

MOBILIZING CHILDREN TO AID THE WAR EFFORT:  
ADVANCING PROGRESSIVE AIMS THROUGH THE WORK OF THE  
CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE OF THE INDIANA WOMAN'S COUNCIL OF  
NATIONAL DEFENSE AND THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU DURING WORLD WAR  
ONE

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This thesis examines the motivations of the Woman's Council of National Defense. It will examine how women in Indiana and Illinois organized their state and local councils of defense as they embraced home-front mobilization efforts. It will also show that Hoosier women, like women across the United States, became involved in World War One home-front mobilization, in part, to prove their responsibility to the government in order to make an irrefutable claim for suffrage. As a result of extensive home-front mobilization efforts by women, the government was able to fulfill its own agenda of creating a comprehensive record of its citizens, thus guaranteeing a roster of citizens eligible for future wartime mobilization. By examining the Child Welfare Committee and the Children's Year in a broad view, this thesis supports the assertions of historians like Robert G. Barrows, William J. Breen, and Lynn Dumenil, who have shown how Progressive-minded women advanced Progressive reforms by embracing the war effort and using it to their own advantage.

Anita Morgan, Ph.D., Chair

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## Chapter One: Progressivism in the War Effort

World War I gave women, especially members of prominent women's associations, unprecedented power and influence in their world. As the government expanded its reach to include all people and industries during mobilization for war, women participated in a way that solidified their right to citizenship, which culminated in receiving suffrage in 1920. The combined impact of the Progressive movement, which used ideas about motherhood to unify women and policies, and the Woman's Council of National Defense (WCND) allowed women to take on prominent and powerful roles within society. The war provided middle- and upper-class women the opportunity to define themselves as socially important, modern women as they became the nation's "maternal overseers."<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the United States entrance into World War I, progressivism guided American politics. The Progressive movement was led by people on the fringes of official political power: social workers, social justice reformers, and women. Among other goals, the movement aimed to improve housing and education, end child labor, and limit the number of hours worked by the working class. There was a commonly held belief that the unpleasant aspects of society could be eliminated by improving the home and work environment of millions of people.<sup>2</sup> Women were more likely to support state expansions of power than men, because they were on the fringe of political power and would benefit more from expansions. For seemingly the first time, women were consulted and influenced policy that directly affected their socially defined realms of influence:

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Cramer, email message to author, September 6, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Allen F. Davis, "Welfare, Reform and World War I," *American Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1967): 517.



children, health, education, and families.<sup>3</sup> Women's associations wielded a power previously unknown, despite lacking the national guarantee of suffrage.<sup>4</sup>

Women's associations, like the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), were useful for the grassroots nature of the Progressive movement and in home-front mobilization because their members and clubs spanned the country. Women involved in these associations tended to be wealthier and had more free time from household duties.<sup>5</sup> This freedom meant that like-minded women were already organized in groups that supported favorable policies of the Progressive Era and had direct access to millions of members to assist in mobilization efforts.<sup>6</sup>

Women were an especially powerful force within the Progressive movement. Their "motherhood" was a central principle of Progressive reform, giving women newfound influence over child welfare and other policies that fell within the woman's sphere.<sup>7</sup> During the Progressive movement, there was an increased interest in scientific

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<sup>3</sup> Historian Robyn Muncy found that the male and female spheres remained largely separate, despite women attempting to break into male-dominated professions. As a result, women turned their attention to areas where they wielded considerable power. Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> In the late 1880s and early 1900s, women's associations flourished as thousands of middle-class women were freed from housework due to advancements in technology. Wealthier women were also able to employ workers to attend to their domestic chores, leaving them with unimpeded free time, which gave rise to an increase in club work. For more information on women's associations, see Eleanor Flexner, *A Century of Struggle* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 179-192.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Dumenil, "Women's Reform Organizations and Wartime Mobilization in World War I-Era Los Angeles," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no. 2 (2011): 215.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that prior to the U.S. entrance into the war, many clubwomen considered themselves to be pacifists and lobbied for a peaceful end to the European conflict without the United States becoming involved. However, the allure of having the policies and changes they sought during the Progressive movement become a reality led many women to show unified support for the war effort. For more information on why pacifists began to support World War I, see David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; reprint, 2004) (page citations refer to the reprint edition), 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> Motherhood is a term used to categorize the experiences of mothers who were often powerless against uncontrolled pregnancy and death that easily befell their children. For more information, see Molly Ladd-

theories on childrearing that middle- and upper-class white women subscribed to in their quest to reform and perfect the art of child welfare. In turn, these women lobbied the government for changes in childrearing policies, which will be extensively utilized in home-front mobilization. Progressive mothers believed that they were uniquely suited to be the leaders of child welfare reform because they were mothers, they were educated, and they fiercely believed in the science behind new childrearing techniques.<sup>8</sup>

The Progressive Era is commonly assumed to have ended once the United States gave support to and joined forces with the Allied Powers. However, home-front mobilization efforts brimmed with support and guidance from Progressive women, which manifested itself most clearly within the WCND. The Woman's Council drew its national board members from prominent women's associations, and state councils were filled with local women who used their positions to advance agendas that began during the Progressive movement, most notably child welfare reforms, child labor, and improving working conditions for women.

As a bid to ensure all citizens were involved in myriad mobilization efforts, both the federal and state government relied on women within associations and the councils to influence and pressure unorganized women into participating in war work.<sup>9</sup> The government frequently relied on both coercion and volunteerism to obtain the level of

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Taylor, *Mother Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 43.

<sup>8</sup> Progressive motherhood was a faction of women who prioritized child welfare services over other female-led reforms, like the Equal Rights Amendment and suffrage. For more information on Progressive motherhood, see Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 7-35.

<sup>9</sup> War work included all efforts that were undertaken to mobilize the country for war. These included training factory workers to make munitions, training nurses to be sent overseas, selling Liberty Bonds, and engaging in the activities prescribed by the Council of National Defense, a wartime agency tasked with mobilizing the nation. For additional information on women's war work, see Lynn Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 58-104.

support needed to undertake mobilization, which included expanding the reach of the federal government into the lives of private citizens.<sup>10</sup> Women across the country used the nation's foray into total war to continue the work of the Progressive movement.<sup>11</sup> As the nation relied on all citizens to become involved in and assist in mobilization, women were in a unique position to continue and advance aims they had been working toward prior to the entrance into the war.

The war effort was also largely dependent on coercion to gauge and sway public opinion regarding the war effort, draft, and rationing of goods for military use. To combat dissent and negative feelings about the war, the Committee on Public Information (CPI) was formed.<sup>12</sup> The CPI, under the direction of George Creel, was responsible for millions of pieces of propaganda that covered topics such as preventing food waste to buying Liberty Bonds to ensuring the men in one's life had enrolled in the draft. The reach of the CPI was intimidating, and it often suggested that citizens who did not participate in the war effort were the enemy. The Committee ensured citizens were doing their part for their country by becoming involved in the war effort.

The Council of National Defense (CND), an organization created to help mobilize the United States for war, and the CPI used each other to create and share propaganda to

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<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War One and the American Experience* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Total war saw the entire nation use its population and resources to become engaged in the war effort. Women were especially useful in helping the United States mobilize, while also advancing their own aims. For more information, see Lynn Dumenil, "Women's Reform Organizations and Wartime Mobilization in World War I-Era Los Angeles," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no. 2 (2011): 213-245.

<sup>12</sup> The Committee on Public Information under George Creel was tasked with promoting patriotism and war support. The CPI used propaganda to censor unpopular opinions and voices that were deemed detrimental to mobilization. Creel's far-reaching methods unintentionally gave rise to intense feelings of nationalism and super-patriotism that gained momentum throughout World War One. For more information on the CPI, see Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3-23.

advance mobilization. Both groups understood that patriotic volunteers had the power to transform the war effort and could sway public opinion into further supporting the government and the war. When patriotic spirits waned, the CPI could be used to boost them with specialized propaganda. One CND publication stated that the purpose of having states and towns agree with and believe in mobilization was to convey “from Washington to the people the messages and measures of the national government, and in the transmission back to Washington of the moods and aspirations of a people at war.”<sup>13</sup> Reporting from the councils allowed the government to identify problem areas within the nation and with specific issues plaguing home-front mobilization.

Most historians, like Allen F. Davis and William J. Breen, agree that women’s war work was, as some women had assumed, intricately connected to being awarded suffrage.<sup>14</sup> The war pushed women from all backgrounds into new roles within the public sphere. Working-class women filled industrial positions left behind by men. Middle- and upper-class women were formally given the right and responsibility of working within the public sphere, with citizens and the government relying on the results of their mobilization work. Women were “competently discharging, every kind of social responsibility, and by so doing, proving once and for all their competence to assume political responsibility as well.”<sup>15</sup> The work women undertook during mobilization proved themselves capable of handling the civic responsibility that came with suffrage.

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<sup>13</sup> Grosvenor B. Clarkson, *A Statement of the Work of the State and Territorial Councils of Defense and the State and Territorial Divisions of the Woman’s Committee of the Council of National Defense throughout the War: A Tribute and A Look Into the Future* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, “Welfare, Reform and World War I,” 525.

<sup>15</sup> Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 288.

The councils made it easy to shift the aims of war work from mobilizing the nation for war into advancing pre-war Progressive aims. The state woman's councils were filled with women who had the means and resources to forego finding employment in favor of volunteering, just like the women of the Progressive movement. These women were often, but not always, white and educated, which granted them a special type of influence over areas that were deemed to be within the woman's sphere of influence, such as child welfare and education. Their role within society supposedly gave women a superior sense of knowing what was best for children, families, and education. Women used their contacts and influence to change and shape how they interacted within the public sphere.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most successful committees in terms of home-front mobilization and in advancing Progressive reforms was the Child Welfare Committee, which in Indiana was under the direction of Albion Fellows Bacon.<sup>17</sup> While the Progressive movement relied on a maternalistic rhetoric to unify women's associations into supporting reforms, the Child Welfare Committee relied on the fear of losing the nation's most powerful resource as a motivator to progress and solidify much needed reforms for the lives of children.<sup>18</sup> The success of the Child Welfare Committee and its partner group, the Children's Bureau, was largely dependent on Progressive women who infiltrated the woman's councils and forced the government to introduce changes to child labor laws, education, and improving the general health of infants and children in a bid to lower infant mortality

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<sup>16</sup> Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon, from Evansville, Indiana, was a social reformer. Bacon championed housing reforms and safe living conditions for tenants and the working-class. She was also a prolific speaker and writer. For more information, see Robert G. Barrows, *Albion Fellows Bacon: Indiana's Municipal Housekeeper* (Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Barrows, *Albion Fellows Bacon*, 43.

rates and ensure the nation always had a steady supply of soldiers in the making. Without Progressivism as the driving force behind the work of the WCND, the Progressive Era would have truly ended with WWI, but instead it thrived.

Maternalist reformers believed that women have always been uniquely suited to be the caregivers and guiding light of the nation. The ideology of maternalism made women believe that they, unlike men or the government, were best suited to raise children and ensure the health of the nation. Women considered it to be their political obligation, in lieu of political rights, to raise patriotic and healthy citizens for the nation.<sup>19</sup> This obligation was directly connected to the work completed by the Child Welfare Committee, using the war effort to ensure children were brought up to be healthy, educated, and patriotic citizens.

Maternalism began as a way for women to influence and engage in policies and government in new ways, as seen with the creation of the Children's Bureau in 1912. The Bureau was run by and staffed with progressive women who adopted the maternalistic view, giving women new ways to be directly involved in the formation and implementation of laws pertaining to children.<sup>20</sup> The work of the Children's Bureau cemented the goals of maternalistic reformers and gave women an outlet to put their knowledge and scientific theories of childrearing into practice.<sup>21</sup>

The WCND used maternalistic policies to cement themselves as the maternal overseers of the nation. Women used the government's need for human resources for

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>20</sup> Molly Ladd-Taylor defines progressive maternalists as those who represented a "halfway point between the sentimental maternalism of the National Congress of Mothers and the feminist position." For more information on progressive maternalists, see Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 74-75.

<sup>21</sup> During the Progressive movement scientific theories on childrearing became popular, with educated mothers subscribing to these new methods of raising children to be healthy and engaged citizens. For more information on the science behind child-rearing, see Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 33.

mobilization purposes to their advantage. As mothers, they were uniquely qualified to assist the nation as it prepared for war. They were also highly capable of helping the nation's children become healthier and stronger. The connection between Progressive women and the WCND led to the United States reducing its infant and maternal mortality rates, so that the U.S. had rates that were more aligned with the rates of other industrialized nations.<sup>22</sup>

This thesis will argue that the Progressive movement did not end with the start of the war. Progressive women used the government's need for all citizens to be engaged in total war to their advantage, to promote Progressive aims. Women sought out roles in mobilization efforts because they understood that they could achieve more success by adopting these stances and coopting them to fit the changes they wanted to enact to make society a better place.<sup>23</sup> The women engaged in Progressivism and war work supported an expansion of government and they were able to involve the government directly in the private lives of families and children.

The Children's Year, a year-long program to assist children in becoming healthier, marked a significant change for the country's youth since prior to this campaign the government only reluctantly involved itself in the home and childrearing matters of its private citizens. The Children's Bureau was the first federal agency in the U.S. focused solely on children. However, when it was created, it had the power to only

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<sup>22</sup> The U.S. estimated its birth and death rates due to a lack of accurate records. A 1913 amendment to the Vital Statistics Law required births and deaths be recorded within thirty-six hours and to be enforced by a health officer. Many health officers actively ignored or failed to fulfill this requirement, which led to unconfirmed numbers of infant births and deaths. For more information on the Indiana Vital Statistics Law, see Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality; Results of a Field Study in Gary, Ind., Based on Births in One Year* (Washington, D.C.: Government Print Office, 1923), 63.

<sup>23</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Grace Julian Clarke, April 16, 1918, Box 2, Folder 2, Grace Julian Clarke Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

observe and report its findings and lacked the ability to introduce any meaningful governmental policies that might impact the health and safety of children.<sup>24</sup> Entrance into the war changed how children were viewed and how the government responded to health concerns regarding the child.

The women who made up the state child welfare committees and the national Children's Bureau encouraged the government to play a larger role in the lives of the country's most vulnerable citizens—children. Women who ran these committees pushed for prenatal care, better care for infants, and health centers to help families in urban and rural areas.<sup>25</sup> By focusing on the health, education, and employment of children and women, the Bureau and the Woman's Council made lasting impacts on the overall health of the nation. The passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921 solidified the success of the councils and the Children's Bureau by providing care for mothers and infants, especially in poorer rural areas that were in desperate need of reliable healthcare.<sup>26</sup>

Historical literature on American society during World War I, childrearing, and the state councils of defense places Indiana's Child Welfare Committee within a national scope of war work. Indiana was one part of a larger movement to further Progressive aims through mobilization efforts. Women, like the Child Welfare Committee chair Albion Fellows Bacon, contributed to the success of child and health reforms by adopting stances during the war that were widely supported by the public. As women generally lacked the political rights to push favorable bills through legislatures, they had to fight

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<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, *Children's Bureau Legacy: Ensuring the Right to Childhood*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2013), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Jessica Peixotto, "The Children's Year and the Woman's Committee," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 79 (September 1918): 260-261.

<sup>26</sup> Kriste Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood: The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 76-92.



strategically to get men to enact reforms that would have the most impact. By adopting these Progressive stances, women could universally support bills that were already favored by the men who had the power to officially make and solidify those changes into law. Historian J. Stanley Lemons notes that once women gained suffrage, their ability to influence political change increased drastically and that their yet unknown amount of power frightened men.<sup>27</sup>

The state councils of national defense were an important aspect of home-front mobilization. The councils mobilized massive amounts of citizens throughout the country, as most states created local councils that allowed the state to organize down to the county level. William J. Breen is a prominent historian of the state councils of defense. He has spent incredible amounts of time going through council meeting typescripts, news clippings, and letters to fully understand how different state councils gained and wielded power.

Breen has previously examined the history and strength of the Connecticut State Council of Defense, calling it one of the most efficient and powerful councils in the nation.<sup>28</sup> Also intricately examined by Breen was the North Carolina State Council of Defense, detailing its origins, activities, and the primary leaders of the council.<sup>29</sup> Breen was most interested in the power relations between the federal government and the state councils. Some states councils exerted a considerable amount of power, which worried the federal government. In some places, like Connecticut, the state set the pace of

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<sup>27</sup> J. Stanley Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act: Progressivism in the 1920s," *Journal of American History* 55, no. 4 (1969): 778.

<sup>28</sup> William J. Breen, "Mobilization and Cooperative Federalism: The Connecticut State Council of Defense, 1917-1919," *Historian* 42, no. 1 (November 1979): 63.

<sup>29</sup> William J. Breen, "The North Carolina Council of Defense during World War I, 1917-1918," *North Carolina Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (January 1973): 1-31.

mobilization efforts.<sup>30</sup> Breen examines this power struggle between state councils and the federal government in more detail in *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919*.

