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**Toward Better
Working Conditions
for Women**

*Methods and Policies
of the
National Women's
Trade Union League*

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
JAMES P. MITCHELL, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU
FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director*

Bulletin 252
1953

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**TOWARD BETTER WORKING
CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN**

*Methods and Policies of the National Women's
Trade Union League of America*

Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, No. 252

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JAMES P. MITCHELL, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU

FRIEDA S. Miller, *Director*

Washington : 1953

TOWARD BETTER WORKING
CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN

Methods and Policies of the National Bureau
of Economic Research

Bulletin of the Women's Bureau, No. 125

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JAMES M. BEVERIDGE, Director

WOMEN'S BUREAU

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, October 12, 1953.

SIR: I have the honor of transmitting a report on the methods and policies developed by the National Women's Trade Union League to help American women workers improve their conditions of work and of life. The National Women's Trade Union League occupies a unique position in the history of the United States, as spokesman for women within the labor movement, and for the labor movement among working women.

This report was prepared by the Women's Bureau in response to demands for historical information concerning techniques used to assist women workers at a time in our Nation's life when the large-scale employment of women in industry was first developing. Methods and policies in this field are matters in which women from other parts of the world have expressed particular interest.

For the most part, the presentation here stresses the work of the League in its first 10 years, although later activities also are indicated. Only the more outstanding examples of the League's many projects and the more basic of its policies are described.

The Bureau wishes to thank Rose Schneiderman, for many years president of the League, and Elisabeth Christman, for many years its secretary, for furnishing numerous helpful materials, and the latter for reading and making valuable suggestions on the manuscript. The selections were made and the report prepared under the direction of Mary N. Hilton, Chief of the Bureau's Research Division, by Mary-Elizabth Pidgeon, economic consultant.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. JAMES P. MITCHELL,
Secretary of Labor.

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MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF AMERICA

IN THE LOCAL FIELD

- Promoting the organization of working women into existing unions, and where necessary forming new unions.
- Informing the public on conditions of women's work and the purposes of trade unions, and securing support for improved conditions.
- Securing affiliation with the League of unions in trades employing many women.
- Assisting women workers during strikes and in securing advantageous agreements with employers.
- Insisting that unions appoint their women members to their policy-making councils and committees.
- Arranging classes in economics and trade-union history for women workers, and securing the cooperation of colleges in conducting such classes.
- Conducting a special training program to develop selected women for active work in labor organizations.
- Securing for girls equal opportunity with boys for trade and technical training.
- Securing provisions for retraining women displaced from industries or occupations with declining demand for workers.
- Forming local committees to promote enforcement of labor laws for women.
- Urging establishment of fire prevention bureaus in cities to protect workers.
- Aiding foreign-born women workers to become a part of American life.
- Conducting recreational groups and health programs for women workers.
- Advising and assisting women to secure compensation for injuries under existing workmen's compensation laws.

ON A STATE BASIS AND, LATER, NATIONALLY

- Furthering legislation of advantage to women workers, in particular the 8-hour day and minimum-wage laws.
- Urging appointment of women on public industrial boards and commissions.
- Promoting the establishment of women's right to vote.

IN THE FEDERAL FIELD

- Initiating the move for a far-reaching Federal investigation of working conditions of woman and child wage earners in woman-employing industries.
- Presenting to the President and to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy during World War I, the importance of declaring standards for women's work on Government war contracts.
- Promoting establishment of a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor.

IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIELD

- Sending two official League representatives to present a reconstruction program to the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I.
- Having fraternal delegates and speakers from other countries at league meetings.
- Keeping continually in touch with working women in other countries.
- Initiating and developing successive international congresses of working women, in cooperation with women's groups from other countries.

LIFE AND LABOR

May, 1913



Winning Strike Cotton Textile—George Hill

Woman, the Wage Earner
John P. Frey

N. Y. White Goods Workers
Erika Schoenfermann

Cotton Mill Workers
Government Report



The Vice Problem
Alice Henry

Preferential Union Shop
Bessie Freeman

The Need of Women Police
Louise de Neveu Brown

Minimum Wage Bibliography

PRICE 10 CENTS



100 PER YEAR

FIGURE 1.—WOMAN IN TEXTILE MILL.

[LIFE AND LABOR, May 1913]

VIII

TOWARD BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN

Methods and Policies of The National Women's Trade Union League of America

The compelling movements for human welfare in our times have included those designed to secure more healthful and satisfactory conditions for women's employment. In this field the work of the National Women's Trade Union League of America has been outstanding. This organization was initiated at the turn of the century by women of leisure who had observed at first hand the terrible situation then existing for women employed in many factories and shops.

The League was made up primarily of working women themselves, together with others who understood their needs. In close cooperation with labor unions, it spent almost 50 years helping women workers organize and standing back of them in their efforts to better their working conditions. Its basic purpose was twofold: It sought to secure public recognition of women workers' problems and public approval of their efforts; and it sought to develop among working women themselves initiative, self-reliance, fellowship, and a knowledge of the economic backgrounds of their employment.

The League continued its work until 1950, when it ceased to function as a national organization, although several local branches remained active. The methods used and the policies developed by this organization can prove of great assistance to women who may be facing similar problems. The far-reaching social objective of the League was well stated in the first editorial of its periodical, *LIFE AND LABOR*, when this publication was launched in 1911:

If the whole burden of remedying unfair industrial inequities is left to the oppressed social groups we have the cruel and primitive method of revolution.

To this the only alternative is for the whole community through co-operative action to undertake the removal of industrial wrongs and the placing of industry on a basis just and fair to the worker.

WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL WORK

In a number of large American cities, small groups of public-spirited men and women had a keen realization of the unfortunate conditions under which many women and children were employed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In that period, a large

proportion of the feminine workers (more than two in five) were young girls under 21 years of age, inexperienced, unskilled and with little bargaining power for a just wage or reasonable working hours.

The excessive hours these girls were employed often ran to 10 or 12 in the day, and sometimes to 14 or even longer. In numerous instances reported, women worked longer days than the men in the plant. The processes of industry and the speed with which they were performed over these lengthened workdays caused excessive fatigue and strained the young workers' physical capacities, sometimes almost beyond endurance.

Basic wages were insufficient to buy the necessities of life; the estimates of average earnings of workers in manufacturing industries in 1904 showed women receiving but little more than half as much as men to live on throughout the year. Wages were subject to many reductions—fines for imperfect work, rental of machines, or purchases of supplies such as thread and needles, or provision of specified uniforms. For example, women making men's pants in Chicago reported that if they damaged a pair they had to buy it at the wholesale rate.

Girls often were subject to insanitary work surroundings, not infrequently to abusive foremen, and to employment in buildings that were firetraps, in some cases with tragic consequences.

The general public was not widely aware of these often shocking conditions of women's employment. But influential women in cities such as Boston, Chicago, and New York, who understood the problems of working girls, sought to inform citizens in general of the unsatisfactory situations and to secure improvements. Labor leaders among the men also were interested, since they knew that low wages for women had an influence in depressing standards for men.

Informed persons realized that public knowledge was necessary. They also believed that assistance was needed among working women themselves, to enable them to band together and make progress within their own ranks for better conditions of work. Some of these persons knew of the work that had been done along these lines in England since 1874 by the British Women's Trade Union League, and had the idea that a similar organization could prove helpful in American cities.

THE LEAGUE'S ORIGIN, OBJECTIVES, AND MEMBERSHIP

Origin of the League

At the time of the convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Boston in the fall of 1903, a small group of interested persons

planned a meeting for the special discussion of the problems of women workers. Permission was given to announce from the platform of the A. F. of L. convention the meeting to consider women workers' needs. It was held on November 14, 1903, and resulted in the formation of the National Women's Trade Union League of America.

The officers and board members of the new organization included women from Chicago, New York, Boston, and Lynn, Mass. They included women from the Boot and Shoe Workers, United Garment Workers, Textile Workers, and Ladies' Garment Workers. Branches shortly were organized in several cities, as will be more fully described later.

From the first, the Women's Trade Union League was closely allied both with labor organization and with the woman movement of the times. Some of its members, experienced in the conditions of working women's lives, saw through the League the importance of woman suffrage; and some of the suffragists learned by contact with the League the importance of organizing women into trade unions. It was "the woman movement within the labor movement, and labor's spokesman within the woman movement."

Membership

The membership of the Women's Trade Union League included women representatives of trade unions and also other women interested in its objectives and program. It united in one national organization all working women, whether already in unions or not, and sympathizers with the movement outside the ranks of labor. It had the unique provision for "national members"—sympathizers living where no local league existed, who could affiliate as individuals directly with the national organization.¹ The League has been defined in general as a federation of trade unions and individuals, its membership consisting of the following:²

- (a) Affiliated unions of men and women, which were also affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.
- (b) Women working in trades in which no local union existed.
- (c) Members at large who were outside the ranks of labor but endorsed the purpose of the League.

¹ See Proceedings, Second Biennial Convention, 1909, p. 7. (Footnotes refer to list of Selected References at the end of this report.)

² See Women in Trade Unions in the United States, Pamphlet of National Women's Trade Union League, p. 6.

PLATFORM AND PURPOSES OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF AMERICA

The National Women's Trade Union League of America is a federation of trade unions with women members, with an individual membership of those accepting its platform. The women trade unionists have made of it a clearing house for their problems and have found it an effective instrument for collective action. The soundness of its policies and the permanent character of its work have won for it the steady support of a large group of men and women outside the trade-union movement, as well as within its ranks.

PLATFORM

1. Organization of workers into trade unions.
2. The shortened workweek.
3. A standard of living commensurate with the Nation's productive capacity.
4. Equal pay for equal work regardless of sex or race.
5. Full citizenship for women.
6. Cooperation with trade-union women of other countries.
7. International cooperation to abolish war.

PURPOSES

To provide a common meeting ground for women of all groups who endorse the principles of democracy and wish to see them applied in industry.

To develop leadership among the women workers, inspiring them with a sense of personal responsibility for the conditions under which they work.

To secure for girls and women equal opportunity with boys and men in trades and technical training, and pay on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex.

To secure the representation of women on industrial tribunals and public boards and commissions.

To interpret to the public generally the aims and purposes of the trade-union movement.

ACTIVITIES

The League's work divides itself naturally into three divisions: *Organization, Education, Legislation.*

Organization of women workers into trade unions enables them to bargain collectively and raise working standards.

In training for trade-union leadership, the Women's Trade Union League pioneered.

The National League keeps in close contact with Federal legislative measures relating to women and civic welfare.

Objectives and Program

The broad objectives of the National Women's Trade Union League were to serve the interests of wage-earning women, to acquaint the public more fully with the unhealthful and sometimes shocking conditions under which women often were employed at the time, to assist women in organizing for the purpose of securing better working conditions, and also to obtain improvements by means of legislation. The League's first purpose was stated:

To assist in the organization of women wage-earners into trade unions and thereby to help them secure conditions necessary for healthful and efficient work and to obtain a just return for such work.

This did not mean separate unions for women alone, but rather increasing the membership of women in existing unions, and developing organization in trades where none existed and where many women were employed.

These major objectives of the League were sought through the methods of organization, education, and legislation, which became the three main divisions of its program. As more fully stated, its purposes were furthered through organization of workers into trade unions, collective bargaining agreements between trade unions and employers, Federal and State legislation for the workers' economic and social advancement, workers' education, and interpretation of labor problems to the public.

The League's Alliance With Labor Unions.—The work of the League, primarily for women workers, always was done in close cooperation with trade-union groups, which then were chiefly of men. The League was started with the endorsement of the only great national labor federation of the time, and its first constitution called for holding an annual convention at the same time and place as this federation. Many unions were affiliated with it. At its second convention (1909) the organization report stated that 42 trades were affiliated. In Chicago the League sent voting delegations to local and State federations of labor and at the conventions of the Illinois Federation of Labor the League usually conducted a session in the interests of women workers. Other leagues also sent delegates to central labor bodies, and these usually had a voice but no vote.

The League constitution provided from the beginning that the majority of the women on its executive board must be union members. (See copy of first constitution at end of this report.) It sent organizers to increase the number of women in existing unions, and early in its history successfully asked the American Federation of Labor to provide women organizers to aid in this. It helped form new unions in industries or localities with many women workers but without

unions. By 1922, its president stated, the League had cooperated with over 100 trades. It gave powerful assistance to women workers in time of strike (which will be more fully described later) and helped women to negotiate with their employers for better wages, hours, and other conditions of work.

The League's close relation with labor organization is further shown by the fact that its national executive board had an advisory council of trade-union men. In 1912 the A. F. of L. again responded to the League's request to make it possible to organize women more fully, and authorized the funds to pay a league organizer for a year. More than a decade later, in the fall of 1925, the League gave the services of its organizer to the Wisconsin Federation of Labor to aid in the 40-hour-week organizing campaign.

The League lent its support to union strikes and policies in many instances where it was not primarily responsible for assistance; for example, in the early years of its existence the Boston League officially took part in a protest meeting during the strike of the hatters in 1908. In 1911 a league convention resolution protested against the arrest without warrant of an officer of one of the metal-trades unions in Indiana. In 1913 league representatives investigated cases in which families of striking copper miners in Calumet, Mich., had been evicted from their homes. In the same year, league convention resolutions supported a Federal investigation of treatment of workers in unions of miners in West Virginia, and called for public apology to a noted social worker among miners' families for her arrest and detention.

The League as a Part of the Woman Movement.—At the same time, the League was an important part of the woman movement of the day. Its work and its support were given along many lines to bettering the conditions of the life and work of women. A description of the League stated that it had:

... the great advantage of being a movement of women for women. Its leaders are women widely known as friends of their wage-earning sisters. In many cases years of study have made them well acquainted alike with the industrial field and the industrial leaders. Their connection with the movement inspired confidence, and in their respective States the Women's Trade Union Leagues soon became the very centers of effort for the improvement of women's conditions along trade-union lines.³

The League advocated full suffrage for women, had a suffrage committee of its own, passed at its conventions strong resolutions for suffrage, and worked actively with the suffrage organizations, which were affiliated with the League and sent representatives to its conventions. One of the national presidents joined the League after contact with a league member while attending a suffrage conference.

³ See Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, Senate Document No. 645, 61st Cong., 2d Sess., vol. X, p. 157.

A resolution was passed in its fourth biennial (1913), remonstrating with the union brothers of the central labor councils of Cincinnati and Dayton for failing to support suffrage, and calling on them to make amends by supporting the Ohio suffrage campaign of that year. The same convention voted that its suffrage committee should be active in increasing the number of Wage Earners' Suffrage Leagues in various localities.

The League had as a basic purpose informing the public of conditions under which women work and interpreting their needs. It made vigorous efforts to increase the membership of women in unions and to organize women workers, and insisted that women organizers be appointed to bring women into existing unions or to form new unions.

The League used its resources in interpreting to men unionists the needs of women workers. Its members realized that men unionists, faced by hard and pressing problems of their own, are likely to give to women's needs much less attention than their importance deserves. Consequently, the League officially urged the American Federation of Labor and all of its constituent bodies to guarantee to women workers adequate representation by women responsible to their organizations on all policy-making councils, bureaus, boards, or committees that deal with conditions of employment or standards of living.

When women were excluded from union membership, for example, the League objected vigorously, as in the case of a branch of the street and electric railway employees, which had refused to admit women to its membership though other branches of the same union had women members. There were many instances where the League carried on active campaigns to secure admission of women to unions, which sometimes required changes in the union charter—for example, the Philadelphia women candy makers in 1918 to the Bakery and Confectionery Workers' Union; the women copyholders in New York in 1920 to the International Typographical Union, which refused them on the ground of their being "unskilled"; and in 1923 the growing numbers of women beauty-shop operators to the Journeymen Barbers' International, an effort that finally succeeded in 1925.

The League also worked to open to women opportunities for technical and trade training, urged that pay be based on the occupation without discrimination because of sex, and insisted on representation of women on public industrial boards and commissions. The Boston League reported to the second biennial (1909) the appointment of its president to the Massachusetts State Commission on Industrial Education, first urged by the League and by textile unions so that "needs of girls for industrial training might not be overlooked by a commission composed entirely of men."



FIGURE 2.—THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE LEAGUE.

Prior to the biennial convention of the Women's Trade Union League in 1909, a beautiful official seal had been designed and presented to the League by a Chicago sculptress, Mrs. Julia Bracken Wendt. The legal work necessary to have the seal patented was the gift of another Chicagoan, Mr. T. J. Morgan. The League program was outlined on the seal as:

"THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY, A LIVING WAGE, TO GUARD THE HOME"

The seal was increasingly popular. It was used by the local leagues on all their publications, from postcards to pamphlets of information and advertisements. It was reproduced as a pin used with the badges of delegates to the convention. The president of the American Federation of Labor, Mr. Samuel Gompers, requested a large copy, which he framed and hung in his office in Washington.

