interest" by their thoughtful questions. Two days later, Mayor Couzens addressed a joint meeting of the Zonta Club (businesswomen) and Caravan Club (businessmen) about the railway plan. The women asked what would become of the DUR if the city built news lines. The mayor replied that there would be no duplicates. The DUR would operate its lines and the city would operate its own. He spoke before the DFWC on February twentieth and the YWCA on February twenty-sixth. The "Y" meeting attracted approximately two hundred voters, and once more the Mayor was impressed with the quality of the questions. They ranged from possible costs to usable power and ultimate responsibility for the system (the Mayor). Lastly, Clarence Wilcox, Corporation Counsel, spoke in favor the Mayor's plan at the Northwestern Woman's Club on March first. Wilcox was also impressed by the

⁷⁶ Ruda Stephens, "Women Decide Fate of DUR," Detroit News (April, 3, 1919).

quality of the women's questions and felt they showed how responsible the women were about voting.⁷⁷

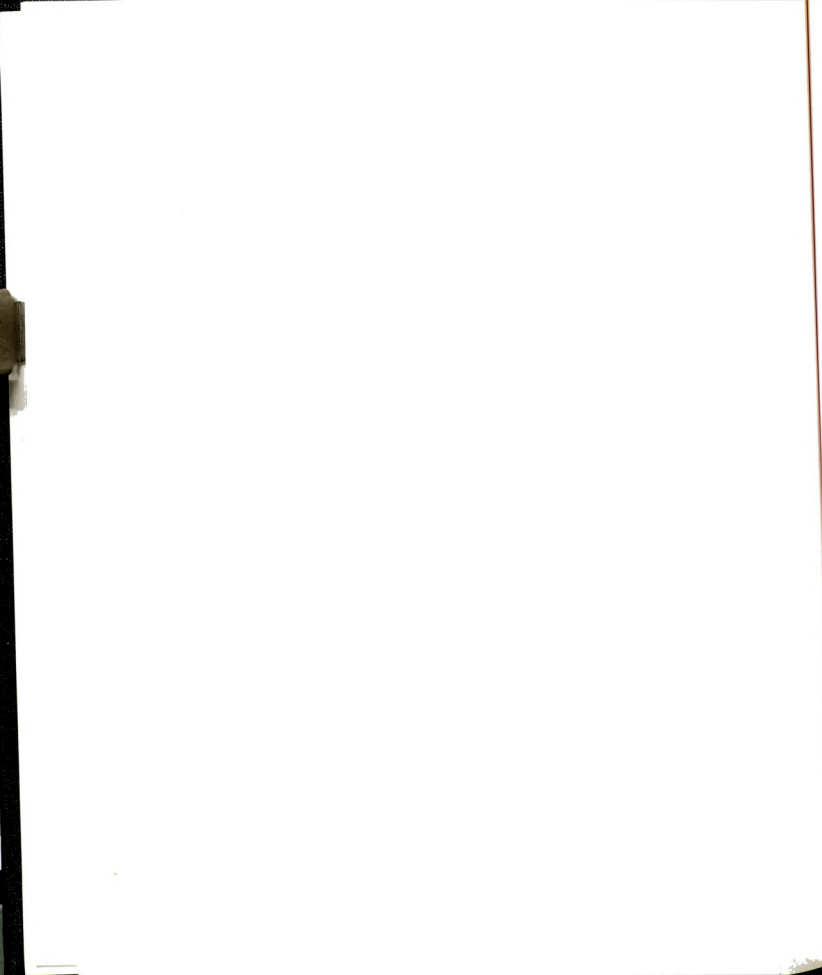
The Detroit News approved municipal ownership and ran front page articles by prominent people who also endorsed this. For example, Laura Osborn voiced her opinion in favor of municipal ownership. Osborn held a position on the Board of Education and as such, was the only elected woman in Detroit. She was also the President of the Twentieth Century Club. She endorsed the plan because she believed that with the numbers of passengers, only municipal ownership made sense. Municipal ownership could provide the people of Detroit with the efficiency they needed. Osborn noted that in her observation of the struggle between the DUR and the citizens of Detroit, the service continued to be poor. She ended by saying it was her duty as a loyal Detroiter to vote for the Couzens' Plan.⁷⁸

Finally, the magazine of the DFWC, The Club Woman, ran articles by Mayor Couzens and DUR President Frank W. Brooks before the election. Mayor Couzens explained how the 1919 proposal to buy out the DUR for \$31,500,000 was rejected by the voters. Earlier, the voters had asked for ownership in the City Charter vote of 1918. The new plan would add fifty percent more tracks and service. It would be paid by bonds, not taxes, and could maintain the five cent fare.⁷⁹ In the April Club Woman, the President of the DUR made his case. He claimed his company was trying to improve service. He believed the price the DUR asked in 1919 was fair and now the Couzens Plan threatened

⁷⁷ Detroit News (February 1, 1920, February 6, 1920, February 8, 1920, February 27, 1920 and March 7, 1920).

⁷⁸ Detroit News (April 4, 1920).

⁷⁹ James Couzens, "Street Railway Question," The Club Woman 12 (March, 1920): 407-409.



to take over part of the system at below price. He blamed the city authorities for lack of improvements because the DUR wouldn't improve unless the franchise was extended and the city refused the extension. The DUR Plan had a thirty-year franchise right to operate until the city decided to purchase or lease the lines.⁸⁰

This time, the voters approved the Couzens' Plan by 63% in April, 1920. There could be fifteen million dollars in bonds issued for approximately one hundred miles of new track and the takeover of fifty-five miles of DUR track. Work began immediately.⁸¹

But the issue of municipal ownership versus the DUR was not fully settled. In April 1921, there was another election to clarify the relationship between the DUR and the City of Detroit. The DUR offered the voters the chance to implement a cost-plus scheme. This would mean profits were a total percentage of the partially municipal (city owned tracks) and partially private (private owned cars) system. Clubwomen, once more, wanted to be informed of both sides of the issue. Mayor Couzens opposed the plan and spoke before the LWV. E.J. Burdich also spoke on behalf of the DUR.⁸²

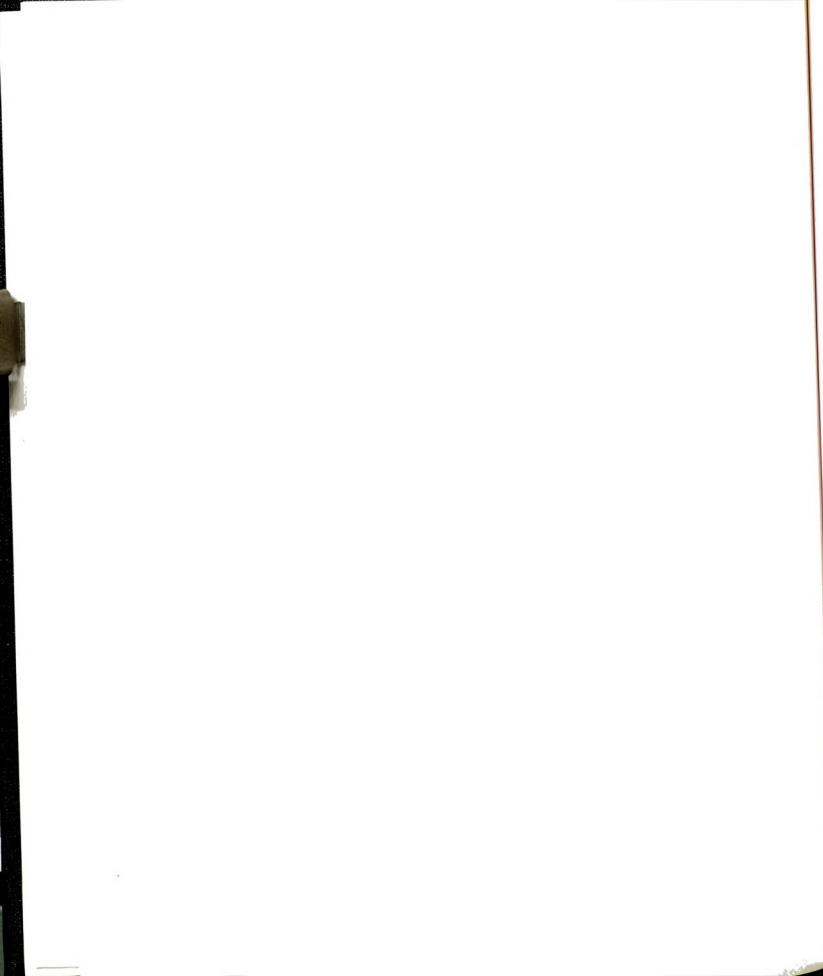
The Detroit News continued its front page coverage of the anti-DUR campaign. It published a letter from Marjory Whittemore, State Chairman of the NWP, who denounced the Cost-plus Plan. She explained that cost-plus service was used during the war because people had no choice but there was no longer a reason to maintain them. The Detroit News published her letter on the front page, as they were opposed to cost-plus themselves and perhaps wanted to influence women voters.⁸³

