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**FORTY
YEARS
OF A
GREAT
IDEA**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

40 YEARS OF A GREAT IDEA



From the faith of the suffrage movement came a great idea, the idea that a nonpartisan organization could provide political education and experience which would contribute to the growth of the citizen and thus assure the success of democracy. The League of Women Voters was founded upon that idea.

— 25 YEARS OF A GREAT IDEA

1945

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

MRS. CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT, 1859-1947
President, National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1900-1904 and 1915-1920
Honorary National President, League of Women Voters, 1920-1947

preface

This is the story of the League at the age of 40. Since 1920 we have pursued the same general objectives, changing and adapting our action according to the needs and demands of the times. Sometimes the changes have been obvious and dramatic, sometimes slow and well-nigh imperceptible. As we pass the 1960 milestone, the League recognizes its obligation anew and welcomes its opportunity to participate in the things that concern government in the United States.

This is the story of what the 127,000 members of the League have in common—the creative forces, the purpose, and the Program history; in other words, the League as a *national* organization. The tremendous job that has been done by Leagues at the state and local levels is implicit in all this and is interspersed throughout but is not made explicit. And supporting it all, of course, is the member, for whom the organization on all three levels exists and on whom it all, in the last analysis, turns.

What the League has achieved has not been done single-handedly. Always there have been groups and individuals working toward the same goals. Sometimes the League has been the leader; sometimes the lead has been taken by another group and the League has joined in the effort. "40 Years of a Great Idea" is, quite naturally, the story of the League's effort, but through it we salute all of those whose support, moral and financial, has helped to make the League's history possible.

Ruth S. Phillips

President

contents

Page

- 6 *Introduction*
- 7 *Chapter I DEEP GROW THE ROOTS*
- 10 *Chapter II LEAGUE PURPOSE*
- 12 *Chapter III THE BEGINNINGS*
- 19 *Chapter IV EARLY AND LATE*
- 22 *Chapter V NONPARTISANSHIP*
- 25 *Chapter VI THROUGH THE THIRTIES*
- 31 *Chapter VII THE WAR YEARS*
- 33 *Chapter VIII WHAT HAPPENED IN 1944*
- 37 *Chapter IX SINCE 1944*
- 45 *Chapter X PROGRAM-MAKING AND REACHING CONSENSUS*
- 49 *Chapter XI UNFINISHED BUSINESS*

introduction

What This Pamphlet Is Not—And Is

This pamphlet, prepared to mark the fortieth anniversary of the League, is not a history of the League of Women Voters. A history, in the comprehensive sense, has yet to be written.

It is not a history of the woman suffrage movement. Any story about the League, however, necessarily includes mention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, because the League grew out of it and the esprit de corps of the one carried over to the other.

Nor is it a history of the League Program, though much information about the Program is contained in it. Because the story is of the League of Women Voters as a whole, it is for the most part concerned with the national Program only. Many state and local Leagues have written histories of their own; they should be read as supplements to this, or vice versa.

"History is the essence of innumerable biographies," and we could review League history by telling the story of the individuals who have made the League what it is. But somehow the sum of the League—members, local Leagues, state Leagues—is greater than the total of its parts, and League history is dotted with the work of so many great women that it would not be fair, not even accurate, to single out individuals for mention. We quote national Presidents within the context of our story; except for mention of one other League officer in recounting an incident of historical interest, we name no individuals and do not attribute quotations.

If this pamphlet seems to hark back often to the early days, it is because this seems necessary, particularly for the newer, younger members. In front of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., are two statues, which together bear these mottoes: "What is past is prologue. . . . Study the past." When the League evaluates where it is and where it is going, there is value in looking back and recalling how the League started and where it has been. Most of the members of the League today take the vote for granted, remember little or nothing, personally, of the woman suffrage movement. A member cannot even be a member until she is of voting age, and it is probable that already there are many who, if they know of the places at all, think of Muscle Shoals as a dam site in Alabama, Bretton Woods as a town in New Hampshire, and Dumbarton Oaks as a pleasant park in the nation's Capital.

So what is this pamphlet?

It is the story of a great idea—40 years of a great idea.



DEEP GROW THE ROOTS

The League of Women Voters in 1960 celebrates its fortieth anniversary. But if we include the roots, too, it is 120 years old. We can scarcely exclude:

Chapter I

—1840, when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met in London at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. Mrs. Mott was one of eight American delegates denied seats because they were women. Mrs. Stanton was the wife of a delegate. These two women made a pact to start a woman's rights movement in the United States.

—1848, when the first Woman's Rights Convention was held, in Seneca Falls, New York. The most daring proposition to come out of this convention was: "It is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."

—1869, when both the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association were founded. The object of the National was to achieve a federal amendment; of the American, to gain suffrage state by state.

—1875, when Susan B. Anthony drew up the wording of a constitutional amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." This is the exact wording of the 19th Amendment as finally added to the Constitution 45 years later.

—1878, when the amendment was first introduced in the United States Congress. It was introduced in each succeeding Congress until passed.

—1887, when the amendment first came to a vote in the Senate, where it lost.

—1890, when the two associations merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association, whose object was "to secure protection, in their right to vote, to the women citizens of the United States, by appropriate national and state legislation."

—1914, when the Senate again voted on the amendment. The vote was favorable, 35 to 34, but a two-thirds vote was needed for passage.

—1915, when the House, voting on the amendment for the first time, defeated it 204 to 174.

Beginning with 1916, things moved faster. In nearly a fourth of the states (11 and Alaska) women had full, equal suffrage; in some other states, partial suffrage. At the 1916 political conventions, both major parties at long last adopted woman suffrage planks, though they still advocated achieving it state by state rather than by federal amendment. One theory is that both parties felt that "the woman's lobby" could no longer be ignored and that "if we can't lick them we might as well let them join us."

Speeding Up

In the long fight for the vote, the National American Woman Suffrage Association had become a tightly knit, efficient, politically wise, powerful organization. Victory was coming into view, and the suffrage leaders, accustomed to looking ahead to the next step, began to plan what their organization would do with the vote once they had it.

It is often said that the League of Women Voters was "conceived in St. Louis, born in Chicago." The references are to the 50th Convention of the NAWSA in 1919 and to the first Convention of the League in 1920.

But before these events there had to be a gleam in somebody's eye. And there was, in the collective eye of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

At the NAWSA Convention in 1916, the idea of an organization within the organization was proposed by Mrs. Katharine Reed Balentine of Maine. It would be composed of representatives from the equal suffrage states, and was referred to as the "Enfranchised States Committee." The proposal was voted and carried. However, the carrying out of the plan was delayed because of the illness of the chairman.

By the time of the 49th Convention, in December 1917, the idea had taken on more substantial form. Convention Proceedings say:

"The chair" (Carrie Chapman Catt presiding) "outlined a plan . . . for uniting the women of the enfranchised states in an association which should be auxiliary to the National American Woman Suffrage Association. All state associations would upon enfranchisement automatically become members of this organization. The plan . . . would consist of an organization committee in each of the enfranchised states composed of five persons from each state, these state committees to be finally united in a central body to be known as the National League of Women Voters, auxiliary to the National American Woman Suffrage Association."

The United States had been at war since April 1917, and with many women doing men's jobs on the home front and in other ways contributing to the war effort, congressional opposition to woman suffrage was lessening.

Home Stretch

In January 1918 the House of the 65th Congress passed the woman suffrage amendment 274 to 136, a fraction of one vote over the required two thirds.

In October 1918 the Senate voted on the 19th Amendment, 62 for, 34 against—only two votes short of the necessary two thirds. In February 1919, late in the life of the 65th Congress (this was the day of the "lame duck" session), the Senate voted again, 63 for and 33 against—just one vote short.

In March 1919 the 50th Convention of the NAWSA met in St. Louis. This was the Jubilee Convention, marking the half century since the two woman suffrage associations, the National and the American, had been established. It was obvious that passage of the 19th Amendment was almost at hand; enthusiasm was high, and the NAWSA Convention was dominated by plans for the new organization which was to emerge from the old.

The call to Convention said: "As a fitting memorial to a half century of progress, the National American Woman Suffrage Association invites the women voters of the 15 full suffrage states* to attend this anniversary convention, and there to join their forces into a League of Women Voters, one of whose objects shall be to speed the suffrage campaign in our own and other countries."

In Mrs. Catt's Convention address she said: "I propose . . . a League of Women Voters to 'finish the fight' and to aid in the reconstruction of the nation . . ."

The Constitution of the NAWSA was amended to include the new organization, with Article III, Section 2, reading: "In order to further the second purpose of the National American Woman Suffrage Association . . . i.e., 'to increase the effectiveness of women's votes in furthering better government,' women from the enfranchised states shall form a League of Women Voters within the National American Woman Suffrage Association."

Votes for Women

Less than two months later, on May 21, 1919, the House of the 66th Congress passed the 19th Amendment by an immense majority, 304 to 90. On June 4 the Senate passed it, 66 to 30.

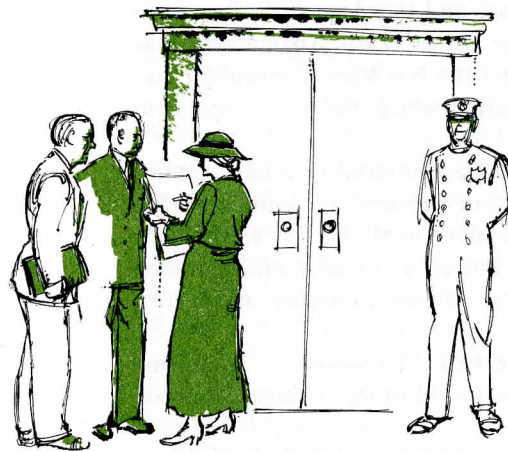
Within an hour after the Senate vote the NAWSA launched its drive for ratification, which took over a year to achieve.

In February 1920 the NAWSA Convention was held in Chicago. It had been hoped that ratification would be complete by that time, so it was a joint event—the final Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the first Convention of the League of Women Voters. The work of the one was all but done; the work of the other was about to begin.

Ratification by the 36th state—the last to make the necessary three fourths—came on August 18. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was proclaimed in effect on August 26, 1920.

* Wyoming, 1869; Colorado, 1893; Idaho, 1896; Utah, 1896; Washington, 1910; California, 1911; Kansas, 1912; Oregon, 1912; Arizona, 1912; Montana, 1914; Nevada, 1914; New York, 1917; Michigan, 1918; Oklahoma, 1918; South Dakota, 1918.

And Carrie Chapman Catt said: "The vote is won. Seventy-two years the battle for this privilege has been waged, but human affairs with their eternal change move on without pause. Progress is calling to you to make no pause. Act!"



LEAGUE PURPOSE

Chapter II

Women—at least those who had worked for woman suffrage—needed no urging to follow Mrs. Catt's advice. They had worked for the vote not just to have it, but to achieve goals which without it had been beyond their reach.

The vote meant different things to different women. Not all women who had wanted the vote were necessarily part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Not all women who had been a part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association necessarily stayed with its successor organization. Some went straight into party work, to run for public office or to serve in party organization, and never got into the League of Women Voters. Some joined the League and never got out of it, though of course most of them joined a party, too. Some stayed with the League for awhile and then went into more active party work; some, vice versa. Some went into organizations which had a single interest, for example, peace, education, working conditions, protection of the consumer.

Multipurpose

But our story is of the League of Women Voters. Even within the League the vote, and the League itself, meant different things to different members. This is apparent from records and statements in the early days of the League and since, and it illuminates the history of the League to take another look at some of them.

At the 1919 Convention, 10 items were listed as "First Aims of the

League of Women Voters." Only two of these pertained to women in particular and both were in connection with citizenship. Eight pertained to education—three to education in general, five to education in citizenship.

A League pamphlet of 1919 said: "The organization has three purposes: to foster education in citizenship, to promote forums and public discussions of civic reforms, and to support needed legislation. It hopes to accomplish its purpose first, by education as to national and state human needs; second, by public discussion to spread information, and, third, by the direct influence of its members who are enrolled voters in the already existing political parties. The slogan of the League is 'Enroll in the political parties'."

In 1919 Mrs. Catt said: "We propose to get into the great parties and to work from the inside. We do not fear issues, and we do not fear the future. We'll not vote as women, but as American citizens, and we are unafraid."

In 1920 she said: "If we are going to trail behind the Democratic and Republican parties about five years, and if our program is going to be about that much behind that of the dominant political parties, we might as well quit before we begin. If the League of Women Voters hasn't the vision to see what is coming and what ought to come, and be five years ahead of the political parties, I doubt if it is worth the trouble to go on."

On the same occasion Mrs. Catt said the League should have three chief aims: "1) to use its utmost influence to secure the final enfranchisement of the women of every state in our own republic and to reach out across the seas in aid of the woman's struggle for her own in every land; 2) to remove the remaining legal discriminations against women in the codes and constitutions of the several states in order that the feet of coming women may find these stumbling blocks removed; 3) to make our democracy so safe for the nation and so safe for the world that every citizen may feel secure and great men will acknowledge the worthiness of the American republic to lead."

Maud Wood Park became the first national President of the League. She had steered the woman suffrage amendment through Congress in the last two critical years, and liked nothing better than legislative work. Yet she said: "The actual work of the League—the end for which organization supplies the means—is, first of all, training for citizenship."

The second national President, Belle Sherwin, expressed her opinion succinctly: "Study without action is abortive."

Marguerite Wells, third national President, said: "The League's purpose has been to promote active participation in government."

As stated by the League today, the purpose is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."

A national Board member has summed up her beliefs this way: "It is not enough to believe in democracy as a theory; democracy can live and breathe only as we work out day-by-day practical procedures for its implementation. We do this within the League, and the League itself is a kind of experimental laboratory. We do this outside the League when

we work to improve our democratic governmental institutions to make citizen participation a real and practical possibility. When we worry over the role of the citizen in the formulation of foreign policy, when we try to bring some order out of the tangle of overlapping governmental jurisdictions, when we support the short ballot or constitutional revision or reapportionment, we are not only fulfilling the purpose of the League, we are coming to grips with one of the most challenging problems of our time: the democratic process itself."

Basic Recipe

These are all variations on the same theme. But emphasis varies. It varied in the beginning; it has continued to vary. The emphasis is, first, in the minds of individual members, then, as it prevails, in the League as a whole, according to the times, according to the situation.

All the ingredients have been there from the beginning. The proportions have varied from time to time, so the result has varied. But the "recipe" is basically the same.

Some members will always think *study* is most important; others, that *action* is most important. Still others will think that service to all voters is most important. Some will think participation in party work is necessary; others will not think so. The League will probably always be some things to all members, all things to some members.



THE BEGINNINGS

Chapter III

If ever the League was all things to all members, it was from 1920 to 1924.

The issues which members were working on had been around for 30 to 120 years. Members had already "studied" them and had had plenty

of time to reach "consensus." They had a "built-in position" on dozens of issues. All they had lacked was the vote, and the status of an organization whose members—every one of them—could vote.

Now they had these. The energy which members had for generations concentrated upon the single issue of attaining the vote was now directed toward a great variety of issues.

At the 1919 Convention, eight standing committees of the League had been appointed, to deal with the following subjects and to report to the 1920 Convention: American Citizenship, Protection of Women in Industry, Child Welfare, Social Hygiene, Unification of Laws Concerning Civil Status of Women, Food Supply and Demand, Improvement in Election Laws and Methods, Research.

All committees except the last two made reports to the 1920 Convention, with 69 items as "statements of principle and recommendations for legislation."

Quite soberly the introductory statement said: "It is not expected that this entire program or even the major part of it will be achieved in one year's work." Well, hardly! However, it was seriously thought that five years might be enough: "Voters should enlist for a five years' service. At the end of that time account should be taken of achievements won and the importance of the unfinished program. A new determination can then be made concerning the advisability of a continuance of the League."

The First Program

Most of the "program . . . adopted as the goal of the League's efforts and as expressing principles which the organization loyally supports" referred to "needed legislation." The League registered support of collective bargaining; wages on basis of occupation and not of sex; a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor; a joint federal-state employment service; a child-labor law; wage-hour legislation; a minimum wage; a merit system in federal, state, and local governments; maternity-infancy protective legislation; regulation of the meat-packing industry; laws to prevent food profiteering; pure-food laws; cooperative associations; social-hygiene legislation; uniform marriage and divorce laws in the United States; independent citizenship for married women; equal interest of spouses in each other's real estate; mothers' pensions; equal guardianship by both parents of persons and property of children; jury service for women; compulsory education, including adequate training in citizenship in every state, for all children between 6 and 16, nine months of each year; education of adults by extension classes of the public schools. AND 47 other specifics.

And this covered only *legislation* the members wanted and went to work on. There were also other aspects of League work such as what today we call Voters Service, and, of course, Organization and Finance.

Some of the legislative aims of the League in 1920 were achieved in a surprisingly short time, some took longer, some are yet to be attained. The greatest challenge, it soon became obvious, was the goal of greater



citizen participation in government. The suffragists were enthusiasts. When the 1920 election showed that women voters were as apathetic as men voters, the League intensified its efforts to educate for citizenship.

Organization, Finance, Voters Service

While the League's early years are perhaps most vividly remembered for its accomplishments in the field of public issues, achievements in the area of voter and citizenship education are no less noteworthy. The latter are particularly interesting because the League inaugurated many practices which are still hallmarks of the organization.

At the 1924 Convention, Mrs. Park took note of the progress the League had made in its first four years. She said:

"The League is organized in at least 346 of 433 Congressional Districts and in the District of Columbia and Hawaii." (Today there are Leagues in 399 of 437 Congressional Districts.)

"In no year has our income equalled the amount called for by our budget, but the increased receipts point to remarkable growth in the organization and to a marked gain in public esteem."

"Numberless demonstration classes," to explain to the newly enfranchised women the proper way to mark a ballot and other technicalities of registration and voting, were started in the League's first year.

Citizenship schools, for the study of the principles of government—local, state, national—were started in 1920 and continued to be a "striking and popular part" of League work. Many of the schools were conducted with the cooperation of universities or colleges.

A correspondence course on government was established during the first year.

In 1921, the Department of Efficiency in Government was established. It gave "advanced information on public affairs . . . conducted institutes for admitted defects in our system of government, with proposed remedies . . . carried on public education in defense of the primary method of nomination . . . stimulated in many states the compilation of digests of state election laws. . . ."