Methods Employed by the League

1. Active promotion of the organization of working women.
 - a. Sending organizers to build unions among women in unorganized trades, and to increase woman membership in existing unions.
 - b. Giving information to the public on conditions of women's work and securing public support for workers' efforts toward improvement.
 - c. Aiding women workers in strike situations in a variety of specific ways.
2. Active promotion of legislation to secure better working conditions for women.
 - a. For laws to provide an 8-hour day and shortened work week.
 - b. For minimum-wage laws and establishment of orders under them.
 - c. Establishment in local leagues of committees to promote enforcement of laws.
3. Educational work along union lines.
 - a. Training women for the work of organizing women.
 - b. Conducting study courses in economics and trade-union history for women workers.
 - c. Promoting access to technical and trades training for girls and women on an equal basis with boys and men.

TELLING THE PUBLIC ABOUT WOMEN WORKERS

Leaders in the Women's Trade Union League saw as one of its first important tasks informing the public more fully of industrial conditions, and especially of the conditions which confronted women in the mills and factories. The President of the League, Mrs. Margaret Dreier Robins, wrote in 1909:

The Women's Trade Union League of Chicago is continuously receiving letters from all over the country asking for information regarding the industrial conditions under which the women in America are working. . . . Better than printed information is the knowledge to be had through personal fellowship with the women workers, and this is found in the membership of the Women's Trade Union League. Therefore, to every woman who acknowledges her share of the responsibility for the miserable lives of women and children in the sweated trades and who recognizes her kinship with all women, we say—Join in the glad comradeship of the Women's Trade Union League and learn with us that organization into trade unions is our immediate opportunity and one within our reach.⁴

In an address to one of the League conventions, Mrs. Robins said:

In shop, factory, and mill all over our country, our women are working under conditions that weaken vitality and sap moral fiber—conditions that are destructive alike to physical health and mental and moral development. These conditions, if permitted to continue, will destroy the ideals and promise of our individual and national life. Long hours, small pay, despotic rules and foremen, overshadowed by the haunting fear of losing one's job, with consequent hunger, cold and bitter want, do not make for the development of free men and free women. . . .

⁴ See Pamphlet, *The Women's Trade Union League of Chicago, 1908-09 Introduction*.

Every product of modern industry has, beside and above its cost price in money, a social price in humanity. Some articles that we seem to be getting very cheap will be found to be costing us very dear. The glory and strength of motherhood, the dream and music of childhood, are many times sold at the bargain counters. . . . Products that are made for wages less than living and by hours longer than health endurance express a ruinous social cost, no matter what the selling price may be.⁵

The League sought every available opportunity to tell about women's work. For example, in 1905 the Chicago League arranged for a young glove worker named Agnes Nestor (then a member and throughout most of its history an active officer of the League) to speak about factory work to the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. This was, apparently, the first instance of an industrial woman appearing before club women. The next year the National League had three representatives at the convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The League sent speakers to unions who could be interested in organizing women, and to meetings and conferences of all sorts to tell of the problems of women workers.

The League Seeks a Federal Investigation

League members, who so well knew of these things at first hand, quickly saw the urgent need for a more comprehensive body of facts to help them show the public how widespread were the unfavorable conditions under which women worked. Not long after its organization, the Chicago League, at one of its regular meetings, asked the board of the National League to request the Federal Government to make an investigation of this subject.⁶ In March 1905, about a year after the Chicago League was founded, the National League's executive committee appointed a committee of three to work for such an investigation. This was headed by Mary E. McDowell, president of the Chicago League, a board member of the National League, and a social worker well known throughout the country.

As League officers and members continued to tell the public about women workers' problems, the committee secured widespread support for an official investigation—support from labor organizations, women's organizations, social settlements, associations of ministers of the churches, and boards of trade.

The committee went to Washington and aroused the interest of President Theodore Roosevelt and of Charles P. Neill, head of the Bureau of Labor (then the only Federal labor agency), which was in the Department of Commerce and Labor. The request for an investigation was supported by major women's organizations of the time—

⁵ See 1911 Proceedings, p. 4.

⁶ See 1911 Proceedings, p. 8; 3d Biennial Convention Handbook, 1911, foreword; Alice Henry, *Women and the Labor Movement*, pp. 166, 167.

MODERN ORGANIZATION OF INDUSTRY

divides labor more and more into repetitions of single processes



Each new division means increased monotony for the workers

MODERN INVENTIVE GENIUS

is constantly increasing the speed of machinery



Every improvement in the machine means greater speeding up of the worker

The Logical Remedy
for these new strains

is

TO SHORTEN THE WORKING DAY

FIGURE 3.—“MODERN ORGANIZATION OF INDUSTRY.”

the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Colonial Dames. It was backed by the American Federation of Labor, by numerous international unions, by the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen's Associations, and by other organizations interested in improving labor conditions.

A bill was introduced into Congress in March 1906, and was passed in January 1907, directing the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to carry on an investigation and to report on the industrial, social, moral, educational, and physical conditions of woman and child wage earners in the Nation. Rep. Gardner of Massachusetts sponsored the bill.

The investigation was very thorough and continued through several years. From time to time, as its reports were published, the League used them in informing the public more fully as to women's work and the conditions under which it was done. Information at length became available on almost all the large industries and trades employing many women. In the end the report was published in 19 volumes and gave a mass of evidence.

The handbook prepared for the League's second biennial convention in 1909 (referred to later) quoted from the investigation, giving examples of workload in some of the industries that depended largely on woman labor. In each instance, the handbook also pointed out the improved conditions that had been secured in plants where unions were organized. Thus the League, which had asked the Government to make this investigation, used it in its two characteristic methods of assisting women workers—informing the public in general, and aiding women workers in organizing to help themselves.

Reports on Conditions of Women's Work

The following excerpts, taken from the 1909 handbook, illustrate the conditions found and the way in which the League helped make them of public use.

TEXTILE WORKERS

Standing in thick cotton dust in the card room the speeder-tender may have 1,000 bobbins in the upper part of her machine and 500 in the lower part, and William Hard tells us that "each bobbin, in each machine, in each alley, is whirling like a dervish at almost unimaginable speed, and screaming like the whistle on a peanut stand." And the weavers, the ringspinners, the speeder-tenders, work in heat which is like the intense heat of the tropics, and at the end of the day's work face the bitter cold nights of our northern winters. What a price we are paying for our cotton sheets and our calico!

THE SEWING TRADES

. . . if you are sewing tucks in a waist or petticoat, you are watching ten needles running at 4,400 stitches a minute—watching to see if a thread breaks, or the point of any one of the ten needles snaps. And they dance up and down like flashes of steel or lightning, and your eyes smart with the strain. . . . And

Eight-Hour Day

for Women

Women Work Under a Strain

"It is brought out that in nearly all occupations an increasing strain and intensity of labor is required by modern methods of production. . . . The introduction of machinery and the division of labor have made it possible to increase greatly the speed of the individual workman."—Report of the United States Industrial Commission, 1901.

"Years ago a woman tended two slowly-running looms. Later, as the hours of work grew less, the number of looms was increased to four and six, and now, with the Drapers, an operative is expected to look out for twelve or sixteen."—Report of Maine Bureau of Industry and Labor Statistics.

DO YOU KNOW—

That a telephone operator answers about 225 calls per hour (in some exchanges 275 per hour) and that each call requires six different operations?

DO YOU KNOW—

That many girls in the sewing trades sit for long hours in a room roaring with machinery watching a machine that carries twelve needles or one that sets 4,000 stitches a minute?

DO YOU KNOW—

That in mills where women formerly tended two looms they now are expected to look out for twelve or sixteen?

DO YOU KNOW—

That in canneries the women sorters must work steadily with their eyes and attention fixed on moving conveyors, and the "cappers" are expected to cap from 54 to 80 cans per minute?

Must we combine the strain of

**SPEED
MONOTONY
PIECE WORK**

With that of **LONG HOURS?**

Women's Trade Union League

43 East 22d Street

NEW YORK

1915



FIGURE 4.—"WOMEN WORK UNDER A STRAIN."

[Page of leaflet, New York League]

sometimes you feel as if the machine were running away from you, and your effort to control it makes your whole body ache.

CLOTH HAT AND CAP MAKERS

Cloth caps—automobile caps—bicycle caps—soldiers' caps—women's and children's caps have to be cut, sewed, lined, trimmed, and finished. The lining makers and trimmers are women—one woman to four men. Each special process of work has its own union. In some factories the workers have to buy \$35 machines at \$60, or else rent them for 50 cents a week. They pay 40 cents a week for power, and they buy their thread, which during the busy season runs up to \$2.50 a week.

The union has abolished night work; reduced the hours of work from 12 to 9 and 8; and increased the average wage 40 percent (\$5 to \$7). The union label strengthens the union, and protects the consumer from sweatshop caps, and the worker from sweatshop competition.

GLOVE WORKERS

In many unorganized factories in the glove trade each girl must buy her machine, paying \$60 for a \$35 machine or rent one for 50 cents a week. She buys the needles and oil for her machine; pays 40 cents a week for power to run it, and pays the factory machinist to repair breakages. All the work in the sewing department is piecework, and the heavy working and driving gloves pass through the hands of the cutter, silker, closer, bander, binder, hemmer, and again closer.

The wage is dependent upon the speed of the operator and upon conditions over which she has no control; for example, poor leather which is difficult to sew; waiting for work from 10 to 20 minutes because of the delay in the cutting department; waiting for supplies, such as needles, thread, welt, and so forth; breaking of belt or machine. For all loss of time the girl pays out of her wage.

The union has abolished the system of forcing the girls to buy machines, and so on. It has reduced hours of work from 12 to 9½ and 8 hours, and has established the Saturday half holiday. The union has eliminated the pacemaker as a factor in controlling the price of piecework, for the price is now determined by the capacity of the average worker. . . .

LAUNDRY WORKERS

How would you like to iron a shirt a minute? Think of standing at a mangle just above the washroom with the hot steam pouring up through the floor for 10, 12, 14, and sometimes 17 hours a day! Sometimes the floors are made of cement and then it seems as though one were standing on hot coals, and the workers are dripping with perspiration. Perhaps you have complained about the chemicals used in the washing of your clothes, which cause them to wear out quickly, but what do you suppose is the effect of these chemicals upon the workers? They are standing 10, 12, 14, and 17 hours a day in intense heat, breathing air laden with particles of soda, ammonia, and other chemicals! The Laundry Workers' Union . . . in one city reduced this long day to 9 hours, and has increased the wages 50 percent. . . .

WAITRESSES IN HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

Long hours and poor pay are the general lot of unorganized waitresses. They often work 14 hours a day and 7 days a week. In many of these unorganized

restaurants they have to provide uniforms and aprons of special fashion, and must pay for the laundering. They have to purchase the material from their employer at a higher cost than it can be had in the open market. In some places they are still compelled to pay for all breakages, however little they may be responsible. When not actually waiting on table, they have to clean silver, pick berries, iron napkins, and so forth. It is estimated that a waitress walks 10 miles in a "10-hour watch," and that she carries 1,500 pounds during that time.

The organized waitresses have their uniforms and aprons, and the laundering of these furnished them. They have established the 10-hour day and the 6-day week, and every other afternoon they are off duty from 2 to 5 o'clock. They have increased wages . . . and give their members \$3 a week sick benefit for 13 weeks, and a \$50 death benefit.

EARLY BRANCHES, CONVENTIONS, PERIODICALS, AND FINANCES

The new Women's Trade Union League was at work along several lines and in several cities at one and the same time.⁷ State branches had been formed in 1904 in Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York. In Chicago, Jane Addams offered the facilities of Hull House for League meetings. At the first one, held January 4, 1904, there were 27 persons present, of whom 23 joined. The New York League opened its headquarters in a room up five flights of dark stairs on one of the East Side streets. In 1908 a league was formed in St. Louis, its headquarters in the home of the musicians' union.⁸ Within the next 2 years leagues were formed in Springfield, Ill., Kansas City, Mo., Cleveland, and Baltimore. In its twenty-fifth year the League had more than 25 branches.

In the first year or two after they were formed, the efforts of these leagues were of necessity devoted mainly to perfecting their organization, to learning the situation in regard to the organizing of women, and to gaining the confidence of wage earners in and out of unions.

In 1907, 4 years after organization of the League, the three existing local branches (Boston, Chicago, and New York) held simultaneous conventions to discuss the question "How can women's unions best be strengthened?" The Chicago meeting was attended by 81 delegates, representing 6 States, 23 cities, and 30 trades. In Boston, 2 States, 11 cities, and 25 unions were represented. In New York, 75 delegates represented 5 States and the District of Columbia. These early conventions passed a resolution urging that a woman be appointed to a responsible position in the Federal Bureau of Labor. A committee was appointed to meet the officers of the American Federation of Labor and request the appointment of a woman organizer.

⁷ See 1909 Proceedings, p. 7 and title page; 1911 Proceedings, p. 7; Pamphlet, Women in Trade Unions in U. S., 1919; Breckinridge, p. 62; Boone, p. 68; Henry, p. 116; Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners, vol. X, pp. 158-159.

⁸ See 1913 Proceedings, p. 3.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Woman's Trade Union League

1906-1907

At the close of the third year it may be recorded that the Woman's Trade Union League has become a recognized factor in the local trade union world; that it has established important relations with some of the local unions as well as national and that these relations have created responsibilities which demand increasing effort on the part of the League. Under reports of committees it will be shown in what way the League has put forth effort in support of the following unions: The Lithographers, Stereotypers, Boot and Shoe Workers, Waitresses, Hand Buttonhole Makers, Overall Workers, East Side Restaurant Cooks, Skirt Makers, Shirt Waist Makers, Children's Jacket Makers, Milliners, Bakers and Confectioners, Neckwear Makers, Shirt Waist and Laundry Workers, United Laundry Workers, United Garment Workers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, International Ladies' Garment Workers, United Hebrew Trades, Broom and Brush Makers, Typographical, Box Makers, Glove Makers, Flour and Cereal Employees.

Committees and Their Reports

It has been the plan of the League to carry out its work so far as possible through committees made up of members of the League. Standing committees with the exception of the Auxiliary, Label and Electrical Workers have been reorganized during the past year. The Electrical Workers' Committee was newly created. The Cooks' Committee was not formed until October, and the Hand Buttonhole Makers' and Waitresses' Committee not until January of this year. The work which was accomplished therefore in connection with these unions, up to the time of their formation, was by the office force.

FIGURE 5.—NEW YORK LEAGUE.

[Page of annual report, 1906-07]

The League reported that on the average of twice a month it was appealed to, to take part in the settlement of strikes or labor disputes.

First National Convention

Shortly after this, in July 1907, the first national convention⁹ of the League was held in Norfolk, Va., meeting at the same time as the convention of the American Federation of Labor. Only seven delegates were in attendance. However, over 60 letters had been received from various international unions pledging support to the League's request that the A. F. of L. appoint a special woman organizer, and the A. F. of L. subsequently made such an appointment.

At this first convention in 1907, the League elected Margaret Dreier Robins of Chicago as its national president. She remained in office 15 years, a continual inspiration to her co-workers and a vital force in furthering the organization of women workers and the bettering of their employment conditions. The convention elected an executive board including the president and other officers (vice president and secretary-treasurer) and three representatives from each local league. The constitution stipulated that two of the three officers and a majority of the board must be trade-union members. (See appendix for first constitution.) This board proved rather cumbersome and, 4 years later, changes in the constitution provided for a board of six members in addition to the officers, care being taken that various cities having leagues were represented.

Again in 1908 three conventions were held at the same time in Chicago, New York, and Boston. The conventions spread a knowledge of the League among the trade unions of these centers. In consequence, a large number of unions having women members became affiliated with them, sent accredited delegates to their meetings, and paid toward their support small but regular per capita dues. Chicago and New York each had some 75 or 80 union delegates in attendance at the 1908 meetings.

Second and Third National Conventions

A national convention was to be held biennially. In the fall of 1909 the second biennial convention met in Chicago, 6 years after the formation of the League. An impressive convention handbook had been printed. It gave details as to the conditions of women's work in numerous industries, using reports from the Federal investigation previously described, and pointed out the effectiveness of unions in some trades in improving women's hours, wages, and other work conditions.

⁹ See 1909 Proceedings, p. 7; 1911 Proceedings, p. 38; Boone, p. 73; Mary E. Dreier—Margaret Dreier Robins, pp. 170, 174; Henry, pp. 115–116; and Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners, vol. X, pp. 157–158.

