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Service clubs in twentieth-century America

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The Johns Hopkins University, 1987

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SERVICE CLUBS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

by

Jeffrey Charles

A dissertation submitted to The Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland
1987

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the twentieth century, millions of businessmen and professionals have gathered in the name of service, to enjoy an informal fellowship and to perform charitable and community betterment projects. Despite their integral role in the social life of American communities, however, service clubs have been neglected by historians. This dissertation describes the development of the three largest service associations--Rotary International, Kiwanis International, and the International Association of Lions Clubs--and argues they deserve study as a complex middle class response to twentieth century social transformations.

The clubs first appeared in big cities in the early twentieth century, attracting locally-oriented businessmen and independent professionals. By supplying a business network and sociability reminiscent of small town neighborliness, the clubs offered an antidote to anomic urban conditions. In the 1920's, however, the clubs spread rapidly to towns and small cities. Members in small communities hoped clubs could help revitalize occupational and residential traditions weakened by corporate and urban expansion. Their boosterism brought attacks from critics who saw the clubs as characteristic of America's crass

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business culture. But members defended their associations' friendliness and community spirit as a way of combatting the impersonality and divisiveness of the modern age.

In the thirties, the clubs' small town, small business vision continued to appeal to men not only in America but also abroad, as Rotary and later the Lions conducted a successful international expansion program. A debilitating fear of social discord hampered club response to the depression and the stormy international affairs of the thirties. Nevertheless, the service organizations weathered those difficulties, and continued their expansion after World War II.

However, as large-scale trends continued to weaken the place of small business and small communities in America, members no longer spoke for traditions separate from modern institutional life. New clubs operated in primarily residential suburbs, undermining the boosterism that fueled club activities in the twenties. Club leaders began referring to their associations as charitable agencies, part of a voluntary "third sector" of bureaucratic organizations. Today, as their distinctive social function gradually disappears, American service clubs face an uncertain future.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many club and staff members of Rotary International, Kiwanis International, and the International Association of Lions Clubs who provided sources and answered questions about their organizations. I am particularly grateful to Paul Bernholdt and his staff at Rotary International, who not only allowed me access to Rotary club files and correspondence, but also took time out of their normal routine to retrieve material I requested.

This study owes much of its coherence to my dissertation advisor, Professor John Higham. His trenchant criticism and historigraphical suggestions never failed to sharpen each of the many drafts I handed him. Professors Louis Galambos and Ronald Walters also helped eliminate some loose writing and vague thinking.

I consider myself fortunate to have as friends Darryl Hart, David Watt, and Peter Kafer. Their knowledge of history improved this study, while their camaraderie renewed my appreciation of the pleasures of informal fellowship.

I would not have completed this dissertation had I not been married to Cathy, whose love and unfailing support

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carried me, often against my will, through every difficulty I encountered. She also did some translations and helped with the statistical compilations.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents. Their assistance went beyond the call of parental duty, including help in gathering data and in editing the manuscript. Most important, throughout my life they have set the standard by which I judge claims of unselfish service.

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VITA

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INTRODUCTION

Round signs depicting a cogwheel, a stylized K, or a roaring Lion appear at the edge of towns or suburban communities throughout the United States. They announce the presence of the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions clubs -- businessmen's organizations that meet once a week for lunch, fellowship, and community service. Although millions of businessmen and professionals around the world have joined these clubs, to most contemporary Americans, their signs mean little. The clubs' scholarships, their pancake breakfasts, their sale of chances on a new car for charity: these activities are a familiar part of the twentieth century middle class life. Today, however, they seem peripheral, anachronistic against the glass-walled office buildings and endless suburban shopping strips which delineate most American communities.

In the 1920's, however, the service clubs were a novel phenomenon, and many regarded them as quintessential expressions of a changing middle class life. Lampooned and caricatured by Mencken and Lewis, derided by the literati, investigated by the Lynds and other sociologists, the

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clubs, these observers felt, typified the commercialism and materialism of American democratic society. The twenties intelligentsia viewed Rotarians, Kiwanians, and Lions as important but disheartening manifestations of the modern American male, who had evolved into a shallow joiner, booster, and conformist.

For years, interpreters of American life have implicitly accepted the twenties stereotype of the club member. Allowing the shadow cast by Babbitt's plump figure to obscure the significance of the service clubs' sudden emergence, historians and other scholars have virtually ignored the phenomenon that bemused intellectuals in the twenties. Yet service clubs deserve more than caricature. Not only do the clubs represent a crucial, but historically undervalued aspect of American culture--its voluntary associational life--they also reflect vital, often contradictory impulses in American middle class experience in this century.

First appearing in the early twentieth century, service clubs combined informal fellowship with a program of charitable activities and community improvement projects. Although the clubs quickly attracted businessmen in a majority of America's larger cities, their most rapid growth occurred after World War I. Then, club expansion swept through small communities all across the country. Town retailers, small manufacturers, doctors, lawyers, and

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educators eagerly joined these new vehicles for community spirit and breezy camaraderie. As this pattern of growth continued, it became apparent that the clubs' constituency occupied a place somewhere behind the front lines of urban and corporate development. Service clubs did not represent, as their twenties critics would have it, the organizational embodiment of commercial capitalism. The men who flocked to membership--small businessmen and independent professionals in smaller communities--among the most vocal advocates of growth and progress--also longed for a return to the "normalcy" of community relations in nineteenth century America.

This study attempts to qualify the image of the service club member as an other-directed Babbitt, cowed into conformity by the forces of materialism and peer-pressure. It examines the service club as a complex response to the large-scale organizing of American society. Drawing their membership from a segment of society placed on the defensive in a corporate, urban environment, many of the clubs' service activities--attempts to inculcate character in youth, to strengthen their home towns against outside influences, and to restore simplicity and Christian values to their business transactions--reveal an aggressive traditional moralism. On the other hand, their informal style and their advertising-inspired rhetoric smacked of the consumer society. Their obsession with service and

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efficiency paralleled similar concerns on the part of corporate officials. And the service clubs' national organizations were themselves efficiently-run bureaucratic hierarchies, expansive during the twenties, resilient enough not merely to survive but also to prosper in the midst of the depression.

By examining the clubs as a phenomenon of "organizing America," I am drawing on a synthesis that has dominated interpretations of twentieth century American history for the last two decades. The organizational synthesis regards the central event in modern American history to be the rise of large-scale organizations--industrial corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Emerging together in response to technological development and new economic complexity, these organizations shaped American society not only within their own areas of activity, but also in their far-reaching influence on the values and behavior of the general population. Their less tangible but still marked general effects include a deemphasis of individualism, new values of "rationality" and "efficiency," and a changed sense of community.[1]

---

[1]The frequently cited central works in this field include Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago, 1957), Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York, 1967), and the two summaries by Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," Business History Review 44 (Autumn, 1970): 279-290, and "Technology, Political Economy and Professionalization: Central Themes of the Organizational Synthesis," Business History Review 57

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Although the portrait organizational historiography paints of the recent American past seems accurate as far as it goes, its depiction has not been a particularly vivid one. The inexorable forward march of bureaucratic structures does not allow much room for the personal motivations and sharp conflict that characterized events in the twentieth century. As those who have elaborated it would be the first to admit, the organizational synthesis could use some deepening.[2]

In this study, I examine a group of men who eagerly adopted organization, not because their traditional attachments to town and social group had been overwhelmed by bureaucratic structures, but rather because the threat of incorporation into urban industrial life re-invigorated loyalties to class and locality. The clubs attracted the traditional core of the middle class at a time when both its occupational and residential life appeared in jeopardy--its foundations about to be swept away by corporate and urban expansion. This threat heightened what might loosely be called a "class awareness" among this group of men. The service clubs' occupationally-defined membership provided evidence of this increased awareness. But the clubs also helped to intensify class solidarity, by gathering into

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(Winter, 1983), 471-493.

[2]See Ellis Hawley's call for further research in "The Discovery and Study of a 'Corporate Liberalism'," Business History Review 52 (Autumn, 1978): 309-319.

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national associations men such as small retailers, lawyers, local officials, and college educators--who despite sharing similar socio-economic circumstances might not otherwise have been drawn together.[3] Organizing these men in the name of "community service," the clubs worked to strengthen local allegiance and create a bulwark of "community spirit" against urbanization's influences.

Doubtless the men who became service club members did not expect to reverse the course of American social development. Instead they joined together to insure their position in the community and defend the national relevance of their values. Restricting membership to one or two representatives from each occupation, clubs made manifest members' status and strengthened local business ties.

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[3]Most club members belonged to that subset of the middle class, the "petit bourgeois." I use "awareness" rather than "consciousness" because I do not wish to imply that small businessmen thought in sharply-defined class terms. In this usage I follow the sentiment, although not the exact definition, behind Anthony Giddens' similar distinction. I believe that for the petit bourgeois, the emergence of the service clubs indicates what Giddens refers to as "structuration," where class, or position in relation to production, coincides with status group membership, i.e., members' place as native white, small town residents in a more pluralistic, urban society. The club members also seem to me to occupy Erik Olin Wright's definition of a "contradictory" position in the class structure--in control of some aspects of their economic fate, but without genuine power and influence. "Structuration" plus a new sense of their "contradiction" equals increased class "awareness." Anthony Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies (London, 1973), 99-117; Erik Olin Wright, "Class Boundaries and Contradictory Class Locations" in Giddens, and David Held, eds., Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates(Berkeley, Ca., 1982), 112-129.

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Against the growth of impersonal bureaucratic institutions, members advocated voluntary cooperation and responsible individualism, and flaunted their sense of public responsibility. Through their meetings and activities, they sought to recreate what they remembered as the warm friendliness and booster spirit of the nineteenth century small town. By expanding world-wide, the associations attempted to smooth over international complexities with the familiar homilies of good neighbor relations. Throughout, they spoke of the necessity of "cooperative individualism," "community spirit," and "world-wide fellowship," calling for a social harmony that would disarm change and ease the disruptions of modernization.

The social conditions and heightened community awareness that allowed the clubs to burst into national prominence following World War I could not last. In the thirties, members saw their voluntary cooperation overwhelmed by the depression and then overcome by government bureaucracy. Foreign expansion, though gratifying in its extent and prestige, entangled club leadership in the thorns of international conflict. Continued growth at home placed clubs in burgeoning suburbs--similar to small towns in their composition, but lacking the economic incentives and sense of residential belonging that had fueled service activities in the twenties. Post-war bureaucratic growth and corporatization

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remained hostile to the interests of the "old" middle class. Club membership increased, but without commensurate gain in club influence. Service clubs and their constituents, though still a considerable presence in many communities around the world, never achieved the prominence that club spokesmen continued to claim at each international convention.

This study examines the rise and development of the three largest service clubs--Rotary International, Kiwanis International, and the International Association of Lions Clubs. More than twenty national service organizations formed in the early twentieth century, among the more successful including the Exchange, Optimists, Ruritan, Sertoma, Torch, Gyro, 20/30 and Cosmopolitan; not to mention the distaff service clubs, Soroptimists, Zonta, Quota, and Pilot. However, not only did the numbers joining "the big three," as they came to be known, comprise 90% of the total service club membership, but also the differences in all the clubs' composition and structure were minor. I therefore treat the three service clubs as a unified group, representative of the service club phenomenon as a whole.

Appreciably different were the fraternal orders, with which I begin this study. These orders dominated the organized social life of small town businessmen in the nineteenth century the way service clubs did in the

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twentieth, and Chapter One traces the shift from a sociability based on fraternity to one dedicated to service. Succeeding chapters discuss the clubs' emergence and rapid expansion; their role in their members' occupational and residential life; their battle with critics in the twenties, and finally their reaction to depression and renewed prosperity after World War II. By the sixties and seventies, I argue, the clubs could no longer maintain the degree of class and community concern that made for their dramatic success in earlier decades.

Yet even though this story ends, as do most histories of America's organizational society, with the declining importance of a social group's unique interests and local peculiarities, the rise of the service clubs illustrates the vigor and complexity of their members' response to bureaucratic life. Rather than fight a rearguard battle against social transformation, members of service clubs sought an accommodation which would still allow their class and communities a degree of power and influence. In the process, they created a sociable organization that successfully combined fellowship, self-interest, concern for local community, and broader awareness of class standing and world-wide social development.

An examination of service clubs could have employed any number of a wide variety of possible approaches--including anthropological analysis, oral history, and in-depth

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community studies. I have relied on a more traditional form of analysis--a careful reading of the speeches and discussions at meetings and conventions which are recorded in proceedings, minutes, and local club histories; an examination of published and unpublished articles and letters; and a review of the observations of sociologists who through the years have considered service clubs in their work on particular communities.

Several important aspects of the service club phenomenon are slighted here, none perhaps more intriguing than the clubs' international expansion, to which I give an abbreviated treatment from an American perspective in Chapter 6. The appeal of these American clubs to businessmen of other nationalities, and the slightly different shape clubs took in other countries, could yet turn out to be the most significant aspect of the service club story. For the last several decades the growth of Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions in other countries has exceeded that in the United States, and today non-American Rotarians and Lions far outnumber membership in the clubs' country of origin. Closely examining the nature of the service club appeal in other countries would provide a substantial contribution to the still underdeveloped field of comparative history. Through service clubs, one could shed light on the twentieth century "Americanization" of other cultures, and weigh the cultural impact of class

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affiliation in relation to unique national characteristics. But these and other issues await a broader treatment.

Service clubs have been a neglected topic of study partly because they fall into the cracks of recent historiographical interests. Historians examining social groups have rightfully attempted to redress an earlier neglect of women, blacks, workers and other peoples excluded from official positions of power and influence. Those writing the history of organizations have focused on associations with a more expressly economic, political or reform purpose. The sociable gatherings of reasonably well-off, native white, small businessmen and professionals, which often seem to result only in expressions of bland optimism, at first glance hardly seem to merit serious study. For travelers down the wide avenue of American social history, service clubs blend, like their signs, into the background of passed landscape. Their existence and accomplishments deserve to be placed squarely back on Main Street.

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CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING FORMS OF FELLOWSHIP: FROM FRATERNITY TO SERVICE

When the Lynds attempted to highlight the changed character of Muncie, Indiana social life in their classic, Middletown, they detailed, with a novelist's flair, a Rotary club meeting.

> These chosen head men, meeting in the best hotel or at the Country Club, stand about chatting, observing the ritual of calling each other by first names, until the president shouts, "Let's Go!" whereupon all crowd into the dining room...Eating proceeds vigorously at the long tables for about half an hour. Ten minutes of lusty song follow...

After recording the lyrics of a typical song ("R-O-T-A-R-Y, That Spells Rotary") the Lynds describe members introducing their guests:

> "I have with me as my guest Bill Smith, visiting Rotarian from Jacksonville," says a member. Bill stands up, and from all the tables rises a brisk volley of, "'Lo Bill!" "Hi, Bill!"

Thus began a representive meeting of organizations the Lynds felt "have displaced lodges and churches as centers of loyalty and personal and class morale."[1]

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[1]Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in American Culture (New York, 1929)[Reprint, 1956], 301-306.

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Had the Lynds written their chapter twenty years earlier, they might have described the same "head men" participating in a more mystical opening ritual--that beginning the evening ceremony at the fraternal lodge. (That is, had they managed to obtain admittance to meetings normally closed to outsiders.) They perhaps might have noticed the presence of one of the town handymen--not necessarily accepted by all as a social equal, but a full-fledged lodgemember nonetheless. Certainly they would have commented on the solemn reverence with which members spoke of the sacred fraternal brotherhood.

There are, as Reuel Denney has noted, periods of transition in sociability; times when men and women begin to choose different forums to gather for fellowship and conviviality.[2] For the American middle class, the early twentieth century was such a period. From the 1850's to the 1920's, millions of American males joined organizations which apparently existed only to affirm, through secret ritual, a symbolic brotherhood. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, new organizations promoting fellowship emerged, which explicitly rejected ritual as a basis for association. Attracting some of the same individuals who had joined the ritualistic orders, the

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[2]Reuel Denney, "Feast of Strangers: Varieties of Sociable Experience in America," Herbert Gans, et. al., On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman (Camden, N.J., University of Pennsylvania Press), 251-269.

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new associations pursued "practical" projects for community welfare. By the 1920's, these "service clubs" were so popular that even the organizations based on ritualistic brotherhood felt it necessary to adopt some form of civic betterment or charitable activity to retain members. Today, few active voluntary associations, whatever their purpose, fail to claim some kind of "service" project.

Georg Simmel defined sociability as the "play-form" of social relations, occurring when people get together for no other reason than to enjoy each other's company--or, as Simmel put it, for "pure" social interaction.[3] Simmel's concept acquires historical significance when men and women organize for sociable purposes. The primary motive remains social interaction, but secondary, historically-determined motives shape the forms of their sociability. For the mid-nineteenth century lodge, motives other than pure fellowship included status and possible business connections. But of more historical interest are those aspects of fraternal sociability that made it particularly attractive to Victorian America. Open to both working and middle classes, including females in "auxiliaries," fraternal lodges celebrated, through ceremony and an elaborate hierarchy of "degrees," nineteenth century bourgeois values of self-help, upward mobility, and

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[3]Georg Simmel, "Sociability: An Example of Pure, or Formal Sociology," in Kurt H.Wolff, ed. and trans., The Sociology of Georg Simmel (New York, 1964), 40-57.

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domesticity. At the same time, fraternal orders offered a temporary refuge from the harsher nineteenth century social realities, allowing members to escape or ignore the divisive effects of nineteenth century capitalism, by encouraging a harmony that cut across sectarian and class boundaries.

In the late nineteenth century, the native American middle class began showing signs of disaffection with ritualistic fellowship. A new type of association appeared, which, like the lodge, clearly existed to promote social solidarity. Yet these new organizations adopted a more informal fellowship. They displayed a weakened allegiance to nineteenth century verities, as hard work, self-help, and domesticity gave way to leisure, a sense of interdependence, and expanded gender roles. Significantly, the membership of these new organizations was more exclusively middle class. Nineteenth century fraternalists assumed their shared values could ensure interclass sociability. Less confident that they would find laborers congenial, those who joined the new middle-class clubs and lodges eschewed association with the lower class. Correspondingly, they justified their sociability not by appeals to universal brotherhood, but rather by performing community betterment and charitable projects.[4]

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[4] In this interpretation, and the elaboration that follows, I am indebted to the studies of three historians: Mary Ann Clawson, who clarifies the role of class and

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This new type of sociability, characterized by lack of ceremony, and justified by "service," reflects a context of association changed by immigration, urbanization and continued industrialization. A fraternal refuge of interclass sociability seemed less possible--and less desirable--to men and women who felt the encroachments of a heterogeneous, corporate industrial society. Many of them chose to join associations that limited sociable interaction to others of similar background, while still working for social unity and good-feeling in the community as a whole. Appearing first among women in the late nineteenth century, this new type of association also influenced male lodges. By the early nineteen hundreds, new fraternal orders had emerged--more open associations, which reinforced lodge brotherhood with recreation and benevolent activities rather than ritual. The exemplar of these new organizations--the businessmen's clubs, of which Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions were the largest--reached full prominence in the twenties.

This chapter examines the shift in middle-class

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gender in nineteenth century fraternalism in two articles, "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation in the Nineteenth-Century United States," Comparative Studies in Society and History 27 (June, 1985): 672-695, and "Nineteenth Century Women s Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders," Signs 12 (Autumn, 1986): 40-61; Lynn Dumenil, who explicates the fraternal ethos in Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930 (Princeton, 1985); and John Gilkeson, whose exhaustive study of changes in one city's voluntary activity, Middle Class Providence, 1820-1940 (Princeton, 1986) encompasses the changes I will be discussing.

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associative life that these new organizations represented. It focuses on five groups--the Odd-Fellows and the Masons, the largest fraternal order of the nineteenth century; the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the first organization of either sex to devote itself to community service; and the Moose and the Elk, two of the few fraternal orders that thrived in the twentieth century. These five organizations illustrate the changing forms of fellowship. But they also help illuminate the rise of a middle class culture which would proclaim its devotion to "community" through its "service."

The I.O.O.F. and the Rise of Fraternalism

While Tocqueville wrote of the "immense numbers of different types of associations" in America, he concerned himself primarily with three types--political, religious, and moral. This limited scope reflected in part the perspective of the evangelical, middle-class Americans with whom he stayed during his visit.[5] Still, it also accurately described the general state of voluntary association at the time of his American journey. Workers in the major cities might be gathering in fire companies or

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[5] David Smith Reichlin makes this observation in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "From Civic Duty to Psychological Reward" (University of Pittsburgh, 1981), 36.

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incipient trade unions, and residents of smaller communities were beginning to sponsor lyceums and lecture clubs; but most non-political associations, particularly in the middle class, were either church-sponsored, or dominions of the "benevolent empire" of evangelical moral reformers. The one nation-wide social organization, the Freemasons, had recently been routed from the field, by fears of irreligion, aristocratic pretense, and political conspiracy. Most Americans as yet felt no need--and indeed were suspicious of--any association which existed mainly for fellowship.[6]

Yet even as Tocqueville published his observations on the multiplicity of associations, greater numbers began to emerge. Moral and church-related reform movements such as anti-slavery accelerated, spurred by the continuing influence of revivalism and perfectionism. Urban economic expansion generated new commerce associations and civic culture societies. And in the greatest increase of all, fraternal orders recovered quickly from anti-Masonic backlash to flourish among both the working and middle

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[6]The best general survey of nineteenth century voluntary activity is Ronald Walters, American Reformers: 1815-1860 (New York, 1978). See also Gilkeson, Middle-Class Providence. A summary of benevolent activity is contained in Lois Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," Journal of American History 60, (June, 1973), 23-41. A study of early Freemasonry which argues its opposition to the religious establishment is Dorothy Ann Lipson, Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut, 1789-1835 (Princeton, N.J., 1977); see also Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 4-7.

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classes. The combined number of members and different fraternities began to grow gradually in the 1850's, and then exploded after the war, to reach by the 1870's hundreds of separate organizations and an aggregate membership of several millions.[7]

Although the resurgent Masons provided the model for most of these organizations, the forces behind the general phenomenon are well-illustrated by what was to become America's largest fraternity, the Independent Order of Odd-Fellows. Less aristocratic than Freemasonry, the I.O.O.F. attracted a wider of range of Americans during its peak; it also suffered the greater decline when the fraternal order lost its appeal to middle class Americans in the early twentieth century.

The Odd-Fellows period of prominence was relatively brief. They did not arrive in America until 1819. Then, Thomas Wildey, a newly emigrated English blacksmith from "humble but respectable" origins, attempted to recreate in Baltimore the friendly society to which he had belonged in England. Gathering a group of English emigrants--all mechanics or artisans like himself--he formed an American

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[7] On the influence of perfectionism, see John L. Thomas, "Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865" David Brion Davis, ed. Ante-Bellum Reform (New York, 1967); for a good description of the emerging concern for civic culture and the process of middle class formation see Gilkeson, 55-94; a broad survey of fraternal orders in America, along with data on membership and foundings is Alvin J. Schmidt, Fraternal Organizations (Westport, Conn., 1980).

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branch of the Manchester Unity of Odd-Fellows. The Manchester Unity had been created from a collection of local funeral benefit societies in 1810, becoming one of England's first, and largest, affiliated orders.[8] This English heritage facilitated the spread of the Odd-Fellows in America, as recent English emigrants became the basis for lodges in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Thus the Odd-Fellows could be considered an early example of the immigrant organizations prominent in late nineteenth century America, although the fraternity quickly welcomed other groups.[9]

Wildey began the Odd-Fellows mainly as a convivial drinking club. But they soon established a sick and death benefits program, similar to that of the Manchester Unity although less systematized. They also added a secret ritual closely modeled on that of the Masons. With these important elements in place, the Odd-Fellows grew rapidly in their first five years, and in 1825 formed the Grand Lodge of America, with subordinate lodges organized in every state. Soon after, however, anti-Masonic sentiment

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[8]P. H. J. H. Gosden, Self-Help: Voluntary Associations in 19th Century Britain, (New York, 1974), 27-29; Robert W. Moffret, The Rise and Progress of the Manchester unity of the Independent Order of Odd-Fellows, 1810-1904 (Manchester, 1905).

[9]John Bodnar briefly discusses these associations in "Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations: Their Historical Development, Character, Significance," in Records of Ethnic Fraternal Benefit Associations in the U.S.: Essays and Inventories (St. Paul, Minn., 1981), 5-14.

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reached its nearly hysterical peak, tarring all secret organizations with the same conspiratorial brush.

Their growth slowed, the Odd-Fellows gradually took measures to win public approval. They reaffirmed in 1835 the stand against drinking at lodge meetings, which the Baltimore lodge had adopted in the 1820's to allay its "Baccanalian" reputation. They made sure to disassociate themselves from the Masonic image: "we spurn with honest indignation that species of ultraism which denies the legitimate and only proper ends of association--the promotion of man's happiness, the melioration and removal of evil [and] the emancipation of mind from spiritual debasement and degradation." And, in perhaps their most important gesture toward their opponents, they adopted lodge member Schuyler Colfax's suggestion that women be allowed to enter the fraternal fold--though only in auxiliary organizations. "Ladies," in Colfax's opinion, "knowing that Odd-Fellowship apparently exhibits no confidence in them...endeavor to induce those related to them to join other, more courteous orders." Forming female auxiliaries would not only "lessen and ultimately destroy the prejudice felt against the Order by many of the fairer sex" but also "assist Odd-Fellowship in cases of brother's sickness," for "she was formed to minister at the couch of

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affliction."[10]

As the Civil War approached, the Odd-Fellows' appeals to respectability--and similar efforts undertaken by the Masons--proved successful. Women flocked to the female auxiliaries, the "Order of Rebakah" and the Masonic "Order of the Eastern Star," as fears of political and religious conspiracy subsided. The Odd-Fellows, the Masons, and other fraternal orders were aided by increasing religious lenience; churches grew more tolerant as their own theology moved closer to the universalist and moral improvement ethic of the lodges. Later, the influence of the Civil War gave birth to some associations, and aided those already established. The Odd-Fellows capitalized on the era's romantic patriotism by adding militaristic regalia and flashy drill in their highly popular "Patriarchal" degree -- replete with "Grand Commanders" and "Encampments." Victorian romanticism and the orders' efforts to win respectability combined to make American society more conducive to fraternal activity.[11]

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[10] Quoted in Theodore Ross, Odd-Fellowship, Its History and Manual (New York, 1888), 98; other measures described in James L. Ridgely, History of American Odd-Fellowship--The First Decade (Baltimore, 1878), 42-47, and Rev. B.B. Hallock, "History of Odd-Fellowship," The Odd-Fellows Offering (New York, 1842), 40.

[11] On the threat Masonry represented and that order's efforts to assuage fears see Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Anti-Masonic Anxieties," American Quarterly 34 (Winter, 1982): 543-561; see also Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 8-9.

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The Fraternal Refuge

However, by far the most important factors in lodge growth were those changes which seemingly worked against fraternal feeling: the divisive effects of an accelerating industrial economy. As Americans in both the middle and working-class saw themselves becoming members of an urban, geographically mobile, extremely competitive, and impersonal society, they turned to fraternities for both escape and protection. "We are in a world of change, of sorrow, and pain," wrote Odd-Fellow B.B. Hallock, "We are continually liable to be placed in a condition in which we need the active, positive and transitive sympathies of our fellow men."[12] Fraternal sympathy could counter the fragmenting tendencies of the new economic order, and provide both psychological and material support. As Lynn Dumenil has convincingly argued in her study of Freemasonry, by stressing brotherhood and ethical behavior when rapid change and sharp competition defined American society, the lodge offered a spiritual asylum from the discomforts of uncertainty. "Here the world is shut-out--you are separated from its care and distractions, its dissensions and its vices" began the ritual of the Odd-

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[12]B.B. Hallock, "History of Odd-Fellowship," 33.

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Fellows.[13]

The fraternal rituals, including an elaborate initiatory ceremony or one in which a member advanced to higher fraternal "degrees," delineated the brotherhood of the lodgeroom. Made up of long recitations and elaborate dramatic tableaux, they combined biblical parables, sage advice, and solemn oaths, parts of them inexplicable to a modern reader--and perhaps also to the contemporary participant. Yet for Odd-Fellows and Masons, at least, the mystical qualities of the ritual service heightened the sacredness of their gathering. When the American Odd-Fellows formulated a ritual, they made English Odd-Fellow ceremony more elaborate, adding dramatic scenes and lengthening the sacred oaths.

This elaboration of ritual came at a time when the Manchester Unity was simplifying its own, focusing instead on efficiency in its benefits program. As a result of disagreements over ritual, the American Odd-Fellows split with the English fraternity in the early 1840's. In 1878, Odd-Fellow historian James Ridgely wrote condescendingly of the Manchester Unity as "chiefly a life and health insurance company," while in the American order "we find stirring appeals to the higher nature and those moral and divine principles which elevate it almost to the dignity of

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[13] Ritual from Revised Odd-Fellowship Illustrated: By a Past Grand Patriarch (Chicago, 1886), 49; Dumenil, 88-111.

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a religion." For the American Odd-Fellows, the ritual perhaps functioned as it did for the Masons, satisfying the hunger for elaborate religious ceremony in a way the simple liturgy of most American churches did not.[14]

As fraternal orders multiplied, all of them using a ritual imitative of the Masonic model, the sacred qualities of the ritual diminished. Since many lodge members were members of more than one order, they became quite familiar with ritualistic language and sentiments. One Mason, for example, became enraged by a bungling attempt to initiate him into the Ancient Order of United Workmen, because the order had lifted the ceremony word for word from the Masonic. "Why I can repeat that lecture a hundred times better than that man can read it!" he reportedly yelled as he stamped out.[15]

Yet familiarity did not necessarily breed contempt. When Freemason and Odd-Fellow Terence V. Powderly founded the Knights of Labor, he naturally added a secret ritual. Ritualistic participation and the swearing of secret oaths could unite any American, it seemed, in bonds of loyalty and brotherhood. All American males in the nineteenth century, whether native Protestant, recently immigrated

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[14]Dumenil, 31-71; Ridgely, History of American Odd-Fellowship, 10.

[15] Anecdote from Myrum W. Sacket, Early History of Fraternal Beneficiary Societies in America--Origin and Growth, 1868-1880 (Meadville, Pa., 1914), 108. The Workmen subsequently altered their ritual.

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Catholic, or middle-class black, found ritualistic fraternalism a powerful promoter of solidarity.[16]

The "Practical" Benefits of Brotherhood

Fraternal orders, however, did not depend only on the spiritual unity provided by the ritual for their communal bond. They also counted on the mutual appeal created by more concrete concerns. Crucial to the post-bellum multiplication of lodges were their life insurance and sick benefit plans. Of the fraternal orders, only the prestigious Masons did not make fraternal insurance central to their organization, although they did build retirement homes for aged members. The Odd-Fellows provided both benefits and homes for former members, while orders such as the Woodmen, the Royal Arcanum, the Macabees, and the

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[16] For an illuminating discussion of the importance of fraternalism to the working class, see Richard Jules Oestereicher, Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900 (Chicago, 1986), 16-118. Mary Ann Clawson offers a slightly different perspective in "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century United States." To the dismay of their white counterparts, blacks insisted on forming their own lodges of fraternal orders, such as the Masons, the Odd-Fellows, and the Elks, creating within them self-help communities. For a study of black Masonry, see William Muraskin, Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society; Prince Hall Freemasonry in America (Berkeley, Calif, 1975). Late in the nineteenth century, Catholics won dispensation to organize the Knights of Columbus, a story told in Christopher Kauffman, Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882-1982 (New York, 1982).

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Ancient Order of United Workmen existed primarily as vehicles for cooperative benefit plans. These groups attracted both working and middle-class members with a lower cost alternative to commercial life insurance.

Despite the lower cost, though, participants in fraternal benefit plans were not making an informed business decision. In prosperous times, with a large number of members paying dues regularly, the lodge reliably made weekly awards (in the case of the Odd-Fellows in the late nineteenth century, five dollars a week) to the member in case of illness, and upon his death, paid his widow or next of kin a lump sum ranging from $30 to $5000. When economic depression brought membership declines, or an unusual spate of deaths or illnesses struck, then the lodges, without a large reserve fund, required extra assessments of their healthy and active members. Some members simply refused to pay these extra assessments, "lapsing," or dropping out of the lodge. If enough members reacted this way to assessments, the lodge either went into debt or simply defaulted on its obligation, leaving members unprotected. As a result of these inefficiencies, obscure fraternal insurance orders went out of business as quickly as they formed, and larger orders such as the Odd-Fellows continually scrambled to stay afloat, hoping membership

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gains offset lapsations and deaths.[17]

If fraternal members had wished to follow sound insurance practice, they had only to follow the example of their English fraternal brethren, who had experienced exactly the same travails before placing their societies on an actuarial and reserve fund basis in the 1850's. Or they could have borrowed the various investment plans being used with great success by the commercial insurance industry, what the lodges called "the old-line companies." Instead, throughout the late nineteenth century, they continued to ignore the pleas of their secretaries for adequate assessments, even at the risk of losing their own benefits.

It appears, then, that the appeal of lodge insurance differed from that offered by commercial life insurance. The commercial companies successfully played on the desire for individual security amidst an uncertain, uncaring society. "If it were practicable, no system of assurance would be so complete as a common brotherhood," insurance historian Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer quotes the commercial insurance salesmen as saying. But, they went on to argue, such brotherhood "cannot be trusted." A man must "do it for himself" placing confidence only in the "entirely

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[17] Ross, Odd-Fellowship: Its History and Manual makes reference to these troubles, 240-270; see also Grand Sire's Report, I.O.O.F., 51st Annual Communication, Sovereign Grand Lodge, 1875.

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practical" commercial contract.[18] The fraternal orders made exactly the opposite pitch. Fraternal insurance relied on brotherhood and group support. Cooperation stood as a buffer between the member and the unpredictability of individual chances. "Mutual cooperation against the trials of life" is how the Grand Secretary of the Odd-Fellows described the Order in 1875. Stressing cooperation, fraternal spokesmen downplayed financial self-interest. Only well into lodge addresses does it become clear that "mutual relief and protection in times of want," "the constant practice of charity," and "inculcating higher ideas of duty to your fellow man" referred to a scheme paying cash benefits. Not just flowery eloquence disguising materialism, these phrases expressed the values of brotherhood central to fraternalism. In the idealized fraternal vision, insurance served only to reinforce mutuality among the lodge members.[19]

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[18]quoted in Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer, Morals and Markets: The development of Life Insurance in the United States (New York, 1979), 95.

[19] Ross, Odd Fellowship: Its History and Manual, 236; for a sampling of fraternal oratory see The Odd-Fellows Offering, and Fraternity: A Compilation of Historical Facts and Addresses pertaining to Fraternalism in General and the Fraternal System in Particular (Rochester, 1910)

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Fraternalism and Benevolent Capitalism

Fraternal cooperation, however, did not mean helpless interdependence. "Let us come up to the work of relief manfully" wrote Father John Upchurch, founder of the Ancient Order of United Workman, which sought the "elevation of mechanic and laborer in mental, moral, social, and civil positions." Priding themselves on attracting what an Odd-Fellow called "the great middle, industrial classes," fraternal orders embodied a "producer's ethic" of hard work, thrift, moral conduct, and masculine duty. Fraternal harmony flowed directly from an awakened responsibility. Spokesmen for Odd-Fellowship argued that the order "bound men together for benevolence and charity" by appealing to the "nobler instincts of the soul," strengthening inner resources for better citizenship or fatherhood. "The Royal Arcanum is cooperation, pure and simple," wrote the editor of The Royal Arcanum Bulletin in 1895, but then went on to express the terms of that cooperation: "in every member of your Order, you see a man -- a Brother whom you are bound to respect and honor." Nobility, self-assurance, respect, were the basis of fraternal harmony. Recognizing the importance of cooperation in the midst of rapid change, members of fraternal orders retained an essential confidence in

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individual efficacy.[20]

Symbolic validation of one man's chances--if aided by his "brothers"--could be found in the hierarchical structure of all fraternal orders. The initiate, through experience in membership and additional rites, could rise through a number of degrees, moving from an "apprentice" to Master Mason, or, in Odd-Fellowship, from white to the "royal purple." Odd-Fellows could rise through six of these degrees; the Masons, more than thirty. Thus, even a member of the lower class, if he could afford the expenditure of extra money that admission to the higher degrees required, could rise to top of his lodge.

Perhaps because of this opportunity -- or perhaps also because most native American workers shared the producer ideology of their middle class counterparts--worker participation in lodges appears to have been high. Although orders were often segregated into working-class and middle-class lodges, at the national or even the community level, fraternalism was an interclass movement.[21] As Mary Ann

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[20]John J. Upchurch, The Life, Labors, and Travels of Father J.J. Upchurch (San Francisco, 1887), 54; editorial, The Royal Arcanum Bulletin 2 (Jan. 15, 1895): 144. For discussions of the fraternal ethic see Dumenil, Freemasons and American Culture, 72-91 and Clawson, "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation," 689-695. For a concrete example of the influence of fraternalism on one man's life and thought, see Nick Salvatore, Eugene Debs: Citizen and Socialist (Chicago, 1984), 19-29.

[21] The best general study of working classes and fraternalism is Clawson, "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation." Gilkeson, Middle-Class Providence finds a

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Clawson points out, the genuine class heterogeneity of the orders allowed members, at least while they met in the lodge, an illusion of social equality. In the fraternal hierarchy, all begin at the bottom and must rise to the top--a symbolic celebration of the upward mobility possible in the nineteenth century capitalist order. No one but the morally unfit are denied the opportunity. Failure is an individual responsibility, while success comes, in the play-acting of the fraternal ritual, because of the good-samaritan aid of fellow members.[22] James Patton expressed this democratic vision in the Odd-Fellow's World. "Odd-Fellowship is a great social leveler, where learned and unlearned, rich and poor meet and unite...it does away with

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cross-class membership in Providence lodges, 155-157. The mixed constituency of the Baltimore lodge is described in Ridgely, History of American Odd-Fellowship; John T. Cumbler discusses the working class Odd-Fellows lodges in Lynn and Fall River, Massachusetts in Working Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure, and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880-1930 (Westport, Conn., 1979), 44-50, 157-164; and Brien Greenberg focuses on laborers in Albany lodges in "Worker and Community: Fraternal Orders in Albany, New York, 1845-1885," Maryland Historian 8 (Fall, 1977), 38-53. The discovery of the importance of fraternalism for the working class has led inevitably to a discussion of the relationship of fraternalism and working class consciousness. Clawson makes a convincing argument that the fraternal ideology discouraged it. Richard Jules Oestreicher argues that fraternal orders in Detroit "led two ways -- toward alliance with the middle class and toward radicalism." (Solidarity and Fragmentation, 42-88.) But the radicalism seems due less to fraternalism than to a hearty dose of socialism that Oestreicher also finds in Detroit working class subculture.

[22] Clawson, "Fraternal Orders and Class Formation," 689-93.

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all artificial distinctions of society and each one sees in his neighbor only the man, the brother, and friend."[23]

In reality, of course, the lodge could be a promoter of social distinction, particularly in larger communities. The Masons, though on the whole solidly middle class, acquired a reputation for their prestigious and successful membership. Other lodges arranged themselves on lower rungs of the status ladder; Odd-Fellowship became known as "the poor man's Masonry." More insidious than encouraging distinctions of status were those aspects of the fraternal vision which saw "brotherhood" as existing only among white, native American males. Despite some astute maneuvering on the part of female members, the auxiliaries always remained subordinate to their male counterparts. Completely shunned were the "colored brothers." Although the English Masonic and Odd-Fellow orders recognized the black Prince Hall Masons and the Grand United Order of Odd-Fellows, American orders fought any association with blacks--even trying to prevent them from sharing the same name--throughout the nineteenth century and into present day.[24]

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[23] James M. Patton, "Odd-Fellowship," The Odd-Fellow World 7 (January, 1900): 23.

[24] For the relationship of auxiliaries to male orders, see Clawson, "Nineteenth Century Women's Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders." The sad story of discrimination in the white orders is told by Alvin J. Schmidt, "The Unbrotherly Brotherhood: Discrimination in Fraternal Orders," Phylon 34 (Fall, 1973): 275-282.

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Nevertheless, for the native American male of the nineteenth century, fraternalism offered a fellowship which blurred the often harsh effects of American inequality and individualism. Stressing harmony between all classes, emphasizing the importance of respectability and moral behavior, and above all supplying what Lynn Dumenil calls a "spiritual community" for hundreds of thousands of members, the lodges thus provided a center of social stability for late nineteenth century cities and towns. Particularly in the smaller communities--which despite urbanization, still dominated the American landscape--the lodge sponsored recreational activities, added the color of full regalia to official occasions, and guaranteed at least a large attendance of brothers, if not a large check, at each funeral. Little wonder that in 1890 the membership of the Odd-Fellows stood at 747,695; the Masons at 609,000; and the combined membership of other orders over a million. Growth continued to be rapid, and new orders continued to form.

