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THE KU KLUX KLAN IN INDIANA IN THE 1920'S AS VIEWED BY THE INDIANA CATHOLIC AND RECORD

Joseph M. White
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Name of candidate:

Joseph Michael White

Oral examination:

Date October 10, 1974

Committee:

Emma Lee Thornburgh, Chairman

W. Malcolm Clark

Walter J. Farber

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Major Professor Emma Lee Thornburgh

THE KU KLUX KLAN IN INDIANA
IN THE 1920'S AS VIEWED BY THE
INDIANA CATHOLIC AND RECORD

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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JOSEPH MICHAEL WHITE
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PREFACE

The Ku Klux Klan during the 1920's attained a high level of influence though not outright control in the political and social affairs of Indiana. The Klan with its nativist vision of American life regarded with hostility the deviant values represented by Negroes, Jews, Roman Catholics, and aliens. The irony of the rise of this movement in Indiana was that the population of these minorities was proportionally lower in the Hoosier state than in most other states. While the rise of the Klan in Indiana was in part a reflection of the national movement of the Klan, there were characteristics peculiar to this state that account for its rise. Hoosiers had long believed in the unique goodness of life in the state. After a period of steady growth and general optimism that included popular pride in Indiana's golden age in literature, Indiana was undergoing a period of uneasiness and resentment toward many characteristics of the post-World War I era. The Klan appeal to the maintenance of the familiar verities about God and country was undoubtedly appealing in this climate. As in other areas of the country, a strong tradition of Protestant fundamentalism contributed to a climate of suspicion about minorities, especially Roman Catholics. The absence of significant communities of Jews and Negroes may have blunted the Klan's attention to

these groups in Indiana. In any case, the Indiana Klan's principal concern as is evident from a reading of the Klan literature was the supposed threat of Roman Catholics to the homogeneity and purity of life in Indiana.

Consistent with the Klan's behavior in other states, the Indiana Klan entered state politics. However, the power of the Klan's nativist program was not as pervasive in Indiana as in other states where the Klan enjoyed influence. The Indiana Klan did not attempt to put the Catholic parochial school system completely out of business as the Klan aimed to do in Oregon. The Klan's intention of merely crippling the Catholic schools by enacting prescriptive legislation was conspicuously unsuccessful. Although the Klan briefly boasted decisive political control of the state, its actual political power should not be overdrawn. Indiana did not elect Klan-oriented public officials like Senator Thomas Heflin of Alabama, who was an eloquent Catholic baiter, or the noted populist Tom Watson of Georgia, who staged a successful political comeback with his election to the United States Senate in 1920 using the supposed threat of Catholicism as the principal issue. Many Indiana public officials who enjoyed the support of the Klan avoided Catholic baiting. Indiana's Senators James Watson and Samuel Ralston simply avoided antagonizing the Klan; they were not ranting demagogues. Even Governor Ed Jackson, who was elected with Klan support, dutifully represented the state at Catholic

gatherings during his tenure as the state's chief executive. For many of Indiana's successful politicians of the time, the Klan was a force to be reckoned with, not antagonized, and used, if possible. John Higham's remarks in Strangers in the Land concerning the American Protective Association's effect on politics might well be applied to the Klan in Indiana politics in the 1920's:

Like every secret political organization in American history, the A.P.A. lent itself to exploitation for private advantage. Office-seekers used it and then ignored it; factions wrestled for control of it.¹

The Indiana Catholic and Record, the only state-wide weekly Catholic newspaper during the entire Klan era, was one of the Klan's most persistent critics. The newspaper's treatment of the Klan phenomenon went beyond mere coverage and adverse comment about the movement's anti-Catholic aspects. The editor, a Catholic layman, Joseph Patrick O'Mahony, was actively engaged in anti-Klan activities and urged his Catholic readers to do likewise. O'Mahony, whose twin passions were religion and politics, had always discussed most of the current political issues in detail. Though the editor's Republican sympathies were difficult to conceal, these extensive political discussions did not necessarily mean advancing the political fortunes of specific candidates for public office. As the Klan became

¹John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p. 86.

active in Indiana politics, O'Mahony's discussions extended to specific recommendations of candidates who were opposed to the Klan. Although the Indiana Catholic and Record did not have investigative or political reporters, it imparted a steady stream of reporting on the Klan throughout the 1920's. For this study, the newspaper, especially its editorials, were carefully studied during this period. The newspaper's views on the Klan have been divided into two broad categories: the Klan's activities and the editor's recommendations for opposing the Klan; and the editor's views on fighting the Klan's involvement in Indiana politics. Extensive excerpts from many editorials have been quoted to impart an idea of the editor's vigorous style of writing. Although these quotations may appear lengthy, they represent only a small part of this dedicated editor's prodigious editorial output on the Klan issue.

In this study a brief history of the Klan and the Indiana political background of the 1920's were reconstructed from secondary sources as well as magazine and newspaper articles of the period. Although the study of the Indiana Klan has fascinated many students of the twenties, there are surprisingly few good accounts of the movement in Indiana--certainly no definitive one. A study of the Klan is complicated by the scarcity and questionable reliability of many sources. Many materials were destroyed by Klansmen; Indiana Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson's house and its interesting contents were destroyed

by fire under suspicious circumstances. The sycophantic Klan journal, Fiery Cross, though interesting, is often unreliable. It must be remembered that the Klan was a secret society whose important undertakings were kept secret even from the rank-and-file members. Presumably much of the business and decision-making were conducted viva voce; thus there would be few records to study. Despite the lacunae in evidence and the occasional conflicts from different accounts, the background of the Klan has been presented as accurately as possible as a setting for the Indiana Catholic and Record's views.

CHAPTER I

THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN INDIANA AND THE INDIANA CATHOLIC AND RECORD

The Roman Catholics of Indiana comprised the largest of Indiana's three minorities of Negroes, Jews, and Catholics against whom the Klan directed its attack. A 1922 census compiled by Church authorities in Indiana showed that 133,780 Catholics resided in the fifty southern Indiana counties forming the diocese of Indianapolis. 161,402 Catholics resided in the forty-two northern Indiana counties of the diocese of Fort Wayne. Thus there were 295,182 Catholics in Indiana according to Church records.¹ The United States Bureau of the Census on the basis of data from the 1920 census reported 312,194 Catholics in Indiana; this represented an increase of 100,000 in only twenty years.² The lower figure of the Church's census undoubtedly reflected a more accurate number of Catholics in active Church membership than the Census Bureau's figures. The Catholic population greatly exceeded that of the other two minorities.

¹Indiana Catholic and Record, January 5, 1923.

²U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1926 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), II, p. 1256ff.

There were 80,000 Negroes in Indiana in 1920.³ The census of religious bodies reported 23,622 Jews in Indiana. Of the 1,312,818 Hoosier church members in 1920, twenty-three per cent were Catholics. In the total population of the state, Catholics formed only about ten per cent. One source generously estimated the voting strength of Hoosier Catholics as 137,000.⁴ It would be difficult to argue convincingly, as the Klan attempted to do, that Catholics formed a bloc capable of dictating the course of Indiana politics. Indeed, Catholics could hardly have menaced the homogeneity and supposed innocence of Indiana, where, as the New York Times so felicitously stated, the only militant Catholic organization was the Notre Dame football team.⁵

This Catholic minority was served during most of the twenties by a single state-wide Catholic newspaper, the Indiana Catholic and Record. Another influential Catholic journal in Indiana, Our Sunday Visitor, founded in 1912 by its publisher, the Reverend John Francis Noll of Huntington, Indiana, dealt with theological, devotional, and inspirational subjects for a general Catholic readership. This publication had been conceived as an antidote against rationalist and socialist thought as well as the proliferating anti-Catholic publications of the

³U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 35.

⁴New York Times, October 16, 1924.

⁵Ibid., November 1, 1923.

time. The weekly Visitor achieved a national circulation of over 450,000 by the mid-twenties. Though it undoubtedly enjoyed wide influence in Indiana, the Visitor did not report on local Church-related news. After John F. Noll became bishop of the Fort Wayne diocese in 1925, he added a supplement to the Visitor for subscribers in his diocese called the Harmonizer, which contained Church news and comment. The Harmonizer was designated the official Catholic journal of the Fort Wayne diocese. The circulation of the Indiana Catholic and Record probably diminished in northern Indiana after 1925. Nevertheless, the Indiana Catholic and Record slowly but steadily increased in circulation during the Klan era, attaining 10,050 subscribers in 1926.⁶

The Indiana Catholic and Record was the product of the personal effort and vision of its founder and editor, Joseph Patrick O'Mahony. A native of Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland, O'Mahony immigrated to the United States as a young man in 1890. He was employed in the newspaper business in Baltimore and Indianapolis for the next seventeen years. In 1907 he joined the Catholic Columbian-Record. This newspaper was known originally as the Catholic Columbian, edited in Columbus, Ohio. In 1895 the Catholic Columbian acquired a struggling Indianapolis newspaper, the Catholic Record, founded and edited by Alexander

⁶ American Newspaper Annual and Directory, A Catalogue of American Newspapers (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer's and Sons), p. 304.

Chomel. Henceforth the Ohio-based newspaper, which also circulated in Indiana, was known as the Catholic Columbian-Record. O'Mahony was hired by this publication to work at its Indianapolis office in the hope of strengthening the Indiana Church news coverage and circulation. However, his innovative suggestions were rebuffed by the Ohio publisher. O'Mahony soon felt that Hoosier Catholics needed a newspaper entirely devoted to Indiana Church news so he broke with his Ohio employer. With the financial assistance of Indianapolis businessmen, Maurice Donnelly and Michael Gill, O'Mahony raised \$3,000 to start a newspaper venture, which was incorporated as the Indiana Catholic Printing and Publishing Company with a capitalization of \$20,000 allowed. Gill was president of the corporation, Donnelly, treasurer, and several other Irish-American friends filled the other positions. O'Mahony was the editor and the dominant influence. The first issue of the Indiana Catholic, as it was then called, appeared on February 4, 1910. In 1911 O'Mahony acquired the Catholic German-language newspaper, Sternenbanner, published in Evansville. This newspaper had been in a state of decline due to a lessened demand for Catholic news printed in German. Since O'Mahony had no money to pay for the newspaper, its proprietor, Peter Wallrath, accepted some of the difficult-to-sell stock in the Indiana Catholic as payment. In this transaction, the Indiana Catholic acquired some antiquated printing equipment--the paper had hitherto been printed under contract--as well as

the services of Wallrath's two daughters, who covered German Catholic news in English. In March, 1915, the Catholic Columbian-Record, which was still circulating in Indiana with diminishing success, offered to sell the Record to O'Mahony. Still without much capital, O'Mahony could only offer the unsold stock in the Indiana Catholic as payment. With this merger, the Indiana Catholic obtained more equipment and an additional name. Henceforth the newspaper became the Indiana Catholic and Record though it was known simply as the Indiana Catholic to its readers until its demise in 1961.

O'Mahony's journalistic venture was certainly not a financial success in its early years. By 1913 the Indiana Catholic was laboring under a mountain of debt and the imminent possibility of bankruptcy. At that time a young Notre Dame graduate interested in working for a Catholic newspaper, Paul R. Martin, applied to O'Mahony for a position on the Indiana Catholic. The editor, who was barely able to support himself from the newspaper, could not possibly hire anyone else. Young Martin then induced his Protestant grandfather to buy \$5,000 stock in the newspaper--one of the rare infusions of actual capital into the newspaper after its initial establishment. Martin was then hired as associate editor at thirty dollars per week. O'Mahony himself had been drawing only twelve dollars per week. The editor paid off the most pressing of the paper's debts with the \$5,000. He always considered this "miracle" pro-

vided by a Protestant benefactor as the act that saved the Indiana Catholic. Martin left the newspaper in 1917 for greater journalistic opportunities in Chicago. In 1913 the Indiana Catholic acquired the services of Humbert Pagani, a former advertising manager for the Marott shoe stores of Indianapolis, as business manager. O'Mahony, who had been directing all aspects of the newspaper himself, had not devoted adequate attention to business and advertising affairs. Under Pagani's direction, the newspaper climbed out of debt. By 1920 O'Mahony and Pagani bought out the other stockholders.⁷

The Indiana Catholic described itself in every issue as the "Official Organ of the Dioceses of Indianapolis and Fort Wayne" until the Fort Wayne diocese had a separate journal. Short statements of endorsement from Herman Joseph Alerding, bishop of Fort Wayne until his death in 1925, and Joseph Chartrand, bishop of Indianapolis, appeared in every issue.* However, there is no evidence that these prelates exercised an in-

⁷O'Mahony related some facts regarding the history of the journal on the annual anniversary of its establishment. He recounted in detail the newspaper's history as it began its fifteenth year of publication. Indiana Catholic and Record, February 15, 1924.

*"The Indiana Catholic and Record has done great service to the cause of religion and its work and development are cordially recommended to the zeal of the pastors of this diocese. Joseph Chartrand, Bishop of Indianapolis."

"The Indiana Catholic and Record, our paper in Indiana, is doing valiant service to religion and could accomplish much more if it received the support it needs and is entitled to. Herman J. Alerding, Bishop of Fort Wayne."

fluence on the editorial policy of the newspaper. Indeed, an extensive reading of the editorials confirms the impression that the newspaper was the personal organ of its editor. The Indiana Catholic did carry the periodic pastoral letters of the bishops as well as their official announcements and appointments. This is the only evidence of the journal's "official" status. O'Mahony always boasted that the paper had been entirely the enterprise of Catholic laymen from its beginning. Unlike virtually all other diocesan newspapers, the Indiana Catholic was neither owned by nor enjoyed the financial support of the two dioceses it served.

The coverage and editorial positions taken by the Indiana Catholic ranged far beyond religious concerns. Unlike Bishop Noll in Our Sunday Visitor, O'Mahony was eager to express himself on any subject whether there was a Catholic interest in the matter or not. The editorial page of every issue contained lengthy columns of rambling editorial writing. The movement for Irish independence always commanded a great deal of attention. As World War I began, O'Mahony expressed an almost lyrical appreciation of Germany as that nation waged war against the hated British. One historian has described the journal's place in the pro-German agitation of the period: "The Indiana Catholic . . . took the lead in the movement in Indiana and became the most influential pro-German paper in the state."⁸

⁸Cedric Cummins, "Indiana Looks at the World War, 1914," Indiana Magazine of History, XXXVII (December, 1941), p. 331.

Since Indiana's Catholic population was predominantly of Irish and German extraction, O'Mahony's fulminations undoubtedly made welcome reading in many quarters. When the United States entered World War I, he reluctantly endorsed the Allied cause. However, the editor, always a devout Republican, held Woodrow Wilson, whom he regarded as an anti-Catholic and anti-Irish bigot, and the Democratic party responsible for saving Great Britain. This strident Republican partisanship of a newspaper serving a Catholic population that O'Mahony estimated at seventy per cent Democratic in political allegiance caused a slackening of subscription renewals. Nevertheless the editorial themes established during the war continued into the twenties. The postwar political upheaval in Ireland was reported in detail from the editor's strongly Irish nationalist viewpoint. The League of Nations was condemned as a cover for British imperialism. This irrational Anglophobia affected the coverage of many issues, especially the Klan. However, O'Mahony's Republican partisanship lessened as that party came under the influence of the Klan in Indiana.

Despite the extensive news and comment on secular subjects, it must be remembered that the Indiana Catholic was essentially a religious publication. Articles of doctrinal exposition, devotional pieces, and religious poetry as well as local Church news appeared in the journal. After the establishment of the National Catholic News Service in 1920, the Indiana

Catholic made full use of its news stories on Church activities in the United States and around the world. This news service also provided extensive coverage to Klan activities around the country in the twenties.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan originated in the post-Civil War era in the South. Initially it was founded as a fraternal organization for Confederate war veterans and led by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest of Tennessee. However, the Klan found a less than fraternal purpose in the convulsed South of this period. The intimidation and even murder of the newly-freed Negroes in the name of white supremacy and the restoration of some form of the southern tradition became the principal activity of the Klan. The antipathies of the Klan at this time were confined to Negroes. As a young man, Chief Justice Edward White, a Catholic from Louisiana, participated in what he called this "uprising of outraged manhood."¹ General Forrest ordered the Klan to disband in 1869 because of its violent manifestations. This order was generally obeyed. With the restoration of stability and order in the South for which the Klan yearned, its activities came to an end by 1872 though the vigilante spirit did not die out in the South.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a revival

¹Eric Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny, A History of Modern American Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 177.

of the Klan haunted the imagination of a southern romantic, "Colonel" William J. Simmons, a sometime Methodist preacher, salesman, and an incurable joiner. He was a member of Baptist and Congregationalist churches as well as any veterans and fraternal organization that would take him. Fraternalism was his life. Assuming the title of Imperial Wizard, he organized the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 in Atlanta as a "High class order for men of intelligence and character; the World's greatest secret, social, patriotic, fraternal, beneficiary order."² Like other fraternal organizations, Simmons' Klan sought a white Protestant membership, but it did not campaign against other minority groups. The Klan made some headway in attracting members at its beginning, which coincided with the Atlanta premier showing of the nativist epic movie, The Birth of a Nation. The patriotic fervor stimulated by World War I also helped the Klan membership effort. The Klan promoted patriotic activities such as bond-selling campaigns and "100 per cent American" propaganda. Nevertheless the Klan did not greatly attract a populace susceptible to a nativist appeal. Simmons' lack of organizational ability was probably to blame for this. Not until experienced publicists, Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, were attracted to the cause in 1920 did the movement advance. Simmons willingly turned over recruitment activities to these indefatigable organizers while he was content to reap handsome profits on mem-

²David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 30.

bership fees and the sale of the official Klan paraphernalia. The Klan burgeoned throughout the South after stirring a wave of resentment against Negroes, Orientals, Jews, Catholics, radicals, and aliens. Valuable unsolicited publicity was obtained in 1921 when a congressional committee investigated the Klan. Still the political import of the secret organization was lost on Imperial Wizard Simmons, who looked upon the Klan as primarily a fraternal and patriotic lodge.

