

FILE
FROM LWVUS
CONVENTION
1984

IN LEAGUE WITH ELEANOR:

Eleanor Roosevelt

and

the League of Women Voters,

1921-1962

by

Hilda R. Watrous

1921

The hostess graciously poured a cup of freshly made tea for her guest. The etiquette of the afternoon ceremony was anchored in tradition, but the topic of conversation on this February day in 1921 was not. Narcissa Cox Vanderlip, Chairman of the New York State League of Women Voters, was asking her visitor, Eleanor Roosevelt, to accept the responsibility of summarizing and presenting the facts of selected legislation to the directors and members of the fledgling organization.

Both women held noted places in society: Narcissa was the wife of a millionaire, Frank Arthur Vanderlip, who had recently retired as president of the nation's largest bank. Eleanor was the niece of a former president of the United States; a few months earlier her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, former New York State Senator and Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had been defeated as Democratic candidate for vice-president. In his new role as a private citizen he was responsible for the New York office of an international investment firm.

Narcissa had been active in the New York State Woman Suffrage Party, and in the organization, in 1919, of its descendant, the New York State League. She had confronted government officials with demands for social reforms—especially those affecting women and children. Eleanor's involvement in political affairs had been as an observer of her husband's career in local, state, and national politics.

A reporter once described Narcissa as radiating vitality and enthusiasm, one whose direct manner of speaking instilled confidence and respect. Eleanor's plea of inexperience was met with a guarantee of expert assistance. Two women, co-editors of a publication devoted to non-partisan presentation of legislation affecting New York City, the state, and the nation, would give Eleanor guidance. *City-State-Nation*, published under the auspices of the League, had been conceived and produced during the suffrage campaign by one of the women—Esther Lape, a teacher and journalist. Her co-editor, Elizabeth Read, was an able attorney. Eleanor accepted the office.

The New York State League (now the League of Women Voters of New York State) met in Albany on January 27 and 28, 1921, for its second annual convention. The League's weekly newsletter maintained that this non-partisan organization of women voters would "work wholeheartedly for good government, for better laws and for higher political standards, without a desire for spoils or office...." Eleanor was presented as Chairman of the Legislative Committee which would provide pro and con arguments as certain bills were introduced in the state legislature.

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The convention endorsed support for specific legislative measures: independent citizenship for women, literacy test for voters, state aid for education of new citizens, separate college of Home Economics at Cornell, enforcement of prohibition, eligibility of women for jury services, equal representation of men and women in county committees of political parties, direct primary, and regulation of the meat packing industry. The League also was to continue to work with the Women's Joint Legislative Conference—a statewide coalition of women's groups supporting legislation to regulate conditions for women in industry.

Newly-elected Governor Nathan Miller confronted the convention with the assertion that the League, as a non-partisan organization seeking to exert political power, was a menace to representative government. He also disparagingly discredited their support for health insurance, an eight-hour day, and a minimum wage.

Editorials in most newspapers across the state supported the League's non-partisan position and the legitimacy of issue oriented groups. A full page editorial in a national magazine, *Woman's Home Companion*, described the League as a thinking, agitating minority destined for leadership. An April editorial in *Good Housekeeping* declared the confrontation had strengthened the resolve of members and secured wider recognition for the League.

Eleanor was a member of the State League's delegation to the convention of the National League of Women Voters (now the League of Women Voters of the United States) in Cleveland in April. Also in the delegation were some Democratic Party women who educated Eleanor in subsequent years in both League and Party: Kathryn Starbuck, speaker at the convention on equality of service for women on juries; Florence Canfield Whitney (Mrs. Caspar), a principal funder of the State League and *City-State-Nation* and elected a National League vice-president in 1925; and a Dutchess County neighbor, Margaret Norrie (Mrs. Gordon), prominent in anti-war campaigns, and in the Progressive Party in 1924.

Cornelia Pinchot (Mrs. Gifford), a friend of Eleanor's from dancing school days, was a member of a National League committee. During the convention she also provided hospitality for Republican women lobbying League delegates to join the Republican Party. (The following year Esther Leape organized women in Pennsylvania to support the gubernatorial campaign of Cornelia's husband, a critical factor in his election.)

In the opening address of the Convention, Maude Wood Park, National League President, declared that the work of the League was to help women become self-directing, conscientious and effective voters. The dinner speaker was Judge Florence Allen of Ohio, first woman judge of a court of general jurisdiction. (In later years, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed her to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the highest judicial position held by a woman up to that time. She often shared the speakers platform with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.)

League positions on social issues were impressed upon the delegates at day-long conferences. The intense convention program wearied even Eleanor. Carrie Chapman Catt—prominent suffragist who first outlined a plan for a League of Women Voters to educate newly enfranchised women

for voting—gave a clarion call to members to consecrate themselves to eliminate war. A resolution was passed urging President Harding and Congress to quickly cooperate with other nations in the reduction of armaments.

A delegation was authorized to visit with the President to discuss disarmament. They also were to express support for the proposed Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act, the first federal grants-in-aid to states for social welfare. The Act provided funds for the promotion of the welfare and health of maternity and infancy. After spirited debate, the convention failed to adopt a position on birth control.

Attendance at conventions, in addition to weekly meetings with Esther and Elizabeth, prepared Eleanor for knowledgeable presentations at League Board meetings. In April, for example, she reported on answers from Congressmen in response to League support for the Sheppard-Towner Act. (Its passage in 1921 was the first major impact of the League's lobbying power.) One Congressman asked for information on the League's position, and Eleanor submitted her answer for approval. She reported on three Constitutional Amendments which would appear on the ballot in November. She suggested an educational campaign regarding the Direct Primary, including a simple analysis of the existing Direct Primary law and proposed changes, and distribution of the information by every local League. Esther Leape was appointed to collaborate with Eleanor on the project.

In May Eleanor spoke in her official capacity to nearly 100 women at a League conference in Syracuse—the largest group she had addressed, in her own right, on public issues. A local paper described the assembly as "some of the most prominent and brilliant women of the state." Eleanor declared, "The most important thing for women today is to be interested in what is going on in the political world and in the men who are representing us." She voiced opposition to partial repeal of the primary, since women did not have equal representation in party organizations. Weakening the primary, she asserted, would make it even more difficult for women to affect nominations for state offices.

An August issue of the League's *Weekly News* offered copies of a "comprehensive digest of the main provisions of the Direct Primary Law, with explanations of the 1921 law modifications, and future changes." The digest made clear what ought to be done to preserve the primary, and to combat the tactics of opponents.

Eleanor attended the July meeting of the State Board. In August her husband was stricken with polio. In September her first venture into the field of journalism was published in *Weekly News*—"Common Sense Versus Party Regularity."

"Every voter," she wrote, "should enroll as a member of that party whose broad principles he or she prefers,...such enrollment does not preclude the voter from supporting...candidates of another party....if at any given time an individual nominee of our party appears to us unworthy, then we have an even higher duty to our heritage as American citizens. America must come first, not party."

Although Franklin's illness had severely disrupted her family life, by December Eleanor was once again attending the State League Board meetings.