Breen, in *Uncle Sam at Home* argues that each council was diverse in its makeup, power, activities, and effectiveness. Breen examines the curious “experiment” of federal-state relations during the war, as the federal government and state councils of defense grappled for control over home-front mobilization.<sup>31</sup> Breen finds that the council’s ability to involve massive numbers of people in mobilization generally led to its success, even though it shifted the focus from the bureaucratic government to the nonbureaucratic, volunteer-led local councils. Breen details the struggle between the federal government and council leaders, as the councils looked for ways to contribute to the war effort, often focusing on the education and health of its local counties. He argues that the states were not passive instruments in the role of mobilization, but active players that had the ability to shape national power.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike many other historians examining the councils or in his previous works, Breen uses *Uncle Sam at Home* to give considerable mention to the Council of National Defense’s sister organization, the Woman’s Council of National Defense. Breen recognizes women’s claims for suffrage through their participation in war work.<sup>33</sup> Breen highlights Indiana’s role and its influence in the both the men’s and women’s state councils. His monograph is broken into sections that detail specific regions of the

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<sup>30</sup> Breen, “Mobilization and Cooperative Federalism,” 79-83.

<sup>31</sup> William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), xiv.

<sup>32</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 8-9.

<sup>33</sup> Breen has written a number of articles and books pertaining to different aspects of the Council of National Defense, including state councils.

country, such as “Midwest,” which includes Illinois and Indiana. He brings attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the midwestern councils, describing Indiana as having a “first class women’s section.”

David M. Kennedy’s *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* provides a general examination of how American society changed and reacted to the tensions of a country at war. Kennedy argues that the U.S. deviated from its traditional stance of isolationism to fight in a war that had divided the country, as pacifists fought intensely to keep the United States out of the war. Kennedy explores how home-front mobilization was used to grow the government and, in the process, changed American society. Kennedy dismisses the state councils of national defense as merely a means of producing propaganda in support of the war. Unlike Breen, Kennedy does not believe that women proved their right to suffrage. He maintains that women did not deviate from traditional female roles in their war work and almost completely ignores the women involved in mobilization. Kennedy gives little mention of women’s war work activities, but maintains they kept the status quo by engaging in activities that involved children and the home.<sup>34</sup> Kennedy’s sentiments on women’s work can be summarized by a quote attributed to William L. O’Neill, “After a while it became evident that the government viewed the Woman’s Committee as a device for occupying women in harmless activities while men got on with the business of war.”<sup>35</sup>

Women’s mobilization efforts and their contributions to their country have been increasingly explored in recent literature. Christopher Capozzola’s *Uncle Sam Wants*

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<sup>34</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; reprint, 2004), 286.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 286.

*You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* examines women's roles during mobilization and the shifting expectations the government had of its citizens. Capozzola makes the argument that citizens owed a political obligation to their country, which could take the form of enlistment into the military or joining mobilization efforts. He makes the connection that women, through their war work, deserved a "new form of citizenship." However, Capozzola also argues that women's service in wartime activities was not used as a bargaining tool to gain suffrage, but that they proved through the fulfillment of their obligations to the government that they could be trusted with suffrage. Although Capozzola does not specifically study the work of Hoosier women, he does commend women in general for their mobilization efforts and their demonstration of handling the rights that came with full citizenship.<sup>36</sup>

Lynn Dumenil's monograph, *The Second Line of Defense*, provides an expanded analysis on the role of women in war work and home-front mobilization. While most literature tends to focus on the experience of female factory workers, Dumenil's book examines the experiences of the women who were involved in every aspect of mobilization and how their work influenced the idea of a new modern woman.<sup>37</sup> Dumenil argues that the war "accelerated developments already under way and heightened awareness of an emerging 'new woman.'"<sup>38</sup> This new woman used her role in war work to accomplish a myriad of goals and let it define her right to full citizenship and suffrage. Military service is often synonymous with citizenship and women had long been denied

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<sup>36</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91-104.

<sup>37</sup> Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense*, 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

that responsibility. By aligning themselves as the “second line of defense,” women proved themselves responsible and worthy of receiving suffrage.<sup>39</sup>

*The Second Line of Defense* is different from other literature on the Great War in that it focuses exclusively on the female perspective and efforts during home-front mobilization, giving consideration to the different ways women participated in the war effort. Other books and publications on the WCND do not dedicate such a well-researched section solely to the Woman’s Council. Dumenil details the major activities of the Council, including how the Woman’s Council went from a purely advisory board to an active participant in mobilization.<sup>40</sup> Unlike Breen’s *Uncle Sam at Home*, no single state is explored, but a general overview of the woman’s council’s activities is discussed.

Allen F. Davis in his article “Welfare, Reform, and World War I,” argues that Progressivism extended well into the 1920s, when it was once widely assumed to have ended with the U.S. entrance into World War I. Davis found that the war brought awareness to social issues that still plagued the working class and countless others. Many Progressives feared the war would erase support for social welfare programs.<sup>41</sup> Davis, and other historians, assert that Progressives actively supported the war because their concerns were finally listened to and addressed through social welfare programs.

Women, like Albion Fellows Bacon, adopted the work of councils because they did not want to divide the country’s interests during the war. In a 1917 letter, Bacon wrote “I have felt that, while I must relax no vigilance, that this is not the best time to push this

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<sup>39</sup> Women were often referred to as the “second line of defense,” describing their ability to move past the barriers that had traditionally limited their work opportunities. For more information, see Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-76.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, “Welfare, Reform and World War I”: 518.

work [housing] upon public attention, unless I am asked to do so, but that the great interests of the war demand all I can give to it—all that everyone can give.”<sup>42</sup> Bacon was willing to set aside her true passion, housing reforms, in order to advance the aims of mobilization.

The state councils of defense were filled with Progressive men and women. Under their guidance the availability of social welfare programs increased during and after the war.<sup>43</sup> World War I marked a period of intense change within America: social welfare programs, employee protections, and the government was expanded to care for a myriad of social causes that were once deemed to be outside of the scope of the government’s responsibilities. Davis found that “the war has suddenly defined America’s public health problem.” The fact that large numbers of drafted men were deemed unfit for military service helped spur the support necessary to create, fund, and implement these necessary social welfare programs.<sup>44</sup>

An influential resource on child welfare, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*, examines the contradictions that make up motherhood “both public and private, both work and leisure,” and how mother-work has been politicized.<sup>45</sup> Ladd-Taylor argues that child welfare policies were created and supported by activist women. These activists often made up the WCND’s state councils and they were looking

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<sup>42</sup>Albion Fellows Bacon to Grace Julian Clarke, August 27, 1917. Box 2, Folder 1, Grace Julian Clarke Papers, 1845-1938, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana; Grace Julian Clarke was one of Albion Fellows Bacon’s closest confidants. Clarke was a social reformer, wrote for the *Indianapolis Star*, served in the Women’s Franchise League, founded and was the first president for the Legislative Council of Indiana, and was a suffragist. Her work in Indiana helped secure the Nineteenth Amendment in the state. For more information, see Martha Wright, “Clarke, Grace Giddings Julian,” *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 445-446.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, “Welfare, Reform and World War I”: 519.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 525.

<sup>45</sup> Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 1.

for ways to further the advancements of the Progressive Era. They adopted popular stances during the war to achieve success for women, children, and families. Ladd-Taylor also argues that women's work was essential in developing the American political and economic system. She describes how women, by being mothers or otherwise engaged in childrearing, used personal experiences, like losing a child in infancy, to shape the policies that they campaigned and advocated for and later supported reforms that reduced infant mortality rates.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the book, Ladd-Taylor is critical of the Children's Bureau, whose publications were often created to not only inform women of childrearing information, but publications were also used to defend their work.

In "*A Right to Childhood: The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46*," Kriste Lindenmeyer provides an in-depth examination of the Children's Bureau and its successes and failures to create and change federal policies on child welfare. She details how different political groups fought to determine the role of the federal government in the lives of children. Lindenmeyer argues that the Bureau's leadership held traditionalist views, holding middle-class ideals in high esteem, which did little to help the children who fell outside of those ideals. She also argues that opponents of the Children's Bureau were concerned the federal government would become too involved in the lives of children. This fear helped stymie reform agendas, but once women were granted suffrage, child health reforms were passed into law.<sup>47</sup> In her analysis of the Children's Bureau, she completes a thorough examination of the Children's Year and its role in the larger scheme of child reform. Since the monograph includes information on the Bureau through the 1940s, it analyzes the impact of newly acquired female suffrage

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>47</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 4-6.

on post-World War I welfare programs, including resistance to the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921. Lindenmeyer's findings are critical to understanding the motivations of the Children's Bureau in partnering with the WCND's Child Welfare Committee to launch programs and spread health and childrearing information that they had previously been unable to accomplish, due to limited staff, budget, and governmental power. The Child Welfare Committees took their direction from the Bureau, who for the first time, had the ability to directly impact its vulnerable constituency.<sup>48</sup>

J. Stanley Lemons in "The Sheppard-Towner Act," attempts to address the opposition to the passage of the act. Opponents included anti-suffrage groups and the American Medical Association, who feared both indifferent female voters and a bill that might be a "Bolshevik conspiracy against America." He argues that the act linked pre-war Progressivism well into the 1920s and led to the creation of the New Deal's social programs and public programs in response to the Great Depression.<sup>49</sup> Lemons found that the bill was the first major dividing factor among women who had recently gained suffrage. The bill was "assailed as a threat to the very institutions of the nation" by conservatives and anti-suffrage groups. This deep fear of the unknown power of the female vote caused male politicians to vote in favor for this 'woman's issue.' By the time the act came up for renewal it had become clear that women did not vote as a bloc as anticipated, but voted more along party lines.

Carolyn M. Moehling and Melissa A. Thomasson further support Lemons' claims that women gaining suffrage did not have a lasting impact on the longevity of the Sheppard-Towner Act. Moehling and Thomasson used economic figures to examine how

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>49</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 779.



the act was impacted by suffrage, with a breakdown by state. Their findings include a link between when a state gave women suffrage, their participation in Sheppard-Towner, and the amount of funding the act received from the state. States that already allowed for female suffrage were less likely to vote for the act, as they already knew that women would not vote as a universal bloc. They also found that overall, the act did not lead to a permanent shift in state spending when it came to laws that were considered “women’s issues.”<sup>50</sup> The Sheppard-Towner Act was an interesting foray for women into the political world. Fear of women’s power helped pass the act, but it ultimately did not keep the act from ending.

Robert G. Barrows, a historian of Indiana with a special interest in Indiana during the Progressive Era, has extensively studied Albion Fellows Bacon’s role in housing reform and child welfare. In “Building Up the State,” Barrows argues that the war, contrary to popular belief at the time, advanced some social welfare programs.<sup>51</sup> Progressives appealed to wartime objectives, and those in support of infant and child health were able to “graft successfully onto the wartime agenda.”<sup>52</sup> In his article, Barrows creates a case study of Indiana’s Child Welfare Committee of the Indiana Woman’s Council of National Defense, detailing the strange partnership between the federal Children’s Bureau and the temporary Council of National Defense. Barrows provides a brief, but detailed, examination of Bacon, child welfare, and the struggles of implementing the stages of the Children’s Year despite an underprepared and

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<sup>50</sup> Carolyn M. Moehling and Melissa A. Thomasson. “The Political Economy of Saving Mothers and Babies: The Politics of State Participation in the Sheppard-Towner Program,” *Economic History* 72, no. 1 (2012): 88-101.

<sup>51</sup> Robert G. Barrows, “‘Building Up the State’: Women Reformers and Child Welfare Work in Indiana During World War I,” *Mid-America: An Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (1995): 268.

<sup>52</sup> Barrows, “Building Up the State,” 268.

underfunded government program. He concludes his article by stating that women involved in the state councils knew “more was at stake in their work than filling some future draft quota.”<sup>53</sup> Women in the WCND used their work to advance necessary social aims, while the government was interested in these changes because it would give them more information and power over its citizens.

This thesis will build upon and support Barrows’ conclusions in “Building Up the State.” Using his examination and understanding of the motivations of the Woman’s Council of National Defense, this thesis shows that Indiana women became involved in home-front mobilization to prove their responsibility to the state to make a claim for suffrage. And as a result of extensive home-front mobilization efforts by women, the government was able to fulfill their own agenda of creating a comprehensive record of its citizens. By examining the Child Welfare Committee and the Children’s Year in Indiana, this thesis will support the assertions of historians like Breen and others, who have shown how Progressive women advanced Progressive aims by embracing the war effort to their advantage.

The chapters are arranged by topic, beginning chapter one’s introduction into progressivism in the war effort. Chapter two includes a brief history of how the Indiana and Illinois State Councils of Defense were created for the male and female councils. These states were chosen to be compared against each other because they are both Midwestern states, but varied in physical geographic size, population size, diversity, and industry. While both Indiana and Illinois state councils have not been fully examined in depth, Illinois has slightly more literature on its wartime activities. By using Illinois as a

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 283.

comparison, I will explore how two neighboring states in the Midwest developed their own unique state councils.

This chapter addresses how Progressive women joined the state councils en masse, and by doing so ensured the continuance of social welfare programs. I will also show how the mindset of total war, which saw the government, economy, and citizens become involved in the war effort, infiltrated the state councils, ensuring that all those capable of mobilizing the country did so. This chapter examines how women used home-front mobilization to advance their right to suffrage. Sources for this chapter include the Administration Files from the Woman's Service Section at the Indiana State Archives and digitized Council of National Defense informational pamphlets accessed through Archive.org and the Library of Congress.

Chapter three examines the Children's Year as it occurred in Indiana and Albion Fellow Bacon's determination to win over the hard-to-reach rural areas, bringing change to child health in every part of the state. The child welfare activities of Illinois will not be examined in this chapter, to specifically focus on Indiana's role and accomplishments with the Children's Year activities in Indiana and how birth registration was pushed as a necessity to ensure the health of children while also benefitting the health of the nation. This chapter uses sources from the Child Welfare, Education, and Publicity files from the Woman's Service Section at the Indiana State Archives. Published articles, posters, and infographics from the Children's Bureau were also immeasurably helpful to understand what the Bureau expected from the councils and how Indiana was able to fulfill its role in the Children's Year.

Chapter four concludes this thesis and addresses the first major political conflict following women being granted suffrage, the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921. The mass of female volunteers involved in the Children's Year influenced the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act, which was the first bill that had the majority of its support come from women. At the time, the bill was decidedly controversial as it allocated federal funds for the use of mothers and children needing health care. The Hoosier women involved in the WCND were immensely influential in distributing information about the bill to its members, which pressured Indiana politicians into supporting the bill at the federal level. This thesis will show that the women involved in the woman's councils were able to use the war effort to advance Progressive aims that began before the United States entered into World War I.

## Chapter Two: The Creation and Organization of the Indiana and Illinois Woman's Service Sections

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 left Europe in chaos as countries took up arms against each other. The United States had to decide what, if any, role to play in the conflict. President Woodrow Wilson, following the wishes of his constituents, formally declared the nation a neutral country. In general, Americans tended to be unconcerned with the war ravaging European countries, because they were so geographically removed from it. Hoosiers heard the news of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination and "generally dismissed the affair as just another assassination of a foreign aristocrat."<sup>54</sup> They received conflicting information about the war and were not "fully in harmony with either side...their sympathy would depend largely on the course of events."<sup>55</sup> Finally, the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania* and the ensuing deaths of 128 American citizens at the hands of German U-boats, among other events, spurred the public to change their collective public opinion regarding the war.<sup>56</sup>

A little over a year following the sinking of the *Lusitania*, on June 3, 1916, Congress approved the National Defense Act. This law, created in part at the urging of former President Theodore Roosevelt, strengthened and increased the size of the U.S. Army and restructured and expanded the National Guard so it became more responsive to emergencies.<sup>57</sup> The National Defense Act also created the Reserve Officers' Training

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<sup>54</sup> Cedric Cummins, *Indiana Public Opinion and the World War, 1914-1917* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1945), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Cummins, *Indiana Public Opinion*, 21.

<sup>56</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 32-114.

<sup>57</sup> Glen Williams, "National Defense Act 1916," *CMH News and Features: U.S. Army Center of Military History*. [https://history.army.mil/news/2016/160500a\\_natDefAct1916.html](https://history.army.mil/news/2016/160500a_natDefAct1916.html) (accessed January 23, 2018).

Corps (ROTC) for college students and the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) for high-school aged students.<sup>58</sup>

Along with these measures, the Council of National Defense (CND) was created in August 1916. Part of the law that created the Council gave President Wilson the authority to order materials needed for defense and the ability to force industries to provide those needs.<sup>59</sup> The President appointed the CND's seven-member advisory board and collaborated with the Secretaries of War, the Navy, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor to mobilize the council. The far-reaching influence of the Council oversaw subcommittees concerning all materials that could turn a peacetime nation into one preparing for war. These additional committees were in charge of procuring everything from mattresses and pillows to munitions to managing inland waterways.<sup>60</sup> At first the CND only coordinated resources and industry to covertly support the war effort; however, once the U.S. officially entered the conflict, the Council expanded its efforts and became an integral part of the success of home-front mobilization.<sup>61</sup> Through its work, preparation for the U.S. entrance into the war came to involve almost every citizen in nearly all aspects of preparation.<sup>62</sup>

States voluntarily implemented the CND's mobilization plan. Governors, states, and citizens did not want to be charged with being unpatriotic by obstructing the progress of the massive home-front mobilization efforts and many citizens threw themselves into patriotic activities. Governors typically nominated prominent citizens to sit on or lead

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<sup>58</sup> *The National Defense Act Approved June 3, 1916* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 23.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, "National Defense Act 1916."