For a fraternal body, there was much unbrotherly infighting. In a leadership struggle at the Klan's first National Klonvokation in 1922, Simmons, whose heavy drinking and high living were embarrassing to many Klansmen, was elevated to the newly created and purely honorary position of Emperor for life. Elizabeth Tyler was safely married off. E.Y. Clarke, whose personal conduct was suspect, was shoved aside with the honorary position of Imperial Giant with hero's cross. The ascendancy of the new leader, Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans, a Vanderbilt University graduate and a Dallas dentist, was a turning point in the development of the Klan. Henceforth, the Klan would have a more sophisticated spokesman for its nativist message.

The views articulated by Imperial Wizard Evans were representative of the nativist ideology of the Klan. The standard of "100 per cent Americanism" was applied to suspect minorities. Negroes, since they belonged to an inherently inferior race, could never attain the high level of civilization enjoyed by

the white Anglo-Saxons who were the "100 per cent Americans." However, Negroes were to be protected because of their inferiority. What they were to be protected from was not clear. Jews represented another group that failed to meet pure American standards. It was apparent that Jews owed a prior loyalty to the interests of their race because they had never been fully assimilated into any society in which they lived. The foreign-born fell short of the standard of pure Americanism because they had not been born and educated in the national virtues. Finally the very nature of Catholicism itself made its adherents unnameable to genuine Americanism. Imperial Wizard Evans declared:

The real objection to Romanism in America is not that it is a religion,--which is no objection at all--but that it is a church in politics; an organized, disciplined, powerful rival to every political government. A religion in politics is serious; a church in politics is deadly to free institutions. . . .

To them the Presidency at Washington is subordinate to the priesthood in Rome. The parochial school alone is sufficient proof of a divided allegiance, a separatist instinct. They demand that our future citizens be trained not in public schools but under the control and influence of a priesthood that teaches supreme loyalty to a religious oligarchy that is not even of American domicile.³

The problem of Catholicism was closely linked to the danger to pure Americanism represented by immigrants:

Most of its members in this country are aliens, and the Church makes no effort to help them become assimilated to Americanism, but actually works to prevent this and keeps the Catholics as a group apart.⁴

³Arnold Rice, The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics (New York: Haskell Press, 1972), p. 22.

⁴Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Catholic Question as Viewed by the Ku Klux Klan," Current History, XXVI (July, 1927), p. 563.

These objections to Catholicism expressed by Imperial Wizard Evans are not far removed in substance from the basic arguments employed by noted secular opponents of Catholicism even to the present time. Moreover, the anti-Catholic appeal in the Klan movement was supplemented by propagating the folklore of anti-Catholicism. The belief in the imminent revolt of American Catholics in order to establish the rule of the Pope over the United States was widely held. There was also the widespread circulation of a bogus oath supposedly sworn to by initiates of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization. This oath enjoined members to "hang, burn, boil, flay, and bury alive" all non-Catholics at an opportune moment.⁵ The belief in the Catholic Church's inordinate lust for political power was fortified by the naive assumption that a cunning Catholic hierarchy could and even wanted to manipulate the political behavior of Catholics to attain this end. Furthermore, far from objecting to Catholicism as a religion, Klan propaganda featured lurid literature and lectures about the supposed inner workings and practices of the Catholic Church. These anti-Catholic appeals paid off for the Klan. A noted authority on the Klan during the twenties, sociologist John Moffatt Mecklin, found that fear of Catholicism was the most potent selling-point in recruiting members for the burgeoning Klan.⁶

⁵Chalmers, op. cit., p. 111.

⁶John Moffatt Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1924), p. 157.

The Klan movement enjoyed one of its greatest recruitment successes north of the Mason-Dixon line in Indiana. Though the precise origins of the Klan in Indiana are somewhat obscure, all accounts point to its initial establishment in Evansville late in 1920 as a result of the organizational efforts of E.Y. Clarke.

A dynamic member of the Evansville Klan, David Curtis Stephenson, soon headed the local Klan Klavern. Stephenson, a native of Texas and a recent arrival in Evansville, had become a quick success in the coal and gravel business. He was deliberately vague about his past life; however, it was known that he had lived in several places in the South, had been married and divorced at least once, and had served in the Army during World War I. Stephenson's claim of service in France has never been substantiated. In Evansville, he initially became actively involved in veterans organizations--a frequent springboard to politics in Indiana. He was an effective organizer and a master of the fustian rhetoric about God, home, and country that Hoosiers found stirring. However, he was not a man of firm prejudices. In a try for political office in 1922, Stephenson unsuccessfully ran as a "wet" in the Democratic primary for the United States House of Representatives. Following his loss, he adjusted his politics and his views on prohibition. Accordingly, he became a Republican and in keeping with the Klan's goal of moral purity a "dry." Nevertheless, his fondness

for alcohol persisted. Like a host of prohibition era politicians, Stephenson, as O'Mahony noted, "drank wet but voted dry."⁷ As a transplanted southerner, Stephenson undoubtedly subscribed to white supremacy on the race question, but a gnawing fear of Negroes as well as Jews and Catholics that characterized many Klansmen was not apparent in his personality. Stephenson's principal motivation in the Klan movement was not so much the advancement of the Klan ideal as his personal pursuit of money and power. He openly declared his hope to be elected president of the United States.

After becoming leader of the Evansville Klan, Stephenson was assigned by E.Y. Clarke to direct Klan recruitment in Indiana with the title of King Kleagle. Later Stephenson was to be in charge of recruitment throughout the Midwest. Under his direction the Klan made rapid progress in Indiana. He tried new methods of promotional activity such as bestowing a free Klan membership on every Protestant clergyman in the state, though a large number declined this dubious honor. Nevertheless, he made frequent use of fundamentalist ministers--usually from Baptist, Methodist, and Disciples of Christ denominations--as Klan lecturers. Every local Klavern had its official chaplain called the Kludd. The use of ministers was intended to make the Klan appeal appear as respectable and sacred as possible. A favorite ploy in gaining the attention of a Protestant con-

⁷Indiana Catholic and Record, January 21, 1927.

gregation was the ostentatious interruption of a church service by a delegation of robed and hooded Klansmen to make a generous donation to the church.⁸ Happily, many congregations refused to be subverted in this manner and rejected the gift. By 1923 several local denominational bodies and ministerial associations were denouncing the Klan intrusion into the churches. The Klan's attempt to use the churches left many Protestant congregations divided and racked with controversy.

Stephenson played an important role in the national Klan organization. He participated in the Klan infighting at Atlanta that resulted in the elevation of Hiram Wesley Evans to the Imperial Wizardship in 1922. Evans was hereafter indebted to Stephenson for his support at the national Klonvokation. The Klan constitution provided for the direction of a state Klan organization from Atlanta until its numbers justified conferring the status of realm within the so-called "Invisible Empire" of the Klan. In reality the Imperial headquarters was usually reluctant to accord this semi-independent status because a large portion of the initiation fee of ten dollars--the so-called Klec-token--and other assessments could be retained by the state realm. In view of Stephenson's past support, Evans granted the Indiana Klan the charter of a realm with Stephenson as its first Grand Dragon at an immense rally at Melfalfa Park on the outskirts of Kokomo, Indiana on July 4, 1923. The Indiana Klan claimed

⁸Morton Harrison, "Gentlemen from Indiana," Atlantic Monthly, CLXI (May, 1928), p. 679.

a membership of 400,000 at this time.⁹ This was probably a very generous accounting of the Klan's secret membership rolls.

The Klan was at the height of its strength in Indiana in the summer of 1923. The number of members probably reached its peak by late 1923. Many more Hoosiers, though they declined to join, undoubtedly shared the views of the Klan. After a period of intensive membership recruitment, the Klan in Indiana as in other states sought to find an outlet for its fervent righteousness in civic and political activities.¹⁰

The Indiana Klan attempted to engage in some charitable work, particularly for its members. At Christmas time baskets of food were distributed to the poor. The Klan took pains to point out that needy Negroes and Catholics were also the recipients of this charity.¹¹ However, this kind of charitable work was not extensive. In fact it appeared that it was engaged in for its public relations value. The indignity of being treated in Catholic hospitals was a regular theme in Klan literature. Despite the lip service paid to the need for building Protestant hospitals, there was no serious attempt sponsored by the Klan to build them.

The state of Indiana had unwittingly provided the basis

⁹Fiery Cross, July 13, 1923.

¹⁰Norman F. Weaver, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of History, University of Wisconsin, 1954), p. 163.

¹¹Fiery Cross, January 5, 1923.

for Klan vigilante action as early as 1852 with the Horse Thief Act. Under this law, volunteers could organize a constabulary force and appoint their own officers after obtaining the authorization of the county commissioners thus forming a Horse Thief Detective Association. These volunteer constables could then exercise police power in pursuing horse thieves or other law violators. Although the capture of horse thieves may not have been the law enforcement problem it had been in 1852, there were other law violations in the twenties that could be dealt with. The uneven enforcement of national prohibition aroused the indignation of the righteous. The Horse Thief Detective Association became a logical vehicle for direct action for good by Klansmen. An often admiring public received concrete proof of the Klan's devotion to law and order, when the Klan could lawfully break up distilling operations, arrest bootleggers, as well as uphold the moral code of the community by breaking up brothels and disrupting petting parties. The Horse Thief Detective Associations, whose members were virtually all Klansmen, were responsible for bringing some 3,000 prohibition violators to justice in 1922 and 1923.¹² In this uplifting work in the battle against alcohol, the Klan enjoyed the sympathy of the influential Anti-Saloon League. In view of the legality the Klan's activities were accorded through these associations in each county, Stephenson's often repeated remark: "I am the

¹²Max Bentley, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana," McClure's Magazine, LVI (May, 1924), pp. 23-24.

law in Indiana," was less than an idle boast.¹³

Many comentators on Indiana have noted how naturally Hoosiers take to politics. Indiana has had a strong two-party system. Elections were hard fought by party loyalists and often closely won. A noted Indiana historian, Jacob Piatt Dunn, described Hoosier political partisanship as "a passion as strong as religion."¹⁴ Organizations that were not strictly speaking political inevitably became involved in the political process such as the Anti-Saloon League and the American Legion. Given the Klan's stand in favor of pure Americanism and moral conformity, it naturally entered the political arena to influence the state government in its own vision. With its hierarchical structure, the Klan could be easily mobilized for effective political action--at least in theory. Stephenson, a man of boundless personal ambition as well as organizational ability, was capable of effective if misguided political leadership.

Stephenson organized a political network in Indiana that was called the "military machine." The machine was supposedly a nonpartisan effort at political education. Candidates acceptable to the Klan regardless of party were endorsed; slates of candidates designated as favorable to or opposed to Klan ideals were distributed to Klansmen; and canvassing and trans-

¹³John Bartlow Martin, Indiana: An Interpretation (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1947), p. 184.

¹⁴Jacob Piatt Dunn, Indiana and Indianans (3 vols.; New York and Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919), II, p. 729.

portation of voters to the polls were organized. The machine was coordinated by a state leader distinct from the Grand Dragon, a colonel was in charge of each congressional district, a county was commanded by a major, each township had a captain, a lieutenant for a precinct, and a sergeant was responsible for twenty voters in his neighborhood.¹⁵ The machine was also responsible for compiling a dossier on every candidate for public office in the state. This formidable secret system was never entirely implemented. Some areas were not effectively organized for political purposes, while others, especially the powerful Muncie Klan, tended to resist direction from above. Although it is difficult to know with certainty how extensively and effectively the machine worked on the local level, the Klan's support was decisive in many contests for local and state offices for several years before 1926.

The success of the Klan in gaining members did not mean that the organization's well understood but often ill-defined goals of pure Americanism and moral conformity could advance in influence pari passu with the expanding membership rolls. The secret organization could not deal with the problems raised by conflicting programs of Klan leaders or their competing vanities. Imperial Wizard Evans, as he surveyed his far-flung "Invisible Empire," must have contemplated with horror the thought

¹⁵ John Augustus Davis, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1920-1930: An Historical Study" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of History, Northwestern University, 1966), pp. 125-127.

of bringing the organization into the political arena. Factions were already forming within the Klan. Stephenson and the Imperial Wizard were engaged in a personality conflict shortly after the chartering of the Indiana realm. A principal cause of disaffection was the high financial tribute exacted by Imperial officials in Atlanta. The issue of Klan funds was brought to public attention in April, 1923, when Emperor Simmons sued Evans for the share of the funds that the erstwhile Klan leader felt he was entitled to. The publicity about lawsuits and large sums of money that Klan leaders were receiving did not help the organization. Given the potential for dissension among Klansmen, Evans hoped to confine the organization's political activities to supporting pure Americans for public office and aiding the existing forces for moral purity by supporting prohibition, agitating against radicalism, and upholding white supremacy.¹⁶ Evans was wisely wary of political involvement. Many Klansmen continued to look upon the Klan as a lodge and were content to celebrate their American virtues in the privacy of Klan meetings.

Grand Dragon Stephenson, who had strong personal ambitions of his own, was not content to follow the flexible policy laid down by the Imperial Wizard nor to allow his Indiana Klan to be an appendage to other movements. Stephenson chose to resign all his official Klan positions on September 28, 1923. This startling news was kept from Indiana Klansmen for several

¹⁶Edgar I. Fuller, The Visible of the Invisible Empire (Denver: Maelstrom Publishing Co., 1925), p. 88.

weeks before its announcement in the Fiery Cross.¹⁷ This Indiana Klan journal attributed the resignation to overwork with organizational duties. Stephenson, according to the journal, would be freed for speaking tours and developing ideas for the Klan.¹⁸ Stephenson and Evans promoted the illusion of harmony while both men maneuvered behind the scenes to consolidate their influence with the membership. There was no indication of any differences between the two men in the pages of the Fiery Cross for several months. In fact Stephenson and his allies and the regular Klan organization were working together for the nomination of Republican Ed Jackson for governor in 1924. While Evans appointed an unknown Klansman as Grand Dragon of Indiana, Stephenson retained the loyalty of most Indiana Klansmen in view of his active participation in founding the Klan in the state. An important anti-Stephenson Klansman throughout the period was former Marion County Superior Court Judge Charles J. Orbison. Orbison, a former legal counsel for the national Klan, took an active part in the Klan infighting as Evans' unofficial representative in Indiana.

The winter of 1923-1924 was a period of exchanges of charges and counter-charges in the secrecy of Klan circles. The nature of the differences between Evans and Stephenson and their respective allies was mostly personal. The numer-

¹⁷Fiery Cross, October 12, 1923.

¹⁸Ibid., October 26, 1923.

ous charges were simply calumnies and slanders, a favorite canard being impropriety with women.¹⁹

The conflict between Evans and Stephenson came out in the open after the Klan victory in the Indiana Republican primary in May, 1924. Stephenson announced the organization of a rival Klan organization in Indiana on May 10, 1924. Klan delegates from ninety-one of Indiana's ninety-two counties--many of them seceding from the sovereignty of the Imperial Wizard--met to form the new Indiana Klan with Stephenson elected Grand Dragon.²⁰ Stephenson and his allies chose to regard the formation of the new Klan as a blow for freedom against the southern rule of Evans. Stephenson announced that his Indiana Klan would seek a revision of Indiana's primary election laws and continue the fight against radicalism. As an added touch he filed libel and slander suits against Evans and several Indiana Klansmen sympathetic to the Imperial organization.²¹

The Imperial Wizard and his organization resisted this revolt in Indiana. In view of the magnitude of Stephenson's treachery, Fiery Cross, controlled by the Imperial faction, concluded that he was now a tool of Rome.²² To fight the revolt, Evans allowed his Indiana followers to retain a larger share of

¹⁹ Davis, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

²⁰ Indianapolis News, May 13, 1924.