1922

When the State League held its annual convention in Albany in January, 1922, Eleanor was advanced in office to the Board of Directors. Also elected were: Mary Drier, a wealthy reformer especially interested in women in industry; Katherine Gavit (Mrs. Joseph); Anna H. Whittic (Mrs. Lieber), who a few years later became President of the State Woman's Party, advocates of the Equal Rights Amendment; and Dorothy Whitney Straight (Mrs. Willard), who enlisted Eleanor as a fund raiser for the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). During the Roosevelt's White House years, she worked closely with Eleanor in the development of Authurdale, a New Deal subsistence homestead project in West Virginia. The President of WTUL, Rose Schneiderman, served as Chairman of the LWV's Women in Industry Committee. The list of attendees at the convention included Nancy Cook, soon one of Eleanor's closest friends.

Among resolutions passed at the convention were: an appeal to President Harding and the Senate to "take immediate steps to unite the nations of the world in outlawing war"; a call to members of the Washington Disarmament Conference to declare in favor of world cooperation, rather than the past practices of alliances and treaties; plaudits to both Governor Miller, a Republican, and the Democratic Party for having gone on record in favor of equal representation of women in party organizations. The convention ordered a study of a revision of the organization's constitution. Eleanor was appointed to chair the responsible committee.

Following the lead of the National League, the State League did not oppose the blanket amendment concerning rights for women, proposed by the Women's Party, but instead promoted passage of separate bills. The League believed the blanket amendment would endanger existing hard-won legislation which protected women working in industry—a position held for many years.

At a women's National Republican Club meeting, held elsewhere at the same time, John T. Adams, a Republican Party official, stated: "Women should recognize their political responsibility and should not organize under the pale banner of non-partisanship or the fanatical standard of a woman's party. Few greater misfortunes could befall our country in these trying times than to have our civic energies frittered away in contests between groups, factions, occupational interests, or social divisions."

In February two members of the State League Board, Margaret Norrie and Rosalie B. Edge (Mrs. Charles Noel), dissatisfied with Narcissa's administration, criticized the convention election administered by Esther Lape. An investigative committee was appointed: Eleanor, Dorothy Straight, and Emily Greene. (Emily's husband, Frederick S. Greene, former NYS Commissioner of Highways, became Superintendent of Public Works under Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt.) The committee reported the dissenters' charges were unfounded. Further discussion was halted by a motion to table. (A parliamentary maneuver suggested by FDR to his frustrated wife.)

At the April Board meeting the dissent again erupted; especially criticized was the establishment of an office separate from the New York City League, as well as separation of the State League's newsletter from that of the City

League. A motion was passed that the two dissenters establish a monomious attitude or resign. Eleanor suggested, in order not to humiliate the League, that opposing Board members should keep Board different private, since officers were elected by the convention.

In May Narcissa issued a report to the Board upholding the Board's with her description of pertinent events, including a meeting called by Margaret Norrie to consider revision of the League's constitution. Norrie termed this "an unnecessary insult" to the membership of Eleanor's authorized committee. She asked that confidence be accorded the majority of the Board as they proceeded with League business, until the next convention.

Passage of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy bill in 1919 stimulated the formation in New York State of a coalition, United Organizations (UO), to support passage of a state enabling act for appropriation of necessary matching funds. Narcissa was chosen Chairman in March. Among funds received by UO was a check from Nancy Cook, representing the Women's Finance Committee of the Democratic State Committee. The Women's Committee included League leaders Emily Greene, Katherine Gavit, Constance Hare (Mrs. Montgomery), Eleanor, and Kathryn Buck.

Facing legislative opposition to accepting federal funds, the League switched support from an enabling bill to a bill appropriating the amount from state funds. According to a State Board of Health official, the League's educational work in support of the federal funds had at least procured state funding for which the agency had been lobbying, successfully, for years.

The State League instituted correspondence courses including a state citizenship education leaflets: "Direct Primary or Convention: Which?" by Fiorello H. LaGuardia, "Women in Industry" by Rose Schneiderman, "How Women Can Make Their Approval or Disapproval on Legislative" by Esther Lape, "Property Laws of Interest to Women" by Elizabeth Read, "Know Your Own County" by Mrs. Frederick Greene, and "When a Woman is an American Citizen. When Not?" by "She Becomes One" by Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read. (One of the accomplishments of the National League in 1922 was passage of the Act, which granted an American woman married to a foreigner the right to retain her U.S. citizenship.)

In April, Lady Astor, a native of Virginia, and the first woman secretary of England's Parliament, returned to the United States. In an address to the New York City's Town Hall, sponsored by the League, Lady Astor urged women to take an active part in government. Eleanor was one of those listed as League patroness of the event.

Lady Astor professed: "I cannot face the future without this hope: that the women of all countries will do their duty and raise a generation of women who will look upon war and all that leads to it with as much horror as we now look upon a cold-blooded murder." After also speaking at the Maryland League of Women Voters, she then addressed the National League Convention in Baltimore. She commended them for not for

new political party. "You are...right to try to lift and raise and improve the platforms of both the big political parties by joining them." She again spoke of her conviction regarding the special responsibility of women to bring peace to the world.

By August a State League questionnaire had been sent out to national, state, and county candidates. The answers were recorded, and distributed to League members to help them vote "more intelligently". Summer issues of *Weekly News* carried articles by Eleanor: "The Fall Election," and "Organizing County Women for a Political Party."

From May through November a major project of Narcissa and some other Board members was the organization of a League in every upstate county. Previous efforts of using paid organizers had been unproductive. In her quarterly report, in September, Narcissa declared that "consecration" was necessary "to create the League against the indifference and prejudice that exist in almost every county." She also believed that participation in organization by Board members gave them knowledge of conditions throughout the state. Eleanor was later credited as one of those who organized a League in Greene County.

A special item of business in some counties was a report on the results of League-sponsored surveys of the conditions and health provisions in local schools. One purpose of the rural-school survey had been to educate at least one woman in each school district about that school, and to create public opinion in favor of improvements. In November the League report on the statewide surveys stated the chief need, in order to secure better health conditions for school children, was to consolidate small school districts.

Some members of the State Board attended the meeting of the Democratic State Committee in Syracuse later in September as Party delegates. Eleanor, a Dutchess County delegate, and Emily Greene represented the Board's interests at the convention. Women delegates considered four women as candidates for the Democratic nomination of Secretary of State: Eleanor; Caroline O'Day (Mrs. Daniel), active in her local Westchester County League; Harriet May Mills, Democratic candidate for the office in 1920; and Marian Dickerman. Marian had been a close friend of Nancy Cook, secretary of the State Committee, since college days at Syracuse University. She was often engaged as a speaker for the Women's Joint Legislative Coalition at League meetings, and carried League recommendations for planks in the Party Platform to the Platform Committee of this convention.

In the course of the convention, however, the women put aside demand for a place on the ticket "for the good of the party." When Al Smith, who favored many of their welfare reforms, was designated the Democratic candidate for governor, the women delegates were the first to their feet to join in the demonstration.

Planks of the Party Platform incorporated several League positions: an 8 hour day for women and minors, establishment of a minimum wage commission, child welfare legislation, and removal of all unjust discrimination against women through separate laws. The State League's "Voter's Bulletin of Information on Candidates," in the fall of 1922, included "View of Issues," authored by Republican and Democratic party members. Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote the Democratic view.

Narcissa, a Republican, caused a "flurry" by addressing a meeting of the women at the Democratic convention. "To make our votes effective we should be identified with a party and have a voice in its management," she said. Eleanor also spoke: "Democratic men...have felt so long that no matter what they do they can't win...that they are out of enthusiasm...Go back to your counties and be enthusiastic. Give the men something to work for..." She called for thorough organization in every county.