During the third year, the "Know Your Town" plan was inaugurated and, according to Mrs. Park, "became at once what it has continued to be, our most popular and helpful study course for Leagues both new and old."

In the fourth year, normal classes in citizenship to train volunteer teachers for citizenship schools were established.

Candidate questionnaires and candidates meetings were inaugurated.

There Ought to Be a Law

And "needed legislation"?

National Board members attended national political conventions in 1920 and presented the League's 13 planks to the two major parties and to two minor parties; 12 planks were included in the Democratic Platform, five in the Republican Platform. The practice of appearing before party platform committees continued regularly until 1945. It is still done,

but only on selected issues and not necessarily at every convention of the political parties.

The Women's Bureau was permanently established in the Department of Labor, and a Civil Service Retirement Bill was passed—both in 1920.

Appropriations for the Children's Bureau were carried in Appropriations Acts for 1922, 1923, 1924.

Legislation for the promotion of the welfare and hygiene of maternity and infancy (Sheppard-Towner Act) was enacted in 1921 and extended to Hawaii in 1924.

Legislation relative to the naturalization and citizenship of married women (Cable Act) was passed in 1922.

Four pieces of legislation in the field of regulation of interstate commerce—two in connection with meat, dairy, and poultry products, and two relative to coal—were enacted in 1921, 1922, 1923.

Mrs. Park said: "Altogether nearly two thirds of our active federal program has been written off by congressional enactment of 15 measures." In addition, "420 bills supported by state Leagues have become law in these years; 64 bills opposed by state Leagues have been defeated."

It was evident that the League was "ahead"—as Mrs. Catt had said it must be—in the era of social legislation that started after World War I.

U. S. Foreign Policy

The League did notable work in the international area, too.

The 1919 Convention of the NAWSA had said it "earnestly favors a League of Nations to secure a world-wide peace based upon the immutable principles of justice" before *the* League of Nations came into existence. The 1920 League of Women Voters Convention passed a resolution urging "adhesion of the United States to the League of Nations with the least possible delay." However, the issue of U.S. membership in the League of Nations was soon caught up in a bitter partisan struggle and the League of Women Voters, while avidly studying the subject all the while, delayed until 1932 an all-out position to support U.S. membership in the League of Nations.

But, the League of Women Voters did find three areas in which it seemed possible for the United States to cooperate, despite the isolationist climate in this country at the time—disarmament proposals, strengthening of inter-American peace machinery, development of international law.

Beginning in 1921, it worked for U.S. participation in all disarmament conferences.

The League's 1922 Convention was held in conjunction with a Pan American Conference of Women, called by Mrs. Catt as president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

In 1922, a Department on International Cooperation to Prevent War was organized within the League, with the slogan "Law, not War," and in 1923 the League began sustained activity in support of U.S. membership in the World Court.

The 1923 Convention declared that "a policy of isolation from world affairs is neither wise nor possible for this nation."

Every Day Election Day

When delegates met in national Convention in April 1924, they elected a new President of the League—Belle Sherwin—and looked ahead to the November election of a President of the nation.

In 1920, only 49 percent of the total number of potential voters—men and women—went to the polls in the presidential election.

The League was determined to do everything in its power to better the percentage in 1924. It had been working toward this steadily since 1920, through its Citizenship Schools, and through its Department of Efficiency in Government, of which Miss Sherwin was chairman in 1922-23.

The program of work adopted in 1924 said: "The League's immediate object is to increase the number of efficient voting citizens."

The League's get-out-the-vote campaign was one of the most intensive ever conducted. But the net gain on Election Day was one percent—this time 50 percent of the potential voters voted.

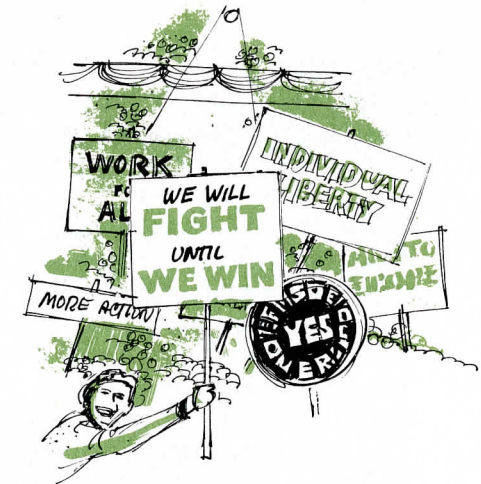
In 1920 the League thought the vote would have been larger, with more of the newly enfranchised women voters going to the polls if only they had had more time to prepare themselves to vote. After all, the 19th Amendment was not in effect until August 26, and Election Day was November 2.

But in 1924 they knew this excuse was not valid. To quote a 1938 League publication: "The League learned that the slacker vote was not disease but symptom. The disease was more obscure. It lay deep in American political life, its traditions and habits, even in the organization of its governmental system. . . . The League . . . began to recognize that American people needed to be made acquainted with political affairs, to learn their dependence on them and how to deal with them effectively. The League concluded that the measures already undertaken for support were as good as any for its purpose and that in fact the League itself was thus getting out the vote all the year 'round. So within the first few years of its existence the League found itself committed to no lesser purpose than to help make the democratic government in the United States a success."

So, the League continued as it had begun, dropping little from its program, adding much. The League learned early that it was never enough to pass a law, set up a bureau in government; enforcement, administration, and appropriations had to be watched.



EARLY AND LATE



Chapter IV

The early years of the League are interesting to look back on, and several observations shine through clearly in the light of later years.

First, the League was generally “ahead,” as it set out to be. It began supporting the procedure of the Executive Budget in 1924, a procedure which was not generally followed at that time. In 1928 it began working for the “Lame Duck” Amendment, to make it possible for the President, Vice President, and Congress to take office in early January following election in November instead of waiting until March to be sworn in; this, the 20th Amendment, was passed by Congress in 1932 and became a part of the Constitution in 1933.

Second, determination, perseverance, and patience were unfailing qualities of League members, if the goal was deemed worthwhile. Women who had fought so many years for the right to vote were not likely to give up easily. In 1924 the League Program listed federal suffrage for residents of the District of Columbia. In 1948, the item was broadened to include home rule. In 1960 it is still on the Program. District residents wonder if it will take them as long to get the vote as it took women.

Late and Soon

Third, the fundamental philosophy underlying our democratic form of government manifested itself in specifics from the inception of the League, coming through in the earliest Program selections and showing up from time to time in a different specific obviously traceable to the same principle. Indeed, the “Principles” on the present-day League Program became, finally, the conscious expression of the principles the League had worked by all along.

For example, individual liberty has been an underlying concern of the League since its inception. “Principle 1” commits the League to “the principles of representative government and individual liberty established in the Constitution of the United States.” The woman suffrage movement itself stemmed from belief in the importance of the individual citizen in a democratic society; so did the League’s early work in behalf of women and children. In more recent years the spread of totalitarian doctrines has

deepened the League's belief in the rights of the individual.

The League began in 1924 to study "how to insure freedom of speech, thought, and action on the part of school boards and teachers." From 1936 to 1942 the Program included "Protection of academic freedom as basic to sound education."

The 1940-42 Program said: "Safeguarding of constitutional rights, with special reference to freedom of speech, assembly, and press, is fundamental to the entire Program."

The 1942-44 Program carried an item reading: "Preservation of the greatest degree of civil liberty consistent with national safety in war." The 1944-46 Program item said: "Preservation of civil liberties and protection of minority groups against discrimination."

In 1954 the national Convention adopted this Program subject: "Development of understanding of the relationship between individual liberty and the public interest."

Over a period of months, largely in 1955, the League was one of many organizations participating in the Freedom Agenda program, which the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund sponsored for community discussion based on review of the Bill of Rights and individual liberty today.

In 1956 the Convention began to focus League study in this general field as follows: "Evaluation of the federal loyalty-security programs, with recognition of the need for safeguarding national security and protecting individual liberties."

In January 1958 the League announced this position: "Modification of federal loyalty-security programs to limit scope, standardize procedures, apply 'common sense' judgment, and provide the greatest possible protection for the individual."

"A Piece . . . A Part of the Main"

Fourth, one thing has always led to another. To paraphrase John Donne, the League learned early that "no subject is an island."

Or, as "A Portrait of the League of Women Voters" says: "In the beginning, each project it undertook was an artificially isolated fragment surrounded by and intertwined with the unknown, but by the time something had been done effectively on one project, no small part of the unknown became known. Much of what the League has learned as it proceeded has come not from separate shafts sunk down called 'study' but has adhered to some root at which the League was tugging and come up with it."

Some of the earliest of League work, which itself was an outgrowth of World War I, led to the League's efforts to improve food-and-drug legislation, also to its support of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and can even be identified with part of each of the 1958-60 subjects of foreign policy and water resources. All of these had their beginnings, in greater or lesser degree, in the Standing Committee on Food Supply and Demand established by the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1919 and continued by League Convention action in 1920.

Study of the high cost of food, food shortages, and profiteering during World War I and the postwar years led the League into work to regulate the meat-packing industry and to support the Federal Trade Commission.

Food supply, the League discovered, was limited partially by the scarcity of fertilizer. The National Defense Act of 1916 authorized the building by the federal government of a plant at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, primarily to produce nitrate for explosives, but the Act also envisioned that the plant would be used for the development of new types of fertilizers. Actually, the plant was not completed in time to be of aid in the war effort.

The 1921 League Program recommended: "That the government be urged to take the necessary steps to increase the production of nitrates and other necessary chemical elements needed in agriculture by the completion and utilization of plants already in process of construction."

In 1922 the League reaffirmed this stand and added that "in the event of the refusal of Congress to approve such government operation the government be urged to accept the offer which best safeguards this great asset still owned by the people."

From 1923 to 1925 the Program listed: "The enactment by Congress of legislation to increase the production of nitrates and other necessary chemical elements needed in agriculture by the completion and utilization of the Muscle Shoals plant, under conditions which best safeguard the public interest."

The 1925-26 Program added "wide and economical distribution of electrical power."

In 1926-27 "flood protection" was added and reference was made to operation "to insure the development of the Tennessee River System as one project."

The 1928-30 Program added "navigation."

The 1932-34 version, the last before passage of the TVA Act in 1933, read: "Utilization of the national investment at Muscle Shoals as required by the National Defense Act of 1916, 'for agriculture and other useful purposes in times of peace,' operated by the government preferably through a nonpartisan governmental corporation to secure a scientific demonstration in power production and distribution and to provide for navigation and flood control."

From 1928 to passage of the Act, the League carried on a courageous campaign of support and was practically the only citizens organization to do so.

Et Cetera

League members had learned much about depletion of natural resources, conservation, overlapping agency functions, conflicting authority, and agency rivalries, during their study of TVA. Conservation was from then on of great interest to the League. Following recommendations of the first Hoover Commission, in 1950 the League put on its Program: "Reorganization measures to improve administrative efficiency in the

development and use of natural resources.”

The outbreak of the Korean War took the League into more immediate problems. But conservation showed up again in the 1956-58 Program as “Study of Water Resources.” And in the 1958-60 Program it is there as “Water Resources: Support of those national water policies and practices which promote coordinated administration, equitable financing, and regional or river basin planning.”

The Committee on Food Supply and Demand was rechristened the Committee on Living Costs in 1922, and by 1924 the League began to study tariff barriers and living costs. And the study of tariffs led to the study of world trade. And world trade took the League into the whole field of economic foreign policy. So it goes, and a 1958-60 League subject is “Foreign Policy: Evaluation of U.S. foreign policy with continued support of the United Nations system, world trade and economic development, and collective security.”

NONPARTISANSHIP



Chapter V

League Activity and/or Party Activity

Shortly before the League reached its tenth anniversary, a situation arose which led to a re-examination of the privileges of the individual League member under the nonpartisanship policy. The situation was so different from what would be possible today that we quote it at length. It appeared in the October 1928 issue of the Bulletin of the National League of Women Voters, as follows:

It is interesting to note that General Motors, the Department of the Interior, and the League of Women Voters have something very much in common. Leaves of absence have deprived them all of valued leaders. We are in no position to reconcile this sort of conduct with the customs, by-laws, or policies of the first two institutions. We are, however, well equipped to cite chapter and verse for this behavior on the part of League members. Section 2 of Article II of the national by-laws, while

stressing the nonpartisan character of the League, urges the individual members to become party members.

When officers of the League undertake active party work a safeguarding procedure must be found so that no slightest doubt may be cast on the nonpartisanship of the League as an organization. What the procedure should be is a matter for the officer herself and her board to determine.

The campaign year finds an unusual number of League leaders active in party work. The National Executive Committee in September voted leaves of absence to Mrs. Maud Wood Park, Counselor on Legislation, and Miss Gertrude Ely, Counselor on New Voters. Mrs. Park is now campaigning for Mr. Hoover while Miss Ely is speaking for Mr. Smith. . . .

“What the procedure should be” is still “a matter for the officer herself and her board to determine.” The problem is worked out by the same formula as always, but the answer is not likely to come out the same as in 1928.

The League has always encouraged, even urged, its members to work as individuals in the political party of their choice. However, to protect the nonpartisanship policy of the League, Board members or other leaders within the League—at local, state, or national level—prominently identified with the League in the public mind do not work actively in their parties while occupying a leadership position in the League.

Newly enfranchised women recognized quickly that government in practice was inseparable from political parties.

Since women won the vote in 1920 they have, slowly but steadily, advanced in status in the body politic and in the political bodies. “Equality” is not absolute, nor in all probability will it ever be. It is still extra-news-worthy when a woman is elected to Congress or to state or local office, or is appointed to the President’s Cabinet or other post at any level of government. It is just as extra-newsworthy—and rarer—when in a political party a woman is elected State Chairman instead of Vice Chairman.

But public or party office is not the only way for a woman to exert influence. Hundreds of thousands do it, as individuals, in political parties and in other organizations, and League members are prime examples.

Parties have come to realize that the League is a training ground for party activity. League members know that it does provide training for that purpose, but they know it first and foremost as a something in itself.

While the League is proud of members who go on to public office, it is not the League’s job to help elect them. It is not the League’s job to help elect anyone. The League takes action in support of or in opposition to selected governmental issues, but it does not support or oppose candidates nor support or oppose political parties.

In 1920 Mrs. Catt said to the League Convention: “Only about one man in 25 will be big enough to understand that you, a Republican, can work with you, a Democrat, in a nonpartisan organization and be loyal to your respective parties at the same time.” But it happens, all the time.

Fifteen years ago the League published “25 Years of a Great Idea.” The preface was written by the national President; the pamphlet was

written by the national Second Vice President. In 1952 one helped organize a citizens committee to support the presidential candidate of one major party; the other supported a candidate running for the presidential nomination in the other party. They were in 1952, in effect, the Mrs. Park and Miss Ely of 1928. The big difference was that they did not take leaves of absence from the League to serve in partisan leadership capacities. They had finished their terms of League office, and had moved on to other interests. They are still loyal members of the League, and loyal members of their parties—but they did not try to serve both in leadership positions at the same time.

Then there was the time the White House asked the League to recommend some women for a certain national Commission. This is not unusual; in fact it is common practice for the President to seek advice and recommendations from various organized groups when a public body is to be set up. The first requisite for appointment is qualification for the post. Party affiliation is secondary—unless party affiliation of the members is specified in the legislation setting up the body. This particular Commission was to be that kind. The League had no trouble making up, from League membership, a list of qualified women. But it didn't know party affiliation. The White House had to know, because of the strict application of bipartisanship in the situation. So the national office of the League had to ask each one whose name had been given to the White House which party she belonged to. The information, confidential, for no such records are kept by the League, was passed along to the White House, but with the private observation of the person who had obtained the information and had done some preliminary guessing: "You know, I had every single one of them pegged wrong."

There was still another time. It could have happened at almost any point from 1920 to 1960. The National Committee of one of the two major parties telephoned the national office of the League to inquire as to the party affiliation of a certain national President. While party affiliation of a League officer is sometimes revealed in the course of events, as in the case of Mrs. Park, this is not necessarily so, and party is not a factor in the choice of a candidate for League office. The one who received the telephone call turned to another and asked if so-and-so was a Democrat or a Republican. The reply was:

"Why, 'X,' I always understood. In fact I thought it was you who told me that."

"But I don't know *for sure*."

"Why don't you tell whoever is calling to ask the 'X' National Committee. They ought to know."

"But it's the 'X' National Committee asking us."

You may well ask: How could a person serve as president of a political, even though nonpartisan, organization for anywhere from two to ten years without party affiliation becoming a matter of common knowledge?

Maybe it could happen only in the League of Women Voters.



THROUGH THE THIRTIES

The 1930s saw the enactment of much legislation which the League had been urging since its beginning. The depression of that decade necessitated, on social and economic fronts, action which blanketed in many long-time League goals.

The original Program of the League, in 1920, called for a federal-state employment service. A so-called U.S. Employment Service had existed since 1918, but it was only a unit within the Department of Labor set up by departmental order. The League kept the subject of a federal-state employment service on the Program continuously, and regularly called for adequate appropriations for the limited employment service that did exist. In 1933 the League supported the Wagner-Peyser Act for establishment of public employment offices.

The League began, in 1923, a continuing study of unemployment and, in 1924, of unemployment insurance systems. The 1932-34 Program recommended for support: "A system for federal, state, and local unemployment relief" and "unemployment compensation." Later, the League supported the Social Security Act provisions for compulsory unemployment compensation and state administration with federal cooperation.

In 1934 the principle of state old-age pensions received League support, and, after the Social Security Act went into effect in 1935, the League added, in 1936, support for federal old-age assistance.

In 1934 the League worked for the inclusion of a maternal and child health program (equivalent to Sheppard-Towner Act, which had expired in 1929) in the Social Security Act, and such a program was included when the Act was passed. In 1939 the League successfully supported an amendment to the Act to increase federal grants to the states for aid to dependent children. In 1938 the child-labor provisions of the Wages and Hours Act were supported.

Beginning with the 1920 Program, the League supported U.S. membership in the International Labor Organization, which the United States joined in 1934.

The League had been instrumental in the achievement of many social and economic measures in the various states before the 1930s, just as

Chapter VI



woman suffrage was enacted by many states before the 19th Amendment. But with depression-induced federal activity on the socio-economic front, federal legislation accomplished many League goals nation-wide, just as the 19th Amendment gave all U.S. women citizens the vote.