²¹ Ibid., May 14, 1924.

²² Fiery Cross, May 23, 1924.

the membership dues to strengthen Klan programs in the state. Evans arranged for the selection of a competent Grand Dragon, Walter Bossert, to lead the fight against the insurgents.²³ Though a decisive majority of Klansmen joined the Stephenson organization, the Independent Klan of America, the Imperial Wizard retained the loyalty of the large Marion County Klan.²⁴ The Imperial faction also filed suits against the insurgents including one to prevent them from using the Klan name. The public was thus treated to much revealing publicity about the secret activities of the Klan arising from this litigation. The lawsuits did not benefit either faction of the Klan in the court of public opinion.

The most sensational incident in discrediting the Klan in Indiana was the highly publicized case of the abduction, rape, and murder of Madge Oberholtzer by D.C. Stephenson in March, 1925. This incident probably did more to ruin the Klan than any other event despite Stephenson's subsequent expulsion from his own Independent Klan and the Imperial faction's numerous declarations that Stephenson had not been associated with the genuine Klan for over a year before the incident. Stephenson was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Through a lengthy process of investigation that revealed

²³Indianapolis News, May 19, 1924.

²⁴Fiery Cross, May 23, 1924.

the wrongdoing of Klansmen in Indiana politics, the Ku Klux Klan went into an irreversible decline in prestige and members in the state. Klansmen went down fighting--especially among themselves--until the movement died out completely.

CHAPTER III

KLAN AND ANTI-KLAN ACTIVITIES AS VIEWED BY THE INDIANA CATHOLIC AND RECORD

While the Indiana Catholic reported the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the South on the basis of wire service stories, the rise of the organization in Indiana was only briefly alluded to at the beginning of the twenties. Joseph P. O'Mahony deplored the nativist ideals of the revived Klan. In May, 1921, the editor attacked the Klan's "Anglo-Saxon cult" with its use of the "absurd term 100 per cent Americanism."¹ He took great exception to the incorporation of the Klan in Indiana in August, 1921. Indeed, throughout the twenties, the revocation of the Klan's charter was regularly called for by the Indiana Catholic.

At the same time, O'Mahony, like the Klan, deplored the changing moral consensus of the twenties. In 1921, he called on his Catholic readership to join others to exert "Christian influences" on behalf of stricter divorce statutes.² Like many church people, O'Mahony felt strongly that an adherence to strict religious observance was the sovereign remedy to personal and

¹ Indiana Catholic and Record, May 20, 1921.

² Ibid., April 22, 1921

social ills. However, much as he may have agreed with some of the strict moralizing of the Klan, O'Mahony was opposed to the organization from its first appearance in Indiana.

The Indiana Catholic did not offer its readers a detailed analysis of the Klan's ideals and purposes until January, 1923. O'Mahony reprinted an article by Norman Hapgood from the Hearst International Magazine interspersed with his own extensive comments. With the assumption of Klan leadership by Hiram Wesley Evans in 1922, it was apparent to Hapgood that the Klan would be playing an increasingly active role in politics. In view of the rigid obedience demanded in the Klan's oath of allegiance, the possibilities arising from the control of members' votes were ominous. Hapgood concluded: "This secret society is trying to control the courts, the legislatures, and the Government at Washington."³ O'Mahony emphasized the meaning of this control for his readers:

If the government of the United States is to pass from the hands of the people of this country into the hands of the invisible organization that controls the governors, the legislators, the judges, and the district attorneys elected by the people, not a single citizen of America is safe in life or property. The reign of law is ended under these conditions; justice and equity are banished from the courtrooms of the nation and replaced by the malignant whim of one who even now has the audacity to dub himself Emperor, while claiming citizenship in a free Republic.⁴

In discussing the aims of the Klan, O'Mahony unfortu-

³Ibid., January 5, 1923.

⁴Ibid., January 5, 1923.

nately confused the professed Anglo-Saxonism of the Klan with Britain's supposed interference in the affairs of other countries. Never one to stand shivering in the draft of an open mind, O'Mahony jumped to the conclusion that the Klan was an English plot:

The Indiana Catholic and Record has maintained from the beginning that the Ku Klux Klan organization was not only of English origin, but that its purpose is English--namely to destroy the unity of the people of the United States. We got this information from the organs of the Klan and speeches of E.Y. Clarke and Simmons. All speak of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.⁵

The editor found regular confirmation of this bizarre prejudice that he invariably shared throughout the twenties with his readership.

The alleged preference at Klan rallies for singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee," which is sung to the same melody as "God Save the King," rather than the "Star-Spangled Banner"--virtually unsingable for untrained male voices--indicated the pro-British disposition of the Klan.⁶

The appearance of the Reverend Fred B. Griffith, an evangelist from Northern Ireland and a Klan lecturer, afforded O'Mahony an opportunity for some characteristic sarcasm. Reverend Griffith spoke on "100 per cent Americanism" at the Westview Baptist Church in Indianapolis. O'Mahony opined:

He speaks with a Cockney accent, crossed with a Belfast

⁵ Ibid., March 23, 1923.

⁶ Ibid., September 28, 1923.

brogue, and though the Ku Klux Klan excludes foreigners, they pay the imported propagandist of disunion to speak for them. This is a sure sign of inconsistency highly tinged with insanity. Paying our good Hoosier money to an imported lecturer on Americanism is the limit. The Klan call themselves Anglo-Saxon. We always knew they were the spawn and dupes of British influence which seeks to divide the U.S.A.⁷

With the adversary identified and its purposes perhaps inadequately defined, O'Mahony launched his newspaper's campaign to inform and arouse the Catholic population of Indiana to action against the Klan.

Solidarity among Catholics was the remedy that O'Mahony envisaged as the basis of an effective response to the Klan. The Catholic press was a vehicle for fostering this unity. The annual observance of National Catholic Press Month in February was the occasion for editorials and reprints of articles from other Catholic publications that promoted the necessity for a strong Catholic press. O'Mahony's desire to combat the Klan only augmented in his mind the need for Catholics to support their religious press. He advised readers:

You may get angry and excited and raise your voice and be tempted to raise your hand against the Church's enemy. . . . But when you subscribe to a Catholic paper you are doing something that may not be so spectacular as the other method, but that is much more effective. Indeed, unless you are doing something to support the Catholic press, your righteous indignation against the anti-Catholic campaigner is open to question.⁸

O'Mahony had little regard for Catholic publications

⁷ Ibid., July 13, 1923.

⁸ Ibid., September 21, 1923.

that did not want to denounce and expose the Klan. John Noll's Our Sunday Visitor was rather late in getting into the anti-Klan fray--not until August, 1924. As for other Catholic journals, O'Mahony declared: "All of them will be awake on the subject sooner or later."⁹

The apathy of many Catholics in regard to the Klan challenge was a constant source of irritation to O'Mahony:

All through these years we have had much advice from the 'conservatives,' 'wiseacres,' and other very pious people of our faith: "Let the Klan alone. It will die out. Don't dignify it by mentioning it."¹⁰

He hoped that the anti-Klan effort would be carried on by Catholic voluntary organizations. Only twenty-eight per cent of the adult Catholic population belonged to such organizations as the Knights of Columbus, the National Council of Catholic Men, and the National Council of Catholic Women. This situation alarmed the editor:

It is surely time that the Catholic manhood of Indiana would take some step to protect Catholic rights. If the Catholic manhood of Indiana is not to be found in Catholic societies, where else shall we look for it? Somebody must do the defending, even if they have to push the side-steps and pussy-footers out of the way.¹¹

The editor attributed much of the Catholic indifference to organizing to fight the Klan attacks on the Church to the failure of prominent Catholics to provide the necessary leadership. O'Mahony frequently castigated leading Catholics throughout

⁹ Ibid., August 1, 1923.

¹⁰ Ibid., August 1, 1923.

¹¹ Ibid., January 5, 1923.

the twenties:

The trouble is there are some who would put him [the average Catholic] to sleep--give him, as it were, an opiate, and those kind of persons are generally regarded as prominent, influential, and weighty in the communities where they belong.

They are experts in showing the white flag themselves and chloroforming any sign of activity on the part of others.¹²

When the Indianapolis diocesan convention of the National Council of Catholic Men passed resolutions condemning the Klan, the Indiana Catholic was pleased.¹³ Unfortunately, such declarations probably served to confirm Klansmen in their belief concerning Catholic hostility.

Except for anti-Klan solidarity at the ballot box, O'Mahony was not too specific about what Catholics and their organizations could do in combating the Klan. The anti-Klan activities of the Knights of Columbus in other states had focused on prosecuting those who circulated the bogus Knights of Columbus oath. Although Indiana was flooded with Klan propaganda about the oath and the activities of the Knights of Columbus in general, the local Knights did not take steps to stop purveyors of slander. When Imperial Wizard Evans announced that the Knights of Columbus would be a principal target of the Klan, O'Mahony was not discouraged:

This is welcome news especially here in Indiana. The Knights might show more real spunk if there was a lively

¹² Ibid., January 12, 1923.

¹³ Ibid., February 5, 1924.

fight waged against them, and it may do great good to that great representative Catholic organization in this city.¹⁴

Having in mind an event in New York in which Knights of Columbus attended a Klan lecture en masse, O'Mahony urged this potentially volatile course on Indiana Knights. In the New York meeting, spokesmen for the Knights of Columbus responded to the anti-Catholic contentions of the Klan speaker.

The success of anti-Catholic propaganda in the Klan movement was largely due to the general public's lack of accurate information about Catholicism. O'Mahony blamed this situation on Catholics themselves:

If great numbers of our fellow citizens were in darkness as to the teachings of the Catholic Church and the aims of American Catholics, it was our own fault. We had no propaganda worth mentioning to show the light to our Protestant neighbors. We had too few information bureaus to answer questions and insert advertisements in the daily papers and those we had we didn't support or encourage.¹⁵

The Indiana Catholic commended the Reverend John Rager, pastor of St. Vincent Catholic Church in Shelbyville, Indiana, for buying space in the town's two newspapers to explain Catholic beliefs and practices.¹⁶ This was done in the hope of stemming the tide of rumor and misinformation about the Catholic Church that was rife in the town.

O'Mahony repeatedly noted that the tiny group of 20,000 Catholics of "darkest Georgia" were energetically supporting

¹⁴ Ibid., November 6, 1925.

¹⁵ Ibid., April 17, 1925.

¹⁶ Ibid., February 29, 1924.

a Catholic information campaign by placing paid advertisements in newspapers throughout the state to explain Catholic positions. Such an agency, the Catholic Information Bureau, was eventually incorporated in Indianapolis in August, 1924.¹⁷ William M. Madden, head of an Indianapolis accounting firm, was chosen president of the Bureau; several leading Catholic businessmen of the capital city filled other positions and evidently paid for the Bureau's operations. O'Mahony was the vice-president of the Bureau. The Indianapolis Knights of Columbus also rendered financial assistance.

O'Mahony himself was a prime mover in the establishment of the Bureau, which he said originated in the offices of the Indiana Catholic. The editor had been enraged because the general press coverage of Klan activities in Indiana also included giving publicity to the anti-Catholic allegations of leading Klansmen. To counteract this situation, O'Mahony had collected funds from well-to-do Catholics and placed advertisements in the Indianapolis newspapers. The incorporation of the Catholic Information Bureau simply institutionalized this activity. At its headquarters in the Fidelity Trust Building in Indianapolis, the Bureau answered personal inquiries concerning Catholicism. However, its principal activity consisted in placing paid advertisements in the daily press in Indiana to answer current anti-Catholic propaganda. The advertisements did not

¹⁷ Ibid., August 22, 1924.

represent an attempt to proselytize.

One of the most noteworthy of the Bureau's many publicity campaigns was aimed at Helen Jackson, a self-styled escaped nun and the noted author of Convent Cruelties. Mrs. Jackson lectured around the state in 1924, often at Klan gatherings. Her real past had been established by investigations in other states. The Bureau placed advertisements in newspapers preceding her lectures stating that she had briefly been a student at a convent boarding school.¹⁸

O'Mahony considered the work done by the Bureau a great success. However, he thought its work went unappreciated among Catholics. He hoped the activities of the Bureau would continue, but it suspended operation in April, 1925 after the state legislature adjourned. O'Mahony attributed the failure of anti-Catholic proposals in the General Assembly to the Bureau's information campaign. With anti-Catholic feeling apparently subdued, supporters of the Bureau felt that there was no further need to continue. O'Mahony disagreed:

This work must be kept up by someone or by some organization if we are to be prepared for the next wave of bigotry. In the meantime let's welcome the era of good will and fraternity that has apparently made its appearance here in our own state, and let us go along in the spirit of forgiveness and charity.¹⁹

An organization especially dear to O'Mahony, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, made anti-Klan publicity its principal

¹⁸ Ibid., October 3, 1924.

¹⁹ Ibid., April 17, 1925.

order of business in an elaborate St. Patrick's Day celebration at Indianapolis on March 17, 1923.* The featured speaker at the celebration, Patrick O'Donnell, president of the American Unity League of Chicago, gave a rousing address on the menace of the Klan. For the next few years, O'Mahony regularly reprinted the following quotation from O'Donnell's speech:

Mark, what I tell you. If they are not exposed and driven from Indiana, they, the Ku Klux Klan, will corrupt your juries, dominate your elections, elect their puppets to power and place, undermine your laws, and violate the principles of your constitution.²⁰

O'Donnell's American Unity League had been organized in Chicago after the Klan made its appearance there in 1921. It was designed to promote genuine Americanism, as opposed to the spurious type the Klan was sponsoring. Its altruistic purpose is evident in the organization's title. Although the League's leadership was composed of men of several minorities headed by its honorary chairman, Negro Bishop Samuel Fallows of the Reformed Episcopal Church, it is apparent that the active membership was largely composed of feisty Irish Catholics.²¹ Its president and guiding force was Patrick "Mad Pat" O'Donnell, a pugnacious trial lawyer. Under his direction the League's

²⁰ Ibid., March 23, 1923.

²¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 103.

* O'Mahony served as the editor of this organization's national journal, the National Hibernian, when Judge James Deery of Indianapolis was the organization's national president. By custom the journal was edited in the hometown of the national president.

principal work was the exposure of the Klan's secret undertakings and especially the publication of the Klan's secret membership rolls in the American Unity League journal, Tolerance. This activity required the employment of less than straightforward means to obtain the lists. A chapter of the American Unity League was organized in Indianapolis in April, 1923, apparently in the wake of the enthusiasm aroused at the Hibernians' St. Patrick's Day rally. Judge James Deery was elected president of the Indianapolis League chapter with prominent local Negroes, Jews, and white Protestants filling other positions.²²

The Fiery Cross was enraged by the establishment of the local chapter. The Klan offered to pay \$50,000 to Catholic charities if it could be proved that the Klan was anti-Catholic or against any other minority. The money would gladly be paid--not to O'Donnell and company--but to "real" Catholics like Bishops Chartrand and Alerding.²³

O'Mahony endorsed the American Unity League's activities, urging Catholics to get involved in the organization:

There are some 'pussyfoot' Catholics here who don't [see the danger of the Klan] and who hold back from joining the only practical method of combating the Ku Klux Klan--the formation of an effective organization of all elements in Indiana assailed by the Klan. So far as we know the Unity League is the only vehicle for this purpose. It should have branches.²⁴

²² Indianapolis News, May 8, 1923.

²³ Fiery Cross, April 6, 1923.

²⁴ Indiana Catholic and Record, August 31, 1923.

While articles and speeches by League officials were reprinted in the Indiana Catholic from time to time, there was little news about the success of its local activities. The League did not enjoy in Indianapolis the triumphs it had known in Chicago.²⁵ The exposure of leading businessmen as Klansmen resulted in great excitement in the Chicago community. The subsequent boycott of Klan businesses there, where Catholics and other minorities were numerous, could spell economic disaster to the businesses in question. The publication of the secret membership lists of Indiana Klansmen in Tolerance barely got started. After Tolerance published the names of 12,000 Hoosier Klansmen, the Indiana Klan obtained a temporary injunction--later made permanent--against the publication of any more names.²⁶ In any case a boycott of Klan businesses in Indianapolis, where minorities were relatively small, would not have been successful. The use of the boycott was not recommended by the Indiana Catholic. Catholic businesses possibly suffered from the Klan because the Fiery Cross published a list of Indianapolis businesses owned by Catholics.²⁷ It is not likely that a conscientious Klansman would patronize them.

After the initial exhortation and even exultation following the establishment of the American Unity League in Indianapolis,

²⁵Jackson, op. cit., p. 149.

²⁶Indianapolis News, May 28, 1923.

²⁷Fiery Cross, April 27, 1923; May 11, 1923.