⁸⁰ Frank W. Brooks, "So Says the DUR," The Club Woman (April, 1920): 491-493.

⁸¹ Detroit News (April 6, 1920).

⁸² Detroit News (March 20, 1921).

⁸³ Detroit News (March 25, 1921).



The Cost-Plus plan was defeated by an impressive majority - 63.5%. This majority voted against any further privileges by the DUR. Additionally, the voters endorsed the continuance of municipal ownership.⁸⁴ By March, 1922, the DUR sold its property to the city for twenty million dollars. The price was approved by the voters a month later on April 7th. On May 15, 1922, the Detroit Department of Street Railways (DSR) controlled the street railway system.⁸⁵

By the mid 1920s, the street railways were inadequate to the job of getting Detroiters around and out of town. The DUR had been reluctant to invest in their system during the many years of wrangling with the city over municipal ownership. DUR spokesman, Frank W. Brooks, had explained as much in his 1920 article in The Club Woman. Consequently, the track and equipment had been deteriorating for years prior to acquisition by the city. DSR revenues repaired these but failed to extend the street railway lines. The DSR turned its attention to trackless electric trolleys and diesel powered buses, further clogging the city's surface streets.⁸⁶

There was some interest in a combination express street car and local bus plan created by Harry R. Miller and Nicholas J. Schorn. The Miller-Schorn plan would have pedestrian underpasses but otherwise ride on Detroit's streets.⁸⁷ It would keep costs at a minimum, and provide a modicum of safety for pedestrians, but still depended on surface streets.

⁸⁴ Detroit News (April 5, 1921).

⁸⁵ Book review of Hyde, Detroit Street Railways, p 84.

⁸⁶ Book review of Hyde, Detroit Street Railways, p.85.

⁸⁷ Nicholas J. Schorn, "New Transportation Plan for Detroit," Michigan Woman 4 (March, 1926): 14-15

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The surface streets of Detroit often had the same funding problems as other forms of transportation. Prior to 1909 Wayne County had no paved roads.⁸⁸ When roads were widened, some felt the merchants benefited and therefore should be assessed properly.⁸⁹ The Michigan Woman published an article by the Rapid Transit Commission explaining a master plan for Detroit's growth, especially into the suburbs. The superhighways that would be needed would be financed one third by the city at large and two thirds by the benefited property. The master plan also included an endorsement for a subway system where thirty-two percent of the cost would be borne by the consumer and the rest by raising bonds.⁹⁰

Surface streets were expensive and the widening of them ran into established businesses, churches and homes. This was especially true of Woodward Avenue. Detroit boosters thought the city was grand enough to have an avenue like New York's Fifth Avenue or Paris' Champs Elysees. In the November 1928 election, the voters approved a charter amendment to widen Woodward Avenue. It was estimated that it could be completed in two years. The widening could be done to avoid churches, but when they had to be moved, companies could do this without cracking the plaster.⁹¹ While the Woodward expansion fight continued into 1929, eventually the avenue was widened.⁹²

Still, the surface streets were inadequate to accommodate Detroit's traffic. Another serious, though costly, solution was a subway system. The bond proposal for the

⁸⁸ Michigan Woman 6 (January, 1928): 23.

⁸⁹ "Public Benefactor Comes To Grief," Detroit Citizen 1 (February 10, 1921): 9

⁹⁰ Sidney D. Waldon, "The Master Plan for Detroit and Environs," Michigan Woman 3 (Christmas, 1925): 13, 26.

⁹¹ Chandler, "Widening of Woodward," p.8, 9, 22-23.

⁹² Detroit News (February 13, 1929).

subway was slated for the April 1929 election. There were only a few articles in the women's club magazines and no notification of public speakers. The Magazine of the Woman's City Club published an article about Rapid Transit for Detroit in March 1929. It explained that Mayor Couzens had appointed a Rapid Transit Commission in 1922 to lay out a comprehensive plan to serve the whole metropolitan area. The Commission set out to provide elevated as well as subway systems. It felt the subways were the most efficient solution to relieve the number of people in private vehicles. Since 1916, the average number of street car rides per person fell from 349 to 253 per year. In four cities with rapid transit, the average was 412 rides per person, per year. Detroit needed a convenient, efficient solution.⁹³

The Detroit Woman's Club reminded its members to vote on the subway proposal, although the club did not support or oppose the subway.⁹⁴ This was typical of the attitude of several Detroit women's clubs. They naturally advocated using the franchise but failed to endorse one or another transportation plan. When Edith Alvord, editor of The Club Woman, was asked what she wanted for Detroit for Christmas, 1928, she requested a new subway system. She noted that the surface streets were already overcrowded and as the city expanded, the situation would only get worse. She concluded that surface space was finite and therefore the subway was the answer to the problem.⁹⁵ Alvord was not offering the endorsement of the DFWC but simply expressing her opinion.

⁹³ "Rapid Transit for Detroit," Magazine of the Woman's City Club 9 (March, 1929): 19.

⁹⁴ Detroit Woman's Club Minutes (March 25, 1929) Manuscript Collection (MS) Detroit's Woman's Club, BHC.

⁹⁵ Detroit News (December 16, 1928).

The election resulted in a resounding defeat: only 28% voted for the subway plan. The explanation for the defeat lay in the voters fears of exorbitant costs. The only voters who supported the measure were in the downtown section or on the crowded Grand River and Warren Avenues.⁹⁶ When the 1929 subway proposal was defeated, Detroit lost its opportunity for relieving its congested streets as other major cities had. By 1930, Detroit was mired in the Depression and the costly appropriation became prohibitive. Detroit had little choice but to rely on her surface streets.

Throughout the 1920s, Detroit clubwomen took a lively interest in the transportation problems of Detroit. They listened to speakers who supported and opposed municipal ownership of the street cars. The Michigan Woman ran several articles on the importance of efficient transportation. Although this was a prominent political issue, clubwomen failed to advocate one program over another. Instead, they studied the issue and individual clubwomen made their views known through the franchise. By 1930, the previously estimated million cars in Detroit were perhaps lessened by the Depression. At the same time, the issue of unemployment superseded that of transportation.