The 1890's: Weakening Foundations of Fraternalism

But even as the fraternal order reached new peaks of membership and influence, ominous signs of impending difficulties appeared. With the Panic of 1892 the Odd-

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Fellows experienced the first of what was to be a series of crises over assessments. The over-building of new retirement homes and lodges and the ever-increasing demands for sick and death benefits placed heavy burdens on even the rapidly growing membership, yet they refused to vote the adequate increases in dues and assessments that financial prudence demanded. They survived because of a surge in membership after the recovery, but troubles were to continue through the early twentieth century.[25] As for the other fraternal insurance associations, those which did not vote financial reforms began to go out of business, while those that did reform, began to adopt the use of agents and become more like the commercial companies. Members appeared to be joining more for the lodge's "practical" function of providing monetary benefits, damaging the fraternal ideal of harmony.[26]

Even more telling, problems began to occur with the

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[25] In a speech before the Sovereign Grand Lodge in 1925, the Grand Sire surveyed the periodic crises over assessments in the Odd-Fellows Order. I.O.O.F., 101 Annual Communication, Proceedings of the Sovereign Grand Lodge, Portland, Or., 1925, 14-21. Difficulties are mentioned in the Communications of 1894, 1896, 1901, and 1907.

[26] Recurrent discussion of these trends appears in the Fraternal Monitor and in the proceedings of the national Fraternal Congress from the years 1890-1930. The National Fraternal Congress was a body formed in 1886 to forward the interests of the fraternal insurance orders such as the Macabees, the Woodmen, and the Royal Arcanum. The Fraternal Monitor was its official organ. The congress was a consistent voice for "business-like" methods in fraternal insurance. See E.J. Dunn, Builders of Fraternalism in America (Chicago, 1924).

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center of fraternalism, the ritual. Evidence of boredom with the Masonic pattern occurred not only with the founding of new orders, which stressed "light and pleasing ceremonies," but also within lodges of the more established orders. "Join the encampment," advised The Odd-Fellow's World in 1890. "There you will find recreation and renewed interest." No need in the Patriarchal degree to "turn to any other order for relief from the Monotony of the Subordinate work."[27]

Some within the established orders turned increasingly to elaborate regalia, dramatic presentations, and public displays. Others found relief from monotony in burlesque. As early as the 1850's a fake order, the Sons of Malta, entertained themselves by enticing innocents into participation in an obscene parody of Masonic ritual, but it ran counter to the earnestness with which most members then treated fraternal ceremony. By 1892, however, the Grand Sire of the Odd-Fellows had to caution his order against the burlesquing of its own ceremonies. Also during the 1890's the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine began to establish its reputation as the "playground" of Masonry.[28] Hilarity could promote

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[27]Editorial in The Odd-Fellow's World 7, (May, 1900), 15.

[28]The Sons of Malta Exposed: By One Who Was "Sold" (New York, 1860); Grand Sire's Report, 69th Annual Communication, Proceedings of the Sovereign Grand Lodge,

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fellowship as well as a sacred ritual, and its existence did not necessarily mean the decline of fraternal feeling. But the joking could mean that an increasing number of members found the allegorical, highly dramatic form of the ritual incongruous. It no longer effectively "shut out the world."

Indications in the late nineteenth century that ritualistic participation no longer held the same inspirational sway reflected a general secularization of middle class culture. Leisure and consumption were determining new kinds of sociable activity. These pursuits formed the basis of a new ethic, which celebrated "play" and self-fulfillment. The solemn and secret rituals of fraternalism, its weighty hierarchical structure, and the rhetoric which paid tribute to hard work and self-sacrifice, seemed ponderous and out-of-date in comparison to sociable activities influenced by the new ethic of leisure. The American middle class did not lapse into a selfish hedonism; religion still retained its influence over middle class behavior. Yet middle-class religion was in the process of deemphasizing liturgical worship, and could also have encouraged a disaffection with ritual. Under pressure from science and social upheaval, the liberal theology of mainstream churches followed the

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Baltimore, Md., 1892, 115; Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 203-205.

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activist tendencies inherent in their evangelical tradition to stress ethical practice above sacred worship. For the Protestant middle class, this meant a religion that stressed the living of the "golden rule" rather than ceremonial observance.[29]

Interdependence, Segmentation, and A New Sociability

While the fraternal ritual was losing its inspirational appeal, other forces worked to undermine the vision of independent producers united in brotherhood. Facing large-scale industry and ever-expanding cities, a middle-class trust in individual efficacy gave way to a sense of interdependence. It is at first difficult to see why this new view of society weakened the appeal of the fraternal ideal, for cooperation was one of the tenets of fraternalism. Yet, as Thomas Haskell has pointed out in his study of professional societies, the new consciousness of interdependence caused uncertainty. Men and their affairs now seemed products of a remote complex of random events and social processes; the beneficient results of a

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[29] Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 148-184, stresses the impact of secularization on fraternal ritual. For general discussions of changing American protestantism, see Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915 (New Haven, 1940) and Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America (New York, 1940).

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simple "brotherhood," in fact, even the chance of a brotherhood forming at all, seemed much more doubtful. Fruitful sociability now required more than a sharing of a ritual or random collections for benefits. The grounds for association had to be more clearly laid out--the basis for membership more limited, members more tightly controlled, purposes enunciated with more certainty.[30]

It was not only the vague unease caused by interdependence that damaged the appeal of the lodge. The shock of labor unrest, and the strangeness of huge masses of immigrants, stirred anxieties that gave rise to nativist sentiment and immigration restriction. The same fears of heterogeneity also led middle-class Americans to join more exclusive associations. These new organizations restricted membership on the basis of disposable income (for example, "country clubs" appeared in hundreds of communities, charging inordinately high entrance fees and dues); heredity (the Sons and Daughters of the American

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[30]Thomas Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority (Chicago, 1977), 1-47;234-240. The implications of a consciousness of interdependence for lodge membership involves subtle distinctions that are perhaps more suited for a study of professional social scientists than for one involving members not inclined to deep reflection. However, I do not think I am misguided in seeing connections between the rise of what Haskell calls "disciplined communities of inquiry"--more rigidly defined professional associations--and a similar development in sociable associations. The connection becomes stronger when one observes the interest and trust service clubmembers placed in professional sociologists. See chapter 3, below.

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Revolution, founded in the 1890's, along with a host of local family societies); and occupation (trade and professional clubs proliferated in the 1890's). As John Gilkeson has noted, the effect of this new exclusiveness was to "sort out" the middle class population, creating a "segmented" culture, antipathetical to the broad, cross-class constituency of fraternalism.[31]

In this "segmented" culture, men and women did not stop joining fraternal orders. But what became known as "old-style" fraternalism soon involved a much smaller portion of the middle class, usually attracting the lower middle class. Correspondingly, it appears that participation in the newer organizations was highest among the upper middle-class, who had the most leisure time, and the money to spend on it. Later, as economic development continued to differentiate by occupation, status, and residential location, associations appealed to even narrower bands of the middle class.[32]

Nevertheless, even if the middle class as a whole no longer pledged allegiance to the lodge, they had not given

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[31]Gilkeson, Middle-Class Providence, 163-173.

[32]Gilkeson, ibid., discusses the constituency of lodges and clubs in Providence. The sociological studies done in the thirties under the direction of W. Lloyd Warner of "Yankee City" and "Jonesville" also found lodge membership had become largely a lower middle class phenomenon. W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven, Conn., 1941), and Warner, Democracy in Jonesville: A Study in Quality and Inequality (New York, 1943).

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up the vision of social harmony at the center of fraternalism. Instead, the late nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of an alternative form of middle-class fellowship, also designed to promote social solidarity, but one which responded to the exigencies of the new social order. This new form of organized sociability was based on service to the community. Exclusively middle class, it sought to confirm status rather than affirm social mobility. It thus deemphasized hierarchy in favor of an informal egalitarianism, and placed a much greater emphasis on recreation and leisure. But most of all, it rejected the idea of a haven of brotherhood protected by secret ritual. The clubs and lodges which adopted a fellowship based on service actively pursued projects to encourage community unity. Instead of a more inclusive association, they undertook expansive service. Where fraternalism sought an antidote to the threat of unrestrained individualism, service associations sought to protect home and community from the dislocations caused by urbanization and corporate industry.

Women, the Progenitors of the New Sociability

This kind of activity, unlike the fellowship of the lodge, could be undertaken equally by both sexes, and

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indeed the first to explore this brand of sociability were women. It is worthwhile to diverge briefly from the male province to examine the development of these clubs, for they presaged many of the same concerns which preoccupied men's service clubs throughout the twentieth century.

Women had begun forming clubs for "self-culture" in the 1850's, hoping to expand the domestic horizon not only through individual study, but also through association with other women. By the 1880's there were over 900 such clubs, spontaneously formed in communities all over America. Their members paid testimony to the club as "a place of meeting where equality prevails, where the bond of a common purpose above individual life draws all together in the inspiration of mutual effort." These could be words of a fraternalist describing his lodge, and indeed one prominent early club, "Sorosis," aimed in 1868 to "establish a kind of freemasonry among women of similar pursuits, to render them helpful to each other, and bridge over the barrier which custom and social etiquette place in the way of friendly intercourse."[33]

Yet the first national convention of these culture clubs, held under Sorosis's auspices in 1889, found a sizable group of socially active women discussing, not just friendship and culture, but community reform. And by the

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[33] Mrs. Jane Cunningham Croly, Sorosis, Its Origin and History (1886; reprint New York, 1975).

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time a national organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, was formed and thriving at the turn of the century, Federation president Charlotte Emerson Brown hoped for the kind of self-culture which "fits women for useful service in all the broadening avocations that are opening before them." Other leaders called on local clubs to address "the great problem of living" by working for "improvement in our social, civic, and educational institutions." For the thousands of women's clubs soon affiliated with the General Federation, "practical" work took its place alongside self-culture, as members worked for city beautification, building town libraries, and petitioning for conservation and industrial reforms.[34]

Thus, associations of women based sociable clubs on civic betterment at least ten years before these activities became prevalent in organizations of male fellowship. In part this precedence occurred simply because women were less attached to the traditions of fraternalism. Fraternal auxiliaries, while they possessed large memberships, followed mid-nineteenth century practice by consigning women to the subordinate role. The Odd-Fellows' Order of Rebekah, for example, prohibited women from inducting their own members, and ruled that a male lodgemember must preside over all ceremonies. As Clawson has recently argued, this

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[34]"Mrs. Brown's Final Address," in Mary I. Wood, The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (New York, 1912), 329.

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did not prevent women from bringing influence to bear on lodge policy. However, women could achieve greater autonomy in benevolent and church activities. The Victorian conception of womanhood did allow leadership of charitable endeavors, and women achieved a prominent place in moral reforms such as temperance. They were thus already inclined more toward a charitable, rather than fraternal association.[35]

But, in addition, women became the first to adopt the "practical" form of sociability because late nineteenth century dilemmas confronting women in particular made them more sensitive to problems facing the middle class as a whole. The women's new levels of education and their relative freedom from household labor gave them exhilarating glimpses of new roles in the world outside domesticity. At the same time, middle-class women were not ready to abandon the home, and club programs demonstrate great concern about threats to the home and community.

Thus women who presided over homes found themselves in a contradictory position. Conditions which threatened the home, their accustomed sphere of influence, called for new vigilance in their roles as mothers and housekeepers. Yet these women's increased level of education, their new power as consumers, the example of both prominent and poorer

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[35]Clawson, "Nineteenth Century Women's Auxiliaries and Fraternal Orders."

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women working outside the home, created dissatisfaction with this limited domestic role.[36]

Women turned to the community service of the club as one solution to their dilemma. By founding libraries, improving local sanitary conditions, strengthening schools, and building playgrounds, clubwomen escaped the confines of the home, and achieved a satisfying new influence within and beyond the local community. Still, all these activities could be undertaken in defense of home and community. "We have no platform unless it is the care of women and children, and the home, the latter meaning the four walls of the city, as well as the four walls of brick and mortar." said one Federation leader in 1908.[37]

Self-consciously expanding the women's sphere, women through service also expressed general middle-class concerns. The clubs made cooperation their keynote, and displayed a great awareness of diverse immigrant populations and conflicting interest groups. The General Federation's slogan was "unity in diversity." Chicago's club was one of many rather exclusive units that reported "phenomenal good-will" amidst a "heterogenous membership, which brings together every phase of religious, social, and

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[36]Turn of the century dissatisfaction with domesticity is discussed in Annegret S. Ogden, The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner, 1776-1986 (Westport, Conn., 1986), 135-170.

[37]Quoted in Wood, The History of the GFWC, 250.

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political opinion, and yet harmonizes the whole upon a universal humanitarian basis." Universal, they also felt, was their religion, their motives not, according to Federation President Ellen Henrotin, "allied to any church or any creed or any nation, but underlying them all." "We must live an applied Christianity," she said. "No greater service can be rendered the world."[38]

"Efficiency" was another important ingredient to the clubwomen's cooperative, practical idealism. Clubmembers discussed scientific housekeeping and childcare, prided themselves on smooth coordination between club departments, and made sure to run business-like meetings. The women's clubs hoped that being "business-like" would dispel feminine stereotypes. But they were also revealing an important aspect of the sociability of service. No symbolic rituals cluttered women's club meetings--in the name of efficiency, most clubs, like that of Indianapolis, "followed parliamentary procedure with great strictness."[39]

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[38]Henriette Greenebaum Frank and Amalie Hofer Jerome, ed., Annals of the Chicago Women's Club (Chicago, 1916), 62; Mrs. Ellen Henrotin, Proceedings, 3rd Biennial Convention, Louisville, 1896, 23-37. In the cities, members of the federated clubs appear to be mainly fairly wealthy, upper class women; in the small towns, the membership was less wealthy, but solidly middle class. Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefine, 1868-1914 (New York, 1980) 95-96; Gilkeson, 162.

[39]Quoted in Helen McKay Steele, The Indianapolis Women's club, 1875-1940 (Greenfield, Ind., 1944), 27. The concern expressed by Mrs. Brown, that "mismanagement [or] inefficiency might wreck our Federation fleet", (Wood, 324)

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Perhaps most important, for the clubmembers both as women and as members of a service organization, their membership demanded expansive activity, for they were part of a class of women "who are neither forced by the exigencies of their families to work for a living nor are they willing to give themselves up to a life of personal indulgences. "Think how much...of educating broadening influence we may give out" said Federation leader Sarah Platt Decker in 1896, "if we are only willing to spend ourselves." Decker and other progressive women rejected the fraternal ideal of an insular haven from change. "I grant you that it is much pleasanter to sit in comfortable easy chairs, in a well furnished drawing room with twenty-five of one's chosen friends...rather than to attend meetings where possibly disagreeable subjects will be mentioned." But such security meant a shirking of duty. Women's clubs could not study the Fifteenth Century "while the problems of the nineteenth are staring them in the face...let us have the unlimited club; it is altruistic, it is democratic, it is American"[40]

Women's clubs at the turn of the century translated

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appears in even the smaller clubs. The "Friday Afternoon Club," of Farmington, New Hampshire, discussed parliamentary practice once a month. Topics, 1906-06, Friday Afternoon Club, (Farmington, N.H., 1905)

[40]Sarah Platt Decker, "Opportunity of Women's Clubs to Improve the Usefulness of Public and Private Institutions," Proceedings, 3rd Biennial Convention, Louisville, 1896, 182-185; Decker quoted in Wood, 109.

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this service ethic into a remarkable degree of civic activity. Particularly in the big city clubs--Sorosis, in New York; the New England Women's Club, in Boston; and the Women's Club of Chicago--prominent women could claim significant reforms as a result of their lobbying and direct intervention. Education work, settlement houses, better treatment of women and children workers, conservation of natural resources, and pure food and drug laws occupied the attention of their many different "departments" of reform work. The Women's Club of Chicago, for example, not only supported several settlement houses, they could also cite their agitation as responsible for improvement of conditions at city jails in 1906. Their lobbying efforts, spearheaded by member Jane Addams, also did much to insure the passage of child labor and ten hour laws in Illinois. Prominent clubwomen such as Addams, Florence Kelley, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Maude Nathan brought women's clubs into the foreground of the progressive movement.[41]

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[41]Annals of the Chicago Women's Club, 278-301. Karen Blair, The Clubwomen as Feminist, 278-301. Blair, anxious to establish the feminist credentials of clubwomen, stresses the city clubs' important role in the progressive movement. Women's clubs in the smaller cities and towns, like the men's service clubs that were soon to follow, worked to strengthen, not disrupt, communal unity, and avoided the controversies progressive politics might raise.

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Local-National Conflict in Women's Club Affairs

But the majority of clubwomen did not seem comfortable advocating national political reform. Even though the activities of clubs often dovetailed with the progressive platform, concerns of the majority of individual clubs were much less political and reflected a more local orientation. While club leaders in large cities like Chicago and New York played active roles in progressive politics, clubs in the smaller towns focused their energies on their own community. Most clubs worked for a town library as their first project--in 1933 the American Library Association attributed 75 percent of public libraries to the efforts of women's clubs.[42] Clubs then moved on to town improvement projects such as building parks, cleaning vacant lots, appearing before the city council to plead for street lights or sidewalks--"stimulating," as the historian of the Women's Club of Govans, Md. put it, "a modest village into a community."[43]

In their community work the clubs at times found

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[42]Blair, 100-101.

[43]As for the men's clubs soon to follow, community building appeared as a purpose particularly in clubs near a growing metropolis, threatening residential traditions. Frances Sidwell Bensen, History of the Woman's Club of Govans, 1900-1945 (Baltimore, 1945), 19-22; Mary Pyatt and Janet Schupe, Women Who Fashioned a Community: The Neptunian Club of Manhattan Beach, 1909-1974 (Los Angeles, 1975) and Mary Burch Deffinbaugh, The Woman's Improvement Club of Silver Spring, Md., A History (Washington, 1961).

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themselves in conflict with the General Federation, which worked through the early 1900's to become "the center from which should radiate information and influence...to reach the smallest and most remote club." Federation officials, who saw an opportunity to achieve significant national influence, attempted to standardize club agendas, forcing clubs away from literary and local work by sending out "suggested programs" and circulating petitions on national issues. Local clubs resented what they saw as "outside interference," and a significant number of them ignored or tabled Federation suggestions. This non-action in turn annoyed national officials. "Remember charitably," said one in 1913, "[that] the little clubs have the spirit of the Federation only in its lowest form."[44]

This conflict between the national organization and locally-minded small clubs increased when the Federation became involved in controversial politics. The Federation's leaders included some politically active feminists--who pushed first for the Federation's support of suffrage, then after World War I for an equal rights amendment and a national child labor law. These progressive politics angered a more conservative body of

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[44]Mrs. J. L. Washburn quoted in Wood, The History of the GFWC, 34. Small town clubs in particular felt any Federation presence beyond a certificate of membership intrusive. For examples, see Miriam Lovell, "The Monticello Friday Club," The Palimpsest 24 (Feb., 1943): 60, and Laura M. Long, "C.C.C.: The Columbus Culture Club," The Indiana Magazine of History 35 (Sept., 1947): 257.

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members, who were willing to support suffrage, perhaps, but less eager to step completely beyond the bounds of domesticity. Although friction between these two groups temporarily dissolved in the heat of the war effort, which united community groups to sell liberty bonds, produce surgical dressings, and raise money for camp libraries and the Red Cross, after the war the Federation's legislative lobbying continued. In a more conservative political environment, these activities resulted not only in internal dissension but also outside accusations of Bolshevism. Perhaps in an effort to quell criticism, the Federation began a "modern homes" campaign, soliciting contributions from electric and appliance companies. Yet that in turn brought accusations of "commercialism," from the other side of the political spectrum.[45]

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[45]J. Stanley Lemons discusses some of the difficulties in the GFWC in the twenties, particularly with accusations of radicalism, in The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920's (Urbana, 1973), 54-55; 123-124. see also "Mrs. Sherman Vigorously Denies False and Malicious Charges Now Being Hurled at the Children's Bureau," General Federation News 7, (June, 1927): 3. The New York Times reported the increasing conflicts in articles appearing Feb. 3, 1923, and May 24, 1926. For a more laudatory, in-house description of women's clubs' war activities and their work during the twenties, see Mildred Wells, Unity in Diversity: The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 170-200 (Washington, 1953). The Federation pushed the "better homes campaign" throughout the twenties. A summary of one aspect, "The Home Equipment Survey" appears in the "Official Report" given in Proceedings, 18th Biennial Convention, Atlantic City, 1926, 92. Articles describing the political fallout of that campaign are "Lobbyism and the Ladies,"The Outlook 149 (June 13, 1928): 247; Silas Bent, "Public Utilities and the Political Campaign," The Outlook 149 (Aug. 8, 1928): 572-575, and Elaine Goodale

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While the individual women's clubs remained locally active, the besieged Federation lost membership during the twenties--from a high of over 2,000,000 right after the war to 1,500,000 by the end of the decade.[46] Its fate demonstrated that the same contradictory concerns which brought women's clubs first to service--the desire to expand horizons, while protecting home and community--could also inhibit an effective national service organization. Increasing women's influence seemed to require a large-scale effort based on political activity. But the new middle class sense of service called for defense of local community, and hoped to extend communal harmony. Neither goal jibed with controversial national politics. The opposition that Federation politics aroused in the twenties, even among its own membership, damaged the Federation's professed purpose of "unity in diversity," and made it seem less of a service organization. A woman writing in The Century in 1927 joined others in predicting "A Clubless Women's World," arguing that the Federation "has never initiated an important campaign nor started a great movement in the interest of human welfare."[47]

Eastman, "Handmaidens of Hollywood?" The Christian Century 48 (Feb. 25, 1931): 268-270.

[46]Wells, Unity in Diversity, 190.

[47]Ida Clyde Clarke, "A Clubless Women's World," The Century Magazine 114 (Oct., 1927): 752-760; see also Anna Steese Richardson, "Is the Women's Club Dying," Harper's Magazine 159 (Oct., 1929): 605-612. The men experienced

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The Men Adopt Service: New Lodges

The troubles of the GFWC came from difficulties in balancing feminism with service, but the type of sociability they formulated became enormously popular. Male service organizations, not having to confront the political difficulties of feminism, experienced phenomenal national growth in the 1920's. By pursuing many of the same activities women did a decade before, Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions clubs attracted hundreds of thousands of small businessmen and professionals, offering the rewards of informal fellowship enhanced by the satisfaction of worthy activity. Even more symptomatic of the change in sociable organizations was the rapidly growing membership of two fraternal orders, the Benevolent Protectorate of Elk and the Loyal Order of Moose. These two orders had been founded in the late nineteenth century, but had struggled until they adapted to new middle class organizational tastes.

The Elks began in 1868 as a drinking club of actors -- "The Jolly Corks." After changing their name to the Elks, they slowly expanded to other large cities, as a vaguely disreputable order still attracting mainly those in the

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something of the same conflicts, although without the harmful consequences, when their international involvement brought them dangerously near "controversial politics." see Chapter 6, below.

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theatrical profession. By the late 1880's, however, enough non-actors had entered the membership to force a transformation in the order. By raising dues and removing any reference to the theatrical profession in their constitution, the Elks consciously sought middle class status. "Instead of the circus girl jumping through hoops, they will have a Sorosis reading art essays; instead of the minstrel rattling the bones, a drug clerk will be making pills; instead of a tragedian tearing passion to tatters, a dry goods clerk will be selling tape," complained an actor Elk unhappy at the new measures. Despite the complaints of this and other disgruntled Elks, the Order gradually gained respectability.[48]

In the early 1900's, as they reached membership in the hundreds of thousands, the Elks undertook further changes,reducing their ritual, stressing recreation and conviviality, and most significantly, sending contributions for disaster relief to Galveston in 1904 and San Francisco in 1906. By 1910, John Willis could write in the American Elk that the order was "benevolent, not confining its operations to the membership of the order, but, recognizing no bonds of creed or social station, it has relieved disaster and shown helpfulness to mankind." In 1915,

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[48]Quote and description of the order's changing character in Charles Edward Ellis, An Authentic History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (Chicago, 1910), 197-200.

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another change in the ritual added what the editor of The Elk called "patriotism and a splash of ginger," placing the Elks in position to benefit from post-war Americanism. After the World War, the Elks adopted the celebration of Flag Day as their special provenance, and in the mid-twenties, the order built a large memorial to the war dead in Chicago--perhaps also to draw attention to a membership that had reached nearly 900,000.[49]

With such membership figures, the Elks could afford to build expensive clubhouses--making them not merely lodgerooms, but places of recreation and relaxation, incorporating athletic facilities and dining rooms. They also wholeheartedly pursued community service, supporting Boy Scout troops and the Salvation Army, giving money to hospitals and schools, and providing Christmas baskets to the needy. "Wealth brings a special capacity for service to humanity," argued an editorial in The Elk's Magazine. The Elks were not so wealthy that they could establish a hospital, but they could "secure treatment for the cripple kiddie in our community." The ability "to do these little things constitutes the wealth that imposes the obligation to do them."[50]

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[49]James R. Nicholson, History of the Order of Elks, 1868-1952 (New York, 1953), 230-400; John W. Wilks, "The Uplift of the Order of Elks," The American Elk 14 (Jan. 15, 1915): 5.

[50]Editorial, The Elks Magazine 6 (September, 1927): 39.

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While the Elks achieved prominence because of their flexibility in adopting middle-class goals, the Moose owed their success to the vision of their organizer, James Davis. Davis, who perhaps is best known as Harding's Secretary of Labor, began as an iron puddler in the steel mills of Pittsburgh, and then became a union leader in Ohio. In 1906, Davis grasped his main chance, when he saw the opportunity presented by the Moose, a straggling group of local lodges with a total of only 500 members. He bought "organizational rights" in the order. Guaranteed a percentage of dues from every new member, he proceeded to build a new organization, which by 1912 numbered over 200,000. In part this extraordinary growth can be credited to efficient salesmanship. Davis not only had union experience, he also claimed membership in a host of other fraternal orders, including the Masons and the Odd-Fellows, and he drew on this experience and these connections in his organizing. Just as significant as Davis's organizational skills, though, was his message. He not only promised to put the "fun back into fraternalism" through social events and activities, he also hinted at a broader goal--performing a great service for children.[51]

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[51]Davis wrote an autobiography, The Iron Puddler (New York, 1922) which describes his early laboring life but quickly passes over his Moose organizing work to discuss "Mooseheart. Slightly more detailed, but utterly adulatory, is a biography by fellow Moose Joe Mitchell Chapple, Our Jim (Boston, 1928). The clearest picture of Davis's Moose activities comes from a more complete in-

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The Moose's children project came to fruition in 1912 when the order purchased a large plot of land west of Chicago for an orphan's home. Davis christened it "Mooseheart," and made it the center of national Moose activity, even changing the ritual to end, "God Bless Mooseheart." The development and maintenance of the facilities at Mooseheart, Davis felt, moved the Moose beyond "fraternity for its own sake" and into the realm of "practical association." Through Mooseheart, the order worked at becoming "the first beneficial fraternity to devote itself to social service," but they also hoped to contribute to the "science of child caring...a specialized form of social work that demands utmost devotion, self-sacrifice, and concentrated effort." Thus the Moose attracted educators such as Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart (who spoke of Mooseheart as "the largest opportunity in the U.S. to prove what can be done by rational education,") and prominent progressives Theodore Roosevelt, Hiram Johnson, Champ Clark--even William Jennings Bryan, who, when joining, was "enthusiastic as a high school boy who had just joined his first

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house history, Warner Olivier, Back of the Dream: The Story of the Loyal Order of Moose (New York, 1952) Davis's personal papers, containing his speeches and addresses as Secretary of Labor, as well as correspondence concerning the Moose in the thirties, are housed in the Library of Congress.

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fraternity."[52]

In their discussion of the children of Mooseheart, Davis and other Moose spokesmen displayed a new understanding of patriarchal duty. Once primarily held responsible for meeting the family's financial needs, lodge members now felt the raising of children required a much more active interest on their part. "Suffer the children to come unto me," the Moose initiate recited. Interestingly, the auxiliary, once an important fraternal concession to the women's sphere, was only a minor part of the lodges of the Moose; while the other newly popular fraternity, the Elks, felt no need for a female branch. Davis hoped to recruit women members, for "when the men begin, as the Moose have begun, to study the duties of husbands and the responsibilities of fathers, the women are needed." But in fact the new interest of males in children, while demonstrating the decline of Victorian gender roles, also removed one of the rationales for the operation of female auxiliaries. The new fraternities and service clubs, with their interest in family life well-established, felt less need to justify a male-only institution.[53]

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[52]David W. Harter, Historical Souvenir of the Loyal Order of Moose (Chicago, 1915), 33-73; Guy Fuller, ed., Loyal Order of the Moose and Mooseheart (Mooseheart, Ill., 1918), 36-52.

[53]"James Davis Appeals to Our Women" Mooseheart Magazine 2, (Nov., 1916), 99.

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Davis believed Mooseheart took fraternalism to a higher plane, since "man owes no higher duty to God and society than the duty of service to childhood." He also felt Moose principles could be extended to reconcile the post-World War I conflicts between labor and capital. To his job as Secretary of Labor he brought a vision of fraternal harmony --"conciliation, the spirit of fraternalism, the realization that the best gain for the individual is to work with every other individual in harmony." However, in the pro-business administrations of Harding and Coolidge, this conservative call for "the golden rule in American industry" resulted in a general sacrifice of the interests of labor. Although Davis never repudiated his belief in "labor's rights to organize, to bargain collectively and to be free," he also argued that "Labor provides for today. Property provides for tomorrow...Capital safeguards the future." The "great corporations," said Davis, have acted responsibly since through stock "they were controlled by the American people."[54] Davis might have begun as a laborer, but he was now a wealthy executive who had constructed a thoroughly middle-class institution. The Moose united to serve children, listened to Roger Babson

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[54]Davis, "Address to the National Association of Catholic Charities, Sept. 17, 1922," mss., Box 38, James Davis Papers, Library of Congress; "Pittsburgh Speech" mss., Box 39. Davis's appointment book shows more meetings with corporate heads such as Armour, Babson, and J.B. Bonner of U.S. Steel than with labor leaders. (Box 1, James Davis Papers).

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speak on "What the Moose Could Do for Business," and held its meetings at hotels being struck for unfair labor practices.[55]

The Decline of "Old Style Fraternalism"

Both the Moose and the Elks sustained a slow growth through the depression all the way into the 1970's, remaining attractive with simple rituals, plenty of recreational activities, and the satisfaction of occasional charity. However, for the largest nineteenth century orders--the Masons and the Odd-Fellows--new conditions proved difficult. Their struggles began during the twenties. Both experienced a dramatic surge in membership right after World War I. Aggressive recruiting drives on the part of the orders fit with a concern for social solidarity left by wartime sentiment. The lodges might also have benefitted from a general desire to return to the stability of traditional institutions.[56]

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[55]Roger Babson, "What the Moose Can Do for Business" Loyal Order of Moose, Proceedings, 35th Annual Convention, Supreme Lodge of the World, Toledo, Oh., 1921, 86-93. Davis ignored an appeal to respect a Cleveland hotel strike by holding the convention elsewhere in 1931. See William Green to Davis, Feb. 19, 1931, Correspondence, Box 3, James Davis Papers, Library of Congress.

[56]Dumenil, Freemasonry and American Culture, 115-120; "Report of the Grand Sire," I.O.O.F., 85th Annual Communication, Proceedings, Sovereign Grand Lodge, Toronto,

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Yet this growth could not be sustained, and both orders rapidly lost members in the later twenties. The Masons did make an effort to adapt; with the Shriners leading the way, Masons formed dozens of auxiliary organizations which focused on recreation and entertainment, or which sought a "practical fellowship" through community service. However, even these changes did not stem the loss in membership after 1925; Masonry could not shake its associations with stuffy and useless ritualism.[57]

For the Odd-Fellows, suspensions for non-payment of dues out-numbered new members even before 1925. Leaders blamed the loss of fraternal spirit on a growing materialism that concerned itself only with insurance benefits. "We do not exemplify toward our brethren the spirit of our lessons," lamented Grand Sire Lucian Eastin, as he observed the quarreling of lodges over assessments in 1924. "Brotherhood, in all that the word implies, was once the supreme purpose of the organization," observed his successor, Herbert Thompson in 1925, but now the "contractual relation" was all that was important to members. Though recognizing that "today the philosophy of America is pragmatic," he wondered if the Odd-Fellow lodge today "radiates friendship or shall it be activated by the

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Ontario, 1921, 10-81.

[57]Dumenil, 185-221

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cold steel of business relations." To avoid the latter, he advocated abolishing insurance benefits.[58]

Although the I.O.O.F. did not immediately take up Thompson's suggestion, it did finally adopt adequate insurance policies in the late 1920's. That move, however, did not stem the loss of members, whose numbers by 1930 had dropped in half from their peak of over 2 million in 1920. The Masons, at least could still offer a degree of status--more than the Odd-Fellows, which had prided itself on attracting men of "moderate means," and therefore were more likely to be hurt by the status consciousness of the middle class in the twenties. More important, the Odd-Fellows made the transition to service too late and too half-heartedly. Writing in the 1930's, Grand-Sire Thomas G. Andrews referred to the order's opportunity for service. Yet he still placed more emphasis on the refuge of the lodge, arguing that "a brightly lighted lodgeroom, which is warm in the winter and cool in summer; which is equipped with comfortable seats and an adequate floor covering; which is kept clean; which is used as a place where men may combine their efforts and aggregate their contributions for the relief of distress in the community...is attractive today. Such a place is able to compete with the

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[58]Lucien J. Eastin, "Report of the Grand Sire, 100th Annual Communication, Proceedings, Sovereign Grand Lodge Jacksonville, Fla., 398-399. Herbert A. Thompson, "Report of the Grand Sire", 101st Annual Communication, Proceedings, Soverign Grand Lodge Portland, Ore., 1925, 30.

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automobile, the radio, and the picture show."[59]

Odd-Fellows Andrews and Thompson both missed the mark when they targeted materialism and technology as the main threat to old-style fraternalism. A new leisure ethic, which readily adopted the car, radio, and movies, had made lodges offering recreational opportunities more attractive. Nevertheless, the efforts of the women's clubs, the Elk, and the Moose to move beyond self-fulfillment and fun demonstrated that the middle class was as willing as ever to organize around an ideal. What lodge members now knew as "old-style" fraternalism no longer supplied a satisfying form of sociability. Well-adapted to Victorian society, old-style fraternalism observed all proprieties, and celebrated nineteenth century domestic and economic virtues. Most important, it provided a fellowship that, through ritual and paeans to brotherhood, escaped the humdrum rounds of daily life, and softened harsher realities of social insecurity and inequality.

But a large part of the twentieth century middle class needed something other than a refuge. It wanted a more narrowly defined basis for social cohesion, as in organizations open only to the top men in each occupation. It sought the reassurance of communal intimacy--like that provided by first name banter and hearty song. More than

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[59]Thomas G. Andrews, The Jericho Road: The Philosophy of Odd-Fellowship (Oklahoma City, 1935), 426.

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the nineteenth century fraternalist, the clubmember faced threats to institutions affecting personal life--home, family, and local society. He thus sought in his sociability not only to establish a sense of place and stability, but also to shore up these personal institutions. "Community"--denoting harmony, stability, and not incidently, middle-class control--became his watchword; "service" his tool to achieve it.

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CHAPTER 2

BUSINESS, FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE: THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE CLUBS

When small town native Paul Harris first arrived in Chicago in 1896, he was "desperately lonely." He felt himself in "a great social maelstrom where racial, political, and religious extremes met and clashed." Struggling to set up a law practice, he sought the advice of other lawyers, but learned that among the successful, "some of them had means of their own," and others "had influential relatives and friends." Away from business, the bachelor was unable to find domestic tranquility, moving more than thirty times in an effort to escape the crowds he found "swarming" the beaches and parks. But then, one evening, walking with a friend in the suburbs, he was impressed by the neighborly way in which his friend greeted fellow businessmen. It reminded him of his own home town, Wallingford, Vermont. It was at that moment, Harris later claimed, that the idea of organizing a group of businessmen for fellowship and perhaps profit occurred

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to him.[1]

In 1905, Harris's idea took shape, when a small group of Chicago businessmen gathered to form the first Rotary Club. Five years later, the club idea had expanded beyond Chicago into San Francisco, New York, and Philadelphia. By 1920, not only did Rotary clubs exist in hundreds of communities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, but also several other federations had formed, in imitation of Rotary--among them the Kiwanis and the Lions, soon to be numerically prominent in their own right. Harris's response to his loneliness had resonated beyond a group of Chicago business acquaintances, beyond the urban circumstances which the club sought to remedy, beyond even the American social experience which shaped the clubs' aspirations.

In explaining the world-wide appeal of the club he founded, Harris later cited the fellowship it provided--"Friendship was the foundation rock on which it was built."[2] Yet Harris's original formula laid more stress on business than on fellowship. Harris first attracted members by promising them higher profits through the open

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[1]. Harris wrote three autobiographies, all of which carried this account. The quoted phrases are drawn from My Road to Rotary (Chicago, 1948), 223-230. His first work, The Founder of Rotary (Chicago, 1927), includes the most detailed descriptions of his early Rotary efforts, while in This Rotarian Age (New York, 1935) he makes a general assessment of the movement.

[2]Harris, My Road to Rotary, 270.

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exchange of business between members. Within several years, though, the proportions of the sociable mix had changed. Clubs attracted members with promise of fellowship, the business exchange provision had been dropped, and economic self-interest was muted in service. If this development had taken the opposite turn, with greedy demands for cartel-like business arrangements conquering members' camaraderie, then one could imagine the clubs dissolving in acrimonious accusation. That they instead could celebrate, as America entered the twenties, the growing popularity of their "fellowship in service," is a testimony to Harris's flexible leadership. It also testifies to the desire of the businessmen who joined Harris's creation for an association providing more than monetary gain, an association that could compensate for the social losses caused by urban and corporate encroachment on their business and community life.

Paul Harris and the First Rotary Club

Many before and since Harris have been lonely and destitute in the big city, but few have organized clubs to solve these problems. The experiences of Harris's early life perhaps explain his response. Born in 1868, Harris was the product of a broken home. Since neither parent was

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willing to assume his charge, he was raised by stern and traditional grandparents in Wallingford, Vermont. After his early schooling, he was sent to the University of Vermont. However, in an indication of what was to come, the University expelled him after his first year--for organizing a secret fraternity. Given a second chance by his comfortably wealthy grandfather, he went to Princeton, only to have his schooling once again cut short, this time by his grandfather's death. By working at odd jobs for two years Harris was able to afford more education at the University of Iowa, where he received a law degree in 1891. Unwilling to settle down immediately, Harris spent the next five years of his life wandering around the world, working variously as a farm laborer, a teacher at a business college, a journalist, a cattleman on a merchant ship, and a salesman. Finally, in 1896, Harris "hung his shingle" as an independent lawyer in Chicago, where he chose to locate "primarily because of its reputation for social unrest."[3]

It was Harris's own personal unrest that led him, in 1905,to gather a small group of businessmen for "the purposes of fellowship and profit." From initial luncheon meetings, "rotated" between each businessman's office, came a full scale club. Members were to meet once a week for fellowship and to "discuss matters of mutual and civic advantage." Outside of meetings, they promised to trade

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[3] Harris, The Founder of Rotary, 75.

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with one another whenever possible, and actually kept a "business register" to record the frequency of in-club transactions. To make "mutual assistance more practicable," and to prevent business rivalry from interfering with sociability, Harris decided to limit membership to one man from each business or profession, a practice that became known as the "classification" system of membership. This scheme of business boosting had great appeal, and the Chicago club grew to 100 members by 1907.[4]

Encouraged by the success of his Chicago club, Harris decided to expand Rotary to other cities. He convinced a fellow Chicago Rotarian, traveling salesman Manuel Munoz, to promote the club idea on his business trips west. Munoz then interested a lawyer in San Francisco, Homer Wood, who organized not only a San Francisco club, but also clubs in Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, and Tacoma.[5] Harris in the meantime was contacting acquaintances in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. By 1909, he could write a prospective member in Philadelphia that "we not only hope but fully expect to be established in every city of importance in the United States in a short time."[6] Within three years of his prediction, the newly formed "National

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[4] Ibid., 61-65.

[5] William Mountin, History of the Rotary Club of San Francisco (San Francisco, 1940), 8.

[6] Harris to J. Lawrence Wetherill, March 27, 1909 (Correspondence on file with Rotary International).

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Association of Rotary Clubs" could claim 49 American clubs with an additional club in London.

The rapid expansion of Rotary shows that Harris had successfully generalized his personal and business frustrations, and that many shared his reactions to their changing social and business mileau. With his parent's divorce, his varied education, his widespread wandering, and his move from the small town to the big city, Harris had experienced the range of displacements suffered by middle-class men and women of his generation.[7] A great many of them, like Harris, responded to disorienting personal circumstances by joining together in groups. Many middle-class citizens at the turn of the century looked to formal organizational ties as replacements for what appeared to be weakening social bonds, and to bureaucratic order as preferable to the threatening uncertainties of urban and industrial conditions.[8]

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[7] For descriptions and analysis of the early lives of other prominent late nineteenth century figures, see Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as Social Type (New York, 1965) and David I. Macleod, Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870-1920 (Madison, Wis., 1983), 3-28.