O'Mahony had little more to say about it as a vehicle for anti-Klan unity--possibly because of its lack of effectiveness in the state. Nevertheless, cooperation among peoples of all creeds and races in the fight against the Klan was repeatedly called for. For instance, readers were urged to attend the anti-Klan lecture of Doctor Samuel Parks Cadman, president of the Federal Council of Churches at Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis in December, 1925. O'Mahony was satisfied with this occasion but somewhat ruefully noted the lack of unity among the anti-Klan forces except at such meetings:

The Good Will meeting Tuesday night in Indianapolis was a wonderful thing in its way, and might accomplish wonders if the Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Negroes, who were present to the number of 9,000, were properly organized like the forces of hate and evil are here in our home city. Because they are organized they act together and count on election day.²⁸

The anti-Klan elements never realized the unity and influence that O'Mahony hoped for.

Throughout the twenties, O'Mahony often took exception to the policy of some Indiana daily papers concerning the Klan. Although the Indianapolis newspapers would eventually take stands of varying degrees of disapproval against the Klan, their treatment of Klan activities frequently meant publicizing the anti-Catholic statements of leading Klansmen. O'Mahony's harsh attitude was expressed in an unsubstantiated charge:

²⁸ Indiana Catholic and Record, December 18, 1925.

The Indianapolis daily papers have some Ku Klux Klan reporters and some Kluxers on the desk who take their orders not from the managing editor but from the 'Invisible Empire's' Emperor and suppress the news.²⁹

He was in this case reacting to the lack of coverage given to anti-Klan activities.

O'Mahony's ire was aroused when the Indianapolis News publicized a speech given by Imperial Wizard Evans at Dallas. He contended that the Wizard's address was not newsworthy:

It contained all the trash and humbug that has disgusted every decent American citizen ever since the 'Invisible Empire' began to function. There was no news in it. But the Indianapolis News printed it as news and gave its valuable space to the ravings of the Wizard to the exclusion of real news.

The point that we want to make and that we have made is that a supposed impartial newspaper, which prides itself on keeping clear of religious controversies is not fair or impartial when it uses an article of this kind and refuses to use the articles that give the other side of the question.³⁰

The News had declined to print O'Mahony's detailed commentary on the Wizard's remarks because the paper feared igniting religious strife. When Imperial Wizard Evans addressed a Klan rally at Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis in February, 1924, O'Mahony obtained an advance copy of the speech. He composed a reply to the charges made by the Wizard, which appeared in the daily Indianapolis newspapers as paid advertisements on the day following the rally.³¹ This, of course, was a forerunner of the Catholic Information Bureau's activities.

²⁹ Ibid., July 6, 1923.

³⁰ Ibid., October 26, 1923.

³¹ Ibid., February 15, 1924.

The Indianapolis newspapers also offended O'Mahony by the lack of coverage given to Oklahoma Governor John C. Walton's outlawing the Klan in his state--a course the editor hoped would be taken in Indiana. Governor Walton, a native of Henry County, Indiana, had taken a variety of legal measures against the Klan culminating in placing the entire state under martial law. The Oklahoma Klan's vigilante actions to preserve conformity in the state had caused the Governor to arrest Klansmen on sight. O'Mahony was exultant:

There is not a governor in the nation nor a mayor in any city in this country who could not with justice do the same. All this talk about an executive having no law to act upon is all silly twaddle served up to fools and peddled around by tricksters and charlatans. Walton of Oklahoma has shown the way. Let's make the others take the same action.³²

The editorial writers of the Indianapolis newspapers, who usually "discuss every subject from the North Pole to the Straits of Magellan," ignored this topic that had been reported in the Indiana Catholic in great detail. O'Mahony blasted this omission on Walton of Oklahoma:

The most amazing display of utter cowardice in the history of the newspaper profession is exhibited here in Indianapolis by the editorial silence of the great dailies on the condition in Oklahoma. . . .

The fact is that the dailies here are as cowardly as the professional politicians. They fear the loss of some 'rube' subscribers. The politicians fear the loss of some 'rube' voters.

Both have degraded Indiana in the eyes of all decent upstanding American men, who are for the Republic and against the 'Invisible Empire.'³³

³² Ibid., September 14, 1923.

³³ Ibid., September 21, 1923.

When the Federal District Court in Oregon declared unconstitutional Oregon's Klan-sponsored law requiring all children to attend public schools, O'Mahony was disappointed that the Indianapolis News did not adequately publicize this setback for the Klan:

The Indianapolis daily papers gave very little notice to this big story. The News had a good editorial on the subject but did not carry the Associated Press report from the Portland office. The editorial comment was fine but the readers of the News we feel sure would have liked to read the facts of the famous decision. We suppose the dispatch was 'inadvertently' lost or that a Klux copy reader wrapped it around his laundry by mistake.³⁴

Needless to say, the Indiana Catholic gave extensive coverage to the Oregon story.

Although O'Mahony wanted Catholics to become involved in public affairs, he was indignant at the frequent suggestion that only Catholics had an interest in advancing certain causes. Otto Ray, a labor union official and the only Catholic member of the Indianapolis City Council before the 1925 election, introduced a bill for a city ordinance prohibiting mask-wearing in public except at Halloween. The Indianapolis News, which supported this anti-Klan measure in an editorial, described a meeting of the City Council at which the measure was discussed as being attended mostly by Catholics. O'Mahony bristled at the suggestion that only Catholics had an interest in this matter:

³⁴Ibid., April 4, 1924.

We don't know where the News got its information from but that part of the information was entirely erroneous.

The committee chosen to present the matter to the Council had only one Catholic on it, Judge Deery. The others were Rev. Sumner Williams, the eminent colored Protestant minister, Dr. Amelia Keller, a non-Catholic, and Attorney Ralph Bamberger, one of the most representative Jews in the City. Surely this committee wasn't mostly composed of Roman Catholics. As to the great throng of over 5,000 that crowded in and around the City Hall, we will venture to say that not one half was Catholic, but if Catholics were in a majority, they are always pretty numerous in every good movement.³⁵

The anti-mask proposal was eventually defeated.

Other Indiana newspapers did not escape his notice. O'Mahony was offended by the Terre Haute Tribune, which extensively covered Klan rallies and parades and thus the Klan message in that city. What particularly galled O'Mahony was the fact that the newspaper's editor, William J. Cronin, was a Catholic, though the newspaper's publisher was not.³⁶

O'Mahony had little to say about the anti-Klan crusade of the Indianapolis Times, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 for exposing Klan-related political corruption in Indiana. O'Mahony, being a Republican, regularly took issue with the Democratic Times on various political issues so it is apparent that he did read it.

While O'Mahony's criticism of the Indiana press was overdrawn at times, his views were not altogether irresponsible. The Indianapolis News was surely not Klan-oriented as he sug-

³⁵ Ibid., January 19, 1923.

³⁶ Ibid., May 11, 1923.

gested; in fact the newspaper endorsed anti-Klan candidates for public office. It is interesting to note that while O'Mahony thought that the News was directed by the Klan, the Fiery Cross felt that the Indiana press in general was in the clutches of Rome. The New York Times offered the following revealing vignette on the journalistic situation in Indiana in the Klan era:

Probably this is a generalization from inadequate data, but it is recalled that an Indiana journalist recently here on a visit, when questioned as to what position his paper took in regard to the Klan, said that he printed neither news about it nor editorial comment on its proceedings. When told that this course was not exactly brave, he replied that, on the contrary, it was nearly or quite heroic, for there was not a little danger for an Indiana paper, nowadays, in not giving vigorous support to Klansmen and Klan ideas, and this he had not done and would not do, whatever happened to him or his paper.³⁷

The Indiana Catholic naturally could never be accused of equivocating on the Klan issue. However, it did not, like the general circulation newspapers, face the problem of intimidation from a large Klan readership.

Although the Ku Klux Klan professed to represent the purest manifestation of Protestantism, the Indiana Catholic publicized the fact that it did not. O'Mahony informed his readers how stable Protestant congregations could be subverted through Klan interference:

Every opportunity is eagerly seized upon by self-seeking leaders of the mob to identify Protestant ministers and Protestant congregations with the campaign of bigotry

³⁷ New York Times, November 3, 1923.

and intolerance. Services are interrupted that sums of money may be handed to the minister by the masked missionaries of misrule to encourage him to preach the doctrine of persecution rather than the gospel of peace.³⁸

O'Mahony always held that the vast majority of American Protestants were fair-minded and not anti-Catholic. To emphasize this point, the denunciation of the Klan by leading Protestant clergymen and denominational bodies formed a prominent part of anti-Klan coverage.

The earliest denunciation made by a local Protestant clergyman recorded in the Indiana Catholic was also reported in the daily press. The Reverend Gustav Hiller, pastor-emeritus of the Irvington Methodist Church and editor of the religious publication, Promise, interrupted a Klan evangelist at the Cadle Tabernacle to challenge his statements.³⁹ Reverend Hiller, O'Mahony's old friend from the pro-German agitation during World War I, was a regular contributor of religious poetry to the Indiana Catholic and a frequent speaker at Catholic gatherings around Indiana.

The Reverend O.W. Fifer of Central Avenue Methodist Church in Indianapolis also denounced from his pulpit the division wrought by the Klan in the community. O'Mahony noted: "His action and attitude are in accord with the leading official periodicals of the Methodist Church, all of which have

³⁸Indiana Catholic and Record, November 2, 1923.

³⁹Ibid., March 30, 1923.

condemned the Ku Klux Klan."⁴⁰

The controversies within the Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis were also discussed in the Indiana Catholic. The Church's pastor, the Reverend Frank E. Davison, resigned after a vote of nineteen to ten by the Church's trustees calling for his resignation. Reverend Davison had refused the use of the Church's facilities for Klan functions. The Indiana Catholic published his denunciation of the Klan. O'Mahony hoped that Davison would soon be engaged by a new congregation.⁴¹

In discussing the relationship existing between many Protestant churches and the Klan, O'Mahony relied upon Protestant critics of the Klan. According to the editor, Indiana's anti-Klan Attorney General Arthur L. Gilliom "has not been slow to point out that ministers of certain Churches in our state fostered and encouraged the Klan and its operations."⁴² O'Mahony, always dedicated to attending anti-Klan lectures in Indianapolis, reported the address of Dr. Sherwood Eddy, an international secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association:

He referred to Indianapolis as the "citadel of the Ku Klux Klan," and charged that "Protestant Christians in a campaign of hatred and falsehood against Catholics had sent the Boy Scouts and members of Sunday schools from house to house circulating that false and bogus oath, which they attributed to the Knights of Columbus, and which they do not now and have never used."⁴³

Although O'Mahony was to complain often about Catholic

⁴⁰ Ibid., April 13, 1923.

⁴² Ibid., November 4, 1927.

⁴¹ Ibid., June 15, 1923.

⁴³ Ibid., January 4, 1924.

apathy in regard to the Klan throughout the twenties, he did at times concede that Catholics had been unified as never before under Klan fire. While the avowed purpose of the Klan was to promote a narrow vision of Protestantism at the expense of excluding Catholics from participation in public life, it did nothing to disrupt Catholic life in Indiana. O'Mahony noted that the disruptive effects of the Klan were manifested elsewhere:

Several months ago and many times since, we said editorially in this paper that it wouldn't be the Catholic Church that would be broken up by the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana but that it would be the big Protestant Churches, the Masonic Lodges and the political parties. We don't want to place ourselves in the prophet class, but what is happening now confirms in every way our expressed opinion.⁴⁴

Despite O'Mahony's repeated denunciations of the Klan and exhortations to readers to fight the secret organization, there were few concrete methods of dealing with it successfully outside of politics. On one occasion, O'Mahony urged readers to support a unique proposal that was aimed at dealing with the basis of the Klan ability to succeed--widespread ignorance. Lafayette's Mayor George Durgan made the utterly charming proposal that chairs of tolerance be established at Indiana's two state universities. In expressing support for this, O'Mahony offered his views on education:

Intolerance is a matter of education and its appearance proves that our education is fundamentally inefficient.

⁴⁴Ibid., June 15, 1923.

As a matter of fact, our public schools have not tackled vigorously and effectively the first duty of a public school, the clear and simple instruction in the fundamentals of our American system. . . .

Tolerance, for example, is one of the chief tests of our system. It is expressed in our basic law in the guarantee of religious liberty. It is a principle that ought to be explained and impressed upon our youth while their viewpoint and standards, habits of thought and feeling, are being formed.⁴⁵

At the heart of an effective response to the Klan was the political involvement of anti-Klan elements, since this was one of the few arenas where Klan and anti-Klan forces could meet each other directly. O'Mahony's pointed recommendations on combating the Klan in politics will be treated in due course. However, the Klan questioned the right of Catholics to participate in politics unless they disassociated themselves from the mind of the Church. Imperial Wizard Evans pronounced the Klan's position:

We believe a Roman Catholic can become a trustworthy American official only when his repudiation of his Church's ideology is so explicit, energetic and conspicuous that his Catholicism becomes as small a matter as is the sect of a Protestant; when he portrays a complete and active revolt against it both as an American and a Catholic, so that his preferment will not tend to strengthen an opponent to American principles.⁴⁶

O'Mahony's view of Klansmen in politics was quite similar and just as harsh as the Klan view of Catholics in politics:

Every holder of public office who has taken the oath of the Ku Klux Klan or swore to obey the orders of the Imperial Wizard should be immediately impeached. Every

⁴⁵ Ibid., June 29, 1923.

⁴⁶ Evans, op. cit., p. 563.

lawyer whose membership can be established should be summarily disbarred.⁴⁷

The Klan contention that Catholics were unsuited for public office because of the implications arising from their fidelity to the Pope was not taken seriously in the pages of the Indiana Catholic. This Klan argument apparently bewildered O'Mahony as it has most American Catholics; for he did not deal with it directly. There were occasional discussions of Catholics' long residence in this country and undoubted loyalty in military service as sufficient confirmation of their devotion to the United States. While the editor made a close identification of Catholicism to Irish Nationalism, it was not possible to make the same connection in the United States. Nevertheless, O'Mahony's deep affection for Ireland did not prevent him from developing a great devotion to the United States. It was apparent that he had read widely--though certainly not deeply and critically--of his adopted country's history. National holidays were the occasion of lengthy editorials celebrating American history and virtues. These essays were in the tradition of the most ardent old-fashioned American patriotism. This intense patriotism has been characteristic of American Catholicism with its strongly Irish features.⁴⁸ The Klan really had little to fear concerning the loyalty of American Catholics.

⁴⁷Indiana Catholic and Record, January 5, 1923.

⁴⁸Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 146-147.

Unfortunately, in this patriotism, there was a loss of a critical attitude toward American life. Catholics, when confronted with the Klan's nativist outburst, attempted to minimize any differences between themselves and Protestant Americans in professing their devotion to the country. Given this mentality, Catholics did not attempt to bring anything distinctive from their traditions to the general pattern of American life. O'Mahony shared this prevailing Catholic attitude.

However, O'Mahony strongly urged Catholics to participate in American politics where he felt they were under-represented. In the 1922 elections, even before the Ku Klux Klan became a powerful political force in Indiana, there were not enough Catholics on the state ballot to please him:

There are approximately 300,000 Catholics in the State of Indiana and they form the bulk of the homeowners and taxpayers of the State. They live in a State where the first white men to come were Catholics. Yet they have only one representative on each of the state tickets of the two great parties. This is far below the proportion they would be entitled to according to their numbers.⁴⁹

He placed much of the blame for this state of affairs on Catholics themselves, who were too timid to get into politics.

Catholics should not underestimate their strength:

Here in Indiana it is figured we are less than ten per cent of the population. Yet an active, energetic, united body of citizens who constitute even ten per cent can be a wonderful power for good. In the great movements for social justice and genuine uplift in every community the ten per cent of active citizens can make itself very much felt. Our people don't do this as much as they could.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Indiana Catholic and Record, November 3, 1922.

⁵⁰Ibid., November 28, 1924.

The lack of participation of Catholic women in civic affairs in general and politics in particular was lamented. O'Mahony reported that women's voting strength was not proportionate to their numbers in the population. He felt that Catholic women were especially negligent:

We shamefully confess that Catholic women have not been so quick as their non-Catholic sisters to recognize their patriotic and moral obligation to take a real interest in politics. . . .

The women--and above all the Catholic women--who will not register and who will not vote on election day is not only false to womenhood but recreant in a serious moral obligation.⁵¹

Furthermore, he felt that Catholic involvement in politics would disabuse the public of any anti-Catholic attitudes and be a defense in any anti-Catholic movement:

We will be bound by more sympathetic bonds to the good citizens of all classes who are our neighbors and when our interests are assailed we will not have to fight our battles alone.⁵²

In addition to fighting the Klan at the ballot box, it was apparent that he had a strong desire to achieve Catholic involvement in politics as a means of expressing the arrival of Catholics--many of them immigrants like the editor himself--to full participation in American life.