Sixty-five delegates were accredited to the 1909 convention. They came from 14 cities, the most distant being San Francisco. They represented 19 different trades and included representatives of two city central labor bodies (Brooklyn and Rochester, N. Y.) and one State Federation of Labor (Wisconsin). In addition, there were three fraternal delegates, one representing a city central labor body (Indianapolis, Ind.) and two coming from abroad, representing the Women's Trade Union League in Great Britain, and the organization of 25,000 German bookkeepers, stenographers, and department-store clerks. The printed report of the convention proceedings contained over 50 double-columned pages. It was very evident that after its 6 years of effort the National Women's Trade Union League was well launched in its work. This convention adopted a national platform (see p. 4) and defined the program that was to be the basis of its legislative activities through the years. (See section on Legislation.) It also adopted a definite form for reporting membership in the leagues.

In the following biennial, the third, in 1911, reports included 765 members in Chicago, 569 in New York, 425 in Boston, 250 in St. Louis, and in Philadelphia a recent buildup to 400. Organizations affiliated with the League, chiefly union groups, numbered in Chicago 32, New York 24, St. Louis 10, and Boston 5. Women who were members of the unions in their own trades constituted four-fifths of the Chicago and St. Louis membership, two-thirds of that in Boston, and over a third of that in New York. The 1911 convention, meeting just after the League had assisted many women during labor strikes, outlined methods of procedure for local leagues to follow in such work. (See section on Organization.)

Later Conventions

By the fourth convention (1913) the work several local leagues had to report was very considerable and the business of the convention so full that separate reports were printed and distributed for the leagues of Boston, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City, Mo. Ten biennial conventions were held through 1922, in one case a year behind schedule. After that the convention program was planned as a triennial meeting, in some cases deferred. During the years, the League also continued holding regional conferences in nonconvention years.

The League's Monthly Publication

The League soon realized the need of a regular printed method of exchanging information as to the activities of its far separated local branches. The *Union Labor Advocate* of Chicago, a labor paper chiefly representing men's unions, offered the League space in 1906 to edit a woman's department. This was used as the organ of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League, and in June 1908 the national

Report

From January 1, 1907 to July 1, 1907

The Women's Trade Union League of Illinois has made great progress during the past six months. It has now, thanks to the generosity of Mr. George Hodge, headquarters in the office of the Union Labor Advocate. Having thus an abiding place, the League has been able greatly to increase the scope of its work.

Eight organizations have been added to those with which the League was already connected. In one instance, that of the Cloth Hat and Cap Makers, Mrs. Raymond Robins and Mr. Anton Johansen of the Woodworkers' Association, were deputed by the Chicago Federation of Labor to go before the workers and present the case for organizing. Mr. Holzsager, National Organizer, reports that a charter has now been issued to the new women's local.

The long-continued strike among the Hebrew Bakers gave rise to much suffering among the women and children during its continuance and still more after its collapse, when strike pay ceased. By forming an auxiliary among the women and also by calling the attention of other workers to the pressing need, the League was able to lessen some of the worst of the distress. The conditions from which the bakers were striving to be relieved and to which they are still submitting are very bad. Eighteen and nineteen hours of work a day are a crying wrong which Chicago must abolish if she would maintain any claim to be a civilized community.

Another need that was emphasized in this connection was the necessity for establishing a legal aid department both to give advice in cases of difficulty and to watch over the interests of working women against whom legal proceedings have been taken.

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FIGURE 6.—ILLINOIS LEAGUE.

[Page of Report, 1907.]

The League reported public meetings held regularly the second Sunday of each month, plans started to provide medical care, exhibits, addresses about the League at many meetings of other organizations, and preparations for an annual meeting at the same time in Boston, New York, and Chicago.

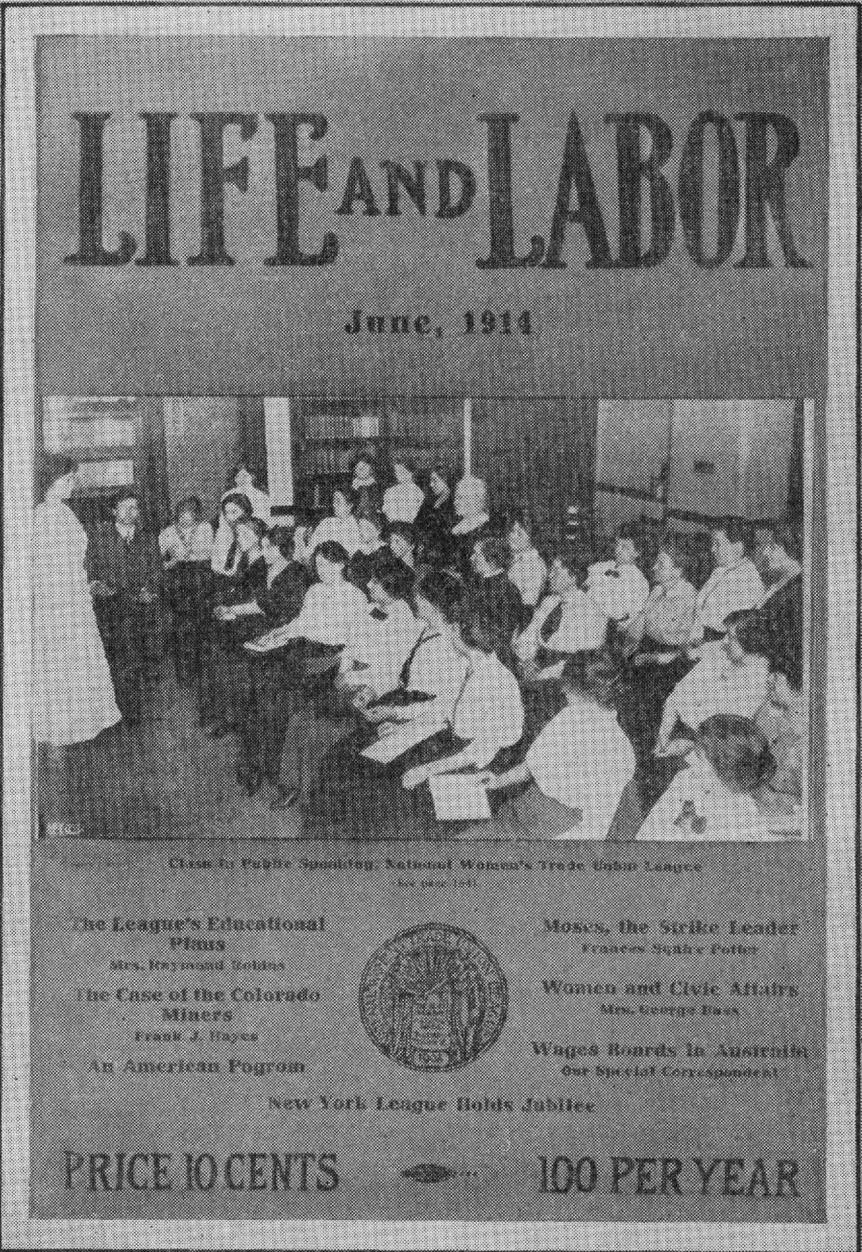


FIGURE 7.—LIFE AND LABOR, JUNE 1914.

executive board made it the League's official national journal. The local branches regularly sent information to the Women's Department of the *Union Labor Advocate*, in some cases, as in the New York League, by a local publicity committee. This publication was sent to a substantial exchange list and special issues were sent to public libraries and to libraries of men's and women's colleges. Its items were widely copied in other labor papers, in papers devoted to woman suffrage, and in the regular press, such as the *Springfield Republican* and *Boston Transcript*. Soon the Woman's Department was reprinted as a separate supplement. In January 1911 the League established its own separate periodical, a journal of over 30 pages, **LIFE AND LABOR**. Its purpose was stated:

To express the forces both latent and active in the woman movement in this country and thus bring the working girl into fuller and larger relationships with life on all sides.

This periodical was printed monthly in its original form until 1921. The next year it began in a 4-page edition, which continued for several years. It was later issued in mimeographed form. Its news was presented in the earlier years in the following departments: What Women Are Doing; Earning a Living; Votes for Women; Industrial Law and Politics; Reports from Local Leagues; With the Editors; Household Notes; The Serial Story.¹⁰

The National League had additional periodicals of shorter existence, as well as numerous pamphlets. For about a year during World War I it regularly issued a 4-page bulletin, *Women's Work and the War*, giving facts on the employment of women in the national emergency. Beginning about the same time and continuing for almost 10 years, the League's Washington office issued a mimeographed weekly News Service telling the status of national legislation of interest to the League. Pamphlets were printed from time to time, as for example, *Self-Government in the Workshop*, an article by Mrs. Robins; the Report of the Committee on Social and Industrial Reconstruction appointed by the League after World War I; and a reprint of articles appearing in **LIFE AND LABOR** in 1912 and 1913 on *The Early History of Women Trade Unionists of America*; and in 1929 a small booklet, *How to Organize*, which reported the findings of a 1-day institute in Chicago on trade-union organization.

League branches in the various cities also had their own publications. Both the New York and Chicago Leagues issued a regular bulletin each month. Annual reports were printed or mimeographed, and special reports were issued of the regional meetings held between national conventions. They also published pamphlets on various

¹⁰ See 1909 Proceedings, p. 8; 1911 Proceedings, p. 9; and Boone, pp. 66, 98.

subjects. For example, the Chicago League issued a booklet of instructions for foreign-born workers, *How to Become a Citizen*, and the Boston League published a pamphlet, *The Case for Trades Unions*.

How the League Was Supported

The means of financial support usually are a problem with a voluntary organization, and industrial girls had little money. The League had a regular system of payments by its members. Local leagues paid a specified amount for each of their members. Union groups that were affiliated, and other affiliated groups such as women's clubs or suffrage organizations, paid an annual fee. Individual members paid yearly dues. (See Constitution of 1913 at end of this report.)

None of these amounts were large in themselves, and even though their aggregate was considerable it was by no means sufficient to support the League. Some of the unions that saw the importance of the League's work gave it special grants, usually on an annual basis but varying with strength of the union. As time went on the League gained increased support from the unions. The A. F. of L. paid the expenses of a League organizer to bring more women into its unions, and from time to time paid for several organizers for limited periods to do intensive work in certain industries or localities.

The League could not have carried on the varied activities it did, over such a wide area, if it had not had substantial assistance from the contributions of many private individuals. A few of its early backers were women of considerable wealth, and they gave generously to launch the League and continued through the years to supply a large part of its support. They also were joined later by numerous persons who contributed with considerable regularity, and by many who gave for a special need that became urgent in some particular time or place. Some contributed primarily for the League's educational work, some for its legislative program, others for its organizational activities, especially when acute situations arose, and still others for its ambitious program of keeping contact with women trade unionists in other countries.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE LEAGUE

From the first, the Women's Trade Union League worked primarily for the organization of women into trade unions and their representation on committees dealing with working conditions. This objective was defined by the League's President, Mrs. Robins, in these terms:

To teach girls of 14 receiving 5 cents an hour, and women working for \$3 a week . . . and interpret to them the tragedy of the underbidder, and the certainty with which low wages react in injury to women and ruin of the

home; to develop a sense of group fellowship and responsibility for working conditions in their factory and trade; to help the average working girl to feel that upon her knowledge, courage and cooperation depend her personal well-being and the well-being of her fellow workers—this is one of the important tasks of the League.¹¹

The difficulties faced in the organization of women workers, a large proportion of whom were under 21 years of age, arose from the fact that so many were immature girls, underpaid, overworked, unaccustomed to working in groups, tending to yield to employer demands. As expressed in a pamphlet of the League, the organization sought to “form a bulwark against the aggressions of those impersonal interests which endeavor to wipe out narrow but hard-won margins.”¹²

Value of Organization to the Woman Worker

The meaning and value of organization to the woman worker is vividly described in various speeches and writings of the League's president. An article by her, published as a bulletin entitled “Self-Government in the Workshop,” stated as follows:

Now it so happens that in the ranks of the army of labor upon whom falls most heavily the burden of the battle for self-government in the day's work there are several million young working girls. Upon their vision, upon their knowledge and fortitude depends the hope of a whole great people. . . .

Having for centuries, and rightly so, looked upon her problem as a personal one to be met and solved through her individual effort, it is not surprising that the woman is slow to learn that her economic problem today is a social one to be controlled by social and collective action. Unorganized, she became the tragic underbidder in the labor market and her own worst competitor, putting the working mothers in the-sweatshop and the working fathers on the tramp. . . . It is because the Women's Trade Union League believes in a government of the people, by the people and for the people in industry as in politics that it stands steadfastly and unflinchingly for the organization of all workers into trade unions.

Many and many a time the call to self-government, the sense of responsibility toward her condition of work is the first awakening of the young girl. Unorganized, she has to accept conditions as she finds them, low wages, long hours, abusive language, insanitary conditions, locked doors, fire dangers, work destructive of her physical strength with its promise of the future, work destructive of her moral and spiritual development.

Alone she cannot even protest against these conditions, except at the risk of losing her job. She has tried—she now knows. She loses her job when she asserts her fundamental right to have a voice as to the conditions under which she works. Self-government is essential to the making of a free people, and self-government in the day's work can be had only by the united action of the workers. Organization of the workers is imperative, for the sake of the girl and for the sake of the community.

¹¹ See pamphlet, The Women's Trade Union League of Chicago.

¹² See pamphlet, Women in Trade Unions, p. 3.

The Case for Trades Unions

"There can be no compromise with poverty arising out of social conditions. Such conditions are a betrayal of the nation. It is idle to speak to men and women of self-government and citizenship when their entire thought and all their activities are engrossed by their daily needs. It is only when the personal needs are increasingly protected by collective action and legislative enactment that thoughts can be turned into new channels and energies directed to other tasks."

Mrs. Raymond Robins.

Issued by the
BOSTON WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE
March, 1920



FIGURE 8.—"THE CASE FOR TRADES UNIONS."

[Page of pamphlet, Boston League.]

Organization Is a Natural Move

In one of her earlier addresses made to the League's first large convention with many delegates (1909), Mrs. Robins had given a series of picturesque illustrations likening the economic organization of working women to the natural grouping of like elements in the physical world:

... organization ... is a fundamental law of nature; everywhere, if we but look, we see union. The miner tells us that when he goes down

into the earth and finds a hard rock or stringer, he works until he comes to another stringer, and finally to a vein, and he knows that if he finds the union of the veins he has found a mine. Astronomers declare that every orb in the sky is bound unto a cluster, and they declare that if there were one scab star in the sky we should have a wreck in the universe. The sun is a central body and the eight planets are joined together into one system to do one thing, and they obey that law of their being always.

Look at the wild cattle on the plain. Do you ever find one straying about alone? No, never, they are always gathered in great herds. . . . I looked once through a glass-bottomed boat at Santa Catalina Island and saw the fish passing over the shoals. They were not alone but in schools—thousands of them together. Look at the bird in the sky when he goes from Lake Winnipeg to Louisiana to spend the winter. Will he go alone? Never. Organized and by the hundreds they will travel not only following a leader, but ranged so as to form an acute angle to lessen the resistance of the air. Can we, my friends, look anywhere in nature and not find unity of action within groups where common purposes are to be accomplished. . . . The trade union is the great social school of the working people, and when the isolated young girl worker enters it she finds it to be the open sesame of fellowship and understanding. Here is the opportunity given to her to study, to think, to learn, to grow into the powers of her womanhood.

Early Organizing Programs of Local Leagues

The local leagues in the cities were active in organizing women into trade unions, and the League early had its own woman organizer. Reference has been made to the fact that in 1907 it was successful in its request that the A. F. of L. supply a woman organizer. The character of this work has been described as follows:

. . . The National Women's Trade Union League, organized in 1903, was the first to develop a technique of organizing women workers which the American labor movement had hitherto failed to accomplish. . . . The contribution of the Women's Trade Union League to the technique of organization was a realization of the special problems besetting women workers and the initiation of methods, . . . and social activities that women understood. Women organizers, women speakers, women trade unionists were developed and encouraged by them to work in a field of organization that had generally been considered hopeless.

. . . the . . . male organizer may have acquired a method of approach in his work with men which he cannot transfer to the organization of women, because they are primarily not interested in . . . the [same] topics and [he] failed to take into consideration the psychology of the women workers—their habits of thought.³³

More than this, it often was not practical for the man organizer to talk easily on union problems with the many young women in his industry who were living in rooms away from home. Nor could he well find out all details as to insanitary conditions and abuses from which girls suffered at their work places, and which the union might seek to correct.

³³ See Theresa Wolfson, *The Woman Worker and the Trade Unions*, pp. 129, 133.

Reports of the local leagues at the second biennial convention in 1909 showed that the newest branch (St. Louis) had organized the bindery women. It also had worked to organize a group of Italian girls employed in garment shops, and since the girls did not understand English, the League secured the help of their church authorities in interpreting its purposes to them.