On October 26 Eleanor attended the Broome County Convention of the League with Narcissa. Both women spoke: Narcissa—"Why Women Should Join the League"; Eleanor—"Women in Political Parties". They traveled the next day, accompanied by Narcissa's secretary, to the Tioga County League Convention in Owego. Eleanor also accompanied Narcissa on fund-raising visits to individual donors—primarily wealthy men.

In her Annual Report to the State League convention in January, 1923, Narcissa mentioned Eleanor as one of a handful of Board members who had successfully raised funds "by telling the story of the League to people who had practically never heard of it or who had been antagonized by it." (Eleanor, unsure of her usefulness, had initially requested—through Esther—that she accompany Narcissa as a silent partner on fund raising visits.) Narcissa asserted to the convention: "It is only people who are devoted to the League and are proud of their connection with it and the work, who can succeed in raising money."

Late in October Eleanor, Narcissa, Florence Whitney, and other Board members attended the first meeting of the State and City Conference on Unification. Up to this time New York City, in part due to its large and dense population, as well as strong suffrage activities, had originally been given considerable power in the State League. The proposed revision of the State League Constitution was to include provisions for a more equalized distribution of power.

1923

On January 2, 1923, representatives of women's groups interested in a joint lobbying program as an Equal Laws Committee, to remove the legal discriminations against women, met in the State League office. At a previous meeting in October the Women's Party had decided to wage a separate campaign. The League, requested to take charge of the joint lobbying effort, announced that ten pertinent bills had been drafted and would be introduced in the Legislature.

When the League met for its annual convention in Albany later in January, an editorial in the *Albany Times Union* noted that the women were non-partisan, and "as such they discuss public questions and public men with a refreshing independence." Women, the editorial continued, better than men, understood the questions of laws for the benefit of women and children, freeing elections from corruption, and more humane factory laws.

The convention was preceded by a Disarmament Luncheon. Speakers included Carrie Chapman Catt, and Ruth Morgan, Chairman of Disarmament for the National League (also sister Margaret Norrie). Arnes Brown

Leach (Mrs. Henry Goddard), whose friendship and work with Eleanor extended over succeeding years, chaired the State League's Committee on International Cooperation.

The principal actions of the convention were the adoption of a new constitution, providing for reorganization—primarily the merger of the New York City and upstate Leagues into a New York League of Women Voters divided into regions, and election of officers. Mentioned as candidates for Chairman were Narcissa, Eleanor ("wife of the former Secretary of Navy"), and Caroline Slade (Mrs. F. Louis), a National League official. As with governmental elections, there were petitions submitted, followed by primary and general elections at the convention. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt's signature was one of 700 on petitions for Narcissa Cox Vanderlip. Nancy Cook was one of the election inspectors.

Eleanor's presentation of her committee's recommendations for the revised constitution was the first order of business of the convention. The most highly contested articles concerned (1) election of regional directors and (2) allocation to State League of one-half of local League dues. Previous funding had been primarily by substantial contributions from individuals, including State League officials, as well as \$1 memberships. New York City delegates contended they would be over-taxed and under-represented.

The convention voted approval of Florence Whitney's proposal for citizenship training schools throughout the state. She argued that the League was not a political organization, but an educational force. "There is such a lack of understanding among women of the great power which lies in their vote that if they ever come to fully appreciate it, there will be a revolution in American politics... We urge them to remain loyal to their respective parties and to bring into their political unit the clean ideas and ideals which we seek to inculcate... When it becomes universal, there will be no further need for us to function."

Newly-elected Governor Alfred E. Smith, whose first speech to the legislature had included many positions also supported by League, addressed the delegates. A new State League Constitution, with modifications of the committee's version, was adopted. During most of the rest of the day and night, delegates caucused to discuss tactics for response to the constitutional revision during the next session.

At the opening session the next day Narcissa withdrew as a candidate for chairman, "in the interest of harmony"—to facilitate the merger with City League. She opposed the convention's revisions of the constitution. Narcissa demanded "in the name of the same unity and harmony and general welfare of the League," which prompted her withdrawal, that the City forces, led by Mary Garrett Hay, again revise the constitution to include City financial support of the State League. Unanimous consent was necessary; Norrie and Edge remained obdurate. Hay shouted across the room: "Withdraw. I promise you will get what you want in your districts." A dues allocation provision was written into the Constitution.

Eleanor and Katharine Gavit had followed Narcissa's example, and withdrawn as candidates for election. Caroline Slade, elected as the new Chairman, introduced a revision of another article in the new constitution. At her suggestion a more democratic election of local League delegates to

convention was adopted. Eleanor, confident of more equalized representation, then accepted the office of Vice-Chairman. Narcissa, Katharine Gavit, and Margaret Norrie were among those elected as Regional Directors. With the state divided into regions, New York City became one region. Ten Regional Directors were elected, as well as officers and Directors. A new treasurer replaced Rosalie Edge.

The convention recommended that legislative efforts in 1923 be confined to: Sheppard-Towner Enabling Act, Eight-Hour Day, Minimum Wage Commission, National Child Labor Amendment to the Constitution, the Ten Equalizing Bills, Amend the Primary Law to re-establish Direct Primaries, Repeal the Lusk Laws (loyalty oaths of school personnel). They also called on both major political parties to support enforcement of prohibition, and on the federal government to take part in international cooperative efforts to prevent war.

According to *The Knickerbocker Press* in Albany, the League, by this plan of work, "proved itself interested in the development of the citizen from babyhood to manhood, and in the development of citizenship from a narrow-viewed imperfect thing to a broad-viewed, and perfect embodiment of an ideal."

From February 14-28 Eleanor and Esther were in Florida on a houseboat; Narcissa went to her 16,000 acre family ranch in California. Elizabeth Read wrote to Narcissa concerning her dissatisfaction with Mrs. Slade's administration, especially as it reduced the efforts of the Equal Laws Committee. She said that Eleanor "learned a lot" when she challenged Caroline Slade's use of false information to cast aspersions on Elizabeth's work for the Committee. Disillusioned by League passiveness in the lobbying effort, Elizabeth resigned as Chairman of the Equal Laws Committee.

Early in March Esther wrote to Narcissa: "I was happy to be with Eleanor Roosevelt when there was nothing for either of us to do. She is an utterly splendid person. Your letter to her received just before we left Florida pleased her immensely. Mrs. Slade is in Florida now so Eleanor is in charge of the League..." She told of the resignation from the Chairmanship of the New York City League by Mary Garret Hay. (According to Esther, Franklin Roosevelt called her "Charlie Murphy" Hay, after a Tammany Hall political boss.) Eleanor's written protest to Mrs. Slade concerning the second vote by Board members, by mail, on committee chairmen, was described by Esther, who had been "effectively resigned" from her post as Chairman of Legislative Information by the mail balloting.

At a State Board meeting in March Eleanor was acting chair. She asked another member to take that position in order that she might speak regarding the propriety of election of the chairmen of committees through mail ballots. At the February meeting Eleanor had urged a plan to determine local League's pro rata plan of assessment for State League funds. At the March meeting she called for a special meeting between State and City League officials to formulate consolidation procedures.

The Albany County League, under the direction of Katharine Gavit, was lobbying for passage of the state enabling act for the Sheppard-Towner funds. Eleanor, representing the State League in the support coalition, United Organizations (UO), reported at meeting on March 6 that the

League was giving office space to UO, as well as publishing educational, supportive articles in *Weekly News*, and notices asking for contributions and volunteer workers. The League was also including informative literature in all letters sent out from the League office. Nancy Cook attended UO meetings as a representative of the Women's Division of the Democratic State Committee.