Yet, while urging political participation, O'Mahony did not formulate a very elaborate political philosophy for his Catholic readers:

⁵¹Ibid., September 26, 1926.

⁵²Ibid., November 28, 1924.

Our civic duties as Catholics is to stand for the election of the best type of men to public office. In that we might also say, that it is our bounded duty to stand by the public men who have been fair to the Catholic Church and whose votes have not been cast for men or measures hostile to Catholic interests.⁵³

⁵³Ibid., September 24, 1926.

CHAPTER IV

THE KLAN AND INDIANA POLITICS

As the Indiana Republican party prepared for the election of 1922, it was experiencing a debilitating round of infighting that was to be the dominant theme of the party's history during the twenties. The Senate seat of first-term Republican Harry S. New was the top political prize of 1922. The fight for the Republican senatorial nomination was to bring out personal and ideological differences that were at least a decade old. Former Senator Albert J. Beveridge, an old progressive, narrowly defeated Senator New in the Republican primary. The latter, as a friend and supporter of President Harding, bore the onus of association with an increasingly unpopular Administration. Indiana's senior senator and the leading figure in the Indiana Republican party, James E. Watson, was not displeased by his colleague's defeat. New had defeated Watson in a bitterly fought primary election for the Republican senatorial nomination in 1916.¹ However, since their college

¹Clifton J. Phillips, Indiana in Transition, 1880-1920 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1968), pp. 122-123. When Democratic Senator Benjamin Shively died after the May, 1916 primary, Governor Ralston appointed Democratic boss Tom Taggart to the Senate. The Republicans gave the senatorial nomination to Watson to oppose Taggart for the short term. Both Watson and New were elected to the Senate in 1916.

days at DePauw University, Watson had been Beveridge's rival. Moreover, Watson had always been a conservative stalwart of the regular Republican organization, while Beveridge had bolted the Republican party to accept the Progressive Party's nomination for governor in 1912 and United States Senator in 1914. Beveridge lost both races. Thus Senator Watson and the Republican organization were not enthusiastic about electing Beveridge in 1922.

The Democrats nominated the ever-popular Samuel M. Ralston for the United States Senate. Ralston was the previous Democratic governor, having served from 1913 to 1917.

In their senatorial contest, Beveridge and Ralston avoided the growing Klan controversy. Although he declined to take a stand himself, Beveridge did invite Kansas Governor Henry Allen, a fellow progressive and a vocal foe of the Klan, to campaign on his behalf. By his denunciation of the Klan, Allen earned for his friend Beveridge the enmity of the Klan.² Ralston, in pursuit of avoiding the Klan issue, delivered an address on the separation of church and state and religious freedom at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, a Catholic women's institution near Terre Haute. The Klan applauded the fact that Ralston had told the papists off to their faces and circulated copies of the speech throughout the state.³ However, the very

² John Braeman, Albert J. Beveridge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 287.

³ Bentley, op. cit., p. 31.

politic remarks of the genial Ralston could hardly be construed as either pro-Klan or anti-Catholic. Nevertheless, Ralston undoubtedly benefited from the Klan's support in his 23,000-vote margin of victory. The Klan subsequently boasted that it elected Ralston. On the other hand, Beveridge was definitely hurt by the lack of full support from the Republican organization.⁴ The Klan's involvement in the senatorial race escaped the attention of the Indiana Catholic. Although O'Mahony was sympathetic to the progressive and anti-League of Nations causes represented by Beveridge, he did not endorse any candidates that year.

The Klan organization was still in a growing stage in its development in 1922; Stephenson did not become King Kleagle of the Indiana Klan until after the general election of 1922. Nevertheless, Stephenson is credited with ordering the mailing of questionnaires to many candidates in this election inquiring about their religious affiliation, membership in fraternal organizations, and other personal information.⁵ The Indiana Catholic objected to such a questionnaire that circulated from an Indianapolis post office box. The candidates queried were all of Irish extraction except Milton Kraus of Peru, the incumbent eleventh district congressman who was seeking reelection. Kraus was of Jewish parentage. The candidates were asked to

⁴Braeman, op. cit., p. 288.

⁵Davis, op. cit., p. 163.

make notarized statements concerning their religion and that of their parents. O'Mahony deplored this practice as an attempt to apply a religious test to candidates for office.⁶ In a pre-election editorial entitled, "Your Citizenship in Peril," he concluded that Catholic and Jewish candidates were clearly marked for defeat.⁷

This view was partially confirmed by the following week's election results as the two Catholics seeking state office were defeated. The loss of these two incumbents, Republican Patrick J. Lynch, Clerk of the Supreme Court, and Democrat Joseph Shea, Judge of the State Court of Appeals and a former Ambassador to Chile, was attributed to the religious issue raised by the Klan. "Honest" William Oliver, incumbent Republican Auditor of the State of Indiana, was also defeated. According to O'Mahony, the Protestant Oliver, as president of the Franklin, Indiana Board of School Commissioners, had refused to dismiss a Catholic public school teacher when requested to do so by a party that did not identify itself as the Klan. "The Klan marked him for defeat."⁸

The election results in Marion County were more encouraging. Three Catholics "that we know of" were elected to office, Democrat John McCloskey, Marion County Commissioner, and Peter Boland, a Democratic state legislator, who defeated his Negro

⁶Indiana Catholic and Record, October 27, 1922.

⁷Ibid., November 3, 1922.

⁸Ibid., November 10, 1922.

Republican opponent. A Republican Catholic, Michael Jefferson, was elected Marion County Assessor, defeating a Democratic Catholic opponent. With the Marion County results in mind, O'Mahony concluded that "bigotry was not widespread."⁹ He was consoled by the election of two Catholics in Allen County for Judge of the Superior Court and County Treasurer. On the basis of admittedly incomplete information, O'Mahony reached the not altogether original conclusion:

It seems from the returns that most of the bigotry in Indiana is confined to the central and southern part of the state, and that it was there the bigots got their most effective work against Catholic candidates on both state tickets.¹⁰

With the election past, a vigilant watch on the Klan was to be maintained. O'Mahony warned Catholics that anti-Catholic measures would be introduced in the forthcoming General Assembly to which an undetermined number of Klansmen belonged. A convent inspection bill had been introduced in the legislature four years before under the guise of regulating private institutions.¹¹ However, no such legislation was considered in the 1923 session. The principal issue of the session was the attempt by organization Republicans to abolish the primary and thus provide for the selection of candidates in party conventions.¹² Proposals for such extensive election law changes were defeated.

⁹Ibid., November 10, 1922.

¹⁰Ibid., November 10, 1922.

¹¹Ibid., January 5, 1923.

¹²Indianapolis Times, January 8, 26, 1923.

Although a seat in the United States Senate affords much prestige and high political visibility to its holder, the most coveted public office in Indiana was probably the governorship. The governor's control of patronage made the office a powerful one for which politicians fought hard. In 1923 the potential candidates for governor were meeting the public and gathering supporters for the 1924 election. Although the Indiana Catholic avoided making outright endorsements of aspirants for governor, it publicized anti-Klan candidates that were likely to be acceptable to Catholic voters.

The name of Mayor George R. Durgan of Lafayette, a possible candidate for governor, made the first of many appearances in the Indiana Catholic in January, 1923. The Democratic mayor and his city council banned masked parades in Lafayette. This action was praised:

It is a credit to the enlightened and prosperous, and thoroughly American city of Lafayette, Indiana that such unanimous action has been taken by Councilmen of all politics, and that the movement has been led by a Protestant mayor and Protestant Councilmen.¹³

In June, 1923, a year before the primaries and state political conventions, O'Mahony, in an editorial entitled "Suggestion," promoted the possible candidacy of Mayor Durgan for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination and Mayor George M. Barnstable of Newcastle for the Republican nomination. O'Mahony warned:

¹³ Indiana Catholic and Record, January 26, 1923.

If these men head their respective tickets in 1924, we might preserve the old parties intact. If Kluxers or Dummies are nominated there will be political chaos in Hoosierdom. Look out, campaign managers and gubernatorial aspirants there are shoals and quagmires ahead.¹⁴

O'Mahony's continued liking for Republicans is apparent in the dramatic coverage given to the announcement of the gubernatorial candidacy of Mayor Ora T. Davis of Terre Haute. This Republican's availability for the highest state office rated bold front-page headlines and picture in the Indiana Catholic in July, 1923. The importance of this political development for Catholic readers was the Mayor's forthright denunciation of the Klan. O'Mahony also assured his readers that Davis, a Protestant and Mason, "has always been fair and square with the Catholic people of Terre Haute."¹⁵ In August, 1923, Mayor Durgan's denunciation of the Klan was featured but without the dramatic treatment accorded Davis. Durgan at this time had not declared his candidacy for governor.¹⁶

In September, 1923, the Indiana Catholic offered an analysis of the political events in Indiana during that year. The burden of the editor's view was "the abject cowardice of the two 'great' political parties in their attitude toward the infamous un-American organization."¹⁷ O'Mahony was also displeased by the attitude toward the Klan held by an organization of considerable political impact in Indiana, the Indiana branch

¹⁴ Ibid., June 1, 1923.

¹⁶ Ibid., August 17, 1923.

¹⁵ Ibid., July 27, 1923.

¹⁷ Ibid., September 14, 1923.

of the American Legion. "The Indiana Legion convention is dumb on the subject and elects a man published as a Ku Klux Klan member as its national committeeman."¹⁸ This silence was in unhappy contrast to the position on the Klan taken by the Kentucky Legion. O'Mahony could cite the resolutions concerning the Klan taken by state and important city organizations of both political parties around the country. He reported approvingly the recent anti-Klan declarations made by the state organizations of both parties in Kentucky and Illinois. The Missouri Democratic and the Michigan Republican parties also condemned the Klan. O'Mahony was confident that the same would happen in Indiana:

The time is coming when the leaders of both political parties must be compelled to 'fish or cut bait' on this question, and the sooner they realize it the better. The great unmasked citizenship of Indiana is getting ready to make the apparently dumb, speak.¹⁹

In order to make their weight felt, the anti-Klan forces must be united just as Catholics should be:

All citizens of Indiana who are opposed to the 'Invisible Empire' must combine, and by putting the question right up to them compel all political leaders and all candidates for political office to declare themselves one way or the other on the Klan issue. . . . Get ready and go after them.²⁰

The declaration of gubernatorial candidacy of Indianapolis Mayor Samuel Lewis Shank cheered the Indiana Catholic.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., September 14, 1923.

²⁰ Ibid., October 5, 1923.

¹⁹ Ibid., September 21, 1923.

²¹ Ibid., November 2, 1923.

The local popularity of the former auctioneer and vaudeville performer and mayor of Indiana's largest city made it appear that Shank was the Republican able to be nominated and elected governor with ease. "Limber Lunged Lew" Shank was the recipient of an uncommon amount of abuse from the Klan. The mayor prohibited masked parades and cross-burning within the city limits as well as refusing the use of the city-owned Tomlinson Hall for Klan gatherings.²² The Fiery Cross especially objected to the arrest of those selling the Klan paper on the streets. The mayor claimed the paper fomented rioting.

O'Mahony noted smugly that the two declared anti-Klan gubernatorial aspirants belonged to the party of Lincoln while the Democrats had no announced anti-Klan candidate. The general lack of influence of Catholics in the Indiana Democratic party was a matter of concern:

It has been generally conceded that about seventy per cent of the Catholics in Indiana are affiliated with the Democratic party. Have they no power of influence in the councils of that party? Are they to be treated with contempt by the Democratic management of the State, and are they to have put over them as a nominee for the Governorship some sleek, oily, sidestepper, who will say nothing about the Klan issue here where everybody knows it is the outstanding issue?²³

When Alabama Senator Thomas Heflin, a noted Klan lecturer and Catholic baiter, was invited to address the Democratic Editorial Association in June, 1923 at Vincennes, O'Mahony not only

²² Jackson, op. cit., p. 151.

²³ Indiana Catholic and Record, November 2, 1923.

considered this offensive to Catholic Democrats but also unwise:

Why was he brought to Indiana at this time when the Democrats seem to have such a good chance? Do they expect to elect their ticket with the sole aid of the Ku Kluxers? It is a strange thing, entirely beyond our comprehension why this man was yanked into Indiana at this time.²⁴

Indiana Democrats also courted the disfavor of Catholic voters when Mississippi Senator Patterson Harrison, another darling of the Klan, spoke at Democratic functions around the state in August, 1923.²⁵ The forthcoming meeting of Democratic party leaders in January, 1924 was the occasion for O'Mahony to urge an anti-Klan course on that party. Anti-Klan Democrats with proper organization could insure the nomination of anti-Klan candidates such as Mayor Durgan for state offices. O'Mahony stated a view on the liability of Klan support that was to become unshakeable:

With Durgan or someone else of Durgan's views, they [the Democrats] will have a fair chance to get into the state house. With a Klux sympathizer they won't have any chance whatever. A nominee who is silent on the Klan question won't get by in Indiana this year be he Democratic or Republican. This is a timely warning.²⁶

O'Mahony welcomed the long-expected announcement of Mayor Durgan's candidacy for governor, which took place at a sensational political meeting at Tomlinson Hall in Indianapolis. An unruly group of Klansmen noisily heckled Durgan as he prom-

²⁴ Ibid., June 8, 1923.

²⁵ Ibid., August 24, 1923.

²⁶ Ibid., December 28, 1923.

ised to drive the Klan from the state if elected governor.²⁷ The Indiana Catholic, which treated the story with bold headlines and large picture of Durgan, described the machine politicians as "flabbergasted" by the large crowd of enthusiastic supporters at the meeting.²⁸ Another important Democratic aspirant for governor, Dr. Carleton McCulloch of Indianapolis, the candidate of Democratic boss Tom Taggart, had not taken a stand on "the leading issue--the Ku Klux Klan."²⁹ O'Mahony repeatedly emphasized McCulloch's silence for the rest of the pre-primary campaign.

Throughout the first half of 1924, the Indiana Catholic repeatedly publicized appearances and statements of Durgan, Davis, and Shank. Short editorial statements also appeared describing them as the only acceptable candidates for governor. Unfortunately, Davis and Shank would be splitting the anti-Klan vote in the Republican primary in May. O'Mahony expressed the great urgency for the numerous Catholic Democrats to vote for Mayor Durgan in the Democratic primary where there were seven other Democrats running for Governor--none of them vocally anti-Klan. O'Mahony had not entirely forgotten old animosities in this campaign. He reminded readers that Democratic gubernatorial hopeful, State Senator Joseph M. Cravens of Madison, was

²⁷ Indianapolis News, January 17, 1924.

²⁸ Indiana Catholic and Record, January 18, 1924.

²⁹ Ibid., January 4, 1924.

anti-German because of his sponsorship of the law outlawing the teaching of German in Indiana schools in the 1919 legislature. Cravens was also anti-Irish for declining to vote for an Indiana Senate resolution favoring Irish independence.³⁰

During 1923 and 1924, the Indiana Republican party not only suffered its endemic factional differences, but it was also rocked by scandal. State Chairman Lawrence Lyons resigned in March, 1923 after being identified as a Klansman.³¹ Republican Governor Warren T. McCray, elected in 1920, was implicated in a variety of corruptions such as manipulating state funds, unseemly personal money dealings, and mail fraud. McCray clung to office for months under fire before finally resigning on April 29, 1924--a week before the primary.³² His trial, the subsequent conviction on thirteen counts, and his sentencing to ten years residence in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary took place during the late summer of 1924 thus focusing unfavorable attention on the Indiana Republican party. A party visited with such calamitous misfortunes--presently being infiltrated by the Klan--deserved punishment at the polls. The New York Times rightly concluded:

An Indiana Republican must have a strong stomach if he can stand his party this year. . . . It is hard to believe that any party in any State was ever in such a

³⁰ Ibid., January 11, 1924.

³¹ Fiery Cross, April 13, 1923.

³² Indianapolis Times, April 29, 1924.

position of continuous and increasing humiliation and degradation as the Republican party of Indiana occupies today.³³

The troubled Republicans had six gubernatorial candidates to choose from. Three of them, Shank, Davis, and Edward C. Toner were anti-Klan. The leading candidate was Indiana Secretary of State Ed Jackson, who was a leading vote-getter on the Republican ticket in three state-wide races. He was the logical Republican candidate for governor, although the discredited Republican organization supported Toner.³⁴

The Klan recognized early the opportunity to place a sympathetic governor in the state house. As a proven vote-getter lacking organization support, Jackson was a convenient instrument of Klan power. The shattered Indiana Republican party could be captured with ease by the popular Jackson aided by a massive infusion of highly motivated Klan voters acting on the theme of bringing morality to state government.³⁵ As the later investigations would indicate, Jackson was receiving cash donations from Stephenson in September, 1923; their contacts dated from as early as the resignation of Republican State Chairman Lyons in April, 1923. In this political crusade to root out corruption in Indiana, the Stephenson and Bossert Klan factions were united in supporting Jackson. Moreover, the Klan

³³ New York Times, October 22, 1924.