Unemployment

The residents of Detroit did not realize they were experiencing a depression in the last months of 1929 because automobile production and employment always went down in the last quarter of the year. But this time, new construction declined, business inventories accumulated, and new car sales lagged. The average number of persons employed in Detroit factories was only 163,431 persons compared to 208,197 persons in the same three months in 1928 . Employment was therefore down 21.5%. There was no accurate

⁹⁶ Detroit News (April 2, 1929).



number of the unemployed in the first eight months of 1930. The Employer's Association and the Board of Commerce estimated factory employment was 52% lower in August 1930 than August 1929. Detroit had the highest rate of unemployment of any big city in the nation. The case load for the Public Welfare Commission grew from 3,380 in October, 1929 to 21,759 in April, 1930 with unemployment accounting for eighty percent of the relief. Ninety-seven point seven percent of public relief came from public funds in Detroit, as opposed to 53.6% in seventy-four other cities. According to historian Sidney Fine, Detroit was the "hardest hit big city in the nation during the Hoover years."⁹⁷

Detroit not only was in serious financial trouble but also political trouble as well. In July 1930, there was a campaign to recall Mayor Charles Bowles. Bowles was unable to work effectively with the City Council, made appointments on the basis of partisan or personal basis, had possible connections to the underworld, denied the press access to relevant records, refused to respond to questions and increased the fare on the Detroit Street Railway. The night of the recall election July 2, 1930, Detroit's most popular broadcaster, Gerald (Jerry) Buckley was murdered.⁹⁸ Bowles dismissed Police Commissioner Harold H. Emmons who had previously received letters of commendation and appreciation from the DFWC.⁹⁹

Frank Murphy, who had been supported by Detroit clubwomen in the important Recorder's Court election of 1923, once more got their support in the mayoralty election of September 1930. Murphy's relationship with clubwomen was certainly a politically

⁹⁷ Sidney Fine, Frank Murphy - The Detroit Years (Ann Arbor, 1975), p.201-204, 246.

⁹⁸ Fine, Frank Murphy p.206-207, 209.

⁹⁹ Board of Directors Meeting (February 27, 1930), Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, no page numbers, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



compatible one. To the women's clubs, he endeared himself by "presenting an image of sacrifice to public duty." More importantly, he embodied many of the same ideas about the proper role of government as clubwomen had. He said "good government was a social obligation for the education of youth, the peace, health and safety of the people and for the care of the poor and sick." He separated himself from earlier Detroit political leaders by believing that government was not simply a business, although it should be run efficiently, economically, and on a non-partisan basis. Finally, like Detroit clubwomen, Murphy believed in using political power to effect social change.¹⁰⁰

Murphy enjoyed a good relationship with liberal women. He appointed Caroline Parker of the Detroit branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to the House of Corrections Commission. Josephine Gomon, a former teacher and liberal thinker, influenced Murphy's politics and became the Assistant Secretary to the Mayor. Beulah Young, publisher of the Detroit People's News, claimed she would keep black voters in Detroit for Murphy.¹⁰¹

Many clubwomen supported Murphy, thus, because his political philosophy was compatible with their own. They also responded to the economic catastrophe affecting Detroit in the early years of the Depression. Typically, many women's clubs set about to study the causes and cures for this problem. In February 1930, the DFWC invited Edward M. McFarland of the Detroit Teachers College to discuss unemployment. McFarland believed that unemployment should not be tolerated but eradicated as science eradicated many diseases. Since McFarland believed that the average working man was unable to

¹⁰⁰ Fine, Frank Murphy, p.217, 225-226.

¹⁰¹ Fine, Frank Murphy, p.216, 217, 221-222, 230, 231.



save for a season of unemployment, a system must be worked out to do so. This must involve employer cooperation. He claimed it was not overproduction but under consumption that lay at the root of the Depression. McFarland concluded by saying that the employer was best equipped to handle this problem, not the government.¹⁰²

The Woman's City Club invited Clinch Calkins (Mrs. Charles Marquis Merrell) author of "Some Folks Won't Work" to speak to the club about how the economy leads to unemployment. Calkins got her information from a nation-wide study of unemployment by the National Federation of Settlements. She stated that in the past, labor had been regarded as the most flexible, easily replaced element in production. She declared that this idea needed changing. She reminded her audience that industrial accidents had once been regarded fatalistically but that had been lessened. Calkins agreed with McFarland about the stabilizing of labor so the worker was safeguarded against seasonal and part-time employment. She suggested that no dividends be paid to stockholders until fixed charges were paid and she encouraged the clubwomen to join in this project because it would take an effort of both employer and consumer to be successful. In a follow-up meeting, the Woman's City Club felt the Clinch Calkins luncheon was a success. The members met later with the Mayor and took notes about how each could help the situation.¹⁰³

While some clubwomen heard lectures on alleviating the Depression through unemployment programs, others were convinced that renewed spending was necessary. A young, unnamed Detroit businesswoman spoke at her Detroit Quota Club. She agreed with McFarland that the economic problem was under-consumption. She claimed that

¹⁰² Detroit News (February 16, 1930).

¹⁰³ The Magazine of the Woman's City Club 11 (November, 1930): 19-31, (December, 1930): 30.

relatively few people were affected by the stock market crash. Additionally, she stated that although family income was relatively the same, women were holding back their spending. Her advice for women was to resume normal spending and the Depression would soon be over. She seemed to echo a recent plea from President Hoover for people who could spend to do so. Hoover suggested that people employ others to do repair and clean-up work.¹⁰⁴ Later, in the Fall of 1930, the DFWC sponsored a plan to potentially create employment for five thousand men. The DFWC announced a project to have members hire unemployed people to do odd jobs. The plan called for a canvas to list every housewife who could use some help during the day, washing windows, gardening, shoveling snow etc. It was figured that twelve women employing a man for four hours each, would give him full time work. The first step was to enlist clubwomen through the 130 clubs in the city. The canvas would then be organized. The proposed wage would be \$100-\$125 per month. The clubwomen did this in cooperation with Mayor Murphy. They also supported Murphy's sub-committee on creative employment to persuade employers to go ahead with construction plans.¹⁰⁵ Sadly, all the grand plans for employing five thousand men would have required the participation of sixty thousand women. In the final analysis, the plan only produced twenty seven jobs.

Detroit clubwomen were civic activists and therefore as they studied about the Depression, they also formulated plans to alleviate the problem. At the Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention of the MFWC, the members went on record as endorsing a new resolution for old age pensions. Isabel Larwill, a State Commissioner for Labor and

¹⁰⁴ Detroit News (April 13, 1930).

¹⁰⁵ Detroit News (October 12, 1930).

Industry supplied a pension bill which would be presented to the State Legislature in 1931. The resolution said that the clubwomen of Michigan understood that workers were unable to provide for their unemployment. Therefore, the clubwomen would study how old age laws were administered in other states with an eye to developing a similar program for Michigan. This whole project was undertaken as a commitment to provide, in a decent and humane way, for the elderly worker.¹⁰⁶ This resolution was more conservative than some proposals that were discussed. Among those were one for unemployment insurance backed by organized labor which would give a worker forty percent of his salary for twelve weeks if he were laid off. There were also suggestions about amending Workmen's Compensation and restricting the use of the injunction in labor disputes.¹⁰⁷ Michigan clubwomen were committed to providing a modicum of security for the working people.

Although the MFWC was conservative in its resolutions, the MLWV was not. It deviated from its usual caution of considering a two year study period for any legislation when it voted in November 1930 to draft an emergency bill for the January 1931 legislature. The women had heard a lecture by Professor William Leiserson of Antioch College and a former member of President Harding's Labor Conference in 1921. Professor Leiserson claimed that business had failed America because it should have been able to give all Americans an opportunity to make a living. He urged the League to draft a bill similar to Workmen's Compensation but requiring employers to insure their workers against unemployment. He added that the employers must consider their workers as carefully as they did their products. Most club members felt the emergency demanded

¹⁰⁶ Detroit News (October 26, 1930).