The Chicago League had organized the necktie workers and helped form the union of the straw and felt hat workers.

The League in New York had worked with some of the stronger unions such as the Bookbinders; and likewise with the Typographical Union, which had few women compared to the men but had pioneered in organizing women in the 1860's. It stated in 1909 that it "must do the most for the people who are suffering the most, and the women who are the lowest paid in New York are the garment finishers." Work with this group was difficult, but after a considerable time the League succeeded in forming an organization with over 100 members. At that time girls in garment shops were working 10 hours a day while the men's day was only 9 hours, the girls remaining for an hour after the men left. The New York League also was helping East Side laundry workers.

Since in New York the garment trades employed the largest number of women workers, it was natural that the League organizer gave them much of her attention, distributing leaflets outside their shops at the end of the workday, addressing their shop meetings, and helping in every way possible. Work also continued through the years to be done with small neglected groups that did not have much help from strong parent organizations. What the New York League learned from its earlier experiences was summarized at a later convention (1911):

When the League first started it eagerly sought opportunity to organize in any one of the many bad trades without due consideration of the spirit of the workers in the trade. This attempt to foster or force organization in the trades where the workers were not ready for it has been discarded. We have learned that the initiative must come from them, and as the League has become known in the community ample opportunity for helping to organize is given and repeated calls for assistance are being made upon the League.

At its second biennial convention (1909) the League's committee on organization recommended the following methods of work:

1. That the National Convention of the Women's Trade Union League petition the international unions who have women employed in their crafts to give us assistance by paying a woman district organizer to work in conjunction with our League for the year 1910.
2. That the delegates ask their local unions to petition their international union to grant a woman organizer for the year 1910.

3. That small groups of women, who cannot get enough members of their own craft to form a good live active union, shall be formed into a federated union.

We further recommend that we have a national benefit, either marriage or vacation benefit, for the federated union. We also recommend that the National Women's Trade Union League notify the local leagues nearest their members at large so that they can cooperate with them in forming new leagues (through literature, notices of meetings, and speakers, etc.); also that they ask the State and Central Federations of Labor to assist them.

The League was developing its own membership at the same time that it was assisting women to organize into the unions of their own trades. Its organizing committee recommended to the fourth biennial (1913) that every local branch appoint an organization committee, two-thirds of its members to be women trade-union members. The committee also recommended the following methods:

1. A series of lectures on trade unionism to be held by every organization.
2. The circulation of *LIFE AND LABOR* [the League's official journal, started January 1911] among the rank and file of our organization, so as to keep our members in touch with matters which, in a great many cases, are familiar only to the officers.
3. That social features be introduced at local meetings to make our girls understand that we come together to have happy times as well as serious and business sessions. Every effort should be made to increase the attendance, and every method tried to encourage this.
4. Another feature we recommend to be introduced into our union is athletic work. This would not only interest our members because of the enjoyment of it, but would be a great health feature.

The League's Work During Strikes of Women Workers

The women who were developing the young organization of the Women's Trade Union League and seeking to arouse public consciousness to the conditions under which women were working were experienced in social welfare activities. They were well aware of the social handicaps and public disapproval almost sure to meet a strong movement on the part of workers, particularly if it reached the stage of labor strikes. In fact there were many cases, like that of candy workers in a plant in Cambridge, Mass., when girls were immediately dismissed from their jobs as soon as employers learned they had attended meetings that promised to result in union organization. In a later period (1918) girls who were leaders in forming a union lost their jobs with a large Philadelphia candy company.¹⁴

The League leaders, who were very influential women, put forth every effort to create and stimulate an atmosphere of public approval for any effort to improve the conditions of women's work. Very soon after formation of the Women's Trade Union League the first of its

¹⁴ See 1909 Proceedings, p. 45; Boone, p. 167; Wolfson, p. 130.

organizers worked to make known through the daily press of the country the reasons for the strikes of 30,000 textile workers in Fall River and 22,000 in Lawrence, Mass., and the facts about conditions of work there. In the same way she aided the laundry workers of Troy, N. Y., at the time of their strike in 1905. In the previous year, the president of the Chicago League, Mary McDowell, who was a resident worker in a social settlement near the stockyards district of the city, helped in the stockyards strike, which involved many hundreds of girls. In 1904 also, the League organizer assisted a group of women corset workers, whose employers had locked them out of their work place in Aurora, Ill. In this case the League adopted a new and effective method—that of writing to all women's clubs throughout Illinois, telling them of the conditions under which women worked in making garments for women.¹⁵ In the same period the League in Boston assisted the Roxbury carpet weavers and in New York, the child laborers in paper-box factories.

A strong reaction from "intolerable overwork, inadequate pay, underbidding by the underpaid, and the consequent utter waste of women's lives" began in 1909 to express itself in a series of labor strikes of extensive groups of workers composed largely of women and girls. These occurred in Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis, Chicago, and New York. They were chiefly among the makers of ready-made clothing, which always had been associated with low wages, speeding up, and uncertain employment. The Women's Trade Union League insisted in season and out upon the publication of the facts. It interpreted to the public the demands of the strikers and the reasons for these demands. Mrs. Robins, the League's president, said in her foreword to the handbook of the 1911 convention:

The great strikes in the garment trades . . . were simply a long overdue reaction against intolerable conditions. The splendid unity of spirit and fortitude under suffering displayed by the women and girls in these struggles is the best hope for the future of the Republic. These women and girls were suffering cold and hunger, struggling to redeem that promise "of the more abundant life" which is the pledge of our religion and our constitution. They are the torch bearers as well as the burden bearers of our Republic.

To abolish such industrial conditions and to begin forthwith is the common duty of all the women of this Nation. The right arm for this work is union organization and the left arm is social and industrial legislation. The two combined can abolish every industrial evil that exists today.

By this time, some of the information had become available from the Federal investigation already described, which the League had stimulated. From these reports the often inhuman conditions under which women worked were being widely publicized. The extent to

¹⁵ See Boone, p. 65; Henry, pp. 110, 119-120.

which public understanding was developed and interest aroused is indicated as follows:

In the strike of the New York garment workers of 1909, the facts disclosing the unsanitary conditions under which the garments were manufactured, plus the tremendous fight which the striking garment workers were putting up, caused men and women of wealth, the press, the clergy, and prominent figures in public life to support the cause of striking women workers. This had a unique effect on . . . the morale of the women workers themselves. They had secured [public] sanction . . . in their efforts, they were not stigmatized as "disorderly persons."¹⁶

The League did much more than help acquaint the public with the facts. It aided the strikers in many ways, as summarized in the following description in a pamphlet of the Boston League:

The function of the League as a national body of trade union women was plain. A multitude of separate grievances and protests were to be assembled into a set of common demands; thousands of young girls speaking a dozen different languages and unacquainted with the rudiments of cooperation were to be organized and held together; pickets were to be provided and protected; bail secured; fines paid; allotments made to strikers of money and food; an agreement made with employers which would be binding and bring a real improvement in conditions of work.¹⁷

In New York and Chicago, leagues assisted the clothing workers in strikes in a number of unions. One of the first of these into which special effort was put was the strike of New York shirtwaist makers, involving 20,000 to 30,000 women. Many of the workers were young girls, new to the union, inexperienced in dealing with employers, and hence greatly in need of effective leadership. The situation was further complicated by the fact that many of these girls were of foreign parentage and not well acquainted with English.

Every morning the League stationed its own members in front of factories to act as witnesses in cases of unlawful arrest and to watch the insulting conduct of many of the police. They helped in the provision of bail, secured newspaper publicity for the workers, and brought out before churches and clubs the intolerable conditions that had driven these young girls to revolt. Some of the women who were backing the League also were arrested with the women strikers and, in some cases, went to jail and had to put up bail for themselves as well as for the workers.

Similar help was given in Philadelphia, to which the clothing strike spread when it was found that New York employers were sending the work there to avoid coming to terms with the strikers. Mrs. Robins herself went to Philadelphia with the League's organizer, Agnes Nestor, to aid the strikers. They stayed until the strike was won,

¹⁶ See Wolfson, p. 130.

¹⁷ See pamphlet, *Women in Trade Unions*, p. 9.

a period lasting over 7 weeks. The League opened headquarters in the heart of the Philadelphia factory district, where pickets and other workers could report, obtain sandwiches and coffee, and rest and warm themselves during the bitter weather which prevailed at the time. That the strikers were successful in this struggle was in large part owing to the local residents who gave much valuable help, especially at the College Settlement, where the League organizers were given a home and center of influence.

League representatives reported to its third biennial (1911) the following activities in the New York shirtwaist strike:

1. Organized a volunteer picket force of 75 "allies," nonworker League members. This is the first time in our knowledge in the history of trade unions where a volunteer picket corps was organized.
2. Organized volunteer legal service, 9 lawyers.
3. Furnished bail amounting to \$29,000.
4. Protested against illegal action on part of police, and interceded for strikers with the city authorities.
5. Organized shops.
6. Organized parade of 10,000 strikers at a day's notice.
7. Took part in arbitration conferences.
8. Arranged large meeting where arbitrators representing the Union explained situation to the strikers.
9. Took active part in shop meetings and paid benefits to those meeting at the League headquarters.
10. Made publicity for strike through the press, through meetings of all descriptions, edited two special strike editions of the *New York Call* and *New York Evening Journal*.
11. Appealed for funds.

The New York League's work with the shirtwaist workers continued after the strike, helping to organize and to teach the new recruits how to run union and shop meetings. Public-speaking classes that the League had organized during the strike were continued.

In the New York cloak-and-suit makers' strike of 1910, which was known as "The Great Revolt" and affected 60,000 workers, the League did less than in the shirtwaist strike, since a smaller proportion of women was involved. However, the League provided for the distribution of milk to workers' families, and in a 6-week period furnished over 200,000 quarts to the most needy families.

In the autumn of the same year (1910) the League in Chicago was active in behalf of the striking clothing workers. Beginning with men's clothing workers, this strike spread to the Ladies' Tailors whose workday had been lengthened from 8 to 10 hours. It spread further to unorganized groups involving many women and girls. All told, it affected some 45,000 workers. In the end a League official and union member, Mary Anderson (who later directed the Federal Women's Bureau for 25 years), served on the committee that made

The Women's Trade Union League
OF
New York
AT A GLANCE

THE WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE
OF
NEW YORK

(Affiliated with the Central Trades and Labor Council)

has

Worked to Extend Trade Union Organization

among Feather and Flower Workers, Copyholders, Retail Salespeople, Lampshade Workers, Fancy Leather Goods Workers, Laundry Workers, Embroidery Workers, Cigarmakers.

Backed Progressive Labor Legislation

Minimum Wage Bill
Eight-Hour Day Bill

and **Against**

the repeal of the night-work and 54-hour laws

Co-operated with Other Organizations

Women's Joint Legislative Conference
Workers' Education Bureau
Health Foundation
Labor Sanitation Conference
Farmer-Labor Party
Men's Trade Unions, through Women's Auxiliaries
N. Y. Council for Limitation of Armaments
United Organizations for the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Bill
Eastern States Industrial Conference

FROM
ANNUAL REPORT
1920-1922

FIGURE 9.—“AT A GLANCE.”

[Page of New York report]

labor history in the forward-looking contract negotiated with the men's clothing firms. The Chicago League also helped laundry workers, mattress makers, paper-box workers, and others.

The report from Boston at the League's third biennial (1911) included the following:

No sooner was the Roxbury [carpetmakers] strike over than the Shirtwaist Makers called for assistance. Thus began our real constructive plan of organization. Small shop meetings were called, literature was distributed in the noon hour and at night. For weeks there seemed to be no response, but we continued, and finally an English-speaking branch of the union was formed. The life of this branch fluctuated in proportion to the assistance that we were able to give.

. . . the League, realizing that to do active organizing work, it must increase its working force, engaged an organizer, herself a shirtwaist maker. By shop meetings and individual work with the girls, she has put new life into the garment trades. The membership in the various locals has doubled. . . . The same policy of individual work was carried on a few months ago in an effort to bring new members into the Clerks' Union. Together with a temporary organizer from the Clerks' Union, the League has interviewed approximately 500 saleswomen.

. . . when we begin to organize a trade, we should be in a position to give assistance, as long as assistance is needed. It is not fair to begin the agitation and then drop out. While the girls must assume responsibility and leadership, it is not fair for us to expect untrained workers to carry the whole burden too soon. We must recognize that our work is not done when a strike is won or a union organized. In order to assist in training the girls to rely upon themselves and ably officer their unions, as well as to interest nonunion girls in organization, a debating class has been started.¹⁸

The struggle of the women clothing workers in New York and Chicago and other cities from 1909 to 1912 ended in the transformation of the needle trades from a sweated and degraded occupation to one of the best paid, most highly standardized and most efficient trades in the country.

Among the other organization work of the League, reported at its third biennial (1911) were the following:

An investigation by the League of working conditions of girls working in breweries in Milwaukee, and assistance to these girls in organizing.

Assistance in organizing, after they had suffered a wage cut, women working in the hose-supporter department of a large corset factory in Bridgeport, Conn.

Assistance in organizing women button makers in Muscatine, Iowa, and La Crosse, Wis., after employers had locked them out of the plants because of joining the union.

Assistance in organizing clothing workers in Sedalia, Mo. These girls made overalls, and when they lost jobs because of organizing the small town offered them few other work opportunities. The League helped union men establish a union shirt factory, in which all workers held stock and belonged to the union.

¹⁸ See 1911 Proceedings, p. 30.

The League continued its organizing program, worked closely with labor organizations, and received financial support from them. At the sixth biennial convention the secretary reported that the League had had 20 organizers at work in the years 1915 to 1917.

Policies of the League for Work During Strikes

Experience in helping women workers during strike periods led the League at its third biennial convention in 1911 to adopt a definite plan for its local branches to follow during strikes. When approached in reference to a strike, the League took no action until full information had been obtained and the matter had been presented to its local executive board and a committee appointed to act in the situation. If it was to assist women strikers, the League was to have representation on the strike committee of the union calling the strike. After this foundation was provided for, the activities of the League in connection with a strike were outlined by the convention as follows, a list that indicates the magnitude and difficulties of the work undertaken and the need for wise direction and varied talents to carry it through successfully:

1. To organize and direct public opinion;
2. To patrol the streets;
3. To obtain fair play in courts;
4. To help in raising funds through its members and sympathizers;
5. To help in formation of trade-union organization where workers are not organized.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE LEAGUE

Mention has been made of the efforts of the Women's Trade Union League to inform the public as to the conditions of women's work. Helping women workers to a better understanding of the economic society in which they were living was an important object of the League's educational program. Lectures and classes were held at headquarters of the local leagues, recreational programs were planned, and libraries were started of books that could be borrowed by members. Somewhat later the National League embarked on a more ambitious training program for women who could work actively in the labor movement. The League also continually sought to have established in the various localities public facilities for trade and industrial training which would be open to women.

Local League Classes and Libraries

As early as the second biennial (1909), the League's president was suggesting the need to help its members study their place in trade-union life, as follows:

. . . It would be well for our leagues to form classes in study of the history of trades unionism, so that we may gain from the experience of the

men and women of other days, learn from their mistakes, learn from their struggles, learn from their victories, and by study of their methods see where we may follow them successfully.

The leagues already were doing some work to inform themselves. St. Louis was planning group meetings to discuss current labor events and their significance. New York was conducting English classes, which were greatly in demand by the large population of foreign residents. Boston had stimulated the Trade School for Girls to develop a program of retraining for experienced women hat trimmers unlikely to find jobs as the industry changed. Chicago had started a lending library of over 300 books, a chorus, and a hockey team, and had planned Saturday outings. They had begun a series of leaflets to discuss current labor questions. A recent court case had brought to the fore the question of the legal injunction issued against labor, and the Chicago League discussed this problem and circulated a series of 14 questions to the members, offering a prize for the best answers.

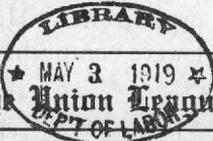
At this convention (1909) the committee on education proposed that local leagues establish classes to discuss labor questions and that they work to have a trade-union woman elected on local education boards. They also advocated placing trade schools under public education authorities, with facilities available to girls as well as boys, and with administration "not to be detrimental to labor."

By the next biennial convention (1911) New York as well as Chicago had made great progress with a series of pamphlets developed from lectures showing the growth of industrial society, and explaining to girls "their position in the world as women and the necessity of the trade-union movement." These pamphlets discussed the development of society; the history of industry; land, labor, capital, rent, wages, and profits; structure, purpose, and methods of trade unions; and the history of the labor movement in Europe and America. They also were accompanied by a series of short stories on the value of organization, and other subjects.