This meant that the League could, to some extent, turn to other fields.

One of these fields was the merit system for the selection of government personnel. It, too, was on the original League Program of 1920.

Two Historic Campaigns

In 1934 the League elected its third national President, Marguerite Wells. In her Convention speech she reminded delegates of the League's purpose: to promote active citizen participation in government. League Program had been getting broader and broader. It was now divided into highly organized Departments, each with a long program of its own. Miss Wells said that the system was producing specialists in subject matter at the sacrifice of the central League purpose, that while the Convention debated whether to make an item "2a" or "3b" under "study," larger opportunities went unrecognized. She proposed that the League agree upon some matter on which to mobilize all members in a campaign for two years. The Convention's choice was "A merit system in all branches of government at all levels."

The merit system campaign probably reached more people than any League effort up to that time. It held League interest for six to eight years. It attracted the public. It impressed legislators. Experts in the field of civil service reform said that the League accomplished more in its few years than they had been able to accomplish in 50 years.

The League was the only citizen group acting consistently for the merit system in those years. Contests for slogans brought catchy phrases which are still in use, among them "Good Government Is Good Politics" and "Find the Man for the Job, not the Job for the Man." Half a million petition cards asking that the merit system replace the spoils system were presented to the parties' national conventions. Pamphlets and leaflets were distributed. The League initiated "Public Personnel Day," with a national radio hookup and hundreds of simultaneous League meetings.

The timing was right. The campaign was waged when federal and state governments were hiring hundreds, thousands, to administer the new social and economic laws. About half of the federal civil employees were outside the Civil Service system; only nine states had civil service laws, and the percentage decreased through cities, counties, and other units of government. Yet, never was it more important to administer laws wisely and economically because of the depression; never was qualified personnel more needed.

Due at least in part to the League's efforts, the Ramspeck Bills of 1938 and 1940 were enacted. This legislation removed hundreds of federal jobs from the spoils system and placed them under Civil Service.

While all this was going on, the League was working in another area in which it had been interested since 1920 and earlier: modernization of

the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. From 1933 to 1938 the League worked for a new law that would establish grade labeling and quality standards. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 did not bring the enactment of all the League's goals, but it was a big forward step in consumer protection. The League campaign for this legislation was a dramatic one; in intensity and effectiveness it ranked second only to the League drive for the merit system.

As Clouds of War Gathered

In addition to these many important contributions to domestic legislation and administration, the League was equally concerned with the international field.

When the League of Nations was unable to deter the Japanese from taking Manchuria in 1931, the League of Women Voters was among those who realized that this act of aggression would probably lead to others and, worse, to general war. The collective security system had failed to survive a major test. Would the system have been stronger had the United States been a part of it? The League of Women Voters thought so, and decided that at least it could take a firmer position in support of U.S. membership in the League of Nations. And so it did, in 1932.

It also intensified its efforts in areas of international cooperation in which it had long been active. Still using the slogan "Law, Not War," the League continued to work for U.S. membership in the World Court. It continued to muster support for disarmament, and in 1932 a League representative personally presented a trunkful of signed petitions to the Disarmament Conference in Geneva.

The League worked for implementation of the Pact of Paris, or Kellogg-Briand Pact, as it had worked for its ratification in 1929. The Pact was initiated by the United States, and the nations (eventually 62) signatory to it renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

Nor did the League overlook economic causes of war.

In 1925 it had studied the Dawes plan for reparations and inter-allied debts, and in 1933 and again in 1938 it supported downward revision of World War I debts.

In 1936 it began its consistent support of the Trade Agreements Program, which had been inaugurated in 1934. The League has worked for every renewal—11 so far—of the Trade Agreements Act, and has opposed numerous amendments designed to weaken it.

In 1935 the forebodings aroused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria were justified, for in that year Italy under Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. After weeks of hesitation the League of Nations applied economic sanctions to Italy, but they were ineffectual.

Then came the neutrality debate in the United States. The League of Women Voters opposed the principle, embodied in the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937, that the United States should treat all belligerent nations alike. As supporters of the principle of collective security, the League thought the United States should discriminate against aggressors.

In 1938 the League Convention voted to support: "Amendment of the Neutrality Act of 1937 to provide, at the discretion of the President, for embargoes on essential war materials and to provide for the application of all embargoes in cooperation with other signatories against those belligerent nations which have violated treaties to which the United States is also a signatory." In April 1939, the League Council supported embargoes on loans and credits to belligerents who had violated treaties.

By action of the 1939 Council, the League also began its strenuous battle against a proposed amendment to the Constitution which would have given to the electorate sole power by a national referendum to declare war or to engage in warfare overseas except in case of direct attack. The League opposed the proposition as a fundamental change in our representative system, a change which would weaken the responsibility of the Congress and would hamper the conduct of foreign relations.

War Starts in Europe

On September 1, 1939, Germany under Hitler declared war on Poland.

On September 8, 1939, President Roosevelt proclaimed a limited national emergency.

On April 9, 1940, Germany declared war on Norway and Denmark.

Still, isolationism prevailed in the United States. Events of 1939 and early 1940 were called a "phony war."

In April 1940, the League Convention voted to support: "A foreign policy as a nonbelligerent which permits discrimination against an aggressor and favors the victim of aggression."

When Hitler invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in May 1940, public opinion in the United States changed rapidly. In September, Congress passed the Selective Service Act.

In December 1940, the policy of aid to victims of aggression was defined by the United States. The general public at last accepted the theory that in aiding friendly nations which were fighting aggression the United States was acting to prevent the spread of war to this country.

The League supported the Lend-Lease Bill, which became law in March 1941, in what has been called the sharpest and quickest decision in the League's foreign policy experience.

The "Battle of Production," upon which the League embarked in May 1941, expressed the League's support of the U.S. policy of aiding the democracies. The 1941 Council selected seven specific areas in which a special contribution might be made to citizen thought and action. They were: taxation and defense; inter-American cooperation; living costs and defense; school facilities and housing in defense areas; relief in relation to defense; collective bargaining in relation to defense; civil liberties in relation to defense.

An unlimited national emergency was proclaimed by President Roosevelt on May 27, 1941.

In October 1941 the League supported repeal of the Neutrality Act. But time was running out.



*With President Truman in the White House Rose Garden in 1949
With President Eisenhower in the White House Rose Garden in 1957*



THE WAR YEARS



Chapter VII

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On December 8 the United States declared war on Japan. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and within a few hours the United States declared war on them.

The League of Women Voters adjusted from a defense effort to a war effort. The "Battle of Production" became "Wartime Service."

A special meeting of the national Council of the League was held in January 1942. A summary of the meeting said: "The Council agreed that in wartime, democracy, without an understanding citizenry active in relation to the function of government, would die at its roots. It agreed that the League of Women Voters had accumulated a store of experience and knowledge about government that, carried in bits and pieces to a wider public, would nourish these roots. It agreed that it possessed in its members not now occupied with the more usual tasks of the League a potential army to convey such bits and pieces about current government to busy men and women of each community. It agreed, therefore, to undertake just such a wartime service."

"The Voice of Today . . .

The League would attempt to enlist every member in some part of this service. It would remind citizens that they should now be more attentive, not less attentive, to what government did. A wartime government would have to act decisively; its decisions would not always be palatable. Citizens should form a united front in order to win the war as speedily as possible, but should be watchful that the essential freedoms of our democratic government did not suffer in the process.

This was not the usual appeal in time of war. It was not as dramatic as many other forms of volunteer activity, such as serving in canteens, or rolling bandages. But League members found a way: they rolled bandages along with others, but they turned the conversation to the necessity of rationing and price control and higher taxes, and later, of a new world collective security system to avoid a third world war.

Simple, brief, and popular were the brightly colored "broadside" with

which the League "carried in bits and pieces to a wider public" the essential points of issues which were affecting the daily lives of all.

The greatest amount of sustained effort by the League was given to support of price control and rationing. It also was for raising the income tax and collecting it at the source, and for financing the war by a pay-as-we-go system as far as possible.

... the Herald of Tomorrow'

But while the League worked in the present, with its contributions to the war effort, it had its sights on the future as well. It had lagged in support of the League of Nations; it would never be so slow again.

The 1942-44 Program called for "participation by the United States in the making and execution of plans for world-wide reconstruction and for postwar organization for peace, which will eventually include all peoples regardless of race, religion, or political persuasion." It also called for "adoption of current policies, political and economic, which will facilitate postwar organization for peace."

As if to vaccinate against a new outbreak of isolationism such as followed World War I, the League carried out a "Stop Isolation" campaign in 1943. It strongly backed a congressional resolution which called for the establishment of an international organization to which the United States would belong.

The Program adopted in 1944 went further, adding support for U.S. membership in a general international organization "for peaceful settlement of disputes with power to prevent or stop aggression."

In 1944-45 the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for the establishment of the United Nations became the focal point for the most intensive nation-wide effort ever undertaken by the League. Countless meetings were held. Over a million pieces of popularly worded literature were distributed. The League waged a similar campaign for the Bretton Woods Agreements, which led to the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund.

The 1944-46 Program called for "participation by the United States in plans and machinery for world-wide relief and rehabilitation, for handling common economic, social, and political problems." The League urged full U.S. participation in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which was established in 1943 and was doing reconstruction work before the war was over and before the United Nations was founded.

The League foresaw that the period of greatest shortages and thus the greatest threat of inflation would come after the end of hostilities. The Program adopted in 1944 called for "A war and postwar finance program based as far as possible on tax revenues, which takes into account control of inflation, fair distribution of the tax burden, and minimizing postwar dislocations; curbing inflation through price control, rationing, and curtailing purchasing power."



WHAT HAPPENED IN 1944

Chapter VIII.

World War I provided the final impetus which brought enactment of the 19th Amendment and full and equal suffrage to women of this country.

World War II provided the final impetus which brought a fundamental change in the structure and methods of the League of Women Voters.

Woman suffrage (1920) and the alteration of the League (1944) would have come soon in any event. Both were long overdue, and needed only that last decisive push.

The League started out as the National League of Women Voters. It inherited its structure from the National American Woman Suffrage Association, of which it was at first a part. State Leagues, most of which had been in existence as state headquarters of the NAWSA, became the keystone of League structure. A Convention of representatives of state Leagues selected a Program, which for many years was national, state, and local all in one, and chose national officers.

A 1924 publication says: "... there is no such thing as membership for an individual in the National League, which is made up of Leagues in the various states. . . The state Leagues, in turn, are made up of local Leagues." However, at that time other organizations could be members of the League, and were, including all their own branches. Today it is just the reverse: *only* an individual may be a member of the League; *no* organization may be a member.

The League purpose is made up of several parts. (See Chapter II.) In the beginning, accent was heavy on "needed legislation," largely to correct long-standing discriminatory practices against women, children, and the consumer.

As the League grew, gained experience, and turned its attention to other public issues, the Program became broader and broader. The Department system was highly developed, each Department having a Program longer than the total Program is now. Each Department covered its Program thoroughly—extremely, exhaustively well. It produced specialists in subject matter; they, and the League, made great contributions in the field of public affairs. In 1959 the national office of the League received a request for a League publication entitled "Corrupt Practices

Legislation." No one in the office remembered it, but the files revealed it, and a copy was sent. The man who asked for it described it as "still the only comprehensive source of tabular information in its field." It was published in 1928, by the Department of Efficiency in Government. That is the kind of work the Department system produced and which won for the League its reputation for presenting dependable, factual information.

The End Purpose of the League

However, another facet of League purpose—development of the well-rounded, effective, individual citizen—suffered by comparison. It seemed to become a by-product of another purpose, not a purpose in itself.

Few, if any, members would seriously consider doing away with "Program." It is the hard core around which the League is built. The League studies government, yes, but not for the sake of accumulating knowledge, nor in a vacuum. Study is the means to an end—action. Members "learn by doing," too, and "doing" means, largely, action on Program. Such action is a desirable end in itself. It is not sufficient for the League, since for the League the end is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."

The first three Presidents, whose administrations covered the 1920-44 period, all seemed to recognize the possibility that the League might, in the nature of things, develop as it did, toward the system of specialization by a few in one or another field at the sacrifice of individual member participation in all fields of League interest and in "the outside world."

Mrs. Park said: "I hope for the League not that it will become a body of expert persons who do remarkable things brilliantly, but that it will continue to be 'an every woman's organization' . . . our future is assured so long as we hold to that fundamental purpose."

Miss Sherwin, who had been chairman of the Department of Efficiency in Government, which was the first Department and the model for later ones, kept uppermost in her mind the larger purpose of the League. She saw it as, first, an experiment in political education to promote the participation of women in government and, second, an expansion of the small, qualitative experiment to the entire electorate. This, she said, was the League's "profound purpose."

Miss Wells, upon assuming the presidency, reminded the League that it was not meant to be a group of specialists, that it was a group of laywomen, and that it adopted a Program and supported legislation in order to give citizens practice in the responsibilities of democracy.

Miss Wells said: "A Program participated in by the few rather than the many is alien to the League's purpose . . . Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but ability to act . . . To cause more people to use effectively what knowledge they possess seems to be the unique aim of the League of Women Voters."

The depression of the early 1930s advanced this line of thinking among members who might not have reached it as soon but for the economic crisis.

The budget of the League dropped by more than half from 1931 to 1933. Field service, a system successfully used by the suffrage association, inherited by the League and to the present one of its hallmarks, was seriously curtailed. "The best things in life are free," ran a popular song of the era. League members found that one of the best of things free was discussion—with friends, neighbors, those in the same block or same section of town.

In the middle '30s, the merit system campaign enlisted many members in a common purpose, unified and stimulated the League. The same was true of the food and drug law campaign. More and more members began to see the larger purpose of the League—the working with a whole community on some issue of general interest.

When World War II started in Europe in the late '30s the threat to the western democracies was a serious one. League members realized sharply that here was a challenge for them. They would extend their discussion pattern in an ever-widening circle outside League membership, try to help others—at the same time they were trying to help themselves—to probe for the causes of the war. People in this country were puzzled, frightened, felt less and less secure from the spreading war. Everyone was looking for the answers.

Then the United States was drawn into the war. League members were now determined to dispense with set patterns of meetings, and to get down to fundamentals—democracy itself, and the importance of the individual to the success of democracy.

As the depression had curtailed large meetings, now gas rationing did it. League members found that discussion with even a small group could be stimulating, rewarding, constructive.

In 1943 the League Council recommended that the Department system be abolished. The 1944 Convention abolished it.

League Becomes Association of Members

The Convention also elected a new President—Anna Lord Strauss, whose great grandmother was Lucretia Mott, one of the women who "started it all" back in 1840.

However, her name was not on the slate recommended by the Nominating Committee. She was nominated from the floor of the Convention, as were two other candidates for the offices of Secretary and Treasurer.

The Convention was determined to vest the power structurally where in fact it had always been—in the members. The recommended slate was no less determined to achieve the same purpose, but some of those named by the Nominating Committee wanted to do away with the state Leagues entirely. Delegates did not want to go *that* far. The full Nominating-Committee slate was up for election, plus the three nominated from the floor. When the votes were counted, the new President, Secretary, and Treasurer were those who had been nominated from the floor. The rest of the slate was elected, but the two Vice Presidents and two of the directors shortly resigned. At the post-Convention Board meeting

these four vacancies were filled by appointment.

As the national Board entered the new League year, its officers and directors were dedicated to the concept of a membership organization and structural and procedural emphasis on local Leagues, and also to delegation of powers to state Leagues in the degree to which the Convention had authorized it.

Up to 1944 the League was a federation of state Leagues. Henceforth it would be an association of members.



The League Testifies at Congressional Field Hearings

(top) Before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee - 1957

(bottom) Before the Senate Select Committee on National Water Resources - 1959

SINCE 1944



The "new look" of the League of Women Voters did not come about overnight. The basic structure was changed in 1944. Some revisions that followed from the major alteration were made reasonably soon; others are still in the process or have been imperfectly realized. Some procedures and many methods remain as they existed before 1944.

The National League of Women Voters was renamed the League of Women Voters of the United States in 1946. Program was considerably shortened that year. In 1954 it was simplified still further.

An individual now joins the League of Women Voters of the United States. She works through her local League in the field of government in her community. A state League is composed of local Leagues and concerns itself with state governmental matters. All members work on state and national governmental issues through their local Leagues.

In general, the national Board deals directly with local Leagues on local-national matters, with copies of correspondence to state Leagues; it deals with state Leagues on state-national matters.

State Leagues have the primary responsibility—delegated by the national Board through Convention action—for establishing local Leagues within the respective states. State Leagues are also responsible for the major part of service to local Leagues and for dealing with them on state-local matters.

National Conventions are made up almost entirely of delegates from local Leagues, though a few attending represent state Leagues. Delegates come to national Convention informed as to what their local Leagues want, but uninstructed; they vote as individuals.

One structural change was the establishment of the unit system, in 1948.

A unit is a small discussion group. It is made up of individuals who form a natural group for various reasons—for example, those who live in the same neighborhood, those who work in the daytime and must meet in the evening, those who have young children in school and must meet in the morning so as to be at home in the afternoon, those who have pre-school-age children and must meet in the evening when the father can stay at home.



The Challenge Still

Despite the structural changes which the League made in an effort to carry out its purpose more effectively, the goal of reaching far beyond its members is not yet realized. It has made progress, but here still lies the challenge.

That challenge was issued by the new President, Miss Strauss, when she said: "It is absolutely essential that the imagination and intelligence of millions of individual citizens shall be deeply stirred." She was speaking of the Dumbarton Oaks campaign of 1944-45, and she urged Leagues to try to reach the unorganized, the unconvinced, the less informed, and impress upon them that an important decision would soon be made and that each citizen could play a part in making it. "Yours Is the Power," argued the first broadside of the League's campaign to promote understanding of the organization which was soon to be the United Nations.

Support of United Nations

In the immediate postwar years, in the League as in the country as a whole, major attention was naturally devoted to problems which the war had left in its wake. Some problems were political; some were economic. More often, a problem was a combination of economic, social, and political factors, and tied domestic affairs closely to international affairs and U.S. foreign policy.

In 1945 the League supported U.S. ratification of the United Nations Charter. Since then the League has continuously advocated a foreign policy based on support of the United Nations, and U.S. leadership to strengthen the United Nations. It has supported increased use of the U.N. and the Specialized Agencies, with adequate budgets, improved procedures, and provision of adequate power to keep the peace.