¹⁰⁷ Lent D. Upson, "Next Year's Legislature," Michigan Woman 8 (September, 1930):11,14-15.

swift action and so they supported the resolution. Some, however, felt that the primary purpose for the League was for education and voted against this haste.¹⁰⁸

In addition to legislation, Detroit clubwomen devised clever ways to raise money, and distribute it. At the December, 1930 meeting of the Detroit Review Club, the members paid an entry fee for their annual Christmas party. The proceeds were given to the many less fortunate. In addition, each member was assigned one family of a similar size as their own for which to provide. While charity and welfare work had always occupied many women's clubs, the economic devastation of the Depression made this work far more common.¹⁰⁹

In December 1929, a committee of DFWC women, appointed by President, Jean Chamberlain, and known as the WMBC Relief Committee, took over the relief work of radio station WMBC. The clubwomen remained there for five weeks and oversaw the distribution of sixteen thousand dollars which had been collected by the radio station. The Permanent Treasurer of the WMBC Relief Committee, Berneice Collins, wrote to the DFWC and commended them for the good judgment of President Chamberlain and the help they gave in the face of terrible distress.¹¹⁰

Some clubwomen adopted policies to provide direct relief for workers. Unfortunately, they were hardly successful. For example, in January, 1930, the DFWC voted to give five hundred dollars to the International Institute to finance one half-time ethnic worker for the next ten months. The Institute would send monthly reports on his

¹⁰⁸ Detroit News (November 16, 1930).

¹⁰⁹ Detroit News (December 14, 1930).

¹¹⁰ Letter from Berneice Collins to DFWC, (December 9, no year) Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.



situation. When it came time to appropriate the money, the members voted for only one hundred dollars. Even the DFWC had fallen on hard times and could no longer publish The Club Woman, their magazine and main source of revenue, during the Depression.¹¹¹

In all their activities addressing the problems brought on by massive urbanization and industrialization, Detroit clubwomen exemplified Chicago activist and clubwoman, Louise DeKoven Bowen's idea that the women of a city have a civic commitment to that city. She said that people should be involved with political affairs because the "safety of family, honor of wife and children and even our happiness might be involved."¹¹² Detroit women understood the home and the city were inextricably linked and therefore they believed that the problems of the city involved them as well. Concerns about public sanitation and safety stemmed from their responsibilities as wives and mothers. They also were certain that their counsel in these civic matters was crucial. Clubwomen wanted their advice to be informed and they consequently held lectures and formed committees for the study of issues such as, city services, public safety, transportation and unemployment. They remained informed but were less vocal on sensitive issues like water, sewage and transportation. Detroit women believed that, as citizens, they had a responsibility to contribute their input into the political process and they sponsored various legislation. During the decade, they joined with other civic groups and contributed their organizational and networking ability to many civic projects. By the end of the decade, politicians like Mayor Frank Murphy sought out the support of Detroit's clubwomen. He

¹¹¹ Meeting Minutes (January 30, 1930), Vol 19 Minutes 1929-1930, no page numbers, MS Federation of Women's Clubs of Metropolitan Detroit.

¹¹² Louise DeKoven Bowen, Growing Up With a City (New York, 1926), p. 24.



appreciated their impressive organizational ability and respected their political opinions.

He understood the city was not longer run by its male citizens but by its female citizens as well.



Conclusion

In 1930, Detroit was mired in a deep economic depression. The city was confronted with all its previous municipal responsibilities plus an enormous public relief burden. In July of that year, the mayor, Charles Bowles was recalled. In the subsequent election, between George Engel, Frank Murphy, Charles Bowles, John Smith and Phil Raymond, Murphy was elected mayor. He was helped in this effort by Detroit clubwomen who were at odds with the business choice, Engel, who was endorsed by the Detroit Free Press, Detroit News, and Detroit Citizens League. Engel promised “a sound level-headed and strong business administration.” Bowles attracted the dry votes and Smith appealed to ethnic and black voters. Raymond ran on the Communist ticket. Club women supported Murphy because he philosophically represented many of their ideas about government. When he declared his candidacy, he echoed Progressive Era concerns by saying Detroit was “in ashes, a political ruin, burned to the ground by hate, by discord, by selfishness, by government put to corrupt and selfish ends.” He promised to maintain his “conception of social and progressive justice.”¹ In opposing the business sponsored candidate, clubwomen displayed the same political independence they had in the 1923 Recorder’s Court Election. Murphy was a Democrat but the President of the Detroit Women’s Republican Club voted for him. African-American women also voted independently of their leaders. Two high-profile African-American men, Dr. Ossian Sweet and Clarence Diggs supported Smith. Nevertheless, African-American clubwomen, and publisher of the Detroit People’s News, Beulah Young made a pledge to “keep all the coloured (sic)

¹ Sidney Fine, Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years (Ann Arbor, 1975), p.214, 215, 219.



peoples votes in Detroit sewed up” for Murphy. Murphy received a majority, sometimes as high as eighty percent, in all the black precincts.²

Detroit women emerged from the 1920s as a factor in Detroit politics. The weekly publication of the Detroit Board of Commerce, The Detroider, printed “The City of Tomorrow” by Dr. Lent D. Upson in 1931. Upson described the early problems of the twentieth century cities, but he detailed the progress that had been made in areas like public health, recreation and education, all areas in which Detroit clubwomen had sponsored programs. Upson predicted that “The political intelligence of the coming city will be better organized than at present, with women, labor and business representatives in council.”³ No matter how celebrated Detroit clubwomen might be by individuals such as Upson, it is clear that by 1930 the analysis of what these women had accomplished is analogous to the “glass half-full versus half-empty” situation.

The explanation for that qualified success lies in the methodological and ideological strategies Detroit clubwomen used for their civic activities. Clubwomen advanced into municipal politics maintaining their club affiliations through which they attempted to influence officials and public policy. The choice to maintain political work within the clubs had organizational and practical considerations. They had used this methodology successfully for political work appealing to local and state governments before suffrage. Within their organizations, they were able to control their agenda and their method of work. They continued working, using many of the same effective techniques like personal interviews, investigations and grass-roots politics. They were