<sup>60</sup> *Council of National Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 4-29.

<sup>61</sup> "The Work of the National Research Council," *Science* 46, no. 1179 (1917): 99-100.

<sup>62</sup> For more information on the Council of National Defense, see Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 17-36.

state defense councils. All forty-eight states and the U.S. territories of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico had some form of a council. In published materials, the CND boasted about their volunteers on the home-front, calling them “armies of production...of energy, of thought that made the sword a flaming thing; of optimism, to offset the stupid pessimism of people who criticized but had nothing tangible to contribute; of the immortal spirit of ‘carry on,’ of, above all, unification.”<sup>63</sup> The CND clearly understood how powerful volunteers were in keeping patriotic spirits high.

Every state council was further encouraged to form councils at the county and local levels. The state level delegated the needs of the national council to their local units and acted as a middleman, sharing information and reports from the county councils to the national body. It was important for the government and the CND to have each state organized to the fullest possible extent. Private citizens would be unable to disregard the needs of the nation if their family and friends were directly involved in mobilization. One CND publication stated that the purpose of having states and towns agree to and believe in mobilization was to convey “from Washington to the people the messages and measures of the national government, and in the transmission back to Washington of the moods and aspirations of a people at war.”<sup>64</sup> Having direct access to tens of thousands of councils across the country not only served the government’s mission, but also informed the national council when patriotic spirits waned. The awareness of how counties felt toward the war could influence what propaganda and marketing materials the Committee on Public Information sent to the states.

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<sup>63</sup> Clarkson, *A Tribute and A Look Into the Future*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Local councils gave the CND unprecedented access to geographic areas that the federal government had never had access to before. In a report about the successful establishment of local councils, it was noted that it was “becoming more and more evident that intensive work must be done in local geographical sub-divisions not larger than a county, and that through efficient and systematic local organizations only, can state councils effectively utilize the resources of their state and render their full measure of co-operation and assistance to the nation.”<sup>65</sup> As President Wilson needed to maintain support for the war effort and the newly created draft, he relied on the councils to push the agenda of total war, ensuring all citizens were invested and engaged in the war effort, whether they lived in an urban or rural area.<sup>66</sup>

County councils were typically formed around a school district or by town.<sup>67</sup> Propaganda specifically targeted schools and school-aged children. By building campaigns that centered around children, it was hoped that they would encompass the spirit of war and enthusiastically support the war effort. Children were a powerful ally to council members and had the ability to persuade their parents to comply with mobilization aims. School districts had the ability to influence how students thought about the war by utilizing carefully constructed, government-provided lessons. Families

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<sup>65</sup> *Report on Organization and Activities of State Councils of Defense, June 18, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 9.

<sup>66</sup> Conscription divided the government and citizens, as many questioned the country’s interests in the European conflict and others asserting volunteer-based military service could be a viable option to raising troops. For more information on conscription, see Kennedy, *Over Here*, 144-190.

<sup>67</sup> Some Indiana county councils also used churches to reach more women, spread information regarding mobilization, and to hold committee meetings. For more information on how churches in Indiana were used in home-front mobilization, see Anne Studebaker Carlisle, *Report of the Woman’s Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense, October 1917-April 1919* (Indianapolis, IN: W.B. Burford, 1919), 9-133.



whose children regularly attended schools not only received propaganda from their children, but also from teachers and principals.<sup>68</sup>

Indiana and its governor, James P. Goodrich, responded quickly to the request of the CND to form a state council and created its council by May 1917. State councils consisted of nineteen men, a labor representative, and one woman. The woman also served as the head of that state's Woman's Council. County councils had positions for six men and one woman. The woman on the county council reported to the woman in charge at the state level. State circuit court judges and executive appointments created the Indiana council.<sup>69</sup> Board members in other states were selected by state legislatures, with local boards nominated by organizations and prominent citizens.<sup>70</sup> In reports shared by the Woman's Council of National Defense the Indiana method was lauded as the "most satisfactory, to-wit: that the judges of the circuit courts with the responsibility and accountability is theirs could best perform this service."<sup>71</sup>

In another Indiana twist, 98 banks and trust companies financed the Indiana state council by loaning the \$100,000 needed to begin their work. The Indiana legislature was not in session to be able to approve the funds, as other state legislatures had, and the financiers did not want the state's image to suffer. Hoosiers did not want to appear to be unpatriotic or unsympathetic to the war effort by not using their best efforts to begin mobilizing their state. The loans, which were not guaranteed to be returned, was a show

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<sup>68</sup> Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 171.

<sup>69</sup> "Organization of Town and City Councils," [ca 1917], Woman's Service Section, Administration, Part 1: Organization. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

of confidence the men and the banks had in the state's support for the war effort. When the state legislature reconvened, it approved funds to reimburse the loans.<sup>72</sup>

In other states, funds were appropriated to cover the direct costs of activities, ranging from \$25,000 to \$5,000,000.<sup>73</sup> While the state of Indiana also provided funds for the council, some committees within the state council, especially within the Woman's Section, were denied the use of funds for anything the Indiana CND did not consider necessary. For example, the Child Welfare Committee of the Indiana WCND was denied funds to pay for a traveling field secretary. The committee relied on individual counties to pay a fee toward the secretary's annual salary.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Clifton Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1968), 597.

<sup>73</sup> *Report on Organization and Activities of State Councils of Defense, June 18, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 6.

<sup>74</sup> Barrows, "Building Up the State," 280.

Picture 1: Woman's Council of National Defense WWI Poster



(Posters: World War I Posters. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.)

The CND's Woman's Section (WCND) was created at the end of April 1917, but was not formally announced until May 21, 1917, after board members had been appointed to the council.<sup>75</sup> The WCND was created to act solely as an advisory committee to help coordinate women's groups across the country. Some reports or documents refer to the Woman's Section as the Woman's Committee or Woman's Service Section, but for this thesis the organization will be referred to as the former. Many women's groups and organizations expressed an interest in using their vast networks and resources to aid the war work.<sup>76</sup> To avoid war work being unnecessarily duplicated by women's associations, the CND founded the Woman's Council (see Picture 1) to address that issue and to advise the CND on how best to involve women across the country in the war effort.<sup>77</sup> Women tended to be distrustful of the men's council and wanted to ensure that their needs and goals were not ignored during the war effort, which was aided by the creation of the Woman's Council.<sup>78</sup>

The prominent Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, former President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, was appointed to lead the ten-woman executive board of the national Woman's Section. Other board members included well-known Progressive women such as Carrie Chapman Catt, the current NAWSA president, and Ida M. Tarbell, a leading investigative reporter and Progressive reformer. While at first

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<sup>75</sup> This committee was also known as the Woman's Service Section in some records.

<sup>76</sup> Women's war work primarily refers to their experiences while mobilizing on the home-front. Middle- and upper-class white women's war work tended to revolve around female organizations and populated the WCND. Working-class women and minorities became involved in mobilization by taking the jobs left behind by enlisted men, although some groups of working-class women also participated in other war work activities.

<sup>77</sup> Emily Newell Blair, *The Woman's Committee: United States Council of National Defense. An Interpretative Report. April 21, 1917, to February 27, 1919* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920), 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 133-134.

considered only as an advisory board, Shaw pushed for the WCND to become intimately involved in home-front mobilization. One of Shaw's first measures as the leader of the WCND was to host a conference of women delegates representing national women's organizations. When states were encouraged to create CND councils, Shaw ensured they also formed woman's sections.<sup>79</sup>

The WCND was first tasked with determining which women's organizations were located within each state and how much territory within that state they had access to and could influence. Women were able to quickly and efficiently organize themselves for war work because of their involvement in national women's organizations.

Number of women in orgs/types of orgs/where located

From this survey of organizations, it was determined that it would be easier to coordinate war efforts if state council branches oversaw mobilization, instead of individual organizations taking direction from their national branches, which might not be located or have a presence in every state or town. Every state Woman's Section coordinated activities within its state lines. The national WCND branch in Washington, D.C. sent plans and goals to every state and it was the state's job to adjust the plans to

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<sup>79</sup> Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, a prominent suffragist, was chosen to chair the national branch of the WCND. Shaw had previously been the President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. For more information on Dr. Shaw, see Ann D. Gordon. "Shaw, Anna Howard," *American National Biography Online*, February 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.1500615> (accessed May 30, 2017). Carrie Chapman Catt was the president of NAWSA during the war. Catt frequently campaigned, wrote, and gave speeches to supporters and opponents, including Congress in favor of suffrage. After women received suffrage in 1920, Catt created the League of Women Voters. For more information, see "Carrie Chapman Catt," *National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection*, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-american-woman-suffrage-association/articles-and-essays/carrie-chapman-catt/> (accessed July 25, 2018). Ida M. Tarbell was a journalist, author, and Progressive Reformer. She pioneered the field of investigative reporting with her expose on the Standard Oil Company. Tarbell was an asset to Progressive Reformers by bringing attention to social and political issues through her exposes. For more information, see Judith A. Rice, "Ida M. Tarbell: A Progressive Look at Lincoln," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 19, no. 1 (1998): 57-72.

best fit the needs and ability of that state.<sup>80</sup> This type of organization guaranteed every person in every town had a surplus of opportunities to become involved in mobilization.

By creating the WCND, the government ensured all women, from clubwomen to unorganized women, were mobilized to advance home-front mobilization. This organization also served to further the government's desire for total war. The councils relied on propaganda from the CPI to insist that citizens to comply with the demands of a nation mobilizing for war. There was intense pressure for state councils to fully mobilize every county. In a personal letter, Bacon wrote that as the chairwoman of the Child Welfare Committee she had the task to see the "92 county chairmen organize, and to do the job." In a letter to Anne Studebaker Carlisle, Bacon complained that she had "finished mailing out, with my own hands...another batch of posters and literature to the 92 counties."<sup>81</sup> Bacon used her authority to advocate for Progressive reforms, while also promoting the government's propaganda in favor of mobilization efforts. The Child Welfare Committee was dedicated to ensuring everyone was involved in the war effort, as it made it easier for committee members to locate children and enforce the goals of the Children's Year.

The councils were officially to act as a "clearinghouse" of information between the government, women's associations, and the otherwise unorganized female population.<sup>82</sup> This cooperation between women and the government enabled Woman's Section members, who were permitted to act as official government agents, to appeal to

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<sup>80</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 19.

<sup>81</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Anne Studebaker Carlisle, August 12, 1918, Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>82</sup> Executive Committee to State Councils, "Relation of National Organizations," October 6, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Administration, Part 1: Organization. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

individual women without regard to socio-economic background, personal interests, or beliefs. It should be noted that while women were considered government agents in this aspect, most women were still denied suffrage and the rights that came with that political power. Most women did not have the right to vote and relied on the influence of their associations to engage in politics.<sup>83</sup> Different states and areas had different rules pertaining to how and when women were permitted to vote, if at all. President Wilson was staunchly against granting women the vote by a federal amendment for much of his time in office.<sup>84</sup> Many women went into their roles with hopeful anticipation that the government would have to reward their hard work and dedication with suffrage.<sup>85</sup>

Historians like Allen F. Davis and Lynn Dumenil agree that women's war work was, as some women had assumed, intricately connected to being awarded suffrage.<sup>86</sup> The war pushed women from all backgrounds into new roles within the public sphere. Working-class women filled positions left behind by men. Middle- and upper-class women were formally given the right and responsibility of working within the public sphere, with citizens and the government relying on the results of their mobilization work. During home-front mobilization women proved themselves capable of handling civic responsibility.

The role the CND imagined for women in the council was to aid government mobilization solely by offering advice and insights about how to reach women not

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<sup>83</sup> Marilyn Gittell and Teresa Shtob, "Changing Women's Roles in Political Volunteerism and Reform of the City," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 67.

<sup>84</sup> Some states gave women the ability to vote in local school board elections or state elections, but there was no amendment formally granting American women the right to vote. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 108.

<sup>85</sup> Dumenil, "Women's Reform Organizations and Wartime Mobilization in World War I-Era Los Angeles," 223.

<sup>86</sup> Davis, "Welfare, Reform and World War I," 525.

involved in existing organizations. Shaw and other members of the WCND had large goals and expectations of what they thought women could accomplish. While they were created to be an advisory board, Shaw pushed the WCND beyond the advisory role, giving many women a purpose and a way to be intimately involved in war work. Before Shaw began carving out new roles for women in war work, one of the only acceptable ways for women to be involved in mobilization was to join a Socks for Soldiers knitting campaign.<sup>87</sup> The WCND soon pushed beyond what the government thought they would be capable of handling and took on its own women-focused agenda. It brought together women's organizations to aid mobilization without overlapping or duplicating efforts. Under Shaw, the WCND became involved in every aspect of life, including education, food waste and production, child welfare, and women in industry.

One way to see how the WCND was employed differently in states is to compare the creation of the Indiana and Illinois Woman's Sections.<sup>88</sup> Councils from midwestern states have not been as thoroughly examined as councils in states on the West Coast or in the South, like California or North Carolina. Both states utilized the expertise and social contacts of wealthy women, who were not required to earn a paycheck for their family, as council work was strictly voluntary.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Socks for Soldiers was a wide-spread campaign to involve women in the war effort. Women, by themselves or more often in knitting groups, knit socks and other materials for soldiers. For more information on Socks for Soldiers, see Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83-86.

<sup>88</sup> This chapter will examine the creation and formation of the Indiana and Illinois WCND. It is important to understand how councils in neighboring states were formed to see how states used their resources in vastly different ways. Originally, the creation of county councils in Indiana were going to be examined, but the necessary records could not be located.

<sup>89</sup> Many states created a separate WCND branch for African American women. In records at the Indiana State Archives, there are only the briefest mentions of a separate council for African American women. However, records for this separate woman's council could not be found. Digitized records of the *Indianapolis Recorder*, an African-American newspaper, also did not contain information pertaining to the Woman's Section. Articles from the *Indianapolis News* include mentions of the "colored women's section," represented by Mrs. Frances Berry Coston. For more information, see "Named Publicity Director," *Indianapolis News* (September 28, 1918), 14; "Notes of the Colored Folk," *Indianapolis News*



In Indiana, Governor Goodrich worked quickly to appoint a woman to lead Indiana's WCND, or IN-WCND.<sup>90</sup> In May 1917, he selected Carolyn R. Fairbank to chair the state woman's council.<sup>91</sup> However, the Council could not begin its duties right away, as Fairbanks was ill for several months following her appointment. She then resigned, and Anne Studebaker Carlisle replaced her in October 1917.<sup>92</sup>

Carlisle, making up for lost time, began her tenure as chair of Indiana's WCND by following Shaw's lead and orchestrating a state-wide conference in Indianapolis of chairwomen and representatives from all of Indiana's women's organizations.<sup>93</sup> All ninety-two Indiana counties were represented at this meeting. The women declared that their purpose was "not to create new committees, but to use existing organizations, direct their activities in so far as possible, and act as a clearing house for all women's organizations, thus avoiding duplication."<sup>94</sup> At various points throughout the span of

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(June 22, 1918), 12. In *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, written by Anne Studebaker Carlisle, lists organizations cooperating with the war effort, including the National Association of Colored Women, State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, Daughters of Ruth, and Colanthe Court, K. of P. Women. For more information on cooperating woman's organizations within Indiana, see Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section*, 8-9. Not much detailed information on their organization and committee activities, outside of the names of women who was the chair of each committee, could be found. Digitized records for Illinois did not mention a separate council for black women.

<sup>90</sup> For purposes to differentiate the Indiana and Illinois Councils, Indiana's Woman's Section will be referred to as IN-WCND and Illinois as the IL-WCND.

<sup>91</sup> Carolyn R. Fairbank was a prominent woman from Fort Wayne, Indiana. Fairbank was a member and served as President of the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs. She also served as the President of the Morning Musical. She was the daughter of F.P. Randall, a Fort Wayne Mayor and State Senator and was married to Clark Fairbank. Fairbank passed away June 1918. In some CND and WCND reports Fairbanks' name is written as Caroline Fairbank. For more information on Carolyn R. Fairbank, see "Prominent Fort Wayne Woman Passes Away at Home Today," 1 June 1918, *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, 1. newspapers.com (Accessed June 3, 2017).

<sup>92</sup> Anne Studebaker Carlisle was the daughter of the influential Studebaker car manufacturing family in South Bend. Carlisle was involved in committees and a well-regarded leader within the Republican Party. For more information on Anne Studebaker Carlisle, see "A Look Back: Remembering South Bend's Anne Studebaker Carlisle," March 13, 2017, *South Bend Tribune*. southbendtribune.com (Accessed June 01, 2017).