At this time the committee on education recommended use by local leagues of the New York leaflets and storiettes, and the Chicago methods of education in trade-union principles and of reaching girls who spoke Italian and other foreign languages. The committee also made recommendations—which were repeated at the next biennial (1913)—that the leagues conduct parliamentary law and debating classes and health lectures, and that they establish lending libraries, as the Chicago League had done.

Training School for Active Workers in the Labor Movement

At the fourth biennial (1913) a still more far-reaching proposal was made by the president—that the League conduct a school for organizers, giving a year's training and providing scholarships for the girls




Women's Trade Union League of Chicago



Bulletin

Phone Randolph 6158

Miss Agnes Nestor, President
Miss Mary McDowell, Vice-President
Miss Olive Sullivan, Secretary
Catherine Duffy, Treasurer

Room 820, 139 North Clark Street, Chicago

VOL. VIII.

FEBRUARY, 1919

No. 1-2

Public Meeting

Thursday Evening, February 6, 1919, at 8 o'clock

Subject: "Why a Labor Party?"

Speaker: MR. JOHN FITZPATRICK, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor and Candidate for MAYOR on the LABOR PARTY TICKET.

Everyone is welcome. Please bring your friends who are interested to know about the new Labor Party and its PLATFORM.

Place: FRATERNITY HALL, 19- WEST ADAMS STREET, between Dearborn and State Streets.

Course in the History of Trade Unions

The course in the History of Trade Unions begins the first Friday in February (7), at 8 o'clock, in Musicians' Hall, 175 West Washington Street.

PROFESSOR JOHN R. COMMONS of the UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN will open the course with a lecture on "Forerunners of Trade Unions Before 1860." Admission to single lecture, twenty-five cents. Entire course, one dollar.

Register Tuesday, February 4, 1919.

FIGURE 10.—BULLETIN, WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF CHICAGO.

who would attend. It was pointed out that these scholarships would have to include sufficient allowance to prevent the girls' families from "losing the support which they brought into the family treasury." In proposing this, the League president stressed the need for constructive labor organizations and pointed out that every week the League received requests, coming from all parts of the country, to send workers

to organize women. She added that it was "idle to think that this work can be done without organizers." Her first suggestions as to the kinds of training needed were comprehensive, and were stated as follows:

The course of study ought to include the philosophy of trade unionism, the history of trade unions in America, England, and Europe, the history of trade agreements and the study of the best type of modern trade agreements in America, England, and Europe, a study of all current labor legislation, current history of the woman movement and the need for full citizenship for women, lessons in parliamentary law, a study in the methods of trade-union offices including the office of the American Federation of Labor at Washington, field practice in more than one city and under the leadership of the trade-union organizers of the Women's Trade Union League.

The convention approved undertaking the school, the first effort in the country to educate for trade-union leadership. Thus was initiated a movement for the education of women workers, which was carried on as such for over a decade and then continued through expanding connections with numerous colleges, and which colored to a large extent the character of workers' education for several decades to follow.¹⁹

The League sent out to unions and central labor bodies a preparatory statement and plan of the school. Enthusiastic replies were received from widely separated parts of the country. The response of working women hoping to participate was so great as to pose new problems. The League's national executive board and a special committee for the purpose selected the few who could be given scholarships.

The Training School for Active Workers in the Labor Movement (so named officially at the 1916 convention) opened its doors at the League's national headquarters in Chicago in 1914, and three girls were admitted to test the experiment, one from Kansas City, one from Baltimore, and one from New York. This pioneer educational program for working girls continued until 1926 and awarded scholarships in all to 44 trade-union women. The University of Chicago and Northwestern University gave cooperation from the first, by admitting students of the school to classes in economics, labor problems, and present-day social and industrial problems.

The course included advanced English, the history of the trade-union movement in England and America, courses in public speaking, organization, the handling of meetings, typing and office procedure, legislation for women and children, and the function, theory, and practice of trade agreements.

¹⁹ See 1913 Proceedings, pp. 2, 10-13; Pamphlet, Educational Plans of the National Women's Trade Union League, Chicago, 1914; Women in Trade Unions, p. 11; Breckinridge, p. 62; Boone, p. 117; Dreier, p. 105; Henry, p. 120.

In order to translate theory into action, field work was arranged which provided constant illustration and practice. The trainee studied the history of trade unionism while the methods of organizing were put into practice. She analyzed trade agreements during the conferences between employers and groups of employees who were drawing them up, and learned to draft an agreement. She learned the detail of office administration through actual filing and cataloging in a union office. She conducted meetings according to parliamentary practice.

At the same time the evening classes in English and public speaking continued open to the local members of the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago. One class of 32 students studied public speaking under the direction of a professor of the University of Chicago.

Other locals were stimulated to secure cooperation of colleges in their areas. In Boston an educational council was formed of women and men trade unionists elected respectively by the Women's Trade Union League and the Central Labor Body. Evening classes were arranged and the Trade Union College was founded.

Arrangements for College Summer Courses

At the fifth biennial (1915) the League asked that women's colleges throw open their doors to wage-earning women in the summer months when the working women might be able to attend. At length Bryn Mawr College showed an interest in such a proposal and opened summer courses for women workers in 1921. The idea developed and later several other colleges provided summer classes of some type for similar groups.

The mimeographed report of the interstate conference held by the Chicago Women's Trade Union League in September 1921 gives some detail of the methods used in opening this school, after the League president, Mrs. Robins, and President M. Cary Thomas of Bryn Mawr, worked out initial plans for the project. To the advantage of both students and sponsoring college were careful provisions that the teachers and lecturers must have high professional qualifications as well as an understanding of the needs of women workers.

On the advice of Miss Mary Anderson, Director of the Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, representative women in the labor movement were invited to meet with representatives of the college faculty and alumnae at Bryn Mawr College. A joint administrative committee was formed of members of the college faculty alumnae, and representatives of working women. At this meeting plans were completed. The country was divided into regional districts and a committee for each district was appointed consisting of members of the alumnae to act upon applications for scholarships and to secure same. Applications were allotted to each district in proportion to the number of women industrial workers. Illinois was allowed 10, of

which 2 were sent from downstate and 4 from Chicago. Ten applications were to be filled by the country at large.

Scholarships were given from scholarship funds provided by trade unions, working girls' clubs, or groups of clubs and other friends, and were awarded to women wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity who might otherwise be prevented from attending the school.

On June 16, 1921, the college opened for classes with 83 students from 17 States, representing 21 trades, and coming from points as far separated as Los Angeles and Boston, Minnesota and Tennessee. The teaching was carried on by means of brief lectures accompanied by class discussions. The courses included literature, English composition, political history, social history, hygiene, music, labor economics, industrial organization, labor movement with reference to women. Physical exercise and sports (including swimming, basketball, hockey, and tennis), relaxation, amusement, and social life in general, were organized and participated in by students, tutors, and gymnastic and sport experts.

Recommendations on Trade Education

The League always worked to increase the availability of trade training to girls as well as boys. The need for this was well set forth in a pamphlet of the Boston League as follows:

The more familiar one is with today's conditions, the more obvious is the fact that the crying need for women in industrial life is proper equipment in the way of industrial training. The girl of 14 or 15 or 16 who goes from school into the factory or workshop with no knowledge of the trade she enters, necessarily drifts into the doing of unskilled work, and unless she is unusually endowed with energy, ambition and courage, she cannot rise into the ranks of the skilled.

If apprenticeships are not to be open to women—and "open" should be easily accessible instead of merely nominally open—then trade schools which offer them opportunities to increase their economic value must come into being.²⁰

Following its convention recommendations in 1909 that trade training be under the public school systems and be open to girls and boys alike, the League at its 1913 biennial made detailed recommendations as to the content of trade training, and embodied these in resolutions to be sent to appropriate educational authorities. They specified that the instruction at trade schools:

. . . include, besides the subjects necessary to trade training, the history of the trades taught, the history of the evolution of industry, and a sound system of economics including and emphasizing the philosophy of collective bargaining; also that all training in such schools be co-educational, the boy and girl studying the same subjects.

. . . the National Women's Trade Union League urges at once upon the educational authorities to introduce into the public school curriculum a special study of the State and Federal laws that have been enacted for their protection, and that such a course shall be of a nature to equip the

²⁰ See Boston Pamphlet, *The History of Trade Unionism Among Women in Boston*, p. 32.

boy and girl entering the industrial world with a full sense of his or her responsibility for seeing that the laws are enforced.

Local League Classes in Later Years

A few excerpts from annual reports of the League of New York at later 10-year intervals indicate the progress of the educational work of a local league that continues in strength.

1930-31. Our educational activities, in spite of the difficulties growing out of the depression, have shown interesting developments this year. Students who have attended, especially in the training course, history, and English classes, have come regularly and worked with great seriousness. Our "Training Course for Active Women Trade Unionists" . . . was aimed to give active trade-union women an opportunity to analyze the functions and operation of their unions. Ten students were selected from applicants suggested by the various local unions affiliated with the League and from the League membership itself, and given scholarships for the duration of the term of 20 weeks. The elementary English class has become almost an institution in itself and has attracted many new students to the League. The class this winter has met two evenings each week for 2 hours at each session. Our largest class this winter has been the course in modern European history. They asked to spend an hour after class each evening to discuss current events. Other classes were in pottery and literature, and there was a series of readings from American literature.

1940-41. In our classrooms, we try to equip young workers for responsible trade-union work by providing them with an understanding of the social problems of American life. If these students are to put their League training to successful use, they must have not only the facts but also the ability to use their information and training within the labor movement and the community. . . . the job is that of bringing intelligent education about the issues at stake in this emergency, and of training working people for active participation in shaping labor and national policy.

This year, the League conducted 12 classes, from October through April, attended by over 300 students from 43 unions. These students used books from the League library at the rate of about 30 a week. They organized into a student council, made six field trips to study government and trade-union administration. They participated in four joint conferences with other young people, arranged six special projects, planned three social get-togethers, a student assembly, and a student banquet. Fourteen students were speakers at large meetings.

The League offered two classes in legislation this year. The class in trade unionism in the United States, taught by the educational director, was given this year for the third time. The students included eight business agents and organizers. Others in the group were newly organized or holding office for the first time. A course was given on current developments in the international situation. Other classes brought to league students the opportunity to work with qualified people in small discussion groups. These included economics, current events, and American and European history. A new activity in league educational work this year

was the radio workshop, organized in November to promote student-produced radio programs about labor problems and what the trade-union movement is doing to solve them.

A large part of the League's educational work this year was in promotion of the general worker's education movement in the community, participation in community efforts to raise general educational standards, and general educational activity in the community to promote wider understanding of labor's aims and activities. During the year the educational director represented the League on numerous joint committees and spoke at many meetings. The League successfully experimented with an open forum, which held a weekly 2-hour meeting, the first hour of which was devoted to a presentation by a guest speaker, and the second hour to student discussion.

1950-51. New this year was the "White Collar Union Techniques Class" which had 10 weekly discussions of the problems and techniques relating to organization and functioning of white-collar unions. Students who participated reported at the final session that the class helped them achieve greater participation in union meetings and affairs through specific suggestions for making meetings interesting, setting up educational meetings, use of films and library, etc. The social action workshop was an outstanding class, which analyzed the leading issues of the day.

The union training course studied grievance procedure, duties and responsibilities of shop stewards, parliamentary procedure and public speaking. With it, the classes in history of labor, and the "Profits and Your Jobs" course furthered the understanding, loyalty, and practical leadership ability of the students.

Our crafts, dance, and dramatics classes provided our working people and community friends at large with the important creative relaxation so important in today's economic and physical setup of our city. They included modern dance, pottery, leathercraft, and dramatics. Our library service provided reading opportunity for students in all classes. Books and pamphlets related to the courses were offered, and modern fiction for relaxing reading was available.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OF THE LEAGUE

The vigorous work for the organization of women workers, already described, was a primary objective of the National Women's Trade Union League. Its leaders realized, however, that hand in hand with organization must go efforts for labor legislation. Legislation became one of the League's three basic programs—organization, education, legislation. As Alice Henry, the editor of the League's periodical put it:

Trade-union women have ardently and efficiently championed the cause of their weaker sisters. . . . In every trade strongly organized even locally some raising of standards has been the unflinching result of organization. . . . But it would be inhuman to postpone the day of improvement until trade unionism among women becomes so general that they can act [solely] through the power of [their] numbers.²¹

²¹ See Henry, p. 136.

WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE OF NEW YORK
Classes for Workers, 1952-53

EFFECTIVE UNION AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

To help the union member understand his role in the local union. Information on structure and functions of the union, as a democratic self-governing entity. How to use grievance machinery and mediation processes. How to participate usefully in floor discussion at union meetings, in committees, in community activities. Encouragement of group discussion by the members of the class.

JULIUS MANSON

Tuesdays, 7:00 p.m.
Begins October 14

Fee: \$10.00
2 semesters

* * *

POTTERY AND CERAMICS

The designing and making of useful and ornamental objects, including vases, trays, bowls, lamp bases. Preparation of glazes on an individual basis. Use of kiln and potter's wheel on the premises, so that students have an unusual opportunity to work out all stages of the potter's art and craft.

Instruction adapted to all degrees of experience. Open to beginners and advanced students.

ROLF KEY-OBERG

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.
Begins October 16

2 semesters
Fee: \$25.00

* * *

LABOR TODAY

Development of the modern labor movement. Organized labor as a powerful force in modern democratic society. Review of the range of its responsibilities, prestige and influence.

Presentation of outstanding speakers, leaders of the labor movement who will discuss their own trade union work.

GEREL RUBIEN

Wednesdays, 8:00 p.m.
Begins October 15

2 semesters
Fee: \$10.00

* * *

DRAMA AND SPEECH WORKSHOP

The dramatic arts as a means of more effective self-expression. Intended primarily for amateurs. Basic techniques of acting and play production. The course will include working out and presenting before live audiences simple sketches and short productions. Themes to be selected by the students.

Analysis of individual speech problems and practice in the classroom of effective speaking. This class "learns by doing."

ELISABETH ROSE

Tuesdays, 7:00 p.m.
Begins October 14

2 semesters
Fee: \$10.00

* * *

CLASSES FOR LOCALS
 (Attention: Union Officers)

Special classes geared to the needs of any local union desiring to utilize the resources of the League's School and library for its own members on a group basis.

Subscription arrangements can be made upon inquiry.

Purpose—to provide a "custom-made" educational program geared to fit an individual union.

Consult the League's Education Director on details.

FIGURE 11.—"CLASSES FOR WORKERS."
 [Pages of New York announcement, 1952-53]

Reasons for Labor Laws

The legislative committee in the second biennial (1909), considering that the League faced a large problem and had no precedent for its full solution, gave the following reasons for the League to support legislation for women workers:

We believe that the organized women, who have the power because of their organization to contract collectively for their labor, are bound to secure protection for their weaker sisters and brothers and to demand that the state secure for all conditions that will safeguard the health of the workers and the welfare of future generations.

Your committee urges this legislative program (listed below) for the protection of wage-earning women because the mass of them are young, between 16 and 21 years, inexperienced, unskilled, without the . . . power to bargain on equal terms with their employers, for, while the employer has the power to wait, these girls are helpless because of the struggle for a mere existence.

The League's Basic Legislative Program

The 8-hour day and a living wage were the first points on which the League actively sought labor laws—policies of such importance that they were placed on the League's official seal. The ambitious legislative program proposed and adopted at the second biennial (1909) included the following, to be introduced as measures "to safeguard the health of female employees":

1. The 8-hour day.
2. Elimination of night work.
3. Protected machinery.
4. Sanitary workshops.
5. Separate toilet rooms.
6. Seats for women and permission for their use when the work allows.
7. Prohibition of the employment of pregnant women 2 months before and after childbirth.
8. Pensions for working mothers during the lying-in period.
9. An increased number of women factory inspectors.
10. Women physicians as health inspectors.
11. A legal minimum wage in sweated trades.

These measures continued as the League's basic program of legislation, with additions and fuller statements from time to time. For example, following the shock that was felt by the entire country when 143 girls lost their lives in the fire of the Triangle Waist Co. in New York, the League's 1911 convention added: Adequate fire protection. This became a permanent part of the list. It also presented these as "measures to be introduced into the various State legislatures as soon as possible." The 1913 convention enlarged the ninth point to read:

9. Factory inspection laws which make possible the enforcement of labor laws. An increased number of women inspectors. The Labor and Factory Departments to be placed on a nonpolitical and scientific basis, and the inspectors to be men and women with a practical knowledge of the work, under civil service.