² Fine, Frank Murphy p.222, 240

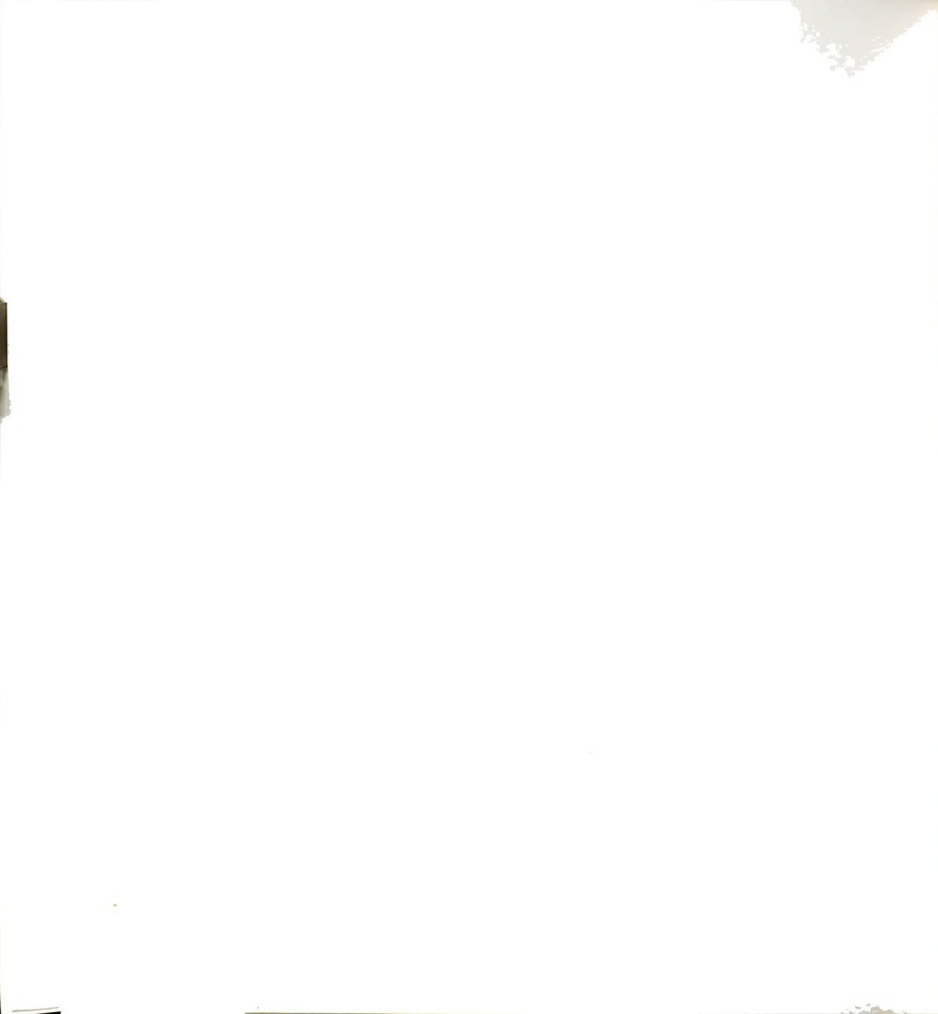
³ Lent D. Upson, “The City of Tomorrow,” Detroider 22 (February 9, 1931): 6.



followers of Progressive Era politics which led them to intensely scrutinize issues. It also made them wary of partisan politics. Detroit clubwomen had developed their own separate political culture before the franchise, but maintained that culture and oftentimes that separation throughout the 1920s.

Detroit clubwomen's separate political culture had methodological advantages but also disadvantages as well. Choosing to continue their political work, alongside their other club activities sometimes produced dissension within the ranks and created an overcrowded agenda where programs only received cursory attention. Their distinct organizations were often marginalized by the press which relegated their programs to the clubwomen's pages. Working often exclusively with other clubwomen left women vulnerable to pejorative stereotypes about women's political capabilities. Men would greet their proposals with the condescending remark, "Well, isn't that just like a woman." The clubwomen's tendency to scrutinize political issues kept them well-informed but also slowed their ability to attend pressing issues. Detroit clubwomen's aversion to partisan politics may have been a strategic error, considering the fact that many political decisions were made within the parties. Furthermore, even when they joined parties, women's political independence encouraged male party regulars to regard them as different and unreliable.

Detroit clubwomen's political culture had ideological implications which both enhanced and hindered their political effectiveness. Within the urban context of 1920s Detroit, clubwomen successfully championed policies to protect women and children from the worst abuses of an industrial economy. They sought the reduction of crime by creating



a more moral environment and they advocated more humane forms of incarceration and punishment. Women also addressed the daily dangers of living in an urban society, raising both public awareness and government responsibility for protecting health, welfare and safety. On the other hand, as their advocacy of these programs was seen as emanating from a maternalist motivation, which gave them a certain moral clout, it also restricted their range of political activities. For example, clubwomen intensely studied the transportation problems of Detroit, but failed to advocate any policies.

Moreover, maintaining their clubs and pre-suffrage strategies made sense because even with the franchise, politics was still male-dominated. Detroit women rejected the male domination of municipal politics. "Municipal housekeeping" for Chicago clubwomen as well as Detroit's was in essence a challenge to the business, efficient method of running the city.⁴ Detroit clubwomen's activities offer additional evidence to Sara Evan's claim that women still pursued public policies that stemmed from private needs.⁵ Elisabeth Perry concluded that when faced with limited political choices, New York women also chose to remain in their clubs where their voices were heard and not marginalized.⁶ While they did not challenge the capitalist system, they looked to the state to keep families together through Mothers Pensions. Deutsch explained that clubwomen's maternalist vision was really about power relations and the limited choices for women.⁷ Additionally, clubwomen looked to the state to provide a healthier, more

⁴ Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable - Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," Journal of Urban History 22 (January, 1996): 165, 168.

⁵ Sara M. Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life," in Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism Suzanne Lebsock and Nancy Hewitt eds., (Urbana, 1993), p.132.

⁶ Elisabeth Israel's Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," New York History (October, 1990): 433.

⁷ Sarah Deutsch, "Learning to Talk More Like A Man: Boston Women's Class-Bridging Organizations, 1870-1940," American Historical Review (April, 1992): 404.

moral environment for themselves and their families. In Detroit, campaigns for rat extermination and smoke abatement were championed by clubwomen. Firor Scott claimed that women made towns healthier, but rarely posed a threat to the political structure.⁸ Likewise, in Detroit, women didn't challenge the political structure but rather the male monopoly of it

The male monopoly of Detroit's business community with its profound influence on municipal politics provided an urban context which circumscribed clubwomen's political effectiveness. The city was grappling with enormous problems posed by the industrial and urban explosion of the early twentieth century. Detroit faced questions about what municipal services were necessary and how it would pay for them. There were also sensitive issues about public and private ownership. In this political-economic atmosphere, clubwomen's belief that they too were entitled to inject their demands on the city was often greeted with marked hostility. Demands like smoke abatement became possible only when it appeared cost-effective. Clubwomen occasionally had access to powerful businessmen, like John Dodge, who helped finance the school milk program. More often, however, their ideas and reforms were received condescendingly or were met with resistance. In addition, Detroit clubwomen's fortunes were constrained by their limited access to the public media which portrayed them as incompetent and self-centered.

In spite of the many limitations placed on women's political effectiveness, Detroit clubwomen enjoyed qualified success in city and state political affairs. Their dogged determination to fully understand municipal matters forced a public airing of many issues. Their local organizational ability and pre-primary plans brought Detroit politics to the

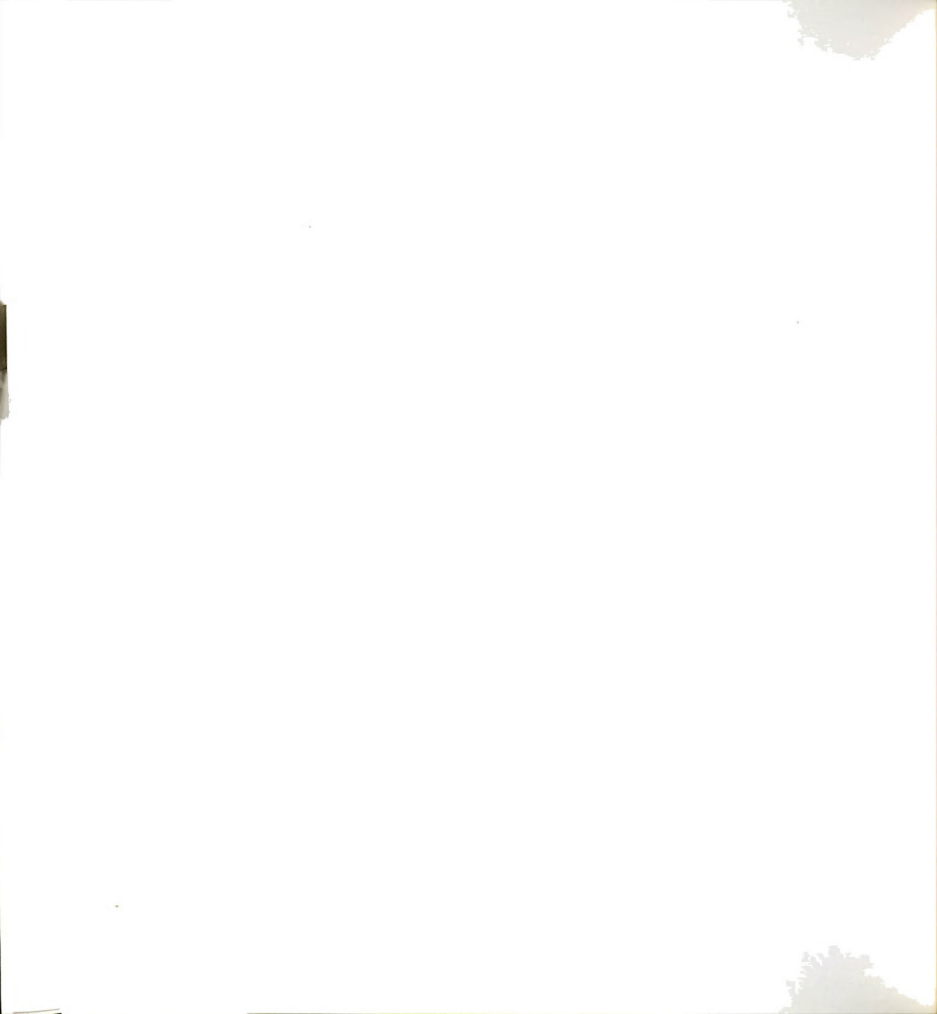
⁸ Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies - Women's Associations in American History (Urbana and Chicago, 1991), p.158.