An active upstate opposition campaign charged that the Act was supported primarily by the birth control movement. The Senate defeated the bill on March 21. Eleanor at once sent telegrams—the swiftest, surest means of communication—to local Leagues urging supportive lobbying visits and other contacts with Assemblymen. League responses were telegraphed back to Eleanor. Other UO members acted similarly.

Narcissa returned from California to take charge of the campaign, temporarily residing in the Ten-Eyck Hotel in Albany. She directed and participated in a campaign to interview every Assemblyman. A woman publicist sent out over 3000 articles to newspapers. More than 15,000 letters were mailed.

One press release quoted Narcissa: "The Sheppard-Towner Act arose from the deepest experiences of the women of this country. They have had babies die or lost mothers and sisters from ignorance or neglect or isolation at the time of childbirth. These women inspired and worked for this bill. Thousands of others who have suffered in less degrees...have longed to help others."

Successful lobbying moved the bill out of committee. Confusion erupted when hearings on birth control and support for a federal department of education stimulated Catholic opposition to all three causes. The League spoke in favor of the birth control measure at its hearing—the first on that subject ever held in the State Capitol.

The following day UO countered the opposition to the state-enabling act for Sheppard-Towner funds with an informative letter—including statements of Catholic support—laid on every Assemblyman's desk. The bill passed—104 aye, 35 no. Under pressure from UO, Governor Smith, who had supported the bill's passage in his annual message, demanded that the Democratically controlled Senate pass the bill. The vote on May 4—one of the last acts of the legislative session—was 26 to 22 in favor. According to *Weekly News* of May 7: "No legislation required work such as this, since Suffrage."

Narcissa's final report, as UO Chairman, on May 8, declared: "We believe that every bit of work put on this bill was necessary; that one letter or one telegram, or one interview less, and our bill might not have gone through." (Intensive lobbying maintained the Sheppard-Towner Act until Congress allowed it to lapse in 1929 as being federal interference in state affairs. Similar federal funding was not available until the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 during Franklin Roosevelt's Administration.)

During that busy month of April Eleanor became a member of the committee for *City-State-Nation*. In a promotional piece for that weekly legislative review her husband stated: "Both [men and women] are equally in need of this particular method of obtaining information in regard to current legislative occurrences and other public questions."

Eleanor also found time to address the League in Queens on "How We Elect Our Presidents". Both she and Narcissa were guests of honor at a Westchester League meeting when Emily Greene led a discussion based on her booklet, "Know Your Own Town." (Still a theme of study for every local League.)

At the March meeting of the State Board Eleanor had reported on the progress of consolidation between the State and City Leagues. At the June meeting she read the agreement entered into by the NYS LWV and the NYC LWV, forming a New York League of Women Voters.

Columbia University, in cooperation with the National League, held an Institute of Government and Politics for several days in July. Eleanor was enrolled, and presided one day. One resource used for a discussion of Federal Aid to the States was a National League publication, "The Acceptance of the Sheppard Towner Act" by Dorothy K. Brown (Mrs. LaRue). Her husband had been a classmate of FDR at Harvard. Eleanor had heard her speak at the National League Convention in 1921.

In July Edward Bok, a retired magazine publisher, chose Esther Lape, who had written for his magazine, to take charge of his American Peace Award Contest. He would award a \$100,000 prize for the best practical plan for American cooperation with the rest of the world. Upon winning a yet-to-be-selected Jury's decision as best plan, \$50,000 would be awarded to the drafter of the plan. The remaining \$50,000 would be awarded when public support was indicated and the plan was implemented by the U.S. Senate.

To establish a non-partisan character for the contest's Policy Committee, Bok instructed Esther to choose a leading woman from each of the two major parties. She chose Eleanor and Narcissa. The three women then chose the remaining Policy Committee members and the Jury. Committee members announced July 2, included Cornelia Pinchot, Nathan Miller, John W. Davis (Democratic nominee for President in 1924), and Henry L. Stimson (A Republican, Stimson was appointed Secretary of War by FDR shortly before the 1940 Presidential Campaign.)

Within two weeks the National League had asked all state and local Leagues to enter the Contest. By September 200,000 entry forms had been requested, and the Jury selected. Among groups submitting recommendations for the Jury had been the League. Their list included Carrie Chapman Catt, Maude Wood Park, and Colonel House—intimate adviser of President Wilson, and influential in formulation of Wilson's "14 Points" peace proposal after World War I. House was appointed to the Jury.

Elihu Root chaired the Jury of Award. He advocated U.S. membership in the League of Nations and had helped devise the Permanent Court of International Justice. In 1921 he was a U.S. delegate to the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Arms.

According to Esther, in *Ways to Peace* published in 1924, over a quarter of a million Americans inquired about entering the Contest. She believed that people were disillusioned, that nothing was being done to prevent war, that they wanted a direct way to express their views. Ninety seven of the "most powerful organizations"—including the National League—united with one undertaking. More than 22,000 plans were submitted, including one by FDR. The Policy Committee selected 8000 for consideration.

Narcissa and Eleanor both wrote and made speeches to stimulate interest. "The American Peace Award," by Eleanor, appeared in the October 1923 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*. *Weekly News* of October 12 also carried an article by her. The plans were to be in by November 15th. The Jury would reach its decision by January first. A popular referendum would be taken before presentation to the Senate in February.

"If we are interested," she wrote, "in making a step forward toward the prevention of future wars, we must, whatever our individual convictions, look upon the American Peace Award as one of the avenues of popular influence, and each one of us must feel her individual responsibility to read the plan and vote upon it as early as possible..."

At the invitation of the Saratoga County League of Women Voters, Eleanor spoke at their annual convention late in October. Kathryn Starbuck, a local League official, reported on national and State League positions. Katharine Gavit gave an outline of the founding and relation of the International Court of Arbitration to the Permanent Court of International Justice. She also defined the relationship between the Court and the League of Nations and explained how it would be possible for the U.S. to join in supporting the World Court without League of Nations membership. (The U.S. never became a League of Nations member.)

Eleanor had been described in earlier articles of *The Saratogian* as "an interesting speaker and a woman of great personal charm," as well as a "well known clubwoman and vice chairman of the NYS LWV." She came to Saratoga Springs from a convention of the Oneida County League. According to a report in the paper on October 24, she explained the American Peace Award, and how it would produce a plan to bring the U.S. in some way into cooperation with the rest of the world for the furtherance of peace. She urged the League to take part in the referendum on the chosen plan.

She also spoke about the LWV, explaining its aims and goals, as well as "the far reaching good it has accomplished and the splendid movements it now sponsored and approved." She stressed the need of women being intelligent women voters. She urged and advocated that women affiliate themselves with a political party since through party government alone could the greatest achievements be reached. Her presentation was described as "of great charm and pleasing individuality."

In November she spoke at a League Citizenship School held in Albany. Her speech on the Peace Award was the final event of the School. In keeping with the League practice of informing the public on both sides of an issue, a Major General of the U.S. Army spoke his views.

The three day School was held at NYS College of Teachers. Students from Albany Law School were also invited. Some of the topics suggested to local Leagues conducting such Schools were: The government's service to the citizen; The citizen's responsibility for the government; Relationship of local, state and national governments; national and state responsibilities. Other topics included information about the League, the direct primary, know your own town and county, legislation concerning women and children, better schools, and topics of local interest. The stated object of the citizenship training was "To interest the homemaker and taxpayer in the great opportunities of citizenship. To arouse the lukewarm and indifferent

voter. To reduce the number of non-voters in every community. To improve the electorate by education."