<sup>93</sup> Anne Studebaker Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense, October 1917-April 1919* (Indianapolis, IN: W.B. Burford, 1919), 6.

<sup>94</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 7.

several months during the time the council was active, Carlisle hosted conferences in Indianapolis, bringing in and challenging her fellow women to be innovative with the challenges they faced and to be dedicated to their work.

Carlisle and her executive committee members worked ceaselessly to get women from all social and political backgrounds invested in creating a cohesive state women's unit. Her goal was "no waste of energy; and to bring every woman in Indiana into vital realization of the meaning of the War and into eagerness to do in some form her part in helping win it."<sup>95</sup> Carlisle used the expertise of the newly created Speaker's Bureau to spread the spirit of mobilization across the state. Indiana was one of the first midwestern states to create a Speaker's Bureau.<sup>96</sup> The Speaker's Bureau furthered the aims of the CPI, spreading information and propaganda in support of the war effort.

While all of Indiana's counties had WCNDs functioning at some level by 1918, it was difficult for some rural counties to feel the same urgency of mobilization. At the beginning of the war, Americans tended to be disinterested in the conflict, because the war was across the ocean in countries many had never visited. That sentiment tended to linger in rural areas, which were often reluctant to fling themselves into mobilization efforts, as women in more populated areas were observed to do. Women living in the large rural areas that made up many areas of Indiana frequently resisted forming the committees the Woman's Section recommended on the basis that they already had some

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<sup>95</sup> Katherine Merrill Graydon, "Woman's Committee Organization Introduction," Report, Woman's Service Section, Administration, Part 1: Organization. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>96</sup> Initially, the Bureau worked with the Food Conservation Committee. Speakers traveled across Indiana to spread information about how and why families should be conserving food and how their contributions could positively affect the war effort. Carlisle also sent female speakers to counties across the state to encourage the creation of county councils. If councils stopped participating in mobilization efforts, speakers gave them a patriotic boost of energy to continue working for the war effort. For more information on the Speakers' Bureau, see Breen, *Uncle Same at Home*, 40.

form of organization that had the same goals or did similar work.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, executive chairwomen who made up the state level IN-WCND had to advocate in those rural areas for the creation of committees that were considered essential for mobilization. The Child Welfare Committee under Albion Fellows Bacon regularly worked with county councils in rural areas to create and advocate for committees that could carry out directives that came from the Children's Bureau.<sup>98</sup>

The Illinois' Woman's Council was organized almost as quickly as the national branch of the CND, in May 1917.<sup>99</sup> An April 1917 meeting with the leaders of every woman's organization within the state, the Illinoisan women had appointed their own chairwoman and executive committee to oversee mobilization resources. Louise DeKoven Bowen was elected chairwoman and Illinoisan Gov. Frank O. Lowden confirmed the election by selecting her to serve on the state CND. The Illinois women present at that meeting had essentially organized their woman's council before the executive board of the national branch of the WCND had been announced.<sup>100</sup>

The Illinois WCND created a pre-cursor committee to what would officially become the state IL-WCND council. After President Wilson dismissed the ambassador to Germany, prominent Illinoisan women met to discuss measures the state could take to prepare for the impending war. Mary Foulke Morrison called the meeting as early as February 1917, seeking recommendations on how their state would be best served if the

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<sup>97</sup> Barrows, "Building Up the State," 273.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>99</sup> *Final Report of Woman's Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois and Woman's Committee Council of National Defense Illinois Division, April 1917-July 1919*, World War I-Documents, Illinois State Library (1919), 8.

<sup>100</sup> Mrs. Joseph T. Bowen, "The War Work of the Women of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 12, no. 3 (1919): 317.

country went to war.<sup>101</sup> Morrison heard discussions from a group of about two dozen women, with views ranging from pacifists to supporters of preparedness. At the end of this meeting, the women agreed to do research on other defense committees that were rumored to already be formed in some eastern states and report back to the group.<sup>102</sup>

Alice Holabird Wicker Wood researched the committees in the East and in Washington, D.C.<sup>103</sup> She reported a basic outline for organization and how to best proceed with mobilization. The informal group of women decided to offer its plan to the Red Cross of Illinois. They believed the Red Cross would be the organization most capable of forming and controlling the many intricate committees necessary to prepare the state for war. Ultimately, the Red Cross declined their proposal, stating they would continue to work within the spheres for which they were best known. Wood's analysis of committees was found to be strikingly similar to the plans which would be endorsed and shared by the national branch of the WCND.<sup>104</sup>

Hence, when the WCND began to spread to individual states, the Illinois council had already been created. The IL-WCND was completely organized by May 1918 with 2,100 local units spanning the state.<sup>105</sup> Illinois arranged its councils at the city and district level, rather than the county method preferred by Indiana. Illinoisan women encouraged

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<sup>101</sup> Mary Foulke Morrison was a suffragist, who worked with Carrie Chapman Catt to help pass the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Morrison also helped to establish Hull House with Jane Addams. For more information, see "Women's Suffrage Leader Dies," *Chicago Tribune* (March 11, 1971), 60.

<sup>102</sup> *Final Report of Woman's Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois and Woman's Committee Council of National Defense Illinois Division, April 1917-July 1919*, World War I-Documents, Illinois State Library (1919), 8-107.

<sup>103</sup> Alice Wicker Wood was an involved member of women's clubs and civic matters in Chicago. During World War One Wood acted as the executive secretary of the Woman's Council. She was also a chairman of the Federated Women's Clubs, board member of the American Child Health Association, and was on the executive committee of the Chicago Council of Social agencies. For more information, see "Mrs. Ira C. Wood, Leader Among Women, is Dead," *Chicago Tribune* (December 20, 1923), 11.

<sup>104</sup> *Final Report of Woman's Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois*, 106.

<sup>105</sup> Bowen, "The War Work of the Women of Illinois," 319.

large cities, like Chicago, to organize themselves by wards or blocks, while other areas focused on congressional districts.<sup>106</sup> Included in their mass of local and county councils was a state advisory council made up of nearly one hundred members. The advisory council consisted of city and state representatives. The link between county councils and the state boards was especially precious to these women. County chairwomen were considered the “main artery” who shared information and news between the local units and state council.<sup>107</sup>

The sheer amount of work undertaken by the Illinois CND and WCND was grossly underestimated by the state. When the Council exhausted its appropriated funds, Gov. Lowden refused to call a special session of the General Assembly to increase funds, requiring citizens to donate to keep the state council functioning.<sup>108</sup> The Illinois General Assembly initially appropriated \$50,000 for the use of the councils. However, those funds were depleted by March 1918. Private citizens and businesses donated over \$100,000 for the sole use of the Illinois CND and its mobilization activities.

Both Indiana and Illinois successfully organized and completed the war work that was asked of them. Breen in *Uncle Sam at Home* describes Indiana, Illinois, and other midwestern states as having “from the very beginning...outstanding state councils.”<sup>109</sup> Breen’s assessment of the councils includes their ability and willingness to respond to the government’s request to create the state councils. Breen was able to impartially examine the effectiveness of the councils, as he was far removed from the council’s active years.

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<sup>106</sup> *Final Report of Woman’s Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois and Woman’s Committee Council of National Defense Illinois Division, April 1917-July 1919*, World War I-Documents, Illinois State Library (1919), 111.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-120.

<sup>109</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 71.

Other reports and examinations of the councils written during the period in which they operated often have different findings in terms of state council success.

In the 1919 *An Interpretive Report*, Emily Newell Blair wrote that an unnamed “impartial observer” wrote about their findings on the state councils and subsequently divided the councils into A, B, and C ranking.<sup>110</sup> There is no way to know what information the observer had access to that could have influenced their decision or even what role he played, if any, within the councils. The author determined Illinois to be an A-ranked state, meaning he thought that it was richer in money, railroads, women, and resources than most other states.<sup>111</sup> The following B and C rankings, had less quality and access to the same resources. None of the rankings included Indiana. Breen’s assessments of state councils include Indiana on the list of first-class state councils.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps due to Indiana’s smaller population and large swaths of farms and rural areas compared to other states, it was not considered by the ‘impartial observer’ to be a major player in home-front mobilization. Despite this lack of ranking in Blair’s report, Indiana established itself as just as strong and capable of mobilization as other states, especially within the contemporary context of the state councils.

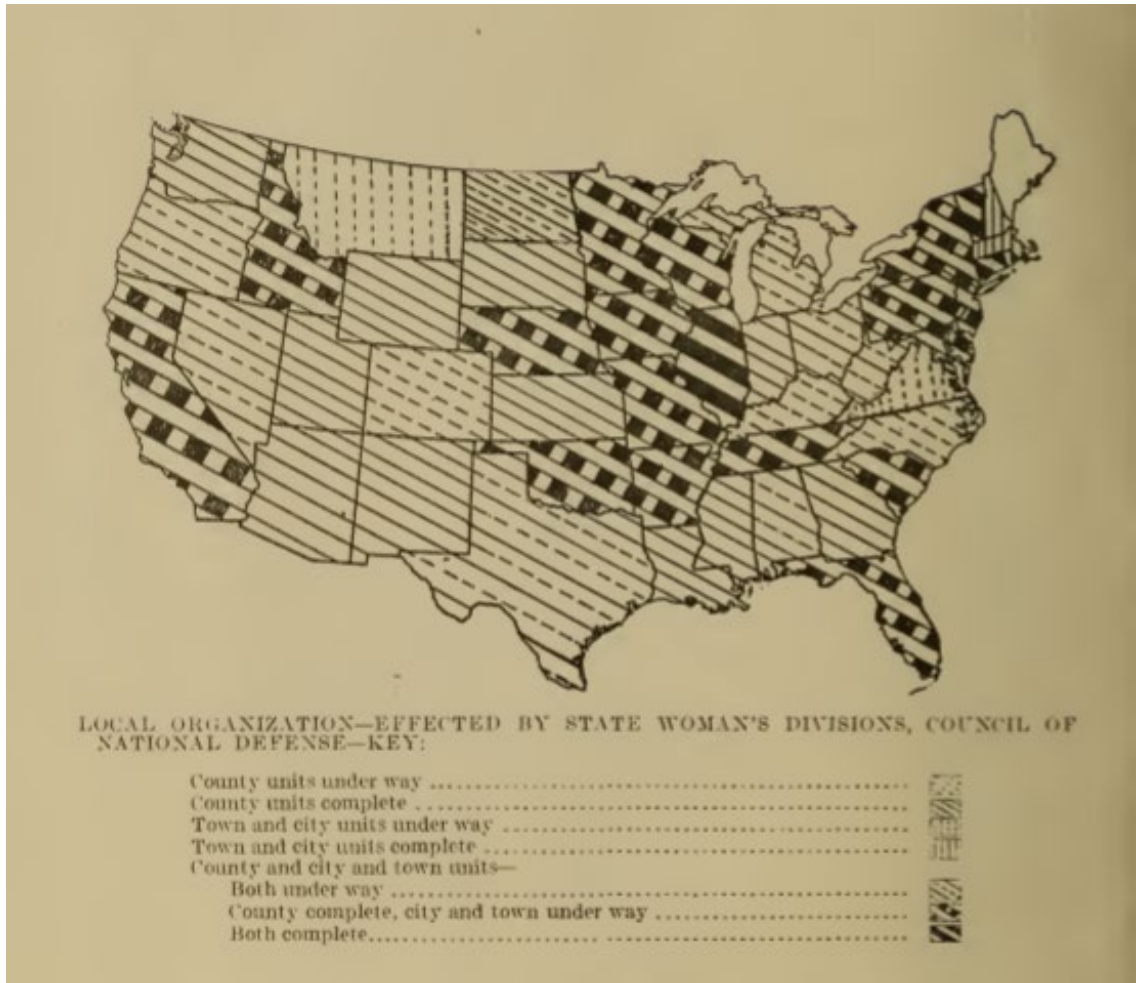
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<sup>110</sup> Blair, *An Interpretative Report*, 111.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

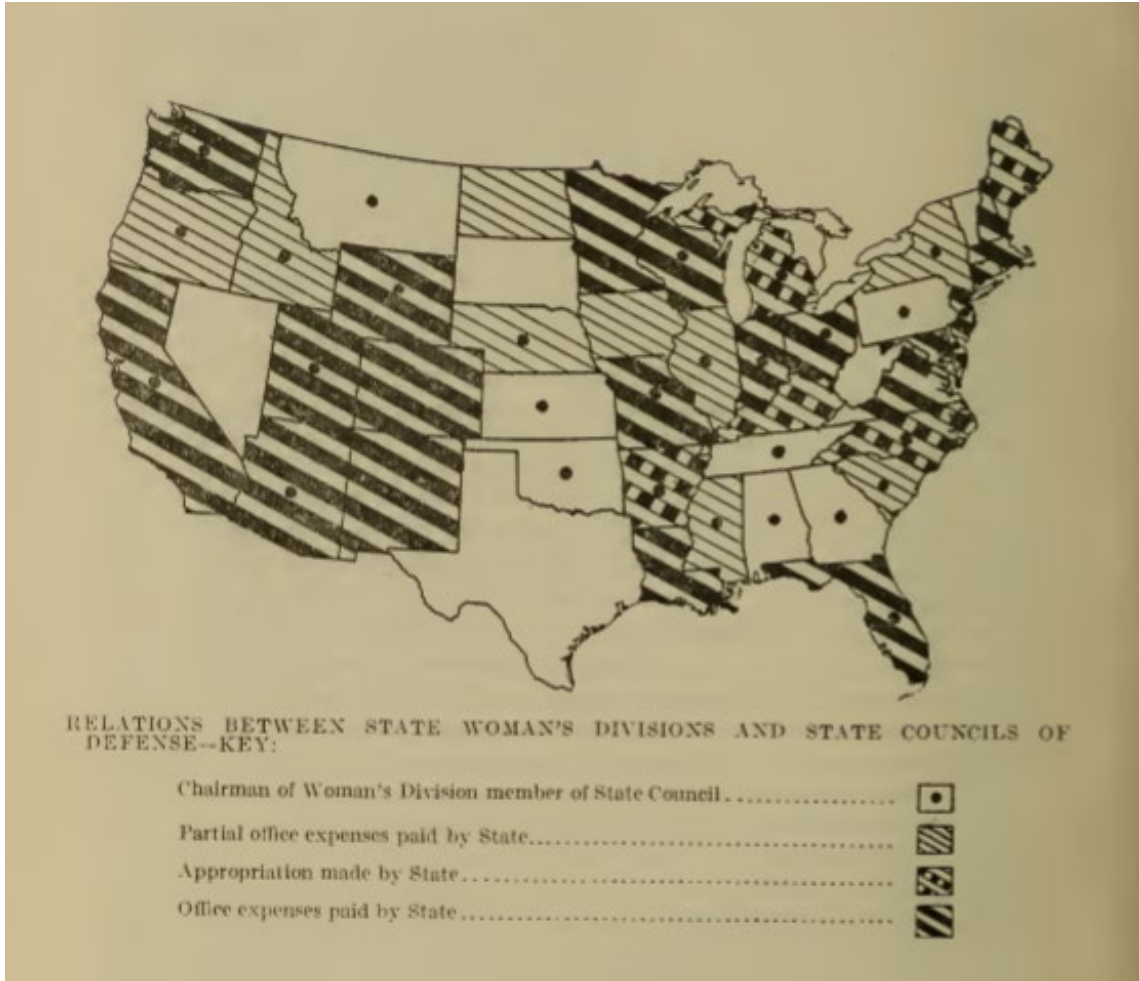
<sup>112</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 137.

Picture 2: County and Local Organization by State as of May 1, 1918



*The Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, Organization Charts May, 1917-1918* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 4.

Picture 3: How Each State Paid for its Wartime Activities



*The Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, Organization Charts May, 1917-1918* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 8.



These images are taken from a booklet detailing how Indiana, Illinois, and other states were organized as of May 1, 1918, about one year into home-front mobilization (see Picture 2).<sup>113</sup> It was reported that some states and counties had been slow to organize or to share the necessary information to prove they had mobilized, which may affect the accuracy of the map. Picture 2 displays more completely than many CND reports can detail, how states mobilized for war. Some states were merely interested in having a functional state WCND branch but were less concerned with forming county and town branches. States with large rural areas were slow to create committees at the local levels and appeared to take more time and effort to become fully organized.

Picture 3 shows a comparison of different states' financing of their Woman's Section. The IN-WCND was largely left to find its own sources of funding and only provided for a secretary, office space, and general office supplies. The IN-WCND, like many other woman's sections, worked on a tight budget, largely relying on unpaid volunteers across the state to accomplish their goals. Similarly, the Illinois Woman's Section was funded mostly by its own fundraising. The Illinoisan women implemented ten-cent registration fees to be a part of the council. The IL-WCND later requested every county to raise \$1,000 to contribute to the mobilization efforts. By the end of the war, the Illinois CND had raised over \$58,000.<sup>114</sup> States had to fund their own activities, which made their ability to mobilize and their involvement in the national branch of the WCND's activities very impressive.