neighborhood block. The educational and get-out-the-vote campaigns encouraged learned and participatory city politics. Clubwomen successfully sponsored legislation to make the work environment more suitable to female needs. They joined, and oftentimes led, campaigns against the high cost of living. They worked tirelessly for mother's pensions, as well as lobbied for Sheppard-Towner legislation and funding. In 1929, Detroit women held the Women's International Exposition which was given for women and by women. They actively supported anti-gambling legislation and both prohibition and prohibition reform. Women worked to establish and thereafter support the Women's Division of the Detroit Police Department. They investigated prisons and successfully defeated capital punishment in Michigan. They were considered meticulous, but respected jurors. Within the city, they organized against the health dangers of rats and smoke. Clubwomen worked both legislatively and educationally for safety on Detroit streets and in Detroit homes. Lastly, Detroit clubwomen followed their beliefs and helped elect Frank Murphy in the crucial Recorder's Court election of 1923 and the important mayoral election in 1929. They achieved their successes often with other allies in the Detroit community.

The political history of Detroit's clubwomen in the 1920s has implications that reach beyond the city and help explain the political environment of the time. It shows how in spite of the franchise, women were only grudgingly accepted into the political process. Especially within the political parties, men were still in charge and only willing to grant women qualified participation, on male-defined terms. But political women, for their part, did not acquiesce to those demands, they simply continued to work as they had previously, in their clubs and associations. Women were not less political after suffrage. From their

pre-suffrage experience, they understood that politics was male-dominated. Thus, the vote was welcomed, but not perceived as the end of the struggle for equal participation. Perhaps women misjudged the intransigence of men, but they knew the obstacles. In assessing their situation, women were selective about issues. While not confining their policies to issues affecting the home, women and children, they were judicious in their demands. They had the greatest success when presenting civic policies that were cost effective. Consequently, they often framed their arguments in those terms. Finally, a continuance of their pre-franchise culture outside of the parties contributed to the less partisan, more interest group orientation of twentieth century politics.

In spite of the rather uneven rate of political achievements, Detroit clubwomen had established a distinct presence in Detroit politics. Their experience reveals much about the political culture of the 1920s and women's role in that culture. The challenges remained for Detroit clubwomen, but they had moved toward fulfilling their promise.



APPENDIX ONE

Directory of the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs 1926

Organized January 28, 1895

Charter Member of State Federation, 1895

Member of General Federation, 1916

Club House, Northwest Corner Second and Hancock Avenue

PAST PRESIDENTS

Mrs. Frances G. Boynton
Miss Lydia Hopkins
Mrs. Pamela A. Patterson
Mrs. Andrew Howell
Mrs. John Walker
Mrs. Clara B. Arthur
Mrs. Clara C. Hickey
Mrs. W.H. Holden
Mrs. George G. Caron
Mrs. Delphine D. Ashbaugh
Mrs. W. R. Alvord
Mrs. C. R. Wilson
Mrs. Frederick G. Ray
Mrs. C. M. Novak
Mrs. Lillian S. Mathews

PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Mrs. Delphine Dodge Ashbaugh

HONORARY PRESIDENT

Mrs. Emma A. Fox

OFFICERS 1925-1926

Mrs. Herbert F. Prescott, President
Mrs. Claire E. Swain, First Vice-President
Mrs. George E. Phillips, Second-Vice President
Mrs. Malcolm McKinnon, Recording Secretary
Mrs. A. H. Holman, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. M. T. Wright, Treasurer

OFFICIAL PARLIAMENTARIAN

Mrs. Emma A. Fox

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mrs. Arthur J. Lacy
Mrs. Geo. E. Doyle
Mrs. A. A. Hughes

CHAIRMEN OF DEPARTMENTS

PUBLIC WELFARE DEPARTMENT

Mrs. W. L. Bullard, Chairman

Divisions

Mrs. L. G. Cooper, Child Welfare
Mrs. Wm. B. Kelsey, Book and Periodical Committee
Mrs. Julien S. Connor, Public Health
Mrs. T. D. Moule, Public Safety

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Joseph N. Krolik, Chairman

Divisions

Mrs. Joseph N. Krolik, Legislative
Mrs. Ernst Wuesthoff, Civic
Mrs. George P. Fraser, Americanization

APPLIED EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Miss Esther Cousins, Chairman

Divisions

Miss Esther Cousins, Educational
Mrs. Walter A. Fisher, Conservation

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Mrs. W. R. Alvord, American Home



FINE ARTS DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Carl B. Chamberlain, Chairman

Divisions

Mrs. J. Francis Quinn, Art

Mrs. Carl B. Chamberlain, Music

Mrs. D. H. Bather, Drama and Literature
Division

CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Miss Theo. McDonald, Finance

Mrs. George Seabold, House and Supply
Committee

Miss Elizabeth Matheson, Federation
History

Mrs. R. E. Huffman, Membership

Mrs. W. B. Taylor, Registration

Mrs. J. B. Whitley, Program

Mrs. C. J. Burgess, Auditorium

Mrs. G. W. Getzendanner, Pages

Mrs. J. Nelson Lewis, Reception

Mrs. Roland M. Athay, Music Program
(Special)