In 1948-49 the League carried on an intensive information program to build understanding of the U.N. among the American people. The Charter was examined to appraise the accomplishments of the U.N. and its potentialities, including possible ways of strengthening it within the framework of the Charter. The League's effort was another of its "Know Your Government" series—a "Know Your United Nations."

The "Pocket Reference on the United Nations," revised each year, is one of the most popular leaflets the League has ever published. Concise and inexpensive, it is as handy for adults as for school-age children. Over half a million copies have been sold since it first appeared in 1955.

Atomic Energy Control

The first atomic bomb, dropped on Japan in August 1945 in the closing days of World War II, brought the question of arms control dramatically to the fore. The League had a history of work in the field of disarmament and munitions following World War I. The backlog of knowledge now stood the members in good stead. The League vigorously opposed, in the fall of 1945, a bill which it thought would lead to military control of

atomic energy. It supported the bill which led to the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, placing atomic energy under civilian control. At the 1946 Convention it placed domestic and international control of atomic energy in first position on the national Program. It supported the Acheson-Lilienthal proposals for international control of atomic energy and the U.S. proposals to the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission which grew out of those proposals.

From 1946 to 1948 the League carried on a widespread community effort on the subject of atomic energy, its significance, the opportunities it offered as well as the dangers it posed. "Atomic Energy Weeks" were carried on by many local Leagues. Also, a tide of letters flowed to the Senate Committee from every part of the country. More letters were from Leagues than from any other organization. This, plus the individual citizen action which League efforts had helped stimulate, made up a strong current of public opinion in favor of the law passed placing atomic energy under civilian control.

World Court, European Recovery, Regional Arrangements

In 1945 the League saw a long-time goal reached. The League had worked from 1923 to 1935 for U.S. membership in the World Court, which sat from 1922 to 1940, but the United States never joined. A new International Court of Justice was reinstituted, along the same lines as the first one, and was included in the U.N. Charter, which the United States, of course, signed.

From 1946 to 1948 the League supported legislation to provide for the admission of a fair share of World War II displaced persons to the United States. The law passed in 1948 was judged by the League to be unsatisfactory and discriminatory, and it supported liberalizing amendments in 1949 and 1950.

In 1946 the League supported the British Loan as being necessary to create favorable conditions for the effective functioning of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank, two of the U.N. Specialized Agencies.

By 1947 it had become clear that the war destruction had been underestimated and that a long-range program of assistance was necessary if European civilization was to survive. Though still emphasizing that U.S. foreign policy was based on support of the United Nations, the League recognized that there were justifiable reasons for independent action by the United States. Members worked with intensity for the initial adoption of the European Recovery Program and annually for its support through adequate appropriations. In 1951 the highly successful European Recovery Program was terminated as such, and the Mutual Security Program began.

The League of Women Voters considers the security functions of the United Nations vital to its existence. It has repeatedly advocated action by the U.S. government toward fulfilling the major security provisions of

the Charter. However, as the "cold war" steadily worsened, League members turned to the idea of regional agreements—economic, political, military. In 1949 it "reluctantly" supported U.S. membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO. But the League retains its objective of a U.N. security system and holds that regional arrangements, under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, must be ultimately integrated into a universal security system.

World Trade

During these same years, the second half of the 1940s, the League continued its activity in the realm of world trade. Old-hand Leaguers are wont to say, to sigh, that the League seems to have been studying trade forever, and will it never stop? Most members would agree with the first statement, and to the question would answer "Probably not." So, in the 1945-50 period, trade is either present or accounted for. The League supported, as usual, the renewals of the Trade Agreements Act which came up in that period. It opposed repeated attempts to hamper the program directly or indirectly. From 1948 to 1950 it worked earnestly, but without success, for U.S. support of the International Trade Organization. In 1948 the United States joined in a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade through an executive agreement negotiated under the authority of the Trade Agreements Act; the League supported this membership.

Governmental Procedures, Fiscal Affairs

And what was the League doing on the domestic front in these postwar years?

The 1944 Convention adopted a Program item calling for, in part, "Strengthening governmental procedures to improve the legislative processes and the relationship between Congress and the Executive. . . ."

An occasion for effective action in strengthening the executive branch came first. The President had been given emergency power in 1941 to meet war needs; the several powers were temporary, however, and agencies affected by them were to revert to their previous status after the war. The League in 1945 supported the proposal whereby the President would be granted certain permanent powers for reorganizing the executive branch, subject to congressional "veto." The Executive Reorganization Act, which was enacted in December 1945, limited the power to the term of the President. Under the Act the League in 1946 supported three reorganization proposals, two of which were put into effect, one of which was "vetoed" by Congress.

In 1946 the League Convention placed on the Program a subject reading "Strengthening the organization and procedures of the Congress." The League was one of the foremost organizations backing the Reorganization Act of 1946, which was passed within a few months after the 1946 Convention.

The "morning after" headache of a wartime economy was a national malady. Everyone feared either inflation or deflation. The League was



concerned, too. From 1946 to 1948 it had on its Program "Governmental economic policies which prevent inflation and deflation and stimulate maximum production and employment." The 1948 Convention adopted an item worded "Analyzing federal taxes and expenditures in order to understand and support such fiscal policies as make for a stable domestic economy."

Root Problems, Korean War

On April 27, 1950, the League elected its fifth national President, Mrs. John G. Lee. She said (some years later): "The League, as an entity, has the same internal and external concerns as does the United States on a larger scale. The League wrestles with the identical root problems which affect the development of our government and society as a whole. . . . By virtue of its containing within its membership wide geographic, economic, and political representation, it (holds) within itself the basic varieties of public opinion which influence the development of government policy. . . . The League (is) a microcosm of the larger society."

In less than two months from the date on which Mrs. Lee took office, the League, along with the nation, had a root problem to wrestle with, for on June 25, 1950, Communist forces attacked the Republic of Korea.

The U.N. Security Council met the same day and asked for resistance by the United Nations. (The U.S.S.R., a member of the Council, had been boycotting it since January 1950.) With 51 of the 59 then member countries of the U.N. giving their support to the action taken by the Security Council, the United States, led by a unified command under the U.N. flag, contributed the major effort.

The League expressed its support of the firm stand taken by the United States in acting through the United Nations. The swift, decisive action was considered a major step toward an effective system of collective security, and the League urged the government to continue to work through the U.N.

Obvious, however, was the question: "But what if there had been a veto in the Security Council?" Thus came, in 1950, passage of the Uniting for Peace Resolution in the U.N., which provided for emergency sessions of the General Assembly, for Peace Observation Commissions, for exploration of ways to cooperate against aggression, and for establishment of special units within national forces prepared for action when the U.N. recommends action. The League urged the U.S. government to take the lead in implementing the Resolution.

Mutual Security

In 1951, as the cold war was intensified, all U.S. economic and military aid to its allies was combined under the Mutual Security Act. The League supported the Act's provision for defense support and military aid to Europe to strengthen NATO; it did not then take nor has it since taken a position on military aid to other regions.



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The League's greatest interest in the Mutual Security Program has been concentrated on the provisions for economic aid and technical assistance to the underdeveloped countries. The League has testified at congressional hearings repeatedly in the history of the Mutual Security Program, in support of technical assistance—unilateral, from the United States, and, even more strongly, multilateral aid through the United Nations Technical Assistance program.

In 1954 the League came out in opposition to the so-called Bricker Amendment to limit the Executive's treaty-making power. The proposal was a highly controversial issue. A brief account of the League's study and action in connection with it appears in Chapter X.

Domestic and Foreign

The national Programs for all two-year periods from 1946 to 1956, when averaged, gave "equal billing" in the primary category to international and domestic subjects. In 1956-58, both subjects in this category were in the domestic field and, for the first time in many years, the League's national Program had no foreign policy item.

... In primary position, that is.

There were four separate subjects in the foreign policy field in the secondary position of the Program, which ordinarily receives far less attention on the part of the membership. And it was under these that the League was able to act when two situations arose later in 1956.

In July of that year, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company, and the Middle East problem opened wide. In October came the revolution in Hungary.

The League promptly set up a campaign for a community project, one that would help League members and other citizens to understand the acute problems in the Middle East and in Hungary, and the short-range and long-range solutions. They called it "Focus on the Future." It was a two-month intensive effort, and members considered it a job well worth doing.

In 1958-60 the League Convention returned to equal billing of a foreign policy item and a domestic item on the national Program.

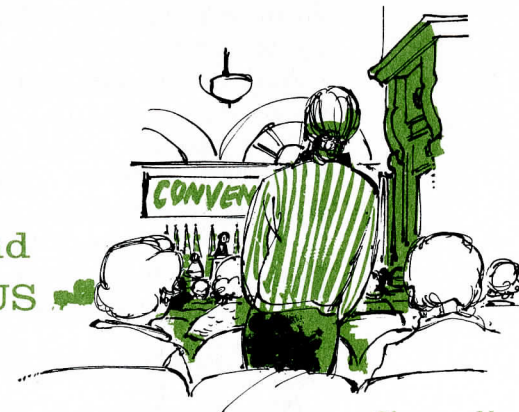
Reminders of League Purpose

Here ends this pamphlet's treatment, sketchy as it is, of League Program content. If to the reader our presentation appears incomplete and inconclusive, we cite what the League has said before of itself.

"The Program Record" paraphrases what Justice Holmes once said of the law: "The life of the League of Women Voters has not been logic, it has been experience."

"The Program Explained" says: "... the Program is neither comprehensive nor logical, which is as it should be. A comprehensive and logical approach to government, though it may be suitable for the student, is not practicable for the active participant, and the League's purpose has been to promote active participation in government."

PROGRAM-MAKING and REACHING CONSENSUS



Chapter X

How is the League Program made?

How does the League reach consensus?

These two questions are frequently asked by nonmembers. The two processes are perhaps the most important elements in the democratic methods which are consciously and conscientiously practiced within the League.

The League Adopts a Program

The national Program is selected by the biennial national Convention of the League, which is held in even-numbered years in late April. But the vote adopting the Program is only the final step of a process which begins six to eight months earlier.

In August of the year before a national Convention, the national Board sends to all local and state Leagues the first call to Convention and gives deadlines. The list of deadlines is also carried in *The National Voter*, the all-member publication of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

In October local Leagues begin discussing possibilities for the new Program. By late November they send their suggestions to the national Board.

Next, members of the national Board, working singly and in small committees, thoughtfully and painstakingly consider all Program suggestions. This takes weeks.

At a January Board meeting, a Proposed Program is worked out. The recommendation must be measured against League principles and purpose, possibilities for political effectiveness, womanpower and time available. Also to be considered is whether it represents a cross section of thinking—that is, did the recommendation come from various sections of the country, from large and small Leagues, from city and rural Leagues?

The Proposed Program is sent to the local and state Leagues in February. Leagues go through another round of discussion and by a date in early April send to the national Board their recommendations, if any, for changes (no completely new area may be suggested) in the

Proposed Program. The Board evaluates these comments and may revise the Proposed Program.

Next comes Convention and floor debate. And finally, adoption of the Program.

No wholly new subject may be considered for the Program by the Convention. However, there is a provision whereby something suggested in the first round, but not on the Proposed Program, may be brought before the Convention; it takes only a majority vote of delegates to have it considered, but a two-thirds vote to have it adopted. This is in line with the League's democratic procedures.

The League Reaches Consensus

The process involved in reaching consensus is as democratic, as grass-roots, as the Program-making process.

First of all, the League takes a national position only on issues which local and state Leagues have had ample opportunity to study.

Secondly, no position is taken unless it is evident that there is a wide area of agreement among the membership.

Sometimes the League is challenged because it does not poll its members. To understand the League's policy one need only consider the representative system of our government. Does a Representative or Senator poll everyone in his constituency when he is preparing to vote on an issue? Of course not; yet he usually has his finger on the pulse of his constituents as a whole.

The League is also sometimes challenged because it does not give out figures when it announces consensus. Figures are used, of course, as a League Board determines whether consensus exists. But figures in themselves are not the only factor. If numbers of Leagues alone were counted, one section of the country, the populous East, for example, where there are more Leagues, could outweigh the total of the other sections. If numbers of members within Leagues were the basis of a count, a few big Leagues could outweigh the total of many small Leagues. If the issue were one in which, for example, Leagues in industrial and agricultural areas might be assumed to have opposing opinions, and more Leagues from industrial areas registered opinions, they could outnumber the Leagues in the agricultural areas; and vice versa.

Therefore, as in Program-making, there must be a wide area of agreement based on cross section as to states, and cross section as to size and type of Leagues, before the national Board can say that consensus has been reached. As local Leagues reach consensus, reports are made to the national Board. The Board also considers attitudes revealed in local and state League bulletins, correspondence, and field visits.

An Example

To illustrate the process, the League consensus on the Bricker Amendment will serve as a good example.

The Bricker Amendment was introduced in the U.S. Senate in Sep-

tember 1951 and again in January 1952. In March 1952 *The National Voter* carried an article on it. In April 1952 the national Convention discussed it. The 1953 national Council also discussed it. Altogether, pro-and-con information was made available to members in at least 14 separate instances through *The National Voter*, "Report from the Hill," and communications to local League presidents.

Three times in 1953—May, October, November—the national Board asked local Leagues to report as to their preparation and views, the final request a reminder that local League opinion would be considered at the coming Board meeting "to determine whether a League position is warranted." Responses were more numerous and opinion was stronger than in the case of any other issue on which consensus had been reached in at least 15 years. And, in January 1954, the national Board announced that the League of Women Voters of the United States was opposed to the Bricker Amendment.

Self-Improvement

The League constantly strives to widen member participation and facilitate the expression of membership opinion. Responsibility rests with the local and state Leagues to express their views; responsibility rests with the national Board to determine the point at which opinion is strong enough to represent the membership as a whole.

However, unanimity is not expected or even desired. Majority opinion prevails, naturally, as in any democratic body. Those who disagree are expected not to make public issue *in the name of the League* of opposition to the official position of the League. But they are free to express their opposition as widely as they wish, as individuals.

There are always minorities within the League. They are heartily encouraged to work as hard as they like within the League to become the majority. League history is full of examples where the minority has become the majority.

For example, the League of Nations "bloc" in the League of Women Voters was a minority for a long time. It was determined, however, and it kept pressing to convince others within the League. It took this minority 12 years to become a majority, from 1920 to 1932, when the League of Women Voters came out in strong support of the League of Nations.

One staunch member of the League probably holds the all-time record for a determined minority. At the 1956 Convention, a group of women who had been part of the suffrage movement in its closing days and leaders of the League in its early days were asked to participate, from the rostrum, in some "conversations" about the history of the League. When this particular leader's turn came she could not resist the opportunity to put her case once more, and she "lobbied" for compulsory citizenship classes in the lower grades of public schools—something that was on the League's first Program.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

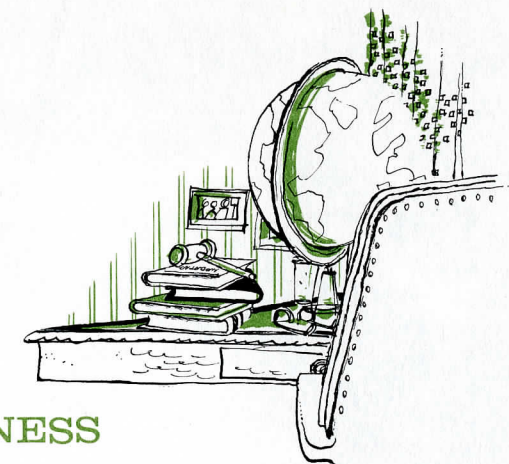
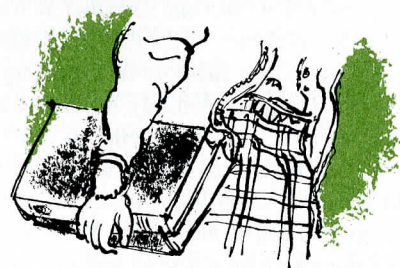
League of Women Voters papers deemed to be of historical interest are now housed in the Library of Congress. The collection is one of the largest in the Manuscript Division of the Library.

The first set of papers was given to the Library in 1933, and includes suffrage papers dating back to 1914. Another set was given in 1950. As records at national headquarters become non-current they are added to the collection, which now runs through 1954. An instrument signed in 1950 makes the entire group a gift to the Library. Processing is still going on; the deed of gift provides that when this process is completed the papers shall be available to interested students.

The papers are assembled in containers which measure 10.5 x 13 x 4.5 inches. Manuscript Division experience indicates that containers average 300 manuscripts each; a manuscript is one unit—it can mean a single sheet of paper, a 6-page letter, or a whole book. The Division also estimates average weight of a full container at 7 pounds. In these terms League papers now in the Library of Congress

fill 1020 containers
weigh . . . more than 3.5 tons
total 306,000 manuscripts
occupy . . 626,535 cubic inches

That's a lot of reading for "interested students."



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chapter XI

One cannot review the history of the League even cursorily without being aware that the *idea* has remained constant.

This is true despite the changes in structure, in Program format and content, in procedures, in interpretation of policy, in application of methods. Every change made is to fulfill the League purpose more faithfully—to make the organization more democratic, more responsive to membership thinking, more effective in the community be it local, state, or national.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Yet in some ways things do not seem to change at all. Consider the minutes of a meeting of the national committees of the League when it was still a part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, in 1919:

"There was general discussion of the possibility of some method of arousing in women a sense of their financial responsibility for the League of Women Voters. . . .

"Mrs. A. suggested that the element which makes the strongest appeal is the work, the Program, of the League. . . .

"Mrs. B. said she believed that the first essential for money-raising is a budget. . . .

"Mrs. C. asked whether expert knowledge is more important than other qualities. . . .

"Mrs. D. stated that in her opinion capacity for leadership is even more important than expert knowledge."

Certainly the plaintive note in the financial report of 1924—"In no year has our income equalled the amount called for by our budget"—has its echoes in any League Convention today.

The same questions are being asked today as always. The call to the 1921 Convention said: "The League is established. The League has power. How best shall we use this power to become a vital and helpful force in our country? How best continue in the work of educating a conscientious, well-informed electorate?"