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<sup>113</sup> The organizational charts breakdown the councils organized by counties and towns by number and percentage. The informational booklet also lists other information about the chairwoman for the state and how the council is funded.

<sup>114</sup> Samuel Insull, *Final Report of the State Council of Defense* (Chicago, IL: State of Illinois, 1919), 112.

States crafted mission statements that indicated how their councils would proceed during the war. In current terms, these mission statements are the goals and ideals that groups publicized so those not involved in the organization could easily understand their focus and priorities. These statements highlighted what they considered important and what they believed their role to be within the war effort. The missions were widely shared among council members and volunteers through newspaper articles, reports, and letters. States relied on these sayings to convince their communities to supply them with volunteers, supplies, and funds. These statements were especially important because there were many organizations competing for resources and women in the rush to become involved in home-front mobilization. For the councils to be successful, they had to have a strong foundation of supporters and resources.<sup>115</sup>

The IL-WCND's mission was "to give every woman an opportunity for patriotic service at home or abroad and incidentally to be an inspirational center for the entire state."<sup>116</sup> Taken at face value the Illinois mission statement implies that the Illinois council was interested in diversity, by encouraging Illinoisan women of all backgrounds to become involved in some form with the state council activities. The IL-WCND achieved some success with this mission statement, through its expansive state-wide mobilization efforts, which saw some major cities in Cook County, like Chicago, become

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<sup>115</sup> In fundraising, a mission statement is the organization's case for support. The statement shared with interested donors and supporters why the organization deserved support and what it will do with donations. The statements of the Indiana and Illinois state councils are also their case for support. Both states created a case for support that stated their core priorities as they hurriedly mobilized their state. For more information on mission statements and how they create a case for support, see Timothy L. Seiler, "Developing and Articulating A Case for Support," in *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising*, ed. Eugene R. Tempel, Timothy L. Seiler, and Dwight F. Burlingame (4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 37-48.

<sup>116</sup> "The State Council of Defense of Illinois: What It is and What It Does," *State Council of Defense of Illinois*, no. 5 (March 1918), 5.

organized down to the neighborhood level.<sup>117</sup> In contrast, the purpose of the IN-WCND was “not to create new committees, but to use existing organizations, direct their activities in so far as possible, and act as a clearing house for all women’s organizations, thus avoiding duplication.”<sup>118</sup> In reports, Indiana informed the national WCND branch that there was a separate woman’s council for African American women, which fit their purpose of avoiding duplication. Although many resources for mobilization were created for and utilized by white woman’s councils, African American women would have had access to resources that served them prior to the war that would continue to be used to carry out state mobilization plans. In reports from IN-WCND to the national branch, some counties include short descriptions of some of the activities undertaken by the African American woman’s council.<sup>119</sup> In the IL-WCND reports referenced for this thesis, there is no mention of separate committees created for African Americans or minorities.<sup>120</sup>

State leaders of woman’s council were also known to create their own personal mission statements that would guide how they acted in their roles. Early in Carlisle’s role as the chair of the IN-WCND, she sent a letter to county chairmen proclaiming, “we hope to perfect a plan that will develop a cooperating organization for every County in the State and that will represent every woman, organization and society, of every class and

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<sup>117</sup> *Final Report of Woman’s Committee State Council of Defense of Illinois*, 11.

<sup>118</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman’s Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Counties that include activities on the activities of African American women are Marion, Vanderburgh, and Wayne counties. For more information on these activities, see Carlisle, *Report of the Woman’s Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 86-135.

<sup>120</sup> Southern states undertook great measures to create a council for African American women. To ensure black councils were created and participated in wartime activities a black field representative was dispatched to southern states. For additional details, see Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 130-131.

creed.”<sup>121</sup> Carlisle’s personal creed was more accepting of the diversity of the state’s mission statement, which favored a streamlined approach to mobilization.

The priorities of the state councils can also be explained by their demographics. In 1910 Illinois had a population of 5.6 million people compared to Indiana’s roughly 2.7 million inhabitants, with over half of the population considered to be rural. Indiana had a much “slower pace of urbanization than neighboring Illinois and Ohio.”<sup>122</sup> Many of the industrial areas that Hoosiers congregated to were in Central and Northwest Indiana. Only thirty-one cities across the state boasted a population of more than 10,000 citizens.<sup>123</sup> The smaller, more rural population of Indiana meant that the women making up the state councils had to work harder to communicate with and gain the trust of unorganized women scattered throughout the state.

Illinois urbanized at a much faster rate than the rest of the country, by 1910 “almost sixty-two per cent of the population were living in towns or cities.”<sup>124</sup> Within the same year Chicago had more citizens than “all the rural districts of the state put together.”<sup>125</sup> Chicago was one of the largest industrial cities in the United States. Combined, the largest cities in Indiana could not parallel the massive industries and population that called Chicago home.

The large urban areas within Illinois made it easier for the IL-WCND to organize throughout the state. The intricate organization of local units, especially within Chicago, ensured all women would have ample opportunities to engage in war work. With Illinois’

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<sup>121</sup> Carlisle to County Chairmen, September 8, 1917. Woman’s Service Section, Administration, Volume 2, Part 1: Dr. Barnard Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>122</sup> Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 363.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>124</sup> Clarence Walworth Alvord, ed., *The Centennial History of Illinois*, vol. 5, *The Modern Commonwealth, 1893-1918* (Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg, 1922), 4.

<sup>125</sup> Alvord, *The Centennial History of Illinois*, 5.

larger population and greater industrialization, there was a larger chance that women throughout the state would be involved in the process of mobilization.

Diversity also played an important role in how women were able to engage others from different ethnicities and backgrounds. Indiana had the highest percentage of native-born white population in the country. The populations of foreign-born citizens and African Americans totaled less than ten percent of the Indiana population by 1920.<sup>126</sup> While Indiana does list the organizations for African American women, there was generally a lack of African American women involved in the IN-WCND because of the smaller population size. Illinois was much more diverse than Indiana; fifty-four percent of its population had foreign or mixed parentage and had over 109,000 African American citizens.<sup>127</sup> The greater diversity in Illinois assisted the IL-WCND in ensuring all women had the opportunity to participate in home-front mobilization, despite their ethnicity or economic background.

It is also important to note the geographical area of these two midwestern states. Illinois has a little over fifty-seven thousand square miles compared to Indiana's thirty-six thousand square miles. Illinois had many more large cities that bested Indiana in population size, which made reaching women much easier. The fact that Illinois had organized its council early made it easier for women to inject mobilization efforts into towns and cities across the state. Despite Indiana's smaller size, Clifton J. Phillips found that Indiana's CND, including the IN-WNCD, was only bested by Michigan in war work, when the states were compared by population.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 369-370.

<sup>127</sup> Alvord, *The Centennial History of Illinois*, 14-21.

<sup>128</sup> Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 598.

Progressivism played a large role in mobilization efforts in both states.

Progressive women tended to advocate for an expansion of government, because it gave them more opportunities to become involved in politics. An expanded government also allowed them to influence policy that they were interested in, like advancing child welfare reforms. By expanding the WCND into individual states, Progressive women were able to co-opt mobilization efforts to advance changes they were most interested in advancing. Total war assisted this advancement of progressive reforms in Indiana, because nearly all 92 counties were mobilized. For the Child Welfare Committee, doing so ensured all children benefitted from the life-saving welfare campaigns that were the focus of the committee. These reforms advanced the Progressive ideals of eradicating the “bad” in society by improving the health and living conditions of working-class and immigrant families.

The U.S. entrance into World War I gave citizens opportunities to become involved in home-front mobilization. The passage of the National Defense Act of 1916 created the mobilization experience on the home-front and changed how civilians were involved in the war effort. State and local councils ensured everyone, no matter their economic or ethnic background, was able to aid the war effort. States strived to become completely organized, as citizens’ perceived patriotism was tied to their willingness to become involved in mobilization. Despite the variety of organization, all states worked toward the same goal.

The WCND was originally created only to act as a clearinghouse of information between the government and the unorganized female population. Shaw and the other chairwomen on the national WCND board worked to shift the government’s expectations

of women's roles in war work. They enabled women to take charge of their own state councils and to make the most out of the power the woman's section provided them. Through the councils, women were given a public platform to advance or continue their own agendas, like promoting child welfare. The Council's work also benefitted women working toward suffrage. Pro-suffrage groups tended to also support other Progressive reforms, like child labor and limiting working hours. The success of these reforms was reliant on legislation and the support of women.

Men used political action to achieve the changes or results they sought, while women were blocked from making the same changes by disenfranchisement.<sup>129</sup> Women needed suffrage to continue the reforms they worked toward during the war outside of the scope of home-front mobilization. Mobilization activities undertaken by the woman's councils helped to fundamentally change how women were viewed by the public. Women would prove themselves capable of handling the responsibility of enfranchisement through their successful work with the state councils. Men and politicians often referred to women's lack of responsibility as a primary reason against supporting women's suffrage. Partly due to the efforts of the millions of women who filled the state councils and took the jobs left behind by the men sent overseas, women received the right to vote in 1920, with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Indiana and Illinois were exemplary states, despite their infrequent mentions in WWI literature. Female leaders in both states strived to guarantee that their state was doing its very best to become an asset during mobilization efforts. Both states had unique struggles that defined and occasionally limited its war work, like Illinois' lack of funding

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<sup>129</sup> Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of Women Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981), 64.

and Indiana's unresponsive rural population. The women who made up the state councils worked tirelessly to ensure their state did not lag behind in the race towards total home-front mobilization. Indiana and Illinois are prime examples of how neighboring midwestern states used their female citizens and available resources to organize in different ways.



### Chapter Three: The Children's Year

Picture 4: "The Health of the Child is the Power of the Nation" Poster



(F. Louis Mora, "The Health of the Child is the Power of the Nation," 1918 (poster). World War I Poster Collection, Indianapolis Public Library.)

The Child Welfare Committee, a group under the Woman's Section of the Council of National Defense, worked closely with the Children's Bureau, a federal agency under the Department of Labor, to implement the Children's Year, a year-long, nationwide infant and child life-saving campaign that began April 1918.<sup>130</sup> The groups utilized home-front mobilization networks of women, nurses, doctors, and teachers to expand upon previous Progressive Era efforts to improve the health and education of immigrant and native-born children. The Children's Year brought concerns of child health and the security of the nation's future to the forefront of home-front mobilization.

The Children's Year enabled women previously engaged in the Progressive movement to become involved with the WCND and continue their mission for social welfare reforms in a bid to use the war effort to address serious issues within society. Julia Lathrop, of the Children's Bureau, led progressive reformers in using the war effort to support progressive child welfare aims. Lathrop used her network of progressive reformers and propaganda to exploit the "new concern for children benefitted child welfare reform well into the 1920s."<sup>131</sup> The WCND used its influence and power during home-front mobilization to advocate for changes that the government and the public had previously ignored. Members relied on the wide-reaching authority of the councils to gain support for major changes that began during the Progressive Era. Council members, like Indiana's chairwoman for the Child Welfare Committee, Albion Fellows Bacon, adopted popular stances to advocate for necessary changes to protect infants, children,

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<sup>130</sup> In 1918 the Child Welfare Committee later changed its name to the Child Conservation Section of the Field Division and remained under the direction of Dr. Jessica B. Peixotto at the national level of the WCND.

<sup>131</sup> Alice Smuts and Robert W. Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children, 1893-1935* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 95.

working-class families, and immigrants. The measures undertaken by the Children's Year may not have been personally supported by the women who ran the councils, but were vehicles used to create larger changes in society.

The slogan "the health of the child is the power of the nation" (see Picture 4) was used as a rallying cry to gain support for the year-long, child-saving campaign. The campaign was aimed to improve the "power of the nation" by making children healthier, stronger, and more educated to unburden the country, according to the WCND, from preventable developmental problems. By addressing these issues early in life, the country could avoid the repercussions that come from having a sickly and uneducated population. The Children's Year was designed to control childhood and create a strong foundation for children to be converted into healthy, strong soldiers should a future need arise. In return, children received a greater chance of having a healthier and more productive future, which was ideal for them and their families, but also for the nation.

At the onset of World War I, the United States had one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates among industrialized nations. Despite being a highly advanced nation, the U.S. suffered from about 132 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to New Zealand's birth rate of 83 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>132</sup> Even in the midst of the war, England had only a slightly worse infant mortality rate than the U.S.<sup>133</sup> This data spurred cognizant citizens into regarding the "health of the child" as "the power of the nation," a frequently used slogan in propaganda to advance the message of the Children's

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<sup>132</sup> The Children's Bureau frequently communicated with representatives from New Zealand during the Children's Year, attempting to recreate the success New Zealand had with its own standardized registration of infants. New Zealand was a popular comparison due to it being a relatively young country and geographically removed from Europe, similar to the U.S. For more information on infant mortality, see Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 43.

<sup>133</sup> *Save the Youngest*, 5.

Year. Prior to the Children's Year intervention in child health, American children frequently died from tuberculous, diarrhea, weakened immune systems, pneumonia, and other ailments that could be cured or easily avoided with early detection. Poverty was also an accurate indicator of a child's likelihood of dying prematurely.<sup>134</sup>

It was assumed that a lack of good child rearing knowledge was directly correlated with the large number of drafted men who failed to pass the military's basic health and fitness tests.<sup>135</sup> The cause of the ailments that made them unfit for service appeared to be the combined result of deficient nutrition and physical activity as a young child. To decrease the alarming statistics of infant mortality and unfit military recruits, the Children's Bureau and the Child Welfare Committee combined forces to "save" or prevent the deaths of 100,000 children between April 6, 1918, and April 6, 1919.<sup>136</sup> Committee members and volunteers found a multitude of ways to find, contact, and besiege mothers and children with information and propaganda equating their child's health with their patriotism. One news clipping proclaimed, "This is a compulsory order and no parent dare neglect this duty, which they owe to their government as a patriotic obligation."<sup>137</sup> Propaganda equated participating in the Children's Year and saving untold numbers of children as being just as important as the lives of soldiers currently fighting in

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<sup>134</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 776.

<sup>135</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Fourteen Minute Women, August 17, 1917. Indiana State Council of Defense, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 4: Fourteen Minute Women, General Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>136</sup> "The Children's Year April 6, 1918-April 6, 1919: Save the Lives of 100,000 Children in the United States," U.S. Department of Labor Children's Bureau. Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>137</sup> "Child Welfare news clipping," [ca.1918]. Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

the war. Parents' patriotic duty and support for the war was intricately intertwined with the health of their children.

The Children's Year aimed to increase knowledge and best practices in child-rearing. In a letter from the National Child Welfare Association, Russell Ramsey wrote, "You may be surprised to know that so desperate is the need for a knowledge of proper child care that in many parts of our own country a new-born baby had less chance for life than its father fighting in France."<sup>138</sup> Lack of clear health and child-rearing guidelines was considered to be a main reason why large numbers of infants died at or shortly after birth or before their first birthday. Mothers and females were deemed to be exceptionally suited to carry out this mass undertaking of child welfare, as it was considered an extension of typical female household duties.<sup>139</sup> As such, much of the reforms were carried out by the WCND, Children's Bureau, and other women's associations.

The Children's Bureau, created in 1912, was the first government agency in the U.S. to focus exclusively on the needs of children. Julia Lathrop, the first female director of a federal agency, led the Bureau and staffed it primarily with women.<sup>140</sup> Originally the Bureau had only the capability of investigating and reporting. It did not have a large enough staff or budget to allow it to undertake great changes in child welfare policy. The Children's Bureau, like many government programs, was born from the Progressive movement. Lathrop's first plan for the Bureau was to implement a birth registration, as it

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<sup>138</sup> Russell Ramsey to Anne Studebaker Carlisle, September 16, 1918. Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>139</sup> Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 81.

<sup>140</sup> Julia Lathrop, a progressive reformer from Illinois, had previously worked at Chicago's Hull House before being appointed to lead the Children's Bureau in 1912. She served on the Illinois Board of Charities, was a charter member of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, and helped establish the research department for the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. Lathrop used her vast connections of like-minded progressive reformers to help her further the goals of the Children's Bureau. For more information on Julia Lathrop, see Smuts and Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children*, 84.

was the least controversial measure. A first registration drive was attempted in 1915 but found much more success with the vast networks of women involved in home-front mobilization through the WCND.<sup>141</sup>

Prior to implementing the Children's Year, the Children's Bureau had completed studies of infant mortality in different areas across the country, including in Gary, Indiana. Infant mortality was a major issue in rural areas and large cities like Gary. The Bureau gathered data on "infant mortality and the social and economic conditions surrounding infant life in typical American cities."<sup>142</sup> The study included children born within the year of the study. Statistics on children born with illnesses or physical deformities, those who died in or shortly after birth, and those who perished within one year of birth were tracked and compared to the findings in other cities. The 1916 study of Gary, Indiana, determined that babies were dying at almost the same rate across the country, when compared to other data. The all-encompassing data included family income, mother's employment status during pregnancy, the infant's food habits, and housing conditions. In 1916, Gary was a booming war industry city, known for its steel mills, with a population of 50,000. Gary had a mixture of native-born and foreign-born citizens. It was concluded that a combination of social and economic factors within Gary was a major indicator of the probability of a child dying before its first birthday.<sup>143</sup>

The Children's Bureau had used the studies, its limited budget, and staff to gather the necessary data to convince the government and the nation that infant mortality was a

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<sup>141</sup> Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 86.