Executive Secretary, Rentals

Mrs. Herbert G. Wood, Social

Mrs. C. E. Sullivan, Scholarship

THE CLUB WOMAN

Mrs. R. H. Ashbaugh, Managing
Director

Mrs. W. R. Alvord, Editor

Mrs. F. L. Brandes, Associate Editor

Mrs. M. B. Sulzberger, Contributing
Editor

Mrs. R. F. Callaway, Dramatic Editor

Mrs. Floyd G. Hitchcock, Art Editor

Mrs. O. E. Closson, Department Editor

Miss Ethel M. Francis, Advertising and
Business Manager

CLUBS

AFTERNOON STUDY CLUB

Mrs. Irwin Fullerton, President

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN DETROIT BRANCH

Dr. Mary Thompson Stevens, President

ATHENA DELPHIAN

Mrs. H. W. Chapman, President

CALEAN STUDY CLUB

Mrs. Harry D. Bumgardner, President

CANTEEN CLUB, CO. S., No. 2

Mrs. A. F. Squire, President

CATHOLIC STUDY CLUB

Mrs. W. W. Warren, President

CERCLE DRAMATIQUE

Mrs. Ralph Ainsworth, President

CLIO CLUB

Mrs. Julia Finster, President

CLUB OF TODAY

Mrs. G. B. Young, President

COMMUNITY CLUB

Mrs. A. H. Holman, President

COTERIE

Mrs. F. G. Hutchinson, President

CURRENT TOPIC CLUB

Miss Rose Crysler, President

DAMES OF THE LOYAL LEGION, DETROIT CHAPTER

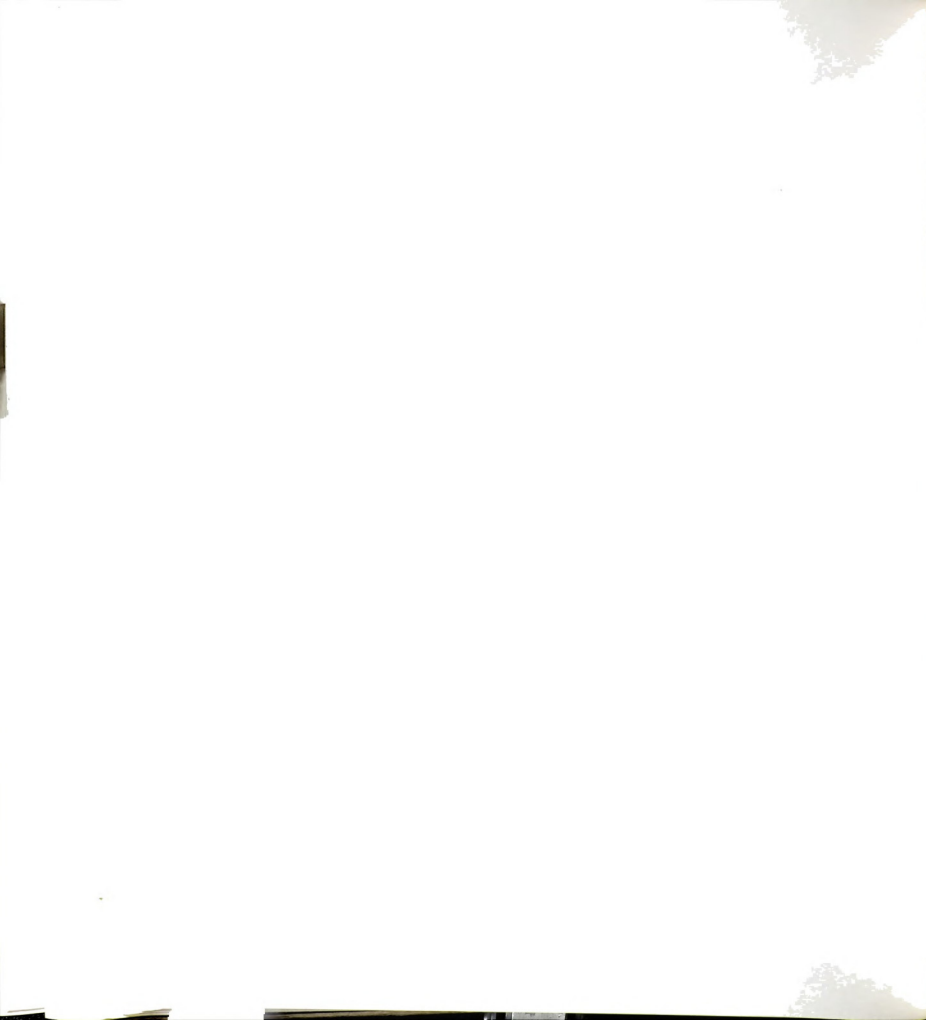
Miss Mary Lacey, President

DAUGHTERS OF G. A. R., GEN.

ALPHEUS S. WILLIAMS

FORTRESS No. I

Mrs. Ethel M. Burns, President



DAUGHTERS OF G. A. R.,
LAWRENCE REESE FORTRESS,
No. 7
Mrs. Thomas Woollett, President

DAUGHTERS OF VETERANS,
ADELAIDE WALLACE
FAIRBANKS POST TENT No. 16
Mrs. Blanche McEwen, President

DAUGHTERS OF VETERANS,
SARAH M. W. STERLING TENT
No. 3
Mrs. Florence Hamilton, President

DAUGHTERS OF VETERANS, JULIA
MEAD JANES TENT No. 13
Mrs. Elizabeth Atkinson, President

DETROIT ALLIANCE DELTA
DELTA DELTA
Mrs. Carl B. Dolbeare, President

DETROIT BRANCH, NATIONAL
STORY TELLERS' LEAGUE
Miss Elizabeth Coolidge, President

DETROIT BUSINESS AND
PROFESSIONAL WOMAN'S CLUB
Miss Augusta M. Bookmyer, President

DETROIT CIRCLE, FLORENCE
CRITTENTON HOME
Mrs. H. R. Daniels, President

DETROIT CHAPTER, KING'S
DAUGHTERS AND SONS HOME
FOR AGED PEOPLE
Mrs. Florence Darling, President

DETROIT CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS
BRITISH EMPIRE
Mrs. S. L. McCombe, Regent

DETROIT DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
OF MICHIGAN STATE NURSES
ASSOCIATION
Miss Katherine Kimmick, President

DETROIT ELEMENTARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
Mrs. A. F. Wolfschlager, President

DETROIT FEDERATION. W. C. T. U.
Mrs. Matie W. Jones, President

DETROIT GIRL SCOUT OFFICERS'
ASSOCIATION
Miss Helen M. McDonald, President

DETROIT HOME ECONOMICS
ASSOCIATION
Miss Louise M. Clawson, President

DETROIT HOMEMAKERS' CLUB
Mrs. Edward Harris, President

DETROIT INDUSTRIAL CLUB
Mrs. Frank Wolfe, President

DETROIT NEW CENTURY CLUB
Mrs. W. E. Collins, President

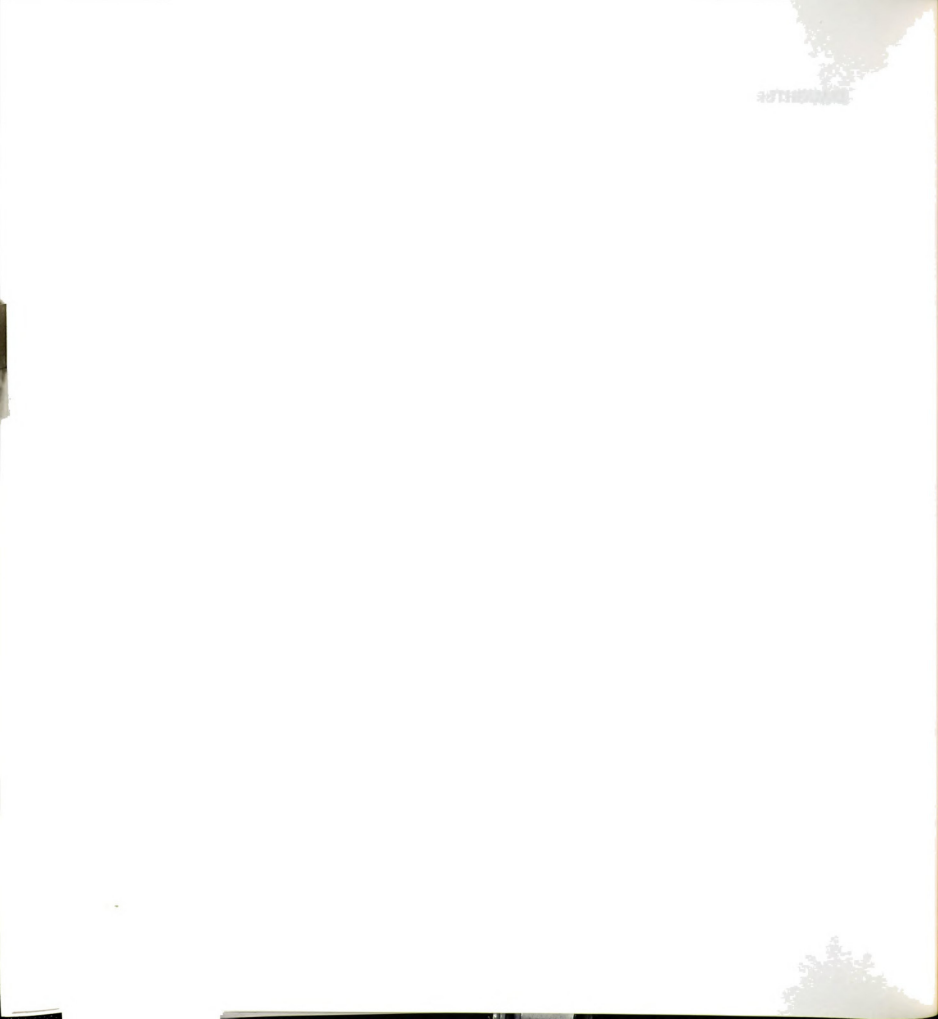
DETROIT PARLIAMENTARY LAW
CLUB
Mrs. Emma A. Fox, President