In December Eleanor addressed a local League in Manhattan—"Do Our Representatives Really Represent?"

1924

The winning Peace Plan advocated United States entry into the International Court of Justice under conditions set by Secretary of State Hughes in 1923, and cooperation with the League of Nations in certain situations specified in the Plan. Narcissa and Edward Bok were among those making speeches over radio January 8, 1924, announcing the Plan and the public referendum which would end February 10.

A million copies of the Peace Plan, and ballots, were sent out to approximately 25,000 cooperating organizations—including local Leagues. The ballots, and a digest of the plan, were printed in 700 daily newspapers, 7000 weekly newspapers, and more than 400 magazines.

Eleanor was to explain the Plan to the annual convention of the New York League of Women Voters, to be held in Utica on January 15. Carrie Chapman Catt was also to address the delegates. The *Utica Daily Press* described the League as a body of women distinguished for public service, and "devoted to arousing the interests of women in public affairs—political, civic and moral."

By January 9, 80,000 ballots on the Peace Plan had arrived in Utica for area distribution. An editorial in the *Utica Observer Dispatch* urged acceptance of the Plan.

Among other matters brought to delegates early in the convention were the urgency of electing women to the State Legislature, passage of a bill to consolidate rural schools, passage of the federal Child Labor Amendment, gaining women's rights to jury service, prosecution of men equally with women in cases of prostitution, getting out 75% of the vote in the forthcoming Presidential election (a national effort of the League in cooperation with women in both major political parties), and getting the U.S. into the World Court as a first step toward international understanding.

Agnes Brown Leach reiterated the National League position, taken a year earlier, of support for the Hughes plan for entry into the World Court. A resolution urging the National League to make its main activity for the coming year work in support of the League of Nations caused heated argument, as did a resolution favoring amendment of the law prohibiting the giving of birth control to a large segment of the population—married women. The National League resolution failed. The birth control resolution passed, recommending local Leagues study ways to amend the law.

A *New York Times* editorial on January 18 declared few of the delegates would learn anything new if the existing restrictions on distribution of birth control were removed, "but their anxiety is for their less fortunately situated sisters who, in their opinion, need that knowledge more than do the many who already possess or can get it for the asking...Whether 'birth control' is right or wrong remains arguable," continued the editorial, "...but when

women like those in the Voters League put themselves formally on record in favor of making knowledge about it available, in proper circumstances, for all, the final result hardly can be doubted."

By a vote of 82-9 the convention voted to exclude men from their ranks. In the debate preceding the vote sometimes ten women were standing at a time to speak. One stated: "We are capable of solving all our problems without other assistance. Besides they wouldn't want to assist. They'd want to manage!" One lady softly wondered, "How would we women like it if we were treated that way by men?" Quick as a shot came the reply from a score of voices, "We are!"

New officers were elected. Both Eleanor and Dorothy Straight retired from office. (Eleanor's action foreshadowed a National League recommendation that in order to preserve non-partisanship, League officials should not be active in partisan politics.)

Mrs. Catt advocated support for the U.S. entry into the World Court, endorsing the Hughes plan. She urged the crowd of 200 to increase their activity in the interest of world peace. She concluded by charging that men, by factory and machine, had taken away women's work. In a ringing challenge, Mrs. Catt urged women to take away man's traditional work—war!

Eleanor began to speak next in the crowded dining hall. Some, on the outskirts of the crowd, unable to hear her, asked her to stand in a chair. "This she did smilingly," according to the *Utica Daily Press*, "and went on...from her elevated position" to explain the origin and method of the Bok Peace Award. She declared the purpose of the Award was not so much to secure adoption of any plan as to arouse the interest of people in peace. She appealed to the women to vote in the referendum; ballot boxes were at hand. Her appeal met with hearty response, "judging by the rustle of paper," said the *Press*.

Among resolutions passed by the Convention was one supporting the Hughes plan for entry into the World Court; a copy was sent to their U.S. Senator. In an interview with the *Press* after the Convention, Eleanor declared the spirit of the convention was enthusiastic and its 1924 program a "mighty fine one."

An *Observer Dispatch* editorial of January 17 stated the dominant note of the convention was a feeling that women were discriminated against by political parties—not nominated for office, nor given opportunity for policy shaping. They were, however, not discouraged, but would go "steadily forward to take the place to which entitled."

In mid-January an antagonistic U.S. Senate committee questioned Esther, Narcissa, and Edward Bok regarding the American Peace Award. The Senators believed the referendum was an effort to control public opinion and legislative matters by purchasing advertising and publicity. *The New York Herald* headlines proclaimed: "Three Women Engineered Bok Peace Prize Contest". *The New York Times* responded: "The crime of engineering a contest is obviously aggravated if the engineers are members of the female sex."

"Who would have thought these women...would insist on retaining their own notions (contrary to the questioning Senators) as to the best means of avoiding the tears and heartbreak of war, and that they would go about put-

spirators have exhibited?"

The Senate declined to implement the proposed Peace Plan. Although the Plan's author received his initial award in a public ceremony, Bok used the remaining funds to establish the American Foundation which, with Esther Lape in charge, attempted for several years to promote American adherence to the World Court. Esther, Eleanor, and Narcissa were founding directors of the Foundation, which still exists with different goals. (In 1935 President Roosevelt urged ratification of a Court protocol for U.S. membership devised in 1929 by Elihu Root. The Senate once again rejected membership.)

The Fifth Annual Convention of the National League of Women Voters opened in Buffalo, New York, with committee conferences on April 24. The proposed program for 1924-25 included: collective bargaining as a means of giving women workers a share in the control of employment conditions; study of disarmament, the League of Nations and the Bok peace plan; ways of equalizing financing of schools; approval of the federal Child Labor Amendment; and study of the relation of women to government.

The *Buffalo Sunday Times* of April 20 published a headline, "Buffalo The Mecca For Leading Women of Nation," over photographs of ten women, including Eleanor. Each woman's name was followed by a few words of identification—except that of "Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt."

In addition to more than 1500 convention delegates, the public was invited to three mass meetings: April 26 for addresses by two governors, including Pennsylvania's Governor Gifford Pinchot—whose wife was to speak at a convention session on politics; April 27 for the topic "Peace—Make the Wish the Will" with Carrie Chapman Catt as featured speaker; April 29 for a question and answer session with prominent journalists.

A Buffalo newspaper editorial recommended: "Electors at large can learn an excellent lesson from the activities of the league and the manner in which it conducts itself. Mob hysteria does not upset these women. They are not in a pack that follows hither and thither the demagogue in his quest for votes. They are not content to be fed up with honeyed words from glib tongues. They have picked for themselves the province of molding public opinion and are doing it well."

A woman columnist for another local paper described the meeting. "Birth and breeding, commonsense, gumption, courtesy and all the graces are cornered under one hotel roof while the National Convention...is on...They are the fairest body of women, in two senses, I have ever seen come together—fair because they are honestly striving so some of the gravest problems which confront this nation and the world, and fair in the other sense, because they are women of position and influence, who know just how to do the right thing, and to wear the right thing."

At the opening session on April 25 the President, Maude Wood Park, read a letter of apology from a federal official regarding a government poster which accused various groups of women by name—including the League—of fostering a campaign of pacifism. The poster bore the heading "The Socialist-Pacifist movement in America". All existing copies of the poster, distributed by the War Department, had been ordered destroyed by

the Secretary of War. After Park's reading of the letter, there was an outburst of applause which continued for several minutes.

