

COUNCIL-  
MANAGER  
- FORM  
1936

Meanwhile, other members were active working for the Council-Manager Plan. They helped publish a booklet describing the Plan, got signatures on petitions, did office work for the Charter League and spoke before public meetings. The budget was now \$480, with \$250 going to State and National League and local dues were raised to \$2.00.

The LWV had achieved a place of recognized importance, and the Chairman (President) reported, "we are consulted by other civic organizations, legislators ask us what our position will be on new measures, and we are constantly being invited to serve on committees to plan for the betterment of the citizens of our community." Candidates and their wives were invited to a League membership luncheon and a League member spoke on, "The Will of the People," explaining what the League hoped for, from elected officials. The appointment of qualified personnel, reorganization of government for greater efficiency, better management of civil service examinations and well trained election officials, were some of the points emphasized.

In 1936 the Council-Manager Plan was put into effect in Schenectady. Immediately the League wrote its first letter regarding the appointment of City Manager. It urged the council to select a man with professional training, a man of integrity with no political ties or obligations. Mr. Purdy was appointed and served one year. He was followed by Mr. Harrell, a professional city-manager. The LWV also asked the city administration to "appoint a Civil Service Commission that would be politically independent and one to command the confidence and esteem of every citizen. We suggest that commissioners be chosen from those who are willing and able to serve without pay, as do members of the school boards. We also suggest that one commissioner be a women."

About this time the League's President was invited by the Governor to be a delegate to a conference on crime. "The Criminal and Society" was the topic and the conference included round table discussions of probation, parole and rehabilitation. This was tied in with the League's interest in dependent, neglected and delinquent children, and lead to local interest in strengthening the probation department and the children's court.

The need for better high school facilities in Schenectady brought League support to citizen committees working toward this goal, and it continued for many years. In their study of the local school situation, it was found that there was no sight saving program and that all dental work had been discontinued when budgets were cut during the depression. Over seven hundred children waited for tonsillectomies. This was a public health problem and the League asked physicians and nurses to meet together to try to find a solution.

There seemed to be no limit to the kind of work the League would tackle. Into their already busy days the National Chairman of the Department of Government and Economic Welfare tossed a request that a survey be made of canned tomatoes, to determine the effectiveness of grade labeling. "The Tomato Can Brigade" was organized and grocers in both chain and independent stores were interviewed. The conclusion was that a label was needed to indicate that the product had been government inspected, and to show the grade and contents of the can.

Questioning the quality of meat, milk and other foods, the League persistently pressured the city council for stricter codes and qualified personnel. (False and misleading advertising of meat was also publicly denounced.) With the health of the whole county in mind, they campaigned for a county health unit (1936). Opposition by the Medical Society, disinterest in the towns and political reasons, defeated the effort as they had once before (1931). However, the city manager later asked the Consumer Committee of the League to outline and recommend milk, meat and food codes for the city, and this they did.



These were truly militant years. During the last of the 1930's "Those League women":