[8] The major outlines of this interpretation were drawn by Robert H. Wiebe's The Search for Order: 1977-1920 (New York: 1967). Louis Galambos has provided a historiographical review and synthesis in two articles, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," Business History Review 44, (1970): 279-290, and more recently, "Technology, Political Economy, and Professionalization: Central Themes of the Organizational Synthesis," Business History Review 57, (Winter, 1983):

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Most cities already had their "commercial clubs" or "merchant clubs," which operated partly as chambers of commerce--working for the general business interest of the city--but which also existed to establish personal business and credit connections.[9] However, Harris sought to distinguish his club by stressing that in Rotary business connections would be "frank" and "open," rather than "sub rosa." As a promotional pamphlet argued, the openness of club relations, in comparison to the rituals of formality in older clubs, "sweeps away subterfuge and pretense from the solicitation of business." The result of Rotary directness was a mutual helpfulness, producing "a condition of friendship and fellowship upon a higher plane than the usual selfish and sordid relationship of commercial life."[10]

471-493. For corroborating surveys, see William L. O'Neill, The Progressive Years: America Comes of Age (New York, 1975), and Samuel Hays, "The New Organizational Society" in American Political History as Social Analysis (Knoxville, 1980).

[9] John Gilkeson describes one such club in Middle Class Providence(Princeton, N.J., 1986), 106. Chicago could claim a commercial club, as well a "City Club" which, five years prior to Rotary, attempted to "enlist a large number of business and professional men, and thus to further the growing movement in Chicago for higher civic conditions by promoting personal cooperation." see Thomas James Riley, A Study of the Higher Life of Chicago (Chicago, 1905), 50-54.

[10] Harris, pamphlet on file at Rotary International, dated 1908; "Rotary: A Unique Club" (pamphlet, Los Angeles, 1909); promotional article reprinted in Chicago Sunday Record-Herald, Aug. 14, 1910 (articles on file with Rotary International).

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While Rotary organizers offered a rational escape from the old random and roundabout methods of business, the club also tried to recreate in its meetings what members remembered to be small town friendliness. In fact, many early clubs went further, and tried to recapture an atmosphere reminiscent of small town boyhood. Early meetings of the Chicago club were characterized by stunts and practical jokes, many initiated by Harris. The Chicago club also claimed to have inaugurated group singing as a device for promoting "unity and enthusiasm." Harris thought these efforts successful, and was convinced that Rotary afforded "the opportunity to enjoy first name acquaintance reminiscent of boyhood days."[11]

Thus Rotary offered the benefits of a ready-made marketing network, yet also attempted to foster a nostalgic fellowship. While Los Angeles secretary Herbert C. Quick spoke bluntly of Rotary's practical advantages--"by simply doing your trading with your fellow members, you will, within a few weeks, at our present rate of growth, have more than 200 men as your valued customers"--Harris described "the dividends on an investment in

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[11] Charles A. Newton, "The Beginnings of Rotary," (mss. of speech given before the Rotary Club of Chicago, 1927; on file with Rotary International). "The Song Spirit in Rotary," The Rotarian 11 (April, 1916): 179.

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acquaintance."[12] The club mellowed bureaucratic organization by recalling gentlemanly business practice and cordial business relations. As New York organizer Daniel Cady wrote a potential member,

> This is an age of organization and cooperation, and the Rotary spirit is the idea of cooperation among gentlemen, bringing together those who would otherwise remain strangers, and turning the business of members and their friends into honest and brotherly channels.[13]

Most new movements combine elements that look backward with conceptions or techniques that reflect their contemporary surroundings. Yet this conjunction in Rotary--offering both the advantages of "cooperation" and antidotes of honesty and friendship to the "age of organization"--held great appeal for a particular type of businessman. The rosters of these early clubs show a preponderance of men who would benefit from a local business network, but whose interests might suffer in a large-scale bureaucratic society. Local retailers and wholesalers dominated club ranks, interspersed with a number of independent professionals. Conspicuously absent were large manufacturers or any representatives of corporate industry other than railroad or public utility agents. In addition, many of the early members were, like

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[12] Rotary Club of Los Angeles, History of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, 1955), 5.

[13] Daniel Cady to German Emory, May 13, 1910 (Correspondence on file with Rotary International).

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Harris, small town natives, who spoke of wanting to know again the character of their merchants, lawyers, and doctors.[14]

An objective observer may question Rotary's attempt to recapture "small town traditions." Members acted toward each other with an exaggerated informality. Hearty handshakes and loud wisecracks soon became standard ritual. Should any member forget where he was, and address a counterpart with a formal "Mister," he was immediately fined. Further, as the early city clubs all grew rapidly to membership in the hundreds, members soon had to be identified to one another by name badges and photograph rosters. With its self-conscious informality disguising an essentially impersonal affiliation, Rotary's brand of small town fellowship appears more attuned to urban culture. In the metropolis, even strangers assumed relations that were transparent and direct, with artifices of polite formality

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[14] Harris, My Road to Rotary, 232. Of the 253 members listed on the 1910 Chicago Roster, 175 or approximately 70%, were in the retail or service sector, supplying goods and services to local markets. Only 11% were manufacturers who presumably had customers beyond city limits, while the others were professionals, railroad or utility executives, and handlers of agricultural products (such as stockyard owners) who perhaps had outside clients. The same figures hold for clubs in San Francisco--53 of 75, 70% in the commercial sector (San Francisco did have 7 railroad executives--a relatively high number); Los Angeles--177 of 252, 70% (with the bulk of the remainder belonging to shippers and suppliers of agricultural products); Seattle--132 of 193, 68% (Seattle had a relatively high percentage of manufacturers, 32 or 16%); and New York--79 of 105, 75%.

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cleared away.[15]

From "Selfishness" to Civic Concern

Still, despite apparent limitations to Rotary's fellowship, when members expressed dissatisfaction, they did so because of troubles with "the profit motive." Soon after its initial expansion, Rotary found the "cash register principle" of ensuring business to fellow members difficult to sustain. In Minneapolis, "the rosy dream of booming business and fat profits proved disappointing" and the club dropped this emphasis.[16] Though an early slogan had advertised Rotary as an "opportunity, not an importunity," some small businessmen who had joined to take advantage of captive customers found that membership was proving to be less a boon than a burden. Statistical summaries of business exchange were required at most local clubs' meetings, and advertising talks dominated club proceedings. "Every week we would wonder whose curtain rods, life insurance, or buggy robes we would be pressured

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[15] Alan Trachtenberg details both the obscurities of city life and the middle class attempt to transform "mystery into light" in his insightful analysis of "the mysteries of the great city," a chapter of The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York, 1982), 101-139.

[16] The Rotary Club of Minneapolis, The Story of Minneapolis Rotary, 1910-1935 (Minneapolis, 1935), 79.

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into buying next. I wanted to sell my goods to anybody who liked them. It seemed out of line to promise all my purchases to just club members." This Oakland Rotarian resigned his membership, as did others dissatisfied with Rotary's benefits. Other small businessmen declined to join, worried, as one put it, "that people on the outside of the membership would feel prejudiced against the members."[17] Outside criticism was as disconcerting as member dissatisfaction. Clubs came under fire from the press and other local businessmen for their "monopolistic" trade practices. Many club leaders found themselves agreeing with a Christian Science Monitor article describing the Boston club, that "if Rotarianism cannot stand the test before a jury composed of the entire American people, then it lacks rationality and should be changed."[18]

Rotary had already begun consciously and deliberately to change its emphasis from "mutual back-scratching" to a more public-oriented, altruistic fellowship. Rotary

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[17] Rotary Club of Oakland, Rotarily Yours: A History of the Rotary Club of Oakland (Oakland, 1969), 34; M.H. Diffenbaugh to Chesley R. Perry, Jan. 12, 1912; H.C. Winslow to Chesley Perry, Dec. 21, 1910 (correspondence on file with Rotary International).

[18] Clipping dated Feb. 11, 1911 on file at Rotary Headquarters. Descriptions of press criticism are also contained in Mountin, History of the Rotary Club of San Francisco, 40; Rotary Club of Oakland, Rotarily Yours, 34; and Rotary Club of Los Angeles, History of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles, 6.

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spokesmen had always stressed the "honesty," "pride of calling," and "cooperation and mutuality" involved in openly promoting each member's profits. This rhetoric remained the same, but its focus now became professional pride and civic betterment. Harris had come to feel that fellowship was far more important than any business advantages the club could offer. Business education and community work suggested themselves as more noble, and less controversial, objectives for Rotary fellowship.[19] By 1910, Harris was arguing that Rotary members should quit their profit-taking. Supported by the leaders of clubs in Minneapolis and Seattle, he swayed enough members at the national convention in 1911 so that "to advance the business interests of the individual members" was removed as an objective of the federation.[20]

Though some clubs protested, most notably San Francisco, which had been highly successful at profit boosting, almost all clubs quickly moved away from any suggestion that membership could result in increased business. The open promotion of business had, at best, mixed results, and if some members still desired business contacts, they could be easily made without meetings being dominated by self-advertisement. But more significantly,

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[19] Emerson Gauss, "History of the Rotary Club of Chicago," (Mss. on file with Rotary International), 66-70.

[20] Proceedings, 2nd National Convention, Portland, 1911, 11.

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Rotary's "spirit of helpfulness" and the pleasures of fellowship would now be given more appropriate expression, and the club could acquire the prestige of an institution working in the public interest. By 1916, a Rotarian who declared "I joined Rotary and paid my dues to get orders" was booed and hissed at the national convention.[21]

To express their new objectives of civic and business betterment, Rotarians increasingly resorted to a catchword that would become the great emphasis of club life in the twenties: "service." The word cropped up at Rotary's first national convention in 1910, when a proprietor of a "School of Salesmanship," Chicago Rotarian Arthur Sheldon, gave the banquet address. In it, he declared that

> the distinguishing mark of the commercialism of the twentieth century is to be cooperation...man comes to see that the science of business is the science of human service. He comes to see that he profits most who serves his fellows best.[22]

When Sheldon used that last phrase again at the 1911 convention, it was greeted with roars of acclaim; delegates voted unanimously to make "he profits most who serves best" the official Rotary slogan. Rotary's primary purpose was now "to develop the capability for service" with programs concentrating on business ethics and community improvement.

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[21] Proceedings, 7th Annual Convention, Cincinnati, 1916, 109.

[22] Proceedings, 1st National Convention, Chicago, 1910, 98.

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Rotary's Early Homage to Service

While several historians have noted the widespread emphasis on service in the twenties, Rotary's pre-war focus on service has gone virtually unnoticed. Yet contained in Rotarians' frequent references to "this age of cooperation" and "the spirit of reciprocity and fellowship" are the main components of the associational ethic usually identified with governmental and business initiatives appearing after World War I.[23] Rotarian spokesmen repudiated the rugged individualists of an earlier business generation. "The genius of Rotary exists more in cooperation than in competition" stated Rotary's "code of ethics," adopted in 1915. An article in The Rotarian agreed that Rotary's "greatest contribution to the hour" was its "preachment that individualism finds its best and truest expression in

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[23]Ellis Hawley briefly mentions pre-war associationalism, and concentrates on its full flowering in twenties, in The Great War and the Search for Modern Order, A History of the American People and their Institutions (New York, 1979). Treatments of service in the twenties include Morrell Heald, "Big Business Thought in the Twenties: Corporate Responsibility," American Quarterly 25 (March, 1962): 223-246 and Lynn Dumenil's chapter "From Ritual to Service" in Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930 (Princeton, 1984), 170-184. In one of the few historical treatments of Rotary ideology, Harold O. Bahlke discusses service, but without placing it in the broader context of American cultural development. "Rotary and American Culture: A Historical Study of Ideology," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Minnesota, 1956). See below for a full discussion of the clubs and associationalism in the twenties.

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social unity."[24]

In practical terms, this meant that business could no longer ignore public needs. As national president Glenn Mead put it at the 1913 convention, "the people of our time have firmly and definitely set their minds to consider business as their proper servant, whose primary purpose is service. This bloodless revolution in business has taught it the wholesome lesson of social service...out of this epoch comes Rotary." Though Rotarians rarely criticized openly the current business standards, their discussions of service implied that business ethics needed improving. A Rotarian minister perhaps went too far for most members when he declared, at the 1917 convention, that "Rotary is war to death with competition, with the evil effects of the competitive system." But most could agree with Seattle president E.J. Skeel--by stressing service, the Rotary movement "fulfilled a definite and urgent need in our present industrial situation."[25]

When Rotarians set about translating service into action, the result was a series of civic betterment and charitable projects in a tradition of community boosting dating back to the nineteenth century. Yet Rotary's

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[24] John R. Knutson, "Rotary and Christian Ideals," The Rotarian 4, (Jan., 1914), 52-53.

[25] Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 7th Annual Convention, Atlantic City, 1917, 42; E.J. Skeel, "Greater Rotary," pamphlet issued by the Seattle Rotary Club, July, 1915, on file at Rotary Headquarters.

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rhetoric contains an intensified sense of social responsibility that distinguishes it from the more complacent exhortations of boosterism, and indeed reflects ideas commonly associated with the progressive movement. Rotarians drew on three groups of ideas, or "social languages" that Daniel T. Rodgers identifies as central to progressive thought: anti-monopoly rhetoric, an emphasis on social bonds, and a stress on social efficiency.[26]

Though hardly sufficient to give Rotary progressive credentials, this common vocabulary suggests other connections between the two movements. Rotary attracted the same native, old stock constituencies that were leading progressive reform in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Seattle--perhaps benefitting from the organizational awareness created by progressive reformers.[27] Chicago in 1905 had more than a hundred women's clubs, two-dozen charitable societies, eighteen social settlements, and a dozen civic-betterment clubs, and Harris was aware of these progressive

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[26] Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," in The Promise of American History: Progress and Prospects (Baltimore, 1982), 123.

[27] Close analysis of the urban constituencies of progressivism appears in the case studies compiled in Michael H. Ebner and Eugene Tobin, eds., The Age of Urban Reform: New Perspectives on the Progressive Era (Port Washington, N.Y., 1977) see, in particular, Michael P. McCarthy, "The New Metropolis: Chicago, the Annexation Movement and Progressive Reform," 43-54.

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agencies for social improvement.[28] California, the first area of Rotary expansion, had already learned the importance of small business cooperation. Since the 1890's, small entrepreneurs, battling railroad and real estate oligarchies, had voiced their opposition through chambers of commerce. These organizations helped create what Kevin Starr calls a "pre-progressive reform sentiment" among the smaller businesses of California.[29] Few Rotary clubs in California or elsewhere, however, followed the example of the Seattle club, which actually participated in a broad reform program led by the city's municipal league.[30] But in the spirit of progressivism, Rotary confronted the new conditions of urban culture with a social activism based on cooperation, offering small business and professional men a chance to gain some control

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[28] Riley, A Study of the Higher Life of Chicago, 54; Harris, The Founder of Rotary, 106.

[29] Kevin Starr, Inventing the Dream:California Through the Progressive Era (New York, 1985), 228. Attempts to placate small business opposition probably explains the presence of public utility agents on early California rosters.

[30] Lee F. Pendergrass, "Urban Reform and Voluntary Association: The Municipal League of Seattle, 1910-1916," in Ebner and Tobin, The Age of Urban Reform, 62. Since this participation was unique, it is important to note that, according to Pendergrass, Seattle's progressive reforms involved not so much fundamental institutional change as nativist measures promoting social order. Conservative Rotarians, who might find pro-labor or referendum legislation objectionable, could readily support a program designed to "keep out undesirables" and "eliminate alcohol use among youth."

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over the big city "maelstrom."

New Organizations and the Benefits of Wartime

The appeal of this kind of activity was demonstrated by organizational imitations of Rotary that began appearing soon after Rotary's initial expansion. Some of these clubs drew on the commercial organizations already in existence, while others were begun by promoters hoping to profit through initiation fees. Among the latter variety was the Kiwanis club, founded in 1914 by a failed lodge promoter named Allen Browne. Unhappy in the territory given him by his employers, the Loyal Order of Moose, Browne instead organized a Detroit club similar to the early Rotary, based on the exchange of business among members. Searching for a suitably exotic name, similar to lodge appellations, he arrived upon an Indian word, Kiwanis, meaning "we trade." Browne was single-handedly responsible for the early expansion of Kiwanis, traveling to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Rochester, starting clubs and collecting initiation fees. Unfortunately for Browne, the popularity of Kiwanis clubs soon exceeded his organizational range. Club members, especially those not recruited by Browne, resented his control over the treasury. At the national meeting in 1917, Browne and Kiwanis leaders quarreled over a series of

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contractual disputes, and in 1919, leaders gathered enough capital to buy out Browne's control of the franchising of new clubs. By that time, the club had followed Rotary's example and switched to service as its main goal.[31] What was to be the third major service club federation, the Lions, formed in Chicago when club member and insurance man Melvyn Jones called a number of unaffiliated city commercial clubs to convene in Chicago in 1917. With the examples of Rotary and Kiwanis before them, they were able to establish themselves immediately as a service organization.

All three of these federations benefitted from America's participation in World War I, which sharpened concerns about cooperation and social cohesion. As David Kennedy has documented, Wilson and his advisors, hoping to avoid excessive expansion in the scope of the federal government, inspired widespread voluntarism through a campaign of propaganda and support of local activity.[32] Businessmen's luncheon clubs jumped at the chance to prove their ability to serve. They provided "four minute men," spearheaded war bond drives, supported the Red Cross, and built recreation facilities and equipment for soldiers camps. Rotary in particular took great pride in its

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[31] The development of Kiwanis is detailed in Oren Arnold, The Widening Path: An Interpretative History of Kiwanis (Chicago, 1964).

[32] David Kennedy, Over Here, (New York, 1980).

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official recognition as an organization "essential to the war effort," and devoted much of its 1917 international convention to "how Rotarians can best cooperate in War activities."[33]

The war's end left Rotary exulting that "no set of men has been more responsive to the war calls than Rotarians, and in all great undertakings none have been more faithful and efficient." They acknowledged "the influence of war...that causes to be born in people the spirit of comradeship, which is the true basis of community feeling."[34] Both Rotary and Kiwanis supported post-war efforts to maintain this spirit with "universal citizenship service." Sharing in the fears that swept the country in 1919, clubs stressed the importance of "cooperative right thinking." All service club federations backed the 100 percent American movement, though none more fervently than the Lions, who adopted the anagramatic, though otherwise nonsensical slogan, "Liberty, Intelligence, Our Nation's Safety," and conducted community campaigns to register aliens.

With armistice came an era of explosive growth in membership and number of clubs. In the two years following

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[33] Intl. Assoc. of Rotary Clubs, Proceedings, 8th Annual Convention, (Atlanta, 1918).

[34] President John Poole's Address, Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 9th Annual Convention, Salt Lake City, 1919, 24. Walter Kern, in "The Rotarian Open Forum" The Rotarian 14, (March, 1919): 69.

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the war, Rotary grew by 17,000 members, the numbers of clubs nearly doubling from 415 to 758; Kiwanis membership increased by 12,000, with clubs more than doubling, from 74 to 156, and the Lions attracted 5000 more members, more than tripling the number of clubs, from 28 to 113. By the end of the twenties, combined membership of these three federations totalled nearly 400,000 business and professional men in 7000 clubs.[35] To club leaders, this growth represented nothing less than a dramatic awakening.

> Men had been waiting for this very thing. It became a "living force" in the lives of many men who had been obsessed with the one idea of making money, transforming them into men who chose for their motto "he profits most who serves best" instead of the old standard of "he profits most who accumulates most in material things."[36]

But as the characteristics of the new membership indicate, the clubs' dramatic growth represented less a transformation of human nature than the changing circumstances of both the local businessman and the American town during the twenties. Judging from a sampling of representative rosters, in all three service federations the membership composition remained the same as in the early Rotary clubs. Most likely to join were the local retailer, the small manufacturer, and a sprinkling of professionals, including educators as well as doctors,

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[35] Statistics drawn from published club directories, 1920-1929.

[36] "Brief History of Rotary," in Rotary Intl., Manual of Procedure for Rotarians (Chicago, 1920), 5.

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lawyers, and engineers. Absent were the corporate managers increasingly significant in American business.(see Table 1)

However, the clubs had shifted geographic ground. Though the original big city clubs retained an important place in their respective federations, the majority of clubs now functioned in towns and small cities. As the federations' growth continued, their small town membership became even more predominant. Throughout the twenties more than 80 percent of new clubs were founded in towns under 10,000; by the end of the twenties, 70 percent of service club membership resided in this size town.[37] For businessmen in these towns, the war left a legacy of "service," accelerated the expanding influence of urban culture, and heightened a class and community awareness. The clubs, already prominent in cities, eager to expand beyond them, stood ready to supply a sociable outlet.

The Blossoming of the Service Ethic

While the twenties have popularly been known as an age of resurgent individualism, when business reigned unhampered by any thought of public responsibility, the

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[37] Statistics compiled by comparing yearly lists of new clubs with the U.S. Census of 1930. Statistics concerning total membership from George Marden, Rotary and its Brothers, (New York, 1935), 121.

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Table I

The Occupational Composition of 30 Men's Service Clubs ca. 1925

	# of Members	% of Total
Retailers/ Wholesalers	868	37
Services (contractors, plumbers, undertakers, photographers, etc.)	346	15
Manufacturers	248	11
Agriculture-Extractive (milling, canning, packing)	139	6
Medicine	106	5
Transportation/ Utilities	101	4
Educators	92	4
Insurance	68	3
Journalists/ Editors	51	2
Government Officials	40	2
Engineers	38	2
Lawyers	35	1
Organizations (Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, Boy Scouts)	29	1
Real Estate	29	1
Farmers	18	1
Clergymen	17	1
Architects	11	1

These numbers drawn from the published rosters of:
Rotary Clubs of Allentown, Pa., Baltimore, Berlin N.H., Cairo, Il., Chicago, Il., Evanston, Il., Fergus Falls, Minn. Fitchburg, Ma.,Gadson, Ala., Greenville, N.C., Indianola, Ia, Irvington, N.J., Jasper, Ala., Kingman, Az.,Lakeland, Fla.,Lancaster, Pa., Laredo, Tx., Lincoln, Neb., Marquette, Ill, Los Angeles, Ca., Modesto, Ca., Palo Alto, Ca., Philadelphia, Pa., Richmond, Va., Sacramento, Ca., San Jose, Ca.
Kiwanis Clubs of Washington, D.C., Schnectady, N.Y., Trenton, N.J.
Lions Clubs of Reading, Pa., and Muskogee, Okla.

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prevalence of an ethic of service suggests another conclusion. For club spokesmen, the themes of cooperation, responsibility, and ethical business practice assumed a nearly religious intensity, as clubs sought to formulate a mission commensurate with their tremendous growth. All clubs had a "code of ethics" laying down rules for proper business behavior. Rotary's code required of members that their "business dealings, ambitions and relations shall always cause [them] to take into consideration [their] highest duties as a member of society." The Lions' code of ethics demanded a "decision against self" in all questionable business situations, and Kiwanis called for "the living of the Golden Rule." These injunctions sought to minimize the profit motive--in a Kiwanian's words, to "change the basis of business from cash to character."[38]

Clubmembers frequently mentioned "character" in relation to their codes of ethics. But as their language made clear, they did not mean character in its nineteenth century sense, with its associations of tough moral fiber, strength of will, and an individualism honed for competitive success. They meant rather a sense of one's social obligations. As a club member put it in 1923, "Above all, thank God, we have come to the point where we lay great stress on character...we know Builders are men

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[38]Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 9th Annual Convention, St. Paul, 1925, 83.

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socially minded."[39] Service required a business individualism based not on self-interest but rather on the spirit of cooperation. A Rotarian editorial expressing these ideas called for "friendly competition when competition is necessary" but otherwise argued business should be based on "a due regard for the other fellow."[40]

Pervasive throughout members' exaltation of service was a vague religiosity. Members appropriated the language of the social gospel to support their activities--even suggesting that, through service, the clubs acquired the high calling of a religious institution. As one Kiwanian described the "religion of business and the business of religion": "No longer can we separate business and religion and education and government...it therefore has become the religion of business to interest itself in the particular advancement of those characteristics that make up fine citizenship, intellectual integrity, and spiritual personality."[41] A priest opened a national Rotarian convention session by praying "while it is not a religious service that we open with this prayer, O God, Rotary is, in no exaggerated sense, the fruit of Christianity..inspired by the spirit of brotherhood, of sacrifice, of self-denial,

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[39]Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 7th Annual Convention, Atlanta, 1923, 20.

[40]Editorial in The Rotarian 16, (Feb., 1920): 60.

[41]Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 13th Annual Convention, Milwaukee, 1929, 277.

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or service."[42]

Service carried the responsibilities of moral stewardship; club members often referred to themselves as "missionaries." As successful and ethical businessmen in an age celebrating business, clubmembers thought themselves well-suited to carry the meaning of service to the public. The "great message of life was first committed to the church, but the church had so many concerns in mind that it has made poor progress," said one Rotarian. Finally "this message to the world has been committed to the hands of men with the real problems of life. The men who are doing the work of the world are the men best capable to lead in spiritual as well as in material things."[43]

In their religiously-tinged tributes to the mission of service, clubs joined a multitude of other men and organizations. Partly as a legacy of war rhetoric, activities in the name of "service" were commonplace in the 1920's. The word appeared with greatest frequency in the business community, and not all who used it shared the clubs' sense of purpose. Advertising men latched onto the word, while corporate business attempted to convince the public that they, as leading industrialist Gerald Swope put it, "had wholeheartedly accepted the conception that

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[42]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 10th Annual Convention, Salt Lake City, 1919, 219.

[43]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 26th Annual Convention, Cleveland, 1925, 105.

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industry is not primarily for profit but rather for service."[44] In the early twenties, service had acquired the mystical force accorded a well-established platitude: its invocation signaled support of all things good. Here is honorary Rotarian Warren G. Harding before the 1923 Rotary convention:

> I tell you, fellow Rotarians, service is the greatest thing in the world and you are doing something--I don't know how consciously--but you're saving America from a sordid existence and putting a little more soul in the life of this Republic...if we can all get down to service--honest service, humble service, help service...then there will come out of the great despondency and discouragement and distress of the world a new order.[45]

Rhetoric concerning service grew so pervasive in the twenties that the secretary of Rotary, Chesley Perry, advised moderation. "It may be about time for Rotarians, as well as others, to put the soft pedal on the word service," he wrote in his newsletter to local club secretaries. Perry thought that the popularity of the word was a good sign of Rotary's influence, but called for "more

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[44]Gerald Swope, "What Big Business Owes the Public," The World's Work 53, (March, 1927): 556. A survey reprinted in The Rotarian found that the word service appeared in 25% of magazine advertisements in 1920, and undoubtedly its use increased as the decade proceeded. Harry D. Kitson, "Growth of the 'Service Idea' in Selling," The Rotarian 20 (Feb, 1922): 56. see also Morrell Heald, "Big Business Thought in the Twenties: Social Responsibility."

[45]Rotary International., Proceedings, 14th Annual Convention, St. Louis, 1923, 231.

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discriminating use" by clubmembers."[46]

Service rhetoric was certainly in the air in the early twenties. Phrases describing an age of cooperation, talking of business assuming public responsibility, and urging the mutual helpfulness of unforced association rolled off the tongue of corporate spokesmen and club luncheon speaker alike. Yet among those who took it seriously, a clearly defined social philosophy lay behind use of the word. Leading those who subscribed to this philosophy was Herbert Hoover, who in 1922 wrote of "a glorious spiritual force...the ideal of service" abroad in the land. He found it exemplified in "the vast multiplication of voluntary organizations for altruistic purposes" displaying "the widespread aspiration for mutual advancement, self-expression, and neighborly helpfulness." They expressed the essence of a "progressive individualism," based on equality of opportunity, economic cooperation, and social responsibility.[47]

Ellis Hawley calls the philosophy behind this kind of rhetoric an "associational ideology." Fueling this ideology, Hawley argues, was a vision of an open economy comprised of independent enterprises, operating a just marketplace regulated by Christian ethics. Drawing on

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[46]The Weekly Letter, no 9, Sept. 21, 1925 (on file with Rotary International).

[47]Herbert Hoover, American Individualism, (New York, 1922) quotes from 27-30; 71-72.

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traditional values, yet influenced by modern organizations, it regarded voluntary association as the ideal "middle way" between stifling government regulation and unrestrained individualism.[48]

Although club members drew on the more conservative aspects of this vision, associational ideology also meshed well with the progressive organizational ethic, which envisioned the efficient cooperation of individually functioning social units. Many corporate businessmen found this philosophy attractive because it allowed them to institute market controls and avoid government interference, while claiming allegiance to traditional American values. In fact, a type of associational ideology appeared as a prominent facet of a progressive-influenced "corporate liberalism." In the twenties, corporate and government leaders presided over an emerging set of institutions that mingled public and private interest--an "organizational sector" made up of trade associations, organized interest groups, and state agencies and regulatory boards staffed by businessmen. Technical and managerial expertise rather than class or locality shaped the interests of these organizations, which sought to

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[48]Ellis W. Hawley, in Joseph Huthmacher and Warren I. Susman, Eds. Herbert Hoover and the Crisis of American Capitalism (Cambridge, Ma., 1973), 4-5. In her biography of Hoover, Joan Hoff Wilson also notes the attempt to reconcile old and new economic values in a "philosophy of vague corporatism." Wilson, Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive (Boston, 1975) 35-40.

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control the state, balance the needs of competing social groups, and develop a "corporative commonwealth." When these business and government leaders talked of service, they hoped to convince the public of the morality and disinterestedness of their corporate institutions.[49]

Service and Local Businessmen

Clubmembers did not belong among the elites shaping the corporative commonwealth. In fact, their interests continued to be much more influenced by class and local concerns than technical expertise. Their associationalism had as its locus small town neighborliness rather than efficient agencies. Typical of clubmember associational rhetoric was that of Rotarian Ed Silberstein, while actually advocating membership in a trade association. The vast expansion of business, he suggested, had "completely cut the personal touch which had always been a determining ethical factor. It ended the reign of neighborliness." This Rotarian believed that business needed to become "re-personalized." Others advocating membership in trade

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[49]Hawley provides an excellent summary of corporate liberalism in his article, "The Discovery and Study of a 'Corporate Liberalism'," Business History Review 52 (Autumn, 1978):309-319. see also, in the same issue, Kim McQuaid, "Corporate Liberalism in the American Business community, 1920-1940."

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associations made frequent references to the businessmen's "craft" or his "vocation," again demonstrating the backward looking, nostalgic aspects of the clubs' associationalism.[50]

Distinctions must be drawn, therefore, between the philosophy of corporate leaders and the service ethic pursued by service club members. A corporative commonwealth, constituted of large-scale, nationally-based institutions, played little part in their vision. Instead, service and other elements of club membership seem designed to bolster the prestige and psychic satisfactions of members' occupational and community life. The appeal of clubs lay in the way they "personalized" service.

As the twenties began, all areas of small town business life felt the pressures of corporate centralization. Community retailers worried about being nudged out by chain stores; small manufacturers occupied less and less of a growing market; even local bankers felt the infringements of an increasingly national financial network. The numbers of small businessmen remained high, and many continued to prosper. But local businessmen could not but feel that their independence, one of the prized occupational benefits of a small business career, lay under siege. As Kurt Mayer noted in 1947, "economic satisfactions cannot fully replace

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[50]Edward A. Silberstein, "Improving the Relationship between Competitors," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1925, 392-393.

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the vanishing social and psychological rewards. The loss of social identity and of general enterprise is a crucial problem for small business."[51]

Such deprivation was already occurring for small businessmen in the twenties. Even those who owned larger local establishments, no matter how much power they might have had in their community, were, as Stanley Hollander points out, "individually quite powerless in their supply markets." He uses the example of automobile dealers, none of which "could significantly influence the fortunes of a large automobile manufacturer." Certainly Ford's cavalier treatment of his dealers during the twenties provides strong evidence of Hollander's point.[52]

Membership in a service club certainly could do little to reverse long term economic trends. But it could reinforce local prestige, strengthen town contacts, and restore a sagging "social identity." Several characteristics of the service federations developed

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[51] Kurt Mayer, "Small Business as a Social Institution," Social Research 20, (1947); 348. For a discussion of the trends effecting small business, see the essays in Stuart W. Bruchey, ed. Small Business in American Life (New York, 1980), particularly Harold Vatter, "The Position of Small Business in the Structure of American Manufacturing, 1870-1970," 142-168; Stanley Hollander, "The Effects of Industrialization on Small Retailing in the Twentieth Century," 212-239; Richard Sylla, "Small Business Banking in the U.S., 1780-1920," 240-262.

[52] Stanley Hollander, "The Effects of Industrialization on Small Retailing in the Twentieth Century," 216.

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throughout the twenties suggest that this sort of status compensation was part of the club's appeal. Though they no longer claimed practical business benefits, all three federations continued to insist that local clubs admit only one member, in the case of Rotary, and two, in the case of Kiwanis and Lions, from each line of business. This classification system made membership selective, presumably admitting only the most successful in each category of business. A rigid adherence to the classification system, a Kiwanis officer argued, encourages members who are "men of quality, of inspiration, and men of leadership and influence, who will be vigorous and powerful, not only in their own clubs but in their communities."[53]

Some club members appeared to feel that the membership limitation was the main attraction to successful or powerful businessmen in a community. Classification thus became the basis of a club's success and permanence. Prestigious members increased the status of the club within the community and made for successful club projects, which in turn attracted additional community leaders to membership. Or as an editorial in The Lion put it

> The Lions Clubs will soon be the finest in the world. Men of Affairs want to belong to the Best Club or Best Anything and because they are Men of Affairs they'll get what they want. They'll WANT

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[53] Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 11th Annual Intl. Convention, Memphis, 1927, 159.

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to be members and they WILL BE.[54]

Rotarians also spoke of classification as "enhancing the value of membership in the judgement of all both within and without the movement.[55] In fact all clubs claimed, like Kiwanis, that classification preserved "`the prestige of selection' a direct result of which is the distinctiveness of Kiwanis." [56]

Classification was the mainspring of a business betterment program that club leaders hoped would result in recognition of their organization's business leadership. Of the service federations, Rotary gave the most serious consideration to this "vocational service," which took the form in the twenties of industry-wide codes of business behavior. This work, begun in 1921, was given impetus by Guy Gundaker, a Philadelphia restaurant owner active from the early years in Rotary organization. Inspired by his observations of wartime industrial cooperation, Gundaker recommended that Rotary work for codes as a logical extension of the Second Object of Rotary, "to encourage and foster high ethical standards in business and profession."

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[54] Editorial in The Lion 4, (March, 1922): 338.

[55] Crawford McCullough, "The Expression of the Rotary Idea Through its Rules and Regulations," in Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 17th Annual Convention, Ostend, Belgium, 1927, 166.

[56] "Report of the Committee on Classification," Kiwanis Intl. Proceedings, 7th Annual Convention, Atlanta, 1923, 84.

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When Gundaker became international president in 1923, Rotary's campaign for codes of correct practice was made the "major activity" for the year. Gundaker later claimed that hundreds of codes of business were written as the result of Rotary's efforts, including those of the Implement Dealers Association, the National Shoe Retailers, the National Association of Real Estate Boards, and the National Restaurant Association--the last drafted by Gundaker himself. Gundaker regarded code-writing as a panacea for business ills. Given a written statement of their employers high business practices, labor would become less suspicious. The public would be reassured, and continued observance of standards of correct practice would "render proposed restrictive governmental legislation unnecessary." But most important, when all businessmen had written codes, "businessmen will compete on a common ground of high business standards, sales will be made on the basis of service, and then that paradox of the imagination--cooperative competition--will be a reality."[57]

Codes, classification, and other aspects of vocational service reflected attempts by club leaders to encourage a "professionalization" of business. Concerned that "there has not been in business, as in the older professions, a

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[57]Guy Gundaker, President's Address, Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 15th Annual Convention, 1924, 31. Other information from the Gundaker Biographical File, Rotary International.

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class consciousness of professional ethics," club spokesmen felt that with high standards of selection providing the prestigious business elite, then a program of "vocational service" would supply the ethical ideals.[58] Referring to their "vocation" and "craft," club members attempted to remove the taint of money-grubbing from the pursuit of business, and achieve the honor accorded to altruistic achievement. To enter Rotary, businessmen had to be already successful "in a practical way," said one spokesman. The key was then to show them the "high ethics of their craft," helping them "to see the vision of the thing." The "vision" was that of an awakened businessman serving the community in an enterprise conducted with pride and honor. Then, as a club member, "the businessman is placed on a level with professional men...no longer a profit worker or even a bread winner, he is a public servant."[59]

The concept of the professionalization of business was not new. As early as 1912 Louis Brandeis had spoken of "business--a profession" calling on businessmen to seek "achievements comparable with those of the artist or the scientist, of the inventor or the statesman." But where

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[58] William L. Reilly, "Ethics in the New Profession," Kiwanis Magazine (July, 1924); 358.

[59] Raymond Knoeppel, "Vocational Service" Rotary Int., Proceedings, 13th Annual Conference, 2nd District, (Sacramento, 1928), 46; Report on Vocational Service, Rotary Intl., Proceedings, Ostend, 1927, 106.

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Brandeis and other social thinkers such as Tawney and Durkheim looked to professionalism primarily as a means of curbing the amoral excesses of an unrestrained market, club members hoped in addition to strengthen their image within their own community.[60] Thus a Kiwanian speaking in 1923 was hopeful that though "the businessman as yet has not convinced the American people that he is entitled to the same consideration as men in other professions" with Kiwanis membership "we have now emerged into that intellectual requirement and that ethical requirement that will permit businessmen to be received by the public in the larger and broader way."[61]

The models in this process were the clubs' own member representatives from the traditional professions, who often led the vocational service programs. A Kiwanian paid tribute to the doctors, lawyers, educators, and clergymen, who "by their Kiwanis contact with merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and other businessmen have materially aided

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[60] Louis Brandeis, Business--A Profession (Boston, 1914), 7. Thomas L. Haskell examines the thought of Tawney and Durkheim in "Professionalism versus Capitalism," in Thomas L. Haskell, ed. The Authority of Experts(Bloomington, Ind., 1984), 180-225. Harold J. Laski expressed viewpoints quite similar to club spokesmen in "Can Business be Civilized?," Harper's Monthly 60, (Jan. 1930): 169-176.

[61] Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 7th Annual Convention, Atlanta, 1923, 91.

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the movement."[62] In fact, an examination of the club directories show that throughout the twenties, lawyers held 35 percent of the clubs' elective national leadership positions, far out of proportion to their number in overall club membership. Furthermore, 60 percent of available club offices in the twenties were held by four occupational groups--lawyers, bankers, doctors, and educators--that together made up less than 20 percent of the aggregate membership.[63] These representatives of the traditional professions, with education and prestige beyond that of the typical small businessman, have traditionally supplied community as well as voluntary association leadership. But election to these offices was not merely honorary. It required a significant commitment of financially unreimbursed time, spent on administrative matters and in visiting local clubs. The clubs therefore played a far different role for men who aspired to national office, a role that extended beyond community concerns. That the professionals within club membership should dominate the

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[62] Poe Fulkerson, "Public Service and Scientific Management," The Kiwanis Magazine 10, (March, 1925): 134. Not all club members held this view, including one Kiwanian who blamed the faults of his club on "attorney domination," and complained that "I have never been to a convention yet but what there has been a preponderance of professional men running it." His comment went unremarked, because the four men directing the discussion were all lawyers. Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 1927, 187.

[63] Statistics compiled using official club directories, 1920-1929.

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organizational leadership of club activity suggests their greater orientation to national involvement and prestige, and perhaps also helps explains why a program of business professionalization occupied such a prominent place on the official club platform.[64]

The "Failure" of Vocational Service

Virtually all members expressed their support of classification and vocational service in theory. But in practice club members proved themselves quite willing to put aside the promise of professional prestige in order to meet the realities of community life. In small towns, especially, compliance with classification was often difficult. Some towns simply did not have enough members to fill a roster by strict adherance to the classification procedure. In many small clubs, too, members would not risk offending friends or influential men in the community just because a classification was filled. Rosters indicate that clubs disguised their failure to observe the one member per occupation group by classifying members under obscure occupations; for example, a second dentist in the Sacramento Rotary club was admitted under the

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[64]Wiebe notes the leading role of professionals in advancing the network of national associations. The Search for Order, 111-132.

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classification "pyhoreaa."[65]

Club officials were well aware of this bending of club rules. A great portion of Rotary and Kiwanis convention time in the twenties was spent rebuking clubs for "laxity in the standards of classification" or "apathy toward the business standards program." As club members were continually reminded in inspirational addresses and articles, their work as "missionaries of service" began in their own occupations. "We cannot preach ideals and unselfishness in Rotary one day a week and then for six days go out and practice selfishness in our business. If we do, good-bye to this organization."[66] Yet having made that assertion, clubs were hard-pressed to find the concrete applications they felt essential to the fulfillment of service. A Kiwanis committee on raising business standards suggested "the quiet investigation of the business and professional standards of individual members," but realized

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[65] Most revealing in this regard are Rotary's "District Governor's Memo of Official Visit" which began appearing in Rotary club files in 1926. From them, it appears that the smaller towns were the least likely to obey classification rules and had the most difficulty coming up with vocational service programs. Examples are the reports on Jefferson, Ohio, Rocky Mount, N.C., and Indianola, Iowa. Kiwanis club vocational service is discussed in Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 1925, 69. The Lions clubs placed considerably less stress on classification and vocational service--as result this conflict between national aims and club practice was less noticeable.

[66] Address of Raymond J. Knoeppel, Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 13th Annual Conference of Rotary Clubs, 2nd District, Sacramento, 1928, 46.