<sup>142</sup> For more information on the Gary, Indiana Infant Mortality Study, see Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality; Results of a Field Study in Gary, Ind.*, 1-5. Other cities included Johnstown, Pennsylvania; Manchester, New Hampshire; Brockton, Massachusetts; Saginaw, Michigan; New Bedford, Massachusetts; Waterbury, Connecticut; Akron, Ohio; and Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>143</sup> Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality; Results of a Field Study in Gary, Ind.*, 81-84.

serious issue that negatively impacted families and communities. By making infant mortality and child health a national concern, the Children's Bureau cemented its necessity in combating the appalling infant mortality rates plaguing the United States. The Bureau used multifaceted approaches to educate mothers, improve pre- and post-natal healthcare, and to advocate for better wages to lift families from poverty and into healthier futures. The Bureau also relied on propaganda to force citizens to consider the health of the child and the health of the nation to be intricately linked with each other.

The Children's Year began April 6, 1918, exactly one year after the U.S. entrance into WWI. In one Woman's Section bulletin, the campaign was lauded and readily accepted; "what could be more appropriate than to begin our great life saving campaign, on this date that has brought death into so many American homes, this day that means Life, Liberty, and Hope to all nations?"<sup>144</sup> April 6, 1918, represented the literal saving of unknown numbers of children, but also figuratively replaced American soldiers killed or wounded in the war with healthy, strong soldiers in the making. Equating every child saved as the future replacement for soldiers currently dying in the war helped these women garner more public support for their goals.

An alarming figure often reported in Woman's Council bulletins and news reports stated that nearly one third of military recruits failed fitness tests.<sup>145</sup> The failure of these men was looked upon as a failure of the nation and the failure of women to fulfill their civic duty of raising healthy children. According to a speech given by the Fourteen

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<sup>144</sup> Bulletin No.41, March 25, 1918, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 3: Speaker's Bureau. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>145</sup> In reality, it was closer to 11% of recruits who failed their health tests. This gross overestimation of failed recruits made the health of children much more pertinent to the war effort and helped solidify support for the work of the Bureau and CWC. Zieger, *America's Great War*, 61; "Children, The Last Reserve of the Nation, Object of Welfare," *Indianapolis News* (April 6, 1918), 21.

Minute Women, “if the drafted men had been examined in their childhood, many of the defects which unfitted them for service could have been cured.”<sup>146</sup> Media reports often preyed on the public’s feelings of intense patriotism to encourage cooperation with the government’s agenda to completely mobilize the home-front. Propaganda utilized patriotic sentiments to pressure men to enlist, immigrants to denounce their homeland, and women to join the workforce and organize activities for mobilization. It also ensured mothers would complete the tasks demanded of them during the Children’s Year. No mother wanted her son to suffer from the defects that might one day make him ineligible for military service, not when her claim to citizenship depended on the health of her children.

The root cause behind these failed soldiers was believed to be a lack of proper care and nutrition before birth and within the first years of a child’s life. Children under fourteen years old who found employment outside of the home were considered at risk of leading an impoverished life, further burdening their nation. These children were not expected to ever finish their education and added to the alarmingly high illiteracy rate. The status of the nation was dependent on the health and education of its children, these alarming factors needed to be addressed to ensure the nation could continue to thrive during and after the war.

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<sup>146</sup> The Fourteen Minute Women was a unique organization created in Marion County, Indiana, by Julia C. Henderson. The organization was created to advance the agenda of the Food Administration, but Carlisle understood how useful it could be to further the message of the WCND and began to utilize female speakers across the state to speak on a variety of topics, relayed war news, and spread propaganda for the CPI. Speakers traveled to conferences, fairs, and other meetings. Carlisle, *Report of the Woman’s Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, p.37; Outline for Fourteen Minute Women on Child Welfare, Woman’s Service Section, Education, Parts 4-5: General Correspondence and Counties. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.



Female volunteers collected data to determine the national averages of height and weight for babies and children under five years of age. Doing so gave the Children's Bureau a system of tracking children who fell outside of those averages, identifying them for additional assistance to get them within a healthy range for a child of that age. The goal of the campaign was to save 100,000 babies from death, and each state was given a portion of that number as its designated number of children to save. This amount represented what was believed to be just a third of the number of children who were estimated to die yearly in the United States due to preventable causes.<sup>147</sup> Indiana's goal was to save 2,594 babies.<sup>148</sup> To accomplish this, the Indiana Woman's Council undertook impressive steps to weigh and measure babies and preschool-aged children and to educate parents about proper hygiene and nutrition. During the campaign, proper health and nutrition was defined as regular access to nutritious meals, clean milk, and vigorous physical activity. Failed military recruits often had some form of rickets which was easily remedied by a diet consisting of calcium and vitamin D.<sup>149</sup>

Albion Fellows Bacon believed that the child welfare work Indiana was undertaking was harder than other mobilization efforts, like Liberty Loan work. In a copy of an undated letter to Child Welfare committees across Indiana, Bacon wrote "while you don't have to get every man's dollar, you do have to get every mother's baby. The patriot can give for the slacker, the rich man for the poor one, but every mother has to bring her

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<sup>147</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Children's Bureau, *The Children's Year Memorandum*, [ca. 1918], Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>148</sup> Circular No. 191, Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>149</sup> "Rickets," *Mayo Clinic*, May 24, 2016. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rickets/symptoms-causes/syc-20351943> (accessed May 13, 2018).

own baby—you can't substitute.”<sup>150</sup> For child welfare to be successful and make a meaningful impact, all women had to work together toward the same goal. Naturally, women from different backgrounds had differing ideas and opinions, but child welfare was used as a rallying cry to unify women behind one much-needed progressive reform.

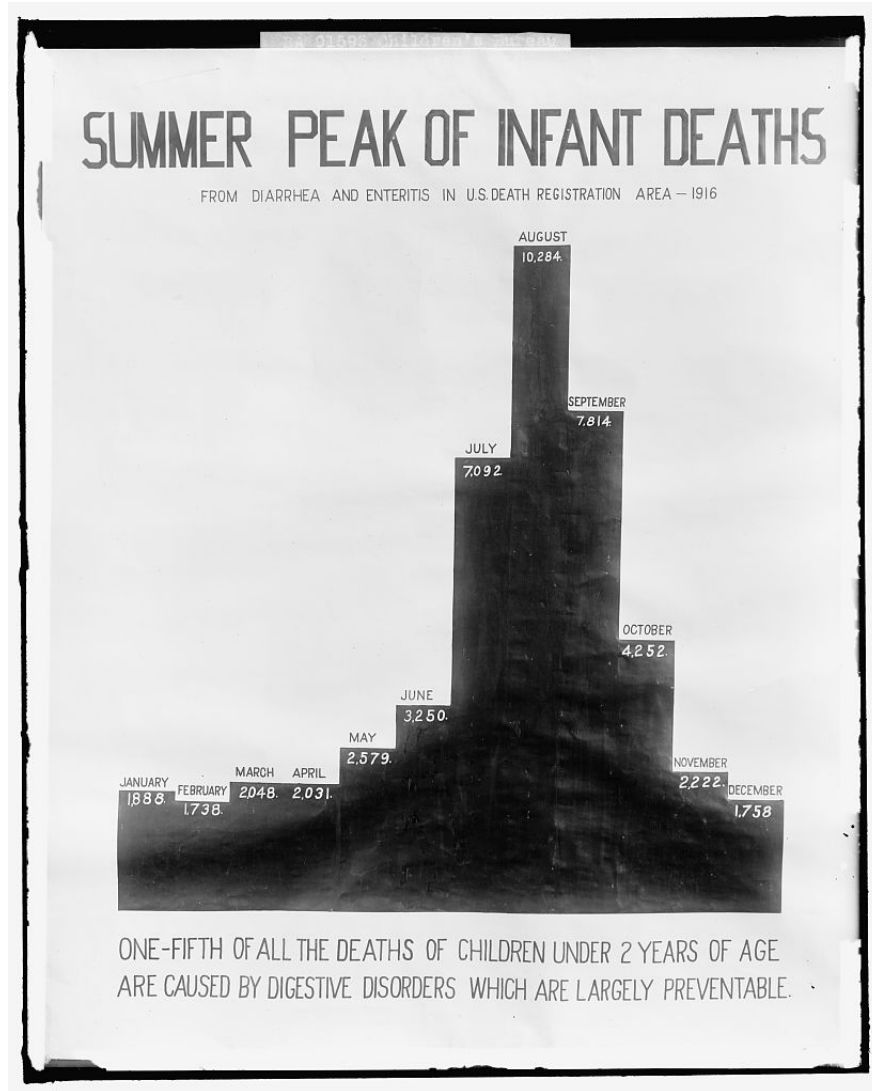
The Weigh and Measure Drive began April 6, 1918, with an intense campaign of weighing and measuring children under the age of five. This first drive lasted sixty days, ending June 1918. Every summer child deaths spiked, beginning in June and peaking in August, before tapering off in October (see Picture 5). The deaths were often attributed to preventable digestive issues, including diarrhea and enteritis, an inflammation of the small intestine caused by consuming contaminated food or drinking bad milk.<sup>151</sup> The sixty-day timeframe concluded as the summer began, thus starting the campaign on a successful path as families were receptive to the advice and resources provided to prepare themselves for the deadly summer months.

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<sup>150</sup> “Child Welfare in Indiana,” n.d., *Housing Documents (1916)*, Box 1 of 8, Fellows Collection, Willard Library, Evansville, Indiana.

<sup>151</sup> *Save the Youngest*, 11.

Picture 5: Summer Peak of Infant Deaths



U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, *Save the Youngest: Seven Charts on Maternal and Infant Mortality, with Explanatory Comment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 11.

Teams of doctors, nurses, and volunteers were dispatched by the CWC to clinics and schoolhouses, county by county, until nearly every child in Indiana had been examined and the results recorded.<sup>152</sup> In each examination, a form was filled out to record the current health of the child. One part of the form was returned to the Children's Bureau and the other was given to parents, so they could track their child's growth from home.<sup>153</sup> The top section of the Children's Bureau Weighing and Measuring Test form was to be kept and filled out by the parents included biographical information of the child (name, age, gender, address), exam date, height and weight measurements, a place to record if the measurements are above, below, or equal to the average height and weight for a child of that age, a small chart to track the child's measurements as they age, a space for additional remarks, and the examiner's signature. The bottom of the form was to be returned to the Children's Bureau. That form included biographical information of the child and the parents, and if they were immigrants, their birth of origin was also included. At the bottom of the form is the question, "Is child apparently healthy and free from serious defect?" Underneath the question is space for additional remarks and the examiner's signature. Both forms also included a question asking if the child's birth had been registered.<sup>154</sup>

The CWC and the Speaker's Bureau utilized the expertise of the Fourteen Minute Women by having them canvass the state, giving motivational and inspirational speeches

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<sup>152</sup> Names of children to be examined were collected from local schools and published in newspapers, announcements, and shared by phone. School-age children were also encouraged to share the names of younger siblings to be examined. Depending on the town, they could be examined at clinics, schoolhouses, or other public gathering places. For more information, see "Bulletin No.63," May 21, 1918. Woman's Service Section, Publicity, Part 2: Bulletins. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>153</sup> Barrows, "Building Up the State," 276.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

on the benefits of these health assessments.<sup>155</sup> The CWC relied on the speeches to persuade counties to adhere to the work outlined by the Children's Year. Rural counties were a known challenge for volunteers and committee members, as they did not always consider child welfare to be a pressing matter. Rural counties in Indiana relied on children to work the farms and they were harder to convince that gaining an education and limiting their work would be beneficial to not only the child, but the entire family in the long run.<sup>156</sup>

In rural towns and counties, teachers and principals were relied upon and pressured to advocate for the invasive demands of Children's Year. Child welfare committees in rural counties depended on the cooperation of the "state board of education and local school authorities...throwing open the school houses." For the children who attended school regularly, these measures were highly effective in locating children to be examined. Students could share information with school officials about any younger siblings. School-aged children were also useful in further distributing propaganda and state-sponsored information regarding the benefits of participating in the activities of the Children's Year with their parents.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 37-39.

<sup>156</sup> Bacon to Chairwomen of the Child Welfare Committee, January 14, 1918, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 1: Education. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>157</sup> "Children, The Last Reserve of the Nation, Object of Welfare," *Indianapolis News* (April 6, 1918), 21; The phrase 'better babies' was used by health reformers who endorsed the practices of birthing and raising only the "'best' and healthiest babies." This phrase emulates the ideals of eugenics, which was gaining support from progressives, health reformers, and state agencies, like the Indiana State Board of Health. For more information on the better babies campaign in Indiana, see Alexandra Minna Stern, "Making Better Babies: Public Health and Race Betterment in Indiana, 1920-1935," *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 5 (2002): 742-752.

Picture 6: Birth Registration Ad

CHECK ME TO A HEALTHY HOME!



Here's a "pack of troubles" in an old kit bag that should make you smile. In one year Uncle Sam will take 100,000 of these small citizens out of the infant mortality list and make them "Better Babies." New Zealand's infant death rate is 50 to each 1000 births—Uncle Sam's is 100 TO EACH 1000 BIRTHS. Let's catch up with New Zealand.

*(Evansville Press, February 28, 1918)*

Registration, the issuing of birth certificates, was completed concurrently with the weigh and measure drive.<sup>158</sup> It was touted as an advantageous way for the government to track the child's health, ensuring the child received prompt and continuous care for any defects or illnesses discovered during the health examination (see Picture 6). Registration of children also provided the government with a means to track its citizens beyond the initial benefit of tracking the health of a child. Conscription was not only hurt by men unfit for service, but also by draft dodgers. Without a formal record of citizens, the government would never know the true number of men who could be potentially called into service.<sup>159</sup> The Children's Year, and in turn the WCND, supported this expansion of government surveillance into the lives of citizens through birth registration. Official documentation of a child's birth gave the government the ability to transform into an "information state" and the information collected by the government proved that there was a 'productive power' in documenting its citizens.<sup>160</sup> The necessity of the registration stemmed from the children being, like other goods, a natural resource to be tracked and grown, ensuring the nation would always have a steady supply of young men ready at a moment's notice.

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<sup>158</sup> It is important to note that children and babies were not the only people being registered during this time. Men were forced to register for the draft. As another WCND activity, women were also registering with the state. Their registration was promoted as a way for the government to know which women had experience or interest in different fields, in case the men who typically held those positions were drafted and there was an immediate need for a new labor force. For more information on women's registration, see Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense*: 64-68.

<sup>159</sup> Zieger, *America's Great War*, 61.

<sup>160</sup> The phrase "information state" was borrowed by the author from Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens since 1500* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004). For more information on the rise of birth certificates, see Susan J. Pearson, "Age Ought to Be a Fact': The Campaign against Child Labor and the Rise of the Birth Certificate," *Journal of American History* 101, no. 4 (2015): 1147-1148.

Registration established reliable lists of men who could be called on in times of war. For the first draft registration for World War I, men between the ages of 21-31 were required to register. Some men fell through the cracks of the draft or refused to register themselves. The establishment of birth records gave the government a foundation they could use to draft soldiers for future war. Birth records gave the government immense power and control they had lacked in the First World War. By establishing the practice of birth records the government would have concrete evidence of which men were eligible for service based on their age.<sup>161</sup>

Scenarios crafted by the Fourteen Minute Women focused on what a child had to lose by failing to be registered versus the power the government would have over its citizens. Stories focused on how birth registration would safeguard any child's potential inheritance, as not being registered "may make complications of many kinds, in marriage or family matters, or legal matters."<sup>162</sup> This benefit was especially important for immigrants who had family members remain in their homeland, as they had to prove they were next of kin to receive their inheritance.

One case in Indiana reported that a farmer had left his farm in the possession of his son, until his granddaughter turned twenty-one. On her birthday, ownership of the farm was to transfer from the son to the granddaughter. The son disputed her age, preventing her from receiving her inheritance. The family never registered their children and merely kept a note of births in a Bible. The page with her birthdate had been removed

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<sup>161</sup> During World War I, General Enoch Crowder initiated a "Work or Fight" order, which stipulated that men who were not gainfully employed would be forced to immediately join the military. Birth records would have assisted this order, as there would be definite proof of age. For additional information on "Work or Fight," see Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 107.