A 1938 League publication said: "The League upon its eighteenth



birthday has not so much arrived at a destination as equipped itself to set forth. . . . Only by volition and eternal vigilance will it preserve its unique promise of increasing active citizen concern for government. . . . The promise is all there. It remains to fulfill it." We can say the same on the League's fortieth birthday.

There was a bit of unfinished business left over from the 1920 Convention of the League. That Convention provided that at the end of five years "account should be taken of achievements won and the importance of the unfinished program. A new determination can then be made concerning the advisability of a continuance of the League."

We have not examined every one of those 306,000 manuscripts in the Library of Congress, but among the many we did examine we could not find that this point was ever raised again. At least no one has brought it up lately.

PHOTO CREDITS

Frontispiece
and page 26 Bachrach

page 14 Underwood & Underwood

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page 30 (top) International News Photos
(bottom) Wide World Photos

page 36 (top) Gary (Ind.) Post-Tribune
(bottom) North Dakota Rural Electric Magazine

page 38 Glogau

pages 42 and 50 Bradford Bachrach

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Pres. File



**FORTY
YEARS
OF A
GREAT
IDEA**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

40 YEARS OF A GREAT IDEA



*From the faith of the suffrage
movement came a great idea, the idea
that a nonpartisan organization
could provide political education and
experience which would contribute
to the growth of the citizen and
thus assure the success of democracy.
The League of Women Voters
was founded upon that idea.*

— 25 YEARS OF A GREAT IDEA

1945

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XL
FORTY
YEARS
OF A
GREAT
IDEA
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES

MRS. CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT, 1859-1947
President, National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1900-1904 and 1915-1920
Honorary National President, League of Women Voters, 1920-1947

preface

This is the story of the League at the age of 40. Since 1920 we have pursued the same general objectives, changing and adapting our action according to the needs and demands of the times. Sometimes the changes have been obvious and dramatic, sometimes slow and well-nigh imperceptible. As we pass the 1960 milestone, the League recognizes its obligation anew and welcomes its opportunity to participate in the things that concern government in the United States.

This is the story of what the 127,000 members of the League have in common—the creative forces, the purpose, and the Program history; in other words, the League as a *national* organization. The tremendous job that has been done by Leagues at the state and local levels is implicit in all this and is interspersed throughout but is not made explicit. And supporting it all, of course, is the member, for whom the organization on all three levels exists and on whom it all, in the last analysis, turns.

What the League has achieved has not been done single-handedly. Always there have been groups and individuals working toward the same goals. Sometimes the League has been the leader; sometimes the lead has been taken by another group and the League has joined in the effort. "40 Years of a Great Idea" is, quite naturally, the story of the League's effort, but through it we salute all of those whose support, moral and financial, has helped to make the League's history possible.

Ruth S. Phillips

President

contents

Page

- 6 *Introduction*
- 7 *Chapter I DEEP GROW THE ROOTS*
- 10 *Chapter II LEAGUE PURPOSE*
- 12 *Chapter III THE BEGINNINGS*
- 19 *Chapter IV EARLY AND LATE*
- 22 *Chapter V NONPARTISANSHIP*
- 25 *Chapter VI THROUGH THE THIRTIES*
- 31 *Chapter VII THE WAR YEARS*
- 33 *Chapter VIII WHAT HAPPENED IN 1944*
- 37 *Chapter IX SINCE 1944*
- 45 *Chapter X PROGRAM-MAKING AND REACHING CONSENSUS*
- 49 *Chapter XI UNFINISHED BUSINESS*

introduction

What This Pamphlet Is Not—And Is

This pamphlet, prepared to mark the fortieth anniversary of the League, is not a history of the League of Women Voters. A history, in the comprehensive sense, has yet to be written.

It is not a history of the woman suffrage movement. Any story about the League, however, necessarily includes mention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, because the League grew out of it and the esprit de corps of the one carried over to the other.

Nor is it a history of the League Program, though much information about the Program is contained in it. Because the story is of the League of Women Voters as a whole, it is for the most part concerned with the national Program only. Many state and local Leagues have written histories of their own; they should be read as supplements to this, or vice versa.

"History is the essence of innumerable biographies," and we could review League history by telling the story of the individuals who have made the League what it is. But somehow the sum of the League—members, local Leagues, state Leagues—is greater than the total of its parts, and League history is dotted with the work of so many great women that it would not be fair, not even accurate, to single out individuals for mention. We quote national Presidents within the context of our story; except for mention of one other League officer in recounting an incident of historical interest, we name no individuals and do not attribute quotations.

If this pamphlet seems to hark back often to the early days, it is because this seems necessary, particularly for the newer, younger members. In front of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., are two statues, which together bear these mottoes: "What is past is prologue. . . . Study the past." When the League evaluates where it is and where it is going, there is value in looking back and recalling how the League started and where it has been. Most of the members of the League today take the vote for granted, remember little or nothing, personally, of the woman suffrage movement. A member cannot even be a member until she is of voting age, and it is probable that already there are many who, if they know of the places at all, think of Muscle Shoals as a dam site in Alabama, Bretton Woods as a town in New Hampshire, and Dumbarton Oaks as a pleasant park in the nation's Capital.

So what is this pamphlet?

It is the story of a great idea—40 years of a great idea.



DEEP GROW THE ROOTS

Chapter I

The League of Women Voters in 1960 celebrates its fortieth anniversary. But if we include the roots, too, it is 120 years old. We can scarcely exclude:

—1840, when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met in London at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. Mrs. Mott was one of eight American delegates denied seats because they were women. Mrs. Stanton was the wife of a delegate. These two women made a pact to start a woman's rights movement in the United States.

—1848, when the first Woman's Rights Convention was held, in Seneca Falls, New York. The most daring proposition to come out of this convention was: "It is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."

—1869, when both the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association were founded. The object of the National was to achieve a federal amendment; of the American, to gain suffrage state by state.

—1875, when Susan B. Anthony drew up the wording of a constitutional amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." This is the exact wording of the 19th Amendment as finally added to the Constitution 45 years later.

—1878, when the amendment was first introduced in the United States Congress. It was introduced in each succeeding Congress until passed.

—1887, when the amendment first came to a vote in the Senate, where it lost.

—1890, when the two associations merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association, whose object was "to secure protection, in their right to vote, to the women citizens of the United States, by appropriate national and state legislation."

—1914, when the Senate again voted on the amendment. The vote was favorable, 35 to 34, but a two-thirds vote was needed for passage.

—1915, when the House, voting on the amendment for the first time, defeated it 204 to 174.

Beginning with 1916, things moved faster. In nearly a fourth of the states (11 and Alaska) women had full, equal suffrage; in some other states, partial suffrage. At the 1916 political conventions, both major parties at long last adopted woman suffrage planks, though they still advocated achieving it state by state rather than by federal amendment. One theory is that both parties felt that "the woman's lobby" could no longer be ignored and that "if we can't lick them we might as well let them join us."

Speeding Up

In the long fight for the vote, the National American Woman Suffrage Association had become a tightly knit, efficient, politically wise, powerful organization. Victory was coming into view, and the suffrage leaders, accustomed to looking ahead to the next step, began to plan what their organization would do with the vote once they had it.

It is often said that the League of Women Voters was "conceived in St. Louis, born in Chicago." The references are to the 50th Convention of the NAWSA in 1919 and to the first Convention of the League in 1920.

But before these events there had to be a gleam in somebody's eye. And there was, in the collective eye of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

At the NAWSA Convention in 1916, the idea of an organization within the organization was proposed by Mrs. Katharine Reed Balentine of Maine. It would be composed of representatives from the equal suffrage states, and was referred to as the "Enfranchised States Committee." The proposal was voted and carried. However, the carrying out of the plan was delayed because of the illness of the chairman.

By the time of the 49th Convention, in December 1917, the idea had taken on more substantial form. Convention Proceedings say:

"The chair" (Carrie Chapman Catt presiding) "outlined a plan . . . for uniting the women of the enfranchised states in an association which should be auxiliary to the National American Woman Suffrage Association. All state associations would upon enfranchisement automatically become members of this organization. The plan . . . would consist of an organization committee in each of the enfranchised states composed of five persons from each state, these state committees to be finally united in a central body to be known as the National League of Women Voters, auxiliary to the National American Woman Suffrage Association."

The United States had been at war since April 1917, and with many women doing men's jobs on the home front and in other ways contributing to the war effort, congressional opposition to woman suffrage was lessening.

Home Stretch

In January 1918 the House of the 65th Congress passed the woman suffrage amendment 274 to 136, a fraction of one vote over the required two thirds.

In October 1918 the Senate voted on the 19th Amendment, 62 for, 34 against—only two votes short of the necessary two thirds. In February 1919, late in the life of the 65th Congress (this was the day of the "lame duck" session), the Senate voted again, 63 for and 33 against—just one vote short.

In March 1919 the 50th Convention of the NAWSA met in St. Louis. This was the Jubilee Convention, marking the half century since the two woman suffrage associations, the National and the American, had been established. It was obvious that passage of the 19th Amendment was almost at hand; enthusiasm was high, and the NAWSA Convention was dominated by plans for the new organization which was to emerge from the old.

The call to Convention said: "As a fitting memorial to a half century of progress, the National American Woman Suffrage Association invites the women voters of the 15 full suffrage states* to attend this anniversary convention, and there to join their forces into a League of Women Voters, one of whose objects shall be to speed the suffrage campaign in our own and other countries."

In Mrs. Catt's Convention address she said: "I propose . . . a League of Women Voters to 'finish the fight' and to aid in the reconstruction of the nation . . ."

The Constitution of the NAWSA was amended to include the new organization, with Article III, Section 2, reading: "In order to further the second purpose of the National American Woman Suffrage Association . . . i.e., 'to increase the effectiveness of women's votes in furthering better government,' women from the enfranchised states shall form a League of Women Voters within the National American Woman Suffrage Association."

Votes for Women

Less than two months later, on May 21, 1919, the House of the 66th Congress passed the 19th Amendment by an immense majority, 304 to 90. On June 4 the Senate passed it, 66 to 30.

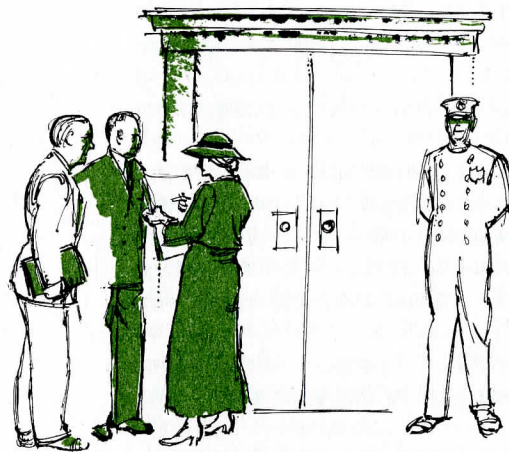
Within an hour after the Senate vote the NAWSA launched its drive for ratification, which took over a year to achieve.

In February 1920 the NAWSA Convention was held in Chicago. It had been hoped that ratification would be complete by that time, so it was a joint event—the final Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the first Convention of the League of Women Voters. The work of the one was all but done; the work of the other was about to begin.

Ratification by the 36th state—the last to make the necessary three fourths—came on August 18. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was proclaimed in effect on August 26, 1920.

* Wyoming, 1869; Colorado, 1893; Idaho, 1896; Utah, 1896; Washington, 1910; California, 1911; Kansas, 1912; Oregon, 1912; Arizona, 1912; Montana, 1914; Nevada, 1914; New York, 1917; Michigan, 1918; Oklahoma, 1918; South Dakota, 1918.

And Carrie Chapman Catt said: "The vote is won. Seventy-two years the battle for this privilege has been waged, but human affairs with their eternal change move on without pause. Progress is calling to you to make no pause. Act!"



LEAGUE PURPOSE

Chapter II

Women—at least those who had worked for woman suffrage—needed no urging to follow Mrs. Catt's advice. They had worked for the vote not just to have it, but to achieve goals which without it had been beyond their reach.

The vote meant different things to different women. Not all women who had wanted the vote were necessarily part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Not all women who had been a part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association necessarily stayed with its successor organization. Some went straight into party work, to run for public office or to serve in party organization, and never got into the League of Women Voters. Some joined the League and never got out of it, though of course most of them joined a party, too. Some stayed with the League for awhile and then went into more active party work; some, vice versa. Some went into organizations which had a single interest, for example, peace, education, working conditions, protection of the consumer.

Multipurpose

But our story is of the League of Women Voters. Even within the League the vote, and the League itself, meant different things to different members. This is apparent from records and statements in the early days of the League and since, and it illuminates the history of the League to take another look at some of them.

At the 1919 Convention, 10 items were listed as "First Aims of the

League of Women Voters." Only two of these pertained to women in particular and both were in connection with citizenship. Eight pertained to education—three to education in general, five to education in citizenship.

A League pamphlet of 1919 said: "The organization has three purposes: to foster education in citizenship, to promote forums and public discussions of civic reforms, and to support needed legislation. It hopes to accomplish its purpose first, by education as to national and state human needs; second, by public discussion to spread information, and, third, by the direct influence of its members who are enrolled voters in the already existing political parties. The slogan of the League is 'Enroll in the political parties'."

In 1919 Mrs. Catt said: "We propose to get into the great parties and to work from the inside. We do not fear issues, and we do not fear the future. We'll not vote as women, but as American citizens, and we are unafraid."

In 1920 she said: "If we are going to trail behind the Democratic and Republican parties about five years, and if our program is going to be about that much behind that of the dominant political parties, we might as well quit before we begin. If the League of Women Voters hasn't the vision to see what is coming and what ought to come, and be five years ahead of the political parties, I doubt if it is worth the trouble to go on."

On the same occasion Mrs. Catt said the League should have three chief aims: "1) to use its utmost influence to secure the final enfranchisement of the women of every state in our own republic and to reach out across the seas in aid of the woman's struggle for her own in every land; 2) to remove the remaining legal discriminations against women in the codes and constitutions of the several states in order that the feet of coming women may find these stumbling blocks removed; 3) to make our democracy so safe for the nation and so safe for the world that every citizen may feel secure and great men will acknowledge the worthiness of the American republic to lead."

Maud Wood Park became the first national President of the League. She had steered the woman suffrage amendment through Congress in the last two critical years, and liked nothing better than legislative work. Yet she said: "The actual work of the League—the end for which organization supplies the means—is, first of all, training for citizenship."

The second national President, Belle Sherwin, expressed her opinion succinctly: "Study without action is abortive."

Marguerite Wells, third national President, said: "The League's purpose has been to promote active participation in government."

As stated by the League today, the purpose is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."

A national Board member has summed up her beliefs this way: "It is not enough to believe in democracy as a theory; democracy can live and breathe only as we work out day-by-day practical procedures for its implementation. We do this within the League, and the League itself is a kind of experimental laboratory. We do this outside the League when

we work to improve our democratic governmental institutions to make citizen participation a real and practical possibility. When we worry over the role of the citizen in the formulation of foreign policy, when we try to bring some order out of the tangle of overlapping governmental jurisdictions, when we support the short ballot or constitutional revision or reapportionment, we are not only fulfilling the purpose of the League, we are coming to grips with one of the most challenging problems of our time: the democratic process itself."

Basic Recipe

These are all variations on the same theme. But emphasis varies. It varied in the beginning; it has continued to vary. The emphasis is, first, in the minds of individual members, then, as it prevails, in the League as a whole, according to the times, according to the situation.

All the ingredients have been there from the beginning. The proportions have varied from time to time, so the result has varied. But the "recipe" is basically the same.

Some members will always think *study* is most important; others, that *action* is most important. Still others will think that service to all voters is most important. Some will think participation in party work is necessary; others will not think so. The League will probably always be some things to all members, all things to some members.



THE BEGINNINGS

Chapter III

If ever the League was all things to all members, it was from 1920 to 1924.

The issues which members were working on had been around for 30 to 120 years. Members had already "studied" them and had had plenty

of time to reach "consensus." They had a "built-in position" on dozens of issues. All they had lacked was the vote, and the status of an organization whose members—every one of them—could vote.

Now they had these. The energy which members had for generations concentrated upon the single issue of attaining the vote was now directed toward a great variety of issues.

At the 1919 Convention, eight standing committees of the League had been appointed, to deal with the following subjects and to report to the 1920 Convention: American Citizenship, Protection of Women in Industry, Child Welfare, Social Hygiene, Unification of Laws Concerning Civil Status of Women, Food Supply and Demand, Improvement in Election Laws and Methods, Research.

All committees except the last two made reports to the 1920 Convention, with 69 items as "statements of principle and recommendations for legislation."

Quite soberly the introductory statement said: "It is not expected that this entire program or even the major part of it will be achieved in one year's work." Well, hardly! However, it was seriously thought that five years might be enough: "Voters should enlist for a five years' service. At the end of that time account should be taken of achievements won and the importance of the unfinished program. A new determination can then be made concerning the advisability of a continuance of the League."

The First Program

Most of the "program . . . adopted as the goal of the League's efforts and as expressing principles which the organization loyally supports" referred to "needed legislation." The League registered support of collective bargaining; wages on basis of occupation and not of sex; a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor; a joint federal-state employment service; a child-labor law; wage-hour legislation; a minimum wage; a merit system in federal, state, and local governments; maternity-infancy protective legislation; regulation of the meat-packing industry; laws to prevent food profiteering; pure-food laws; cooperative associations; social-hygiene legislation; uniform marriage and divorce laws in the United States; independent citizenship for married women; equal interest of spouses in each other's real estate; mothers' pensions; equal guardianship by both parents of persons and property of children; jury service for women; compulsory education, including adequate training in citizenship in every state, for all children between 6 and 16, nine months of each year; education of adults by extension classes of the public schools. AND 47 other specifics.

And this covered only *legislation* the members wanted and went to work on. There were also other aspects of League work such as what today we call Voters Service, and, of course, Organization and Finance.

Some of the legislative aims of the League in 1920 were achieved in a surprisingly short time, some took longer, some are yet to be attained. The greatest challenge, it soon became obvious, was the goal of greater



citizen participation in government. The suffragists were enthusiasts. When the 1920 election showed that women voters were as apathetic as men voters, the League intensified its efforts to educate for citizenship.

Organization, Finance, Voters Service

While the League's early years are perhaps most vividly remembered for its accomplishments in the field of public issues, achievements in the area of voter and citizenship education are no less noteworthy. The latter are particularly interesting because the League inaugurated many practices which are still hallmarks of the organization.