³⁴ Indianapolis News, May 6, 1924.

³⁵ Frank Mark Cates, The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana Politics, 1920-1925 (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science, Indiana University, 1970), pp. 114-116.

greatly feared the political appeal of the popular Mayor Shank. If Shank were not overcome in the primary he might be nominated for governor at the Republican state convention with the help of the large Marion County delegation.³⁶ It was necessary for Jackson to receive a majority of all votes cast in the primary to win automatic nomination. To this end, the Klan's "military machine" was mobilized for Jackson's support. As before, Stephenson resorted to enlisting the aid of the Protestant clergy to boost Jackson. In an editorial entitled "Church and State--Eh!" O'Mahony deplored the Klan attempt to activate the ministers of the Disciples of Christ, the denomination to which Jackson belonged, on behalf of the latter's candidacy.³⁷

The results of the primary of May, 1924 indicated the political strength enjoyed by the Klan in arranging Jackson's lopsided victory over his opponents and his automatic nomination for governor:³⁸

<u>Republicans</u>		<u>Democrats</u>	
Jackson	227,785	McCulloch	92,814
Shank	95,494	Durgan	50,373
Toner	55,381	Cravens	42,946
Bush	22,531	Crittenberger	28,675
Davis	9,210	Holt	30,892
Dulberger	2,821	Batt	19,380
		Priest	6,789
		Risk	5,750

³⁶ Stanley Frost, "The Klan Shows Its Hand in Indiana," The Outlook, CXXXVII (June 4, 1924), p. 189.

³⁷ Indiana Catholic and Record, May 9, 1924.

³⁸ Yearbook of the State of Indiana for the Year 1924 (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1925), pp. 16-18.

The returns naturally disappointed the Indiana Catholic, which henceforth referred to Jackson as the Klan nominee instead of the Republican nominee. O'Mahony viewed the Klan victory as a default in leadership:

This means that for the present at least, the 'Invisible Empire' and its cohorts of masked men and women have captured the Republican party in the Hoosier state, while the big outstanding Republican leaders were asleep at the switch.³⁹

Leadership was lacking outside the Republican party also:

What becomes now of the empty twaddle of those so-called conservative Catholics, those mild mannered gentlemen, who said the Klan movement didn't amount to anything and that the best way to deal with it was to leave it alone.

A definite stand must be taken for principle all along the line. We must organize and join hands with the valiant fair-minded, non-Catholics of Indiana, who are opposed to the Klan.⁴⁰

O'Mahony could not have been pleased with the plurality obtained by McCulloch. Since no candidate received a majority in the Democratic primary, the nomination was to take place at a state convention in May. However, O'Mahony was soon rejoicing that McCulloch, who had hitherto been silent on the Klan issue, denounced the organization after the primary.⁴¹ The Taggart organization insured McCulloch's nomination for governor and beat back attempts from a minority of Klansmen to dictate the platform.⁴² O'Mahony noted that the anti-Klan

³⁹ Indiana Catholic and Record, May 9, 1924.

⁴⁰ Ibid., May 9, 1924.

⁴¹ Ibid., May 16, 1924.

⁴² Indianapolis News, June 4, 1924.

victory in the Democratic state convention was the result of "the splendid upstanding battle made by our non-Catholic fellow citizens."⁴³ The participation of Catholics in the party to which most of them belonged was still not proportionate to their numbers.

At the Republican state convention, the Klan did not enjoy the decisive influence that it had exercised in the primary. After the primary, Stephenson announced the establishment of his own Klan order in Indiana thus insuring the complete enmity of the Atlanta-affiliated Klan led by Bossert. O'Mahony thought this break in the Klan ranks and the attendant feuding a sure sign of the Klan's imminent demise.⁴⁴ This rift in the Klan did not help its bargaining position in the Republican state convention in May. Stephenson and Bossert headed two factions in a convention that already included several. Consequently the selection of the lesser candidates on the Republican state ticket was not dictated by the Klan as the gubernatorial nomination had been.⁴⁵ Harold Van Orman, candidate for lieutenant governor, and Ben Urbahns, candidate for state treasurer, were the only other major Klan candidates for state office. The Klan suffered a notable defeat in not preventing the nomination of Arthur Gilliom of South Bend as candidate

⁴³Indiana Catholic and Record, June 6, 1924.

⁴⁴Ibid., May 23, 1924.

⁴⁵Indianapolis News, May 25, 1924

for state attorney general. The importance of this office was recognized by the Indiana Catholic. O'Mahony attributed the failure of Klan activities in Michigan to the exertions of the state attorney general there. He all but endorsed Gilliom over his Democratic opponent, Harvey Harmon of Princeton, before the November election:

Mr. Gilliom is for some reason being bitterly opposed by the Ku Klux Klan. Perhaps it is because he defeated the regular Klan nominee in the Republican state convention by a narrow margin. . . . Mr. Gilliom has been outspoken and plain on the Klan in his native city and perhaps has incurred their bitter hostility.

Mr. Harmon's neighbors of all faiths speak kindly of him and scorn the suggestion that he is in anyway pro-Klan. We feel sure he is not, but he has not expressed himself as yet on the Klan question like Dr. McCulloch. We should expect as much from an Attorney General on that subject as from a Governor. Before the election is the best time to clear up all doubt on the subject.⁴⁶

Although there were no significant issues to separate the Republican and Democratic parties in the presidential and state contests in the country at large, O'Mahony felt that "Indiana stands alone in this campaign" with an issue of great importance--the Klan:

The issue is clear-cut in Indiana. Anyone who votes for Jackson for Governor will be voting for the chosen nominee of the Klan. He will be voting for a man whose nomination was only made possible by the support of Stephenson, the Texas Democrat, who dominates the Klan in Indiana. No Republican who believes in the principles of Abraham Lincoln can support Jackson.⁴⁷

Dr. McCulloch, whose integrity had once been questioned in the

⁴⁶ Indiana Catholic and Record, October 31, 1924.

⁴⁷ Ibid., July 11, 1924.

pages of the Indiana Catholic, now metamorphosed into a paragon of virtue, was endorsed for governor:

Dr. McCulloch, the Democratic nominee for Governor, is the son of one of the most respected Protestant ministers who ever lived in Indiana. He is an upstanding, respected citizen and a soldier with an honorable record in the great war.

No Catholic worthy of the name, be he Republican or Democrat can stultify his citizenship and his faith by voting for or in any way contributing towards the election of Ed Jackson and his associates on the Klan ticket.⁴⁸

In the ensuing campaign, the Indiana Catholic noted Jackson's fulsome statements on religious liberty and separation of church and state without mentioning the Klan. Jackson did not deny being a member of the Klan as cited by the American Unity League.⁴⁹ O'Mahony's stridency increased as November neared. He questioned the sanity of any Catholic who would vote for Klan-Republican candidates. As always he felt that the support of the Klan was a liability for any candidate:

Dr. McCulloch looks like a sure winner unless oodles of Klux Democrats vote for Jackson, but even then he will have a hard time getting by even in 'darkest Indiana.'⁵⁰

O'Mahony was convinced that "upstanding Lincolnian Republicans" by the thousands would support McCulloch.⁵¹

Being an Indianapolis resident, O'Mahony was especially aware of politics in Marion County where "the entire Democratic ticket is an anti-Ku Klux Klan ticket with one exception."⁵²

⁴⁸ Ibid., July 11, 1923.

⁵¹ Ibid., October 24, 1924.

⁴⁹ Ibid., October 17, 1924.

⁵² Ibid., October 31, 1924.

⁵⁰ Ibid., August 22, 1924.

O'Mahony's friend, ex-Judge James Deery, was warmly endorsed for prosecutor. He felt sure that Indianapolis attorney Joseph Turk would be elected to Congress because his opponent, Republican Ralph Updike, had the Klan's support. With Klan help, Updike had earlier upset veteran Congressman Merrill Moores in the Republican primary.

In a pre-election issue, the Indiana Catholic published a list of candidates that originated with the Klan. This list, extensive but not exhaustive, divided candidates for state, congressional, legislative, and local offices in Indiana into anti-Klan, pro-Klan, and neutral classifications.⁵³ Intended for the guidance of Klansmen in voting, the list undoubtedly guided many Indiana Catholic readers also.

The Indiana Catholic did not ignore the presidential campaign of 1924, though it commanded less attention than Indiana politics. O'Mahony had a strong progressive streak in his political thinking; he often reprinted articles from secular publications in support of progressive political positions. However, in 1924 the Klan was the principal issue for O'Mahony. Early in the year he reported that the Klan was bitterly opposed to the presidential ambitions of Democratic Senator Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama, Republican Senator Hiram Johnson of California, and Progressive Republican Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin. This was clearly a point in their favor. Pres-

⁵³Ibid., October 24, 1924.

ident Wilson's son-in-law, Klan-backed Senator William G. McAdoo of California, was regularly derided as "Klown Prince McAdoo" in the Indiana Catholic. Indiana's Senator Samuel Ralston, who was to be a favorite son candidate for president at the 1924 Democratic National Convention, was conspicuously silent on the Klan issue. In response to an American Unity League questionnaire, Ralston declined to denounce or endorse the Klan though he favored civil and religious freedoms for Jews, Negroes, the foreign born, and Catholics as well as for "full-blooded Americans." O'Mahony seized upon the differentiation made by the Senator to imply that Ralston entertained Klan sympathies: "Is it not possible for a Catholic, a Jew, or a Negro to be a 'full-blooded American?' Is it only Anglo-Saxons that are such?"⁵⁴ As the election year opened Ralston was still sitting on the fence on the Klan issue. O'Mahony, who had known the Senator personally as a political reporter before founding the Indiana Catholic, was disappointed:

Our genial junior Senator has often said that he stands for civil and religious liberty, but in these days that is only a glittering generality. What is the mystery behind it? Why doesn't Senator Ralston of Indiana condemn the Klan in the same way that others have done? His attitude of ostrich silence is a great mystery to many Indiana men who know him or thought they knew him.⁵⁵

When Indiana's Democratic leader Tom Taggart attempted to organize a Ralston-for-president "boom" in preparation for the

⁵⁴Ibid., November 30, 1923.

⁵⁵Ibid., January 25, 1924.

Democratic National Convention, O'Mahony was displeased that some prominent Hoosier Catholics were associated with the movement.⁵⁶ Although Ralston's candidacy failed at the convention, he made a respectable showing in the balloting.

The Indiana Catholic looked to President Coolidge for leadership in fighting the Klan. When Coolidge succeeded to the presidency on the death of President Harding in August, 1923, O'Mahony called upon the new President "to stamp out this infamous un-American conspiracy against the peace of the nation. It is a test for Mr. Coolidge that will show his real calibre."⁵⁷ The editor was sure this would happen in view of Coolidge's suppression of the Boston police strike in 1919 when he was Governor of Massachusetts. However, the President did not respond to the Klan movement in this manner. In fact, he did not seem to respond at all. By the summer of 1924, O'Mahony was complaining about the President's silence.⁵⁸ At the close of the presidential campaign, Coolidge finally allowed the release of a perfunctory statement disclosing his lack of sympathy with the aims of the Klan. O'Mahony noted with resignation "that of course is a Coolidge way of doing things."⁵⁹

The Indiana Catholic found the anti-Klan statement of John W. Davis, Democratic presidential nominee, sharper in its denunciation. However, Davis's vice-presidential running mate,

⁵⁶ Ibid., April 4, 1924.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 11, 1924.

⁵⁷ Ibid., August 17, 1923.

⁵⁹ Ibid., October 31, 1924.

Charles W. Bryan, was derided as a darling of the Klan.⁶⁰

Senator Robert LaFollette, the Progressive party's candidate, had made the earliest and most fervent denunciations of the Klan of the three candidates. However, O'Mahony was uneasy about LaFollette's proposal regarding the election of Federal judges and a constitutional amendment to provide Congress with the power to overturn judicial decisions.⁶¹ Nevertheless, he all but endorsed LaFollette, though he realized the Senator could not be elected, when the editor expressed the hope that the three-way presidential race would be decided by the House of Representatives where LaFollette could name the winner in return for the pursuit of progressive policies by the newly chosen president.⁶²

The November, 1924 election resulted in a sweeping Republican victory in Indiana and the nation. The headlines of the Fiery Cross crowed: "Protestant Ticket Sweeps State."⁶³ Despite the obvious victory of the many Klan-backed Republican candidates in Indiana, O'Mahony was not prepared to concede Indiana to Klan domination. He emphasized to his readers the obvious fact that Ed Jackson ran far behind the President. In Indiana President Coolidge received 210,797 more votes than John W. Davis; Jackson led his opponent by only 81,000 votes.

⁶⁰ Ibid., October 31, 1924.

⁶¹ Ibid., October 10, 1924.

⁶² Ibid., October 24, 1924.

⁶³ Fiery Cross, November 14, 1924.

This confirmed once again the editor's view of the Klan's political effect: "The time will come in Indiana, if it is not here now, when the leaders of both political machines will realize that. . . the Klan is a liability and not an asset."⁶⁴ In view of the narrowness of his victory, Jackson was free to consider the coattail effect of President Coolidge's landslide as the reason for his election and not the support of the Klan. The governor did not need to feel obliged to the Klan organization in the future. In supporting this view, O'Mahony seconded the editorial position of the Indianapolis Star.⁶⁵ Ironically, O'Mahony came to the defense of Governor-elect Jackson when Commonweal, the recently established New York journal edited by a group of Catholic laymen, published an article on Indiana politics in which Ed Jackson was closely identified with the Klan. O'Mahony disagreed:

It is not quite correct of our New York contemporary to say that the Governor-elect of Indiana is an "outspoken adherent of the Klan." No matter what his affiliation may have been previous to the campaign, he never endorsed them or their program in public. As a matter of fact he was not outspoken at all. He refused point blank to say where he stood on the question and was as silent as a wooden Indian whenever he was asked to express himself as to membership in the Klan or affiliation with that organization.

Our prediction is that Mr. Jackson will not pay much attention to the Klan or its legislative program. . . . Our bright New York contemporary is simply mistaken in its calculations. It does not know the foxiness of Indiana politicians and does not understand the game as played in the Hoosier state.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Indiana Catholic and Record, November 7, 1924.

⁶⁵ Ibid., November 7, 1924.

⁶⁶ Ibid., November 28, 1924.

O'Mahony expressed great admiration for the voting behavior of Negroes. The Negro voters in Indianapolis shifted from their traditional Republican allegiance to the Democratic party for the first time in many cases.⁶⁷ In registering their opposition to the Klan, the editor found that Negroes were not "bound by the chains of party slavery that held the whites." Their solid voting contained a lesson in group consciousness for Catholic readers:

What does it prove? It proves that the colored people, men and women, were well organized and well led and that they had the splendid courage and intelligence to rise above party and vote against the enemies of their race and those who would violate their rights under the Constitution. We wish we could say the same for some of the 'superior' white citizens of Indiana.⁶⁸

With the victory of Governor Jackson and the election of a Republican-controlled legislature containing an undetermined number of Klansmen or Klan sympathizers, it was widely believed that a Klan program could be enacted into law.⁶⁹ However, O'Mahony harbored fewer fears concerning the outcome of the General Assembly of January, 1925 than he had for the previous session. As the legislature began its work, he took comfort in the quality of the men elected to leadership positions. State Senator James Nedjl of Whiting was chosen president pro tempore of the Senate and chairman of the Senate ed-

⁶⁷ Emma Lou Thronbrough, Since Emancipation: A Short History of Indiana Negroes, 1863-1963 (Indiana Division of the American Negro Emancipation Centennial Authority, 1963), pp. 31-32.

⁶⁸ Indiana Catholic and Record, November 7, 1924.

⁶⁹ Weaver, op. cit., p. 163.

ucation committee. Representative Harry G. Leslie of Lafayetta was elected Speaker of the House. Both men as well as several other key leaders were opposed to the Klan. O'Mahony expressed satisfaction:

The conservative and sane element seem to be in charge judging from the leadership and the committee chairmanships that have been announced. . . .

We hope it is not too much to say that the Legislature has started out auspiciously. Anyway, there is much reason to hope for good results.⁷⁰

The chairmanship of the House education committee was won by Representative James Knapp of Fort Wayne, who was believed to be a Klansman.

Consistent with the Klan's program of promoting Americanism was the desire to rid public education of foreign and non-Protestant influences. To this end a series of bills were introduced in the General Assembly that were obviously aimed at Catholics. A bill to prevent the wearing of religious garb by teachers in the public schools was introduced in the Senate by Senator George W. Sims, Republican of Terre Haute.⁷¹ The bill was aimed at the several public schools in five southern Indiana counties: Spencer, Perry, Crawford, Floyd, and Dubois, where members of Catholic sisterhoods were hired to teach in the predominantly Catholic communities there.⁷² This practice

⁷⁰Indiana Catholic and Record, January 16, 1925.