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its implementation was unlikely, since "the average business or professional man does not like advice on how his business should or should not be conducted." At Kiwanis conventions, it appeared to be common knowledge that the business ethics committee was the least active in each club.[67]

Similarly restricted was discussion of an employer's relationship with his workers, although the subject was approached at conventions in general terms.[68] Most clubmembers appear to have shared the attitudes of those industrialists who advocated a form of "welfare capitalism" --the payment of adequate wages, the provision of some benefits and a small degree of employee representation--and hoped for "the harmonious relationship between labor and capital." Though they seemed relatively enlightened for the time, these attitudes probably reflected a paternalism born of prosperity rather than a genuine sympathy for the working man.[69] However, because they were mostly small businessmen working in the commercial sector, clubmembers

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[67]Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 1925, 69.

[68]When at their convention in 1919 Rotarians attempted to vote on a resolution making specific proposals concerning compulsory arbitration and wage legislation, discussion became quite heated and the resolution was dropped. see Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1919 139-150.

[69]David Brody, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," in John Braeman, Robert Bremner, and David Brody, eds., Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America: The 1920 s (Columbus, Ohio, 1968), 147-178.

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did not employ enough workers to make labor relations an urgent problem. When they did focus on what spokesmen called "vocational service," they preferred talking of their relationship to the consumer or to their competitors. Members considered harmony in these areas more crucial to their business and community success than rapport with workers.[70]

Judging from local rosters, conference proceedings, and local club reports, club members did not show much interest in any of the practical implications of vocational service. This failure of their national business standards program to generate concrete action should not be surprising. After all, men do not commonly join a sociable organization to in order to reform their business practices. But conflict over this program gave some evidence of why members did join. At conventions and in letters to local headquarters, local clubs in discussions of classification requirements and program guides expressed resentment over the "outside interference" from national headquarters. While small businessmen members welcomed the national objectives of prestige through vocational service, and listened to a large number of speeches promoting better business practice, far more club effort was expended boosting the local community than promoting business

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[70]Charles Marden discusses this preference in Rotary and its Brothers, 43-60.

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"professionalization." Most members, it appeared, joined more as an expression of loyalty to traditional, local communities than to a nationwide professional class.

Conflict With Headquarters: The Strength of Local Interest

Significantly, organizational conflicts such as those over classification and vocational service assumed a local-national character, as members defended their autonomy from infringement by the national association. They chafed at most organizational regulations which required local clubs, no matter how remote and small their place of residence, to answer to a central headquarters located in cosmopolitan Chicago. The international "secretariat" of the three federations set club policies, edited the general club magazine (to which all members were required to subscribe), and mailed a steady stream of ducational pamphlets to the local clubs. District offices run by elected governors visited local club, reporting on problems and accomplishments to the national headquarters. In addition to following classification procedures and putting on vocational standards programs, clubs were required to meet weekly, expel any member that missed several meetings in a row, and to send delegates to the annual "international

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convention."[71]

This hierarchical system of conventions and federation publications along with local chapters conformed to a formula for voluntary association organization that had been developed as early as the 1820's, when evangelical benevolent societies used it to pursue moral reform.[72] Centralized administration was efficient, and often supplied direction and needed reinforcement for local branches. But as generally applied in the early twentieth century, and certainly in the case of the service clubs, national organization also enforced standardization.[73] It gave rise to administrators who stressed the integrity of the central organization above all concerns of the local clubs. Melvyn Jones, the Lions general secretary who controlled association policy for more than twenty years, worked from the early twenties to "cultivate local club

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[71] Of these three, the individual attendance requirement caused the most difficulty. Requiring attendance prevented a situation then occurring at lodges, where members joined but then did not bother to attend meetings. It also created an extremely high membership turnover--members would join, miss the requisite meetings, be expelled--perhaps to join again later. To create more incentives for attendance, all three organizations held yearly attendance contests, awarding the winners and also publishing the clubs with the lowest percentages.

[72] David Seth Reichlin, "From Civic Duty to Psychological Reward," (Phd. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1981), 56.

[73] John Gilkeson describes a similar standardization for women's clubs which federated in Middle-Class Providence, 250.

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secretaries as vital communicative links."[74] The first general secretary of Rotary, Chesley Perry, played a major role in the tightening of the Rotary association.[75] Writing as early as 1914, to a Philadelphia member who warned against "dictation from the Association," Perry defended standardized local club constitutions prescribed by the central administration. While it was true that "the early feeling of the Association was that it had no jurisdiction over the local affairs of the constituent clubs...can this condition continue in view of the increasing importance of the clubs as a body in the association?" Perry was convinced that it could not, and worked for thirty years to centralize Rotary administration. By 1922, a member of Perry's staff would write to a member of the Lincoln, Nebraska club explaining that they must meet every week of the year, even though Lincoln's summers were unbearably hot: "You know that

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[74] Quoted in "A History of Lionism", 38 (mss. on file at Lions Headquarters). The Lions utilized paid organizers to expand from town to town--unlike Rotary and Kiwanis, which relied either on indigenous organization or on older clubs to "father" new groups in nearby communities. As a result, the Lions grew far more rapidly than the other two, but, sometimes lacking true local grounding, also had a greater club failure rate. See Marden, Rotary and its Brothers, 127.

[75] Harris paid Chesley Perry high tribute, calling him "the builder of Rotary international." Perry had worked as a bank clerk and as secretary of a fraternal association before becoming Rotary's first general secretary in 1910, a job he held until 1942. From all accounts, he was an aloof but dedicated worker, with a high conception of Rotary's purpose.

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throughout Rotary, its a common expression that `our club and town are different.' If we look at it from a broad viewpoint we realize immediately that there is nothing to that expression."[76]

While most of the service clubs eventually fell into line with this standardization, there were enough signs of resistance to indicate their strong orientation to the local community. The president of Rotary's board of directors noted in 1922 what he termed "a harmful tendency toward provincial individuality and lines of division local in character." As evidence of these lines of division, Rotary headquarters in the twenties was bombarded with letters from members annoyed at the conformity required by the "International."[77] The editor of The Kiwanis Magazine was alarmed in 1924 that members were inclined "to use `you' speaking of Kiwanis International and `we' speaking of his own club" and warned against it. Still, the practice must have continued, for at the 1927 Kiwanis Convention another official spoke against "the error of the lay Kiwanis's mind to think and speak of the International as something apart from the cycle of its understanding,

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[76] Perry to Glenn Mead, June 6, 1914; Raymond M. Harris to Roscoe Taylor, July 20, 1922 (Correspondence on file at Rotary Headquarters).

[77] Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Oct.-Nov., 1922, 16. The best source for member letters are the individual club files at Rotary Headquarters.

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activity, and participation--as some sinister superstructure imposed upon a hapless unwilling constituency"[78] Organization could generate these local-national tensions--even within clubs that claimed small town community as their touchstone. Yet these tensions were also evidence of an intensified awareness among local club members. "We in our communities, know our conditions," a Kiwanian said in "protest against [the] encroachment upon the rights of all local clubs."[79]

The frustrations that future club members might feel within a restrictive organization were contrary to Paul Harris's original intentions for utilitarian fellowship. Neither did he foresee that his big city club might prove popular among the local businessmen in the small town environment it tried to recall. Despite these unintended consequences, however, joining a service club still fulfilled practical purposes for local businessmen interested in strengthening business or community ties. It allowed them to reaffirm their interest in public affairs, and share in the national prestige of belonging to an honorable association. Paul Harris could be proud of his creation, which appeared, late in his life, to be the "working out of religious impulses in business

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[78]Editorial, The Kiwanis Magazine 9, (July, 1924): 373; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 11th Annual Convention, Memphis, 1927, 138.

[79] Kiwanis International, Proceedings, 1924, 366.

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relations."[80]

In light of its enormous success, it seems clear why Harris believed that the impulse that resulted in the service club was "providential." Yet the institution's development beyond Harris's original formulation can be explained in other terms besides divine intervention. Faced with the anomic loss of personal contact, Rotary's fellowship attempted to intensify relationships heretofore casual or formal. Profit-seeking proved a poor basis for the emotional solidarity members sought, since it introduced conflict of interest, and subjected clubs to public criticism. Basing their sociability on service allowed non-corporate, urban businessmen to meet the challenges of the "organizational age" with a sense of personal engagement.

The club's fellowship based on service also possessed an unintended, latent appeal, which became quickly apparent after the war. Local businessmen in towns and small cities, their occupational independence threatened by corporate expansion, saw in expressions of service an opportunity to raise both national and community prestige. Ironically, their brand of service put them in rhetorical concurrence with big business leaders, and occasionally in conflict with their own club administration. As their club activities during the twenties made clear, however, members

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[80]Harris, My Road to Rotary, 263.

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had not yet relinquished their identity to a corporate culture.

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CHAPTER 3

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

In 1925, three years after Hoover wrote of the "great spiritual force poured out by our people--the ideal of service" the nation's Lions Clubs reported 904 different activities directed to children's welfare, 1141 projects of civic improvement, and 498 actions on behalf of the blind, the poor and the handicapped. During the same year, Kiwanis claimed 3003 instances of aid to youth, 1918 community improvement efforts, and 889 miscellaneous acts for the public welfare. Rotary published no compilation of local club service projects in 1925, but every month The Rotarian detailed hundreds of examples of clubs' youth work, town beautification projects and other charitable activities.[1] The clubs often inflated reports of their activities, offering resolutions as accomplishments and counting small-scale acts of charity that individuals could easily have performed without club sanction. Nevertheless,

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[1]"Report of the Major Committee on Activities," The Lion 9, (August, 1926): 17-19; Kiwanis Activities, v. IV, 1925 (Chicago 1925). Each clubs' monthly magazine listed local club activities sent them by local secretaries.

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throughout the twenties, the service clubs were vehicles for a remarkable degree of civic activism.

Although not without precedent, the new intensity of this activity indicates important changes affecting the lives of club members. For years, local businessmen had supported their towns and cities in various endeavors mixing business self-interest and community concern--recruiting state and private enterprises, sponsoring Lyceums or Chautauquas, building new roads and parks--all in the name of "boosting." In the twenties, club projects continued in that tradition, pursuing some of the same activities, and attempting to create the same kind of community spirit. However, service clubs, while not abandoning boosterism, adopted a greater number and variety of projects, relying more on organization, efficiency, and sociological insight to accomplish their objects. The three most common types of service activities undertaken--community improvement, such as park building and town beautification, charitable projects like baskets of food for the needy and new equipment for health clinics, and boy's work--reveal less a booster's bravura than a heightened awareness of a threatened position. The great "outpouring" of service that so impressed Hoover came from clubmembers attempting to preserve town and class unity in the midst of cultural transformation.

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Boosterism, Urbanization, and the Service Clubs

Today the term "booster" seems slightly archaic. When used outside of electronics, it is often pejorative, referring to an over-zealousness, spuriously motivated. Yet historians of both nineteenth and twentieth century communities have seen boosterism as an essential function, part of a conscious strategy of community progress.[2] Its motives were clear enough: as the town went, so went the town's business. Towns and their businessmen vigorously competed for institutions, railroad lines, and county seats, well aware that only a limited number of these make-or-break awards were available, and that their business future depended upon their community's success in attracting them. Because conflict would disrupt growth, and damage the town's image, the key to success lay in "community spirit"--a loyalty and harmony among the town's citizens. Thus nineteenth century boosterism combined the twin goals of growth and unity, hoping to create a collective energy that would ensure progress.

In the 1920's, boosterism continued as a coherent ethos, yet its task grew more complex. Physical growth and

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[2]Lengthy discussions of booosterism appear in Don Harrison Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870 (Chicago, 1978), 62-91; Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York, 1965), 113-134; and Blaine Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930 (Baton Rouge, La., 1975).

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winning economic prizes remained primary goals. But in the expanding cities, a greater heterogeneity of population meant a complex of socio-economic interests. Unity and harmony, regarded by boosters as essentials to continued growth, became even more difficult to achieve. Commercial leaders feared that the consequences of uncontrolled growth would be civic disorder. In response to this threat, civic-minded businessmen in urban areas stressed even more than before the psychological unity of their city. Sensitive to conflict of any kind, they avoided controversy at all costs--and made sure to publicize their support of only widely-popular measures.[3]

In the search for consensus, the clubs could play an important role, providing a forum and a meeting place for the various factions of the commercial and civic elite to iron out their differences. Yet the increased sensitivities of businessmen anxious for civic harmony often prevented club service from assuming the significance that members claimed for it. Already inclined to stress fellowship and friendly behavior, club members pursued non-political, non-controversial projects that did not look to transform civic life but to reaffirm it. Clubs advocated road building, civic beautification, and parks and recreation areas precisely because these activities already

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[3]Blaine Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South: 1920-1930, 125-155.

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had the support of the entire middle-class population. These projects solidified the club's place in the community, and, members hoped, created a sense of solidarity among all residents.

Serving Small Communities: The Power of Organization

Although service clubs thus played an important role in large urban communities, their activities had a far greater impact on the homogenous, independent small cities and towns to which clubs rapidly spread after World War I. As club leaders recognized, the small size of these communities could make clubs more influential. "Kiwanis is at its best in the small community, in which the effects of Kiwanis ideals and service are immediately felt" said one Kiwanian.[4] The boosting role played by the clubs was far more important in towns and small cities than in the metropolis. In the big city, the clubs played only a supporting role to the chamber of commerce in its efforts to improve the business climate. In the small town, clubs often founded or acted in place of the chamber of commerce. Therefore despite a general similarity in club activities regardless of location, community circumstances influenced

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[4]Kiwanis Intl, Proceedings, 13th Intl convention, Milwaukee, 1929, 22.

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the approach to these activities and their consequences. The resolution adopted by the Kiwanis club of Birmingham, Ala., in support of traffic safety might have been influential, but not in proportion to the results obtained by the Kiwanis Club of Shamokin, Pa., which installed with club labor two traffic lights "worth $750" on main intersections.[5]

The clubs were important in towns and independent small cities for other reasons. As several studies of community power have demonstrated, the 1920's witnessed the waning of local businessmen's influence in large urban areas. Corporate industry and population growth created a "bifurcated" power structure, with outside "economic dominants" wielding great power but concerning themselves with the community only on issues where their own interests were affected. Small cities and towns, however, still had a cohesive, if insecure, local commercial elite. In these communities, clubs indeed could "bring a dead town to life" by awakening local businessmen, in the words of a California Rotarian, to "the great need of acting and thinking in terms of community interest and community unity."[6]

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[5]Brownell, Urban Ethos in the South 48, 122; Kiwanis Activities v. IV, 1925, 78.

[6] Raymond J. Wheeler, speech in Proceedings, 12th Annual Conference, 2nd. District of Rotary International, Stockton, 1927, 9. For sociological studies concerning community influence see Michael Aiken and Paul E. Mott.

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Thus the clubs undertook traditional boosters' activities designed to restore the vitality and civic loyalty of the local business class. The Haines City, Florida, Lions club worked to "sell Haines City to itself," through "optimistic speakers presenting favorable points of the town." The Kiwanis Club in Detroit, Minnesota took a more cultural approach, sponsoring addresses "by well-known people in regard to the early history of Detroit...creating a great deal of civic interest." As a Stockton, California Rotarian described it, clubs' took "an active interest and part in every worthwhile civic and social affair, and accept[ed] the responsibilities of citizenship as a sacred trust." "Kiwanis crystallizes community consciousness" said another clubmember also speaking on "the responsibility of citizenship."[7]

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ed., The Structure of Community Power (New York, 1970), in particular, Donald A. Clelland and William H. Form, "Economic Dominants and Community Power: A Comparative Analysis," and C. Wright Mills and Melville J. Ulmer, "Small Business and Civic Welfare." For a historical perspective see David Hammack, "Problems in the Historical Study of Power in the Cities and Towns of the United States," American Historical Review 83 (June, 1978), 323-349, and "Small Business and Urban Power: Some Notes on the History of Economic Policy in Nineteenth Century American Cities" in Stuart Bruchey, ed., Small Business in American Life (New York, 1980),319-337.

[7] Report to The Kiwanis Magazine 9 (Jan., 1924) 29; Francis Hazelton Williams, "What Lionism has Accomplished in Small Cities," The Lion 11, (Jan. 1928): 38-39; Rotary International, Proceedings, 12th Annual Conference, 2nd. District, Stockton, 1927, 9; Harry Spillman, "The Responsibility of Citizenship," Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1929, 131.

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Such rhetoric indicated that the twentieth century required something more than a booster's exhortations to achieve the much-prized "community consciousness." As Rotarian McCullough argued, the clubs' weekly meetings were now needed to supply "the uninterrupted sequence of frequent personal contacts" necessary for true community feeling. "Petty differences and jealousies are more rampant in small communities," a Lion felt. By "collecting representative citizens around the luncheon board once a week," Lionism provided "a splendid cure for these ills."[8]

In fact, the clubs felt it their duty to go beyond civic awakening. They had to generate activism through organization. "Why join a club?" asked a Lions club president. "Does not every citizen carry with him a desire to see his hometown progress? Quite true. But it is only through united cooperative effort that great things can be accomplished in a civic way, only through the tremendous power of organization." "As active, diligent, and intelligent as they are in their separate fields," a Rotarian argued, businessmen not in clubs "have no common place upon which to meet, nor any particular institution which continually reminds them of their duty to their

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[8] Crawford McCullogh, "The Expression of the Rotary Idea Through its Rules and Regulations,", 166; Frances Hazelton Williams, "What Lionism has Accomplished in Small Cities," The Lion 11, (Jan. 1928): 38-39.

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community."[9] Members felt that mere residence in a local community was now not enough to guarantee loyalty and civic spirit. Activity once undertaken informally now required an organization to bring it to fruition. Leading merchants, bankers, and professional men had to be harnessed in the service of their town and spurred into community action.

Much of this faith in organization can be traced to the war and local mobilization efforts. To whip up wartime enthusiasm, the Council of Defense had attempted to organize a community council in every school district. The success of these councils in generating intense patriotism and huge volumes of war bond sales spawned imitations in the twenties, which witnessed an unprecedented number of chamber of commerce drives, community chest campaigns, and town center constructions.[10] The war also hastened the integration of independent communities into a national economy, and along with the automobile, the radio, and corporate and urban expansion tended to undermine local autonomy. As talk of the impending "death of the small town" spread, town leaders worried about migration to the

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[9] W.B. Todd, "What Are We Here For," The Lion 9 (October, 1926): 11. Sylvester L. Weaver, "Rotary Interpreted in Service to the Community," Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 6th Annual Conference, 23rd District, Long Beach, Ca., 1921, 93.

[10] Burt Noggle, Into the Twenties (Chicago, 1974), 155. For a favorable contemporary evaluation of these efforts, see Jesse Steiner, "An Appraisal of the Community Movement," Social Forces 7, (March 1929): 333-342.

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city and a loss of economic vitality.[11] Thus, behind the surge in organizational activity lay community defensiveness. Outside threats generated a new awareness of community, and service organizations undertook projects that moved beyond traditional boosterism. [see Table 2]

Serving the Small Community: Fortification and Extension

Even though clubs worked enthusiastically for the economic growth of their communities, they did not approach all their business boosting projects with the same enthusiasm. Given the incentives for expansion of the town's economic foundation, for example, clubs made surprisingly few efforts to attract industry. The Monticello, Georgia Kiwanis club was one of only 48 clubs in 1925 which reported advertising "free taxation for new plants" and extolling "the general advantages of the city" for manufacturing. Perhaps many members remained ambivalent about outside business moving in, since their primary contact with large-scale industry came through the railroad and utility companies, and relations with these corporations were often strained. Quarrels with utility companies over rate hikes, with railroads over freight

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[11]Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington, Ind., 1954), 285-329.

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Table 2--Kiwanis Activities, 1925[a]

Type of Activity	# of projects	% of category	% of total
Youth Work	**2706**		**48**
Under-Privileged Child	735	27	
Boy Scouts	396	15	
Playgrounds and Recreation	392	14	
Educational Work	381	14	
Boys Work	247	09	
Athletics	196	07	
Music	147	05	
YMCA	88	03	
Girls Work	41	01	
Camp Fire Girls	33	01	
Girl Scouts	28	01	
Vocational Guidance	14	--	
YWCA	8	--	
Community Service	**1918**		**30**
Better Town and Country Relations	390	23	
Improvement of Civic Conditions	302	18	
Aid to Business and Industry	300	18	
Good Roads	262	15	
Street and Road Signs	166	10	
Tourist Camps	81	04	
Assistance to Chamber of Commerce	58	03	
Libraries	44	03	
Street Lighting	33	02	
Memorials	31	02	
Commission Form of Government	03	--	
Charitable Work	**889**		**16**
Assistance to Needy	187	21	
Charity Organizations	132	15	
Community Chest	130	15	
Health and Sanitation	129	15	
Hospitals	113	13	
Red Cross	62	07	
Salvation Army	57	07	
Comfort of Patients in Hospitals	49	06	
Near East Relief	30	03	
Citizenship Activities	**187**		**03**
American Legion	83	44	
Citizenship	45	24	
Patriotic Activities	27	14	
Soldiers Comfort	23	12	
Preparedness	9	05	
Miscellaneous	**188**		**03**
Safety First	82	44	
Miscellaneous	73	39	
National and State Parks	17	09	
Conservation	16	09	
TOTAL ACTIVITIES	**5640**		

[a]compiled from Kiwanis Activities, v. IV, 1925

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service and "dangerous grade-crossings" were reported by over 100 clubs in 1925, including the Kiwanis club of Cairo, Ill., the club chosen "most efficient" by Kiwanis International.[12] Though these complaints were out of character for clubs which normally avoided controversy, not only were the economic interests of the clubmembers and the utility companies frequently in conflict, the large electric and phone corporations were business and residential outsiders. Clubs viewed action against a utility company, therefore, as a community service. So the Anderson, Indiana, Lions club, "aroused at a increase in rates of the Indiana Bell," was able to gather "all the civic organizations of the city in a campaign to force lower rates, and hold a joint meeting with Rotary and Kiwanis to discuss the formation of a municipal phone system and a boycott of the corporation."[13]

Problems with utility companies were similar to local businessmen's difficulties with chain stores, which clubs sought to combat by creating a "buy at home spirit." Typical of these concerns was an article in The Kiwanis

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[12] "Efficiency Contest Stimulates Activities," The Kiwanis Magazine 10, (December, 1925): 522-524.

[13] Reported in The Lion 6, (October, 1923): 28. Kenneth Jackson has noted that "Americans taxed and harassed public transportation, even while subsidizing the automobile like a pampered child." The club's often strained relations with private corporations providing public services suggest that the good roads movement and the automobile could have represented community as well as individual independence. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier (New York, 1985), 171.

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Magazine about the "home trade problem" that warned of "the disintegration of the independent units of local business life before the onslaught of chain stores--which seldom do their share in aiding the town in solving community problems."[14] Club efforts on the behalf of the local economy required more than just encouraging growth; they also needed to concern themselves with the economic autonomy of their communities.

Therefore despite an uneasiness over the kind of industry their boosting efforts might attract, members supported most forms of economic expansion. Among the most popular projects, attracting the attention of nearly all of the three federations' 1700 clubs in 1925, were those designed to improve local transportation. Bond issues supporting a new bridge, an enlarged railroad station, or, most frequently, a new road, had no more fervent supporters than the service clubs, for these improvements symbolized new business, and an extension of local economic influence. In particular, a town's future appeared to depend on what Kiwanis Activities called "the progressive good roads movement." The automobile had spread so rapidly that communities that could not successfully accommodate its presence faced economic extinction, while towns with modern roads were proud to advertise with billboards along those

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[14] John Griest, "The Home Trade Problem" The Kiwanis Magazine 10, (Feb. 1925): 65-66.

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progressive highways. "Lodi--City of Paved Streets," bragged the billboards erected by the Lodi, Ca. Lions Club. "Kiwanis Always Tries to Make the Road Smoother for Humanity" read the billboard on the new main highway into Atlantic City, N.J.[15]

Roadside billboards and a support for building "tourist camps" reflected the clubs' awareness of a newly mobile population and a new concern for the town's extended economic community. This concern was visible not only in the good roads movement but also in a sudden interest, particularly in country towns, in town-farmer relations. These relations had often been less than amicable because of the town's exploitation of the farmer's limited choices for supplies. However, in the twenties, hard agricultural times, increased farmer-consumer mobility, and the threat from chain stores meant country town retailers had to scramble to retain their share of the market.[16] The clubs provided outlets for this merchant concern, conducting "good-will tours"--"to see crops and build good-fellowship,"; sponsoring product fairs and giving prizes to

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[15] Lodi report from Henry C. Rim, "Teamwork Gets Results," The Lion 6, (April, 1924), 23; Kiwanis billboard listed in Kiwanis Activities, 120. For discussions of the good roads movement see Brownell, 117-122 and Kenneth Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 162-171.

[16] For descriptions of this relationship, see Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border, 49-57, and Richard Lingeman, Small Town America, (New York, 1980), 326-336.

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the boy or girl who grew the best crops; and holding "Buy Our Town" days, with special discounts to farmers. Kiwanis made the "development of better town and country relations" one of its "international objectives" in 1922. All three clubs worked throughout the twenties to show that like this Kiwanian from Iowa, "My Kiwanis community is not confined to the city limits of my hometown. My Kiwanis community is bounded by a county line and consists of 35 townships."[17]

Beyond Boosting: Middle-Class Stewardship

In their boosting members in towns and small cities sought to extend and fortify the influence of their communities, using local organization to combat "outside influences" which could damage both their economic interests and civic unity. Yet the clubs cooperationist ethic also carried them to a larger conception of community welfare, and defined civic responsibility in other than purely economic terms. Not only did members hope to widen the extent of local business community, they also sought to deepen a sense of responsibility to those "less fortunate."

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[17]Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 12th Annual Convention, Memphis, 1927, 615. For lists of activities concerning the farmer see Kiwanis Activities, 30-33; Brooks Hays, "Farmers Find Lions Good Friends," The Lion 6 (Oct., 1923): 6; and R.D. Stitzel, "The Brainerd, Minn. Lions Club and the Farmer" The Lion 6 (March, 1924): 26.

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A Lion described the ideal community as

> the community where the needs of every individual as to health, food, shelter, and clothing are recognized as essential community demands, and if there be those who because of mental or physical infirmity or misfortune in any other particular are not able to provide these particular means, then it becomes the duty of the community to make provision therefore.[18]

In practice, this second aspect of club service--their work for local welfare--was piecemeal and individualized. Nevertheless, it reveals a consistent set of concerns about class position, and displayed the influence of the techniques of progressivism and community sociology.

When clubs set out to perform acts of charity, they were first of all attracted to the dramatic cases of human suffering. The widow who lost her home in the fire; the poor worker who needed an operation; the family without coal for the winter: these cases were typical of the immediate beneficiaries of club relief. Without discrediting the genuine altruism involved in these good works, it is clear that the emotional rewards of this kind of charity were high--the results were clear and the response was immediate and gratifying.

Beyond individual cases of relief work, member's pursued projects establishing or benefitting a local institution. Buying and donating equipment to a hospital, funding a new recreation room at the county poor farm, or

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[18]Ed S. Voight, "Will the Civic Club Endure," The Lion 11, (Sept. 1928): 20-21

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raising funds for a workshop for the handicapped, were typical club projects. In the least personal aspect of their public welfare work, clubs held fundraisers for established charities, such as the Salvation Army or the Red Cross, and helped organize and run community chest and associated charity drives.

Among this long list of projects involving, in the aggregate, millions of charitable dollars a year, were some impressive accomplishments. The Los Angeles Rotary club established and took an active interest in a settlement house in a neighborhood of Mexican immigrants for ten years--though by the mid-twenties they found the annual budget of $30,000 too burdensome and sold the property. The Cairo, Illinois Kiwanis club established in 1925 a community health clinic, to which the clubs' doctors and dentists donated several weekends a month. And, after Helen Keller challenged the Lions to become "knights of the blind" at their 1925 convention, the organization did some important work on behalf of the sightless. It was a Lion in Toledo, Ohio, who conceived of the white cane as an aid and identification in 1928, and Lions were responsible for the free distribution and wide dissemination that led to the cane's universal acceptance.[19]

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[19] The Los Angeles Rotary project is described in Rotary Club of Los Angeles, History of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, Ca. 1955) 115-116; the Cairo Kiwanis work in "Efficiency Contest Spurs Activities," 523; and the Lions work for the blind is detailed "History of

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Yet the clubs' charity work was in no way systematic or sustained, and once a community welfare project was complete, the clubs moved on to other interests. For many clubs, baskets of food and clothes at Christmas time made up the extent of their work for the less fortunate. Observing the intermittent nature of the clubs' charity interests, Charles Marden likened the service club as a welfare agency to "the boy who rakes up the scattering hay left in the path of his father's hay wagon. And like the boy, it gets tired easily and stops to play frequently."[20] Marden's judgement was harsh, in response to the overweening pride in service rendered that he found in club magazines. No matter how grating the self-congratulatory tone of club reports, however, the clubs never claimed to function as welfare agencies. In fact, national leaders, worried that local clubs might assume financial and time obligations that would drive away members, repeatedly reminded clubs they were "not to take the place of your church, board of trade, or charity agency."[21]

At the 1923 Rotary convention, delegates passed a resolution, "number 34," designed to serve as a guideline

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Lionism" (mss. on file with Lions International), 137-146.

[20]Marden, Rotary and its Brothers, 149.

[21]Dist. Gov Graham, "What Lionism is and What it is Not," The Lion 6 (Oct., 1923) 5; speech of Gov. Everts at Rotary Intl., 6th Annual Conf., Rotary Clubs of the 23rd Dist., 1921, 15 are two examples.

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for clubs undertaking service projects. It advised clubs that "activities which enlist the individual efforts of all Rotarians are generally more in accord with the genius of Rotary than those require the mass action of the club," a statement soon echoed by other service federations. On the other hand, if action was undertaken by the club as a whole, the "club should endeavor to secure the cooperation of all other organizations that ought to be interested, and seek to give them full credit."[22]

However, the local clubs were never reticent about taking their full share of credit, nor did they confine their welfare activities to the quiet efforts of individual clubmembers. Instead, the nature of club charitable activities--sporadic, unsystematic, and always well-publicized--indicates an ulterior purpose. Along with expressing a genuine social concern, club activities appear chosen to justify and solidify social standing. Although class interest was often disguised, it seems clear that David Macleod accurately characterizes the ideology of service as "the affordable gospel of wealth," pursued by members of a segment of the middle class not quite confident of their position. In club charitable projects, community responsibility and class interest became closely intertwined, so that, in the name of community welfare,

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[22]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1923, 204-205; "Major Activities Committee Report" The Lion, 17-19; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1929, 253.

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members could reaffirm class status.[23]

A Diluted Progressivism

To reaffirm their claim to charitable leadership, members borrowed progressive techniques and sociological expertise. Despite the personal and spontaneous nature of their own charitable work, clubs welcomed the authority of social work experts in the community. They provided strong fiscal support for the YMCA, Salvation Army, and local relief and aid societies, even, in at least one case, "urging the County Commissioners to retain the County Welfare Officer, Red Cross Worker and County Agent."[24] Social science provided sanction for their own service projects; before several of the larger Rotary clubs undertook major youth work, they conducted a "survey of community needs" led by social work researchers. A general community survey by professionals was recommended by all three service federations in order that the club could

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[23] David MacLeod, Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920 (Madison, Wis., 1983) 202. James Leiby discusses the only partially successful attempt among social workers to shift philanthropy from a class to a community basis in A History of Social Welfare and Social Work in the United States (New York, 1978), 163-190.

[24] The Aberdeen, N.C. Kiwanis Club, listed in Kiwanis Activities, 1925, 81.

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understand and meet community needs efficiently.[25]

Social workers themselves were in the process of building up bureaucratic agencies in a drive for authority and professional prestige. Since clubmembers were also admirers of the "power of organization," they readily accepted the associated charity agencies and community chests which promised to coordinate charity activities and reduce the number of fund-raising requests. Clubs did not, perhaps, defer to social workers as often as these emerging professionals might have wished. As Roy Lubove points out, the social workers' goals of bureaucratic rationality and administrative efficiency soon submerged the concern for public welfare that clubs liked to display. In community chest drives, "an anonymous public supported an anonymous machinery to serve anonymous clients."[26] Given the rise of such impersonality, it is little wonder that clubmembers preferred in their own projects to witness the tears of

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[25]The Chicago club was the first to undertake such a survey, employing a young researcher out of the University of Chicago to take a "survey of the boy situation" in 1919.[on file at Rotary Headquarters.] Los Angeles and Salt Lake City surveys of "boys life" in their communities were undertaken in 1928. The Los Angeles survey was published under the title The City Boy and his Problems in 1928. Health surveys were sponsored by the Kingsport Tenn. Kiwanis Club and the Richmond Rotary Club in 1925. General community survey were recommended by the Lions "major activities report" and the Kiwanis "report on public affairs," op cit.

[26]Roy Lubove, The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930 (Cambridge, Ma., 1965), 155-182, quote from 172.

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gratitude on faces of the recipients.

However, like the sociologists and pre-war progressives, when clubmembers did approach the anonymous public, they did so in perfect faith of its good will. Merely to expose a community problem to what one Rotary official called "the pitiless glare of publicity" would, club members thought, generate action. Thus clubs reported as accomplishments the "calling of attention to the need of medical inspection in the schools" as did, for example the Elko, Nevada Lions club, or "the arousing of public sentiment in favor of a new hospital wing" as reported by the Marysville, Ohio, Kiwanis club. Rotary codified this policy in "Resolution 34" which defined clubs' "most successful" role as that of "propagandist." "A Rotary club discovers a need,...does not seek alone to remedy it but to awaken others to the necessity of the remedy, seeking to arouse the community to its responsibility."[27]

These ideas about the efficacy of publicity showed the impact of public relations techniques on voluntary association work--the feeling, as expressed by a Rotarian, that "publicity, propaganda and advertising are just as essential requisites in a social enterprise as in business or industrial organization."[28] Nevertheless, the parallels between club welfare work and progressivism suggest that

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[27]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1923, 204.

[28]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1925, 480.

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public relations was not the most important influence on club thinking. Progressive in their faith in civic idealism as a spur to action, clubmembers, like progressives, also counted on the weight of expertise to sway community opinion. Of course, a crucial distinction existed between the efforts of club service and those of pre-war progressives: clubmembers had no intentions of undertaking broad social reform. But the framework of progressivism lent itself for expressing social concern, particularly among the middle class constituency of the service club. Reinforced by objective expertise, supported by an eager public, clubmembers could feel confident of local good-will, and more certain that they occupied a solid position in the community and nation.

Boy's Work

While community boosting and charitable projects offered many satisfactions, perhaps no activity better combined the community, class, and altruistic motives that spurred club service than a third category of service: "boy's work." In thousands of projects involving youth education, the boy scouts, and recreation centers for young men, club members clearly revealed their preoccupation not only with the nation's youth, but also with civic and class

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unity. For clubs in the twenties, boy's work provided the least controversial and most fulfilling outlet for members' class and community anxieties.

Rotary was the first of the service clubs to recognize the potential of boy's work as a service activity, when the 1916 convention appointed a standing committee on "Work Among Boys." In doing so, they joined an organizational movement focused on youth that had been developing since the late nineteenth century.[29] Boy's work was not, at first, emphasized above other activities. But it quickly rose to prominence, given impetus by the war, which focused attention on young men as representative Americans, and boys as "men in the making." As the twenties proceeded, Rotarians devoted more and more of their time to what they termed "the boy problem." "A neglected boyhood means a neglected America in the days of the future" warned Rotary director Raymond Kneoppel in an inter-club publication, "The Boy." Citing crime statistics--"there is more than one chance in fifty that the boy will be arrested this year"--he urged clubs to "help give the boy the right

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[29] Joseph Kett's book Rites of Passage (New York, 1977) is the essential reference on "the invention of the adolescent" by organizations such as the YMCA and Boy Scouts. David Macleod's exhaustive study, Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA and their Forerunners 1880-1920 (Madison, Wis, 1983) deepens Kett's insights.

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environment."[30] Rotarian William Butcher also felt it was necessary "to do some work in spending a dollar for the boy in the "teen" age, when it will do some good, rather than spending a hundred dollars on damaged goods when it is too late."

Yet future criminality was not the only concern. Butcher, like other Rotarian boy's work advocates, hoped to meliorate the present plight of the boy. "The population knows very little about the boy....how many know anything about the psychology of the boy? How many know anything about the boy's reactions toward his elders? How many know anything about the temptations and conditions which he confronts in our modern civilization?"[31]

Butcher thought the solution lay in "boy's week," a project first started in 1920 by the New York City Rotary in cooperation with other civic bodies. For a week, boys were made the center of attention with ceremonies, newspaper articles, sermons and speeches. Boys were given tours of business and industry, and a "boy mayor" was designated. The week culminated in a "boy's loyalty parade" down Fifth Avenue.[32] This much publicized event

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[30]Raymond J. Kneoppel, editorial in The Boy 1, (April, 1923) (on file at Rotary Headquarters.)

[31]William Butcher, "Boy's Week International," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1925, 475-481.

[32] Detailed descriptions of New York's boy's week appear in The Rotarian 20, (Nov. 1920), and in the New York City Club file at Rotary Headquarters.

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did a great deal to stimulate interest in boy's work throughout the organization. Boy's week became the centerpiece for a boy's work program that included the building of recreational facilities, vocational guidance, and support for the YMCA and the Boy Scouts. Rotary developed their boy's work program so thoroughly along these lines that the 1922 Kiwanis Executive Committee on Public Affairs was left feeling "preempted." Still anxious to do youth work, the committee opted for "underprivileged children's work" under the slogan "A Square Deal for the Child." Despite this attempt at a different emphasis to their youth activities, Kiwanis on the local level also eventually directed many of their efforts toward the boy.[33] The Lions, meanwhile, did not think it necessary to differentiate their program from Rotary's, and even followed the plan of a "boy's week." All three of the service federations conceived their role in boys work as that defined by the Rotarian "Manual of Procedure"--"to furnish leadership in awakening the community to a realization of that community's duty and obligation to boys."[34]

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[33] "Report of the Executive Committee on Public Affairs," Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1922 Convention, 55. Kiwanis Activities 1925 shows approximately 800 activities under the category "handicapped children" but nearly twice that in recreation, vocational guidance, boy's work, Boy Scouts and YMCA categories.

[34] "Manual of Procedure for Rotarians," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1921, 498.

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Given their emphasis on the boy "problem" one would expect a series of activities designed to reform the "problem boy." Several clubs did work with the juvenile court, counseling and advising its wards. The Lancaster Rotary club funded a detention home to prevent underage boys from being sent to jail, a venture they called a "house of affection and not of correction."[35] But work with the delinquent was rare. In 1928, the Kiwanis Committee on Public Service recommended that care be taken in children selected for personal service work. "Religious affiliations, racial and national characteristics should be taken into consideration. The bad boy...should usually be avoided--special knowledge is required."[36] The clubmembers appeared less concerned with controlling the behavior of lower-class or criminal boys than with ensuring the proper development of boys within their own social class.

Central to that development was, of course, formal education. In general, clubs were solidly behind the school system, eager to support bond issues for new schools and even, as in the case of the Brockton, Mass. Kiwanis club, to "give serious thought to raising teachers salaries."[37] Clubmembers hoped to encourage academic endeavor by

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[35]Lancaster Rotary Club, History of the Lancaster Rotary Club, (Lancaster, Pa., 1935) 27.

[36]Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1928, 133.

[37]Report to The Kiwanis Magazine 9 (Jan., 1924): 29.

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offering a range of prizes and scholarships, and holding essay and oratory contests. Nevertheless, they also had a sense that formal education as presently constituted was inadequate; that it did not allow the boy to develop properly. "Many parents, employees, and teachers still misunderstand boys and fail to plan for their development along the lines which have been approved by men who have given their lives to studying and working with boys."[38]

Clubmembers arrived at these conclusions as a result of the influence of boy's work "experts," whose views had begun circulating prior to the war. Though their pioneering studies were behind them, boy's work theorists such a J. Adams Puffer, Joseph Lee, and William Forbush all spoke before service clubs in the twenties, and their ideas provided the controlling assumptions for most club endeavors. These three men were influenced by the "recapitulationist" psychology of G. Stanley Hall, which saw the development of youth as a progressive reliving of man's evolutionary history. To ensure proper maturation, the boy had to be allowed to live through each phase, before finally becoming "socialized."

Boy's workers, attempting to establish their efforts on a scientific basis, found this psychology particularly suitable. It placed the boy's development in a universal,

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[38] "Manual of Procedure for Rotarians" Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1921, 498.; "Boyhood's Challenge for 1922," The Rotarian 20 (Jan. 1922): 5-8.

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psychological framework rather than stressing class or ethnic peculiarities.[39] Clubmembers were similarly attracted to this psychology; it allowed them to speak of "the boy problem" as a community-wide difficulty, affecting even the middle-class, apparently well adjusted boys with which they preferred to work. A Kiwanian, speaking at the end of the twenties, summarized the clubs' boy's work psychology. "Boys need help before their personality reaches a crisis...Where our young manhood finds no adequate outlet for their strongest native capacities and the outlet for their special abilities blocked they are thwarted. They become neurotic, apathetic or savagely rebellious." To combat this damaging frustration in a boy, clubmembers had to "function" in a "positive" way "allowing each new generation to acquire the full heritage of our social experience...by this service, security and solidarity will be part of their social consciousness."[40]

"Vocational guidance" provided by clubmembers visiting schools and speaking on their professions, was one part of this service. Enlightening boys with their business and

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[39] For a discussion of the ideas of these men see Kett, Rites of Passage, 215-228; Macleod, Building Character in the American Boy, 97-110; and Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 246-251. J. Adams Puffer wrote an article for The Lion in 1924, in which he was introduced as a "lecturer to service club on boy's work." See "Chumming with Boys" (Nov., 1924):8.