Limitation of Work Hours

The first subject on which the League focused its legislative activity was that of women's hours of work, which was so closely related to the health of the workers.²² Soon after the first convention in 1907, the Chicago League called a conference of women trade unionists

²² See 1909 Proceedings, pp. 18, 19, 48; 1911 Proceedings, pp. 20, 54; Chicago Report, 35th Anniversary Dinner, "The First Ten Years"; Boone, pp. 112-113.

Why Labor Laws For Women?

Because They Are Necessary

To Establish Standards of Health and Efficiency for the Wage-Earning Woman.

Except in states where there are 8-hour and minimum wage laws, hundreds of thousands of wage-earning women are working more than 8 hours, many of them more than 10 hours a day, for less than \$12 a week.

To Permit Efficient Motherhood and Healthy Children.

Nearly 2½ million of the wage-earning women in this country are under 21 years old—at ages when overstrain means broken health for life. In a typical industrial community, over half the women factory workers are married, and many of them are mothers of children under 5 years old, working at night, after caring for their children all day.

To Prevent Exploitation of Women and the Destruction of Industrial Standards for Both Women and Men.

So many women must work to live, so many are unskilled and their bargaining power is so slight because of their necessities and lack of organization, that they are at the mercy of the exploiter. Forced to accept longer hours and lower pay than men, they become underbidding competitors and drag down the standards of all industry.

FIGURE 12.—“WHY LABOR LAWS FOR WOMEN?”

[Page of League leaflet.]

and presented its proposals to the State industrial commission, which the Illinois governor had appointed to draft a law for workers' health and safety. These included an 8-hour measure, protection from machine accidents, and provision for women factory inspectors. The Commission did not include the 8-hour measure in its recommendations, but the League pressed it on the State legislature in 1909. This resulted in 1911 in the passage of a law limiting hours in factories and laundries to 10 a day.

In reporting this progress, the League continued to look forward, saying, "After the law was passed it was our job to get the information to the working women of Chicago, so they would know of the protection the law afforded them, and how and where to report a violation. Thousands of leaflets printed in many languages were distributed." The League's president and organizer also stood on street corners, morning after morning between 5 and 6 o'clock, meeting young workers as they went to work in hotels and restaurants in the poorer sections of Chicago and telling them about the new law.

—From 54 to 48 Hours—

6 Reasons for 6 Hours Less Work a Week

THE PROPOSED 48-HOUR LAW FOR WOMEN IN INDUSTRY would cover women employed in factory and mercantile establishments. Approximately 400,000 women are employed in these industries in New York State. In towns of less than 3,000 population, the 48-hour law would not apply to mercantile establishments. The summer exemption for canneries would not be changed.

What will be the effect of a 48-hour week law on these women and these industries.

Health and efficiency

- 1 For the women workers—better physical and mental conditions when they are released from the strain of too long hours.
- 2 For the industry—improvement in the quality of the work, less absenteeism, fewer industrial accidents, greater efficiency.

Earnings and profit

- 3 For the women workers—the same or higher earnings, for investigation has shown that wage earners in establishments with a schedule of 48 hours or less a week receive higher rates for full time than workers on full time in establishments with longer hours.
- 4 For the industry—less material wasted, less time wasted, longer life of equipment and less repairs, increased production. Mr. Harrington Emerson, director of the Emerson Engineers, has formulated the following table showing the profitableness of shorter hours, his calculation being based on actual experience:

Reduction in hours	33½ per cent
Increase in wages	15 per cent
Increase in production	37 per cent
Decrease in cost	15 per cent

Stabilized employment

- 5 For the women workers—more full time, steadier work in place of long periods of idleness followed by periods of too long hours with consequent over-strain and injury to health.
- 6 For the industry—less labor turnover. This is an objective for which every industry strives for it means lower cost of production, higher skill in workmanship and greatly increased efficiency.

THE 48-HOUR WEEK PAYS—

In dollars and cents—In satisfied and therefore better workers—
In better health.

FIGURE 13.—SIX REASONS FOR SHORTER HOURS.

[Page of League leaflet]

In 1909 the League's national convention passed the following resolution, and similar action was repeated in 1911:

Resolved, That each local league present an 8-hour bill at the next general assembly in their State, if possible, and that we urge all State federations of labor to assist us in securing such legislation.

The New York League in 1910 pressed for limitation of women's work hours. They formed a joint labor legislative conference of the legislative committees of all the various labor organizations and secured an enormous array of supporters for the bill. After its defeat, the State federation of labor made it an issue, and notified Senate leaders that unless it was passed labor would work to defeat its opponents. The result was a 9-hour-day bill with a weekly limit of 54 hours, passed in 1912 after a bitter fight.

The Minimum Wage

The League's president laid special stress on the second basic point in its program, the minimum wage, in her address to the fourth biennial convention (1913). By that time the League had made some progress in promoting laws to limit hours, and the first State minimum-wage laws had been passed. Mrs. Robins says:

The National Women's Trade Union League at its second biennial convention in 1909 included in its legislative program the demand for a minimum wage. Representing as we do the organized women workers in America, it was natural that we should be among the first to understand the need of such legislation. Today, however, thoughtful men and women everywhere are realizing the individual and social menace of the low wage and there is a general recognition of the fact that in a great, rich, empty country, able-bodied men and women should find it possible to earn their living by their day's work. . . .

No one will deny that however difficult the problem, we find ourselves under conditions demanding immediate action. The right to live and the right to earn a living are indistinguishable terms. . . .

A living wage must certainly mean sufficient reward for labor to provide health-giving food, good clothing, shelter with sunlight and air and warmth and comfort, education and recreation—books and music—sufficient reward to tide over periods of sickness or other unemployment and to make provision for a happy and serene old age. It must give opportunity and time not only for the development of the powers within us, but also for expression of human fellowship.

Developing Effective Methods

It has been seen that the Chicago League did not stop after passage of a law had been secured, but at once began to spread information that the law existed. Similarly, the National League sought to develop among women workers methods of seeing that the law was effective. At the third biennial (1911) the committee on legislation suggested that each local league set up a permanent law-enforcement committee, in the following manner:

Methods for Local Leagues To Make Laws Effective

That each league request all women's unions to send one representative to such a committee. Through each union this committee is to form in each shop or factory a voluntary social police force consisting of two shop members, whose business it is to see about the enforcement of the fire, labor, and sanitary laws. This shop committee is to report to its union representative on the enforcement committee, and also to the chairman of this committee, which will have on file the shops and factory, and the names and addresses of the voluntary social police committee of each shop.

This committee is to report to the department of labor or fire any violation reported to it. If this does not bring results, the union is requested to take up the question.

This committee should also have a résumé of the laws affecting the women workers in factories, and distribute it through the shops and factories.

At the fourth biennial convention (1913) the committee on legislation made two far-reaching recommendations for methods of strengthening league programs of legislation. One of these outlined methods of procedure for local leagues, some of which already had been used in some localities; the other proposed further work in the National League.

Methods for Local Leagues in Supporting Legislation

. . . in times of a legislative campaign the local league's legislative committees shall call upon all women's trade unions in the State to form a State legislative committee with representatives from all women's trade unions and trade-union leagues throughout the State.

The committee also recommends a joint labor legislative council, called by each local league, of the legislative committee of all local unions or central labor bodies.

Also that at all legislative hearings on labor questions the leagues shall send as large a delegation of trade-union women as possible.

National Standing Committee on Legislation

The committee on legislation recommends the establishment of a standing committee on legislation, whose duty it shall be to follow and further the progress of legislation in the various States and in Congress with regard to the program of the legislative committee; to keep on hand at the national office such information and data as may be of assistance with reference to legislative work in the different States. . . .

The League Campaigns for a Federal Women's Bureau

The League was seeking to raise the standards of women's work conditions along every front. Besides intensive local activities it had stimulated a Federal investigation of women's work. Immediately after Congress had authorized this, as has been mentioned, the three interstate conferences in 1907 requested that a woman be appointed to a responsible position in the Federal Bureau of Labor. The need for this was emphasized as the investigation progressed and its findings seemed to League members to indicate the requirement for a permanent investigating body in the Federal Government, with

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR A BUREAU
TO BE KNOWN AS

THE WOMEN'S BUREAU

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there shall be established in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau.

SEC. 2. That the said bureau shall be in charge of a director, a woman, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$5,000.¹ It shall be the duty of said bureau to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment. The said bureau shall have authority to investigate and report to the said department upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry. The director of said bureau may from time to time publish the results of these investigations in such a manner and to such extent as the Secretary of Labor may prescribe.

SEC. 3. That there shall be in said bureau an assistant director, to be appointed by the Secretary of Labor, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$3,500¹ and shall perform such duties as shall be prescribed by the director and approved by the Secretary of Labor.

SEC. 4. That there is hereby authorized to be employed by said bureau a chief clerk and such special agents, assistants, clerks, and other employees at such rates of compensation and in such numbers as Congress may from time to time provide by appropriations.

SEC. 5. That the Secretary of Labor is hereby directed to furnish sufficient quarters, office furniture, and equipment for the work of this bureau.

SEC. 6. That this act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, June 5, 1920.

Public No. 259, 66th Congress (H. R. 13229).

¹Amounts increased by Reclassification Act of March 4, 1923, as amended and supplemented.

officials always at work and able to provide continuing information that would give a basis for further action to better women's working conditions. The League's second biennial (1909) asked that such an official authority be established in the Federal Government. The request was prefaced with strong statements that indicated current situations as follows:

. . . The Federal Supreme Court and the Supreme Courts of 19 States have established the legality of limiting the hours of women's labor and have decided as constitutional the principles of protective legislation for working women;

. . . The rapid increase of women workers in the factories, mills and shops of the Nation is fraught with industrial and social consequences of the utmost importance to the national welfare;

. . . The National Women's Trade Union League, in convention assembled, respectfully asks the Honorable Charles Nagel, Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor, and the Honorable Charles P. Neill, Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor, to create in said Bureau of Labor a specific department for the investigation and report from time to time upon the condition of working women in the United States with special reference to protective legislation directed to the preservation of the health, safety and morals of the motherhood of our people;

. . . We respectfully urge upon said Secretary and Commissioner the wisdom, propriety, and justice of appointing a woman as the head of such department.

A Women's Division was set up in the Federal Government, but only as a subdivision of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Its head worked as effectively as possible under the conditions and secured considerable support from State labor bureaus. But she had no independent authority, no power of initiative, and no separate appropriation. Efforts continued for a separate and independent bureau. At length a bill was introduced for this purpose in 1916, with the recommendation of the Secretary of Labor and the support of the Women's Trade Union League, the Young Women's Christian Association, the National Consumers' League, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and labor organizations. This was the Jones-Casey bill.

Work to establish a Women's Bureau continued without result for several years. In the end, the need for it was emphasized to a wider public by the experiences of World War I. In that period, war industries had rapid need of large numbers of women workers and many of those who responded were young and inexperienced. Often they were subject to conditions that led to serious strain or injury. At length a Woman in Industry Service was established in the Department of Labor. Its value and the need for it were so fully demonstrated that pressure to make it permanent continued after the war. Finally, in June 1920, 11 years after the League's first national convention resolution and 4 years after a bill was first introduced in Congress, a law was passed to establish a permanent Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor.

Other Federal Measures the League Supported

Reference has been made to the League's earliest national policies—work for a Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor and for a Federal investigation of women's work. Each year it used its influence to get Congress to appropriate funds to operate the Women's Bureau and the Children's Bureau. The League was among the leading organizations that pressed for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to give Congress power to regulate the employment of children under 18.

The convention of 1913 established a national legislative committee. By the spring of 1918 this developed into an office in Washington with an official legislative representative. This continued until 1926, after which the national office carried on this work in Chicago until 1929. At that time the national headquarters was moved to Washington. The legislative secretary, Ethel Smith, sent to local leagues and other interested groups a mimeographed weekly news service telling the status of legislation of interest to the League. Among other measures the League supported were extensions of Children's Bureau functions to include research and policymaking on maternal and infant hygiene, an act to make the citizenship of a woman independent of her husband's nationality, development of the merit system in the civil service, and the establishment of a department of education with a secretary in the President's Cabinet. The League carried on its legislative work in close cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, which was made up of representatives of a number of women's organizations working to support their common legislative policies.

Later State Legislative Programs

In later years, local leagues continued to work for comprehensive programs of State laws, and had well-developed methods of furthering the legislative measures they supported. This is illustrated by the following extracts from the activities along this line mentioned in some of the annual reports of the New York League:

1941 Legislative Activities

The committee sent representatives to the annual legislative conference of the New York State Federation of Labor in Albany. The League's legislative program was introduced, and we participated in the general program of the State federation. The League's interest still centers on the problems of the household employee. Three measures were again introduced for domestic workers: To provide for them workmen's compensation; to establish a 60-hour week; and to include domestic workers under the minimum-wage law. Emphasis was placed on the workmen's compensation bill, as it represents the least controversial measure and the most feasible of admin-

istration. No bill, however, passed. The League then organized a special committee of representative women to continue promotion of the workmen's compensation bill until it is enacted into law.

1951 Legislation

The Women's Trade Union League began its work for the 1951 legislative season early in June of 1950, preparing its legislative program which was submitted to the New York Federation of Labor convention for approval. The League's program is:

1. Enactment of a law establishing maximum hours of work and minimum wages for all workers [including men in the women's law].
2. Establishment of day-care centers for the children of working mothers.
3. Equal pay for women and men workers on the basis of work performed.
4. Extension of child-labor laws to cover children—
 - (a) in street trades,
 - (b) on commercial farms,
 - (c) as caddies.
5. Amendment of the disability benefits law to eliminate the provisions which discriminate against women workers.

THE LEAGUE'S RESPONSE TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS

The basic points in the national program of the League continued as its long-time policy. But the broad purpose of furthering all improvements in the status of working women and of women in general allowed for considerable flexibility of action as need arose. The League, both on national measures and in local situations, thus gave its efforts to a variety of programs that promised to aid in the development of its broader purposes.

Response to the strike situations already described were instances of this. Other examples were the work for adequate standards for women's work on Government contracts in World War I and the vigorous local plans developed for workers' health, for legal aid to those eligible for compensation for injuries suffered in their work places, and for aid to foreign-born workers along several lines—in learning English and adjusting to their new industrial environment, in legal difficulties, and in the techniques of obtaining citizenship. In one of the league pamphlets Mrs. Robins describes, in her usual inspirational style, the broad possibilities the League sought to develop and its versatile response to current needs:

THE IMMEDIATE NEED

If the fight for the shorter workday presents itself as a legislative measure for the 8- or 9- or 10-hour day, we throw our strength and time and intelligence into the winning of that fight. Not forgetting that we stand for the 8-hour day we yet realize that even a 10-hour day limitation often means, as in the laundry and hotel trades for instance, a shorter workday by 4 or 5 hours, and we know that these hours so gained give opportunity for thought and action.

If the fight for better wages becomes a legislative measure in the form of a demand for minimum-wage boards, we throw whatever we have of time and strength and intelligence into that fight. . . .

If the demand for equipment in citizenship takes the form of a legislative measure enfranchising women, all the more certainly will we throw our time and strength into this fight for democracy.

If the constructive work of organizing and training for self-government demands organizers—women with vision and power and patience—we must furnish such organizers. . . .

If the request comes for music and merrymaking from our younger sisters, let us understand that joy more certainly than sorrow calls the child into the larger life and social relationship.

If the constructive work of organization in the shop has not been permitted by the employers and a strike ensues as a long overdue reaction against intolerable conditions, then here, too, let us put the best that is in us of time and strength, of intelligence and service and money into this fight for a truer democracy. Grim and terrible as a strike may be as an expression of protest, it is nevertheless the outward and visible sign of a miracle in the human soul. . . . The gleam of some vision caught . . . breaks through into light and life as unexpectedly, as miraculously as the power which, unseen and unrecognized through the long winter months, suddenly transforms the barren and desolate moors of the northland into sunlit sod and singing grass.

That the work of the Women's Trade Union League is national in scope and need is recognized. This battle can only be won by and with and through the whole people. Will you help?

Are you an artist? Give us designs and colors. We need two thousand streamers and banners for the next parade.

Are you a cartoonist, a writer, a poet, a playwright or an actor? Our problem is largely a problem of interpretation. Interpret for us the struggle and the story.

Are you a rhymster? Give us jingles so that the children in the street may learn and play with them and catch their meaning.

Are you a musician? Give us music to stir the heart and make it glad, to give it courage and hope so that the songs of the people may bring in the victory.

Are you a thinker? Help us plan wisely so that no moment may be lost to restore childhood to its joy, motherhood to its glory, manhood and womanhood to power of growth and freedom.

Are you an educator, a teacher? Help us to set free the hidden powers of the human heart and spirit.