⁷¹Journal of the Indiana State Senate, 74th Session of the General Assembly, January 8, 1925 (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1925), p. 76

⁷²Indianapolis News, February 17, 1925.

had been outlawed by the Indiana attorney general in 1919 because it allegedly violated the separation of church and state. In 1921, the subsequent attorney general, U.S. Lesh, reversed this decision. O'Mahony reacted with pleasure to this change:

This settles the matter in Indiana unless some legislator is foolhardy enough to introduce an educational bill which will designate the cross of Christ as a religious insignia or mark of sectarian garb, and unless the Legislature passes such an unChristian and unAmerican measure.⁷³

The "unChristian and unAmerican" Sims proposal did not gather much support in the Senate. Senator Nedjl, a Protestant and Mason, delivered a forceful plea urging the bill's defeat because it violated the personal religious liberty of the teachers in question. Senator David L. Chambers, Democrat of Newcastle, urged that the bill be discussed without recourse "to hiding behind bushes or sheets."⁷⁴ The bill was defeated by a vote of forty to six.⁷⁵ The Klan strength in the Senate could not have been great given this decisive defeat.

A similar bill prohibiting religious garb was introduced in the House by Representative Clyde F. Cooper, Republican of Terre Haute. This bill passed the House by a substantial margin of sixty-seven to twenty-one.⁷⁶ The House apparently con-

⁷³ Indiana Catholic and Record, April 15, 1921.

⁷⁴ Ibid., January 23, 1925.

⁷⁵ Journal of the Senate, 74th Session, p. 85.

⁷⁶ Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, 74th Session, January 8, 1925 (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1925), pp. 170, 258.

tained more Klan strength than the Senate. O'Mahony could identify only one Catholic member in the lower house.⁷⁷ The Cooper bill was killed when it was sent to the Senate.

Senator Sims next proposed to purify the public schools by introducing a bill to require all public school teachers to be graduates of public schools thus preventing most Catholics from pursuing careers in public education. The bill undoubtedly would have disqualified the graduates of Protestant church schools also. This measure was defeated by a vote of forty-one to five.⁷⁸

Several other Klan-inspired education measures were considered by the House. A bill providing for uniform textbooks in both public and private schools was introduced, but it was later withdrawn.⁷⁹ A proposal to establish a state textbook commission that would insure the use of acceptable texts in Indiana public schools was passed by the overwhelming vote of eighty-seven to three.⁸⁰ A measure to provide for the reading of the American Revised Standard Version of the Bible "without comment" was adopted seventy-five to eleven.⁸¹ These two measures died in Senator Nedjl's education committee when they were sent to the Senate.

⁷⁷Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925.

⁷⁸Journal of the Senate, 74th Session, pp. 76, 113-114.

⁷⁹Journal of the House, 74th Session, pp. 113, 125.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 423, 749.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 422, 721.

The Indiana Catholic closely followed the progress of the legislature. Many Klan bills that even the lower house would not pass were introduced and forgotten such as a bill to insure mandatory Bible instruction, not simply Bible reading; a measure to insure instruction in "Americanism;" and a proposal to require the registration of alien adults. Given the host of bad proposals not acted upon or defeated in the Senate, O'Mahony gave the session high marks:

The Indiana legislature continues to make good progress in the matter of killing useless, fanatical, and unnecessary legislation. We doubt if any legislature has a better record so far in economy and efficiency.⁸²

The only measure from the Klan's educational program that achieved passage in the legislature was a law providing for the study of the United States Constitution in the public high schools of the state.⁸³

Responding to the pleas of various church groups, the legislature passed a religious education law providing for the release of public school students for two hours of religious instruction per week by their respective churches if the parents of forty per cent of the children in the school consented.⁸⁴ This measure had been endorsed by a religious education conference consisting of Indiana clergymen of various denominations including the Reverend John D. Cavanaugh, President of the Uni-

⁸²Indiana Catholic and Record, February 9, 1925.

⁸³Journal of the Senate, 74th Session, pp. 293, 544.

⁸⁴Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925.

versity of Notre Dame. O'Mahony applauded the passage of the religious education law "even for the short period of two hours a week:"

The best opinion of all good citizens of the State of all denominations favored such a measure. For a long time the feeling was growing that the people of Indiana were taking a terrible responsibility in having the public school children raised without any knowledge of God and His commandments.⁸⁵

Governor Jackson pocket vetoed this bill when advised by Attorney General Gilliom that it violated the separation of church and state.⁸⁶

The defeat of the Klan-supported legislation reinforced O'Mahony's view that the Klan was not in control of state government:

The legislature was overwhelmingly Republican, and the Ku Klux Klan had the impudence to assert that they owned the Republican party in Indiana. They have received their answer in no uncertain terms from the action of the legislature. The Klan may survive here and there, but it is routed, battered, and disintegrated.⁸⁷

After the General Assembly adjourned O'Mahony crowed for weeks about the Klan's failure so much so that he tended to think that the Klan strength had been decisively broken. In an editorial entitled, "The Wave of Bigotry is Receding," he concluded:

That all this has come to pass in such a short time is, to say the least, surprising. Much credit is due the few vigilant organizations that were active in the inter-

⁸⁵ Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925.

⁸⁶ Indianapolis News, March 16, 1925.

⁸⁷ Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925.

est of religious liberty, but in the main the general result is due to the fact that the American people, though they may be temporarily misled are fundamentally fair-minded.⁸⁸

The Indiana Klan was greatly discredited at this time by the sensational disclosure of the rape and murder of Madge Oberholtzer by Grand Dragon Stephenson in March, 1925. O'Mahony refused to report or comment on the matter except to say the case "has no place in a Catholic paper and should have no place in any decent daily paper."⁸⁹ Although Imperial Wizard Evans and Grand Dragon Bossert were obviously pleased with the fall of their enemy, their numerous declarations that Stephenson had long ago seceded from the national Klan and had been expelled from it long ago went unheeded.⁹⁰ The entire Klan movement was damaged by Stephenson's crime.

With the Klan apparently defeated, O'Mahony entertained no fears about the Indianapolis mayoral primary of May, 1925. He was still exulting over the goodness of humanity and finding good candidates for mayor in both parties:

It doesn't matter to us what his religious convictions are so long as he is not a trickster or a bigot. The events of the past three months demonstrate pretty well to all the Catholic people of Indianapolis that their rights and liberties are always safe in the hands of good plain ordinary Americans, no matter what religious persuasion they may have.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid., April 17, 1925.

⁸⁹ Ibid., April 25, 1925.

⁹⁰ Indianapolis News, October 8, 1925.

⁹¹ Indiana Catholic and Record, March 27, 1925.

While failing to notice Klan activity, he went on to report division in the Grand Old Party in the city: "there are about three Republican factions, or probably four."⁹² Unfortunately many of O'Mahony's "good plain ordinary Americans" were supporting a Klan candidate for mayor. Not until the week before the primary did the editor discover the Klan in mayoral politics when he asked the following political question:

Will the next Mayor of Indianapolis be the tool of a bigotted machine that now controls the county or will he be one whose affiliations are known to his neighbors and whose business record is above reproach.⁹³

O'Mahony was referring to the Klan-supported candidacy of Marion County Treasurer John L. Duvall. The Marion County Republican organization had been split badly by the Klan issue. In January, 1923, the Marion County Republican chairman, Klansman George Coffin, packed the Republican city convention with members of the Horse Thief Detective Association. Anti-Klan Republicans bolted to form their own convention led by Mayor Shank and former Mayor Jewett. The Klan-Coffin Republicans eventually supported Duvall, while the Shank-Jewett faction endorsed former Marion County Treasurer Ralph Lemcke for mayor of Indianapolis.⁹⁴ O'Mahony charged foul when Duvall and the Klan-Republican ticket won the Republican primary:

The total vote in the Republican primaries was the heav-

⁹² Ibid., March 27, 1925.

⁹³ Ibid., May 1, 1925.

⁹⁴ Davis, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

iest ever cast in the city. Duvall got 41,618 and Ralph Lemcke 34,724. The boards, which were completely Klan-dominated, destroyed or mutilated thousands of ballots.

In other words the Klan conspirators did their work well, backed by their Democratic machine associates behind the scenes.

The Democratic vote cast in Tuesday's primaries for mayor was the smallest ever cast. . . . Walter Myers, the Democratic nominee, got only a total of 7,847 votes, though he had the complete backing of the Democratic machine.⁹⁵

O'Mahony hoped that Myers would rally the anti-Klan forces and defeat Duvall in November. Before the primary Myers had not taken a stand on the Klan issue.

The Indianapolis political scene included the non-partisan election for the Board of School Commissioners. In this race the Klan-sponsored candidates formed the United Protestant slate. The incumbent board members headed by a Catholic as president had been elected under the Citizens label. The new candidates of the Citizens slate, which included a Protestant clergyman, all happened to be Protestants. "Surely this was Protestant enough for the most exacting disciples of the Reformation," according to the Indiana Catholic.⁹⁶ The school board elections were made more exciting by the unsubstantiated last-minute charge by Indianapolis Congressman Ralph Updike that \$75,000 from New York had been contributed to the Citizens slate's campaign.⁹⁷ O'Mahony hoped that the United Protestant slate would be defeated:

⁹⁵ Indiana Catholic and Record, May 8, 1925.

⁹⁶ Ibid., November 6, 1925.

⁹⁷ Ibid., October 30, 1925; Indianapolis News, November 3, 1925.

Of the several slates and tickets that are out for the approval of the voters, right-minded citizens will utterly ignore the so-called 'United Protestant' slate. . . . It is just as reprehensible to have a 'United Protestant' slate as it would be to have a 'United Catholic' slate for the adherents of the latter creed pay taxes to support the public schools as well as the former. The attempt to array creed against creed by such tactics must be fought down by all straight-thinking citizens.

Perhaps, the candidates who come nearer filling the ideal qualifications for the school board are those comprising the 'Citizens' ticket.⁹⁸

Before the November election the welter of charges and counter-charges about Klan association confused the political scene in Indianapolis. After declaring that there was little at issue in the election except Klan participation, O'Mahony warned readers not to be stampeded by false propaganda.⁹⁹ Some of the confusion about Klan participation was cleared up before the election by the Indiana Catholic. The noted Klan leader, Charles Orbison, endorsed Duvall at a big Klan rally at Cadle Tabernacle with Marion County's Exalted Cyclops George Elliot presiding and the candidates of the United Protestant slate and the city Republican ticket in attendance.¹⁰⁰

The election resulted in the victory of Duvall and the Republican ticket as well as the United Protestant school slate. "The power of organized prejudice in the community in which we live was strikingly demonstrated," according to O'Mahony.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Indiana Catholic and Record, October 30, 1925.

⁹⁹ Ibid., October 16, 1925.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., October 30, 1925.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., November 6, 1925.

His analysis of the returns in the mayoral race showed that the Klan endorsement had been a liability. Indianapolis as a predominantly Republican city would normally give a Republican mayoral candidate a majority of 15,000 to 20,000 votes over the Democratic rival. Duvall with the Klan's help won by only 8,000 votes. Furthermore, Democrat Walter Myers did not take advantage of the Klan issue:

Mr. Myers, the Democratic nominee for mayor, made no anti-Klan statement, and it appears he did not get the support of thousands of the anti-Klan element in the city. He 'fought shy of the issue' and the anti-Klan voters 'shied away' from Mr. Myers. Thousands of them did not vote.¹⁰²

In view of the narrow victory, O'Mahony felt that Duvall would not be indebted to the Klan in the future:

It is our honest conviction that Mr. John L. Duvall, mayor-elect of Indianapolis, will do as much to carry out the Ku Klux Klan program as Governor Jackson has done since he was elected--which isn't much.¹⁰³

The Klan celebrated the election of Duvall, who trailed behind other candidates on the Republican ticket, with a round of infighting over who was to blame for the mayor-elect's poor showing at the polls. The Klan-Republican County Chairman Coffin blamed the close victory on the failure of the Bossert Klan faction in not completing the distribution of sample ballots. The Bossert faction laid the blame on Coffin's shortcomings.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid., November 6, 1925.

¹⁰³ Ibid., November 6, 1925.

¹⁰⁴ Indianapolis News, November 4, 1925.

When the new mayor announced appointments to city offices, Duvall found it difficult to please the several Klan and Republican factions. Duvall's early appointments did not please the Indiana Catholic, which joined the Indianapolis daily press in deploring the appointment of Charles Orbison as Indianapolis corporation counsel. The Orbison appointment was later withdrawn. The replacement of Fire Chief John J. O'Brien with a political supporter of Duvall was deplored. The replacement of a Catholic policeman, Robert Glenn, as chief of detectives was reported. Glenn, as chief of the traffic department, had refused the Klan's request to blockade city streets for Klan activities.¹⁰⁵ Duvall did appoint as city attorney, Catholic John K. Ruckelshaus, presumably as a gesture to Republican regulars.

The decline of the Klan was not arrested by the election success of the Indianapolis Klan or the incumbency of Governor Jackson. The mayoral races in Evansville and Kokomo were the only other major Klan successes in 1925. D.C. Stephenson's conviction for the rape and second degree murder of Madge Oberholtzer occurred on November 25, 1925. The Indiana Catholic broke its silence on the case to record "an important fact in connection with anti-Catholic agitation in the Hoosier state."¹⁰⁶ With the Klan faltering and its record of nefarious activities

¹⁰⁵ Indiana Catholic and Record, November 13, 1925.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., November 27, 1925.

gradually unfolding, politicians and party organizations belatedly began to deplore the organization. The Marion County Democratic organization declared in January, 1926 that it would now fight the Klan to the death. "Heretofore they were as dumb as a cigar store Indian and that is why they got whipped," O'Mahony declared.¹⁰⁷ General outspokenness from politicians at the beginning of the movement would have prevented the election of Klan members and sympathizers to public office.

Political interest in Indiana in 1926 centered on the senatorial races. In October, 1925, Senator Ralston died. To fill the vacant seat, Governor Jackson, who claimed divine inspiration in his choice, appointed Arthur R. Robinson, a former legal counsel to Stephenson's Klan organization.¹⁰⁸ Some students of the Klan in Indiana have speculated that the Senate seat would have gone to Stephenson if the Oberholtzer matter had not occurred.¹⁰⁹ Robinson had to face the voters in 1926 in a special election for the remaining two years of Senator Ralston's term. Senator Watson's first full term was coming to an end in 1926. Indiana was the only state to have both Senate seats contested that year.

Senator Watson had successfully avoided taking a clear-cut stand on the Klan issue. The Indianapolis Times quoted him

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., January 8, 1926.

¹⁰⁸ William G. Shepherd, "Indiana's Mystery Man," Colliers, LXXIX (January 8, 1927), p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Chalmers, op. cit., p. 172.

as saying: "I'm not a member of the Ku Klux Klan or of the Catholic Church, but I haven't anything against anyone for belonging to either."¹¹⁰ However, Watson was considered a useful Klan sympathizer to Imperial Wizard Evans because of his support for the contested seating of Klan Senator Earl Mayfield of Texas in 1923. The Klan even boosted Watson for the vice-presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in 1924.¹¹¹ This move embarrassed the Senator's attempt to straddle the Klan issue; Watson immediately denounced the Klan's endorsement. O'Mahony, who was always examining politicians of the Klan issue, had not complained editorially about the Senator during the Klan era. When the Indianapolis Times suggested that Watson was signalling a break with the Klan by supporting a Senate bill to increase immigration quotas, O'Mahony was indignant at the idea that Watson had ever been linked with the Klan: "He has never voted for one Klan-sponsored measure in the Senate. He has voted for the confirmation of every official up for appointment that the Klan bitterly opposed."¹¹² However, the Imperial Wizard, in order to insure the Indiana Klan's support for Watson's reelection, arranged the resignation of Grand Dragon Bossert, who was replaced by W. Lee Smith.

¹¹⁰ Indianapolis Times, May 13, 1924.

¹¹¹ Arnold S. Rice, The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1962), p. 75.

¹¹² Indiana Catholic and Record, December 17, 1926.

Bossert had been opposed to Watson's reelection.¹¹³

This change of Grand Dragons only intensified dissatisfaction among Indiana Klansmen, who resented dictation from Atlanta. Many members allowed their membership to lapse. The upheaval within the Klan came to the attention of outsiders, including the Indiana Catholic, which reported the ongoing decline of the Klan as of February, 1926:

In a recent Klan suit before Judge Thomas L. Slick of the Federal Court in Indianapolis, the supreme secretary of the hooded body, said, Indiana now had only 50,000 members who paid dues. This is just one-fourth of the number of members the Klan claimed in the State two years ago. Since the testimony was given, Klaverns representing 20,000 northern Kluxers have decided to secede and form a new organization. That makes the third split in a year. Soon there will be less than nothing behind the mask when it is lifted--and that may be Judge Orbison holding the bag of gold he made off the order in this State.¹¹⁴

With the Klan on the decline, O'Mahony concluded that it no longer enjoyed political influence. The only candidate to be praised before the May, 1926 primary was Republican State Senator Thomas A. Dailey of Indianapolis, a Protestant and Mason, who had compiled an anti-Klan record in the 1925 legislature.¹¹⁵ Dailey had been the Progressive party's candidate for governor in 1916. O'Mahony declined to endorse any other candidates:

It is a dangerous thing to publish a list of who is right or wrong on the Klan issue on the eve of the primary. We are frank to say that we have been fooled ourselves in a few cases and we don't like to be a party to

¹¹³Chalmers, op. cit., p. 173.