<sup>162</sup> Outline for Fourteen Minute Women on Child Welfare, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 4-5: Fourteen Minute Women, General Correspondence and Counties. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.



and could not be located. Luckily, a neighbor remembered that the granddaughter was born on the same day as one of his prized cows. The neighbor had recorded the cow's birth, which also served as proof of the granddaughter's birthdate. If the neighbor had not recorded information about his calf, the woman would not have been able to establish her legal age and would have been swindled out of her rightful inheritance.<sup>163</sup>

A case widely shared by the Fourteen Minute Women to encourage registration involved an immigrant family living in Spokane, Washington. The parents had immigrated from Norway, but their daughter was born and raised in Spokane. The father took his daughter to visit relatives in Norway. During the trip the father died, and the daughter attempted to return to the U.S., but was denied entry. She was required to prove her identity to be permitted to return to her home. The daughter's birth had not been recorded and the Washington State Board of Health attempted to chase down leads to prove her citizenship. After much searching, the Board of Health located a woman who was present at the daughter's birth and confirmed her identity and vouched for her citizenship.<sup>164</sup>

Another tale shared the deceit of an Italian family living in Chicago, where birth records were used to keep children in school and out of the factories. The family of ten had moved to Chicago following the Messina earthquake in Italy. The father applied for work certificates for his two eldest daughters, implying they were of legal working age at sixteen and fourteen years old. The elder girl was given the permit and allowed to find employment and the younger daughter was denied a permit due to her deafness and a

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<sup>163</sup> Julia Lathrop, *Birth Registration: An Aid in Protecting the Lives and Rights of Children*, U.S. Department of Labor: Children's Bureau (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 13.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

possible mental deficiency and was required to continue her education. The family again tried applying for a permit for the younger daughter, and the Chicago Associated Charities requested birth records from Messina, which uncovered the family's deceit. The older daughter who had secured employment was only thirteen years old and her younger sister was twelve. The Fourteen Minute Women used this story as propaganda to garner support for registration. If the Italian city of Messina had not kept birth records, these girls would have been free to work, when they should have been obtaining an education.<sup>165</sup>

These stories focused on the general fears of any family, whether native-born or immigrant: loss of inheritance, denial from entering the country, and losing their chance at an education. These fears fueled wide-spread support for the Registration campaign. Propaganda was used to compare the pitiful records the United States had on its citizens to that of European countries, where birth registration was mandatory. Before this campaign, babies were rarely registered by the county in which they were born. Typically, larger cities were somewhat more likely to implement guidelines to give health examinations and register newborns, but it was rarely an enforced practice. The successful introduction of birth certificates and the registration of infants allowed the government to track not only the health of the child, but also gather exact data on infant mortality by area. The government would be able to establish more accurate infant mortality rates by comparing birth certificates to death certificates in any given area.<sup>166</sup>

Registration also benefitted another of the Children's Year Progressive-minded reforms. Official documentation of a child's age prevented students from being permitted

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>166</sup> Davis, "Welfare, Reform and World War I," 524.

to wantonly abandon their education before the mandated age of fourteen years or older. School districts would have the necessary information available to guarantee that every child between 6-14 years old received their compulsory education. It also kept younger children from becoming employed.

Preschool and elementary aged children held the country's attention for a sizeable amount of time during the Children's Year, but they were not the only group targeted by the campaign. In a 1915 newspaper article, Dr. Woods Hutchinson reported that, "It is urged that pregnancy be made a reportable condition and...[nurses] advise her how to protect her health and that of the coming life."<sup>167</sup> Pregnant women, whether it was their first child or their third, were subject to intense scrutiny to determine if they correctly took care of themselves and their unborn baby according to new, scientific childrearing standards.<sup>168</sup> At the beginning of the weigh and measure campaign, Mrs. James T. Cutler of the Evansville Child Welfare Committee wanted mothers to realize "how much this is going to help them care for their babies during the coming hot months more intelligently than ever before."<sup>169</sup> Mothers were expected to make it their patriotic duty to give birth to and raise healthy children.

The first six days of June 1918, following the completion of the weigh and measure drive, was reserved for Baby Week. This nearly week-long event publicized the desperate need for trained nurses and the dangers hot summer temperatures posed to infants.<sup>170</sup> Other baby weeks had been held in limited areas across the country in prior

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<sup>167</sup> Woods Hutchinson, M.D., "The Children's Year." *South Bend News-Times* (April 23, 1918), 6.

<sup>168</sup> Progressive women strongly supported new ideas of childrearing as a scientific practice to be perfected and carried out by mothers to raise healthy children. Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 33-35.

<sup>169</sup> "To Weigh Every Baby Under Five," *Evansville Press* (April 10, 1918), 10.

<sup>170</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, The Children's Year Memorandum, [ca. 1918], Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

years and were coordinated by the General Federation of Women's Clubs or other local organizations. The Child Welfare Committee's Baby Week, created with the help of the Children's Bureau, aimed to implement new rules and regulations concerning the newest generation. Fourteen Minute Women performed speeches for mothers and families across the state, promoting the benefits of the Children's Year and Baby Week. Their speeches often focused on how babies "who do not die grow up to a sickly existence, bringing more sickly children into the world, unable to do their part to be citizens, often a burden on the community."<sup>171</sup> Mothers were given advice, whether sought or unsolicited, pertaining how to best raise their children to grow into strong adults.

The failings of one mother to have unhealthy children, according to the Fourteen Minute Women, could impact the health and future of many generations to come.<sup>172</sup> Speeches often played on a woman's desire to see her child thrive in all endeavors and to prove her patriotism by supporting all the country's war efforts. Women who were uninterested in improving the health of their children were deemed apathetic to the war effort or to the raising the standards of health and education for future generations. During the Children's Year the health of the child was intricately linked with the health and success of the nation. It was implied that giving birth to unhealthy children was equivalent to making the nation weak in terms of manpower.

Women were encouraged to check up on pregnant friends and, if deemed necessary, schedule nurse visits to check the health of the mother and unborn baby.

World War I mobilization saw an increase in surveillance among citizens and community

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<sup>171</sup> Outline for Fourteen Minute Women on Child Welfare, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 4-5: Fourteen Minute Women General Correspondence and Counties. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

groups. This attentiveness to the personal health of private citizens was an important aspect of mobilization. Children were treated as future replacements for soldiers and adults were responsible for maintaining their health through childhood and into adulthood. Women were scrutinized for their choices or apparent lack of action regarding the health and education of not only their children, but also children in the community. Collectively, the WCND, the Bureau, and women's associations volunteers worked together to give the nation the best opportunities to address issues with the health of its citizens as a wartime measure. These included improving and investing in the health of children; the nation's next line of defense.<sup>173</sup>

Many women wanted to start the most vulnerable infants off on the right track. The success of the Children's Year and the completion of registration guaranteed all children would have a greater chance of surviving infancy compared to the generations that came before them. They would also use their right to receive an education and would theoretically be freed from engaging in child labor. Baby Week brought awareness to pre- and postnatal care, clean milk for drinking, and hygiene. The week relied on a variety of means, like persuasive speeches and depending on others to inform on pregnant women to reach almost every mother and compel her to comply with the goals of the Children's Year.

Patriotic Play Week, the main feature of the Recreation Drive, was created to increase the physical stamina of boys and girls across the country. Indiana adopted the slogan "For a Stronger America," and began its quest to create healthier children by holding the Recreation Drive in the first week of September, often around the same time

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<sup>173</sup> Capozzola, "The Only Badge Needed is Your Patriotic Fervor," 1360-1362.

as a fair or other community celebration.<sup>174</sup> The games played during the drive focused on the skills a military recruit would need to be adept at, such as games that trained the eye and developed quick reflexes.<sup>175</sup> Patriotic Play Week was designed to “implant in the minds of the children the idea that keeping themselves fit is patriotic, and that they are serving their country when they make themselves stronger,” further regarding children as merely a natural resource to be cultivated in the best interests of the nation.<sup>176</sup>

Children, especially boys, participated in military and Boy Scout drills. Other activities for boys included pull-ups, standing broad jumps, and sixty-yard runs. Girls were expected to participate in Potato Races, throw basketballs into hoops from fifteen feet away, and to walk twenty-four feet on a balance beam with a book on her head.<sup>177</sup> Children could be awarded medals and certificates for competing in or winning physical assessments designed to test agility, stamina, and strength. The formation of this campaign tried to control student’s leisure time during the summer, using methods that were considered wholesome and patriotic.<sup>178</sup> The Recreation Drive provided children with information on how they performed compared to the national average of strength and skill and gave tips on how to improve areas where they had deficiencies.<sup>179</sup> This drive further aligned the health of boys in terms of what skills they could offer to the country as soldiers.

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<sup>174</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, “Patriotic Play Week,” 1918, Woman’s Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>175</sup> Children’s Year: Suggestions for Patriotic Play Week, 1918, Woman’s Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>176</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, “Patriotic Play Week.”

<sup>177</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Indiana Mayors, “Patriotic Play Week,” July 26, 1918. Woman’s Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>178</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 146-148.

<sup>179</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Indiana Mayors, “Patriotic Play Week,” July 26, 1918. Woman’s Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 2: Publicity. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Bacon was excited to see boys ranging from six to eighteen years old come together in her hometown of Evansville, to learn military drills from military officers. In a personal letter, she wrote, “We have quite a goodly showing and it is a great sight. I am so anxious to have this idea extended throughout the state. The boys are given simple military drills, and are very enthusiastic about it.”<sup>180</sup> Bacon wrote in another letter to Anne Studebaker Carlisle that she wished “we could get military organizations of boys of all ages, in every community.”<sup>181</sup> Organizations that promoted military-like aspects like survival skills, patriotism, and being physically fit, like the Boy Scouts, were called upon to help support Patriotic Play Weeks across the country. Some towns and cities even went as far as creating summer military training camps, furthering the militaristic aspects of the Children’s Year and mobilizing children as part of the war effort.<sup>182</sup> Even though there were many ways for children to foster an aptitude for military skills, Patriotic Play Week guaranteed many children were reached at one time. It also ensured children received training that would make them not only physically fit, but also develop and refine skills routinely used by soldiers.

The Child Welfare Committee, especially in county and local councils, aided the enforcement of the recently passed Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916, which went into effect on September 1, 1917.<sup>183</sup> Under this law, companies were forbidden to sell

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<sup>180</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Grace Julian Clarke, September 11, 1918, Box 2, Folder 2, Grace Julian Clarke Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>181</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Anne Studebaker Carlisle, 1918, Woman’s Service Section Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>182</sup> Susan Zeiger, “The Schoolhouse vs. the Armory U.S. Teachers and the Campaign Against Militarism in the Schools, 1914-1918,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no.2 (2003): 157.

<sup>183</sup> The Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916 restricted child labor, but the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1918. Another bill passed in December 1918, which heavily taxed goods produced by children under 14. It was also ruled unconstitutional in 1922. In 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed, ending child labor. For more information on the Keating-Owen Act, see “Keating-Owen Child Labor Act of 1916 (1916).”

goods made by children under fourteen years of age. The law also limited the number of hours that could legally be worked by a sixteen-year old. Children whose families relied on them to assist with harvest seasons were not exempt from these rules, burdening rural families. This law also hindered working-class families that relied on their children's income to live. The idea behind the law was that children would not be tempted by the allure and excitement of working to aid the mobilization efforts and would instead continue their education.<sup>184</sup> The Child Welfare Committee made it a mission to decrease illiteracy, especially in rural and working-class areas, by enforcing a strict anti-child labor policy. Unfortunately, the U.S.'s entrance into the war caused school delinquency to increase throughout the country, defeating that goal.<sup>185</sup>

Juvenile delinquency surged throughout the country especially once the U.S. joined the war effort; some reports estimated that it increased by forty percent.<sup>186</sup> Information spread by propaganda implied that children, especially from working-class families, sought out war work, instead of finishing their education. Restricting child labor and enforcing school attendance were viewed by the women in the Child Welfare Committee as a method to track children and to ensure they were given every opportunity to grow and succeed in life.<sup>187</sup> While other states may have had issues concerning delinquencies, a survey led by the IN-WCND determined that nearly every school-age

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<sup>184</sup> As noted by Ladd-Taylor, this idea assumed that families were not dependent on the incomes of their children to survive. For more information on how the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act affected working-class families, see Ladd-Taylor, *Mother Work*, 76.

<sup>185</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Anne Studebaker Carlisle, November 20, 1917, Woman's Service Section Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>186</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to County Chairmen, November 12, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>187</sup> Julia C. Lathrop to the State Chairman, August 17, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 1: Education. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.



child was indeed enrolled in school.<sup>188</sup> Much of the work undertaken during the Back to School Drive was aimed at children over the age of fourteen years, who had no legal obligation to continue their education.

Lathrop told all state chairmen, “It [education] sets them free to give them a better chance in the world.”<sup>189</sup> Education provided all children with the best opportunities in life and future employment. Committee members were encouraged to check attendance records at their local schools and report their findings back to Bacon and the CWC. Bacon urged the formation of groups to “study the child labor laws and the school attendance laws” and to physically go to schools to collect lists of children who had not returned for the new school year.<sup>190</sup> Parents of delinquent children could expect to receive aggressive inquiries regarding why their child was allowed to ruin their future by abandoning their education. To combat these issues of delinquency and child labor, the Back to School Drive was implemented and aimed at children on the cusp of fourteen, when they were most likely to abandon school in favor of finding employment.

The Back to School Drive was held at the end of the summer, after the summer’s Recreation Drive. The drive was used to ensure all newly unemployed children returned to their education. It was anticipated that there would be resistance from students to return for the school year and the drive was used to support teachers and school officials in enforcing the child labor law.<sup>191</sup> The drive was also used to ensure students had the supplies and support they needed to be able to attend school without worry. The latter

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<sup>188</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman’s Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 20.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Outline for Fourteen Minute Women on Child Welfare, Woman’s Service Section, Education, Parts 4 & 5: Fourteen Minute Women. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>191</sup> Carlisle to County Chairmen, September 25, 1917, Woman’s Service Section, Administration, Part 5: Dr. Barnard Official Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

included providing scholarships funded by the county WCND councils for underprivileged students.<sup>192</sup>

The WCND found that the most efficient way to keep track of students routinely missing from class was to compile lists of children within the mandatory school age and to use those lists to find and coerce the parents and child until they rightfully returned to their education. The Children's Bureau publicized facts and circulated statistics about boys who completed a high school education and earned on average two and a half times more in their lifetime at age twenty-five compared to someone who left school at age fourteen.<sup>193</sup> Mailings sent to Child Welfare Committee members often reminded the women that the country's smartest men had gone overseas to fight in the war, and it was their job to ensure all children received an education. Educated children were needed to replenish these men in a variety of occupations and duties. Bacon summed up these sentiments in a letter to all Indiana county chairs writing, "We are urged to see that no child grows up in illiteracy, but that the generation coming on shall be trained to take the place of our educated young men now in the army."<sup>194</sup> A common theme throughout the Children's Year found that children needed to be raised healthier and smarter than the previous generations, because they would be needed to replace the healthy, educated men that were fighting in the war.

Through Bacon's hard work 89 of Indiana's 92 counties were organized and participated in the Child Welfare Committee activities. Each Indiana county had varied

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<sup>192</sup> Julia C. Lathrop to State Chairmen, August 17, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>193</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 125-126.

<sup>194</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to County Chairmen, November 12, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Child Welfare, Part 1: County Committees. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

success with the Children's Year. Some counties were much more responsive to the agenda of the Child Welfare Committee. In Marion County it was reported that 212 clinics examined 5,347 children under six years of age. In total, it was estimated that roughly 94,814 children were weighed and measured. From these examinations, it was assumed that 33-50% of children had some defect, with "diseased tonsils, adenoids, undernourishment, bad teeth, circumcision needed, hernia, tuberculosis, defective eyes, heart trouble, defective hearing" as the most common ailments.<sup>195</sup> It was noted that the "keynote of this work was quality and not number of children examined."<sup>196</sup> While every Hoosier child may not have been examined, the ones that were examined received quality care that would have addressed any potential defects.

The success of Indiana's CWC was entirely reliant on Bacon's never-ending support. At first, Bacon went into her Child Welfare work somewhat grudgingly, telling Grace Julian Clarke, "I am still engaged on my life work, which I never expect to lay down—housing....I have felt that, while I must relax no vigilance, that this is not the best time to push this work upon public attention."<sup>197</sup> Bacon would have rather spent her time fighting for better housing regulations, but the war changed her focus, if only for a year. She went above and beyond to implement the different phases of the Children's Year in every community across the state. The Indiana Child Welfare Committee found success only due to its leader. Any other woman would not have given the committee the dedication, effort, and time needed to impact the lives of the more than 94,000 children

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<sup>195</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 20.

<sup>196</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 86.

<sup>197</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Grace Julian Clarke, August 27, 1917, Box 2, Folder 1, Grace Julian Clarke Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

who directly benefitted from the Children's Year activities in Indiana.<sup>198</sup> Despite a lack of government support and supplies, Bacon remained dedicated to helping children. At the end of the war and as the CND was ending its work, Bacon encouraged Indiana to continue the child welfare reforms that had gained support during the war.