At the 1924 Convention, Mrs. Park took note of the progress the League had made in its first four years. She said:

"The League is organized in at least 346 of 433 Congressional Districts and in the District of Columbia and Hawaii." (Today there are Leagues in 399 of 437 Congressional Districts.)

"In no year has our income equalled the amount called for by our budget, but the increased receipts point to remarkable growth in the organization and to a marked gain in public esteem."

"Numberless demonstration classes," to explain to the newly enfranchised women the proper way to mark a ballot and other technicalities of registration and voting, were started in the League's first year.

Citizenship schools, for the study of the principles of government—local, state, national—were started in 1920 and continued to be a "striking and popular part" of League work. Many of the schools were conducted with the cooperation of universities or colleges.

A correspondence course on government was established during the first year.

In 1921, the Department of Efficiency in Government was established. It gave "advanced information on public affairs . . . conducted institutes for admitted defects in our system of government, with proposed remedies . . . carried on public education in defense of the primary method of nomination . . . stimulated in many states the compilation of digests of state election laws. . . ."

During the third year, the "Know Your Town" plan was inaugurated and, according to Mrs. Park, "became at once what it has continued to be, our most popular and helpful study course for Leagues both new and old."

In the fourth year, normal classes in citizenship to train volunteer teachers for citizenship schools were established.

Candidate questionnaires and candidates meetings were inaugurated.

There Ought to Be a Law

And "needed legislation"?

National Board members attended national political conventions in 1920 and presented the League's 13 planks to the two major parties and to two minor parties; 12 planks were included in the Democratic Platform, five in the Republican Platform. The practice of appearing before party platform committees continued regularly until 1945. It is still done,

but only on selected issues and not necessarily at every convention of the political parties.

The Women's Bureau was permanently established in the Department of Labor, and a Civil Service Retirement Bill was passed—both in 1920.

Appropriations for the Children's Bureau were carried in Appropriations Acts for 1922, 1923, 1924.

Legislation for the promotion of the welfare and hygiene of maternity and infancy (Sheppard-Towner Act) was enacted in 1921 and extended to Hawaii in 1924.

Legislation relative to the naturalization and citizenship of married women (Cable Act) was passed in 1922.

Four pieces of legislation in the field of regulation of interstate commerce—two in connection with meat, dairy, and poultry products, and two relative to coal—were enacted in 1921, 1922, 1923.

Mrs. Park said: "Altogether nearly two thirds of our active federal program has been written off by congressional enactment of 15 measures." In addition, "420 bills supported by state Leagues have become law in these years; 64 bills opposed by state Leagues have been defeated."

It was evident that the League was "ahead"—as Mrs. Catt had said it must be—in the era of social legislation that started after World War I.

U. S. Foreign Policy

The League did notable work in the international area, too.

The 1919 Convention of the NAWSA had said it "earnestly favors a League of Nations to secure a world-wide peace based upon the immutable principles of justice" before *the* League of Nations came into existence. The 1920 League of Women Voters Convention passed a resolution urging "adhesion of the United States to the League of Nations with the least possible delay." However, the issue of U.S. membership in the League of Nations was soon caught up in a bitter partisan struggle and the League of Women Voters, while avidly studying the subject all the while, delayed until 1932 an all-out position to support U.S. membership in the League of Nations.

But, the League of Women Voters did find three areas in which it seemed possible for the United States to cooperate, despite the isolationist climate in this country at the time—disarmament proposals, strengthening of inter-American peace machinery, development of international law.

Beginning in 1921, it worked for U.S. participation in all disarmament conferences.

The League's 1922 Convention was held in conjunction with a Pan American Conference of Women, called by Mrs. Catt as president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

In 1922, a Department on International Cooperation to Prevent War was organized within the League, with the slogan "Law, not War," and in 1923 the League began sustained activity in support of U.S. membership in the World Court.

The 1923 Convention declared that "a policy of isolation from world affairs is neither wise nor possible for this nation."

Every Day Election Day

When delegates met in national Convention in April 1924, they elected a new President of the League—Belle Sherwin—and looked ahead to the November election of a President of the nation.

In 1920, only 49 percent of the total number of potential voters—men and women—went to the polls in the presidential election.

The League was determined to do everything in its power to better the percentage in 1924. It had been working toward this steadily since 1920, through its Citizenship Schools, and through its Department of Efficiency in Government, of which Miss Sherwin was chairman in 1922-23.

The program of work adopted in 1924 said: "The League's immediate object is to increase the number of efficient voting citizens."

The League's get-out-the-vote campaign was one of the most intensive ever conducted. But the net gain on Election Day was one percent—this time 50 percent of the potential voters voted.

In 1920 the League thought the vote would have been larger, with more of the newly enfranchised women voters going to the polls if only they had had more time to prepare themselves to vote. After all, the 19th Amendment was not in effect until August 26, and Election Day was November 2.

But in 1924 they knew this excuse was not valid. To quote a 1938 League publication: "The League learned that the slacker vote was not disease but symptom. The disease was more obscure. It lay deep in American political life, its traditions and habits, even in the organization of its governmental system. . . . The League . . . began to recognize that American people needed to be made acquainted with political affairs, to learn their dependence on them and how to deal with them effectively. The League concluded that the measures already undertaken for support were as good as any for its purpose and that in fact the League itself was thus getting out the vote all the year 'round. So within the first few years of its existence the League found itself committed to no lesser purpose than to help make the democratic government in the United States a success."

So, the League continued as it had begun, dropping little from its program, adding much. The League learned early that it was never enough to pass a law, set up a bureau in government; enforcement, administration, and appropriations had to be watched.



EARLY AND LATE



Chapter IV

The early years of the League are interesting to look back on, and several observations shine through clearly in the light of later years.

First, the League was generally "ahead," as it set out to be. It began supporting the procedure of the Executive Budget in 1924, a procedure which was not generally followed at that time. In 1928 it began working for the "Lame Duck" Amendment, to make it possible for the President, Vice President, and Congress to take office in early January following election in November instead of waiting until March to be sworn in; this, the 20th Amendment, was passed by Congress in 1932 and became a part of the Constitution in 1933.

Second, determination, perseverance, and patience were unfailing qualities of League members, if the goal was deemed worthwhile. Women who had fought so many years for the right to vote were not likely to give up easily. In 1924 the League Program listed federal suffrage for residents of the District of Columbia. In 1948, the item was broadened to include home rule. In 1960 it is still on the Program. District residents wonder if it will take them as long to get the vote as it took women.

Late and Soon

Third, the fundamental philosophy underlying our democratic form of government manifested itself in specifics from the inception of the League, coming through in the earliest Program selections and showing up from time to time in a different specific obviously traceable to the same principle. Indeed, the "Principles" on the present-day League Program became, finally, the conscious expression of the principles the League had worked by all along.

For example, individual liberty has been an underlying concern of the League since its inception. "Principle 1" commits the League to "the principles of representative government and individual liberty established in the Constitution of the United States." The woman suffrage movement itself stemmed from belief in the importance of the individual citizen in a democratic society; so did the League's early work in behalf of women and children. In more recent years the spread of totalitarian doctrines has

deepened the League's belief in the rights of the individual.

The League began in 1924 to study "how to insure freedom of speech, thought, and action on the part of school boards and teachers." From 1936 to 1942 the Program included "Protection of academic freedom as basic to sound education."

The 1940-42 Program said: "Safeguarding of constitutional rights, with special reference to freedom of speech, assembly, and press, is fundamental to the entire Program."

The 1942-44 Program carried an item reading: "Preservation of the greatest degree of civil liberty consistent with national safety in war." The 1944-46 Program item said: "Preservation of civil liberties and protection of minority groups against discrimination."

In 1954 the national Convention adopted this Program subject: "Development of understanding of the relationship between individual liberty and the public interest."

Over a period of months, largely in 1955, the League was one of many organizations participating in the Freedom Agenda program, which the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund sponsored for community discussion based on review of the Bill of Rights and individual liberty today.

In 1956 the Convention began to focus League study in this general field as follows: "Evaluation of the federal loyalty-security programs, with recognition of the need for safeguarding national security and protecting individual liberties."

In January 1958 the League announced this position: "Modification of federal loyalty-security programs to limit scope, standardize procedures, apply 'common sense' judgment, and provide the greatest possible protection for the individual."

"A Piece . . . A Part of the Main"

Fourth, one thing has always led to another. To paraphrase John Donne, the League learned early that "no subject is an island."

Or, as "A Portrait of the League of Women Voters" says: "In the beginning, each project it undertook was an artificially isolated fragment surrounded by and intertwined with the unknown, but by the time something had been done effectively on one project, no small part of the unknown became known. Much of what the League has learned as it proceeded has come not from separate shafts sunk down called 'study' but has adhered to some root at which the League was tugging and come up with it."

Some of the earliest of League work, which itself was an outgrowth of World War I, led to the League's efforts to improve food-and-drug legislation, also to its support of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and can even be identified with part of each of the 1958-60 subjects of foreign policy and water resources. All of these had their beginnings, in greater or lesser degree, in the Standing Committee on Food Supply and Demand established by the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1919 and continued by League Convention action in 1920.

Study of the high cost of food, food shortages, and profiteering during World War I and the postwar years led the League into work to regulate the meat-packing industry and to support the Federal Trade Commission.

Food supply, the League discovered, was limited partially by the scarcity of fertilizer. The National Defense Act of 1916 authorized the building by the federal government of a plant at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, primarily to produce nitrate for explosives, but the Act also envisioned that the plant would be used for the development of new types of fertilizers. Actually, the plant was not completed in time to be of aid in the war effort.

The 1921 League Program recommended: "That the government be urged to take the necessary steps to increase the production of nitrates and other necessary chemical elements needed in agriculture by the completion and utilization of plants already in process of construction."

In 1922 the League reaffirmed this stand and added that "in the event of the refusal of Congress to approve such government operation the government be urged to accept the offer which best safeguards this great asset still owned by the people."

From 1923 to 1925 the Program listed: "The enactment by Congress of legislation to increase the production of nitrates and other necessary chemical elements needed in agriculture by the completion and utilization of the Muscle Shoals plant, under conditions which best safeguard the public interest."

The 1925-26 Program added "wide and economical distribution of electrical power."

In 1926-27 "flood protection" was added and reference was made to operation "to insure the development of the Tennessee River System as one project."

The 1928-30 Program added "navigation."

The 1932-34 version, the last before passage of the TVA Act in 1933, read: "Utilization of the national investment at Muscle Shoals as required by the National Defense Act of 1916, 'for agriculture and other useful purposes in times of peace,' operated by the government preferably through a nonpartisan governmental corporation to secure a scientific demonstration in power production and distribution and to provide for navigation and flood control."

From 1928 to passage of the Act, the League carried on a courageous campaign of support and was practically the only citizens organization to do so.

Et Cetera

League members had learned much about depletion of natural resources, conservation, overlapping agency functions, conflicting authority, and agency rivalries, during their study of TVA. Conservation was from then on of great interest to the League. Following recommendations of the first Hoover Commission, in 1950 the League put on its Program: "Reorganization measures to improve administrative efficiency in the

development and use of natural resources.”

The outbreak of the Korean War took the League into more immediate problems. But conservation showed up again in the 1956-58 Program as “Study of Water Resources.” And in the 1958-60 Program it is there as “Water Resources: Support of those national water policies and practices which promote coordinated administration, equitable financing, and regional or river basin planning.”

The Committee on Food Supply and Demand was rechristened the Committee on Living Costs in 1922, and by 1924 the League began to study tariff barriers and living costs. And the study of tariffs led to the study of world trade. And world trade took the League into the whole field of economic foreign policy. So it goes, and a 1958-60 League subject is “Foreign Policy: Evaluation of U.S. foreign policy with continued support of the United Nations system, world trade and economic development, and collective security.”



NONPARTISANSHIP

Chapter V

League Activity and/or Party Activity

Shortly before the League reached its tenth anniversary, a situation arose which led to a re-examination of the privileges of the individual League member under the nonpartisanship policy. The situation was so different from what would be possible today that we quote it at length. It appeared in the October 1928 issue of the Bulletin of the National League of Women Voters, as follows:

It is interesting to note that General Motors, the Department of the Interior, and the League of Women Voters have something very much in common. Leaves of absence have deprived them all of valued leaders. We are in no position to reconcile this sort of conduct with the customs, by-laws, or policies of the first two institutions. We are, however, well equipped to cite chapter and verse for this behavior on the part of League members. Section 2 of Article II of the national by-laws, while

stressing the nonpartisan character of the League, urges the individual members to become party members.

When officers of the League undertake active party work a safeguarding procedure must be found so that no slightest doubt may be cast on the nonpartisanship of the League as an organization. What the procedure should be is a matter for the officer herself and her board to determine.

The campaign year finds an unusual number of League leaders active in party work. The National Executive Committee in September voted leaves of absence to Mrs. Maud Wood Park, Counselor on Legislation, and Miss Gertrude Ely, Counselor on New Voters. Mrs. Park is now campaigning for Mr. Hoover while Miss Ely is speaking for Mr. Smith. . . .

“What the procedure should be” is still “a matter for the officer herself and her board to determine.” The problem is worked out by the same formula as always, but the answer is not likely to come out the same as in 1928.

The League has always encouraged, even urged, its members to work as individuals in the political party of their choice. However, to protect the nonpartisanship policy of the League, Board members or other leaders within the League—at local, state, or national level—prominently identified with the League in the public mind do not work actively in their parties while occupying a leadership position in the League.

Newly enfranchised women recognized quickly that government in practice was inseparable from political parties.

Since women won the vote in 1920 they have, slowly but steadily, advanced in status in the body politic and in the political bodies. “Equality” is not absolute, nor in all probability will it ever be. It is still extra-newsworthy when a woman is elected to Congress or to state or local office, or is appointed to the President’s Cabinet or other post at any level of government. It is just as extra-newsworthy—and rarer—when in a political party a woman is elected State Chairman instead of Vice Chairman.

But public or party office is not the only way for a woman to exert influence. Hundreds of thousands do it, as individuals, in political parties and in other organizations, and League members are prime examples.

Parties have come to realize that the League is a training ground for party activity. League members know that it does provide training for that purpose, but they know it first and foremost as a something in itself.

While the League is proud of members who go on to public office, it is not the League’s job to help elect them. It is not the League’s job to help elect anyone. The League takes action in support of or in opposition to selected governmental issues, but it does not support or oppose candidates nor support or oppose political parties.

In 1920 Mrs. Catt said to the League Convention: “Only about one man in 25 will be big enough to understand that you, a Republican, can work with you, a Democrat, in a nonpartisan organization and be loyal to your respective parties at the same time.” But it happens, all the time.

Fifteen years ago the League published “25 Years of a Great Idea.” The preface was written by the national President; the pamphlet was

written by the national Second Vice President. In 1952 one helped organize a citizens committee to support the presidential candidate of one major party; the other supported a candidate running for the presidential nomination in the other party. They were in 1952, in effect, the Mrs. Park and Miss Ely of 1928. The big difference was that they did not take leaves of absence from the League to serve in partisan leadership capacities. They had finished their terms of League office, and had moved on to other interests. They are still loyal members of the League, and loyal members of their parties—but they did not try to serve both in leadership positions at the same time.

Then there was the time the White House asked the League to recommend some women for a certain national Commission. This is not unusual; in fact it is common practice for the President to seek advice and recommendations from various organized groups when a public body is to be set up. The first requisite for appointment is qualification for the post. Party affiliation is secondary—unless party affiliation of the members is specified in the legislation setting up the body. This particular Commission was to be that kind. The League had no trouble making up, from League membership, a list of qualified women. But it didn't know party affiliation. The White House had to know, because of the strict application of bipartisanship in the situation. So the national office of the League had to ask each one whose name had been given to the White House which party she belonged to. The information, confidential, for no such records are kept by the League, was passed along to the White House, but with the private observation of the person who had obtained the information and had done some preliminary guessing: "You know, I had every single one of them pegged wrong."

There was still another time. It could have happened at almost any point from 1920 to 1960. The National Committee of one of the two major parties telephoned the national office of the League to inquire as to the party affiliation of a certain national President. While party affiliation of a League officer is sometimes revealed in the course of events, as in the case of Mrs. Park, this is not necessarily so, and party is not a factor in the choice of a candidate for League office. The one who received the telephone call turned to another and asked if so-and-so was a Democrat or a Republican. The reply was:

"Why, 'X,' I always understood. In fact I thought it was you who told me that."

"But I don't know *for sure*."

"Why don't you tell whoever is calling to ask the 'X' National Committee. They ought to know."

"But it's the 'X' National Committee asking us."

You may well ask: How could a person serve as president of a political, even though nonpartisan, organization for anywhere from two to ten years without party affiliation becoming a matter of common knowledge?

Maybe it could happen only in the League of Women Voters.



THROUGH THE THIRTIES

Chapter VI

The 1930s saw the enactment of much legislation which the League had been urging since its beginning. The depression of that decade necessitated, on social and economic fronts, action which blanketed in many long-time League goals.

The original Program of the League, in 1920, called for a federal-state employment service. A so-called U.S. Employment Service had existed since 1918, but it was only a unit within the Department of Labor set up by departmental order. The League kept the subject of a federal-state employment service on the Program continuously, and regularly called for adequate appropriations for the limited employment service that did exist. In 1933 the League supported the Wagner-Peyser Act for establishment of public employment offices.

The League began, in 1923, a continuing study of unemployment and, in 1924, of unemployment insurance systems. The 1932-34 Program recommended for support: "A system for federal, state, and local unemployment relief" and "unemployment compensation." Later, the League supported the Social Security Act provisions for compulsory unemployment compensation and state administration with federal cooperation.

In 1934 the principle of state old-age pensions received League support, and, after the Social Security Act went into effect in 1935, the League added, in 1936, support for federal old-age assistance.

In 1934 the League worked for the inclusion of a maternal and child health program (equivalent to Sheppard-Towner Act, which had expired in 1929) in the Social Security Act, and such a program was included when the Act was passed. In 1939 the League successfully supported an amendment to the Act to increase federal grants to the states for aid to dependent children. In 1938 the child-labor provisions of the Wages and Hours Act were supported.

Beginning with the 1920 Program, the League supported U.S. membership in the International Labor Organization, which the United States joined in 1934.