According to the *Christian Science Monitor* of that day, peace was "running away with the convention." One bloc was sponsoring a resolution endorsing the League of Nations, another wanted strong affirmation of the World Court, and another group met to launch a war on war. The latter group met at a luncheon separate from the convention sessions. They decided to invite 75 women's organizations to confer on their common goal of promotion of peace. The luncheon meeting was the origin of Cause and Cure of War Conferences held in subsequent years—frequently attended by Eleanor.

In Park's annual message to the delegates she reflected on the League's growth in her four years in office. She also stressed the distinctive method which the League had developed in preparation and adoption of its program—the discussion and study of a suggested subject for one or more years before urging legislation.

The most spirited and longest debate of the convention centered on the subject of birth control. Proposal of the subject for study was defeated. The proposal of the Committee on Social Hygiene for advocacy of vice control laws that would provide for the equal punishment of men and women was accepted.

The League's program for international co-operation was approved without change. It recommended study of disarmament, reparations, the League of Nations, the Bok plan, and review of American foreign policy. No changes were made in the program for women in industry which provided for shorter hours and no night work for women, and for workers to go among foreign women employed in industry to teach them English and aid in their naturalization.

The topic of introduction and passage of a U.S. Constitutional Amendment to give suffrage to the District of Columbia was placed again in items for study. One reason was that the League was unwilling to push more than one Constitutional Amendment at a time. The House approved the Child Labor Amendment while the convention was in session; delegates were directed to urge their Senators to take similar action. On the final day of the convention a last minute vote of reconsideration resulted in a vote to advance from study to active support for suffrage for the District of Columbia. (It still remains on the League's agenda.)

The program of study of the legal status of women was adopted, including study of changes in uniform laws governing marriage and divorce. The convention declared itself opposed to any blanket legislation to eliminate women's inequalities. (Eventually the League of Women Voters of the United States altered its position and became a supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment.)

At the mass meeting on peace, Mrs. Catt declared the biggest blunder this nation ever made was its refusal to sign the League of Nations covenant. She criticized a previous speaker, a Congressman, for his opposition to the League of Nations, and his support, instead, for disarmament conferences. She declared that the only cure for war was a solemn pledge by nations not to make war, to arbitrate their differences, and to abide by the arbitration. She told the women that peace was attainable, and that they were the ones to

bring it about. "Women must furnish the backbone of the peace movement." The audience of 3000, mostly women, loudly cheered her prediction that world peace was not impossible.

The *Buffalo Evening Times*, on April 19, published an interview with Eleanor, as one of a series in "How Men Have Treated Me In Politics." According to the article, the question was put to "one of the most charming and gracious women attending the Convention," who also had recently been appointed, by the Democratic National Committee, to chair a committee of women to draw up social welfare planks for the Democratic platform. She declared she had mostly pleasant memories of her experiences in politics. "I know a great many men with fine minds who believe women have a real contribution to make....a contribution from a different angle (than men)... This phase of the question that women grasp, men realize has its importance."

During the final feature of the convention, at which six editors and writers discussed American politics, William Allen White reviewed his fight for League of Women Voters' planks in the Republican platform in 1920. He recommended that women make just as much trouble within the parties as they could. "Don't let the men think they own you."

In a column in the *Buffalo Evening News*, one of the journalists, David Lawrence, stated that many of the convention delegates were affiliated with the major political parties and expected to be active in the drafting of platform planks and in the balloting of state delegations. He noted convention support for the World Court, and outbursts of overwhelming applause whenever the League of Nations was mentioned. He stated that neither party could do better than to adopt the set of humanitarian principals proclaimed by the National League.

At a meeting of the newly elected Board of the League on April 30, a special committee was appointed to select and present recommendations for planks to the two major parties. They announced the location of their headquarters in each party's convention city, in order to be on hand to urge their recommendations.

Eleanor was one of 500 Democratic women who celebrated the fourth anniversary of the Democratic Club of 1000 Women following the convention. Their featured speaker was Emily Newell Blair, vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, who had also addressed the Convention. (She had been a founder of the National League.) Other speakers included: Eleanor; Caroline O'Day, Chairman, Women's Division, NYS Democratic Committee, as well as a local League official; and Patti R. Jacobs (Mrs. Solon) of Alabama, newly elected first vice-president of the National League. Patti Jacobs had been selected by the League's executive committee to present the League's platform recommendations to the Democratic convention.

In 1920 all of the League requests had been in the Prohibition platform, all except one in the Democratic platform, five in the Republican platform, and three in the Farm-Labor platform. More than half of the requests embodied in those planks were carried out in the 1920-1924 period, according to a *New York Times* article of May 26, 1924.

Eleanor's National Platform Committee on Social Legislation was to combine the requests of all women's organizations of the country. Its members were to be experts in social welfare and were to be served by non-partisan ad-

visory committees. League officials included as members of the Committee were Margaret Norrie, Gertrude Ely, Patti Jacobs, Dorothy K. Brown, and Minnie Cunningham (Mrs. Beverly J.). National League files in the Library of Congress contain a reference to Eleanor's assistance in finding alternate accommodations for the League's contingent, since the convention hotel was fully occupied.

By June 24, the opening day of the convention, Eleanor had presented the planks, and the names of women's groups proposing each. The League led proponents listed for funding for home economics in the Department of Agriculture equal to that of agriculture and trades; creation of a Department of Education; civil service reform; removal of inequalities of women by specific legislation; continuation and extension of the Maternity and Infancy Act; support for the Children's Bureau; educational work to prevent venereal disease; support for regulation to protect women in industry including adequate wage, safety and sanitary provisions, eight hour working day, appropriations for the Women's Bureau, and equal pay for equal work.

Caroline O'Day and Josephine Schain presented specific National League planks before the Platform Committee: endorsement of U.S. entry into the World Court; passage of adequate provisions for public welfare agencies in government; creation of a Federal Department of Education; establishment of a merit system rather than political appointments—especially in the Veterans' Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service; and ratification of the Child Labor Amendment. (Child labor standards were not set until the Supreme Court upheld those in the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1941.)

At the Democratic State Convention, held in September in Syracuse, Eleanor again petitioned for platform planks on behalf of a large number of women's organizations. The State platform included a child labor plank, even though the national Democratic platform did not.

In her support for the national Democratic ticket Eleanor spoke to various Democratic women's groups. In Geneva, NY, in October, accompanied by Constance Hare, she urged cooperation with the League in getting women, especially, out to vote. (The women's national get-out-the-vote effort did not achieve the goal of its sponsors. The League attributed this to registration difficulties, and undertook to study that phase of elections.) Echoing League sentiments, she urged women to accept the responsibility of voting. In Syracuse, a few weeks later, she declared, "Women will think things out for themselves on political questions rather than following tradition as men do."

1925-1928

Eleanor's public speeches continued to reflect what she had encountered in League. In an address to students at Syracuse University on February 27, 1925, she urged them to keep open minds on public questions. She declared the chief problem confronting women was how to do away with war.

She continued to participate in League activities: patroness of a State League lecture course on foreign affairs; and member of the lecture/teaching faculty of a Speakers School, sponsored by the Manhattan Borough of the League, which prepared women for public speaking. Late in November she

held the second in a series of 25 World Court teas in her home in New York City, and spoke in support of U.S. entry into World Court.