¹¹⁴Indiana Catholic and Record, February 5, 1926.

¹¹⁵Ibid., April 2, 1926.

fooling others. A Catholic paper, any more than other papers, has no particular source of accurate information on this subject.¹¹⁶

Before the primary he confined himself to urging readers to remember with gratitude anti-Klan incumbents seeking reelection: "Our readers know them. We need say no more."¹¹⁷

O'Mahony maintained silence on the senatorial races even though the two incumbents had Klan ties. Of the twelve other aspirants for the Senate seats, one candidate, L. Ert Slack, chief counsel for the Indiana Klan and former Indianapolis city councilman, was seeking the Democratic nomination for the long term. In the primary Watson and Robinson were easily nominated. Watson's Democratic opponent, Albert Stump, a political unknown, received a plurality but not a majority of the votes in the crowded Democratic field that included Slack. Stump received the senatorial nomination at the Democratic state convention. Robinson's Democratic opponent for the short term was Evans Woollen, a former Congressman who successfully achieved nomination in the primary.¹¹⁸ In surveying the primary results, O'Mahony found confirmation in his belief in the Klan loss of political influence:

It is apparent that the Ku Klux Klan has ceased to be a power in Indiana politics. The most extreme of them evidently followed the standard of their chief counsel

¹¹⁶ Ibid., April 9, 1926.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., April 23, 1926.

¹¹⁸ Davis, op. cit., pp. 217-219.

into the Democratic party, and they piled up unlooked for support for him in the cross-roads towns. We are happy to say that there was less bitterness and acrimony in the campaign this time than in any primary for some years which at least shows that we have made some advances in clearing the name of Indiana from the odium that came upon it and upon both parties in this State.¹¹⁹

In November, the Democratic candidates were the apparent beneficiaries of popular discontent with the Klan-tainted Republicans. However, this discontent was not great enough to unseat the Republican senators. With over a million votes cast in each race, Senator Watson polled only 11,000 more votes than Stump, while Senator Robinson exceeded Woollen by 22,000.¹²⁰ The winning Republicans for state offices generally outpolled the two senators.

As the November, 1926 election neared, O'Mahony's attention was deflected from the Klan to the Anti-Saloon League. The editor discovered that the League, an organization that he often linked with the Klan, was bitterly opposed to the reelection of Judge Julius Travis to the Indiana Supreme Court. Judge Travis had upheld the reversal of a conviction in a case involving the violation of prohibition statutes because the evidence was gathered illegally. O'Mahony, who had no sympathy for national prohibition, deplored the League's drumbeating: "If this is not an open and unblushing effort to intimidate the judiciary of the state, we don't know what it may be

¹¹⁹ Indiana Catholic and Record, May 7, 1926.

¹²⁰ Yearbook of the State of Indiana for the Year 1926 (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1927), pp. 23-25.

called."¹²¹ Judge Travis was reelected to the Supreme Court.

Despite its decay, the Klan formulated a legislative program for the General Assembly in January, 1927. At an Indianapolis meeting chaired by Judge Orbison, the twenty-six Klan legislators proposed to introduce substantially the same program that had been defeated in the last General Assembly.¹²² After reporting the names of the legislators in attendance, O'Mahony urged:

We hope that the people back home in the country towns of Indiana will study the names of those who attended this meeting and advocated this legislation and bear them in mind in the future. But we are not one bit worried about the legislature. It will probably hand the Klan the same kind of a lemon that was handed to it the last time.¹²³

When the General Assembly opened, the Indiana Catholic approved of the reelection of Harry Leslie as Speaker of the House and James Nedjl as president pro tempore of the Senate. The names of the members of the House and Senate education committees were reported and readers were urged to contact them. However, he did not entertain any fears about the General Assembly: "there is little danger of any radical or narrow-minded legislation."¹²⁴ A bill requiring public school teachers to be public school graduates was introduced but gathered little support. The legislature failed to pass a released-time reli-

¹²¹Indiana Catholic and Record, October 29, 1926.

¹²²Indianapolis News, January 5, 1927.

¹²³Indiana Catholic and Record, January 7, 1927.

¹²⁴Ibid., January 14, 1927.

gious education bill like the one vetoed after the previous session. At the close of the session O'Mahony was pleased: "that not one measure was passed at the recent session which could be considered injurious or hostile to the Catholic people who live in Indiana."¹²⁵ He also rated the legislature's overall performance: "It did little harm and not much good, nor much of anything."¹²⁶

Since the arrest of D.C. Stephenson in the spring of 1925, there had been a steady stream of revelations concerning Klan wrongdoing. Investigations by various government agencies and newspapers, notably the Indianapolis Times and the Vincennes Commercial and Leader, compiled a record of Klan-related iniquity. The United States Senate elections subcommittee, which investigated Klan involvement in politics around the country, and the Marion County Grand Jury uncovered links with the Klan in Governor Jackson's office. Although Stephenson was safely in prison and the Klan was declining, the Governor could not escape the burden of his past association with the organization. When a long-expected pardon from the Governor was not forthcoming, Stephenson released some of his damaging political secrets. Stephenson produced a cancelled check made out to Jackson for \$2,000 dated in September, 1923. Since this was not listed as a campaign contribution, Jackson took three weeks to decide

¹²⁵ Ibid., March 25, 1927.

¹²⁶ Ibid., March 4, 1927.

that the check was payment for a horse sold to Stephenson. The horse subsequently choked to death on a corncob. In the ensuing investigation by the Marion County Grand Jury, Jackson was indicted for attempting to bribe his much convicted predecessor, Governor Warren McCray. Jackson escaped conviction because the statute of limitations had expired. Thus he did not feel obliged to heed the demands for his resignation from many quarters. Mayor Duvall was indicted and convicted for violating the Corrupt Practices Act; he subsequently resigned. Duvall was joined in jail by his brother-in-law, the city controller, as well as the Marion County sheriff, the city purchasing agent, and a former Republican state chairman.¹²⁷

O'Mahony very early took the position that the investigations were reported in the daily press with enough thoroughness "to satisfy and gratify the desire of the most extreme anti-Ku Klux Klan enthusiast."¹²⁸ Therefore the details of Klan iniquity were not repeated in the Indiana Catholic. Furthermore, O'Mahony was unwilling to comment on individuals under indictment as in the Stephenson case. When Jackson, Duvall, and others were indicted, he warned his readers that the guilt or innocence of the accused was to be decided in court. Yet he did note: "We cannot help thinking and calling attention to the fact that those who played with the Klan and used it

¹²⁷ Martin, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

¹²⁸ Indiana Catholic and Record, February 12, 1926.

are having a bitter lesson and perhaps will have a terrible retribution."¹²⁹

The resignation of Mayor Duvall in November, 1927 did not relieve Indianapolis of the onus of Klan influence. The Klan-dominated city council after thirty-eight ballots chose as the new mayor, L. Ert Slack, the chief legal counsel of the Atlanta faction of the Indiana Klan. Six of the nine city councilmen were under indictment at the time. The six later resigned after pleading guilty to lesser charges and paying fines.¹³⁰ Mayor Slack claimed that his relationship to the Klan was only of a business nature. While commenting on the history of Slack's involvement with the Klan, O'Mahony was willing to let the new mayor prove himself. The editor added: "In the true Christian spirit of charity, we wish Mr. Slack good luck and success. Anything will be better than what we had."¹³¹

In the Indiana senatorial race of 1928, the Klan was again an issue. With his short term expiring in 1928, Senator Robinson was seeking election to a full term. In addition to the Klan sympathy he no doubt enjoyed as a former legal counsel to the Stephenson Klan, Robinson had the support of the Republican state organization and the potent Anti-Saloon League. The League charged Robinson's two Republican challengers in

¹²⁹ Ibid., September 16, 1927.

¹³⁰ Martin, op. cit., p. 199.

¹³¹ Indiana Catholic and Record, November 11, 1927.

the primary, Indiana Attorney General Arthur L. Gilliom and Judge Solon A. Carter, with being "wet."¹³² The charge was substantially correct. Gilliom felt that prohibition was unenforceable.¹³³ Judge Carter, who was vocally anti-Klan, had also been flaying the "dry" leaders for some time.¹³⁴ Once again the prohibition and the Klan issues were closely linked.

The Indiana Catholic's sympathies could scarcely be concealed. Since the 1924 election, O'Mahony had been celebrating the activities of Attorney General Gilliom, especially his outspoken denunciations of the Klan and the Anti-Saloon League. In his few references to Klan exposés, O'Mahony tended to ignore the work of county prosecutors and newspapers and to emphasize the effort of the Attorney General in bringing Klansmen to justice.¹³⁵ Gilliom matched eloquent words with deeds when he filed suit in the Circuit Court of Marion County for cancellation of the Klan's charter.¹³⁶ O'Mahony had always questioned the granting of the charter in the first place and had subsequently called for its revocation. Having publicized Gilliom over the years as one of the few Indiana politicians to fight the Klan, it was only natural for the Indiana Catholic

¹³² New York Times, April 15, 1928.

¹³³ Indiana Catholic and Record, March 5, 12, 1926.

¹³⁴ Ibid., June 4, 1926.

¹³⁵ Ibid., February 24, 1926.

¹³⁶ Indianapolis News, January 4, 1928.

to endorse his candidacy for the Senate: "With a representative like Mr. Gilliom in the Senate, Indiana might be able to raise her head from a self-imposed yoke, and resume her once honored place among the States of the nation."¹³⁷ However, Robinson easily won the Republican senatorial nomination in the primary as well as reelection in November, defeating Democrat Albert Stump.

The Indiana Catholic did not endorse any other candidates. The two gubernatorial nominees, Republican House Speaker Harry Leslie and Democrat Frank Dailey, were acceptable: "Whichever of them wins, we will have a good governor."¹³⁸ Leslie outpolled Dailey by 40,000 votes in November.¹³⁹

Despite the candidacy of a Catholic, Democrat Alfred E. Smith, the presidential contest of 1928 did not command an extraordinary amount of attention in the Indiana Catholic. The newspaper's interest in partisan politics diminished as the Klan's strength declined in Indiana. O'Mahony had been periodically defending Al Smith's participation in national politics for several years before 1928. Not surprisingly, the editor found no conflict between holding the office of president and being a Catholic. However, this discussion was not extensive; after all, Catholic involvement in politics hardly

¹³⁷ Indiana Catholic and Record, March 30, 1928.

¹³⁸ Ibid., June 1, 1928.

¹³⁹ Yearbook of the State of Indiana for the Year 1928 (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1929), pp. 39-41.

needed to be defended to Catholic readers. O'Mahony did not link what remained of the Klan to the raising of the religious issue in the presidential campaign.

The Indiana Catholic took a generally balanced approach to the issues and personalities of Smith and Hoover. Reprints of articles from secular publications appeared explaining the candidates' positions on leading issues. The political history of both candidates was favorably presented. Smith was praised for his progressive record as Governor of New York as was Hoover for his war relief service and his record as Secretary of Commerce. This balance was somewhat upset when O'Mahony reprinted an article from an Irish-American newspaper, the San Francisco Leader, that described how Hoover supposedly applied for naturalization as a British subject while working as a mining engineer in Australia.¹⁴⁰ Needless to say, O'Mahony thought that freely choosing to become a British subject was thoroughly reprehensible. Nevertheless, when Hoover was elected, a gracious congratulatory editorial appeared in the Indiana Catholic.

In his treatment of the waning years of the Klan, O'Mahony portrayed it as broken before its actual demise. He thought that the Klan's defeat in the 1925 General Assembly also killed the organization. He apparently failed to notice the generally recognized link between the Klan and Senators Watson and Robinson. In general, O'Mahony was very charitable to the people

¹⁴⁰ Indiana Catholic and Record, August 31, 1928.

of Indiana in overlooking what other writers on the Klan have called the "mental Klan" or those nativist attitudes Hoosiers held that attracted them to the Klan. The Klan in Indiana declined and fell, not because Hoosiers had been converted to tolerance, but because the Klan leaders engaged in discreditable activities.

During the late twenties O'Mahony took to the defense of Indiana against what he regarded as an overdrawn criticism of the state based on the Klan madness. He took issue with a Chicago Tribune editorial entitled, "Indiana in the Dark Ages," which was reprinted in the Indiana Catholic. The Tribune portrayed Indiana as virtually a vigilante state:

It came about that American citizens in Indiana were judged by their religion, condemned because of their race, illegally punished because of their opinions, hounded because of their personal conduct; and a state of terror was substituted for a state of law. Intolerance took the place of amiability and good nature.¹⁴¹

O'Mahony attacked this analysis by indicating that lawlessness was being investigated and malefactors prosecuted. Furthermore there were instances of Klan violence and destruction at Herrin, Williamson County, Illinois where the National Guard had to be called out to quell disorder. O'Mahony rejoined: "When we think of Herrin and some things that happened even in Chicago, we thank God we are not as bad as Illinois."¹⁴²

However, Indiana was not as free of these disruptive

¹⁴¹ Chicago Tribune, April 3, 1927; reprinted in the Indiana Catholic and Record, April 8, 1927.

¹⁴² Indiana Catholic and Record, April 8, 1927.

manifestations as O'Mahony suggested. Although the Klan leaders always professed to stand for law and order, there were some overly zealous Klansmen, who, acting on their own, engaged in direct action against the Klan's adversaries. At North Judson, Starke County, Indiana, Klansmen blew up the priest's residence next to Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church there. Fortunately the priest escaped injury.¹⁴³ In June, 1927, a few months after O'Mahony's above statement, a Klansman set fire to the second oldest Catholic church in Indianapolis, St. Patrick's on the near southside. The church was completely destroyed. The same arsonist had also set fire to two other Catholic churches in Indianapolis, but the fires were quickly discovered and extinguished after causing limited damage to furnishings.¹⁴⁴

In responding to the Tribune, O'Mahony also endorsed the generally held belief in the innate innocence of Hoosier life as he discussed the origins of the Klan in Indiana:

We have had our experience with the Klan. It was not Indiana men who started the Klan in this Hoosier state. It was an artful bunch of criminals from Georgia, Alabama, and Texas who invaded Indiana and misled, deceived, and plundered thousands of innocent yokels. . . .

Unfortunately when that condition came about in the latter part of 1921, and on to 1922, there was no Lincoln in either party to arise and repudiate or denounce the prescriptive organization. . . . But the policy of the big leaders seemed to be to let the Klan run its course and that it would "die out."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Ibid., August 8, 1924.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., June 24, 1927.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., April 8, 1927.

O'Mahony acknowledged that a small minority of bigots would always remain but tended to ignore the idea that the nativist impulse had not been overcome. He definitely minimized the entire Klan experience: "when the worst is said it was only a passing nightmare inspired by a circus parade of dupes led by artful dodgers."¹⁴⁶

O'Mahony's lament over the bad light into which Indiana had been thrown seemed to outweigh his concern about the Klan's near ability to succeed in the state. He noted that businesses were shying away from locating in Indiana. He continued the defense of Indiana when the Nation and the Catholic Transcript, official newspaper of the diocese of Hartford, Connecticut, published articles about "Klan rule" in Indiana. After reciting the salient facts supporting the position that the Klan never actually ruled Indiana, O'Mahony complained:

Judging from some of the articles appearing now in eastern publications, one would imagine that the Klan had inflicted terrible punishment on the Catholics, Jews, and Negroes of the state as compared with other states. That is not so.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, O'Mahony found some positive good in the Klan phenomenon because of the unifying effect it had on the Catholic community in Indiana. In an editorial entitled "In Thanksgiving," he expressed appreciation for the Klan:

The Ku Klux Klan, after a hectic career, has just about run its course. We are sorry. We can think of nothing

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., April 8, 1927.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., October 28, 1927.

in the last hundred years which has been greater benefit to the Catholic Church than this organization which had for its avowed purpose eternal hostility to the Church. . . . The Klan will be missed.¹⁴⁸

In rendering the final verdict on the people among whom the Klan madness arose, the editor of the Indiana Catholic observed charitably: "Indiana has come back into her own. Her people, in spite of all that has been said, are among the best in the world, the most neighborly and the most kindly."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., August 7, 1925.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., April 8, 1927.

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