[40] C. P. Segaro, "Vocational Guidance," Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1929, 137-145.

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professional experience, clubmembers could provide a corrective to an aimless schooling. "We have played grab-box with our children's futures long enough," thundered an Oklahoma Rotarian. "It is time for the schools to face the problem squarely. The aim of education should be to assist a child to discover that business or profession for which he is best fitted."[41]

However, though a number of clubs conducted vocational guidance programs, the preponderance of club projects focused on the leisure activities of boys. This fitted with the emphasis of recapitulationist psychology, for play was a crucial area of development, where the boy gave outlet to his "social instincts." The emphasis also revealed the complex of anxieties disturbing the club members as fathers. Tracing the changes in middle-class child-rearing, Daniel Rodgers notes that the Victorian emphasis on discipline and work gave way in the late nineteenth century to an encouragement of spontaneity and play, as fears of "over-systemization" partially overcame older concerns for character development. On the other hand, by the early twentieth century, still another set of worries concerning the breakdown of social unity influenced parents' attempts

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[41]Herbert R. Bruner, "Square Pegs and Round Holes," The Rotarian 22 (April, 1923): 192-194.

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to make boys models of cooperation and "team spirit."[42]

Club rhetoric reveals all these concerns, for club members felt that theirs was, as a title of an article in The Rotarian put it, "A Dangerous Age for Fathers." This article advised the Rotarian father to "put aside the austerity and remoteness of fatherhood." He had to become a "pal" to his son, and reach "the free meeting ground of mutual interests and understanding." Otherwise, "rebuffed too many times, the boy will never seek friendship there again."[43] While the father had to "chum with the boys", an article in The Lion argued for the corollary of such closeness: a father had to be frank with his son, speak to him "man to man," for a man without an understanding with his son "will never have the right attitude toward boys of his community."[44] While it is uncertain how many clubmembers thus attempted to approach fatherhood through friendship, it does seem clear that in their boy's work activities, clubmembers sought to breach the distance between child and adult.

Thus, even in models of fatherhood was evidence of a

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[42]Daniel T. Rodgers, "Socializing Middle-Class Children: Institutions, Fables, and Work Values in Nineteenth Century America," in N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, eds., Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective (Urbana, Ill., 1985), 119-135.

[43]P. H. Higley, "Dangerous Age for Fathers," The Rotarian 28, (Jan, 1926): 18-19.

[44]"Lions and the Boy Problem" The Lion 11 (November, 1928): 20-22.

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cooperational ethic, deemphasizing conflict between generations, and stressing consciousness of community obligation. Clubs could not interfere with the raising of children, but many clubmembers felt, as did the president of the Charlotte, N.C. Rotary club, that "the boy's play, far more than his eating or sleeping, concerns the neighborhood and becomes a community responsibility."[45] Clubs could help fulfill this responsibility by providing proper facilities--such as a well-designed camp, playground, or school athletic fields. They did so in abundance; in 1925 all three federations reported building, funding, or sponsoring over 1000 camps, playgrounds, swimming pools, and ice skating rinks.[46]

Yet clubmembers also accepted the youth workers' contentions that unsupervised play was of little value to the correct development of the boy. They therefore devoted much time and financial support to those clubs, camps, and adult-organized agencies--in particular the YMCA and Boy Scouts--which directed boy's instincts toward proper outlets. Clubs in the larger cities supported "fresh-air camps," which allowed city youth to "escape to nature" or else they sponsored independent boy's clubs or the YMCA.

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[45]Earle Draper "Solving the Playground Problem," The Rotarian 20, (Jan, 1922): 19.

[46] Figure based on the number of projects compiled in Kiwanis Activities for 1925 added to those reported monthly to The Lion and The Rotarian.

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In the smaller cities and towns, club support went almost entirely to the Boy Scouts, for which they provided both administration and financial support. By the mid-twenties, Rotary had organized more than half the supervisory scouting councils in the United States, and was an indispensible aid in fund-raising.[47] Kiwanis, which prefaced its report on club service to Boy Scouts by saying "Kiwanis clubs have concentrated their services on behalf of those boys which could properly be classified as under-privileged, rather on those boys who enjoy normal advantages....since it is the latter type which makes up Boy Scout troops, the list of activities is not as comprehensive," then proceeded to list nearly 400 examples of organization and support, only slightly less comprehensive than the approximately 700 activities for the underprivileged.[48] This level of activity lends support to David Macleod's argument that it was their administrators' success in appealing to the organizational, class, and community sympathies of local businessmen, rather than in meeting the desires of boys themselves, that enabled the Boy Scouts and YMCA to thrive.

Of particular appeal to these businessmen was the scout troops identification with community. Macleod argues that community-defensiveness, based on fears of urban corruption

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[47]Macleod, Building Character in the American Boy, 203.

[48]Kiwanis Activities for 1925, 65.

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reaching town boys, partly accounts for the predominance of scout troops in small towns--40% of the troops were in towns of under 25,000 in population, compared with 25% of the population.[49] A different set of community concerns is reflected in the grumbling of a Lion in Bordentown N.J., who felt in their Boy Scout efforts, "we did not receive value for funds raised locally." He warned against allowing a church to sponsor a troop, since "the community, not a particular church, should get the benefit of the capable leaders that will serve as scoutmasters." A community organization, "such as the Lions" should sponsor the troop.[50]

Identification with community was also central in the small town club's support of high school athletic teams. Holding a lunch meeting with the team and coach present was an obligatory part of the club's booster function, particularly when the team was victorious. Even with a losing team, the club might score triumphs like that of the Elgin, Ill. Rotary club in 1922. It invited the losing high

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[49] MacLeod thinks community concerns masked class anxiety. Because the middle class was more solidly in control in smaller communities, he argues, they identified the fate of their class with that of their community; thus "middle-class defensiveness was transmuted into community defensiveness." The Boy Scouts and YMCA were an attempt to protect the small town boy from "urban contagion" and also prepare him for later contact with the city. Building Character in the American Boy, 224-229.

[50] quoted in Francis Hazleton Williams, "Good Scouts," The Lion 10, (November, 1927): 12.

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school team to lunch, explained to them the principles of Rotary, compared "unselfish service, loyalty, and cooperation" with "team-work so vital on the football field" and then cheered them on to victory in a big intersectional game, a win "due to the hearty cooperation of the whole city."[51]

This intensive commitment to boys' activities, viewing the success of a Scout troop as protection against urban corruption, and victory over a rival football team as representative of Rotary principles, suggests how potent the amalgamation of community, class, and fatherly concerns could be. Yet the underlying goal of the service ethic, to protect community and class position, could not be fully achieved. Young men continued to migrate to cities; the expanding metropolis continued to swallow up small towns, and the depression would soon overwhelm local club welfare efforts. Even the achievements of organization seemed limited; already, in the later twenties, the Lynds and other sociologists were hearing complaints of "over-organization" and mutterings of the divisiveness of club membership.[52]

However, even as clubs suffered the brickbats of an

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[51] Report in The Rotarian 22, (Jan., 1923): 49.

[52] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (New York, 1929), 272-280; Albert Blumenthal, Small Town Stuff (Chicago, 1932), 264-271.

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articulate group of social critics for their "hypocritical" talk of service, and witnessed the recurring inadequacies of their efforts in defense of class and community, there appeared to be no flagging in the number of service projects they eagerly adopted. Still clinging to the booster's optimism, members vowed, in the words of Rotary founder Paul Harris, to be "more neighborly, friendly, and kindly than we have ever been before."[53] With enough civic and class awareness to arouse their sense of responsibility to the general welfare, and an organization strong enough to weather the impending collapse of economic fortunes, clubmembers continued to work at smoothing over impediments to civic spirit and community development.

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[53]Paul Harris, "Rotary is Thirty Years Old" The Rotarian 46 (Feb., 1935): 5.

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CHAPTER 4

THE CLUBS AND THE CRITICS

Of all the mythic figures of the twenties--the flapper, the flag-pole sitter, the gin-runner, and the silent picture star--none remains more vivid than a far from exotic literary creation, the businessman George F. Babbitt. In part because Lewis's caricature was so comprehensive and authentic, in part because "babbittry" still seems endemic to American culture, the plump businessman's characteristics are well known: materialism, hypocrisy, and conformity. In the novel, one aspect of Babbitt's life seems to encapsulate all these traits. Babbitt, to the great chagrin of Rotarians, Kiwanians, and Lions, is a service club member.

The publication of Babbitt in 1922 was just the beginning of a stream of ridicule and criticism directed toward the clubs by an array of those whom members called "intellectuals." To the smart set of the twenties, the terms "Rotarian" or "Kiwanian" became synonymous with Babbitt and with Mencken's "typical Americano"--"well-fed, well-dressed, complacent, and cocksure, he yet remains

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almost destitute of ideas."[1]

The general impression has been that service clubs, if not oblivious to the ridicule, were defenseless against it.[2] Actually, the clubs were not only keenly aware of the critics, they also fought back. Alternately defensive, indignant, or forgiving, club spokesmen responded to attacks upon their character with vigorous prose and logical argument, although in the war of words club spokesmen were clearly outclassed by a formidable lineup that included, in addition to Lewis and Mencken, Dorothy Parker, Bruce Bliven, Clarence Darrow, Gilbert Seldes, and G.K. Chesterton, to name a few. To club member and critic alike, the battle lines seemed clearly drawn; one side consisted of "literary radicals," the other of the "booboisie."

In a sense, the controversy between clubs and critics, or more generally, the middle-class's philistines and its high-brows, is an old story. Even during the decade, culturally-aware Americans understood the disillusionment and the rebellion of the intellectual as one of the central events of the period, an interpretation Frederick Lewis

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[1]H. L. Mencken, Review of Middletown, The American Mercury 16 (March, 1929): 379.

[2]A notable exception is an article by Thomas S. Hines, "Echoes from `Zenith:' Reactions of American Businessmen to Babbitt" Business History Review 41, (Summer, 1967): 123-140, which catalogues the remarkable extent of the reaction to Babbitt among American businessmen.

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Allen preserved for posterity in his best-selling Only Yesterday.[3] As historical distance from the twenties increases, this rebellion seems of lesser importance; the decade's kaleidoscopic images have multiplied, and the often tragic struggles of blacks, women, farmers, workers and fundamentalists for cultural legitimacy seem more heroic. Still, this clash between best-selling writers and prosperous businessmen can reveal a great deal about the period. Even while they have drawn attention to the multitude of voices that deserve a hearing, historians have continued to stress the cultural conflicts that took place. Henry May's observation, in an essay on the twenties, that "the way to understand our recent cultural history is to understand why and how its exponents fail to agree" can justify reexamination of a well-known conflict, just as it does focusing on the forgotten.[4] Cultural fragmentation still seems a key to understanding the twenties.

All the conflicts of the period, as May has pointed out, have their roots in earlier decades. Its technological changes, cultural discoveries, and changing morals can all be traced to the turn of the century, if not

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[3]For a recent discussion of Allen, see David M. Kennedy, "Revisiting Frederick Lewis Allen's Only Yesterday," Reviews in American History 14 (June, 1986): 309-314.

[4]Henry May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," in Ideas, Faiths, and Feelings: Essays on American Intellectual and Religious History, 1952-1982 (New York, 1983), 22-45.

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before. Yet not until post-World War I America did the changes hit the majority of Americans with full force. Mechanization and the increased availability of new technology, the rapid spread of knowledge through expanded networks of communication, new scientific techniques and theories; these, as Warren Susman has convincingly argued, produced a "crisis in the world view" of many Americans and made them increasingly self-conscious about themselves and their group identities.[5] This self-consciousness is quite evident in the exchanges between club members and their critics, as it is in other clashes of the period, and may have contributed to an exaggerated sense of cultural disjunction.

In fact, despite the vehemence which characterized this cultural argument, the essential concerns of the two groups were quite similar. Both the clubs and their critics were cognizant of powerful new forces arising from corporate capitalism. The critics of American culture, who generally shared the social origins of their adversaries, expressed less a complete alienation from the society as a whole than from the social products of this new capitalism. The critics directed their satiric invective at an increased middle-class conformity and materialism, which to their eyes departed from the American tradition of individual

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[5]Warren Susman, "Culture and Civilization: The 1920's," in Culture and History (New York, 1983), 22-45.

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initiative and organic community.

Naturally, club members, as businessmen, expressed fewer reservations about the by-products of American commercialism. But their rhetoric and service activities frequently display the same concerns about the direction of corporate transformation. The local retailers, independent professionals, and small manufacturers who joined the clubs had little stake in a developing system which threatened their autonomy and prestige. Convinced that their clubs helped compensate for ebbing community spirit, and aided in restoring the possibilities for individual achievement, members at times appeared baffled by critic's attacks.

The story of this particular cultural schism, then, is not so much one of intellectuals' alienation from an unappreciative American culture. Nor does a portrait emerge of an anti-intellectual and materialistic business class. Instead, the basis of the conflict between clubs and critics lies in the different ways they chose to confront the same twentieth century problem: how to preserve a sense of individual significance in mass society.

The Debunkers

Criticism of business before the war had been deadly

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serious in tone, as it attacked corruption and price-fixing, shoddy consumer goods, and employee exploitation. Although the small businessmen who joined Rotary clubs had not been the direct target of these attacks, still they saw their cooperative effort in service clubs as one answer to public concerns about the irresponsibility of unrestrained competitive enterprise. During the war, when a government supervised by progressive intellectuals directed business activity and encouraged local voluntarism, clubs felt increasingly confident of their value to American society. This confidence increased as new members flooded into the clubs immediately following the armistice. American business, the clubs felt, was showing new concerns for ethics, for social improvement, for "service."

At the same time, however, the war brought disillusionment to those hoping for fundamental social and economic reforms. To one group of discontented--middle-class and well-educated--attacks aimed at reforming America's business system itself seemed ineffectual or irrelevant. As America grew increasingly prosperous and politically conservative, it appeared to this group that the country had developed an entire culture centered on the practice of business. They gave vent to their dissatisfaction in cynical, debunking critiques that

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differed vastly in tone from the earnest pre-war reformers, not condemning the practice of business so much as ridiculing the manifestations of the new business culture. The burgeoning numbers of complacent club members thus presented a prime target.

Service clubs were seen as the embodiment of a creeping philistinism in a prosperous business society. Critics found no evidence in businessman's thinking of an appreciation of life apart from its monetary worth. They agreed with Harold Laski in The New Republic, that "the American businessman has no real sense of impalpable values. He contents himself with material well-being." With no other values than business, middle class Americans were small-minded and mean-spirited. Stripped of true religion, they worshiped what Virgil Jordon called the "business psychle." "The mendicant friars of Fra Roger [financier Babson] preach the new gospel on the highways and by-ways among the Kiwanis and Rotarians." Critics understood that hypocrisy riddled the ethical precepts of this new religion. French observer Andre Siegfried expressed the sentiments of American critics when he called service the "doctrine of an optimistic pharisee trying to reconcile success with justice."[6] The clubs seemingly

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[6]Andre Siegfried, America Comes of Age (New York, 1927): 141; Virgil Jordon, "The Business Psychle," The Freeman 8, (Dec. 5, 1923): 298-300; Harold J. Laski, "The American Scene," The New Republic 53 (Jan. 19, 1928): 16-17.

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callous optimism was also too much for Clarence Darrow, who "lashed" club businessmen in a 1924 speech cited in The Rotarian:

> They know life is worthwhile, and the reason they know it is because they can get money. You will find optimists in the Rotary club...you will find them in the Lions club: here they roar about money. You will find them in the Kiwanis club, and wherever there are gathered together a body of 100 percent Americans, you will find them boasting and lying and stealing.[7]

But of equal concern to detractors of American business culture as the injustice of its prosperity was the conformity which it promoted and enforced among its supporters. Gilbert Seldes was one of many who downplayed the dastardly behavior suggested by Darrow's accusation. "These boy scouts of business do a dirty trick a day if they can get away with it, but it is a small trick...in the aggregate they provide an army of contented cows." At the same time that they slavishly worshiped the god of mammon, the clubs discouraged dissent in their communities. Writing in Harper's in 1925, Duncan Aikman went so far as to suggest that the clubs were harbingers of an American fascism, displaying a "home-town mind" that allowed no deviance from the chamber of commerce line. Less alarmed but still harshly critical, Bruce Bliven blasted the clubs in a Scribner's article, for "standing in the way of genuine municipal progress" by "enforcing a single

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[7]Quoted in Arthur Hobbes, "Is There Anything Wrong With Rotary?," The Rotarian 27 (November, 1925): 50.

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attitude of mind." So commonplace was the notion that clubs were engines of conformity that Ruth Sapin could predict for her son, "Babbitt Jr." who "cares not a whoop for being an individual," a future Rotary presidency.[8]

Behind all these images loomed not only Lewis's specific caricature of an individual, but also the general "revolt from the village" which he represented and explored. Because of their heavy concentration in small midwestern towns, the clubs were easily associated with these towns as symbols of a monotony and provincialism and crushers of individual aspiration.[9] Along with their geographic associations, the clubs embodied several characteristics in the new business society that critics found antipathetical to cultural achievement. The clubs, they felt, represented the extension of business values into everyday life, and a concomitant loss of spiritual awareness. The clubs stressed moral uplift and emotional solidarity and were easy dupes for the latest fad. All these activities devalued individual creativity and serious thought, preventing any appreciation for the truly good and

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[8]Gilbert Seldes, "Service," The New Republic 43 (July 15, 1925): 207; Duncan Aikman, "American Fascism," Harper's Magazine (April, 1925): 514-519; Bruce Bliven, "The Babbitt in his Warren," Scribner's Magazine (December, 1928): 899-901; Ruth Sapin, "Babbitt, Jr.," New Republic 48 (Sept. 8, 1925): 68-69.

[9]For a perceptive discussion of the "midwest as metaphor" see Frederick J. Hoffman, The Twenties (New York, 1949), 327-335.

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beautiful. With his aesthetics determined by cash value and his opinions handed him by the crowd, the clubmember in caricature would not know an original work of art if it came up to him, slapped him on the back, and called him by his first name.

The Clubs' Response

Despite such contempt, the clubs felt that most citizens of the community regarded their presence as a blessing. They could find satisfaction in the expressions of gratitude from recipients of service, while local papers, as concerned with boosting their town as were the clubs, gave the members a generally favorable press. Even the New York Times placed its stamp of editorial approval on a group of men who were

> longheaded and yet sometimes a little naive, eager, bustling, gregarious, hopeful and free-handed...a characteristic expression of the composite, migratory, trustful, and boyish nation of their origin.[10]

Later, as the debunking tide rose, club members could find plenty of editorial support, both among major newspapers and magazines such as Liberty, The Saturday Evening Post, and The World's Work. A World's Work article, written by novelist Booth Tarkington near the end

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[10]Editorial, New York Times (June 19, 1923): 18.

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of the decade, was characteristic of the defenders. Businessmen, argued Tarkington, supply the material basis of civilization, but they also endow the great cultural institutions. Rotarians and their service were the exemplars of business's "incalculable" aid to progress, and Tarkington ended the article by recalling a Christmas day on which he witnessed Rotarians delivering packages to the needy in horrible weather.[11]

Club spokesmen were quick to cite this article, as they did all other published praise. Yet club members were equally sensitive to their attackers and returned time and again to the critics. Club magazines carried articles analyzing the critics' motives; convention speeches frequently referred to them; the Muncie, Ind. Rotary Club even devoted a meeting to a discussion of Babbitt and other "sharp criticisms" of service clubs to see "what could be done if caustic comment was deserved, and what might be done to correct wrong impressions."[12] Club members attempted to respond to charges of conformity by arguing that they promoted a responsible individualism. "It is not the group activity of which "Rotary is most proud," said club director Raymond Kneoppel in Scribner's. "Rotary

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[11]Booth Tarkington, "Rotarian and Sophisticate," The World's Work (January, 1929): 41-44.

[12]Reported to The Rotarian 26, (June, 1925). For a cataloguing of club responses, see Thomas Hines, "Echoes from Zenith."

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stands for the development of the individual." In a thoughtful Rotarian article discussing the critics' charges, Arthur Hobbes echoed these sentiments, calling for the individual Rotarian to "conduct himself by the rule of reason--liberal and untrammeled--rather than by the rule of the crowd...Rotary Clubs can well see to it that their influences encourage the development of real merit, skill, genius, and educational ambition." Hobbes's article was illustrated by a cartoon showing an adult "average member" looking out a window puzzled at a hive of angry bees, labeled "critics," while a shamed-faced boy holding a stick with the tag "irresponsible member," hid behind the door. "I wonder what stirred them up?" reads the caption. Responses such as these, reasonable and aware, granted to a surprising degree the validity of the critics' charges, while attempting to disprove by counter-example the image of unthinking conformity.[13]

"Pie in the Face" Satire

Particularly disturbing, however, were those caricatures which could not be combatted by reason, and which led to the discouraging sensation that educated men

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[13]Raymond Kneoppel, "A Member Replies," Scribner's Monthly (December, 1928): 954; Arthur Hobbes, "Is There Anything Wrong with Rotary?," 50-53.

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held them in contempt. "We all have been disturbed and chagrined at a spreading attitude of derision," wrote Will Garrity in The Rotarian in 1926. "Men who like to pose as leaders and educators of public opinion, men who assume a liberal and forward looking attitude, men who preach the gospel of culture for culture's sake, have been extremely critical of Rotarians."[14]

Tarkington had written partly because he felt that the service club members had become a "satirist's joke." "The debunking writers have ridden their joke so hard it has become popular...until now it has almost the prevalence once possessed by the stock plumber joke and the stock mother-in-law joke." Since clubs included in their ranks educators, professionals, and businessmen who liked to think of themselves as liberal and forward looking, many club members found it galling to be, in Tarkington's words, "the chief figure of fun for the critical 'intelligentzia.'"

None of the purveyors of what The Rotarian called "literary bunk" bothered to take the clubs' service achievements seriously. Instead, as an editorial complained, they focused on "the weekly luncheon meeting with its friendly camaraderie."[15] William Feather was one

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[14]Will Garrity, "Menckenitis," The Rotarian 28, (March, 1926): 8-9.

[15]Editorial in The Rotarian 27 (October, 1925), 26.

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of those who lampooned the foolishness of the weekly meetings--"some hold beauty contests among their members, requiring the candidates to do aesthetic dances and pose as the 'dying bootlegger'...a favorite form of recreation is for each member to lie on his back and kick a basketball with his feet. At Thanksgiving and Christmas each members brings a newsboy or an orphan to the meeting for a big feed."[16]

What made satire like this so frustrating to club members was that they could not absolutely refute it. Local clubs did slap backs, hold beauty contests, kick basketballs, and sponsor newsboy feeds. Obviously these occurrences did not constitute the whole of club life. "One might as well try to give a true picture of the national congress and its position in American affairs by reporting the amusement of senators over a story in the lobby before they take part in an important session," wrote the infuriated editor of The Kiwanis Magazine.[17] In response, the clubs made a conscious effort to limit publicity of their meetings and promote instead their service activities. Even that effort brought Bruce Bliven's satiric sketch of "the heart-rending picture," of "this cowed band leaving the luncheon room, peeking around

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[16]William Feather, "The Sire of Kiwanis," The American Mercury 1 (March, 1924): 355.

[17]Editorial in The Kiwanian 9 (February, 1924): 67.

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apprehensively to see whether Red Lewis be not lurking behind each onyx pillar, as they scuttle back to their offices, to sink back blissfully under the soporific "Do it Now" mottoes."[18]

Short of changing their mode of expression, clubs could do little to combat the caricatures. Satirists delighted in the clubs because of the contrast between the self-conscious informality and boyish stunts that dominated club conclaves and the lofty rhetoric members used proclaiming their noble purposes. As articles such as Hobbes's in The Rotarian showed, even some of the staunchest defenders conceded that the absurdities of club behavior were fair game.[19] The Handbook of Entertainment for Rotary Clubs, for example, suggests such "rich stunts" as dressing initiates in diapers, having a member pretend to be a "woman speaker from Washington," and serving "fake

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[18]Bruce Bliven, "Lower 9, Car 26," The New Republic 41 (June 10, 1925): 72. A memo from the international president to club secretaries published in the Weekly Letter (December 8, 1925) suggested "dignity" in club expression because of "critics on the watch for an occasion to ridicule Rotary." Calls for changes in member behavior, and an increased focus on service, were made throughout the twenties in articles and convention speeches. Typical was the editorial in The Kiwanis Magazine 9 (May, 1924): 29 "How to Get Good Publicity and Avoid Bad" and the report of the publicity committee at the following year's Kiwanis convention, Proceedings, 10th Annual Convention, Atlanta, Ga., 1925, 59-63.

[19]Hines cites other passages from The Rotarian that "rival even the choicest passages in Lewis' novel." "Echoes from Zenith," 136-137.

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fritters--pieces of cork camouflaged with a little dough and sauce." Juxtapose this with the pomposity of Rotary Founder Harris's description of the movement's origins:

> If one standing on a promontory of time could have donned his metaphysical spectacles revealing thoughts and deeds standing out in the affairs of men, he would have observed a memorable struggle for existence--the persistent and irresistible "Will to be" of an ideal, which eventually found expression in Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions clubs and a dozen kindred organizations.

Contrasts such as these created what amounted to ready-made caricature.[20]

Double-Barreled Ridicule

Lewis was perhaps the most successful in taking advantage of the opportunities for caricature presented by the clubs' rhetorical overreaching. Yet if measured by hostile reaction from the clubs, H.L. Mencken, editor of "that green-covered magazine," was not far behind. Hunting over the same debunking ground, Mencken and Lewis fired an overwhelming barrage of ridicule and satire at even trivial club lapses in taste and expression. Both were particularly sensitive to language, and were able to capture precisely those utterances which made club members

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[20]Handbook of Entertainment for Rotary Clubs (Chicago, Ill., 1919); Paul Harris, This Rotarian Age (New York, 1935), 35.

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appear most ridiculous. Lewis had an extraordinary talent for mimicry, and the monologue of his post-Babbitt caricature, "The Man Who Knew Coolidge" bears a remarkable resemblance to the convention discourse of a certain kind of club member. Here is the man who knew Coolidge, Lowell Schmaltz:

> Why say, just this past year our Zenith Kiwanians have put up no less than two hundred and sixty three highway markers within forty miles of Zenith and we gave the kids at an orphan asylum a dandy auto ride and free feed. And believe me, it was one fine ad for the Kiwanians, because we took the kids out in trucks, and each had on it a great big red sign "Free outing for the unfortunate kiddies, provided free by the Zenith Kiwanis Club.

And here is William Winkler, a real life Kiwanian from Hobart, Oklahoma:

> See now, we are going to build a lake for the community, and we are going to name it Kiwanis Lake; right in the cement we are going to put Kiwanis. But we haven't got enough money to pay for it. But you see, the thing to do is just put a little good business sense into a Kiwanis club, get a little bit of credit, and let the whole town or community pay for it.[21]

For his part, Mencken dispensed with imitation, and reproduced actual club material. Club members made up a

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[21]Sinclair Lewis, "The Man Who Knew Coolidge," The American Mercury 13 (Jan., 1928), 20; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 11th Intl. Convention, Memphis, 1927, 496. Lewis, it should be said, generally underestimated the amount of intelligent speechmaking that went on at club conventions, although the Duluth, Minnesota Lions club in 1964 reportedly responded favorably to a verbatim reading of a speech of Babbitt's before the Zenith Real Estate board. David G. Pugh, "Babbittry and Baudelaire," in Warren French, ed., The Twenties, Poetry, Fiction, Drama (Deland, Fla., 1975), 90.

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significant portion of his monthly catalogue of public folly, the section of quotes and excerpts Mencken entitled "Americana." Newspaper headlines provided him with "George H. Shaw lauds Christ in Rotary speech," and a record of "red-blooded he-men Kiwanians" seeking "recreation from the burdens of service" by holding balloon busting contests. The club members themselves gave him the chance to quote verbatim such statements as "Tolstoy was an unconscious Kiwanian;" "The first president of Lions International was Jesus Christ. I quote you from the Bible: He was the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and "Had there been a Kiwanis club in Civil War days that great conflict would have been avoided."

Behind these quotes and vignettes was the image of an uncultivated, self-satisfied businessman--a member of "the booboisie," straining for profound expression, a "go-getter," in the words of Zenith Booster club member Chum Frink, hustling to "Capitalize Culture." Simply by drawing attention to members' fatuous statements, Mencken and Lewis exposed to ridicule not only the clubs, but all the pompousity, sentimentality, and materialism which blighted middle-class American culture. "All organizations, in America, seem to draw rhetoricians," Mencken wrote to a Rotarian asking him what was wrong with the club and how to

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improve it. "What is to be done about it, I don't know."[22] In "Americana" Mencken cited politicians as often as club members, using their platitudes to limn their true character--blowhards spouting pretentious nonsense. An important part of his brief against the clubs (and politicians) was that they dishonestly misused language to conceal from themselves and others their true purposes: "Whenever a group of real estaters get together and sob for service, somebody's going to be done."

Both Mencken and Lewis took a contrary joy in what Mencken called the "commonwealth of morons," and relished confronting the philistines with their ignorance. Speaking in front of the Rotary Club of Kansas City, Lewis first imitated the types of post-luncheon speakers that Rotarians invited--"the effeminate highbrow" the "rambling journalist," and the "he-man talking he-language." Then he launched his attack in earnest, contrasting boosterism with a genuine appreciation for culture. "Should you be surprised if the man from Stratford on Avon came to Kansas City not because of your beautiful parks and boulevards, but because one Theodore Drieser thought Kansas City important enough to lay a book there. When you go through London, do you think much about its exporting or importing business or about the characters of Dickens walking through

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[22]Quoted in Edward Silberstein, "Rotary, from the Outside," The Rotarian, 28 (Jan., 1926): 33.

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the streets?"[23]

Comparing Critiques

The Kansas City Rotarians were rightfully annoyed at such condescension, and to suggest that Lewis was more sympathetic toward the values of service clubs than Mencken would have brought no consolation. There seemed no distinction between the contempt both men shared for service clubs and boosterism.[24] Yet a close reading of the two critics reveals Mencken's rejection of service club culture to be far more complete. Lewis attacked the commercial capitalism that he took the clubs to represent, but was attracted to the unaffected, egalitarian fellowship that club members themselves hoped to foster. Mencken, however, saw the clubs as a symptom of chronic ailments afflicting American democratic life. He revealed no ambivalence in his contempt for democratic society.

In a thoughtful analysis of Mencken's social criticism, George Douglas has argued that Mencken harkened to a nineteenth century individualism that stressed

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[23]Quoted in Arthur Melville, "Heads or Tails" The Rotarian 28 (April, 1926): 23.

[24]Historians and literary critics have also ignored the important distinction between the thought of the two men. see for example, the otherwise excellent study by Edward Martin, H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers (Athens, Ga., 1984).

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independence, work, and responsibility. Mencken criticized democracy in a way that recalls nineteenth century thinkers James Fenimore Cooper, Charles Dana, and Henry Adams. Even had the clubs not made public statements Mencken regarded as "utterly idiotic" they would still have experienced his bombastic derision, because of the way they illustrated the foolishness of democratic man.[25]

In his essays on the clubs and elsewhere, Mencken follows a train of thought reminiscent of Tocqueville's observation on "the restlessness of Americans in a democracy." Believing in equality, American's attempt to subvert it, by elevating their own position and pulling others down. The result of this envy and ambition was a dissatisfaction with the commonplace, a turning away from down-to-earth realities to grandiose illusions, among them that "soaring humorless Vision that is the essence of Rotary." Why did a businessman join a service club? To Mencken, the answer was clear: the clubs were misguided attempts to achieve dignity, to convince members they were really "citizens of mark." The American businessman

> needs something more than is to be got out of blowing spitballs and playing golf. So he searches

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[25]George Douglas, H.L. Mencken, Critic of American Life (Hamden, Conn., 1978). Douglas s interpretation is particularly convincing when explaining why Mencken quickly fell from favor when the intellectual mood changed from debunking to populist celebration. Mencken did not alter his essential positions; according to Douglas he was never in any but coincidental accord with the trends of twentieth century social thought.

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> for that something in the realms of fancy...He reads the dithyrambs of Edgar Albert Guest, Arthur Brisbane and Dr. Frank Crane. He listens to the exhortations of itinerant rhetoricians, gifted and eloquent men, specialists in what it is all about. He intones "Sweet Adeline," and is not ashamed of the tear that babbles down his nose. Man cannot live by bread alone. He must hope also. He must dream. He must yearn.

And so he also joins a service club, which with its supposedly selective membership, convinces "used car dealers, insurance agents, newspaper editors, trucking contractors and butter and egg brokers" that "they are somebody."[26]

Mencken's criticism of American democratic society did not concern itself with political or economic injustice, but rather its moral and psychological consequences. Had club members been able to look beyond the satire of this "literary radical" they would have seen a conservative whose views had something in common with the most reactionary among them. Mencken wrote of his respect for work as a moral ideal, his dislike of the revolution in morals, and his regret over the decline of civility. In an essay, "Das Kapital," from Prejudices, Third Series, Mencken displayed his economic conservatism. Capitalists, according to Mencken, deserve our praise, because it is only in their occupation that some pride of workmanship survives. Among the workers, it is dead, having been

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[26]Mencken, Prejudices, Sixth Series (New York, 1926): 70-71.

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killed by a unionism which "devotes its power to safeguarding bad work."[27]

In his economic conservatism, Mencken perhaps revealed his background as son of an independent small businessman. In fact, many of his values appear consistent with those of a respectable nineteenth century burgher. The conservatism of the club members, on the other hand, was imbued with a twentieth century cooperative ethic. Their philosophy of action was therefore far removed from Mencken's conception of individual initiative. Clubs predicated their service on good-will and egalitarian participation, something Mencken was sure would produce only folly. Members placed their faith in the power of harmonious community, an ideal Mencken dismissed as foolish illusion. The club's outlook was framed by twentieth century organizational life, Mencken's by nineteenth century individualism. Even though neither felt entirely comfortable in modern America, their reactions remained utterly incompatible.

A less iconclastic frame of reference lay behind Lewis's fiction. His work does not attempt to expose the ultimate foolishness of democratic community, but rather detail how materialism and capitalist greed convert community into an engine of conformity. His three novels of the early twenties, Main Street, Babbitt, and

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[27]Mencken, Prejudices, Third Series (New York, 1922), 109-118.

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Arrowsmith, direct their ire at an institutionalized commercialism which beats down individuals and molds them to quiescent consumerism. Carol Kennicott joins other small town failures whose souls have been flattened by "the beautiful big balloon tires that roll over the new pavement on Main Street;" Arrowsmith successfully escapes the McGurk institute and its standardizing of "the erstwhile chaotic spiritual activities of America" to make them "as practical and supreme as the manufacturer as cash registers;" Babbitt struggles with and then succumbs to the materialist community organizations "fixing what he believed to be his individuality." Although these characterizations are more complex than the stereotypes they came to represent, in all three, a well-organized commercialism corrupts generally decent men and women and augments the oppressiveness of natural community.

Of Lewis's books, Babbitt best catalogues the twisted relationships that occur in a corporate, commercial society. The book begins with a Babbitt already seduced by soul-sapping consumerism. "These standard advertised wares--tooth pastes, socks, tires, cameras ...were at first the signs, and then the substitutes for joy and passion and wisdom." Briefly awakened by his experiences with his friend Paul Riesling, with whom he enjoys a genuinely human relationship, Babbitt is finally forced back into the commercial order. He acknowledges his defeat by rejoining

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the false camaraderie of the Boosters' Club, where relationships depend on the potential for profit.

Lewis's caricature of the clubmembers in Babbitt is at once harsher then Mencken's--he holds them responsible for ruthless economic exploitation--and less damning--their companionship has moments of redeeming value. Even while Lewis reveals Babbitt to be shabbily corrupt in his real estate dealings, he shows him capable of genuine affection and loyalty. Here and in his other writings Lewis reveals ambivalence in his feelings toward democratic community. He revolted not against the small town in which he grew up--he remembered it as a "good time, a good place, and a good preparation for life"--but instead against the Main Street of Gopher Prairie, "a force seeking to dominate the earth, to drain the hills and sea of color, to set Dante at boosting Gopher Prairie, and to dress the high gods in Klassy Kollege Klothes."[28] Lewis enjoyed the hunting companionship of Minnesota Rotarians, and his portrayal evidences an affection that Mencken and many other reviewers missed on first reading. In Lewis's later novels, the hero is a solid, middle-class citizen, the apotheosis of the Babbitt type. Lewis, in other later pronouncements, declared that men like Babbitt were those

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[28]Sinclair Lewis, "The Long Arm of the Small Town," in The Man from Main Street, ed. by Harry E Maule and Melville H. Cane, (New York, 1953), 272; Lewis, Main Street (New York, 1961), 259.

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"he really enjoyed," and that he wrote the book out of love for Babbitt.[29]

In his later years, Mencken also claimed to have softened his judgement of the clubs. But a notebook entry published in the 1956 Minority Report demonstrates once again the differences between his sardonic perspective and the ambivalence of Lewis. The "Rotarians and their imitators, almost forgotten," Mencken wrote, were simply stupid fellows, seeking a moral system to substitute for Christianity. To their credit, unlike theologians, they did not attempt to force anyone to believe in Service. They avoided pressure politics, "paid cash out of their own pockets for all their crusades," and were not a public nuisance. Of course, they were comic, "but only in the benign sense that a dog chasing its tail is a comic character." Mencken, as "one who spent a good deal of time and energy crying them down," was happy to proclaim publicly their innocence.[30]

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[29]Martin Light, The Quixotic Vision of Sinclair Lewis (West Lafayette, Ind., 1975); Perry Miller, "The Incorruptible Sinclair Lewis," in The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines (Amherst, 1979), 120.

[30]Mencken, Minority Report (New York, 1956), 178-179.

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Babbitt as Social Criticism

As Babbittry became a synonym for their very existence, few club members in the twenties found Lewis's critique more palatable than Mencken's. Yet most Americans, while they would never reject democratic culture, shared at least some of Lewis's distaste for "standardization" and increasing commercialism. Johan Huizinga noted in 1926 that "the Americans can no longer get rid of Babbitt as a warning example. He is more than a literary figure, he has been a force. Nobody wants to be a Babbitt, and most people in fact detect in themselves traces of "babbittry."[31] Even club members admitted to Babbitts in their midst, though one member who saw in each club "a certain number of babbitts" proposed "shearing them of any Babbitical tendencies and class consciousness by impartial assessment of fines," a solution which by its foolishness would have delighted both Lewis and Mencken had they encountered it.[32]

Criticism which singled out the commercialization of middle class life was in fact also congenial to the thrust of service, which sought to add other, moral considerations to cold cash in business transactions. Lewis and other detractors took the club member's moralizing as evidence of

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[31]Johan Huizinga, America (New York, 1972), 257.

[32]"Rotarian Open Forum," The Rotarian 30 (Feb., 1927):

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blatant hypocrisy, when instead it, too, revealed an ambiguity toward the new commercial order. Hoping the public would grant them the high status of "professional"--one who operated from motives other than profit--club members also looked back to what seemed a simpler business age, when character counted as much as cash. Nostalgia connected their vision with that of Lewis's in a way that Mencken skeptically rejected.

Most cultural critics preferred Lewis's view, with its vaguely radical distaste for the fruits of American business culture, and the chance it allowed, if slight, for reform. The basis of a vigorous democracy--a natural, participatory community--could be restored, but only if Americans spurned the indulgences of consumerism and asserted their humanity over mass technology and bureaucratic anonymity. It was this critique, rather than Mencken's general skepticism of egalitarianism, that influenced two respected contemporary interpretations of the period.

The first, the Lynds' study of Middletown, described in nearly Babbitt-like terms the impact of the car, the radio, and advertising in standardizing community behavior. Nowhere was this standardization more to be seen than in leisure, which had once been spontaneous and carefree, and now was "over-organized:"

> Men and women dance, play cards, and motor as the crowd does; businessmen play golf with their

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> business associates...for those who look wistfully beyond the horizon a hobby tends to be like an heretical opinion, something to be kept concealed from the eyes of the world.

Leading the way in the over-organization of leisure were the service clubs, "challenging the member and his world at no point, often proving of actual cash value in his business." Where once a club of leading Middletown business and professional men were "stirred to fierce indignation over philosophic and social questions," now the "leveling effect of credit" had produced these "quietistic" clubs.[33]

As Richard Wightman Fox has argued, the enemy in the Lynds portrayal is consumer capitalism, turning Middletowners away from community-centered self-reliance. Although Fox discounts the influence of Babbitt, he believes that the tone of Middletown reveals a hopeful Robert Lynd, calling for democratic resistance against the enforced conformity of corporate consumer culture.[34]

While the Lynds gave Lewis's critique the backing of sociological research, Frederick Lewis Allen lent it the sanctions of an historian in his popular review of the decade, Only Yesterday. David Kennedy. in a recent

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[33]Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrel Lynd, Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture (New York, 1929), 299-306.

[34]Richard Wightman Fox, "Epitaph for Middletown: Robert S. Lynd and the Analysis of Consumer Culture," in Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York, 1983), 103-141.