A State League press release in March 1925 described Eleanor as an outstanding example of the League's tenet that women should take an active share in the work of the parties of their choice. At the Democratic State Convention in Syracuse in September 1926, Eleanor introduced women's planks for the Party platform: a 48 hour work week for women in industry, continuation of the Maternity and Infancy Act, and minimum wage for women and minors. Dorothy Straus, an attorney and adviser to both State and National Leagues, presented similar League planks. In a dinner speech Eleanor called the election of Caroline O'Day as vice chairman of the State Committee "the breaking down of the last barrier" against women in the Party.

Eleanor continued contact with the League. Her letter in support of continuation of the Sheppard-Towner Act, written in response to a League request, was entered in the *Congressional Record* by Senator Royal S. Copeland on January 6, 1927. She also maintained friendships formed within League. Early in 1927, for example, a family dinner party included Esther Lape, Elizabeth Read, Narcissa Vanderlip and her husband.

Throughout 1927 Eleanor also associated with local Leagues. She spoke on political parties at a League meeting in Rhinebeck High School, and on "Woman as Citizen" at a League meeting in Manhattan. The Dutchess County League meeting of August 27, on "Water Power in the State of New York" was held at her Hyde Park home. On October 13 she hosted a State League meeting of Board members, and representatives of Leagues in 13 nearby counties. While the State Board held its meeting in the morning, Dutchess County League held its annual meeting, and re-elected Eleanor vice-leader for the community of Hyde Park. Meanwhile some 300 other Leaguers wandered about the grounds high above the Hudson.

In the afternoon members of the State legislature and Congress addressed the entire group, gathered in the library, on legislation of interest to the League. In addition, Martha Van Rensselaer spoke on the need for civic education of rural residents. Carrie Chapman Catt, as final speaker, challenged the League to educate the public in support of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, an international agreement to settle disputes peacefully. (Without powers of enforcement, except world moral opinion, the pact—signed by 62 nations, including the U.S.—became a gesture of futility.)

The first week in December, Mrs. Catt similarly addressed the State League Convention in Albany, which Eleanor attended. Ex-Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania spoke to the delegates of the risk of natural water power resources being held by a few individuals, while another speaker opposed government ownership. This debate centered around Muscle Shoals facilities on the Tennessee River. From 1928-1933 the League was the only citizens' organization supporting government ownership. (FDR, while governor, established a state power authority. As President he resolved the Muscle Shoals dispute in 1933 with establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority.)

Eleanor led a roundtable discussion on "How the Two Party System Should Function." She declared that both parties should nominate a woman for state office: that women should choose the nominee rather than accepting

one "handed out" to them by men. She had written her views on the subject for a December issue of *Weekly News*.

Resolutions passed by the convention included support for treaties such as the Kellogg-Briand Treaty, support for U.S. adherence to the World Court, and enforcement of laws—including the Eighteenth (Prohibition) Amendment. The *Albany Times Union* described the Leaguers as "Feminist Standard Bearers." Eleanor was identified as "wife of former Wilson Cabinet member."

In an article in the April 1928 issue of *Redbook*, she again advocated equality for women in politics and suggested women organize within parties to elect "women political bosses" who would exercise real power. An interview, printed in the *New York Times Magazine* of April 8, further detailed her views on political equality.

Belle Sherwin, National League President, in her address to the National League convention, held in Chicago April 25-28, declared there was no contradiction in the League urging members to act through a political party, while discussing, in League, free from party bias, "measures for which women see the need most clearly." There also was, she continued, a need for action of groups, such as League, in the public interest, irrespective of party affiliations.

The "Bulletin" of the convention featured prominent Leaguers in advertisements for products. On the back page was a photograph of Eleanor, with apron, bowl, and sifter, endorsing Gold Medal Flour.

Eleanor attended a League Conference on Public Affairs held in New York City in mid-April. Later in the month, at a League meeting in Manhattan, she presented the Democrats' position favoring government development of water power. Her datebook for 1928 included LWV engagements throughout the year. Her friendship with Esther and Elizabeth, formed in League, continued, as evidenced by appointments with them.

During 1928 Eleanor became Eastern Director, Women's Activities, for the Democratic National Committee in its campaign to elect Alfred E. Smith as President. One of her chief assistants was Caroline O'Day. Dorothy K. Brown was a member of Eleanor's advisory committee. Caroline Slade, former State League President, gave up her National League office in order to lead the national women's committee for the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover.

Eleanor was frequently a speaker, in her partisan role, at League events. At a Dutchess County League meeting she presented her party's view on foreign policy, while Ruth Morgan gave the Republican view. Eleanor described the Democratic Platform at another local League meeting in Rhinebeck. In August she analyzed the Democratic Platform planks on prohibition during one of the National League's voter information radio broadcasts. She supplied *Weekly News* with responses to League's questionnaire from the Democratic Presidential candidate, Alfred E. Smith. Elsewhere in the same issue were the responses of her husband, candidate for Governor.

Her husband was elected Governor, and Eleanor added another task, mistress of the Governor's Mansion, to her already busy life. Katherine Luddington, a National League official, wrote with pride in *Weekly News* that the League was continuously supplying the parties with League-trained workers like Eleanor.

1929-1932

In March 1929 Eleanor held a tea at the Governor's Mansion in honor of her friend, Agnes Leach, State League Chairman. Guests were women college students who would serve as hostesses for the forthcoming Conference for New Voters—a League sponsored organization for women in college. When the Conference was held in Albany May 3 and 4, unit presidents were guests at the Mansion.

Eleanor traveled to Saratoga Springs early in December to address that League's annual meeting. She spoke of the preparation given women, in League, for public service. She declared that the non-partisan League was a medium through which women could clarify their opinions and beliefs and then decide which political party to join. "Women who have been in League really do the best political work. The League has helped them to be more independent, shown them how to form their own opinions, and made them unafraid, confident and sure of themselves."

On February 21, 1930, Eleanor spoke on disarmament to 250 women at a luncheon of the Onondaga County League of Women Voters. She expressed her belief that only with ratification of the World Court would people be willing to accept disarmament. She declared that if the disarmament conference being held in London failed, "women may do much to secure that world peace which our diplomats have failed to achieve." She asserted that men did not work as wholeheartedly for peace because they feared others would think them afraid to go to war. "Women have no such reputation to sustain."

During 1931 Eleanor spoke to local Leagues such as Westchester County and Orange County. A card party and tea in the Roosevelt home at Hyde Park raised funds for the Dutchess County League. During 1931 Eleanor served on a committee of the State League which raised funds for National League by collecting cash contributions in support of an honor roll of those who led the suffrage struggle. The State League's suffrage memorial tablet, with the names of many women familiar to Eleanor in League, was installed in the Capitol during the State Convention in November 1931. Some of those state suffragists' names were also inscribed on a national tablet installed in National League headquarters. (The present location of the national tablet is unknown.) Some of the national names submitted by other State Leagues were also of women Eleanor had met in League.

Eleanor extended the hospitality of the Governor's Mansion to the League convention, but she was in Warm Springs, Georgia, with her husband. On November 22 she spoke at a luncheon given in her honor by the Atlanta League. She repeated her conviction that men were not going to do much about war, and that "any successful crusade against it must be conducted by the women of all countries." She also admonished the women to help guide the nation through its present economic crisis. "You have got to study, because it is your business to know what is wrong and to lead and guide in these changes."