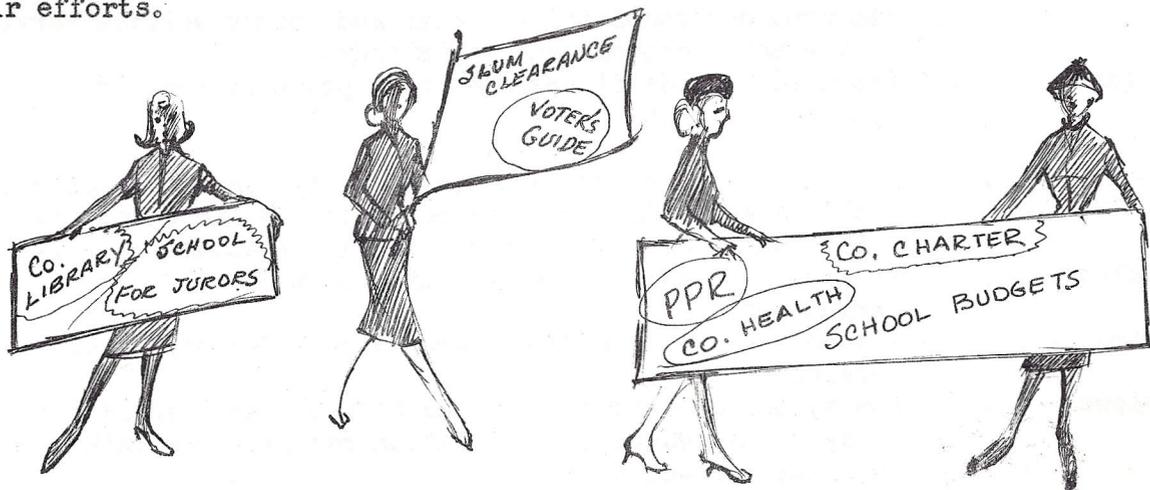
- surveyed . . . . . library facilities in the county.
- stressed . . . . . the need for more low cost housing for families relocated due to slum clearance.
- indorsed . . . . . the Proportional Representation method of electing public officials.
- studied . . . . . personnel standards in the Welfare Department --- in 1940 they asked the City Council and County Board of Supervisors to consider combining the city and county welfare services, for greater economy and efficiency.
- asked for . . . . . improved methods of assessment of property for taxation purposes, in the city.
- sponsored . . . . . a "School for Jurors" especially to inform women jurors, following the passage of a permissive Woman Juror Law --- they continued to work for a mandatory woman juror law.
- gave talks . . . . . on radio in favor of ratification of the Child Labor Amendment.
- supported . . . . . the county Child Welfare Board in care for neglected children.
- interviewed . . . . . beauty parlor workers as to hours and wages, as part of the League's interest in legislation regulating working conditions for women.
- campaigned for . . . . . a new County Charter for Schenectady with a manager as executive head (1937). This form of county government was recommended by a Citizens Committee of 21 on which League members served. The charter was voted on and defeated.
- advocated . . . . . improvement in school district organization and extension of the guidance program. They continued to press for better high school facilities and adequate budgets.
- scrutinized . . . . . each item of the city and county budgets and stated their opinions at public hearings.

set up . . . . . the first local committee to work for the Permanent Personal Registration System. The first League bill for PPR appeared in the 1940 State Legislature. This was the Lupton bill on which there was no action. It was re-introduced in 1941. A permissive law was passed in 1954, fourteen years of lobbying later!!

conducted. . . . . "Go See" tours for League members to every public and government institution in the county, and to meetings of Boards and Councils.

published . . . . . information on amendments to be voted on at election time, and the first (1940) VOTER'S GUIDE. This was done in cooperation with the Schenectady Gazette, the data supplied by the League and printed in the regular edition of the paper. Biographies of candidates, duties of elected officials, and a discussion of the issue of retaining the Council-Manager Plan were included.

It seems incredible that League women could have been so shrewd in reaching the heart of the problems and accomplished so much in the way of reforms. Where they did not actually reach their goal, they pointed the way, and continued to educate themselves and the public, looking toward future success as reward for their efforts.



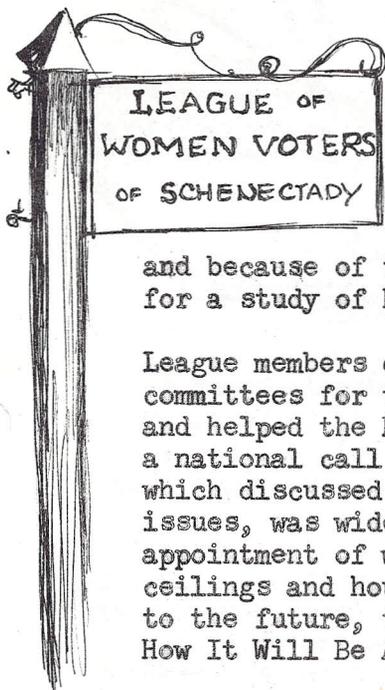
THE WAR YEARS

World War II strongly influenced the work of the League in the 1940's as the great economic depression had in the 1930's. Although some members felt that they should resign to devote their time and energy to war work, the majority thought that the League should maintain its unique service to the people by continuing to fight for the kind of government we need, whatever the circumstances. League members numbered 223 in 1941 and the budget had reached \$520.

At this time the League, practically the only nonpartisan organization to try to "Get Out the Vote," continued its pre-election activity with information booths, radio programs, and meetings where representatives of the political

parties outlined their platforms. The importance of the primary elections was stressed. In the fall of 1942 a Voters Handbook was published, financed by paid advertisements. This netted the LWV \$550. A Candidates Meeting was held in the form of a dinner at the Mohawk Golf Club for congressional candidates.

New provisions of the civil service law were studied and the adoption of state administration of civil service was recommended to the Board of Supervisors. The Ramspeck Bill extending the merit system in the Federal government was actively supported during legislative session.