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"revisit" to the book, notes that Allen identified the emergence of a media-induced consumerism and faddishness. Allen blamed the "disillusionment" produced by war for undermining traditional verities--simple honesty, self-dedication, and genuine religion. The American people lay open to the blandishments of "ballyhoo" and the attractions of false religions such as that offered by the service clubs, whose "mysticism" expressed "the national faith...in the redemptive and regenerative influence of business." Since business after the crash proved itself to be a tin god, Allen, too, was hopeful the American people would return to the solid ground of democratic values.[35]

Allen, like all critics of business society, saw the new commercial order as one destructive of individual integrity. The American people, seduced and emptied of conviction by the siren call of advertisers, fell into lockstep consumption of the newest fad. The clubs' booster idealism was a false spiritualism. Devoid of all but material values, it only reinforced the conformity and commercialism of the new age.

With Babbittry so thoroughly identified with the clubs, it remained only for Englishman G.K. Chesterton to label the period a "Rotarian Age." "Filled with the wind of

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[35]Kennedy, "Revisiting Frederick Lewis Allen's Only Yesterday"; Allen, Only Yesterday (New York, 1931), 178-179.

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self-advertisement" the clubs had done their part to undermine individual dignity. Characteristic of the shabby level of human discourse was the hearty backslapping and first name-calling which "debased human friendship." The clubs enforced a comradeship that, like the age, was "gross, common, vainglorious, blatant, sentimental, and in a word, caddish."[36]

Beyond the Stereotype

Like many of the intellectual critics, Chesterfield allowed an aristocratic distaste for the manners of the club members to denigrate their attempt to exalt friendship. The characteristic use of first names, the glad-handing, the practical jokes, these were all efforts to remove, as a Rotarian put it "the barrier of polite formality" and "speed the evolution of acquaintance into friendship." Through such friendship, a Lion claimed, isolated men could be made "part of the warp and woof of their community life." A striving for closeness and togetherness as a remedy for the impersonal conformity required by bureaucratic organization fostered their hearty back-slapping. "No assaults by literary anarchists with

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[36]1931 Chesterton speech quoted in C.R. Hewitt, Towards My Neighbour (London, 1946), 148.

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misguided ideas of community life can breach the fortification of idealism and relations between humanity which build a more happy and harmonious world" declared a Kiwanian, muddled in his expression but sure of his ideals.[37]

Critics could point out that club idealism was often fortified by unison versions of "Old Mcdonald's Farm." Yet even the group singing and foolish stunts had their communal rationale. By "checking their dignity at the door" members acted on terms of true equality. Assuming an atmosphere of boyish innocence and good-natured fun, club members (so their reasoning went) escaped the workaday world with its artificial distinctions between men, and, as the Lion Stunt Book and Toastmaster's Guide phrased it, were inspired to "work harder in the spirit of play than they would feel like doing if it were merely work."[38] Searching for metaphors to describe their unencumbered egalitarianism, they often reminded themselves of their common origins: "The staid old businessman is after all but a boy on stilts."

Undoubtedly this kind of thinking put little value on aesthetic judgement or critical analysis, even if it did

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[37]Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 18th Annual Convention, Ostend, 1927, 323; I.K. Russell, "H.L. Mencken's Shock Troops," The Lion 8 (December, 1926): 9; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 10th Intl. Convention, Montreal, 1926, 122.

[38]Lion's Stunt Book and Toast Master's Guide, (Chicago, 1950), 9.

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encourage support of culture which could justified in terms of community betterment--institutions such as museums, libraries, and schools. Still, the clubs' vision could be defended as a response to the spiritual emptiness critics condemned. Speaking at the 1927 convention Rotarian Bill Elliot described the dilemma of the age as one of "destructive specialization." He then addressed himself to "Mr. Mencken and Mr. Lewis," saying he found entertainment in their work, but "where is the constructive integrating idea which you are trying to present to the world?" Elliot admitted "there are what you are pleased to say Robots in Rotary" but found the movement's limitations paled "compared with the great fact that Rotary is a movement which is trying to present to the world a constructive and integrating idea."[39]

The integrating power of sociability had become for members a dominant concern, and one with which they hoped to combat the same technological change, the same institutional encroachment, the same changing communities decried by Lewis, Lynd, and Allen. Of course, the critics and clubs responded to these social problems in vastly different ways. Lewis and other analysts valued free intellectual inquiry, and felt it could dissolve the falsities of consumer capitalism and restore individual

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[39]Bill Elliot, "The World-Wide View of Rotary," Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 18th Intl. Convention, Ostend, 1927, 260.

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autonomy and a vital democracy. More concerned about the impersonality and fragmentation of modern society, club members stressed consensus and harmony of sentiment. But both were eager to return to an organic and constructive community; only Mencken sardonically stood aloof, to laugh at the spectacle of human buffoonery.

A Concluding Postscript

In 1935, the Minneapolis Rotary club published its 25 year Anniversary history, and recalled, along with its notable service achievements, the "rough and tumble of badinage" which flourished at meetings a mere ten years before. In what reads like a wiseacre's digest, it recounts the horseplay of the twenties:

> underwear worn to the installation ceremony of the president; straw hats torn to shreds; electric seat pads; electrically charged rings, water glasses with holes in their sides; Burma Shave served as frosting for chocolate eclairs; fake telegrams; snake dance parades "a la Shrine"...

"gorgeously hilarious affairs" in "striking contrast" with the "serious roundtables and governor's breakfasts of today."[40] A decade of derision had taken its toll, and combined with the depression to sober the exuberance of club meetings--not only for Minneapolis Rotarians, but for

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[40]Rotary Club of Minneapolis, The Story of Minneapolis Rotary, 1910-1935 (Minneapolis, 1935), 97.

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club members across the country. In the thirties, though all clubs required group singing and members still called each other by their first names, only with caution did members "check their dignity at the door."

Given this aftermath, it would be easy to consider the controversy between the intellectuals and the clubs another bit of cultural trivia, a quaint relic from the age of bombast and ballyhoo. Yet the specter of Babbitt, as Johan Huizinga correctly predicted, still haunted American middle class culture. In the fifties David Riesman placed Babbitt in a new framework of "other-direction," leading to anxious discussions of the anti-intellectual joiner. In the sixties and seventies the issues of conformity and materialism were politicized, yet the critique once again assumed cultural forms when Richard Sennett discussed in 1977 the "fall of public man;" Christopher Lasch analyzed the "culture of narcissicism;" and finally quite recently, a collection of essays edited by historians T.J. Jackson Lears and R. Wightman Fox, focused on the emptiness of consumer culture.[41]

Although their insight is more sophisticated, these critics decry essentially the same flaws that their

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[41]David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven, 1950); Richard Sennett, The Fall of the Public Man (New York, 1977); Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York, 1980); Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York, 1983).

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counterparts found in the society of the twenties. As they discuss the lack of autonomy, of democratic participation, and of genuinely human relations in modern society, they portray a set of circumstances remarkably similar to those the service clubs in the twenties were accused of propagating--materially prosperous, but characterized by empty values centered around sociability. To apply the observations of Riesman, the member's sensitivity to the reactions of their fellows, their freighting of leisure with values of work these characteristics seem to place them in "the other directed round of life," where they attempted, but did not quite succeed in escaping the "terror of loneliness." Richard Sennet would note in members' often paralyzing avoidance of controversy, the pressure they felt to be a booster and not a knocker, a "destructive gemeinschaft"--appearing when citizens value the psychological unity of community to such an extent that significant constructive action becomes impossible. By Fox and Lears's interpretation, club members were also victims of the hegemonic "way of seeing" promoted by the culture of consumption, and powerlessly faced the "empty prospect" presented by "the marketplace of personal exchange" at each good-natured luncheon meeting.[42]

Yet the club members of the twenties--ostensibly

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[42]Sennett, The Fall of the Public Man, 237-239; Fox and Lears, The Culture of Consumption, xii.

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victims of the corporate consumer culture--did not share this grim perception of cultural reality. Asserting that through service they acted in the community's interest, and that by first-name camaraderie they increased the sum of cheerfulness in the world, they appear convinced that they met, glad-hands extended, the challenges of modern society. These convictions do not of course negate the observations of the contemporary critics. One can still regret the derogation of human dignity that took place when, to quote Mencken, "the first Rotarian called John the Baptist Jack." Nevertheless, as events in the thirties were soon to make clear, the club members' cooperationist ethic stood a far cry from the reactionary bitterness expressed by middle class groups in other countries. The culture of service clubs, for all its foolishness, materialism, and stress on consensus, retained the attitudes and values essential to the preservation of democratic community.

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CHAPTER 5

THRIVING IN HARD TIMES: THE CLUBS IN THE THIRTIES

If the service club had failed to survive the depression, few of its critics in the twenties would have been surprised. Even some of its dedicated members confessed later to doubt the clubs' ability to prevail apart from a general prosperity. Yet after a sharp drop in membership during the early years of the economic crisis, club membership figures again climbed steadily, and reached new highs by the end of the decade. Considering the time and expense the clubs exacted of their members, this growth was a significant achievement.

For the most part, clubs attracted these members without undertaking special depression service activities. The continuity is not entirely to the clubs' credit. Club service appeared to disregard the severity of the economic crisis; clubs' sporadic "depression relief" efforts lacked the enthusiasm with which members continued to approach boy's work or traffic safety projects. Anxious to avoid community dissension, radicalism among respectable citizens, and "interference" from a burgeoning big

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government, club activities stressed security and order, and avoided significant reforms.

On the other hand, clubs did not plod blindly down the familiar path. Many clubmembers--particularly those in organizational leadership--wondered if the philosophy of service clubs should change in such a crisis. These members sought new methods of building consensus and promoting good-will that would extend beyond the town or city to the nation and the world. As the thirties proceeded, club leaders talked less and less of service "to the community." At the same time, the continuing expansion of the urban periphery, along with the clubs' own growth, meant that an increasing number of clubmembers lived in suburban areas. By the end of the decade, the combined influence of depression fears of social upheaval and new residential conditions had shifted the thrust of service from a cooperational ethic influenced by progressivism to a more conservative striving for conformity and "adjustment." Thus the clubs responded to events in the decade in ways that continued to appeal to small businessmen and professionals; but the thirties also witnessed the ebbing of the exuberant "community spirit" that characterized earlier club service.

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Early Reactions to Economic Crisis

As stunned by the sudden collapse of prosperity as the rest of the nation, the clubs immediately assumed the role with which they felt most comfortable: that of booster and propagandist. Feeling that the slump primarily demonstrated a "crisis of consumer confidence" clubs sought to "bust the buyer's strike" and encouraged spending through slogans and campaigns. Clubs initiated the spending of "hot dollars," checks purposely circulated quickly through club businesses to set an example for the "hoarding consumer." The Lions sponsored "Business Confidence Week"--"a campaign of optimism...to assist in relieving the minds of people." Kiwanis clubs put up billboards proclaiming "The Buy Way is the high-way to prosperity" and "Purchases are the minutemen of business." And at least 20 clubs ritualistically killed off "Mr. D. Pression," and replaced him with "young man Prosperity"[1] In these early years of the thirties, clubmembers found convincing the theory that the depression existed largely in the minds of the people and worked hard to renew optimism, boost spending and thus

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[1]"Business Confidence Week Proves Great Boon," The Lion 13 (Nov. 1930): 8; "Old-Man Depression Killed, Prosperity the Victor," ibid: 10; "Buy Now-the Key to Better Business," Ki-Grams 11 (Jan 19, 1931): 8; "Muskegon Busts the Buyers Strike" Kiwanis Magazine 15 (Dec. 1930): 577, 608; "Notorious Character is Gone from Saugus," The Kiwanis Magazine 16 (Sept. 1931): 267; "Des Moines 'Hot Dollar Campaign'" The Rotarian 37 (Oct. 1930) :44.

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prosperity. Theodore Rosenoff calls this explanation of the depression the "confidence thesis" and argues that it provided the core of the conservative critique of the New Deal. If government would act positively to boost consumer confidence and quit meddling in the economy, then the natural recovery power of the business cycle would reassert itself. Although conservatism dominated clubmembers' thinking, the appeal of the confidence thesis was as much methodological as it was ideological. Arousing public sentiment was a central technique of the service ethic in the twenties, and the clubs sought to meet the crisis with familiar methods. During this crisis, however, these methods fell short. Their failure left the clubs floundering, just like President Hoover--the most visible champion of local voluntarism--both of them proclaiming "prosperity around the corner."[2]

As the depression deepened, club leaders expressed alarm as their membership rapidly dropped--Rotary from 124,000 in 1930 to 102,948 in 1934; Kiwanis from 102,150 to 74,577 in the same period; and Lions from 80,456 to 75,725. Leaders, who in the twenties witnessed nothing but

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[2]Theodore Rosenoff, Dogma, Depression, and the New Deal: The Debate of Political Leaders over Economic Recovery (New York, 1975) 35-39. Craig Lloyd describes the importance of public relations techniques to Hoover's administrative style, and their complete breakdown during his presidency, in Aggressive Introvert: A Study of Herbert Hoover and Public Relations Management, 1912-1932 (Columbus, Ohio, 1972).

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continuous expansion, now wondered if their clubs were on the right course. Articles that asserted "Lions club an essential institution, a tower of strength," or "Kiwanis exists for times such as this" sounded a cheery note that rang false even for the ever-optimistic club journals. More applicable to the situation at hand were sober articles and speeches discussing the "maturity" of the service club movement. Like the decade of the twenties (which club members, just two years after its close, spoke of as a "wild" and "youthful" time), the early Rotary "developed much that was trivial and childish." The next quarter of a century, wrote Rotarian Edgar G. Dondria in 1931, "will determine whether it is to survive or go the way of transient and empty fads." And the 1932 Kiwanis Convention heard Wallace Austin's ironic reminder: "Surely we all realize that a long waiting list of desirable Kiwanis material as well as groups of men clamoring for Kiwanis charters are as remote as banks that insist on loaning you money to invest in the stock market." Membership had to be actively recruited.[3]

Although widespread concern over actual survival decreased soon after 1932, club leaders no longer put so much emphasis on "classification" as a limit on membership

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[3]Wallace Austin, Report of Membership Committee, Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 16th Annual Convention, Detroit, 1932, 117; Edgar G. Dondria, "The Critical Years Ahead," The Rotarian 38 (May, 1931): 5.

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recruiting. Almost as soon as losses became apparent, in 1930, Rotary followed the Kiwanis and Lions in loosening membership restrictions, allowing, in effect, more than one member in each line of business. In large part, this rules change and other subsequent liberalizations simply gave official sanction to what local clubs commonly practiced. But it also meant that the importance of classification to the community status of the club would no longer be the theme of convention speeches. Membership expansion, always an important concern, became an overriding theme of club policy.[4]

On the local level, successful struggles for survival testified to the continuing attractions of club life. Clubs lost resources through bank failures, plant closings and in at least one case, a treasurer absconding with funds, yet refused to cease operation. The Kingman, Ariz. Lions club, for example, lost their deposits three times in three different banks, and still "did not say die") Judging from Rotary field secretary reports, the clubs that did well before the depression continued to do so, while the weaker, small town clubs, in mining or poor

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[4] Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 21st Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill, 1930. 21-33. The increased pressure to expand provided one of the dynamics for foreign involvement and suburbanization of the clubs. See below.

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agricultural districts suffered the most.[5] Nevertheless, remarkably few clubs gave up their charters -- within Rotary, fewer than fifty collapsed completely during the entire decade.

Providing Depression Relief

The tenacity of local clubs demonstrated that members' continued to feel the necessity of civic spirit: club participation in ceremonial observances, community improvement, and assistance to the Chamber of Commerce did not falter. On the other hand, surprisingly few clubs undertook special projects to combat the depression. Some clubs did make efforts to relieve depression hardship. The Easton, Pa and Maywood Ill. Rotary clubs donated land and seed for "community gardens;" the South Bend, Indiana Rotary club and the Portland Oregon Lions clubs harvested vegetables rotting in the fields and turned them into soup for the hungry; the Newton Ka. Rotary club gathered old shoes and gave them to the unemployed; the service clubs of

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[5]"Memos of official visits" on file at Rotary International Headquarters noted for example, the continued strength despite bank failures and other economic problems of the Reading Pa., Cairo, Ill., Modesto, Ca., Muncie, Ind., and Indianola Iowa clubs; clubs that failed because of "impossible economic conditions" included Shinston, W. Va., Coaldale, Pa., Madisonville, Tenn., Beaumont Ga, and Clinton, South Carolina.

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Dallas united in placing "penny jars" in local retail businesses, and were able to divert "hundreds of dollars" in pennies to relief.[6] But these were exceptions. More characteristic were the clubs like those of Muncie, harshly described by the Lynds in their follow-up study published in 1937, Middletown in Transition. During the depression, the Lynds observed, the service clubs "continued to meet and to listen to speeches, but they have not as organizations shared in any concerted way in the solution of the city's urgent civic problems."[7]

Like much of local service during the twenties, the clubs concentrated on activities outside their members' vocational sphere. Only a few clubs actually attempted to ease unemployment by agreeing, as did a joint committee on unemployment consisting of representatives of the Washington Kiwanis, Lions, Optimists and Rotary clubs, to "furnish employment to one or more persons for work outside the ordinary routine." While it is doubtful that clubmembers as small businessmen could have made a dent in local unemployment even if they had been so inclined, old

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[6] "The Dallas Penny Provider Plan," Kiwanis Magazine 17, (Nov. 1932): 507; Leland Case, "Filling in with Soup" The Rotarian 43 (March, 1933): 16-17; "Lions Kitchen, Portland Ore.," The Lion 13 (Jan. 1931): 6 "Community Gardens, An Opportunity," The Rotarian 43, (April, 1933); "Old Shoe Drive," Ki-Grams 11 (Nov. 30, 1931): 2.

[7] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts (New York, 1937), 284.

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shoes and pennies hardly constituted a significant response to the depression. With their community and vocational service proving so inadequate, it seems that the clubs' contributed to depression relief the same way they contributed to the pressures of prosperity; satisfying the small businessmen's need for fellowship and his impulse to express civic spirit.

Of course, the inadequate relief response of service clubs illustrates only a small part of the total failure of local resources in the early years of the depression. Historical studies of even the more prosperous and better organized cities point to the woeful limitations of voluntary relief efforts.[8] Even though a local community could hardly be expected to "solve" the depression problem, the magnitude of suffering makes inexcusable the absence in many communities of any public mechanisms for relief. Part of the trouble, then, lay in patterns established in earlier decades. Throughout the twenties, methods of unsystematic charity similar to service club activities prevailed in most communities. Emergencies brought quick response and volunteers eager to serve, but like that

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[8]See, for example, David M. Katzman, "Ann Arbor: Depression City," and Bonnie Fox Schwartz, "Unemployment Relief in Philadelphia, 1930-1932: A Study of the Depression's Impact on Voluntarism" both in Bernard Sternsher, ed., Hitting Home: The Great Depression in Town and Country (Chicago,1970), 47-84; and Charles H. Trout, Boston, The Great Depression, and the New Deal (New York, 1977), 75-100.

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"drowsy giant," the Red Cross, the altruistic public could only be roused by "fire, sword, storm and flood."[9] Newly professionalized social workers discouraged volunteer participation but lacked the resources to conduct their work without government aid. As a result, government spending for relief, as meager as it was, exceeded private charity by a ratio of three to one--despite the broad claims of local charitable agencies. With no tradition of systematic charitable relief other than the community chest --a vehicle existing as much for businessmen's convenience as for its philanthropic effectiveness -- little wonder that emergency local relief efforts collapsed so quickly.[10]

Aware of the responsibilities of service, members could not be insensitive to the troubles around them. In the twenties, when confronted with a temporary emergency, clubs gave generously to social agencies equipped to deal with the crisis: Flood Relief Committees, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army. In the thirties, however, the government took over many of those emergency duties. Although clubs in their activity reports did occasionally list cooperation with New Deal agencies, such as the CCC or the WPA, for the most part when the federal government began their relief

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[9]Quoted in John Finbar Jones and John Middlemist Herrick, Citizens in Service: Volunteers in Social Welfare during the Depression, 1929-1941 (Lansing, Mich., 1976), 11.

[10]Michael B. Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America (New York, 1986), 206-215.

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programs, service clubs ended their own attempts at special service. By 1937, when the Lions listed their cumulative club activities for the past year, 4600 of the 28,000 projects were classified under "health and welfare" as opposed to 14,000 for community work such as road repair, parades, sports leagues, and city beautification. This percentage is roughly comparable to that of the projects listed 10 years earlier, when approximately 800 of the 3600 projects involved social welfare. Only a very small percentage of these activities, in the thirties as well as the twenties, involved sustained relief. A comparison of Kiwanis Activities, 1925 and Kiwanis Activities, 1936 reveals the same result. Clubs, as sociable organizations, did not normally function as social welfare committees, even in times of great hardship. Instead, they talked of their responsibility to local community social service agencies. However, the majority of clubs apparently felt if government controlled a community agency, then that agency lay beyond the boundaries of service.[11]

The New Deal: A Blessing and a Curse

Since club activities, from the outset, displayed a

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[11]Statistics drawn from "Club Activities Classified, Lions Intl., Proceedings, 20th Annual Convention, Chicago, Ill, 1937, 59-335; "Major Activities Committee Report," The Lion 9 (August, 1926): 17.

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desire to protect the integrity of local community, government adoption of goals the clubs might have unanimously supported had they been privately sponsored created a deep ambivalence in the clubs' approach to the New Deal. Although club spokesmen generally expressed a standard conservative view--government should stay out of business and lower taxes--the mix of big city and small town professionals and educators with varieties of small businessmen precluded a uniform opinion on all New Deal measures. Rotary, for example, contributed members to the Liberty League, but also administrators to the New Deal. Among the latter was Rotary's international president in 1934, Clinton Anderson, who remained an active force in Rotary affairs at the same time he helped run several New Deal agencies in New Mexico.[12]

The clubs' reaction also varied on specific New Deal measures, though one agency, the CCC, did receive universal approbation. By far the most popular New Deal measure among the general populace, the CCC especially appealed to club members because of its affinities with their own boy's

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[12] Anderson, who later went on to a long career as senator and a strong advocate of environmental conservation, also met other New Dealers through Rotary, including James A. Farley, FDR's campaign manager, and A. Harry Moore, governor of New Jersey. Clifford Anderson, Outsider in the Senate (New York, 1970), 25. Anderson's biographer, Richard Baker, feels that the "presidency of Rotary International assured Anderson's political success", introducing him to influential men and helping him become a successful speaker. Richard Baker, Conservation Politics: The Senate Career of Clinton P. Anderson (Albequerque, 1985), 16-23.

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work. CCC camps, set away from morally enervating urban influences, provided an outlet for youthful energies similar to the popular club project, recreational summer campgrounds. And its discipline, suggestive of the civilian military training often advocated by the service clubs, seemed just the character builder needed to protect troubled youth from dangerous propaganda. Since the camps brought new revenue, jobs, and facilities into the community, service clubs and local Chambers of Commerce fought to obtain them, and strenuously protested when they were removed. The CCC was the one New Deal agency that appeared with relative frequency in local club service activity reports.[13]

At first, members reacted favorably to most government measures--even to the centerpiece of the early New Deal, the NRA. Clubs welcomed Roosevelt's appeals for spirit and unity, and played a vigorous role in the "Blue Eagle" parades and sticker campaigns. Inspired to "do their part," members sent in songs to the Rotarian: (sung to the tune of R-O-T-A-R-Y, that spells Rotary)

> NRA, that's the way, Roosevelt cleared the track/
> NRA, that's the way, Good times are coming
> back./Each firm will sign, and then live true, the

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[13]John A. Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1943: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, N.C., 1967) 102-120. "Report on Youth Service," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 25 Annual Convention, Detroit, 1934, 276-300; Herbert M. Schmidt, "Kiwanis in C.C.C. Camps," The Kiwanis Magazine 19 (June, 1934): 252.

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> things set out in code to do/NRA, thats the way, Good times are coming back.[14]

Rotarians in particular were well-disposed toward the NRA in its early stages; since the twenties, leaders of Rotary's vocational service program had advocated business cooperation and the writing of ethical business codes, and club spokesmen saw the NRA as legislative endorsement of their program. Favorable editorials and articles about the NRA ran monthly in The Rotarian from late 1933 and early 1934. "It stamps with approval the policy of industries that operate on the principle that business was made to serve men" noted one. "It constitutes the greatest single effort ever undertaken to bring spiritual values into effective daily use," argued another.[15]

However, despite this interpretation of the NRA as a moral injunction, disenchantment occurred rapidly when the act failed to bring quick recovery. The Rotarian soon began receiving letters complaining that the magazine was "not truly representing the feeling of many Rotarians in its attitude" toward the NRA. The Rotarian president of Holgate Bros., manufacturers of brush handles, argued that the bill "penalized severely the small town and small industry" with

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[14]Letter to The Rotarian, (Feb., 1934): 39.

[15]Letter to the Rotarian,43 (Sept. 1933): 2; Editorial, The Rotarian 43 (August, 1933): 37; Chester E. Willard, "Meeting Cut-Throat Competition" The Rotarian 43 (October, 1933): 33-36.

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its regulations designed for big industries. Other letters agreed that the act was "forcing small business to the wall" by requiring them to meet codes designed for and by large businesses. Perhaps due to this negative response, articles favorable to the NRA and the New Deal appeared less and less frequently in The Rotarian as 1934 proceeded. In September, 1934, Rotary International discharged the NRA advisory committee it had set up in an early flush of enthusiasm for the act. In the same year, Lion founder and secretary Melvyn Jones, who had never set up such a committee, blamed the increased staff and higher wages required by the NRA for his organization's budget deficit.[16] William Leuctenburg argues that contemporary commentators exaggerated the extent to which the NRA hurt small business. The small businessman's main grievance, he believes, was that government ended their exploitation of labor.[17] However, clubmembers' rhetoric reveals more was at stake than resentment of labor privileges. Above all, the New Deal heightened members' sense of encroaching bureaucracy. Even after the Supreme Court ruled the NRA unconstitutional, club spokesmen still felt themselves

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[16]Letter, Don Berry to The Rotarian 44 (March, 1934); Letter, Fred Carlson to The Rotarian 44 (February, 1934); "Symposium: Is the New Deal Working," ibid., "NRA Advisory Committee Discharged" The Rotarian 45 (Sept., 1934): 9; Melvyn Jones, Report of the Secretary, quoted in "A History of Lionism"(mss. on file with Lions International), 143.

[17]William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York, 1963), 69-70.

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trapped between the interests of big government and big business. Club leaders spoke of an independent middle class that an article in the Rotarian described as "melting away before our very eyes." The New Deal, Kiwanian District Governor Clark Clement felt, was only hastening the replacement of small business and professional men by the extension of great industrial enterprises." The image of clubmembers as part of a "forgotten middle class" appeared more frequently in club rhetoric as the decade proceeded. The 1938 Kiwanis convention listened to clubmember Roy Smith describe the "first breadline in America...during the Republican Administration, when bankers and corporation presidents lined up in front of the RFC tellers windows." At the same convention, Senator Burton Wheeler talked of corporate control producing an "economic system much more susceptible to government domination." By the later thirties, small businessman added labor unions, "greater in power than monopolies of trade and commerce ever dared to be" to the list of organizational threats to the interests of the small businessmen.[18]

With a triumvirate of oppressive bureaucracies--

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[18]Hendrik Van Loon, "A Credo for a New Day, The Rotarian 42 (June, 1933): 6-8, 51; Clark Clement, "Kiwanis Can Help Find the Answers" The Kiwanis Magazine 19 (March, 1934): 99-100; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 22nd Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1938, 18-92; W. Clement Moore, "Business Needs Common Sense, A Tonic and a Vacation," The Kiwanis Magazine 23 (Jan., 1938): 67-68.

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big government, big business, and, late in the decade, big labor--abetting a continuing economic crisis, clubmembers might have formulated a cohesive middle class ideology, based on their position as "forgotten men." Service clubs came close to expressing such an ideology during the 1950's, when their complaints about government bureaucracy reached a crescendo, but it did not emerge during the depression. Not only was the apolitical fellowship of the service club a poor ideological catalyst, but also there seemed no inclination on the part of clubmembers to forge their grievances into a systematic framework of analysis.

Although more conscious than ever that their membership represented what a Kiwanian called "middle class business and professional life, the very grass roots of the capitalist system," clubmembers, like most small businessmen, worked continually for expansion of their own business. This entrepreneurial dream, to one day become "one of the big boys" muted one possible line of criticism, of "big business domination." Even though a favorable article on chain stores drew several pages worth of angry letters, other pieces treated the anti-chain store Robinson-Patman Act of 1937 with indifference, and the act received no attention at club conventions. Noting a similar ambivalence about Robinson-Patman among the small business community as a whole, historians of small business ideology suggest that distrust of government restrictions weakened

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support even among those who would benefit from its provisions. Meanwhile, Roger Babson's 1938 article in The Rotarian, arguing that "little business will never come back by trying to handicap big business" met with broad approval. The proclamations of the 1938 Conference of Small Businessman in Washington also revealed that, while quite conscious of their differences, small business felt a strong identity with big businessman.[19]

Observing the failure of small businessmen to express resentment against big business, and observing also that corporate leaders sang the praises of "entrepreneurial freedom," as if they were independent operators, C. Wright Mills argued that "small businessmen tender[ed] [their] ideological gifts to big business in return for a feudal-

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[19]C.O. Sherrill, "Across the Chain Store Counter," The Rotarian 38 (June, 1931); Angry letters, most of them accusing chain stores of community irresponsibility, occupied two pages in both the July and August issues. In contrast, dispassionate discussions of the Robinson-Patman Act appear in Walter F. Boye, "The Robinson-Patman Anti Price Discrimination Law" Kiwanis Magazine (April, 1937) 76, 114 and "Shackling the Chain Store" The Rotarian 54 (Feb., 1939): 16-17. Babson remained a club favorite throughout the depression. Roger Babson, "Is Little Business Coming Back" The Rotarian (Oct., 1938):8-9; reader response the following (Nov.) issue. For discussions of small business ideology, see Rowland Berthoff, "Independence and Enterprise: Small Business in the American Dream,"in Stuart W. Bruchey, ed., Small Business in American Life (New York, 1980), 28-45, and John Bunzel, The American Small Businessman (New York, 1962). Bunzel describes the Small Business Conference, arguing that there and elsewhere small businessmen reveal an "agrarian" ideology, stressing simplicity and the morality of the frontier. This ideology does not appear in the small businessman I am studying.

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like protection."[20] Yet the hegemony of big corporations does not explain the general failure of club members to develop an ideology based on class-consciousness. From the beginning of the club movement, members had adopted an ethic of cooperation as a defense of class status. Now, as economic hardship and continued bureaucratic encroachment further undermined their occupational standing, clubs did not suddenly turn to confrontation, but rather sought increased consensus. In marked contrast to their counterparts in continental Europe, members did not respond to the depression with new class antagonism.[21]

Clubs in the 1930's not only refrained from anti-big business and anti-labor rhetoric, they also shied away from an ideological critique of New Deal policies. When clubmembers complained about government interference in business, an element of self-blame surfaced. "Even if this is socialistic, we had it coming to us," said Rotarian Cornelius Garrettson, summing up a 1933 convention discussion of the New Deal. John McDowall told the 1936 Kiwanis convention that "if every businessman in his country lived up to the high precepts and principles of Kiwanis, there never would have been any occasion for the NRA." Clubs should not be too quick to complain of

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[20]C. Wright Mills, White Collar (New York, 1951), 43.

[21]Jurgen Kocka makes this point in White Collar Workers in America, 1890-1940 (Beverly Hills, Ca., 1980), 251-284. See below, Chapter 6, for a fuller comparative perspective.

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"government interference," another speaker reminded the convention, when their "municipalities were the first to call upon the U.S. government in time of need."[22] By turning the conservatives' complaint about government policies into a question of moral failure, these spokesmen avoided any consideration of the larger issues raised by the increased scope of government. Overall, club members' conservatism dissolved into griping about "swollen taxes," and "inefficiency of government at the local level."

Much of club behavior in the thirties seemed designed to prevent the development of any systematic political theories, other than a vague adherence to democratic values. In this tendency, the clubs reflected perfectly the climate of the decade, which, in the face of apparent institutional breakdown, sought security, order, and consensus. Even the New Deal itself, as Alan Lawson has noted, took on the character of a cultural movement, stressing the collective strength of the "American way," rather than divisive political partisanship. With government encouraging communitarian values and security seemingly lying in the collective instead of the individual, service clubs, stressing cooperation, could thrive. Ironically, while service clubs prospered because

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[22]Cornelius Garretson, Address to Business Practices Assembly, Rotary Intl., Proceedings 24th Annual Convention, Boston, 1933, 284; Discussion of "Efficiency in Government" Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 20th Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., 1936, 258-279.

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of an associative climate fostered by government measures, they also appealed to businessmen rallying against government intrusion into local affairs. Thus the New Deal, the bane of many clubmembers, helped boost club growth.[23]

Running from Lefty: Service and the Flight from Politics

"Today citizenship makes greater demands of us than ever before," the Committee on Citizenship reported to the 1932 Kiwanis Convention. "Men with shivering bodies and empty bellies despairing of relief can easily be transformed under the spell of a fiery demagogue from peaceable law-abiding citizens into dangerous foes of society." Reflecting both a concern for the welfare of the unemployed, and an even greater fear of potential radicalism among the needy, this report seems a characteristic middle class response to the depression. However, it characterizes only a part of the club response, for members reacted only uncertainly to relieve empty

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[23]Alan Lawson, "The Cultural Legacy of the New Deal" in Harvard Sitkoff, Fifty Years Later: The New Deal Evaluated (Philadelphia, 1985) Richard Pells describes the decline of socialist radicalism into anti-ideological defense of the American Way in Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years. (New York, 1973) 293-329; even more than Pells, Warren Susman stresses the ideological innocence of the decade in "The Culture of the Thirties," in Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1984) 150-183.

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bellies, and worried as much about the growth of radicalism among the relatively prosperous as among the needy.

These concerns appear in leaders' proposals becoming "a more vital instrument in the solution of the pressing problems." For Kiwanis International Secretary Fred Parker, that meant the clubs no longer could be afraid of "soiling their hands with politics." Members had been "unwilling to endanger their business profit, their professional standing...by opposing men whose antagonism might be costly to them." Kiwanis must "give itself to molding of public affairs." In The Rotarian, Stephen Bolles described local clubs' reluctance to engage in political affairs as "the Oregon Boot on the Service Club." "We have too many clubs that are afraid of topics." he wrote.[24]

As soon became clear, however, when club leaders talked of moving into politics they meant that clubs should act to defuse politics, and assert their leadership just as they had in the twenties, by laying grounds for compromise and consensus. To set an example for local clubs, The Rotarian began in the early thirties a series of impartially presented monthly debates on topics such as

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[24]Stephen Bolles, "The Oregon Boot on the Service Club," The Rotarian 36, (Jan. 1930) : 11-12, 58; Fred Parker, "The Cycle of Progress," Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 17th Annual Convention, Los Angeles, 1933, 68-72. Rotarian District Governor David Reese also urged the approach of "controversial topics" in his address "New Times, New Methods," Proceedings 23rd Annual Convention, Seattle, 1932, 143-147.

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socialism, the death penalty, gun control, and public health insurance. For this series, the editors solicited articles from Rotary antagonists, among them H.L. Mencken, Clarence Darrow, and Norman Thomas. This change in editorial policy made interesting reading. Compared to the other clubs' magazines, The Rotarian attracted by far the most thoughtful analysis of both in-house and world-wide events. But, except for letters predictably denouncing the more unconventional position in each debate--socialization of medicine and the elimination of the death penalty, for example--the monthly features produced little discernable response at the local level. Along the same lines as the Rotarian monthly debates, Kiwanis later in the decade adopted a policy of promoting "open forums" for the discussion of civic issues. Here, too, the club was to serve as impartial arbiter, a "clearinghouse on public affairs" to the "thousands of fine Americans who are seeking for authoritative information on the perplexing problems and issues of the present." The Lions also jumped on the discussion platform by sponsoring "Socratic League Debates" designed to "stimulate thought and create open discussion."[25]

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[25]Walter P. Hepner, "National Forums of Democracy," The Kiwanian (May, 1938): 263-264; Melvin Jones, Report to the Mexico City Convention, (Chicago, 1935), 23. Leland Case leads a discussion of The Rotarian's policy of "impartial debates" in the 1930's in Rotary Intl., Proceedings, Thirtieth Annual Convention, Cleveland, Oh., 1939, 150-154.

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In encouraging local clubs to enter openly into the debate on public policy, club leaders sought a broader role for service clubs than that of community booster. To accomplish this goal, however, they turned as they always had, not to a possibly partisan citizenry but rather to the "scientific" analysis of the expert. Sponsoring public debates among professors, economists, and public administrators, the clubs revealed that their faith in "objective" sociological expertise remained unshaken, despite the economic crisis. The Board of Directors of the Lions illustrated this faith when in announcing formation of a "Committee on Economic Guidance" they also expressed doubt that "a permanent and definite plan of procedure can come from the office-holding class; nor does it appear likely that the business world can work out its own salvation." Therefore the Board turned to 50 leading economists and political scientists to frame a plan for control of business cycles. While the Lions sought business advice, the Rotary Club of Chicago went one step further, and commissioned a study of themselves conducted by the University of Chicago sociology department. The resulting, relatively critical study, Rotary? was then commended to "all thoughtful Rotarians."[26] Conservative clubmembers

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[26]"Board of Director's Report," The Lion 15 (April, 1933): 3-5; Rotary? (Chicago, 1934); Allen D. Albert, "Rotary under the Microscope" The Rotarian 45 (Aug., 1934), 25-27.

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might inveigh against the policies of the "Brains trust," but they shared the assumptions that led to its formation.

By placing the burden of debate on the shoulders of the expert, clubs could play a vital role in community reconstruction without promoting dreaded "isms." This kind of forum could defuse dissent, and build a larger consensus. Public participation in open--yet harmless--debate, would demonstrate the general strength of the democratic process, and, club spokesmen hoped, produce a wider adherence to democratic values. Rotarians read about Des Moines, a "city without a bogey," where citizens could sleep soundly, undisturbed by the "goblins of isms invoked from street corner soapboxes" because they met, with the help of Rotary, to talk things over in the "old New England town hall manner."[27]

The political disposition of the nation's middle class youth particularly concerned clubmembers. Where, in the twenties, the clubs concentrated on the younger boy, attempting to build character in order to withstand the temptations of big city life, now the clubs' interests shifted to the older boys, "coming home from college" and unable to find a job, "subsequently becoming a fertile field for the inculcation of all sorts of ideas and ideals contrary to our own established order." Kiwanis in the

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[27] Wayne Gard, "A City Without a Bogey," The Rotarian 46 (May, 1935) 30-31,50.

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twenties listened to convention speeches calling for a "square deal for the crippled child." In the thirties, the favored topic in youth work was "the citizen of tomorrow." The Philadelphia Rotary club was one of several that held a "Training Course in Citizenship" for young men, seeking to teach future leaders the value of "enlightened political activity."[28]

Clubmembers thus sought to dissuade those closest to them, in both class background and familial lineage, from adopting destructive political tendencies. Yet it seems safe to assume that members' sons and daughters, along with the citizens who might attend club-sponsored forums, would be among those least likely to destroy the social order. Thus what clubmembers appeared most concerned about in their attempt to weaken radical politics, is the kind of quarrel that might erupt between acquaintances or generations--one that might create personal tensions more than social disruption. Evidence for this interpretation appears in local club behavior. Although assuring themselves that members "were broad-gauged men who can discuss debatable questions without heat and ill temper,"

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[28]Discussions of "Youth Work" in Rotary Intl.,Proceedings 25th Annual Convention, Detroit, 1934, 276-311; Proceedings 28th Annual, Nice, France, 1937; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings 19th Annual Convention, San Antonio, 1935, 96-117; "Report on Training Course in Citizenship Prepared for the Rotary Club of Philadelphia" August, 1938, pamphlet on file at Rotary Headquarters, additional programs described in Phillip C. Lovejoy, "Youth Gets a Hearing" The Rotarian (September, 1936) 23-25.

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the clubs' expressed such an exaggerated fear of "controversy" that the vision of the club as a platform for public policy formation never really materialized. Only some 200 Kiwanis clubs attempted forums in 1937, and even fewer Rotary or Lions clubs did so. At least one club--the Cedar Rapids Rotary club--reported reluctance to continue because of public impressions of the speakers as "radicals."[29] To serve as forum for debates risked disrupting the surface consensus upon which club fellowship depended. Ideological controversy troubled smaller clubs particularly because political questions could easily evolve into clashes of personality.

From Boosting to Adjustment

As the decade proceeded, clubs placed more and more emphasis on conformity. In 1936, Kiwanis International began pursuing an objective to "support churches in their spiritual aims." Members were to "stand by churches in promotion of special days" such as Loyalty Day and Easter, and see that "every man woman and child goes to church some day." Little difference existed between this campaign and

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[29] From the discussion of open forums in Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings 22nd Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1938, 272-284, 326; and a similar discussion appearing in Rotary Intl, Proceedings, 27th Annual Convention, Atlantic City, 1937, 408-411.