Are we workers? Then may the vision never leave us in the day's drudgery. Let us qualify ourselves to the task undertaken and by establishing self-government in the workshop help win this next step in the human struggle for liberty and social justice.²³

League Programs for the Workers' Health

The health of the workers was a continual interest of the League. In that period the conditions of factory work, involving long hours, speed of operation, and often insanitary surroundings, resulted in broken health for many workers. In most trades workers were likely to be subject to some particular type of illness. In the garment and

²³ See pamphlet, *Self-Government in the Workshop*, by Margaret Dreier Robins.

textile industries, which employed many women, the workers frequently contracted tuberculosis. Several of the local leagues, notably Chicago and New York, had extensive health programs.

The sick-benefit plan of the Chicago League was reported as early as the second biennial (1909) to have been "established for some time." From it grew a well-developed health plan in which several physicians cooperated, in particular three women physicians. Members were encouraged to take advantage of this, and if headache, sore throat, excessive fatigue, or other symptoms indicated trouble to go to a physician so the cause could be determined and corrected "before their health is entirely broken down." Later the League supported beds for tubercular patients in two hospitals and established a summer camp for women workers.

The physicians who participated in the health program kept careful records of the cases, noting the trade where the girl was employed, hours of work, whether the job was done sitting or standing, whether the factory or shop was well or poorly lighted, and other conditions that would affect the workers' health.

The method arranged for the health service was that every union affiliated with the League also could belong to the health committee by the payment of a small annual fee per member (25 cents). A book of tickets was issued to the union's shop steward and a member needing medical aid could secure a ticket entitling her to a visit to the doctor. League officers were careful to explain that the doctors were paid their full fees.

The report at the League's fourth biennial (1913) showed that almost 100 women had received treatment in the year. About 40 percent had made no more than 5 visits to the doctor, but almost 30 percent had made 15 or more visits. The expense of the program made it necessary to limit the number of free visits to 5, with a charge of 25 cents for each of the next 5, and thereafter a charge of 50 cents, half the usual fee doctors then charged for an office visit.

During the strike of cloakmakers in 1916, the New York League set up a special medical-care service. Aid was given by 71 physicians and many druggists and opticians provided supplies at cost. The League's distribution of milk to workers' families has already been mentioned.

Other parts of the program of some local leagues that were directed toward the workers' health were certain of their recreational activities and the inclusion of health lectures in their educational programs; leagues also were advised to introduce athletic work as a health feature.

Helping Injured Workers Get Compensation

The New York League set up in 1922 a compensation service to help women injured in industry to obtain compensation. Many of these

women were timid and did not know what they were entitled to nor how to present their cases to the State workmen's compensation commission. Some of them could speak but little English.

The adviser of the New York League, Maud Swartz (who was also in this period the National League's president), told them their rights under the laws, advised as to what was best for them to do, helped to get doctors' reports, expense accounts, doctors' bills, procured witnesses for their hearings, procured subpoenas, got their doctors to testify, if necessary, had the cases put on the calendar if there had been a delay. If the injured worker was unable to resume her former employment, the adviser urged her to go to the Rehabilitation Bureau of the New York State Department of Education, which made a specialty of placing the disabled workers and sometimes gave them retraining. If claimants were in need they were referred to the social service department. Sometimes it was difficult to collect compensation promptly and in those cases the adviser helped the claimant to collect the payments due her. Reports to the League's national conventions showed that in the period 1922-24 over 500 women had been aided in this way, and in 1926-29 more than 2,000 had been helped. The League continued this service for almost a decade, after which assistance was given by the New York State Department of Labor.

League Plans to Aid Foreign-Born Workers

In their organization work local leagues often had a problem to secure the interest of women workers who had come recently to America. In New York and Chicago large groups of Italian women were employed in the garment and other trades. The New York League offered classes in English, and organized a group of over 200 Italian women to whom they "taught the principles of trade unionism," and whom they helped in various other ways.

The Chicago League undertook an ambitious program of helping foreign-born workers to become well integrated in the New World. The story of this League's "First Ten Years," in its Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Report, says:

One of our early committees was the immigration committee, formed in July 1908. Arrangements were made with the authorities of Ellis Island to have sent to us the names of all the immigrant women en route to Chicago. The receipt of the names was followed by personal calls. From July 15, 1907, to April 1, 1908, 1,459 names were received, representing almost every country in Europe. The ages ranged from 16 to 30, and fully 90 percent of the women came alone. Although the committee did not attempt to meet trains, it was found that a very important work was still necessary after the girl arrived at her destination.

The League helped these foreign-born persons to go through the process of obtaining American citizenship, and prepared a booklet of

instructions: *How to Become a Citizen*. The work continued to grow, and the Chicago League interested a group of citizens in it, took the initiative in organizing the Immigrants' Protective League, and paid its secretary for a time. This organization specialized in giving help of various kinds to foreign-born women. For example, it aided in settling legal difficulties and in freeing immigrants from the grip of certain unscrupulous agencies which purported to obtain employment or to give other services. The League secured the cooperation of prominent lawyers in these efforts.

Recreational activities also were organized in foreign districts. For example, the Chicago League report covering its first 10 years states:

In order that our strange foreign neighbors might have brought into their lives some of the music to which they were used in their home countries, we organized a music committee and arranged concerts in the small parks throughout the city. Concerts were held every week during the winter, and the best artists contributed their services. This was the first attempt to give this sort of music to the people in our foreign districts. Later the Civic Music Association took over all such work.²⁴

Standards Proposed for Government Contracts, World War I

The League's sixth convention was held in June 1917, three months after the United States had entered World War I. War industries soon called for large numbers of women, many of whom were inexperienced. It was thought the war would be short, and demand was widespread for total or partial abolition of restrictions on hours and on work at night or on Sundays. The United States Navy Yard went on a 10-hour basis, the first breakdown of an 8-hour law for Government workers. At the same time new investigations were showing that excessive work hours and insanitary and dangerous conditions of work lessened rather than increased production, because of their ill effects on the workers. The League's convention took vigorous action. The following is an extract from a resolution on this subject passed by the convention:

Whereas England's experience under like circumstances has proved on the one hand that increasing the hours of labor actually lessens the output, and, on the other, that the crippling of the schools was accompanied by an increase of 34 percent in child delinquency, while the small money saving made in this way in two years was only enough to support the armies for 15 hours, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the National Women's Trade Union League in convention assembled protest emphatically against any attempt to lower educational standards or to weaken the laws safeguarding the workers, especially

²⁴ See *Thirty-fifth Anniversary Report*.

women and children, and that we do all within our power to maintain and help establish

THE ONE DAY REST IN SEVEN
THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY
FACTORY, FIRE AND SANITATION LAWS

as well as guard every other law enacted for the protection of women and children in industry; that we secure equal pay for equal work where women are forced into the positions left vacant by men.

The League convention also passed resolutions demanding preservation of the right of free speech in wartime, and urging the Government to try to "achieve a just and honorable settlement" of the conflict. However, it did not stop with the passage of resolutions. A convention committee on women's work in wartime outlined in detail standards that should be established in women's wartime work. The League urged on the President of the United States, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy the importance of putting these standards into effect. The League's proposals were as follows and were published in a pamphlet, Report of Committee on Women's Work in Wartime:

For the first time in our history, trade-union women representing their respective trades have been called by the Government into active service in order to meet intelligently the difficulties and complications which will arise in the industrial field as the result of our entrance into the war. It is therefore incumbent upon us to consider the best ways of protecting the great mass of women workers from the exploitation that may follow.

Trade-union women are serving on committees appointed by the Council of National Defense and on State and city defense committees, thereby in an official capacity representing the interests of the women workers and voicing for the first time the needs of this most exploited group in the country.

We therefore recommend to the proper Government committees the following outline of standards to be established for Government contracts, and the following recommendations to protect working women in the necessary industrial adjustments that are now in process of development:

STANDARDS OF INDUSTRY FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

1. Adult labor.
2. Wages—
 - a. The highest prevailing rate of wages in the industry which the contract affects.
 - b. Equal pay for equal work.
 - c. Those trades where there is no wage standard whatsoever shall be placed in the hands of an adjustment committee.
 - d. That all wages be adjusted from time to time to meet the increased cost of living—by this committee—and that other wage questions be submitted to it.
3. The 8-hour day.
4. One day's rest in seven.
5. Prohibition of night work for women.

6. Standards of sanitation and fire protection.
7. Protection against overfatigue and industrial diseases.
8. Prohibition of tenement-house labor.
9. Exemption from the call into industry of women having small children needing their care.
10. Exemption from the call into industry of women during 2 months before and after childbirth.

In this first war year, these activities of the League were among the pressing influences that, combined with the necessity for an enormous program of rapid production led the War Department to establish the women's branch as a part of the Industrial Service Section of its Ordnance Department. Government policy on conditions for women's employment was first defined by the War Department in General Order No. 13 issued by the Chief of Ordnance in November 1917 and at the same time by the Quartermaster General. This suggests to manufacturers working under war contracts and to plants under Government control certain employment standards characterized as "mechanisms of efficiency." These standards of 35 years ago state, among other points:

The day's work should not exceed the customary hours . . . already attained. The drift in the industrial world is toward an 8-hour day as an efficiency measure. Hours of labor must be adapted to the age and sex of the worker and the nature of the occupation. . . . existing legal standards should be rigidly maintained. Effort should be made to restrict the work of women to 8 hours.

One day of rest in seven should be a universal and invariable rule. The working period on Saturday should not exceed 5 hours. The half holiday on Saturday is already a common custom. The Saturday half holiday should be considered an absolute essential for women under all conditions.

The standards of wages hitherto prevailing for men in the process should not be lowered where women render equivalent service.

The employment of women on night shifts should be avoided.

No work should be given out to be done in tenement houses.

Other provisions made for women required time and suitable place for meals, rest periods, use of seats where possible, and avoidance of continuous lifting of heavy weights. Reference has already been made to the Woman in Industry Service established in the Labor Department as a wartime measure.

CONTINUING CONTACT WITH WOMEN WORKERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Some of the League leaders had contacts with women prominent in the workers' organizations of other countries. Every opportunity was taken to enable the membership to meet or hear such personalities from abroad and learn of the movements they represented. The League's wide concept of fellowship with workers and with the oppressed of all types was expressed as follows by Mrs. Robins:

labor's kinship is as broad and wide as life. We are kin with those who are suffering . . . in that storm-tossed Continent of Europe. We are kin with our own folks at home, with the political prisoners who dared obey their conscience in the whirlwind of the war, with the mine workers in West Virginia, with the steel workers in Pennsylvania, with the old men and women in our midst to whom the fulfillment of life has been denied, who are suffering poverty in old age in spite of hard, honest work through the long years. . . .²⁵

Women unionists from abroad were invited to attend and speak at League conventions. The regional conferences held in 1908 requested the League's national officers to establish the fullest possible cooperation with women's trade unions in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe. The activities of the British Women's Trade Union League had been carried on for nearly 30 years when its American counterpart came on the scene. Its secretary, the dynamic Mary Macarthur, who also had started the National Federation of Women Workers, was present at the League's second biennial (1909) and was asked to speak on organization. Also attending and speaking at this convention was Margarete Schweichler representing women in the large organization of office workers and department-store clerks in Germany. This organization was again represented at the 1911 biennial.

Labor Standards in the Peace Treaty After World War I

In international affairs that applied more specifically to women workers themselves, the League pioneered in presenting forward-looking programs. After World War I the national board had appointed a committee on social and industrial reconstruction. One of its proposals was that labor standards should be incorporated in the treaty of peace. This followed a plan which was endorsed by the League's sixth convention (1917), proposed by Mme. Gabrielle Duchene of the white-goods workers of Paris—that such standards be included in the treaty, and apply within a definite time to every country signing. Two League representatives were sent to Paris to present this plan and the standards to the Labor Commission of the Peace Conference, which was handling initial plans for what later became the International Labor Organization. They made a detailed report at the seventh biennial convention (1919). At the same time the League asked the American Federation of Labor to include a woman among the delegates it would appoint to the International Labor Conference, which was held in Washington later in 1919.

The standards the League proposed for inclusion in the peace treaty consisted of those it formerly had recommended to the President, the

²⁵ See Dreier, p. 171.

Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy to be incorporated in Government war-work contracts (see p. 55), with the addition of the following: Abolition of child labor; legislation for compulsory full-time education up to 16, and part-time up to 18 years of age; social insurance against sickness, accident, industrial disease and unemployment; and provision for old-age and disability pensions and maternity benefits. The program also called for the full enfranchisement of women and demanded that they should be accorded political, social, and legal equality.

The International Congress of Working Women

One of the most original and far-reaching programs the League ever undertook was the proposal to call an international conference of working women. This was a recommendation of the committee on social and industrial reconstruction, formerly mentioned, and was urged by the representatives sent to Paris. A committee to plan further details reported at the national convention in June 1919. An outstanding trade-union woman from Great Britain, Margaret Bondfield, brought to this convention from the Standing Joint Committee of Women's Industrial Organizations in England a special resolution that offered full cooperation in calling such a conference.

The First International Congress of Working Women was convened in Washington in late October 1919, just before the first meeting of the International Labor Conference. Delegates had been asked to bring material from their countries on the 8-hour day, women's employment, unemployment, child labor, and maternity care. They were requested to bring credentials signed by trade-union organizations in their countries. Labor organizations of 11 countries in addition to the United States sent delegates, most of them one or two. Women from 7 other countries came as visitors. The League sent 10 delegates since the call to Congress asked for that number. Headquarters were established in Washington, with a secretary.

A second such congress was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1921, and a third in Vienna in 1923. The Vienna Congress voted to develop as a women's department of the International Federation of Trade Unions, which had headquarters in Amsterdam. The American Federation of Labor, with which the League was affiliated, had not connected itself with this International. For this reason, the League, which had initiated the women's international congress, voted at its ninth biennial (1924) to withdraw from the women's department of the Federation. (For lists of countries represented and League delegates to the three international conferences, see p. 67.)

THE CLOSE OF THE LEAGUE

When the Women's Trade Union League decided to disband as a national organization in June 1950, it pointed out that other organizations it had stimulated were now carrying on much of the work it had begun. Other factors in the 1950 situation were in considerable contrast to those at the beginning of the century, when the League was formed. To mention but a few of the differences:

Unions had greater strength by 1950 than in 1900. Not only did they more generally include women in their membership in 1950, but they also consulted women's needs and often elected them as local officers, or on local committees, sometimes as delegates to national conventions. Conditions of work in many plants were much improved by 1950, sometimes as a result of adopting better methods and increased facilities, or of newer buildings started for war production. Union activity had directed more widespread attention to workers' health and welfare, and advanced knowledge along various lines had made possible more modern work equipment. Furthermore, young girls were a markedly smaller proportion of the labor force in 1950 than in 1900 or at the time the League was born.

The statement made at the close of the League in its mimeographed bulletin *LIFE AND LABOR*, for June 1950, said in part:

. . . Our task is not done, but much of it has been taken over by the labor movement and by other groups which we have helped to form. In effect we are and should be a self-liquidating organization. There is now an enormous opportunity for women in the trade-union movement and for friends of the trade-union movement to participate directly in the implementation of the program to which the National Women's Trade Union League has been dedicated for so many years.

The National Women's Trade Union League was organized in 1903 at a time when working women and the labor movement had few sympathetic supporters. For 47 years the League has been a federation of trade unions with women members, with a supplementary membership of persons who indorse its principles and accept its platform. National and international unions and State Federations of Labor have been linked to the League by affiliation and have helped to further its aims, and by financial assistance, to accomplish its purposes. In the several industrial centers where the League maintains local branches there is a similar relationship. The fundamental principle upon which the Women's Trade Union League has based its work is the organization of women wage earners into trade unions. Throughout the years it has been their spokesman, the interpreter of their problems—and these have grown in complexity with mass production and modern speed, repetitive processes and mechanized assembling.

The League's program has been made possible by the support, tangible and moral, of men and women without the trade-union movement and of some national and international unions and State federations of labor, as well as individual union members.

An additional point that should be mentioned in connection with the League's closing was its increasing difficulty in balancing its budget. The regular dues from many affiliated unions and from individual members, and the considerable additional contributions from a number of unions, were never enough to maintain the League and carry on the projects necessary. The organization had to depend on generous contributors for a large proportion of its financial support. The League had from time to time made various economy moves, such as shifting the national convention from a biennial to a triennial basis, or substituting a small mimeographed paper for the monthly magazine the League published in earlier years. It had also raised its scale of dues and affiliations. The depression of the 1930's had been weathered, but it diminished the resources of much of the League's regular clientele and some of its largest contributors. The greatly advanced price levels of the 1940's and the depreciation of the dollar took an added toll.