DETROIT REVIEW CLUB
Miss Fanny Hasty, President

DETROIT SCHOOL OF EXPRESSION
ALUMNI STUDY CLUB
Mrs. Eva Bishop, President

DETROIT SECTION OF THE
COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN
Mrs. Joseph Welt, President

DETROIT SOROSIS



Mrs. John S. Siefert, President

DETROIT STUDY CLUB

Mrs. A. L. Turner, President

DETROIT WOMAN'S AUXILIARY,
R. M. A.

Mrs. B. B. Thayer, President

DETROIT WOMAN'S CLUB

Mrs. Roland Cornell, President

DETROIT WOMAN PRINCIPALS'
CLUB

Miss Mabel Redman, President

DETROIT WOMAN'S SWIMMING
ASSOC.

Mrs. Bess Kennedy, President

DETROIT WOMAN WRITERS' CLUB

Mrs. Louise B. Clancy, President

DIAL CLUB

Mrs. Herbert W. Mason, President

DIVERSITY LITERARY CLUB

Mrs. Frank J. Roehm, President

EDNA CHAFFEE NOBLE ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Tresa Merrill, President

ENTRE NOUS CLUB

Mrs. John Bambrick, President

FRIDAY STUDY CLUB

Mrs. Horace Biglow, President

GAVEL CLUB

Mrs. C. R. Wilson, President

GOOD CHEER CLUB

Miss Ethel Munroe, President

GUARDIAN ASSOCIATION OF
CAMPFIRE GIRLS

Mrs. I. W. Stuart, President

HIGHLAND PARK WOMAN'S CLUB

Mrs. J. J. Livingstone, President

HOME STUDY CLUB

Mrs. C. U. Bear, President

HYPATIA CLUB

Mrs. Ida Jones, President

INTERNATIONAL KINDERGARTEN
UNION, DETROIT BRANCH

Mrs. Ethelyn Woodruff, President

KNIGHT STUDY CLUB

Mrs. M. J. Wright, President

LEAGUE OF PROTESTANT WOMEN

Mrs. Rowena Rice, President

LIBRI

Mrs. John Mc Neil Burns, President

LINCOLN STUDY CLUB

Mrs. Howard Marsh, President

MARGARET FOLEY CLUB

Lola McPherson, President

MICHIGAN LEAGUE FOR CRIPPLED
CHILDREN

Mrs. E. S. Leonard, President

NEW COLONY CLUB

Mrs. W. F. Seeley, President

NORNAE STUDY CLUB

Mrs. J. C. Goodale, president

NORTHEASTERN WOMAN'S CLUB

Mrs. Harry V. Wilkie, President

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Mrs. Philip Griffiths, President

NORTHWESTERN WELFARE CLUB
Mrs. G. M. Fanning, President

NORTH WOODWARD WOMAN'S
CLUB
Mrs. A. J. Coon, President

OUTLOOK CLUB
Mrs. W. E. Brownlee, President

PALESTINE WOMAN'S
ASSOCIATION
Mrs. W. E. Gould, President

PARMENAS CLUB
Mrs. Robert Wells, President

P. E. O. CHAPTER A
Mrs. W. Robertson, President

P. E. O. CHAPTER B
Mrs. G.F. Key, President

P. E. O. CHAPTER D
Mrs. C.W. Lemmon, President

P. E. O. CHAPTER F
Mrs. H. M Robbins, President

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PHI THETA PHI SORORITY
Miss Edna G. Luths, President

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Mrs. Ruby Zahn, President

PROGRESSIVE DELPHIAN
Miss A.M. Block, President

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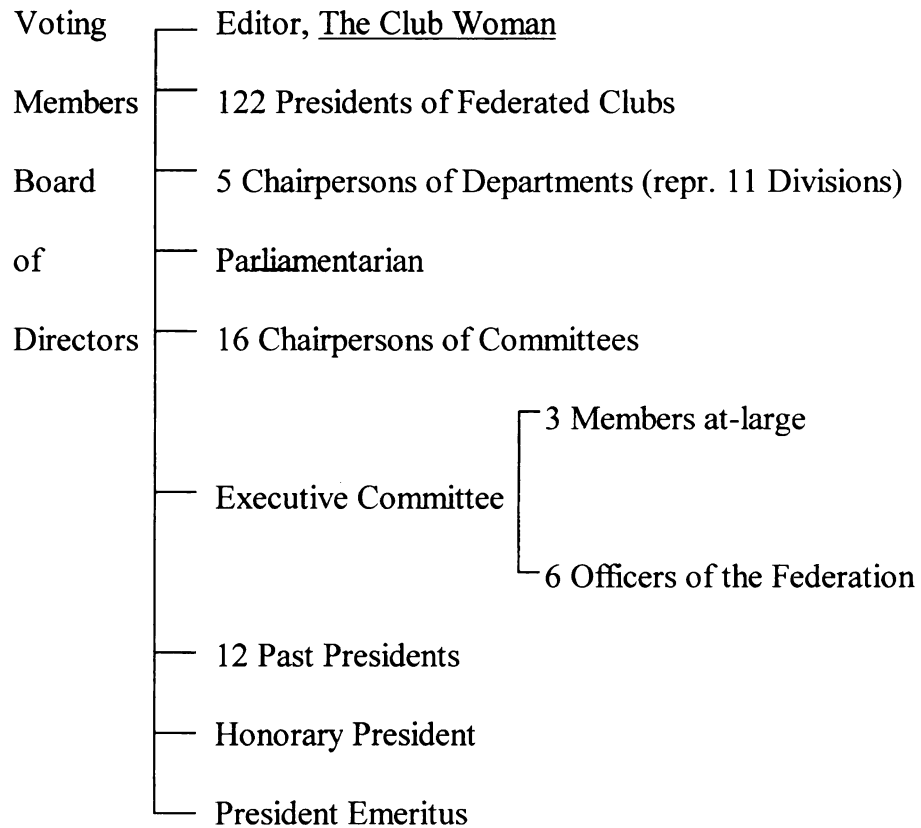


APPENDIX TWO

ORGANIZATION OF THE DETROIT FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS,

1926

Members (estimated 15,000) of Federated Clubs - Voting at General Meetings





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Detroit Woman's Club

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Michigan Equal Suffrage Association

New Era Study Club

Laura Osborn Papers

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Zonta Club

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