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the "Buy your hometown products" days, except here the pressures were applied more to conform in appearances rather than spend money to support local merchants.[30]

Similarly, a change in emphasis occurred in the club's educational work. Their interest shifted from pre-adolescent boys to high school and college age youth, and club concerns in education went from playgrounds to school extra-curricular programs. In times when the school budgets were often the first trimmed, clubmembers defended "fads and frills" such as music, dramatics, and vocational training as essential to a complete education. The Kiwanis club secretary described the "unnecessary slaughter of hogs" as "nothing as compared to the unnecessary slaughter of the finest development of our youth which has resulted from so-called economy in public education." In 1933, The Rotarian ran a debate between H.L. Mencken and John Dewey, "Shall We Abolish School Frills?" with Mencken arguing the affirmative--"new pedagogy places too much stress upon play activities and too little upon the immemorial fundamentals," and Dewey responding that "frills are a legitimate and practical response to social conditions and needs." In the reader response published for months after

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[30]Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 20th Annual Convention, Washington, 1936, 236-238; this objective continued into the 1950's. The obvious criticism, that large attendance is hardly a church's "spiritual aim" did not seem to occur to Kiwanian leaders. Perhaps they felt that "to support the churches in their material aims" might seem incongruous.

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the article, sentiment ran overwhelmingly in favor of Dewey, on the grounds that for the coming generation, "a complex age such as we have now" requires "instruction in public health, music, art, or physical education at the public expense."[31]

In their study of public schools during the Depression, Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot argue that rhetoric supporting Dewey's philosophy did not necessarily reflect realities in local school districts. Many communities paid lip-service to progressivism in public education, but often that meant only, as in Middletown, new courses like "business English" and a small "guidance" program. The determining factor in the adoption of new educational techniques remained the wealth of the school district and the homogeneity of its students. Districts in rural or industrial areas, the ones that needed money most during the twenties, were also the hardest-hit during the depression.[32]

Whether or not clubmembers translated their rhetorical defense of progressive education into financial terms probably also depended on local conditions. What their verbal support of new programs definitely demonstrated was

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[31]Fred Parker, "The Challenge of Our Special Objectives," Kiwanis Magazine 20 (Jan., 1935):6-7, 44; "Shall We Abolish School Frills: Yes, by H.L. Mencken--No, by John Dewey," The Rotarian 42 (May, 1933): 16-19; letters of response in following (June) issue: 2-4.

[32]David Tyack, Robert Lowe, Elisabeth Hansot, Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years (Cambridge, Ma., 1984), 150-186.

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a new sensitivity to psychological adjustment, particularly among youth, but also among the citizenry as a whole. Club conception of "guidance" programs for youth in the thirties went beyond the vocational counseling the clubs pursued in the twenties to meet the boy's emotional and psychological needs. Expressing a concern that a disenchanted youth might not properly integrate into the social order, articles in club magazines described the "new teacher" "well trained in psychology, sociology, in health. Many of us would rather have a teacher who isn't an expert in his subject but is an expert in dealing with boys and girls." Articles displayed a new consciousness of the psychological importance of adolescence, recognizing the "powerful influence of developing sex-interest." Convention discussion cited the lack of personal counseling as one of the causes of juvenile delinquency. Club members always had subscribed to environmentalism in their youth work, believing "there are no bad boys, only good boys in bad circumstances." Now, instead of changing community conditions to better serve youth, members proposed to train youth to better adapt to society.[33]

In club magazine articles, what members apparently regarded as the insights of popularized psychology

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[33]Dean Lobaugh, "The New Kind of Teacher," Kiwanis Magazine 22 (April, 1937): 210, 254; Roy E. Dickerson, "What's the Matter with our Bill?" The Rotarian 50 (April, 1937): 15; Rotary Intl, Proceedings 29th Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1938, 376-414.

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abounded. Rotarian Amos Squire wrote on the "Psychology of Fellowship," explaining Rotary's appeal in terms of the "so-called gregarious drive" and "the drive of the desire for approval." Kiwanian Clyde Hissong defined "true Freedom" in terms of the "individual's adjustment to his environment." Personality tests replaced community surveys as evaluative tools, with members being encouraged to "see yourself as others (the customer, the boss, the family) see you."[34] As Warren Susman notes in a penetrating analysis of middle class culture of the thirties, this kind of psychologizing attempted to place responsibility on the individual--who could achieve success by self-adjustment--rather than suggesting the necessity of larger social reform. Linked with the withdrawal from ideology, it illustrated again the profoundly conservative trends present in the thirties.[35]

Yet the new psychological emphasis also shows the clubs themselves adjusting to new conditions. The communities in which they more and more frequently found themselves were suburban, primarily residential communities. Although the majority of the clubs remained in communities with

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[34]Amos Squire, "The Psychology of Fellowship," The Rotarian 47 (Sept. 1935): 13-15, 51; Clyde Hisson, "The Kiwanis Quest for Freedom, Kiwanis Magazine 19 (Feb, 1934): 53-55; William Marston, "As the Boss Sees You," The Rotarian (July, 1939) 24-26, 59.

[35]Warren Susman, "The Culture of the Thirties," in Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1984), 150-183.

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populations under 10,000, sixty percent of clubs founded after 1934 lay in metropolitan districts. Clubs in cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles underwent multiplication by division; by 1938, the Los Angeles metropolitan area had more than twenty Rotary clubs in close proximity to one another.[36] For these clubs based on residential divisions, community spirit did not inhere primarily in balancing interdependent, at times competing, business interests. Instead, it depended on adjusting personal concerns and assuring the psychological solidarity of neighbors. Similarly, in this type of community, personal definition in terms of occupation became less important than style of life in consumption and leisure.

Clubs early in the thirties began to focus on "the promise of the new leisure." "When men are working," Rotarian William Phelps told the 1933 convention, "they all look alike. If you want to know anything about individuals you must find out what they do with their leisure time." Leisure thus became an outlet for individual fulfillment and spiritual growth. "Leisure," said Kiwanian Harry Holmes, "means time to pursue our ideals." "Living all your life," to Kiwanian Fred McCallister, meant balancing work and leisure and cultivating consumption "to awaken

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[36]Statistics compiled by comparing club directories from the thirties with Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book, 1940. Record of suburban Los Angeles clubs from Los Angeles file, Rotary Headquarters.

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markets, revive production, create higher standards of living and an increased measure of human happiness."[37]

Thus, as the thirties came to a close, clubs found themselves once again advocating consumption to escape the Depression. Yet here, in addition, they added elements compatible with suburban life, by stressing leisure, apolitical relationships, and individual adjustment. In adapting to the thirties' cultural conservatism and the decade's changing communities, clubs had also laid the foundation for growth in the suburbs of the forties and fifties. Club expansion, rapid during the later years of the depression, would accelerate in post-war America.

Of course, clubs needed to take only a relatively small step from stressing community cooperation and "boosting, not knocking" to an emphasis on adjustment to existing social norms. To their critics, service clubs seemed from the beginning to deemphasize individual autonomy and work for conformity. But the differences in club style and emphasis between 1920 and 1939 should not be overlooked. Although the majority of clubs remained locally-oriented, members no longer expressed a sharply defined sense of community. In the twenties club fellowship displayed

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[37]William Lyon Phelps, "Building Leisure time Activities," Rotary Intl., Proceedings 25th Annual Convention, Detroit, 1934, 79-85; Harry Holmes, "The New Leisure" Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings 20th Annual Convention, Washington, 1936, 292; Fred G. McAllister, "Live All Your Life," Kiwanis Magazine 22 (Jan, 1937): 9.

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heightened small business and small community awareness. Club service activities specifically attempted to defend town interests and preserve local autonomy. But by the late thirties and into the post-war decades the emphasis lay on integration into a national and even world-wide social order. As the vague internationalism increasingly pursued by clubs demonstrated, the service ethic remained expansive, but its goals became more diffuse.

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CHAPTER 6

SERVING THE WORLD

Historians once characterized the decades between the two world wars as an era of American isolationism, a period when the United States misguidedly withdrew from world affairs--only to learn its international responsibilities from the lessons of World War II. But recent scholarship has drastically revised this assessment. Businessmen and makers of government policy, it now appears, pursued a "liberal-corporatist" ideal even on the international level, hoping to establish a network of trade alliances and financial agreements that would hasten a world-wide business community.[1] While business diplomats conducted

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[1] A solid summary of current interpretations of foreign policy during the twenties and thirties appears in Michael J. Hogan, "Revival and Reform: America's Twentieth Century Search for a New Economic Order Abroad," Diplomatic History 8 (Fall, 1984): 287-310. Hogan cites Gaddis Smith, "The United States in World Affairs Since 1945" in William H. Carwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr., eds., The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture (Washington, D.C., 1973) for his portrayal of the "isolationism to involvement" cycle, but virtually any earlier analysis of American world involvement in the twenties and thirties discusses the "retreat to isolationism." See John L. Braeman (also cited by Hogan), "American Foreign Policy in the Age of Normalcy: Three Historiographical Traditions," Amerikastudien/American

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dignified negotiations, American commercial mass culture expanded beneath them, needing little translation to transform taste and fashion. The more snobbish European cultural arbiters, who fumed over the "Americanizing" of European manners, art, and sports, undoubtedly would have preferred the insular, isolationist America of earlier historiographical commonplace.[2]

The international expansion of service clubs--in particular, Rotary--provides yet another example of American's interest in and impact on foreign cultures during this period. Even Lions and Kiwanis clubs, though their foreign involvement during the twenties and thirties was confined to Canada and Latin America, played up the prestige of "international service." Propelled by trade connections, the lure of the exotic, and a middle class drive for unity, club leaders sought, long before the Cold War, to extend the benefits of the American system of capitalist idealism beyond United States borders. Club members regarded themselves as distinguished ambassadors of

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Studies 26 (November, 1981): 125-128.

[2]For a contemporary perspective on "Americanism" and European civilization in the twenties, see Hiram Motherwell, The Imperial Dollar (New York, 1929), 183-221. An historical study focusing particularly on economic and political influences is Frank Costigliola, Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933 (Ithaca, 1984). Robert Sklar briefly discusses the overseas impact of Hollywood in Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies (New York, 1975), 215-227.

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service and good-will; foreign commentators, more often than not, saw the clubs as yet another incursion of American mass culture--Babbitt overseas.

The success of Rotary abroad illuminates trans-national similarities in twentieth century middle class culture, even as variations in club life also demonstrated differences in style and tradition among businessmen of separate countries. In fitting with the focus of this study, however, this chapter will concentrate on what the clubs' international expansion reveals about the American service ethic.[3] Certainly, their internationalism was one of the great successes of the service organizations--a demonstration that club preachment could awaken in small town businessmen an awareness of world citizenship. Nevertheless, the clubs' international program ultimately suffered from limitations of their service ideal. Well-suited to smooth over discord within an homogenous social group, the service ethic could not mediate between conflicting national ideologies. As post-World War II clubs continued to grow rapidly abroad, they also continued to demonstrate that the sentiments which reinforced local neighborliness proved a weak foundation for an enduring international community, even among men of essentially similar economic backgrounds.

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[3]To give an adequate account of the role of service clubs overseas requires much further research, which I hope eventually to be able to undertake.

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Rotary's Early International Expansion

The first service federation was also the first to charter a club in another country. Canadians who were friends of a Chicago club member formed the seventeenth Rotary club in Winnipeg in 1909. Rotary at the time made much of its new "international" character, but close business and family connections of American club members from the upper border states facilitated northern expansion, and the outlook of Canadian businessman appeared to differ little from their American counterparts.[4] A more significant international growth occurred later the same year, when Stuart Morrow, a promoter unaffiliated with Rotary, discovered that businessmen in the British Isles would pay to join this new American organization. He quickly formed "unauthorized" clubs in Belfast, Dublin, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, milking the members for as much of their dues as he could before moving on, often in considerable haste. Meanwhile, Rotary's "official" representative, Arthur Sheldon, was simultaneously setting up a London branch of "Sheldon's School of Salesmanship" and forming Rotary Clubs in England. By 1912, due to the

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[4] David Shelley Nicholl, The Golden Wheel: The Story of Rotary 1905 to the Present (Estover, Plymouth, 1984), 81; E.C. Russell, Fifty Years of Rotary in Ottawa (Ottawa, 1966); Victor Lauriston, History of the Sarnia Rotary Club (Sarnia, Ontario, 1966).

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combined efforts of these two hucksters, Rotary could claim ten clubs in the British Isles.[5]

Shortly after, Rotary piggybacked its way into non-English speaking countries, when American businessmen carried the movement south, into Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Argentina, and Uruguay--and east, to the Philippines, China, India, and Japan. Only World War I delayed its further expansion into Europe. Soon after the armistice, as Paul Harris described it, Rotary followed "the dove of peace" to aid in reconstruction of the continent. Businessmen in France, Germany, Italy, while they did not flock to membership with the enthusiasm of those in the British Empire, nevertheless formed Rotary clubs in nearly all of their major cities. As it entered the 1920's, Rotary was truly a world-wide movement.[6]

The international expansion of Rotary owed a great deal to its founder. While organizing Rotary, Harris did not plan an international club, but his world travels as a youth had been a crucial formative experience. When the opportunity for world-wide expansion presented itself, he quickly pressed forward, despite early opposition from other influential members. Still, growth such as that

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[5]David Shelley Nicholl, The Golden Wheel, 92-115.

[6]Paul Harris, My Road to Rotary (Chicago, 1948), 238-240, 254. Descriptions of European clubs found in Histoire du Rotary en France; Rotary aus Baden-Baden; and Rotary Clubs of Italy, Annario.

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fostered by Morrow occurred almost spontaneously, surprising even Harris.[7] Rotary's quick spread around the world demonstrates the degree to which it coincided with the growth of American business's international interests and influence.

Economic connections between England and America, of course, had always been close; but early in the twentieth century, the flow of goods out from America aroused in England both fear and a grudging admiration of "the Americanization of the world." J. Potter quotes a 1901 London Daily Mail article describing the "all-american" routine of a British businessman:

> He sits on a Nebraskan swivel chair, before a Michigan roll-top desk, writes his letters on a Syracuse typewriter, signing them with a New York fountain pen, and drying them with a blotting-sheet from New England. The letter copies are put away in files manufactured in Grand Rapids. At lunch time he hastily swallows some cold roast beef that comes from the Mid-West cow, and flavours it with Pittsburgh pickles, followed by a few Delaware tinned peaches, and then soothes his mind with a couple of Virginia cigarettes.

Twenty years later, the caricature would have had the businessman enjoying his lunch at a Rotary meeting. When Rotary held its first convention out of America, in Edinburgh, the local press, in the words of C.E. Hewitt, saw the Rotarian "to be coeval with the pole-squatter, the

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[7]Emerson Gauss, History of the Rotary Club of Chicago Mss. on file at Rotary International, 13.

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comic-strip buffoon, and the man who propelled a pea-nut from New York to Detroit with the tip of his nose." Yet public ridicule of this American fad did not prevent its increased presence; by the end of the 1920's, there were over 400 clubs in Great Britain.[8]

In other European countries, where economic connections were less direct, the numbers still testified to a growing cultural influence, with over 300 clubs on the continent by the 1930's. Elsewhere, the international expansion of Rotary was so closely connected with the widening sphere of American business influence that the first clubs in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru were all considered "a fine tribute to the American business spirit." In the Middle East and Orient, Rotary emissary Jim Davidson won new clubs by blatantly emphasizing the economic advantage of association with American prosperity--hoping later to convert the clubs to true Rotary principles.[9] One of the non-western countries that proved most receptive to Rotary was Japan, which during the first three decades of the twentieth century imported technology and American business techniques to aid a fledgling electronics industry, while

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[8]Quoted in J. Potter, "America and Europe: Economic Interconnections" in Robin W. Winks, ed. Other Voices, Other Views: An International Collection of Essays from the Bicentennial. (Westport, Conn., 1978), 149-163.

[9]David Shelly Nicholl, The Golden Wheel, 175-230.

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westernizing its popular culture with movies and baseball.[10] Membership in Rotary meshed nicely with this Americanization.

The Impact of Liberal Corporatism

While the growing internationalism of American business served as a vehicle for Rotary expansion, Rotary's internationalism displayed characteristics that historians associate with the philosophy of liberal corporatism. Many leaders of the American business community placed their faith in voluntary international agreements between business, encouraged but not regulated by friendly governments. If voluntary cooperation succeeded in tempering economic competition, and nations discarded divisive and wasteful political rivalries, then capitalism could bring about an efficient and peaceful world community. Although not all in government or business shared the liberal corporate vision, America's foreign policy in the 1920's enjoyed a good deal of success

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[10]Yasukichi Yasuba, "American Impact on the Japanese Economy" in Robin Winks, ed., Other Voices, Other Views, pp.164-180; on the enormous popularity of baseball in twenties Japan, see Richard C. Cradeau, "Pearl Harbor: A Failure of Baseball?," Journal of Popular Culture 15 (Spring, 1982): 67-73.

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following this general direction.[11]

As an international voluntary association, Rotary had many antecedents--most prominently those inspired by missionary Christianity, but also secular organizations like fraternal orders and scholarly societies. Rotary, however, following the model of liberal corporatism, claimed that because businessmen of all countries shared common capitalist concerns, their organization was uniquely placed to foster a broad international understanding. As a 1915 editorial described Rotary's "plans and dreams," if Rotary could unite "a large number of representative businessmen of every nation and every race under the banner of Service," it would thereby insure "the prevalence of a spirit of International Peace and Good Will."[12] Rotarians expressed these sentiments more and more often as American involvement in the European War increased; the prosperity businessmen enjoyed as a result of the conflict heightened their consciousness of international economic independence. At the same time, America's position apart from the

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[11]Joan Hoff Wilson, American Business and Foreign Policy, 1920-1933 (Lexington, Kentucky, 1971) and Hogan, Informal Entente, The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918-1928 (Columbia, Mo. 1977) discuss corporate liberalism's manifestations in foreign policy. For an analysis of this mode of thinking in American society as a whole see Ellis Hawley, The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order, A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933 (New York, 1971).

[12]Editorial, The Rotarian 6 (Feb., 1915): 22.

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conflagration gave a sense of moral superiority, which was only increased by the nation's timely intervention in the war. Leaders of post-war Rotary felt that business transcended national interest, and that businessmen -- particularly American businessmen -- carried the responsibilities of a moral mission to rebuild international order where politicians had failed. "I earnestly commend the duty of pressing the organization of Rotary clubs into prostrate Europe" President John Poole told the 1919 convention. "Let us help to there unfold the blessings for liberty and peace in the same spirit that brought victory to the world. Any effort that makes for healthy industrial progress is always welcome... And Rotary, standing apart from all hindering alignments, is happily situated to render a great public service."[13]

Rotarians who thus spoke of the world as "one great interlocking business" and who called for business and professional men to sit down "without kings or congresses" to try "to devise a plan which means safety and permanency" revealed the broad influence of a corporate perspective. However,there were limits to the American Rotarians' corporatism. The Americans were primarily concerned with the sociable aspects of international interaction, and

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[13]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 10th Annual Convention, Salt Lake City, 1919, 24. Wilson describes the impact of WWI on American business sentiment as a whole in American Business and Foreign Policy, 1920-1933, 1-30.

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their movement only indirectly aligned itself with corporate liberal tenets. They couched their calls for economic cooperation in a vague idealism and eschewed direct action. Reluctant to take stands controversial at home, as an organization they refused time and again to endorse specific measures like the World Court, an International Board of Arbitration, or reduction of war debts or tariffs, even though convention discussion and magazine articles indicated a significant amount of support for positive action on all of these issues.[14]

This inaction on the part of Americans frustrated the European Rotarians, who often sponsored resolutions proposing a concrete international program. Much of the Europeans' greater interest in this aspect of the Rotary program had to do with their proximity to other nations,

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[14]General discussion of the Rotary international sentiment (and the above quotes) appear in Crawford C. McCullough, "Modern Business and World Progress" The Rotarian 21 (March, 1922): 105-106, and Harry Rogers, address at the 1927 Rotary Convention, Ostend, Proceedings, 22-26. Discussion of international organizations, resolutions concerning them, and their ultimate rejection occurred particularly at the overseas conventions. At the 12th Convention in Edinburgh in 1921, Rotarian delegates set up a Committee on International Amity but rejected endorsement of Arbitration; at Ostend, in 1927, they tabled a resolution concerning international debt (Proceedings, 184-185), and at Vienna, in 1931, took no action after a lengthy discussion on tariff reduction, (Proceedings, 219-240.) An editorial in The Rotarian 26 (May, 1925): 32, was typical of the American Rotarian attitude toward the World Court, expressing support, but refusing endorsement, and then calling for local Rotary clubs to set up "an informative program to enlighten members" as to the World Court's function.

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but European Rotary also had its corporate element. Charles Maier has contended that Western Europeans, even more than their American counterparts, were moving toward a social order that could be termed corporatist--in which organized social groups exerted their private power at the expense of parliamentary authority. The middle classes, Maier argues, played the primary role in this transformation, turning to corporatism in their search for stability after World War I.[15]

Rotary obviously never became a primary vehicle for this transformation. But the action of European Rotary Clubs suggests that Rotary could align itself, more than in America, with this corporatist tendency. Not only did Europeans place more hope than Americans in Rotary as the basis for international agreements between businessmen, they also demonstrated a greater interest in Rotary's vocational program. In England, for example, British Rotarians listed as service projects the establishment of pension schemes, the revival of apprenticeship, the allocation of profits for staff welfare and sports, and the sponsorship of industrial and workers councils. In Italy, Rotarians became enthusiastic fascists; and in Germany, they reached agreements with Hitler. Rotarians everywhere in Europe were more amenable than Americans to welfare

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[15]Charles S. Maier, Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I (Princeton, 1975), 3-15.

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capitalism, whatever its political stripe.[16]

Class and Rotary in Europe

This greater accommodation to corporatism demonstrates also a greater willingness among European Rotarians to acknowledge class interest. Americans neglected vocational service, partly because, as small businessmen, they were not major employers, but also because they felt uncomfortable acknowledging "labor" and "capital" as two permanent interest groups. Sample rosters from England, France, and Italy show approximately the same rank of businessmen as in America, and in their speeches European Rotarians also talk paternalistically of the unity of labor and capital. But European Rotarians expressed much more openly their position in the social structure. In Germany and Italy, Rotary assumed a more aristocratic tone, adapting itself to the character of the bourgeois elite in those countries. Membership became something of a badge of social distinction. (Members in Italy included Duke of

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[16] The European interest in vocational service was not only evident at conventions, where Europeans such as Anton Verkade (Netherlands) and Sidney Pascall (Great Britain) chaired Vocational Service Committees and tried to push Rotary to greater emphasis on this program, but also was observed by historians of overseas Rotary, Nicholl, The Golden Wheel, 204-209, and C.E. Hewitt, Toward My Neighbour--The Social Influence of the Rotary Club Movement, 79-81.

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Aosta, the Duke of the Abruzzi, the Prince of Piedmont, the Count of Turin and the Prince of Udine, King Victory Emmanuel III.) In England, on the other hand, Rotarians complained of their inability to attract the "big men of their community." According to C.E. Hewitt, as they saw "big bosses negotiate price rings and cartels," Rotarians "were antagonized. The Rotarian's ideal of service above self became more and more the ideal of the small businessman." In America, to be sure, certain elements of Rotary fellowship demonstrated an heightened class awareness, but in these European countries, the club served much more openly as a social vehicle for class interest.[17]

Since Americans dominated the leadership of Rotary and set its policies, the frank acknowledgement of class did not alter the structure of European clubs. Nevertheless, the slightly different place Rotary assumed in European middle class life did create an obvious difference in the fellowship at club meetings. In fact, though social affairs could dominate European club life (particularly, it appears, in Italy and France) "fellowship," in the American sense of the word, did not play an important role in

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[17]My impressions and a sampling of rosters of the European clubs are drawn from Nicholls, The Golden Wheel, 203-310; Hewitt, Towards My Neighbour 9-46; Annuario del Distretto Italiano, 1936-37 (Milano, 1936) [translated for me by Nancy McCall]; Annuaire des Rotary-Clubs de France, 1938-39 (Paris, 1938); Histoire du Rotary en France [translated for me by Cathy Charles], Dr. Erich Heintel, 50 Jahre Rotary Club Wien, 1925-1975 (Wien, 1975); Alfons Schler, 25 Jahre Rotary Club Baden-Baden (Baden-Baden, 1955).

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European Rotary meetings. By all accounts, the meetings of foreign Rotarians encouraged little backslapping, no "get acquainted stunts," few practical jokes--in some clubs, even first names were rare. At the 1927 convention, in Ostend, Belgium, American Rotarians embarrassed their European counterparts when they serenaded King Albert with "he's a jolly good fellow." By the same token, on a tour of European clubs, Paul Harris was offended when German Rotarians took little notice of his presence at one of their meetings. The difference was perhaps most dramatically illustrated at the 1921 convention in Edinburgh. Immediately after a speech of Rotarian Alfred Peters of Sheffield recommending dignity in initiation of members, Rotarian Frank W. Warden of Syracuse stood up. "The highbrows have had their chance," he called out. "Now its time to loosen up!" and he lead the convention in a singing of "Old McDonald's Farm."[18]

As noted earlier, informal fellowship was one of Rotary's distinguishing and frequently satirized characteristics in America. American Rotarians defended behavior considered undignified even by the less decorous standards of their country, because of the good feelings they felt it created. Yet this most important American trait was the one aspect of Rotary that did not translate successfully to foreign Rotary clubs. Judging from their

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[18]Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1921, 88; Nicholls, 257.

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convention remarks, Rotarians in other countries felt such noisy gregariousness beside the point. The sociability of European clubs either acquired the exclusiveness of aristocratic privilege, or it stressed the practical purposes of middle class stewardship and the infusion of the spiritual into daily occupational life. The novelist Thomas Mann, a member of the Dresden Rotary Club during the twenties, was one of several Europeans who eloquently expressed this latter appeal of Rotary. Speaking in 1930 before the Rotary International Conference of Directors, he noted Germany's precarious situation "between two fires"--one on the political right, the other on the left. Rotary suggested itself as part of a middle way:

> In the Rotary club men of all tongues and of all climes have united, men who know well the eternal values in the sphere of the individual, in the sphere of art and culture, men who are determined to defend it against the accusation of materialism--men, however, who are equally determined that they will permit no false romanticism to interfere with their will to serve and to work for a better human organization.[19]

Beside such a grand conception of Rotary's purpose, the glad-handing American clubman, with his stunts and singalongs, appears pathetically frivolous. Yet it was not necessarily lack of profundity but rather a response to a

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[19]Mann's speech was published in The Rotarian 37 (Nov. 1930): 9-11, 54-55, incongruously placed before Knute Rockne's article "Footballs or Hand-Grenades." Rockne "respectfully suggest[ed] football as a substitute for bloodshed.

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different social system that accounts for much of the Americans' stress on informal fellowship. More significant to the American class structure than its Old World counterpart was its geography. Scattered in small towns, cities, or suburbs across the country, American Rotarians felt the need for a neighborly unity more than class solidarity. If foreign Rotarians saw their clubs primarily as a means of establishing or reinforcing their social position within a more restrictive class structure, then dignity and seriousness of purpose would best assert their standing. On the other hand, American Rotarians, concerned more with tightening the horizontal bonds of community, in what they perceived as their open social system, sought a common denominator--unifying affability, without titles or even surnames.[20]

Of course, the American stress on community does not mean a complete lack of class awareness. Given the homogeneity of the communities in which service clubs

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[20]Given my limited sources, I would not want to extend my generalizations beyond an explanation of the differences in Rotarian behavior. Three scholars who do, with observations upon which I base my analysis, are Jurgen Kocka, whose White Collar Workers in America, 1890-1914 (Beverly Hills, Ca., 1980) authoritatively establishes the greater importance of "the collar line" in continental Europe; J. Martin Evans, America: The View from Europe.(San Francisco, 1976), who comments convincingly on the relationship between the "openness" and "exteriority" of American culture and its candor and informality; and Arthur Marwick, who undertakes an ambitious comparison of class based on images in popular and government usage in Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930 (New York, 1980).

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thrived, class and community feelings were often equivalent. The Americans' class interest remained present, but was most often expressed in community service projects, activities far less important to European clubs. "Rotary in my country means the same as Rotary in yours -- an organization trying to develop in the individual a social consciousness," Rotarian William De Cock Boning of the Netherlands told the 1936 convention. But he went on to note the "marked differences in the character of service." In describing Rotary's middle class social consciousness, "community spirit" was an Americanism.[21]

The American Impulse to International Service

As Rotary learned the lessons of foreign relations in Europe, the other service organizations had slowly begun to extend their version of community spirit to the international scene. Both Lions and Kiwanis sought the prestige of claiming to be international organizations, and had expanded into Canada shortly after their founding--the Lions even called themselves international before they actually had a club outside of American borders. Yet in

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[21] "International Roundtable" at Atlantic City in 1936. Proceedings, 76-89. The Americans greater stress on community service was also noted by Harris, This Rotarian Age. Henri Diffre, Histoire du Rotary en France, makes no mention of community service.

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the twenties and thirties, neither federation followed the course of Rotary and aggressively pursued world-wide expansion. Kiwanians considered further international expansion several times during the twenties and thirties, but ultimately decided to concentrate on "the frontier of community service." (They reversed their decision in 1959.) The Lions, usually open to membership expansion of any type, held back from full-scale internationalism in the 1920's--their hesitation perhaps due to the heavy emphasis on Americanization and "Our Nations Safety" in their domestic program. They did acquire clubs, made up mostly of transplanted Americans, in China, Mexico, and Cuba. In the late thirties, reflecting a nearly faddish concern for Pan Americanism begun with Roosevelt's "good neighbor policy," they established a foothold in Central America, founding clubs in Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Puerto Rico. The genuine world-wide expansion of Lionism, however, came after WWII.[22]

If the Lions and Kiwanis organizations had merely expressed their reluctance to expand world-wide and then moved back to local community service, they might have served as isolationist counter-examples to Rotary

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[22] Mss. "History of Lionism" (on file with Lions International), 14-60; Moserrate Acosta Ayala, Historia, Filosofia Y Psicologia del Leonism (Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, 1985); L.A. "Larry" Hapgood, The Men Who Wear the K: The Story of Kiwanis (Indianapolis, 1981), 97-105.

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internationalism. But instead spokesmen made sure to affirm their commitment to world involvement. "A Lions convention is a lesson in world understanding, where you can meet representatives of every nation, race, and creed" claimed a 1926 editorial about the San Francisco Convention, which perhaps had an Asian, a sampling of Jews and Catholics, and a few Canadians in attendance. In 1929 the Lions added to their list of objectives, in imitation of Rotary, a pledge "to create and foster a spirit of generous consideration among the peoples of the world through a study of the problems of international relationships from the standpoint of business and professional ethics."[23]

Kiwanis, without such a wide-ranging international objective, went to great lengths to stress their particular inter-nation connection with Canada. Their somewhat strained effort at international service led to the celebration of some unusual symbols. The Rush-Bagot treaty received a yearly commemorative as "the first great treaty of disarmament." Harding, perhaps because he died just after he gave a speech on Canadian-American friendship, was memorialized as a man "who blazed new trails in the interest of concord and harmony among nations." And the unarmed border between Canada and the United States became

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[23]Editorial, The Lion 9 (August, 1926): 14; "History of Lionism," 60.

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"an object lesson of peace...to all the world", a symbol of "the tie that binds more firmly each year, ever-increasing acquaintance and comradeship."[24] Thus Kiwanis and Lions in the twenties and thirties joined Rotary in pursuit of the ideal, if not yet the genuine practice, of international fellowship.

Foreign expansion carried prestige and the attraction of the exotic, but American service clubs appeared to pursue international service as an extension of their community spirit. Club spokesmen often discussed the world as if it were "across the backyard fence." "International service is simply to develop between nations the same spirit that operates between neighboring families," wrote William Osborne in The Rotarian in 1930. The key to such a spirit, said Kiwanian C. King Woodbridge, was cooperation and trust, born of "world fraternization." As Leland Case put it in The Rotarian, international friction would dissolve, if "the friendly understanding that unkinks local club problems" was applied to the world movement.[25]

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[24]Dedication Ceremonies, Harding International Good-Will Memorial, Kiwanis Activities, 1925, 5-6;"Report of U.S. Canada Week" Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings 1927, 160-161; "Pilgrimage to Harding International Good-Will Memorial," Proceedings, 1928; "Rush-Bagot Memorial Tablet Erected by Kiwanis International" Kiwanis Magazine 20, (June, 1935): 246-247.

[25]William Osborne, "Across the Backyard Fence," The Rotarian 36 (April, 1930): 26-27. C. King Woodbridge "Service Clubs an Aid to International Understanding," Address, Kiwanis Intl Convention, Proceedings, 10th Annual Convention, Montreal, 1926, 129-137; Leland Wood, "Our

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In such a view of world affairs, the problem of war arrived through miscommunication--national hostility became simple ignorance, and peace a realization of common purpose. "The [international] anarchy is in men's minds" wrote a Rotarian. Lion Frank Miles thought that "the idea of Lionism spread to all the world...would make a warless world. Let Lions take the leadership in mobilization of thought for honorable peace." Since essential human nature was everywhere the same, conflict of interests, when examined rationally, disappeared. "That the whole world rides in Fords and laughs at Charlie Chaplin is not without meaning" argued Rotarian George Pope Shannon. If the mere externals of life could all be made uniform, then "the essential human spirit everywhere the same shall hold communion over the earth, unhampered by impertinent local divergences."[26] As a way of facilitating communication, and eliminating "divergences," all service clubs supported the study of Esperanto as an international auxiliary language, so that "language will no longer block peace."[27]

Expanding Backyard," The Rotarian 44 (May, 1934), 5.

[26]George Pope Shannon, "Peace follows the Order Book," The Rotarian 37 (August, 1930): 12-14; Frank Miles, "Lionism and World Peace" quoted in "History of Lionism," 60; Salvador de Madariaga, "The Anarchy in Men's Minds," The Rotarian 44 (Jan, 1934): 6-8, 54-56.

[27]Quote from discussion of Esperanto at Rotary's 22nd Annual Convention, Vienna, 1931 Proceedings, 177-184. Frank Ninkovich discusses Americans support for Esperanto in the late twenties and early thirties as symptomatic of the apolitical idealism that dominated American foreign

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Visible behind the hyperbole that surrounded international service were the same assumptions that motivated clubs' community service projects. Clubs could help unify the world the way they could communities, by creating public sentiment for peace. International problems dissolved into apolitical questions of personality, and sociability became the key to world understanding. Obviously, these assumptions made the clubs, as international sociable associations, central to the resolution of world affairs. More significantly, however, this outlook gave small businessmen and professionals a rational and comforting way of viewing a tangled world. They could tell themselves, as did Rotary President Will Manier, in 1937, that "the problems of Rotary clubs of Kentucky are the same as the problems of Rotary Clubs of Europe."[28]

Local Internationalism

By reducing world conflict to a local scale,

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relations in that period. Frank A.Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relation, 1938-1950 (New York, 1981), 20-22.

[28]Will Manier, "Rotary--An Adventure in International Understanding and Goodwill," Proceedings, 29th Annual Convention, Nice, France, 1937, 45.

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international service not only provided a reassuring familiarity to foreign involvement, it also helped expand the horizon of the local club. Not that international service ever occupied a central place on the local club program. Most clubs shared the dilemma of the Mitchell, Ind. Rotary Club; though they believed themselves "far from provincial in spirit", as a "small club located inland, we seem to not approach the International feature of Rotary with any definite results."[29]

Yet local clubs did find ways at least to acknowledge their membership in an international association. A popular program, adopted by clubs of all three organizations, was to choose a designated sister club, and exchange letters, memorabilia, and visiting members. Slightly more ambitious, the Rotary club of Winnetka, Illinois in 1930 persuaded language classes of their high school to write letters to new foreign clubs. Combining, as Winnetka did, the themes of youth and international service proved popular. Several Lions club during the twenties sponsored children as part of a Near East relief program, while all clubs were eager to treat exchange students to at least a luncheon meeting. One Kiwanis club made a point of inviting every foreign student it encountered to their meetings to discuss peace, for "had we taken in 1917 all

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[29]Mitchell Ind. Report to District Governor, Jan 7, 1931; on file at Rotary International.

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the boys and girls of kindergarten age [and] started a program in international peace today we would have a group of children in the age of twenty to twenty-five years old who would have peace as their foremost thought." Developing international understanding and good will "in the minds of the community at large" also spurred the Rotary Club of Nashville, which set up "an Institute of International Understanding"--a several week program of speeches and discussion.[30]

While these efforts of local clubs must surely be credited with awakening, for at least a short time, the members' international consciousness, most of the activities failed to deal seriously with the heightening international crisis in the late twenties and early thirties. The contact with foreign cultures promoted by international service carried an appeal akin to tourism, briefly exposing members to exotic climes. The Lincoln Neb. Rotary Club's special meeting, "A Night in Bohemia"--where members dressed in authentic costumes, served

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[30]J.A. Cage, "Institute of International Understanding" Address, Proceedings, 1937, 67-69; Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 19th Intl. Convention, San Antonio, 1935, 248. Fort Madison, Iowa, and Fort Smith Ark. Lions Clubs supported children during 1925. "Lions Club Activities," The Lion 7 (Feb., 1925): 33. The Philadelphia Rotary Club pursued a typical international program. It adopted Nottingham England at its sister city in 1921; presented a gavel to the Rome Club made of timber from Independence Hall in 1929, and sponsored exchange students throughout the twenties and thirties.

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Czechoslovakian dishes, and sang Czech songs--provided a good example of the service clubs' escapist internationalism. On the national level, the club magazines often ran National Geographic style pictorial reviews of Canada, Latin American or European countries, particularly prior to foreign conventions. "Crystal clear laughter, the rhythm of dancing feet, the soft strumming of guitar," an advertisement for the 1935 Lions convention described Mexico City, "where every day is a holiday." This emphasis added interest and appeal to international activity. At the same time, however, it could actually hinder understanding of important economic and political distinctions between countries, by ignoring harsh realities and reducing foreign practices to quaint custom.[31]

Rotary and International Conflict in the Thirties

The consensual methods of international service received their most severe test in the 1930's, when

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[31]"A Night in Bohemia" Rotary Propeller (December 7, 1929); similar programs described in The Rotarian 36 (Jan. 1930), 45. Ernest Stavrum, "Foreign Charms of Mexico Told By Non-Lion," The Lion (April, 1934): 17, 34. Robert Mead muses briefly on the inadequacies of tourism and international exchange programs in Robert O.Mead, Atlantic Legacy: Essays in American European Cultural History (New York: 1969) 197-200.

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conflict between countries in the Rotary fold gradually ripened into war. These conflicts put Rotary in an untenable position. Primarily a social organization, Rotary had no means of responding to deep political crises. It would be unrealistic, therefore, to expect Rotary to have responded adequately to the conflict eventually resulting in World War II. On the other hand, the organization's absolute refusal to judge--to "take sides"--reveals limitations that angered even some Rotarians.

The Depression, while it caused Rotary difficulties at home, did not lessen the association's commitment to international service. If anything, Rotary increased its level of world involvement. The 1931 convention, held in Vienna, the first organized by Europeans, witnessed a "frank and courageous" discussion of the tariff question at an "International Roundtable." As Rotarians congratulated themselves on the "new atmosphere of friendliness" between French and German Rotary clubs, a portent of what was to come appeared in the Far East. China's difficulties, abetted by Japan, brought a letter to the to the August Rotarian asking if "the Rotary clubs are going to sit down idly and not do something." The answer perhaps was provided in the next issue, when an editorial entitled "Rotary in the Orient" praised the Japanese feudal code, "the Bushido," finding it comparable to the Rotary codes of

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ethics.[32]

The intentions of Japan could still, in the early thirties, appear benign. Not so with those of Hitler, who, shortly after he rose to power, threatened to eliminate the German Rotary clubs, along with all other voluntary associations not sponsored by the state. The president of Rotary, however, sought an audience with the Fuhrer, and was able to assure Rotarians in November, 1933, that when "the real character of Rotary" was explained to "Germans in posts of high responsibility, a satisfactory understanding was reached." Rotary, as a result, continued in Germany "without change in its fundamental features and with the approval of the Hitler Administration." Still, "some of our Jewish Rotarians terminated their membership under varying conditions."[33]

While tensions rose in the East and Europe, Rotarians, mostly from Europe, attempted without success to strengthen Rotary's support of international justice. Even such a mild and vaguely worded resolution calling on Rotary to "amplify its characteristics as regards international

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[32]Editorial, "The Vienna Verdict," The Rotarian 39 (July, 1934): 34, also Proceedings, 22nd Annual Convention, Vienna, 1931; Letter, The Rotarian (Aug., 1934): 40; Editorial, "Rotary in the Orient" The Rotarian (Oct., 1931): 23.

[33]John Nelson, "Rotary Carries on in Germany," The Rotarian 44 (Nov. 1933): 21. It should be noted that one of the men forced to terminate their membership was Thomas Mann.

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service" aroused much debate and was tabled. Rotary had already clarified its official stand on international politics. "Rotary in its corporate capacity does not attempt to interfere with forms of government nor with political systems or schools of thought." Thus the organization attempted to preserve an absolute neutrality, "offering its good offices" to both Japan and China as they began their undeclared war.[34]

Faced with a troubled international scene, officials in the Rotary administration tried to offend no one. When Hitler finally forced Rotary in Germany to disband completely in 1938, the president of Rotary, Maurice Duperrey, praised the German Rotarians for "their example that the first duty of every Rotarian is to be a loyal citizen of his own country, even though one is devoted to the cause of international understanding." Yet some Rotarians, like the Governor of the Swedish District Harald Tolle, felt Rotary's actions "too few and too faltering." Answering those critics, the Chairman of the 1938 session on International Service first stated the case of those supporting strong stands on international issues: "There are those who think in times like these Rotary's present procedure is inane and meaningless."