Indiana was one of thirty-eight states to continue precautionary efforts aimed toward reducing infant and child mortality rates. The state organized committees or departments to continue child welfare life-saving measures after the war. The states formed advisory committees to continue to advocate for continued protection for children, whether that was supporting legislation or working with local agencies to aid any needs that might arise.<sup>199</sup>

The Children's Year established standards in infant and child healthcare, some of which are still in place today. Prior to the war, the government rarely interfered in the lives of its citizens and had little to do with protecting the lives of mothers and children. However, with the successful completion of the Children's Year, many people supported measures that would protect vulnerable populations. This support culminated in 1919 with funds being appropriated to continue child welfare efforts in Indiana. Funds were secured for the fight against venereal diseases, the Department of Child Hygiene in the State Board of Health, the Division of Tuberculosis in the State Board of Health, and funds were given to distribute the Indiana Mothers' Baby Book, among other provisions.<sup>200</sup> Following the war, Lathrop wanted to establish a national program to address infant and maternal health issues through standardization of care and

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<sup>198</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 20.

<sup>199</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, *Children's Year: A Brief Summary of Work Done and Suggestions for Follow-up Work* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 13.

<sup>200</sup> Carlisle, *Report of the Woman's Section of the Indiana State Council of Defense*, 21.

education.<sup>201</sup> The Sheppard-Towner Act was one such change that came from the Children's Year. The law passed in 1921 and provided federal funding for maternity and child care and funded the creation of child health and prenatal clinics across the country.<sup>202</sup> Newly enfranchised women were strong supporters of the bill, which continued the successes of child welfare reforms gained during the Children's Year.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 76.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-108.

<sup>203</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 778.

## Chapter Four: Suffrage and the Sheppard-Towner Act

The Woman's Council of National Defense gave middle- and upper-class white women an acceptable way to become involved in mobilization efforts. Many of these women had been heavily involved with Progressive reforms prior to the war and would utilize their massive networks of volunteers and women's associations to their advantage during home-front mobilization. They believed an expanded government and its authority would have the power to identify and assist the country's most vulnerable citizens, making necessary reforms available to all citizens. By involving themselves in the mobilization efforts, these women ensured that extraordinary measures were taken to protect the nation's "greatest assets" –children.<sup>204</sup>

Leaders of the WCND intertwined mobilization efforts and Progressive child welfare reforms, insisting that the nation itself could not be strong unless infant mortality rates decreased, and its youngest citizens were also healthy. By merging mass mobilization efforts with much needed reform, women were able to continue many of the changes they had sought during the Progressive Era. Home-front mobilization gave women the necessary support and resources to successfully implement changes as a measure of patriotic service to the country. Working with the Children's Bureau also helped the efforts gain the support from the federal government, which had its own reasons for wanting to become involved in child welfare.

The Children's Year gave the government unprecedented access to its citizens. The many aspects of the life-saving Children's Year campaign focused on the creation of

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<sup>204</sup> Albion Fellows Bacon to Fourteen Minute Women, August 17, 1917, Woman's Service Section, Education, Part 4: Fourteen Minute Women, General Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

records that allowed the government to begin tracking its youngest citizens. By using the war effort to create a record of the birth and health of children across the country, the government could not only track the rates of infant mortality, but also had the means to raise future armies. Establishing a birth record with an accurate age benefitted more than Progressive Era child labor and education reforms, as it helped the government know exactly which citizens were eligible for future drafts. These records made the U.S. government extremely powerful and gave it undeniable access to its citizens for the first time.

Women understood that the councils could be used as a vehicle to gain rights that they had consistently been denied. Proving one's loyalty to her country and the ability to prove civic responsibility were surefire ways for women to gain suffrage. Council of National Defense historian William J. Breen found that "as intensely patriotic as the men, the women were bolder in their social vision. They were more aggressive than their male counterparts in their efforts to use the wartime crisis as an opportunity to promote various social reforms that had been championed by the prewar women's movement."<sup>205</sup> During the war, women had the support of the national and state governments and the Children's Bureau to implement reforms to childrearing, education, and labor. By undertaking massive campaigns in the name of patriotism for the war effort, women were able to prove themselves responsible citizens, worthy of all rights and responsibilities that came with citizenship.

Like women's associations, the councils offered many women the opportunity to become involved in making much needed changes in society. Women already invested in

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<sup>205</sup> Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, xvi.

the Progressive movement segued into the councils, seeing it as a means of continuing their work.<sup>206</sup> Progressives, who often held the same views of anti-war pacifists, came to see the war and mobilization as a positive. Many of the changes they had been adamantly attempting to garner support for were finally widely accepted and promoted by the government. Their ideas were supported by the CND and WCND committees and new committees were created for the sole purpose of undertaking large social issues, such as labor, Americanization, and child welfare.

The Children's Year, while only in effect for twelve months, has had an enduring impact on how the nation cares for its youngest citizens. In 1918, it was discovered that 80% of pregnant women did not receive advice or training on child welfare or how to care for their child.<sup>207</sup> Some states, including Illinois and Indiana, formed advisory committees to continue child welfare efforts that began as part of the Children's Year.<sup>208</sup> These included maintaining and informing families of standards of child welfare, creating support systems, including accessible healthcare, teaching and demonstrating hygiene, and public health nurses to assist families when needed, for working-class families or single mothers, helping disabled or diseased children get the care they need.<sup>209</sup>

Throughout the war, the Children's Bureau and the national Child Welfare Committee proved the necessity of having programs aimed toward improving the quality of life and health of every child, no matter where they lived or their family's income. Prior to the disbandment of the IN-WCND committees, Carlisle sent a recommendation to John V. Wilson, Secretary of the Indiana State Council of Defense, listing WCND

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<sup>206</sup> Davis, "Welfare, Reform, and World War I," 518-519.

<sup>207</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 777.

<sup>208</sup> *Children's Year: A Brief Summary of Work Done and Suggestions for Follow-up Work*, 12-13.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



committees she believed to be of the “utmost importance” and should be continued.<sup>210</sup>

These committees, included Child Welfare, Americanization, Women in Industry, Home Economics, and Food Productions. They were aimed at helping working-class women and children, often furthering Progressive aims.

As the end of the war drew near, Carlisle began organizing support for upcoming bills, including new laws for women in industry and child welfare. Carlisle sent letters encouraging Hoosier women to show support for the bills. Women across the state conferred to ensure they were all in support of the same measures. At one point, women supported three separate versions of the women in industry bill.<sup>211</sup> Newspapers were also cognizant of the pending bills that were of interest to women, noting that it is “necessary to create and enforce some standards for protection of these newcomers in industry, many of whom will never return to their prewar status.”<sup>212</sup> Bacon also used her influence to support the passage of an eight-hour workday law and gave many speeches in support of a child labor bill in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Massachusetts.<sup>213</sup> These women used the political power they had at that point, which often included using women’s associations connections to exert pressure on politicians to encourage them to pass these bills, as women did not yet have suffrage.

In March 1919, Carlisle received a letter about the lack of concern for women’s and children’s issues in government. The unsigned letter stated, “the Legislature has adjourned permanetly and unless the Women and Children’s Division in the Industrial

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<sup>210</sup> Carlisle to John V. Wilson, December 2, 1918. Woman’s Service Section, Administration, Part 2: Mrs. Anne Studebaker Carlisle Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>211</sup> Carlisle letter, February 3, 1919. Woman’s Service Section, Administration, Part 2: Mrs. Anne Studebaker Carlisle Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>212</sup> “Bills Pending Interest Women,” *Indianapolis News*, February 15, 1919.

<sup>213</sup> “Advocates Eight-Hour Law,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 29, 1919; “Mrs. Bacon’s Work,” *Indianapolis News*, February 15, 1919.

Board got through, this Legislature failed to grant one thing for women and children. It certainly is time women had the ballot as that is the only thing that will make us of any value in the eyes of men.”<sup>214</sup> Women accomplished much through the work of the WCND, but they were still not guaranteed suffrage. At the end of the war, it was more apparent than ever that women could accomplish only so much with their current political status.

Female suffrage was finally achieved in 1920, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Previously, depending on the state, some women had partial suffrage, usually granting them the ability to vote in local school board elections. Women residing in the western United States were typically given more political rights than women residing elsewhere in the country. Wyoming in 1889 and the territory of Utah in 1870 had been the first to offer women suffrage.<sup>215</sup> For nearly a century, suffrage had been a hard-fought battle and with the conclusion of World War I, suffrage appeared to be within reach for all women.

It was imperative for women to receive suffrage, so that they could advance the work that began with the Progressive movement and continued through World War I home-front mobilization. Women could not continue to rely on men to support their political agendas, especially since the latter might hold views that were contradictory to the female agenda. To make the work of the Child Welfare Committee and the Children’s Bureau permanent, women needed to be able to wield political power in support of the changes they sought. The women who worked tirelessly for the councils would feel sour

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<sup>214</sup> Letter to Carlisle, March 11, 1919. Woman’s Service Section, Administration, Section 2: Mrs. Anne Studebaker Carlisle Correspondence. Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>215</sup> Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 161-163.

disappointment in their government if it failed to protect women and children by refusing to pass bills in favor of child welfare and child labor restrictions in 1919. Obtaining widespread suffrage marked a new beginning for women. One of the first widely-supported bills that concerned the health and welfare of women and children was the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921.

The Act made the federal government promote and provide improved care for mothers and babies.<sup>216</sup> This law was one of the first major legislative pieces that was initially drafted by a woman and fiercely supported by the recently enfranchised women. Jeannette Pickering Rankin, a Progressive reformer from Montana, was the first woman elected to Congress. Rankin helped design and plan the bill, which originally was created to help babies and pregnant women in rural areas, but was expanded to include women in towns and cities. Rankin worked with the director of the Children's Bureau, Julia Lathrop, to create a program that would continue the work of the Bureau and increase protective measures for babies and supply child-rearing knowledge for mothers. The act allocated federal and state funds for the creation and implementation of programs focused on hygiene and maternity, which tended to be scarce in rural areas.<sup>217</sup>

Rankin's version of the bill asked for federal funds to be provided to individual states. In return, each state had to create a state board for maternal and infant hygiene, which also included the governor, a health physician, a registered nurse, and an

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<sup>216</sup> The Sheppard-Towner Act helped to further the ideologies behind the 'better babies' campaigns and contests in Indiana. The Act made funds available to the Division of Infant and Child Hygiene (created 1919), which allowed health reformers, like Dr. Ada E. Schweitzer who was interested in eugenics and public health, to spread information and childrearing techniques to families across the state. For more information on better baby contests, see Stern, *Making Better Babies*, 744-748.

<sup>217</sup> *The Child-Welfare Special: A Suggested Method of Reaching Rural Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 16-19.

educator.<sup>218</sup> The Children's Bureau would disperse the funds based on established need and population. At the time, the bill had failed. Following a reported favorable opinion and a lack of opposition for Rankin's version, the bill surprisingly failed to reach the floor of Congress. Following this defeat, Morris Sheppard, a Senator from Texas, and Horace Towner, a Congressman from Iowa, reintroduced the bill, which made considerable progress in Congress once women were granted suffrage in 1920.<sup>219</sup>

Female supporters of the Sheppard-Towner Act organized and prepared to use their newfound power to help solidify the bill as law. Many male politicians were strongly opposed to the Sheppard-Towner Act. Groups who had previously held unchallenged political power were threatened by the immense unknown power of the female vote. They dreaded that women would act irresponsibly with their newfound political influence and would create chaos if they chose to support and push through bills against the wishes of more politically experienced men.

Support for the act was predictably divided among different groups. The National League of Women Voters, and the Democratic, Socialist, Prohibition, and Farm-Labor parties supported the bill. Anti-suffrage groups, the American Medical Association, the only current female member of Congress and anti-suffragist, Alice Robertson, and later the Catholic Church were fiercely against the bill.<sup>220</sup> Another opponent of the bill was the *American Medical Association Journal*, which feared that the bill would give the government too much control over health care and would weaken the state's power, while

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<sup>218</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 78-79.

<sup>219</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 777.

<sup>220</sup> Rankin was in Congress from 1917 to 1919 and again in 1941 to 1943. Robertson served in Congress from 1921-1923 and was the only female in Congress when the Sheppard-Towner Act was voted into law. Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 777-778.

increasing taxes.<sup>221</sup> The power of women's votes at this time was unknown and feared; suffragists had proclaimed that they would "clean house" when they were enfranchised and that women would vote depending on the issue and not along party lines.<sup>222</sup> Until the passage of the act, women were an unknown political force. No one was sure how women would vote, if at all. When the revised bill finally came to a vote, Alice Mary Robertson voted against the bill.<sup>223</sup>

The Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC) was created to lobby on behalf of millions of women and several national women's organizations. Female voters had the potential to change the course of American politics and pass bills that they personally supported and were invested in. The WJCC created grassroots efforts to inform millions of women of the benefits of the act, including using articles in popular women's magazines, like *Good Housekeeping*, to foster female support for the bill across the nation. The Sheppard-Towner Act roused such emotion from people on both sides of the argument, because the threat of female political power was being flaunted. The WJCC lobbied groups purporting that if politicians did not support the bill their female constituents would vote them out of office. There was a real fear over the unknown amount of power and the ambition of women to follow through with these threats.<sup>224</sup>

The Children's Year had brought mothers' private fears of infant mortality into the public sphere. The Sheppard-Towner Act allowed these fears to be placated with the help of the federal government. The final version of the Act conflicted many groups. The

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<sup>221</sup> Joseph B. Chepaitis, "Federal Social Welfare Progressivism in the 1920s," *Social Service Review* 46, no. 2 (1972), 219.

<sup>222</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 778.

<sup>223</sup> Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 76-92.

<sup>224</sup> Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act," 779.

federal government's role in the law changed from the "protection to the promotion of maternal and infant health."<sup>225</sup> The changes did not allow for any payments of pensions, stipends, or gratuities, limited the bill to a brief five years, and removed the daily work from the Children's Bureau to state welfare boards. Doctors felt threatened by a welfare program led by women and opponents of the law claimed that it violated state rights.<sup>226</sup> Despite these objections, the bill did help women and children living in rural and urban areas. The federal government made these changes to avoid interfering with the states' rights.

The Sheppard-Towner Act was only turned into law due to the support of progressive women lobbying in favor of the bill. After the law was passed, many states, including Indiana, quickly adopted the law and created their own appropriations to begin work. Only Illinois, Connecticut, and Massachusetts had refused to participate in the Act. Under the Sheppard-Towner Act birth registration was expanded to an additional eighteen states, making a total of forty-five states and the District of Columbia participate in birth registration. Many states used the Act to create child-hygiene bureaus and permanent prenatal and child health clinics. And allowed for health conferences, home nurse visits, classes on infant and maternal care, and the mass distribution of literature.<sup>227</sup>

The Act was ultimately repealed in 1929. Male politicians were no longer afraid of the power of the female vote, as women voters were more divided politically than originally anticipated.<sup>228</sup> The bill was set to naturally expire in 1927, but in 1926 funding was extended for an additional two years. Despite a premature end to the Act, there were

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<sup>225</sup> Chepaitis, "Federal Social Welfare Progressivism in the 1920s: 217.

<sup>226</sup> Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 168-187.

<sup>227</sup> Chepaitis, "Federal Social Welfare Progressivism in the 1920s": 223-224.

noticeable results to the infant mortality rate. The infant mortality rate before World War One was estimated to be 132 deaths per 1,000 live births; with accurate tracking of births and deaths and improved child healthcare, the infant mortality rate during the Sheppard-Towner Act dropped to 67 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>229</sup> The Act failed to succeed long-term due to women failing to vote as a bloc. The fears many men had surrounding the unknown power of the female vote were unfounded, as many women did not universally support the same bills. Even with a short period of time, the Act was about to positively impact the lives of countless children across the nation.

The Children's Bureau and Child Welfare Committees were instrumental in laying the groundwork for child welfare that led to the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act. They helped to establish and provide a need for these services in all communities across the state, especially in rural and low-income areas. The war effort provided an excellent way for Progressive women to shift their focus from Progressive reforms to adapting their aims to fit within the all-encompassing scope of home-front mobilization. Home-front mobilization enabled women to find success by implementing needed changes into American society, like worker protections and improved healthcare. Without these women, Progressive reforms would have ended as the U.S. entered World War One.

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<sup>229</sup> Chepaitis, "Federal Social Welfare Progressivism in the 1920s": 224.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Meaghan L. Jarnecke**

### **Education**

Master of Arts in Public History, Indiana University-Indianapolis, 2019  
Thesis: Mobilizing Children to Aid the War Effort

Bachelor of Arts in History, Schreiner University, 2014  
Thesis: Post Offices in Texas during the Civil War

### **Professional Experience**

Indiana Historical Society, Processing Assistant, 2018

Indiana Historical Society, Program Specialist, 2017-2018

Newfields, Ursula Kolmstetter Scholar, 2016-2017

Pioneer Museum, Intern, 2013

### **Presentations**

Hoosier Women at Work, "Mobilizing the Nation's Children," April 2018

Schreiner Student Achievement Showcase, "Post Offices in Texas during the Civil War,"  
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Pioneer Museum, "Post Offices in Texas during the Civil War," Poster, 2013

### **Organizations**

Graduate Student History Association, IUPUI, 2016-  
Treasurer, 2017-2018

Phi Alpha Theta, IUPUI, 2017-  
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