A League office was acquired at 207 State Street and was kept open for voter information on week days from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. It also provided a place for Board Meetings and housed League records.

The League backed the Municipal Housing Authority in favor of slum clearance. They visited housing projects, and because of the demand for more housing by defense workers, they called for a study of housing conditions.

League members did not neglect community war effort. They served on committees for the sale of war bonds, planned recreation for servicemen and helped the Red Cross. They supported the Lend-Lease Bill in answer to a national call to action. A new League publication called Broadsides, which discussed isolationism, OPA, manpower, lend-lease and other national issues, was widely distributed. They wrote the ration board urging the appointment of women to serve on panels, particularly concerning price ceilings and household matters. Typical of League thinking, in looking to the future, they began a study called "World Order After the War and How It Will Be Achieved."

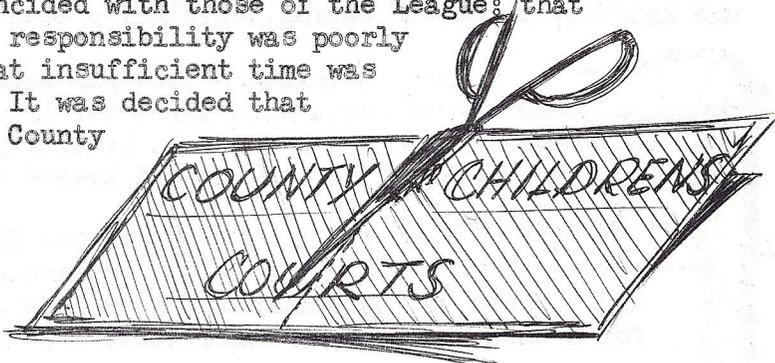
Several women's groups including the League, AAUW, YWCA, Panhellenic and Junior League organized a Discussion Leaders' training course which provided community leaders so that citizens could meet, discuss, and become informed on vital issues, in the democratic tradition.

One of the early recommendations of the League, a county-wide welfare department, became a reality at this time, possibly because the factual basis for its merit had been established through the years.

During 1943 to 1945 the war-time activities of the League continued with special attention to consumer problems of rationing, inflation and taxes. Broadsides on "Prices and Subsidies" were distributed and the anti-inflation program in Congress was supported. Post war planning was also of vital interest. A report was made on a resolution in the U. S. Senate favoring an organization of United Nations to maintain peace. The League's Foreign Relations Committee called the attention of members to conditions in foreign countries and the policies of these countries, particularly Russia, Yugoslavia and China. The Bretton Woods and Dunbarton Oaks Conferences which planned for world security through the United Nations, were thoroughly studied by the League and then the information was taken to the community by speakers and through discussion groups.

The Schenectady League was commended by State and National League Boards for their excellent work in informing the public about the United Nations and related subjects. International Relations has been of major importance on League program since this time.

In addition to war work Schenectady League members devoted a great deal of time to the County Probation Department and Children's Court. A study of children's courts was presented to the County Court Judge for his suggestions and reactions. His conclusions coincided with those of the League: that the staff was overworked, probation responsibility was poorly organized and decentralized, and that insufficient time was given to the preparation of cases. It was decided that reorganization was needed to form a County Probation Department with adequate personnel, eliminating voluntary agencies. This meant spending \$20,000 a year by the county, instead of \$7,000, and the Board of Supervisors were asked to include this amount in the budget. The League also urged the supervisors to seriously consider the separation of County and Children's courts, and give the Children's Court a full-time judge. To alert the public, the League printed and distributed 2000 flyers about the Children's Court in the community, with the help of the Citizen's Unity Committee, the CIO, PTA's, Teachers Association and County Bar Association.



Later, the County Judge asked the League to appoint a committee to investigate the existing facilities for the care of mental cases in Schenectady. Their findings lead them to recommend that a mental health clinic be included in a county health plan, and urged the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors to study the feasibility of combining town, city and county health services into one County Health Unit. This they agreed to do.

The League again recommended increased funds for library facilities in Schenectady and its Education Committee was active in reporting on the health, recreation and building programs of the local schools.

Before elections, questionnaires were sent to candidates for Congress and these were then discussed in meetings with local party committeemen to stimulate interest in the job of the committeeman and show his relationship to the voter. A "Voter Institute" was held to discuss the issues of the campaign, both domestic and international, as they affect the individual, his family and his job. A second voters handbook "Your Vote Counts" was published.

The monthly bulletin which had been suspended as a war-time economy was started again to better inform the members of the many program items.