The League had been instrumental in the achievement of many social and economic measures in the various states before the 1930s, just as



woman suffrage was enacted by many states before the 19th Amendment. But with depression-induced federal activity on the socio-economic front, federal legislation accomplished many League goals nation-wide, just as the 19th Amendment gave all U.S. women citizens the vote.

This meant that the League could, to some extent, turn to other fields.

One of these fields was the merit system for the selection of government personnel. It, too, was on the original League Program of 1920.

Two Historic Campaigns

In 1934 the League elected its third national President, Marguerite Wells. In her Convention speech she reminded delegates of the League's purpose: to promote active citizen participation in government. League Program had been getting broader and broader. It was now divided into highly organized Departments, each with a long program of its own. Miss Wells said that the system was producing specialists in subject matter at the sacrifice of the central League purpose, that while the Convention debated whether to make an item "2a" or "3b" under "study," larger opportunities went unrecognized. She proposed that the League agree upon some matter on which to mobilize all members in a campaign for two years. The Convention's choice was "A merit system in all branches of government at all levels."

The merit system campaign probably reached more people than any League effort up to that time. It held League interest for six to eight years. It attracted the public. It impressed legislators. Experts in the field of civil service reform said that the League accomplished more in its few years than they had been able to accomplish in 50 years.

The League was the only citizen group acting consistently for the merit system in those years. Contests for slogans brought catchy phrases which are still in use, among them "Good Government Is Good Politics" and "Find the Man for the Job, not the Job for the Man." Half a million petition cards asking that the merit system replace the spoils system were presented to the parties' national conventions. Pamphlets and leaflets were distributed. The League initiated "Public Personnel Day," with a national radio hookup and hundreds of simultaneous League meetings.

The timing was right. The campaign was waged when federal and state governments were hiring hundreds, thousands, to administer the new social and economic laws. About half of the federal civil employees were outside the Civil Service system; only nine states had civil service laws, and the percentage decreased through cities, counties, and other units of government. Yet, never was it more important to administer laws wisely and economically because of the depression; never was qualified personnel more needed.

Due at least in part to the League's efforts, the Ramspeck Bills of 1938 and 1940 were enacted. This legislation removed hundreds of federal jobs from the spoils system and placed them under Civil Service.

While all this was going on, the League was working in another area in which it had been interested since 1920 and earlier: modernization of

the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. From 1933 to 1938 the League worked for a new law that would establish grade labeling and quality standards. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 did not bring the enactment of all the League's goals, but it was a big forward step in consumer protection. The League campaign for this legislation was a dramatic one; in intensity and effectiveness it ranked second only to the League drive for the merit system.

As Clouds of War Gathered

In addition to these many important contributions to domestic legislation and administration, the League was equally concerned with the international field.

When the League of Nations was unable to deter the Japanese from taking Manchuria in 1931, the League of Women Voters was among those who realized that this act of aggression would probably lead to others and, worse, to general war. The collective security system had failed to survive a major test. Would the system have been stronger had the United States been a part of it? The League of Women Voters thought so, and decided that at least it could take a firmer position in support of U.S. membership in the League of Nations. And so it did, in 1932.

It also intensified its efforts in areas of international cooperation in which it had long been active. Still using the slogan "Law, Not War," the League continued to work for U.S. membership in the World Court. It continued to muster support for disarmament, and in 1932 a League representative personally presented a trunkful of signed petitions to the Disarmament Conference in Geneva.

The League worked for implementation of the Pact of Paris, or Kellogg-Briand Pact, as it had worked for its ratification in 1929. The Pact was initiated by the United States, and the nations (eventually 62) signatory to it renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

Nor did the League overlook economic causes of war.

In 1925 it had studied the Dawes plan for reparations and inter-allied debts, and in 1933 and again in 1938 it supported downward revision of World War I debts.

In 1936 it began its consistent support of the Trade Agreements Program, which had been inaugurated in 1934. The League has worked for every renewal—11 so far—of the Trade Agreements Act, and has opposed numerous amendments designed to weaken it.

In 1935 the forebodings aroused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria were justified, for in that year Italy under Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. After weeks of hesitation the League of Nations applied economic sanctions to Italy, but they were ineffectual.

Then came the neutrality debate in the United States. The League of Women Voters opposed the principle, embodied in the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937, that the United States should treat all belligerent nations alike. As supporters of the principle of collective security, the League thought the United States should discriminate against aggressors.

In 1938 the League Convention voted to support: "Amendment of the Neutrality Act of 1937 to provide, at the discretion of the President, for embargoes on essential war materials and to provide for the application of all embargoes in cooperation with other signatories against those belligerent nations which have violated treaties to which the United States is also a signatory." In April 1939, the League Council supported embargoes on loans and credits to belligerents who had violated treaties.

By action of the 1939 Council, the League also began its strenuous battle against a proposed amendment to the Constitution which would have given to the electorate sole power by a national referendum to declare war or to engage in warfare overseas except in case of direct attack. The League opposed the proposition as a fundamental change in our representative system, a change which would weaken the responsibility of the Congress and would hamper the conduct of foreign relations.

War Starts in Europe

On September 1, 1939, Germany under Hitler declared war on Poland.

On September 8, 1939, President Roosevelt proclaimed a limited national emergency.

On April 9, 1940, Germany declared war on Norway and Denmark.

Still, isolationism prevailed in the United States. Events of 1939 and early 1940 were called a "phony war."

In April 1940, the League Convention voted to support: "A foreign policy as a nonbelligerent which permits discrimination against an aggressor and favors the victim of aggression."

When Hitler invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in May 1940, public opinion in the United States changed rapidly. In September, Congress passed the Selective Service Act.

In December 1940, the policy of aid to victims of aggression was defined by the United States. The general public at last accepted the theory that in aiding friendly nations which were fighting aggression the United States was acting to prevent the spread of war to this country.

The League supported the Lend-Lease Bill, which became law in March 1941, in what has been called the sharpest and quickest decision in the League's foreign policy experience.

The "Battle of Production," upon which the League embarked in May 1941, expressed the League's support of the U.S. policy of aiding the democracies. The 1941 Council selected seven specific areas in which a special contribution might be made to citizen thought and action. They were: taxation and defense; inter-American cooperation; living costs and defense; school facilities and housing in defense areas; relief in relation to defense; collective bargaining in relation to defense; civil liberties in relation to defense.

An unlimited national emergency was proclaimed by President Roosevelt on May 27, 1941.

In October 1941 the League supported repeal of the Neutrality Act. But time was running out.



*With President Truman in the White House Rose Garden in 1949
With President Eisenhower in the White House Rose Garden in 1957*



THE WAR YEARS



Chapter VII

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On December 8 the United States declared war on Japan. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and within a few hours the United States declared war on them.

The League of Women Voters adjusted from a defense effort to a war effort. The "Battle of Production" became "Wartime Service."

A special meeting of the national Council of the League was held in January 1942. A summary of the meeting said: "The Council agreed that in wartime, democracy, without an understanding citizenry active in relation to the function of government, would die at its roots. It agreed that the League of Women Voters had accumulated a store of experience and knowledge about government that, carried in bits and pieces to a wider public, would nourish these roots. It agreed that it possessed in its members not now occupied with the more usual tasks of the League a potential army to convey such bits and pieces about current government to busy men and women of each community. It agreed, therefore, to undertake just such a wartime service."

"The Voice of Today . . .

The League would attempt to enlist every member in some part of this service. It would remind citizens that they should now be more attentive, not less attentive, to what government did. A wartime government would have to act decisively; its decisions would not always be palatable. Citizens should form a united front in order to win the war as speedily as possible, but should be watchful that the essential freedoms of our democratic government did not suffer in the process.

This was not the usual appeal in time of war. It was not as dramatic as many other forms of volunteer activity, such as serving in canteens, or rolling bandages. But League members found a way: they rolled bandages along with others, but they turned the conversation to the necessity of rationing and price control and higher taxes, and later, of a new world collective security system to avoid a third world war.

Simple, brief, and popular were the brightly colored "broadside" with

which the League "carried in bits and pieces to a wider public" the essential points of issues which were affecting the daily lives of all.

The greatest amount of sustained effort by the League was given to support of price control and rationing. It also was for raising the income tax and collecting it at the source, and for financing the war by a pay-as-we-go system as far as possible.

... the Herald of Tomorrow'

But while the League worked in the present, with its contributions to the war effort, it had its sights on the future as well. It had lagged in support of the League of Nations; it would never be so slow again.

The 1942-44 Program called for "participation by the United States in the making and execution of plans for world-wide reconstruction and for postwar organization for peace, which will eventually include all peoples regardless of race, religion, or political persuasion." It also called for "adoption of current policies, political and economic, which will facilitate postwar organization for peace."

As if to vaccinate against a new outbreak of isolationism such as followed World War I, the League carried out a "Stop Isolation" campaign in 1943. It strongly backed a congressional resolution which called for the establishment of an international organization to which the United States would belong.

The Program adopted in 1944 went further, adding support for U.S. membership in a general international organization "for peaceful settlement of disputes with power to prevent or stop aggression."

In 1944-45 the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for the establishment of the United Nations became the focal point for the most intensive nation-wide effort ever undertaken by the League. Countless meetings were held. Over a million pieces of popularly worded literature were distributed. The League waged a similar campaign for the Bretton Woods Agreements, which led to the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund.

The 1944-46 Program called for "participation by the United States in plans and machinery for world-wide relief and rehabilitation, for handling common economic, social, and political problems." The League urged full U.S. participation in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which was established in 1943 and was doing reconstruction work before the war was over and before the United Nations was founded.

The League foresaw that the period of greatest shortages and thus the greatest threat of inflation would come after the end of hostilities. The Program adopted in 1944 called for "A war and postwar finance program based as far as possible on tax revenues, which takes into account control of inflation, fair distribution of the tax burden, and minimizing postwar dislocations; curbing inflation through price control, rationing, and curtailing purchasing power."



WHAT HAPPENED IN 1944

Chapter VIII

World War I provided the final impetus which brought enactment of the 19th Amendment and full and equal suffrage to women of this country.

World War II provided the final impetus which brought a fundamental change in the structure and methods of the League of Women Voters.

Woman suffrage (1920) and the alteration of the League (1944) would have come soon in any event. Both were long overdue, and needed only that last decisive push.

The League started out as the National League of Women Voters. It inherited its structure from the National American Woman Suffrage Association, of which it was at first a part. State Leagues, most of which had been in existence as state headquarters of the NAWSA, became the keystone of League structure. A Convention of representatives of state Leagues selected a Program, which for many years was national, state, and local all in one, and chose national officers.

A 1924 publication says: "... there is no such thing as membership for an individual in the National League, which is made up of Leagues in the various states. . . The state Leagues, in turn, are made up of local Leagues." However, at that time other organizations could be members of the League, and were, including all their own branches. Today it is just the reverse: *only* an individual may be a member of the League; *no* organization may be a member.

The League purpose is made up of several parts. (See Chapter II.) In the beginning, accent was heavy on "needed legislation," largely to correct long-standing discriminatory practices against women, children, and the consumer.

As the League grew, gained experience, and turned its attention to other public issues, the Program became broader and broader. The Department system was highly developed, each Department having a Program longer than the total Program is now. Each Department covered its Program thoroughly—extremely, exhaustively well. It produced specialists in subject matter; they, and the League, made great contributions in the field of public affairs. In 1959 the national office of the League received a request for a League publication entitled "Corrupt Practices

Legislation." No one in the office remembered it, but the files revealed it, and a copy was sent. The man who asked for it described it as "still the only comprehensive source of tabular information in its field." It was published in 1928, by the Department of Efficiency in Government. That is the kind of work the Department system produced and which won for the League its reputation for presenting dependable, factual information.

The End Purpose of the League

However, another facet of League purpose—development of the well-rounded, effective, individual citizen—suffered by comparison. It seemed to become a by-product of another purpose, not a purpose in itself.

Few, if any, members would seriously consider doing away with "Program." It is the hard core around which the League is built. The League studies government, yes, but not for the sake of accumulating knowledge, nor in a vacuum. Study is the means to an end—action. Members "learn by doing," too, and "doing" means, largely, action on Program. Such action is a desirable end in itself. It is not sufficient for the League, since for the League the end is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government."

The first three Presidents, whose administrations covered the 1920-44 period, all seemed to recognize the possibility that the League might, in the nature of things, develop as it did, toward the system of specialization by a few in one or another field at the sacrifice of individual member participation in all fields of League interest and in "the outside world."

Mrs. Park said: "I hope for the League not that it will become a body of expert persons who do remarkable things brilliantly, but that it will continue to be 'an every woman's organization' . . . our future is assured so long as we hold to that fundamental purpose."

Miss Sherwin, who had been chairman of the Department of Efficiency in Government, which was the first Department and the model for later ones, kept uppermost in her mind the larger purpose of the League. She saw it as, first, an experiment in political education to promote the participation of women in government and, second, an expansion of the small, qualitative experiment to the entire electorate. This, she said, was the League's "profound purpose."

Miss Wells, upon assuming the presidency, reminded the League that it was not meant to be a group of specialists, that it was a group of laywomen, and that it adopted a Program and supported legislation in order to give citizens practice in the responsibilities of democracy.

Miss Wells said: "A Program participated in by the few rather than the many is alien to the League's purpose . . . Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but ability to act . . . To cause more people to use effectively what knowledge they possess seems to be the unique aim of the League of Women Voters."

The depression of the early 1930s advanced this line of thinking among members who might not have reached it as soon but for the economic crisis.

The budget of the League dropped by more than half from 1931 to 1933. Field service, a system successfully used by the suffrage association, inherited by the League and to the present one of its hallmarks, was seriously curtailed. "The best things in life are free," ran a popular song of the era. League members found that one of the best of things free was discussion—with friends, neighbors, those in the same block or same section of town.

In the middle '30s, the merit system campaign enlisted many members in a common purpose, unified and stimulated the League. The same was true of the food and drug law campaign. More and more members began to see the larger purpose of the League—the working with a whole community on some issue of general interest.

When World War II started in Europe in the late '30s the threat to the western democracies was a serious one. League members realized sharply that here was a challenge for them. They would extend their discussion pattern in an ever-widening circle outside League membership, try to help others—at the same time they were trying to help themselves—to probe for the causes of the war. People in this country were puzzled, frightened, felt less and less secure from the spreading war. Everyone was looking for the answers.

Then the United States was drawn into the war. League members were now determined to dispense with set patterns of meetings, and to get down to fundamentals—democracy itself, and the importance of the individual to the success of democracy.

As the depression had curtailed large meetings, now gas rationing did it. League members found that discussion with even a small group could be stimulating, rewarding, constructive.

In 1943 the League Council recommended that the Department system be abolished. The 1944 Convention abolished it.

League Becomes Association of Members

The Convention also elected a new President—Anna Lord Strauss, whose great grandmother was Lucretia Mott, one of the women who "started it all" back in 1840.

However, her name was not on the slate recommended by the Nominating Committee. She was nominated from the floor of the Convention, as were two other candidates for the offices of Secretary and Treasurer.

The Convention was determined to vest the power structurally where in fact it had always been—in the members. The recommended slate was no less determined to achieve the same purpose, but some of those named by the Nominating Committee wanted to do away with the state Leagues entirely. Delegates did not want to go *that* far. The full Nominating-Committee slate was up for election, plus the three nominated from the floor. When the votes were counted, the new President, Secretary, and Treasurer were those who had been nominated from the floor. The rest of the slate was elected, but the two Vice Presidents and two of the directors shortly resigned. At the post-Convention Board meeting

these four vacancies were filled by appointment.

As the national Board entered the new League year, its officers and directors were dedicated to the concept of a membership organization and structural and procedural emphasis on local Leagues, and also to delegation of powers to state Leagues in the degree to which the Convention had authorized it.

Up to 1944 the League was a federation of state Leagues. Henceforth it would be an association of members.



The League Testifies at Congressional Field Hearings

(top) Before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee - 1957

(bottom) Before the Senate Select Committee on National Water Resources - 1959



SINCE 1944

The "new look" of the League of Women Voters did not come about overnight. The basic structure was changed in 1944. Some revisions that followed from the major alteration were made reasonably soon; others are still in the process or have been imperfectly realized. Some procedures and many methods remain as they existed before 1944.

The National League of Women Voters was renamed the League of Women Voters of the United States in 1946. Program was considerably shortened that year. In 1954 it was simplified still further.

An individual now joins the League of Women Voters of the United States. She works through her local League in the field of government in her community. A state League is composed of local Leagues and concerns itself with state governmental matters. All members work on state and national governmental issues through their local Leagues.

In general, the national Board deals directly with local Leagues on local-national matters, with copies of correspondence to state Leagues; it deals with state Leagues on state-national matters.

State Leagues have the primary responsibility—delegated by the national Board through Convention action—for establishing local Leagues within the respective states. State Leagues are also responsible for the major part of service to local Leagues and for dealing with them on state-local matters.

National Conventions are made up almost entirely of delegates from local Leagues, though a few attending represent state Leagues. Delegates come to national Convention informed as to what their local Leagues want, but uninstructed; they vote as individuals.

One structural change was the establishment of the unit system, in 1948.

A unit is a small discussion group. It is made up of individuals who form a natural group for various reasons—for example, those who live in the same neighborhood, those who work in the daytime and must meet in the evening, those who have young children in school and must meet in the morning so as to be at home in the afternoon, those who have pre-school-age children and must meet in the evening when the father can stay at home.



The Challenge Still

Despite the structural changes which the League made in an effort to carry out its purpose more effectively, the goal of reaching far beyond its members is not yet realized. It has made progress, but here still lies the challenge.

That challenge was issued by the new President, Miss Strauss, when she said: "It is absolutely essential that the imagination and intelligence of millions of individual citizens shall be deeply stirred." She was speaking of the Dumbarton Oaks campaign of 1944-45, and she urged Leagues to try to reach the unorganized, the unconvinced, the less informed, and impress upon them that an important decision would soon be made and that each citizen could play a part in making it. "Yours Is the Power," argued the first broadside of the League's campaign to promote understanding of the organization which was soon to be the United Nations.

Support of United Nations

In the immediate postwar years, in the League as in the country as a whole, major attention was naturally devoted to problems which the war had left in its wake. Some problems were political; some were economic. More often, a problem was a combination of economic, social, and political factors, and tied domestic affairs closely to international affairs and U.S. foreign policy.