Though the National League disbanded, several strong local leagues still continue their activities. Other organizations also have felt further responsibilities for developing programs in the interest of women workers. Among the numerous present-day organizations, for example, that did not exist when the League was first organized, and that could continue some of the types of work the League formerly handled, are the union auxiliaries formed for women in the families of men who are members of a union affiliated either with the A. F. of L. or with the more recently organized C. I. O. Those affiliated with the A. F. of L. have combined on a national basis into the American Federation of Women's Auxiliaries of Labor.

APPENDIX

LEAGUE PRIMARY OFFICERS AND LOCAL BRANCHES

PRESIDENTS

- Mary Morton Kehew, Boston, 1903.
 Mrs. Charles Henrotin, Chicago, 1904.
 Margaret Dreier Robins, New York and Chicago, 1907.
 Mrs. Maud O'Farrell Swartz, Typographical Union, New York,
 1922.
 Rose Schneiderman, Cloth Cap and Hat Makers, New York,
 1926-51.

SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

- Secretary—Mary Kenny O'Sullivan, A. F. of L., Boston, 1903.
 Treasurer—Mary Donovan, Boot and Shoe Workers, Lynn, Mass.,
 1903.
 Treasurer—Margaret Dreier Robins, 1904.
 Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. Robert A. Woods, Boston, 1907.
 Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. D. W. Knefler, St. Louis, 1909.
 Secretary—Stella M. Franklin, Department Store Workers, Chi-
 cago, 1911.
 Treasurer—Melinda Scott, Hat Trimmers, New York, 1913.
 Secretary-Treasurer—Stella M. Franklin, 1913.
 Secretary—Emma Steghagen, Boot and Shoe Workers, Chi-
 cago, 1915.
 Secretary-Treasurer—Elisabeth Christman, Glove Workers,
 Chicago, 1921-51.

AFFILIATED LOCAL BRANCHES 1903-29

Baltimore	Grand Rapids	New York City
Birmingham	Kansas City	Philadelphia
Boston	La Crosse, Wis.	Rock Island, Ill.
Chicago	Lake Geneva, Wis.	St. Louis
Cincinnati	Los Angeles	St. Paul
Cleveland	Madison, Wis.	Seattle
Clinton, Iowa	Milwaukee	Springfield, Ill.
Denver	Minneapolis	Washington, D. C.
Detroit	New Bedford, Mass.	Worcester, Mass.

EDITORS OF LIFE AND LABOR

Alice Henry	Irene Osgood Andrews
Stella M. Franklin	Amy Walker Field
Frances Squire Potter	William L. Chenery
Margaret Dreier Robins	Sarah Cory Rippey

THE FIRST CONSTITUTION OF THE WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE (ADOPTED IN FANEUIL HALL, BOSTON, NOVEMBER 17-19, 1903)

Object

The object of the Women's Trade Union League shall be to assist in the organization of women wage workers into trade unions.

Membership

Any person may be admitted to membership who will declare himself or herself willing to assist those trade unions already existing, which have women members, and to aid in the formation of new unions of women wage workers. Any member may be admitted to the Annual Conference by the endorsement of a majority of the Executive Board. Those who have attended Annual Conference shall be eligible to all succeeding Conferences.

Officers

The officers shall consist of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, with the usual duties of these officers.

Executive Board

The Executive Board shall consist of the four officers and five other members. The majority of the Executive Board shall be women who are, or have been, trade unionists in good standing, the minority, of those well known to be earnest sympathizers and workers for the cause of trade unionism. The Executive Board shall have full power to act subject to the Conferences. A majority of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum. Two-thirds of the Executive Board may grant permission to organize local leagues or committees under the authority of the Executive Board.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference shall be held at the time and place of the meeting of the American Federation of Labor, whenever possible.

Dues

The dues shall be one dollar a year, payable in advance.

Amendments

A majority of those present at any Conference shall have authority to amend the Constitution.

CONSTITUTION (Revision of 1913)

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of this organization shall be The National Women's Trade Union League of America.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSES

The purposes of this organization shall be:

First, to develop the national aspects of the trade organization of women.

Second, to assist the Local and State Trade Union Leagues in organizing women into trade unions, and to organize women locally into trade unions where there are no Local and State Trade Union Leagues, such unions to be affiliated where practicable, with the American Federation of Labor.

ARTICLE III—MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. The membership of the National Women's Trade Union League shall consist of:

a.—Local Women's Trade Union Leagues.

b.—State Committees of the National League.

c.—State Women's Trade Union Leagues (State groupings of the Local Leagues).

d.—Affiliated International Unions, Trade Union Locals, Central Labor Bodies, and State Federations of Labor.

e.—Other Offiliated Organizations.

f.—Members at large.

Section 2. (a) Local Women's Trade Union Leagues whose membership includes at least seven women, whose members are admitted by a majority vote and whose executive boards contain a majority of trade unionists in good standing, shall be eligible to membership in the National League and the National President and Secretary-Treasurer acting for the National Executive Board, shall have power to issue a charter with a fee of five dollars to any such local League provided its application for membership has been approved by the National Executive Board. Applications for membership are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board. The duties of local Leagues shall be to organize the women workers of their locality into trade unions, and to strengthen existing unions. Local Leagues are urged to affiliate with and attach themselves to the various Central Bodies in their localities chartered by the American Federation of Labor.

Section 3. (b) State Women's Trade Union Leagues consisting of at least seven affiliated local Women's Trade Union Leagues, shall be eligible to membership in the National League. Applications for membership are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board. The duties of State Leagues shall be especially to promote labor legislation as outlined in the platform.

Section 4. (c) In States where there is no State Women's Trade Union League, a State Committee of the National Women's Trade Union League may be formed to carry on the work of the League.

Section 5. (d) Trade Union Locals whose membership includes at least seven women, existing in a locality where there is no local Women's Trade Union League, also International Unions, Central Labor Bodies, and State Federations of Labor, shall be eligible to membership in the National League. Applications for membership are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board.

Section 6. (e) The Constitution and By-Laws of the State Leagues, State Committees and Local Leagues shall not be inconsistent with the Constitution of the National Women's Trade Union League and are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board.

Section 7. (f) Other organizations in sympathy with the purpose of the National League, existing in a locality in which there is no local Women's Trade Union League, shall be eligible to membership in the National League as Affiliated Organizations. Applications for membership are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board.

Section 8. (g) Any Trade Unionist in good standing residing in a locality in which there is no local Women's Trade Union League, or any person who would be eligible as an allied member of a local League, residing in a locality where there is no local League, shall be eligible to membership in the National League as a Member at Large, upon declaration of sympathy with its purposes and endorsement of its platform, accompanied by a signed application blank. Applications are to be subject to the approval of the National Executive Board.

ARTICLE IV—OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers shall consist of a President, a Vice-President and a Secretary-Treasurer. Two of the three officers must be trade unionists in good standing.

Section 2. To be eligible for election as a National Officer or a member of the National Executive Board it is necessary to have been a member of a local League for at least two years and to have served as an officer or Executive Board member of her local League.

Section 3. The President shall perform the usual duties of the office. When the Executive Board is not in session, the President, with the assistance of the Secretary-Treasurer, shall conduct all business for and in all respects represent the League.

Section 4. The Vice-President shall perform the usual duties of her office.

Section 5. The Secretary-Treasurer shall have charge of the correspondence and funds of the League. She shall send each member of the Executive Board, within two weeks following the meeting of the Board, a full copy of the minutes of the meeting. The funds of the League, outside of current expenses, shall be paid out only upon warrants signed by the President and Secretary-Treasurer. The Secretary-Treasurer shall send out notices in regard to the payment of the annual dues by the first day of May each year.

Section 6. The Secretary-Treasurer shall be bonded. Amount of bond not to exceed \$5,000.

ARTICLE V—EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1. The Executive Board shall consist of the officers and six members elected at large. Of the members elected at large not more than one shall be from any one League. A majority of the Executive Board must be trade unionists in good standing. Vacancies occurring in the Executive Board between elections shall be filled by the Board.

Section 2. (a) The National Executive Board shall meet twice a year if possible. Additional meetings may be called upon the initiative of the President with the majority vote of the Board, as well as by the majority of the Board, the total number not to exceed four meetings a year.

(b) Expenses and salaries of National Executive Board for Board meetings and convention to be paid out of the National treasury.

(c) The authority of the convention shall be vested in the Executive Board between conventions.

Section 3. When due notification of a meeting of the Executive Board has been given, five members shall constitute a quorum, provided that there be a majority of the trade unionists present.

Section 4. In the absence of personal representation at any meeting of the Executive Board, official written reports from each League shall be sent to the Board, signed by the President and Secretary of the League.

Section 5. The National Convention shall elect the League's delegate to the American Federation of Labor to serve during a period of two years.

ARTICLE VI—ELECTIONS

Section 1. The President, Vice-President, and the Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected by ballot at the National Convention to assume office thirty days after their election and to serve two years or until thirty days after their successors shall be elected. The six members of the Executive Board elected at large shall be elected by ballot at the National Convention to assume office thirty days after their election and to serve for two years or until thirty days after their successors shall be elected.

Section 2. The Secretary-Treasurer shall within thirty days of the election of the officers and the six members at large of the Executive Board, notify the Secretary of each local League of such elections.

ARTICLE VII—DUES

Section 1. (a) The dues of local Leagues shall be on the basis of ten cents annually for each person in their membership.

Section 2. (b) The dues of State Leagues shall be \$5.00 annually.

Section 3. (c) The dues of Affiliated International Unions, Trade Union Locals, Central Labor Bodies, and State Federations of Labor, shall be \$5.00 annually.

Section 4. (d) The dues of other Affiliated Organizations shall be \$5.00 annually.

Section 5. (e) The dues of Members at Large shall be \$5.00 annually. Dues of Trade Union Members at Large shall be \$1.00 annually.

Section 6. Dues for current year shall be paid on or before the first of July of that year.

Section 7. Only those Leagues and Affiliated Organizations whose annual dues shall have been fully paid up sixty days in advance of the National Convention shall be entitled to vote at the Convention.

ARTICLE VIII—NATIONAL CONVENTION AND INTERSTATE CONFERENCES

Section 1. Each National Convention of the Women's Trade Union League shall determine time and place for the succeeding National Convention.

Section 2. The membership of the Convention shall consist of the following:

a.—The three officers and the other six members of the Executive Board with one vote each.

b.—Each local League shall be entitled to send one delegate with one vote for every 25 members or fraction thereof, up to 500 members, and after that, one to every 50.

c.—Each affiliated State League shall be entitled to send one delegate with one vote.

d. Each Affiliated International Union, Trade Union Local, Central Labor Body, and State Federation of Labor, shall be entitled to send one delegate with one vote.

e. Every other Affiliated Organization shall be entitled to send one delegate with one vote.

f.—In order to encourage interest in forming local Leagues, Members at Large shall be given voice, but with no vote.

Section 3. The Local Leagues shall be encouraged to hold Inter-State Conferences. The time of such Conferences shall be determined at the National Convention.

ARTICLE IX—CHARGES AND APPEALS

Section 1. All charges of whatever nature against any officer or member must be presented in writing to the body before which the charges are made, and no defendant shall be found guilty without having upon written application a copy of the charges preferred, and opportunity for defense.

Section 2. Appeals against the decision of any Officer, Committee, Board or League shall be presented in writing to the next highest authority and no appeals shall be considered unless the applicant conforms to the decision appealed from, pending the decision of the appeal.

ARTICLE X—AMENDMENT

This Constitution can be amended only at a regular session of the Convention, and to do so it shall require a two-thirds vote. [Formerly advance notice required, and if provisions differed, subsequent ratification by local leagues.]

NOTES ON INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WORKING WOMEN

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WORKING WOMEN

Washington, 1919

Countries whose labor groups sent representatives:

Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United States of America.

Countries having women visitors present:

Cuba, Denmark, Japan, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland.

Delegates from National Women's Trade Union League of America:

Margaret Dreier Robins (League President), Leonora O'Reilly (Ladies' Garment Workers, New York), Rose Schneiderman (Cloth Hat and Cap Makers, New York), Mrs. Louis B. Rantoul (Federal Employees, Boston), Mary Anderson (Boot and Shoe Workers, Chicago), Fannia Cohn (International Ladies' Garment Makers Union, New York), Elisabeth Christman (Glove Workers, Chicago), Agnes Nestor (Glove Workers, Chicago), Julia O'Connor (Telephone Workers, Boston), Maud Swartz (Typographical Workers, New York).

Officers chosen:

President—Margaret Dreier Robins.

Secretary-Treasurer—Maud Swartz.

Vice Presidents:

Mary Macarthur (England).

Betzy Kjelsberg (Norway).

Landova Stychova (Czechoslovakia).

Jeanne Bouvier (France).

Anna Boschek (Austria).

Action of Congress:

. . . The Congress requested the International Labor Conference to amend its Constitution so that in future one of the two Government delegates and one of the two delegates representing Labor should be women. Other resolutions demanded a maximum eight-hour day and forty-four hour week for all workers; the prohibition of the labor of children under sixteen and regulation up to eighteen years of age; the prohibition of night work for women and for all workers insofar as possible; and the regulation of hazardous occupations. All the delegates agreed that there should be some form of maternity insurance, though they differed on the scope and details of the scheme. The Congress requested the International Labor Conference to take steps toward dealing with emigration on an international basis, and with unemployment as an international problem. . . .

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WORKING WOMEN

Geneva, 1921

Countries having representatives:

Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland, United States of America.

Delegates from National Women's Trade Union League of America:

Margaret Dreier Robins, Maud Swartz, Emma Steghagen (League Secretary), Sarah Green (Waitresses, Kansas City).

Included among visitors, women from the following:

World's Young Women's Christian Association, Chinese Young Women's Christian Association, Nippon Women's University of Tokyo, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, International Labor Office, other women's organizations.

Statement of purposes of the organization:

- (1) to promote trade union organization among women;
- (2) to develop an international policy giving special consideration to the needs of women and children and to examine all projects for legislation proposed by the International Labor Conference of the League of Nations;
- (3) to promote the appointment of working women on organizations affecting the welfare of the workers.

Organization:

... the ... Federation ... was to "consist of National Trade Union organizations, containing women members, and affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions; it should also admit working women's organizations accepting its aims and agreeing to work in the spirit and to follow the principles of the International Federation of Trade Unions."

Action of the Congress:

- (1) Sent the International Labor Office resolutions which were more far-reaching than its proposals on Anthrax, Lead Poisoning, Conditions of Agricultural Work, and Employment of Young Persons on Ships.
- (2) Called for the protection of women and children under the application of the ILO Night-work and Lead-poisoning Conventions.
- (3) Meeting in a period of acute economic distress, the delegates ... asked that governments should take measures for the stabilization of exchanges and extension of credits, looking to the reestablishment of world trade.
- (4) Passed a resolution urging total disarmament, and appointed Miss Kate Manicom, of the General Workers' Union of Great Britain to carry it to President Harding at the time of the Disarmament Conference which was to convene in Washington, D. C., on November 11.

THIRD CONGRESS—INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WORKING WOMEN
Schoenbrunn, Vienna, 1923

Countries whose labor groups sent representatives:

Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Roumania, Sweden, Cuba, United States of America.

Countries and organizations with fraternal delegates:

Argentina, Chile, China, Hungary, Japan, Norway, International Federation of Trade Unions, International Labor Office.

Delegates from National Women's Trade Union League of America:

Margaret Dreier Robins, Rose Schneiderman, Maud Swartz, Mary Anderson, Elisabeth Christman, Agnes Nestor, Mary E. Dreier, Pauline Newman (organizer, Philadelphia League), Frieda Miller (Secretary, Philadelphia League), Agnes Johnson (Boot and Shoe Workers, Chicago).

President elected:

Mlle. Hélène Burniaux of Belgium.

Action of the Congress:

- (1) The report on trade union organization advocated: organization of men and women into the same unions; an intensive campaign among women and girl workers in each country, to be carried on with the assistance of women speakers and organizers; development of recreation and education in connection with the unions; and recognition of the fact that many women do not remain permanently in industry and therefore that no opportunity should be lost to awaken their social consciousness for the sake of future moral support of the labor movement. The Congress agreed that there ought to be minimum standards of work (both national and international) such as the eight-hour day, but that the method of obtaining them, whether by trade union agreement, by legislation, or both, should be determined by the organized workers of each country. It therefore declared in favor of laws affecting women but not necessarily applying alike to men, where organized women wished to use the legislative means of trying to improve industrial conditions.
- (2) It urged the "Outlawry of War" and asked for a codification of international laws. It demanded the revision of the Treaties of St. Germain, Trianon, and Versailles and the cancellation of inter-allied debts and condemned the military occupation of the Ruhr basin, which had begun January, 1923.
- (3) It voted to open negotiations with the International Federation of Trade Unions, to develop the Women's Department at Amsterdam and appoint a woman secretary and to organize an International Women's Advisory Committee,

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