She continued the theme of League responsibility when she spoke to the New York City League on January 12, 1932, at a luncheon opening their fund raising campaign. She cautioned them that people would excuse

themselves from contributing, because they were giving to emergency relief causes instead. The League studied the problems of government, she said, and government needed all the study, intelligence, and help which women could give.

"We must have women who are not satisfied simply with alleviating suffering temporarily, but who are willing to study the problems of the future and face the fact that we may have to have great changes... We must be prepared to meet things with open minds and go to the roots of questions as they come up."

When her article, "What Do Ten Million Women Want" was published in *The Home Magazine* in March, 1932, she raised issues similar to those engaged by League: women in government, a federal department of education, a solution to the problems of prohibition, and improvement and uniformity in marriage and divorce laws. She mentioned the desirability of having women in the police force. The National League was the only organization gathering and recording information on this subject at the time, under its Social Hygiene program. A major attraction at the 1924 National League Convention had been an English policewoman.

1933-1962

A few months after her husband was elected President of the United States, Eleanor addressed the League of Women Voters of Illinois. Again she spoke of women's responsibility to be active in political affairs, and to interest young people in government. She forcefully declared that the most important work of modern women was to work for the prevention of war.

On January 27, 1933, the New York League of Women Voters held a reception in New York City for Eleanor. According to *Weekly News*: "This is our opportunity to show Mrs. Roosevelt, before she goes to Washington, how much we appreciate her unfailing friendliness to the League of Women Voters, and our confidence and our pride in her wise leadership of women in political thought and action." At the reception, Eleanor praised the League. She commended their non-partisan presentation of government issues so that voters could know each side of every question. "You may be sure that... I shall remain active in the League... even during my stay in Washington."

During her White House years, Eleanor continued her support for the League as (1) a primary source of non-partisan information on government questions, and (2) as an educational medium to learn the process of collecting and studying facts prior to individual decision making on government questions. Her book for children, *When You Grow Up To Vote*, published in 1933, was somewhat along the lines of League's "Know Your Town."

Her speeches and writings continued to present issues—and positions on those issues—in which she had been instructed to present issues—and positions on discrimination against women, and (2) women's role in decision making, and in peacemaking. She maintained friendships and working relationships with many of the women with whom she had worked in League. (Aside from

governmental interests, Eleanor engaged Henrietta Nesbitt, active in her local League, and who had also done family cooking for Eleanor on occasion, as official housekeeper in the White House.)

In October, 1934, national attention focused on Eleanor when she became the first President's wife to campaign for a candidate—Caroline O'Day, Democratic candidate for Congressman-at-large (an office that no longer exists). At a candidates' meeting sponsored by the League of Women Voters in Buffalo the Republican candidate, also a woman, virulently attacked the New Deal; the audience responded with boos. O'Day yielded to Eleanor. The First Lady admonished the audience by stating her own appreciation for meetings which gave an opportunity to hear various points of view "no matter how much we may not agree with them." She systematically defended her husband's politics and declared O'Day as one who would carry them out. O'Day served in Congress from 1935 to 1943.

At a press conference in December 1938, Eleanor blamed the general apathy of women voters for a drop in the number of women in federal and state legislatures, as disclosed by a League study. She said women wasted their energies—that they had not suffered sufficiently to feel that something had to be done and that they had to do it.

In 1939 she recommended the League to a Congressional Class in Public Speaking as a good medium for training and education in government. In answer to questions directed to her through *Democratic Digest*, she recommended the League as a resource for formulation of high school and college programs to study questions of local, state, and national interest.

She addressed the League's General Council, made up of League officials meeting in alternate years from conventions, in 1939, and suggested the word "women" be eliminated from their name. She asserted that ideas women believed in, permeating such an organization, would enable men to more quickly understand the obstacles women encountered. (Men became eligible as members in 1974.)

She told how she advised young people, probing public questions, to go to the League for information on both sides. She commended the League: "You have a trained group of women who can sit down without emotion and analyze. This is really freedom—to keep informed." Her address to National League Convention in 1940 again stressed citizen education on public questions.

Eleanor participated in national and international women's gatherings where League, and her League friends, also took part, such as the Women's Centennial Congress in New York City in 1940, and the International Assembly of Women in rural upstate New York in 1946.

Her continued interaction with the League of Women Voters can be identified throughout her papers in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, in such files as "Memberships-Accepted" and "Invitations-Accepted" as well as her correspondence during the White House Years. References to the League, to women who were League members, and to issues of interest to League, appear in many of her speeches and articles, including her "My Day" newspaper columns.

After her husband's death in 1945, Eleanor was appointed a U.N. Delegate and elected Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the U.N.

U.N. In 1948 she shared the M. C. Thomas Prize for distinguished achievement in the field of international relations with Anna Lord Strauss, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States. Strauss was appointed an alternate U.S. delegate to the U.N. shortly before Eleanor's resignation from her U.N. posts in 1952 following the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President.

The League supported U.S. Ratification of the U.N. Charter in 1945 and in 1948 undertook an intensive program to educate the American people about the U.N. The League continues support for the U.N. as the best existing instrument to promote world peace. In December 1983 LWV US adopted a new position in support of arms control measures.

The League, in addition to other programs, continues to work for justice for women, as in Eleanor's era, as well as for minorities. It also continues to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, and provides non-partisan voter information.

Eleanor's connections with the League have a silent epitaph in her will, filed after her death in 1962. In addition to bequests to family members she left personal items to a few women, including Esther Lape, her first co-worker in League. Although unwritten in the will, Eleanor Roosevelt bequeathed a legacy to the League of Women Voters: her example of informed and earnest public service.

AUTHOR'S NOTES AND SOURCES

In *Current Biography*, published in 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt gave full credit to the League of Women Voters for grounding her in citizenship and government. In her autobiography published in 1961, she credited, by name, some League officials as opening up many areas of thought and work for her. "In League with Eleanor", a short history of the relationship between Eleanor and the League, is not complete, but could be the basis for more study and a more definitive work on the role of the League, and its leaders, in Eleanor's development as a unique public servant.

My goal has been to illuminate Eleanor's relationship with the League of Women Voters—especially in her early, most active years in League—by selecting from known and new information, and molding it to reveal Eleanor Roosevelt in a new light. I hope this work has faithfully redeemed a portion of the past, and renewed interest not only in Eleanor Roosevelt, but in the role of the League as a shaper of women, and of society.

My primary sources were: League of Women Voters of New York State Collection in Butler Library, Columbia University; League of Women Voters of the United States Collection in the Library of Congress; the Narcissa Cox Vanderlip Papers in the Frank Arthur Vanderlip Collection, Columbia University; and, of course, the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park. I mined the microfilms of the *New York Times* and various local newspapers, in libraries across the state, for their coverage. *Eleanor and Franklin*, by Joseph Lash, (New York: W.W. Norton 1971) was a helpful secondary source.

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Hilda R. Watrous
Clifton Park, NY
March 1984

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS is a non-partisan volunteer organization which works to promote political responsibility through the informed and active participation of citizens in government. Although the League does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate, it does support or oppose certain legislation after serious study and substantial agreement among its members. Membership is open to everyone.

THE FOUNDATION FOR CITIZEN EDUCATION is the tax-deductible affiliate of the League of Women Voters in New York State. Established in 1950, the Foundation is classed as a public charitable organization by the Internal Revenue Service. It works closely with the local Leagues of Women Voters in New York State to support their citizen education projects. It conducts the citizen information activity of the League of Women Voters of New York State.