In 1945 the League supported U.S. ratification of the United Nations Charter. Since then the League has continuously advocated a foreign policy based on support of the United Nations, and U.S. leadership to strengthen the United Nations. It has supported increased use of the U.N. and the Specialized Agencies, with adequate budgets, improved procedures, and provision of adequate power to keep the peace.

In 1948-49 the League carried on an intensive information program to build understanding of the U.N. among the American people. The Charter was examined to appraise the accomplishments of the U.N. and its potentialities, including possible ways of strengthening it within the framework of the Charter. The League's effort was another of its "Know Your Government" series—a "Know Your United Nations."

The "Pocket Reference on the United Nations," revised each year, is one of the most popular leaflets the League has ever published. Concise and inexpensive, it is as handy for adults as for school-age children. Over half a million copies have been sold since it first appeared in 1955.

Atomic Energy Control

The first atomic bomb, dropped on Japan in August 1945 in the closing days of World War II, brought the question of arms control dramatically to the fore. The League had a history of work in the field of disarmament and munitions following World War I. The backlog of knowledge now stood the members in good stead. The League vigorously opposed, in the fall of 1945, a bill which it thought would lead to military control of

atomic energy. It supported the bill which led to the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, placing atomic energy under civilian control. At the 1946 Convention it placed domestic and international control of atomic energy in first position on the national Program. It supported the Acheson-Lilienthal proposals for international control of atomic energy and the U.S. proposals to the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission which grew out of those proposals.

From 1946 to 1948 the League carried on a widespread community effort on the subject of atomic energy, its significance, the opportunities it offered as well as the dangers it posed. "Atomic Energy Weeks" were carried on by many local Leagues. Also, a tide of letters flowed to the Senate Committee from every part of the country. More letters were from Leagues than from any other organization. This, plus the individual citizen action which League efforts had helped stimulate, made up a strong current of public opinion in favor of the law passed placing atomic energy under civilian control.

World Court, European Recovery, Regional Arrangements

In 1945 the League saw a long-time goal reached. The League had worked from 1923 to 1935 for U.S. membership in the World Court, which sat from 1922 to 1940, but the United States never joined. A new International Court of Justice was reinstituted, along the same lines as the first one, and was included in the U.N. Charter, which the United States, of course, signed.

From 1946 to 1948 the League supported legislation to provide for the admission of a fair share of World War II displaced persons to the United States. The law passed in 1948 was judged by the League to be unsatisfactory and discriminatory, and it supported liberalizing amendments in 1949 and 1950.

In 1946 the League supported the British Loan as being necessary to create favorable conditions for the effective functioning of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank, two of the U.N. Specialized Agencies.

By 1947 it had become clear that the war destruction had been underestimated and that a long-range program of assistance was necessary if European civilization was to survive. Though still emphasizing that U.S. foreign policy was based on support of the United Nations, the League recognized that there were justifiable reasons for independent action by the United States. Members worked with intensity for the initial adoption of the European Recovery Program and annually for its support through adequate appropriations. In 1951 the highly successful European Recovery Program was terminated as such, and the Mutual Security Program began.

The League of Women Voters considers the security functions of the United Nations vital to its existence. It has repeatedly advocated action by the U.S. government toward fulfilling the major security provisions of

the Charter. However, as the "cold war" steadily worsened, League members turned to the idea of regional agreements—economic, political, military. In 1949 it "reluctantly" supported U.S. membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO. But the League retains its objective of a U.N. security system and holds that regional arrangements, under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, must be ultimately integrated into a universal security system.

World Trade

During these same years, the second half of the 1940s, the League continued its activity in the realm of world trade. Old-hand Leaguers are wont to say, to sigh, that the League seems to have been studying trade forever, and will it never stop? Most members would agree with the first statement, and to the question would answer "Probably not." So, in the 1945-50 period, trade is either present or accounted for. The League supported, as usual, the renewals of the Trade Agreements Act which came up in that period. It opposed repeated attempts to hamper the program directly or indirectly. From 1948 to 1950 it worked earnestly, but without success, for U.S. support of the International Trade Organization. In 1948 the United States joined in a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade through an executive agreement negotiated under the authority of the Trade Agreements Act; the League supported this membership.

Governmental Procedures, Fiscal Affairs

And what was the League doing on the domestic front in these postwar years?

The 1944 Convention adopted a Program item calling for, in part, "Strengthening governmental procedures to improve the legislative processes and the relationship between Congress and the Executive. . . ."

An occasion for effective action in strengthening the executive branch came first. The President had been given emergency power in 1941 to meet war needs; the several powers were temporary, however, and agencies affected by them were to revert to their previous status after the war. The League in 1945 supported the proposal whereby the President would be granted certain permanent powers for reorganizing the executive branch, subject to congressional "veto." The Executive Reorganization Act, which was enacted in December 1945, limited the power to the term of the President. Under the Act the League in 1946 supported three reorganization proposals, two of which were put into effect, one of which was "vetoed" by Congress.

In 1946 the League Convention placed on the Program a subject reading "Strengthening the organization and procedures of the Congress." The League was one of the foremost organizations backing the Reorganization Act of 1946, which was passed within a few months after the 1946 Convention.

The "morning after" headache of a wartime economy was a national malady. Everyone feared either inflation or deflation. The League was



concerned, too. From 1946 to 1948 it had on its Program "Governmental economic policies which prevent inflation and deflation and stimulate maximum production and employment." The 1948 Convention adopted an item worded "Analyzing federal taxes and expenditures in order to understand and support such fiscal policies as make for a stable domestic economy."

Root Problems, Korean War

On April 27, 1950, the League elected its fifth national President, Mrs. John G. Lee. She said (some years later): "The League, as an entity, has the same internal and external concerns as does the United States on a larger scale. The League wrestles with the identical root problems which affect the development of our government and society as a whole. . . . By virtue of its containing within its membership wide geographic, economic, and political representation, it (holds) within itself the basic varieties of public opinion which influence the development of government policy. . . . The League (is) a microcosm of the larger society."

In less than two months from the date on which Mrs. Lee took office, the League, along with the nation, had a root problem to wrestle with, for on June 25, 1950, Communist forces attacked the Republic of Korea.

The U.N. Security Council met the same day and asked for resistance by the United Nations. (The U.S.S.R., a member of the Council, had been boycotting it since January 1950.) With 51 of the 59 then member countries of the U.N. giving their support to the action taken by the Security Council, the United States, led by a unified command under the U.N. flag, contributed the major effort.

The League expressed its support of the firm stand taken by the United States in acting through the United Nations. The swift, decisive action was considered a major step toward an effective system of collective security, and the League urged the government to continue to work through the U.N.

Obvious, however, was the question: "But what if there had been a veto in the Security Council?" Thus came, in 1950, passage of the Uniting for Peace Resolution in the U.N., which provided for emergency sessions of the General Assembly, for Peace Observation Commissions, for exploration of ways to cooperate against aggression, and for establishment of special units within national forces prepared for action when the U.N. recommends action. The League urged the U.S. government to take the lead in implementing the Resolution.

Mutual Security

In 1951, as the cold war was intensified, all U.S. economic and military aid to its allies was combined under the Mutual Security Act. The League supported the Act's provision for defense support and military aid to Europe to strengthen NATO; it did not then take nor has it since taken a position on military aid to other regions.

The League's greatest interest in the Mutual Security Program has been concentrated on the provisions for economic aid and technical assistance to the underdeveloped countries. The League has testified at congressional hearings repeatedly in the history of the Mutual Security Program, in support of technical assistance—unilateral, from the United States, and, even more strongly, multilateral aid through the United Nations Technical Assistance program.

In 1954 the League came out in opposition to the so-called Bricker Amendment to limit the Executive's treaty-making power. The proposal was a highly controversial issue. A brief account of the League's study and action in connection with it appears in Chapter X.

Domestic and Foreign

The national Programs for all two-year periods from 1946 to 1956, when averaged, gave "equal billing" in the primary category to international and domestic subjects. In 1956-58, both subjects in this category were in the domestic field and, for the first time in many years, the League's national Program had no foreign policy item.

... In primary position, that is.

There were four separate subjects in the foreign policy field in the secondary position of the Program, which ordinarily receives far less attention on the part of the membership. And it was under these that the League was able to act when two situations arose later in 1956.

In July of that year, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company, and the Middle East problem opened wide. In October came the revolution in Hungary.

The League promptly set up a campaign for a community project, one that would help League members and other citizens to understand the acute problems in the Middle East and in Hungary, and the short-range and long-range solutions. They called it "Focus on the Future." It was a two-month intensive effort, and members considered it a job well worth doing.

In 1958-60 the League Convention returned to equal billing of a foreign policy item and a domestic item on the national Program.

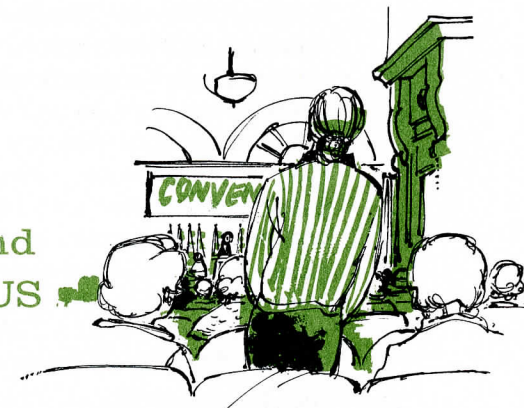
Reminders of League Purpose

Here ends this pamphlet's treatment, sketchy as it is, of League Program content. If to the reader our presentation appears incomplete and inconclusive, we cite what the League has said before of itself.

"The Program Record" paraphrases what Justice Holmes once said of the law: "The life of the League of Women Voters has not been logic, it has been experience."

"The Program Explained" says: "... the Program is neither comprehensive nor logical, which is as it should be. A comprehensive and logical approach to government, though it may be suitable for the student, is not practicable for the active participant, and the League's purpose has been to promote active participation in government."

PROGRAM-MAKING and REACHING CONSENSUS



Chapter X

How is the League Program made?

How does the League reach consensus?

These two questions are frequently asked by nonmembers. The two processes are perhaps the most important elements in the democratic methods which are consciously and conscientiously practiced within the League.

The League Adopts a Program

The national Program is selected by the biennial national Convention of the League, which is held in even-numbered years in late April. But the vote adopting the Program is only the final step of a process which begins six to eight months earlier.

In August of the year before a national Convention, the national Board sends to all local and state Leagues the first call to Convention and gives deadlines. The list of deadlines is also carried in *The National Voter*, the all-member publication of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

In October local Leagues begin discussing possibilities for the new Program. By late November they send their suggestions to the national Board.

Next, members of the national Board, working singly and in small committees, thoughtfully and painstakingly consider all Program suggestions. This takes weeks.

At a January Board meeting, a Proposed Program is worked out. The recommendation must be measured against League principles and purpose, possibilities for political effectiveness, womanpower and time available. Also to be considered is whether it represents a cross section of thinking—that is, did the recommendation come from various sections of the country, from large and small Leagues, from city and rural Leagues?

The Proposed Program is sent to the local and state Leagues in February. Leagues go through another round of discussion and by a date in early April send to the national Board their recommendations, if any, for changes (no completely new area may be suggested) in the

Proposed Program. The Board evaluates these comments and may revise the Proposed Program.

Next comes Convention and floor debate. And finally, adoption of the Program.

No wholly new subject may be considered for the Program by the Convention. However, there is a provision whereby something suggested in the first round, but not on the Proposed Program, may be brought before the Convention; it takes only a majority vote of delegates to have it considered, but a two-thirds vote to have it adopted. This is in line with the League's democratic procedures.

The League Reaches Consensus

The process involved in reaching consensus is as democratic, as grass-roots, as the Program-making process.

First of all, the League takes a national position only on issues which local and state Leagues have had ample opportunity to study.

Secondly, no position is taken unless it is evident that there is a wide area of agreement among the membership.

Sometimes the League is challenged because it does not poll its members. To understand the League's policy one need only consider the representative system of our government. Does a Representative or Senator poll everyone in his constituency when he is preparing to vote on an issue? Of course not; yet he usually has his finger on the pulse of his constituents as a whole.

The League is also sometimes challenged because it does not give out figures when it announces consensus. Figures are used, of course, as a League Board determines whether consensus exists. But figures in themselves are not the only factor. If numbers of Leagues alone were counted, one section of the country, the populous East, for example, where there are more Leagues, could outweigh the total of the other sections. If numbers of members within Leagues were the basis of a count, a few big Leagues could outweigh the total of many small Leagues. If the issue were one in which, for example, Leagues in industrial and agricultural areas might be assumed to have opposing opinions, and more Leagues from industrial areas registered opinions, they could outnumber the Leagues in the agricultural areas; and vice versa.

Therefore, as in Program-making, there must be a wide area of agreement based on cross section as to states, and cross section as to size and type of Leagues, before the national Board can say that consensus has been reached. As local Leagues reach consensus, reports are made to the national Board. The Board also considers attitudes revealed in local and state League bulletins, correspondence, and field visits.

An Example

To illustrate the process, the League consensus on the Bricker Amendment will serve as a good example.

The Bricker Amendment was introduced in the U.S. Senate in Sep-

tember 1951 and again in January 1952. In March 1952 *The National Voter* carried an article on it. In April 1952 the national Convention discussed it. The 1953 national Council also discussed it. Altogether, pro-and-con information was made available to members in at least 14 separate instances through *The National Voter*, "Report from the Hill," and communications to local League presidents.

Three times in 1953—May, October, November—the national Board asked local Leagues to report as to their preparation and views, the final request a reminder that local League opinion would be considered at the coming Board meeting "to determine whether a League position is warranted." Responses were more numerous and opinion was stronger than in the case of any other issue on which consensus had been reached in at least 15 years. And, in January 1954, the national Board announced that the League of Women Voters of the United States was opposed to the Bricker Amendment.

Self-Improvement

The League constantly strives to widen member participation and facilitate the expression of membership opinion. Responsibility rests with the local and state Leagues to express their views; responsibility rests with the national Board to determine the point at which opinion is strong enough to represent the membership as a whole.

However, unanimity is not expected or even desired. Majority opinion prevails, naturally, as in any democratic body. Those who disagree are expected not to make public issue *in the name of the League* of opposition to the official position of the League. But they are free to express their opposition as widely as they wish, as individuals.

There are always minorities within the League. They are heartily encouraged to work as hard as they like within the League to become the majority. League history is full of examples where the minority has become the majority.

For example, the League of Nations "bloc" in the League of Women Voters was a minority for a long time. It was determined, however, and it kept pressing to convince others within the League. It took this minority 12 years to become a majority, from 1920 to 1932, when the League of Women Voters came out in strong support of the League of Nations.

One staunch member of the League probably holds the all-time record for a determined minority. At the 1956 Convention, a group of women who had been part of the suffrage movement in its closing days and leaders of the League in its early days were asked to participate, from the rostrum, in some "conversations" about the history of the League. When this particular leader's turn came she could not resist the opportunity to put her case once more, and she "lobbied" for compulsory citizenship classes in the lower grades of public schools—something that was on the League's first Program.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

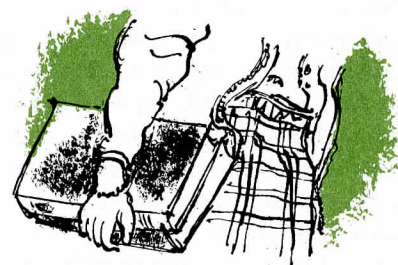
League of Women Voters papers deemed to be of historical interest are now housed in the Library of Congress. The collection is one of the largest in the Manuscript Division of the Library.

The first set of papers was given to the Library in 1933, and includes suffrage papers dating back to 1914. Another set was given in 1950. As records at national headquarters become non-current they are added to the collection, which now runs through 1954. An instrument signed in 1950 makes the entire group a gift to the Library. Processing is still going on; the deed of gift provides that when this process is completed the papers shall be available to interested students.

The papers are assembled in containers which measure 10.5 x 13 x 4.5 inches. Manuscript Division experience indicates that containers average 300 manuscripts each; a manuscript is one unit—it can mean a single sheet of paper, a 6-page letter, or a whole book. The Division also estimates average weight of a full container at 7 pounds. In these terms League papers now in the Library of Congress

fill 1020 containers
weigh . . . more than 3.5 tons
total 306,000 manuscripts
occupy . . 626,535 cubic inches

That's a lot of reading for "interested students."



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chapter XI

One cannot review the history of the League even cursorily without being aware that the *idea* has remained constant.

This is true despite the changes in structure, in Program format and content, in procedures, in interpretation of policy, in application of methods. Every change made is to fulfill the League purpose more faithfully—to make the organization more democratic, more responsive to membership thinking, more effective in the community be it local, state, or national.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Yet in some ways things do not seem to change at all. Consider the minutes of a meeting of the national committees of the League when it was still a part of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, in 1919:

"There was general discussion of the possibility of some method of arousing in women a sense of their financial responsibility for the League of Women Voters. . . .

"Mrs. A. suggested that the element which makes the strongest appeal is the work, the Program, of the League. . . .

"Mrs. B. said she believed that the first essential for money-raising is a budget. . . .

"Mrs. C. asked whether expert knowledge is more important than other qualities. . . .

"Mrs. D. stated that in her opinion capacity for leadership is even more important than expert knowledge."

Certainly the plaintive note in the financial report of 1924—"In no year has our income equalled the amount called for by our budget"—has its echoes in any League Convention today.

The same questions are being asked today as always. The call to the 1921 Convention said: "The League is established. The League has power. How best shall we use this power to become a vital and helpful force in our country? How best continue in the work of educating a conscientious, well-informed electorate?"

A 1938 League publication said: "The League upon its eighteenth



birthday has not so much arrived at a destination as equipped itself to set forth. . . . Only by volition and eternal vigilance will it preserve its unique promise of increasing active citizen concern for government. . . . The promise is all there. It remains to fulfill it." We can say the same on the League's fortieth birthday.

There was a bit of unfinished business left over from the 1920 Convention of the League. That Convention provided that at the end of five years "account should be taken of achievements won and the importance of the unfinished program. A new determination can then be made concerning the advisability of a continuance of the League."

We have not examined every one of those 306,000 manuscripts in the Library of Congress, but among the many we did examine we could not find that this point was ever raised again. At least no one has brought it up lately.

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