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[34]Pres. John Nelson, "Rotary and the State," The Rotarian 43 (Nov., 1933): 57-59; Maurice Duperrey, "Around the World with Rotary," Proceedings 29th Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1938, 9-22.

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> These friends of Rotary believe that it is time that the high minded, right-thinking Rotarians of all nations rise as one man in denunciation of offending nations in order that the hand of justice throughout the world be sustained and international lawlessness be banished.

But the Chairman rejected this "high and moral concept of Rotary," because, following it, "Rotary would be blown in a thousand pieces."[35]

Yet by this time, most of the "offending nations" had disbanded their Rotary clubs, ending with the Italians in 1939. Since their decision was reached "only after earnest study" by Italian Rotarians, "with regard to their obligations as good citizens of their country," an editorial enjoined Rotarians to avoid criticism of the Italians, because it would "most likely embarrass them." This fine and paralyzing sensitivity disgusted some leading British Rotarians, particularly as they found themselves being bombed by Hitler. "Are we to wait and again be contemptibly kicked out, as in Germany, for lack of courage to leave?" asked the editor of the British magazine Rotary Service, W.W. Blair Fish, in 1940. Rotarian Andrews, in the same publication in 1941, wrote contemptuously of the Rotary organization's assertion that a Rotarian must be a good patriot above all. By that principle, "only those Germans who exalt the state above humanity can be good

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[35]Proceedings, 1938 Convention, 9-22, 97, 428-429.

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Rotarians."[36]

Rotary's refusal to take a stand undoubtedly reflected official U.S. neutrality and the concern of leading American Rotarians' that statements condemning the Axis countries would involve the club in controversies at home. But it also demonstrates the inadequacy of the Rotarians' sociable service ethic in the face of true conflict of interest. "To deal with conflicting ideologies is and always has been Rotary's specialty", claimed Paul Harris optimistically before the 1939 Rotary convention. Yet that is exactly what Rotary as an organization could not do. Despite assertions to the contrary, the organization existed more to reinforce international good-will than to create it and had no mechanisms to arbitrate disputes between members, or even to censure clubs which supported obvious violations of international law. While Rotary in the midst of the depression could not have been expected to alert Americans to the danger in the international scene, the organization might have supported more strongly--even only with resolutions--those foreign Rotarians in the 1930's who were themselves willing to take a stand. That fear of controversy disabled Rotary's ability to act--even with direct evidence of fascism's terrors--constitutes a

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[36]Editorial, The Rotarian 54, (Jan., 1939): 45; W.W. Blair Fish, "From a Rotary Viewpoint," Rotary Service 1 (Nov., 1940): 9; Wilifred Andrews, "Rotary and Impartiality -- A Lamentable Farce," Rotary Service 2 (Dec., 1941): 16.

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serious moral failing of the service ethic.

Service Clubs and the "New" Internationalism

It was almost with relief that service clubs turned away from the moral dilemmas of internationalism and the economic pressures of the depression to immerse themselves in the war effort. Here was an activity for which their organization was ideally suited--mobilizing a united population to support a patriotic cause. In efforts similar to those of World War I, club members gave blood, supported war bond drives, collected scrap metal, helped with rationing, grew victory gardens, and assisted the U.S.O in entertaining the boys at home. Rotarians corresponded with clubmembers in allied countries, and did what they could to send packages of food and supplies. Most of all, their morale building activities helped preserve "mental hygiene" in what The Lion saw as "the war of nerves the Axis is waging on civilization through threats, fatigue, and rumors."[37]

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[37]"Lions International in War Time," The Lion 24 (July, 1942): 16-17; L.A. "Larry" Hapgood, The Men Who Wear the K (Indianapolis, 1981), 80-86; Nicholl, The Golden Wheel, 220-236; Luis M. Morales, "Mental Hygiene in the War of Nerves" ibid. 13, 54. The majority of speeches before Kiwanis clubs in 1942 concerned morale, closely followed by "youth activities in wartime." Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings 25th Annual Convention, 1942, 29.

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The successful conclusion of the war once again brought businessmen the world over flooding into service clubs. "Consciously or unconsciously, the entire world is clamoring for Rotary," International President S. Kendrick Guernsey announced to the San Francisco convention in 1947, as he reviewed a growth that had placed Rotary in more than 100 countries. The Lions could also claim that "the spirit of Lionism can cure the world's ills" while they chartered, world-wide, more than one club daily.[38] As American government policy pursued an increasingly international emphasis, so too did the clubs continue to make internationalism a keynote of their service programs. Rotary and the Lions received flattering invitations to send representatives to the U.N. advisory conference in San Francisco in 1945, as "voluntary associations with an international membership," and from its beginning the United Nations received the support of all the service clubs.

Support of the institutions and committees of the U.N. did not change the conviction of the clubs that peace required an internationally-minded community. Rotarians made little mention of the failures of their efforts at good-will in the thirties; indeed, Paul Harris, in his last

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[38]S. Kendrick Gurensey, Inaugural Message, Proceedings 38th Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1947, 28-32; Ellis Lovelass, "The Spirit of Lionism Can Cure the World's Ills," The Lion 28 (Feb., 1946): 15.

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message before his death, told the 1946 convention that "Rotarians are deeply thankful that governments of the world are following the trail blazed by Rotary forty-one years ago."[39] Even more than before the war, it appeared to service club members that "the world is shrinking -- today we are all neighbors" and that the world unity depended upon "mutual understanding based on a fuller and more intimate knowledge of our fellow men in foreign lands." The theme of the 1947 Rotary International Convention was "living together in friendship and understanding."[40] With the world as one big neighborhood, the United Nations became a community institution. Along with the Kiwanis club of Middletown Ohio, club members viewed the U.N., as an international town meeting, defusing aggression through debate and thereby promoting their own common interest.[41]

Frank Ninkovich argues that this view of the U.N. dominated official United States policy as well. He faults the Americans for not recognizing that the United Nations was in fact a political structure, dealing with concerns of power, and not simply an organizational expression of international good-will. While this idealism might have

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[39]Rotary Intl, Proceedings 37th Annual Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., 1946, 15.

[40]Proceedings, San Francisco, 1947, 32.

[41]Walker Y. Brooks, "Diplomacy from the Cross Roads," The Kiwanis Magazine 32 (Nov. 1947), 8-9.

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been foolish naivete, Ninkovich thinks that in fact it masked America's own drive for power. By making cultural unity as defined by the United States the prerequisite for world order, Americans could pursue their own interests in the name of international harmony.[42]

Although service clubs were certainly aware that, as Melvyn Jones put it, their fellowship might "counteract the harmful ideologies through which enemies of democracy divide men", they did not implement any explicitly Cold War programs.[43] They displayed, in the late forties and early fifties, great concerns about the threat of communism, both in America and around the world, and it is perhaps no accident that enormous post-war service club growth occurred in developing countries, first in Latin America and then the Far East, corresponding with massive infusions of U.S. aid and carefully cultivated economic ties. But the service clubs continued to focus on encouraging personal fellowship--sponsoring scholarships abroad, encouraging club exchanges, sending "Paul Harris Fellows" to visit "as many foreign Rotary clubs as possible." All clubs carefully avoided any suggestions that Americans "owned" the service club movement. Both Rotary and the Lions--and later, in the 1960's Kiwanis, were careful to

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[42]Frank Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas 85-181.

[43]Melvyn Jones, "World Unity Through Mutual Understanding," The Lion 31 (April, 1949): 1.

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elect their officers from a wide range of countries. In fact, foreign expansion soon outpaced growth within the States. By the 1960's, more service club members lived outside the United States than in America.[44]

Far more than an American drive for power, the clubs demonstrate the expansiveness of what John Gilkeson has called "middle-class cultural imperialism."[45] Displaying high-minded ideals, always concerned that controversy be controlled and conflict be smoothed over, this group of businessmen attempted to extend their good-will to all who would accept it. Even as they exposed members to foreign cultures and new experiences, the clubs discounted the differences; theirs was not primarily an ethic of pluralism. Rather, they gathered under the banner of benevolent capitalism, promoting a world-wide neighborliness, always hoping that unity lay just a handshake away.

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[44]The current secretary of Rotary, Herbert Pigman, estimates that membership in the clubs of the Far East alone will soon exceed American membership. David Shelly Nicholl, The Golden Wheel, 236.

[45]Gilkeson, Middle-Class Providence, 354.

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CHAPTER 7

SERVING THE SUBURBS: POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS IN CLUB LIFE

> GRANDFATHER: And this is only the beginning, son. Because men will always yearn for fellowship--communities will always need service--business must always have high standards--and the world more than anything else needs understanding and brotherhood.
>
> GRANDMOTHER: Rotary gives us a glimpse of humanity as we would like it to be.
>
> GRANDFATHER: Yes, Jimmy, in the future Rotary will go as far as each Rotarian will let it go.
>
> Stage darkens...Boy scouts appear carrying flags of all nations in which there are Rotary clubs, while an unseen voice proclaims: "1905 one country, one club--a handful of members. 1955 90 countries, 8700 clubs, ALMOST HALF A MILLION MEMBERS"

Concluding scene of "The Anniversary Album" -- pageant at the 1955 Rotary Convention.

Rotary and its two kindred organizations had good reason to celebrate in 1955. World War II, like its 1918 predecessor, had inaugurated another period of rapid expansion in club membership. Suburbanization fueled club growth; a majority of new members came from the rapidly multiplying suburban enclaves, where familiar programs in education, traffic safety, and recreation acquired a new relevance and local significance. Foreign expansion for the Lions and Rotary was equally rapid, and their student exchange and foreign aid programs gave both organizations a sense of world-wide prestige.

But despite their apparent compatibility with post-war

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life, club members expressed more openly than ever before their resentment of institutional growth in America society. Club spokesman railed against big government and big labor as representatives of the excesses of corporate America--and celebrated the clubs as true representatives of the "American Way." Of course, since the headquarters of the service organizations themselves required large bureaucracies, spokesman could hardly denounce all corporate organization. Instead, they increasingly described the clubs as part of the "independent sector" of American institutional life, pursuing the voluntarism that kept the democratic tradition alive.

Club members perhaps still felt they stood apart from the corporate trends exerting an ever greater influence in post-war America. But these residents of suburbia and members of the "independent sector," no longer organized in defense of a distinctive style of life. They spoke much less of "bringing a dead town to life" or of "restoring a sense of craft" to their business. They remained as concerned as ever about local issues; if anything, suburban living induced a greater resident parochialism than did small town community. However, as the clubs passed through the turbulent sixties and seventies, their brand of sociability no longer seemed quite relevant to the experiences of small businessmen. What had begun as a relatively progressive association of local clubs dedicated

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to community service had become a mature organization, following a familiar round of fellowship and philanthropy--and, despite the hopes of its founders, never quite achieving the status of a central American institution.

Small Businessmen in a Big Business World

Although the service clubs recruited over 300,000 new members in the decade following World War II, the infusion of new businessmen did not bring in the corporate officers that some club leaders hoped would join. Throughout the 1930's, with small business suffering hard times and in apparent jeopardy from continued economic centralization, Rotarian spokesmen worried that the club did not attract the corporate executive. Highly mobile as they stepped up the corporate ladder, young executives did not seem to share the civic concerns of well-rooted small businessmen.[1]

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[1]These fears were first voiced in a Rotarian article in 1931 ["A Rotarian's Son Predicts" (May, 1931): 15-16] but references appeared in most debates about membership restrictions, in particular at the 1937 convention in Nice, France [Proceedings 321-333]. Interestingly, Rotarian concerns about corporate neglect of community welfare were echoed by C. Wright Mills and Melville J. Ulmer in their war-time study of small cities commissioned by the Senate, "Small Business and Civic Welfare" published by the Select Committee on Small Business, Small Business and the Quality of American Life: A Compilation of Source Material on the Relationship between Small Business and the quality of Life, 1946-1976 (Washington, D.C., 1977), 545-583. Although Mills expressed a general contempt for the American businessman, his sympathies both here and in White

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Post-war expansion did generally increase "executive" membership in all the clubs. "Many of our employees in the communities where we operate are members of Lions Clubs" Clifford Hood, vice-president of U.S. Steel condescendingly told the 1951 Lions Convention.[2] But, as a number of sociological studies convincingly establish, the involvement of large corporations in community associations such as the service clubs seldom extended above middle management representatives, joining mainly to establish community good-will.[3] Surveys done by research firms for organization headquarters confirmed that expansion had not significantly changed the membership's small business and professional character.[4] In 1947, an article in The

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Collar definitely lay with the small entrepreneur of the old middle class.

[2]Clifford F. Hood, Address, Lions Intl., Proceedings, 34th Annual Convention, Atlantic City, N.J., 1951, 133-137.

[3]Most of these studies took place in the fifties, as sociologists attempted to determine the role of the corporation in the local community power structure. Representative articles include R.O. Schulze, "The Role of Economic Dominants in Community Power Structure" American Sociological Review 23 (February, 1958): 3-9; N. Long, "The Corporation, its Satellites and the Local Community" in D.W. Minor and S. Greer, eds., The Concept of Community (Chicago; 1959), 163-176; Donald A. Clelland and William H. Form, "Economic Dominants and Community Power: A Comparative Analysis" and Phillip Mott, "The Role of the Absentee-Owned Corporation in the Changing Community, in M. Aiken and P.E. Mott, eds., The Structure of Community Power (New York, 1970).

[4] One such survey, taken of Rotarians in 1947, found 44% owned their business, while another 35% were corporate officers and executives in smaller firms. As further indication of these Rotarians' involvement in small

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Kiwanis Magazine hopefully predicted "fine results" if "large corporations joined the community" and local clubs. As was already quite apparent, however, corporation executives would not involve themselves in the type of sociable voluntary activity the clubs represented.[5]

That club membership retained its small business character did not bode well for the future influence of service organizations. However, immediately after the war, club prospects looked bright. In both retail and manufacturing sectors returning veterans swelled the ranks of small businessmen. Until a downturn hit small business in the mid-fifties, prosperity reigned, amidst an outpouring of editorial support linking small businessmen and civic virtue. Clubs themselves were praised in popular periodicals--Colliers ran a laudatory article in 1948, and Life did a pictorial on the 1949 Lions convention. As in the twenties, club members could depend on the Saturday

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business, 66% belonged to their local chamber of commerce. Another survey of Kiwanians in 1956 reported that 86% either owned their business or made a significant portion of their business's purchases. Don Herold, "Meet Yourself, Mr. Reader," The Rotarian 69 (Jan., 1947): 31-32; Merle H. Tucker, "The Man Who Wears the K," Kiwanis Magazine 41 (Nov., 1956): 35-38.

[5]J. George, "Corporations 'Join' the Community," Kiwanis Magazine 32 (Oct., 1947): 12-13. Robert K. Merton found that corporate executives, operating on the basis of a "cosmopolitan" frame of reference, were much less inclined to join sociable organizations designed for "making contacts" and tended to join associations based on special skills and knowledge. Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York, 1968), 452-453.

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Evening Post to tell the "truth about service clubs"--that during their meetings, members' analyses of national politics "were as informed and intelligent as anything I'd read" and that, given the chance, they "could run the country handily."[6]

With membership expanding rapidly, no new Mencken or Lewis to torment them, and the American public seemingly convinced of the virtues of small businessmen and service organizations, clubs could feel they enjoyed a rightful prestige as representatives of American principles. "The democratic way is the Rotary way" Rotarian Walter Williams told the 1950 convention. "America's great dynamic strength exists because out of the grass roots each citizen has been a dynamic producer, planner, and doer" and nothing exemplified this strength better than "Rotary community service."[7] Kiwanian O. Sam Cummings echoed these

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[6]"With the Lions," Life 27 (Aug 1, 1949): 25; Oren Arnold, "Clubs are Trumps," Colliers 121 (Jan., 1948):11-13; Jerome Ellison, "The Truth About Service Clubs" Saturday Evening Post 224 (Oct. 13, 1951): 38-39. The post-World War II position of small business is described in Steven Solomon, Small Business USA: the Role of Small Companies in Sparking America's Economic Transformation (New York, 1984), 71-75; Stanley Hollander, "The Effects of Industrialization on Small Retailing in the United States in the Twentieth Century" and Harold Vatter, "The Position of Small Business in American Manufacturing, 1870-1970," both in Stuart Bruchey, ed., Small Business in American Life (New York, 1980). John Bunzel discusses the post-war celebration of small business in The American Small Businessman (New York, 1979 [reprint of 1955 ed.]).

[7]Walter Williams, "Spectators or Players," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 1950, 52-59.

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sentiments in a 1952 Kiwanis Magazine editorial. As "articulate representatives of the great middle class" club members "most vigorously champion the cause of the private enterprise system" essential for "the preservation of our way of life."[8]

Resentment of `Socialist Trends'

Yet even though they expressed confidence in their mission, club members also appeared convinced that the American Way was under siege. The clearest threat came from outside American society--the great communist powers and their agents of subversion. But communists were not the only group working to undermine American traditions. "Big government" and "big labor" had also abandoned the American Way, and were careening out of control down an unfamiliar path. Club members, certain they represented true democratic principles, but aware of their lack of influence over the major forces shaping American society, lashed out with uncharacteristic resentment at the "sinister forces trying to muscle in on Libertyville."[9]

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[8]O. Sam Cummings, "Kiwanians, Champions of Private Enterprise," Kiwanis Magazine 37 (Jan. 1952): 10-12.

[9]Quote from J.J. Kaufman, "They're Selling Freedom," The Lion 33 (July, 1951), 12-14.

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Club members supported whole-heartedly the anti-communist crusades of the late forties and early fifties, although they generally avoided the paranoia associated with the extremes of McCarthyism. Involvement in the Cold War, the Rosenberg case, and the pervasiveness of anti-communism among politicians and business leaders made members' anxieties plausible.[10] The Russians represented a significant threat, and, even worse, had ridiculed the service clubs, "where full grown men, merchants of suspenders or electric ranges, roared upon command."[11]

In their eagerness to defend "American democratic capitalism," club members at times exaggerated the presence of the red menace in ways that today strain credulity. An article in the Kiwanis Magazine worried about the "one

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[10]Robert Griffith, "American Politics and the Origins of McCarthyism" in Griffith and Athan Theoharis, eds., The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York, 1974) argues convincingly that the Red Scare owed a great deal to the compromises political leaders made to win support for their particular programs--compromises that systematically weakened liberal opposition, and created an environment in which the claims of conservative businessmen's associations, veterans organizations, patriotic societies and of course McCarthy himself were given a hearing.

[11]This Menckenesque line came from a Soviet observer of American life, and apparently was widely reported in American newspapers. All service clubs took affront, but none more than the Lions, who devoted several pages of The Lion to responses from around America. One of them came from the Wall Street Journal, who defended the clubs on the grounds that American democracy "includes the privileges of the citizen to make himself ridiculous if he chooses." With such friends... "What A Soviet Reporter Said About America--and About Lions" The Lion 29 (Sept., 1946): 20-21.

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half-million of our people gullible enough to follow the pied pipers of international communism." To show how easy it would be for Communists to take over a Kiwanis club, a member secretly enrolled himself in a mock Communist party, and then won election to the presidency. More than one club pulled this stunt, which always ended with "shocked Kiwanians" arriving for luncheon in a room with a picture of Stalin on the podium and signs on the walls proclaiming "Down with Capitalistic Kiwanians" and "The United Soviets of America."[12] Lions president Harold Nutter told the 1951 convention that though he did "not believe any Lion is a Communist" it was always possible that they would "associate with an organization such as ours to cause confusion and distrust." He reassured convention attendees that "neither I nor any of the members of my own club in Camden, New Jersey would tolerate for a moment a communist among our members."[13]

However, club members do not appear obsessed with fears of communist takeover. As Samuel Stouffer observed in 1954, "the picture of the average American as a person with the jitters, trembling lest he find a Red under the bed, is

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[12]Milton Lomask, "500,000 Americans Can Be Wrong," Kiwanis Magazine 36 (Feb., 1951): 24-25; J.J. McGraw, "Red-Letter Day," Kiwanis Magazine 34 (March, 1949): 34-35; "Kiwanis Activities," Kiwanis Magazine 36 (Oct., 1951): 41.

[13]Lions Int., Proceedings, 1951, 172.

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clearly nonsense."[14] While Lions President Fisher warned the 1949 convention that communism "creates decay from within, using the spores of discontent and disillusionment to break down the supporting fiber of our Christian democratic way of life, and reduce it to a worthless mass of rotten ineptitude" he knew the antidote: "Lionism is a purifying force." An editorial in the Kiwanis Magazine also gave the clubs the advantage in battle with the reds. "Certainly the communist internationale hasn't been able to place an average of 67 agents in every one of 2,650 communities and win for them positions of leadership in business and the professions." Hugh Stevenson's 1949 Kiwanian article, "Why do men become communists?" provided an interpretation of communism's appeal that explained this sinister menace in familiar terms. According to Stevenson, communism met the psychological needs of those not integrated in the community, giving "release to resentment" supplying a "scapegoat for failure" and "flattering the ego." Reading the article, one gets the feeling that a little counseling could remove any shade of pink.[15]

The clubs' response to the threat of communism reveals

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[14]Quoted in Griffith, "American Politics and the Origins of McCarthyism," 4.

[15]"Lion Fisher's Speech at the International Convention" The Lion 32 (Sept., 1949): 21; Editorial, Kiwanis Magazine 32 (Sept., 1947): 48; Hugh Stevenson, "Why is Anyone a Communist?" Kiwanis Magazine 34 (March, 1949): 9-11.

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less a deep-seated fear than a desire to protect the free enterprise system on all fronts--or, as one of the 1951 Kiwanis International objectives put it, to "resist all trends toward socialization." Ultimately, clubs worried most about the "socialism" that emanated from within American society. Members had complained during the depression of the growth of government, but, uncertain in crisis conditions, had considered "government interference" perhaps necessary. Now, as prosperity seemed assured, it appeared the federal government had capitulated to indulgent paternalism--something a Rotarian clergyman called "the greatest threat yet advanced against the American way." In trying to satisfy the unreasonable demands of lazy and dissatisfied Americans, government had "slammed the door in the face of the average man." Once begun on its socialistic course, government began to expand of its own accord and, as Senator Wallace Bennett told the 1951 Rotary convention, "the common citizen is of less importance than the maintenance of the [government] organization and its functions."[16]

One beneficiary of government's growth--a group apparently not among the "average men" hurt by federal bureaucracy--was the labor union. "Labor has cried and

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[16] S. Robertson, "Indulgent Paternalism" The Rotarian 76 (May, 1950): 57. Wallace F. Bennett, "How Rotary Can Become a Vital Source," Rotary Intl., Proceedings 42nd Annual Convention, Atlantic City, 1951, 37-41.

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schemed for power" wrote Harry Adams in the Kiwanis Magazine in 1947. "Well, it has it now. Labor has the power to take all Americans to even higher standards of living or to new and uncharted depths of disaster." Adams left no doubt that the latter possibility would be more likely.[17] Beyond the fact that both unions and the government were large organizations hostile to small business interests, club spokesmen seldom made clear the precise link between the two. But club interpretation of these two bureaucracies' growth frequently stressed that they both capitalized on men's psychological weaknesses. An official Rotarian publication, Service is My Business, argued that labor's power, although aided by government paternalism, had a psychological basis--similar to communism's appeal as identified by Kiwanian Stevenson. Membership in unions gratified "feelings of inferiority caused by [automated] conditions in modern employment" by strike victories over employers. Unfortunately, the book argued, this psychological compensation drives an "unnatural wedge" between employees and managers that "decreases production and threatens the whole structure of society." Like unions, government growth could also indicate a society-threatening mental laxity. Government restrictions and regulations were "bred in apathy." The

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[17]Henry Adams, "Labor's Date With Destiny" Kiwanis Magazine 32 (Feb. 1947): 14-15.

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"welfare state is only a state of mind," the editor of the Kiwanis Magazine argued, as he called for an alert citizenry.[18]

The Symptoms of Pop-Psychology

Thus the psychological mode of analysis that first appeared in the thirties became more pervasive after the war, as club spokesmen analyzed "socialistic trends" in terms of apathy or resentment, supplying "compensation" for "feelings of inferiority." All levels of American culture had shifted from a sociological to a psychological mode of analysis by the fifties. Intellectuals led the way in speaking of "status anxiety" and "transferral."[19] The

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[18]F.B.S., "Pull up a Chair," Kiwanis Magazine 35 (Jan., 1950), 56; Rotary International, Service is My Business (Chicago, 1948), 95-126.

[19]Ironically, they applied such an interpretation to club conservatism. When critics of America's "pseudo-conservatives" in the 1950's sought to explain why apparently irrational views on the "socialistic" tendencies of post-war America acquired such wide currency, they turned to a socio-psychological explanation. America was at the time experiencing unprecedented prosperity; there appeared to be no legitimate grounds for grievance among the kinds of people that made up the anti-Communist bloc. Therefore, they argued that behind the conservatives' resentment lay the anxieties of status deprivation. The commentators--among them C. Wright Mills, Richard Hofstadter, and Seymour Martin Lipset, reasoned that, though prosperous, the small businessmen and professionals who made up the old middle class now found themselves on the fringes of society, and needed scapegoats for their loss of prestige. These displaced conservatives vented

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clubs' psychological terminology probably displayed more the influence of popular writers such as the honorary Rotarian Norman Vincent Peale, who explained his "positive psychology" before the 1949 Rotarian Convention, and also published articles in Kiwanis Magazine and The Lion.[20] Club psychologizing also owed a great deal to the faddish interest in the "science of human relations" that swept corporate industry after the war. The clubs fully shared in the enthusiasm for what a Lion article called "a new art bringing a revolution to industry." Service is My Business gushed that "each store, each office, each workshop, each factory is a laboratory of human engineering, where vital knowledge is waiting to be organized."[21]

Club members might have found this way of thinking

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their spleen on labor and big government as symbols of the new order. Their politics expressed frustration and insecurity, and their paeans to free enterprise represented an attempt to recapture their lost status. C. Wright Mills, White Collar (New York, 1951); essays of the others pursuing the same line of thought appeared in Daniel Bell, ed., The New American Right (New York, 1955), republished as The Radical Right (New York, 1963).

[20]Norman Vincent Peale, "Formula for Great Days Ahead," Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 40th Annual Convention, New York, 1949, 67-73; Peale, "The Art of Living in Post-War America," Kiwanis Magazine 32 (August, 1947), 18-19; and "How to Find a Richer Life," The Lion 36 (June, 1954): 12-13. For an insightful analysis of Peale and pop-psychology in American culture, see Donald Meyer, The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts (New York, 1980).

[21]Rotary Intl., Service is My Business, 97; "Human Relations," The Lion 36 (Nov., 1953): 7, 47.

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particularly appealing because it downplayed the genuine conflict of interest small businessmen might feel with government bureaucrats and labor unions. As local controversy was soothed with club fellowship, so might these national tendencies be therapeutically solved with proper, scientific applications of service.

Yet beyond these traditional booster concerns for social consensus, the psychologizing of club social analysis in the early fifties revealed how deeply members themselves had been influenced by the corporate way of life. As they moved through the twentieth century, the clubs' spokesmen had moved from promoting cooperation to advance community interest, to talk of individual "adjustment" to the social order, and finally to touting "human engineering" as a balm for worker discontent. Each of these rhetorical positions display a conservative impulse to preserve social unity. Yet each moves closer to what could be termed a bureaucratic perspective of human action--stressing psychological manipulation in the interest of organizational stability, and worrying over the difficulties of personal "fulfillment" amidst a shadowy institutional world beyond individual control.[22]

As club leaders began to express a corporate

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[22]see Peter Berger, "Toward a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis" in Facing Up to Modernity, Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion (New York, 1977), 23-34.

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perspective--even in their complaints about bureaucratic expansion--it became apparent that the foundations of their sociability were slowly dissolving. From their beginning, service clubs predicated their fellowship on a reaction to the urban, bureaucratic way of life. This reaction continued to hold great appeal in the early fifties--the clubs' ability to rally small businessmen concerned about "socialistic tendencies" might explain the clubs' rapid growth. But once members' more pressing fears about the survival of the "American Way" subsided, clubs struggled to recall the cooperative, small town-oriented values upon which they once organized. Not only was corporate thinking proving difficult to resist, another powerful social trend, suburbanization, was also undermining the clubs' rationale.

Success in Suburbia

In 1955, Rotary's North American membership stood at 268,136, Kiwanis's had grown to 228,905, and the Lions had solidified their newly-gained position as the largest service organization, with a total of 325,640 American and Canadian members. Yet the international federations could still claim that 70% of local clubs served communities with populations under 20,000. These new club communities were not the small towns on the defensive that provided such

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fertile club ground in the twenties, but rather expanding, newly-settled suburban communities. From 1945-1955, more than 70% of new clubs formed fell within census-defined Standard Metropolitan Areas.[23] This growth showed the service clubs playing an important role in the suburban experience, as one of the multitude of associations that attracted the suburban "joiner."

Most of the suburbanization during the forties and fifties resulted from migration out of the cities, generated by returning servicemen searching for affordable, family-style housing. Many national associations regarded these new communities as territory ripe for organization. As Herbert Gans showed in his well-known study of one of the later Levittowns, the original impulse to "join" often came from "external sources"--representatives from the national organizations recruiting members to form new clubs. For the service clubs, with their emphasis on expansion, this procedure had already been well-established by the 1940's. Expansion followed a set bureaucratic process, involving the proposal of possible new club communities by the District Governor, a survey of potential members, a "sponsoring club," and a representative from

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[23]Statistics compiled by comparing data in the Bureau of the Census's County and City Data Book, 1956 and club directories, 1945-1955.

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headquarters to coordinate the final formation.[24]

Of course, club recruiters could only do so much to attract new members; not all demand for clubs was created externally. An important motive for joining service clubs remained the possibility of business contacts, particularly important in a new locale. Yet sociologists have also established that suburban conditions, while they do not create the urge to join, do enhance other motives for community participation. A recent study of suburban attitudes found that the relative affluence of residents, the homogeneity of background and interest, and the community's location as a slightly isolated "subarea" of the city encouraged "neighboring" and local involvement, similar to that found in small town culture. Gans observes that organizations allowed a new and largely homogenous population to sort itself by interests and prestige. In addition, as members of a new residential area, Levittowners felt particularly anxious to establish the trappings of a genuine community, including associations like service clubs--whether or not these associations proved important to their lives as a whole. In the suburbs, then, the service organizations benefitted both from small-town-like conditions and from the desire to

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[24]Herbert Gans, The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community (New York, 1967), 52-67. At Rotary's headquarters, most of the paperwork in each club's file concerns elaborate founding procedures.

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emulate small town community.[25]

On the basis of these similar conditions, service clubs could continue pursuing many of the same kinds of projects as they did in the twenties. Projects involving youth work, education, and traffic safety continued to occupy their service agenda. Yet service club interests did shift noticeably, displaying the impact of their suburban location. Club activities turned even more to leisure facilities-- the building of parks and swimming pools. Youth work often involved close cooperation with the PTA, such as that of the Kiwanis Club of Torrington, Conn., which cosponsored with the PTA "lectures on child psychology." Other Kiwanis clubs sought to "teach community living" to youngsters, delving into problems such as "zoning, sewerage disposal, church attendance--in fact all of the things people face today." Club fund-raising activities, though still directed to traditional service themes such as the helping the blind, aid for crippled children, and college scholarships, turned more and more to weekend, non-business oriented events such as pancake breakfasts, chicken barbecues, and door-to-door solicitation--selling light bulbs, fruit cake, even

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[25] Claude S. Fischer and Robert Max Jackson, "Suburbs, Networks, and Attitudes," in Barry Schwartz, ed., The Changing Face of the Suburbs (Chicago, 1976), 279-305; Gans, The Levittowners, 135-149.

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monosodium glutamate in a "three shaker set."[26] Noticeably missing, in these activities, are the booster incentives so clear in earlier club community service. In fact, the clubs responded to suburban residence with a gradual deemphasis on the element of community in the club's service ethic.

"The Community of Limited Liability"

Suburban life did not, as many early commentators feared, mean the complete loss of "gemeinschaft." Even in recent years, analysts of suburban life note the persistence of such concerns as "neighborly" behavior and local allegiance.[27] Despite the enthusiasm for service clubs that resulted from these concerns, however, suburban localism did not mean that the clubs could draw on a reservoir of "community spirit." William Whyte noted in

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[26]Club Activities, Kiwanis Magazine 36, (March, 1951), 41; Ruth Wyrick, "Teaching Community Living," Kiwanis Magazine 37 (June, 1952): 22; John Read Carel, "Buster's Barbecue," The Lion 35 (Nov., 1952): 6-8; "They Waded In," The Lion 35 (June, 1953): 17-19; "Project Light Bulb," The Lion 35 (February, 1954): 18-19; "Selling Accent," The Lion 37 (July-August, 1955): 23-25.

[27]see Albert Hunter, "Persistence of Local Sentiments in Mass Society" in Roland L. Warren and Larry Lyon, ed., New Perspectives on the American Community (Homewood, Ill., 1983), 178-194; and Warren, "External Forces Affecting Local Communities--Bad News and Good News" Journal of Community Development Society 6 (Fall, 1975): 6-21.

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Park Forest tremendous pressures to participate in neighborly activity. So strong was this pressure to conform, Whyte felt, that the residents he studied often avoided the broader community interest organizations (such as service clubs) for more intimate block-wide associations -- so as not to alienate the neighbors.[28]

Whyte had an axe to grind, hoping to stimulate individuals to resist such conformity, but other observers with different themes have worried that suburban life does not encourage broad community awareness. In his study of Philadelphia and its suburbs, Sam Bass Warner argues that most suburban dwellers wish to live "informally among equals", free of responsibilities and demands. Throughout the twentieth century, disregard of public responsibility, though endemic to metropolitan Philadelphia, best characterized the suburbs.[29] In a more recent appraisal of suburban culture, Barry Schwartz adds a third critical perspective, finding suburban sociability "diffuse." A wide variety of organizations form, but, drawing on an small number of very similar people, they cannot sustain a specialized purpose. The result is a "confusion of means and ends" which creates an active, but shallow, associational life. As an example, Schwartz cites the

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[28]William Whyte, The Organization Man (New York, 1956), 359-365.

[29]Sam Bass Warner, The Private City (Philadelphia, 1968), 173-176.

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suburban church, which, more than its urban counterpart, serves general socialization functions--sponsoring activities such as bingo, singles dances, and scout troops--and perhaps loses its spirituality in the process.[30]

These criticisms of suburban life echo earlier criticisms of small town culture--the conformity enforced by excessive neighboring; the insularity of the isolated provincial; and the loss of leisure-time fulfillment caused by "over-organization." It is precisely these community vices that service clubs claimed to have successfully overcome in small towns all over the country, where members testified that they "pulled a town together." However, a crucial element of small town service club life, and the focus of small town boosterism, failed to appear in post-war suburbia. These largely residential communities did not foster a sense that individual business interest required a stake in overall community success.

The suburbs' general failure to develop a booster ethic can be traced to the pattern of metropolitan development established as early as the twenties. During this first suburban boom period, suburbs sprawled from the city in configurations determined only by developers' land-holdings and the automobile. Retailers, keeping pace with their customers migration, quickly distributed their outlets into

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[30]Barry Schwartz, "Images of Suburbia: Some Revisionist Commentary and Conclusions" in Schwartz, ed. The Changing Face of the Suburbs, 330-332.

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the new residential areas, taking advantage of low-rents and easy accessibility by car. The result, the infamous "suburban strip" and later, spreading quickly after World War II, the shopping center, not only destroyed the retail function of the cities' central business district, it also failed to generate suburban business centers akin to the small town's Main Street.[31] The scattering of the suburbs' commercial interests meant that a sense of a business community based on location did not emerge, no matter how strong a loyalty suburbanites felt to their residential locality. A small retailer who on Main Street might have helped his service club "sell Jonesville to itself," would, in a shopping center location, fund club projects by selling products from national manufacturers door to door.

Service clubs in the post-war suburb thus appeared in an anomalous position. Residents flocked to membership; club growth was as rapid in this type of community as in the twenties small town. But as an institution which at its best combined social, business, and civic concerns, the clubs occupied a far less influential position than in the small town, for these concerns often existed separately in the suburb, and seldom worked together to form a broad sense of community. In a revealing study of Forest Park, a

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[31]Basil G. Zimmer, "The Urban Centrifugal Drift" in Amos H. Hawley and Vincent P. Rock, Metropolitan America in Contemporary Perspective (New York, 1975), 23-91; Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York, 1985), 257-261.

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suburb of Cincinnati, Zane Miller accounts for its patchwork community interest--intense in some areas, indifferent in others--by drawing on the concept of "community of limited liability." Miller argues that Forest Park residents in the fifties and sixties saw themselves as members of several different "communities"--business, professional, religious, or social--of which Forest Park was only one. Only when an issue arose of concern to all these interest groups, such as a development plan affecting property values, did residents display a wider civic concern.[32]

Operating in the suburbs, the service clubs could draw on a number of these "limited" communities. They could still be vehicles for expressing local interest, displaying altruism, or making business contacts. But suburban clubs could not tap a civic loyalty created by a confluence of business interest, residential anxieties, and local pride. "Community service" no longer meant "community spirit."

Service Organizations in Recent Decades

While local clubs felt diminished incentives to boost the community, national leaders also no longer spoke so

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[32]Zane Miller, Suburb: Neighborhood and Community in Forest Park, Ohio, 1935-1976. (Knoxville, Tenn., 1981).

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fervently of community service. In 1926, Lions President W.B. Todd argued that the clubs "prime purpose" is "to make its home town a better place to live." Thirty-five years later, the President of Kiwanis International thought it disillusioning "that we have so usually read [service club objects] as a community improvement association advertisement." Anyone who believes that "community charities form the first business of civic clubs in the second half of the twentieth century is still living in the first half of it." He thought Kiwanis members should start acting and thinking as world citizens. Beginning in 1965, Rotary also sought to promote "world community service." Club charity would no longer meet home-town insufficiencies, but rather go where it was most needed around the world.[33] Demonstrating the increasing significance of the clubs' international membership, this new thrust of service also shows the influence of the Peace Corps, Vista, and other United States government-sponsored voluntary agencies.

The rhetoric of club leaders, in fact, appears more characteristic of a charitable agency than a club promoting fellowship. Spokesmen now talked of the clubs as

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[33]W.B. Todd, "What are We Here For?," The Lion 9 (Oct., 1926): 11, 17; Pres. J.O. Tally Jr., "Message of the President" Proceedings, 46th Annual Kiwanis Convention, Toronto, Ont., 1961, 38-46; C.P.H. Teenstra, Proceedings, 57th Annual Convention, 1966, 225-234; "Dialogue on World Community Service" ibid, 201-208.

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organizers of America's volunteer spirit, in contrast, and at times in competition, with the bureaucracy of government welfare agencies. Rotarians worried in the early sixties about the "civic stagnation" caused by government paternalism. But they reassured themselves that "most of the good work of this nation is done by the millions of people engaged in voluntary work." Lions president Edward Lindsey also felt that the nation was "crying for a resurgence of independent individualism" which the Lions could provide. The clubs belonged to the "independent sector" represented by millions of "dedicated individuals quietly working to tear down old walls of prejudice and understanding."[34]

However, businessmen seemed less inclined to join the "independent sector" than they had a home-town service club. The slow but steady growth that the service clubs experienced from 1955 to 1965 leveled off. Numbers still remained substantial--the Lions American-Canadian membership over 500,000; Rotary's and Kiwanis's over 300,000 and 200,000 respectively. But even though Rotarian William Walk talked hopefully of Rotary's ability to "build

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[34]Examples of the linking of voluntarism and independent individualism include Proceedings, 53rd Convention, Los Angeles, 1962, 250-262; Proceedings, 54th Convention, St. Louis, 1963, 110-117; Edward M. Lindsey, "The Independent Sector," The Lion 49 (October, 1966), 5-6; Clarence L. Sturm, "Call to Leadership" The Lion 42 (July Aug, 1959):5-6, and "The Future of the Service Club Movement: A Discussion" Kiwanis Magazine 53 (Dec. 1967-Jan. 1967): 25-28.

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bridges between people," the protests, riots, and political turmoil of the later sixties did not create confidence in the service club's ideal of consensus. In a 1971 article in Newsweek club leaders worried openly about the clubs' ability to "project a meaningful image to socially conscious young adults." R.P. Merridew dismissed those fears at the Kiwanis Convention of that year, pointing back to the Kiwanians of 1938, who passed resolutions condemning drug trafficking and pollution. Even back then, he told the convention, "Kiwanis had been `relevant.'"[35]

If Merridew hoped to suggest that the clubs had been in advance of their time, then of course he was guilty of convention hyperbole. The clubs' position on each decade's issues could be taken as a solid barometer of middle class opinion. The continuities between the Kiwanis resolutions of 1938 and those of 1970 simply show the constancy of American middle class concerns in the twentieth century. Yet Merridew could not be faulted in claiming "relevance" for the clubs through those years. For a significant section of that middle class, Kiwanis and the other service clubs have provided a way of meeting the transformations of the twentieth century. For a white middle class of small businessmen and professionals, the clubs' fellowship served

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[35]Address, William E. Walk, Rotary Intl., Proceedings, 61st Annual Convention, 1970, 106; "Club Talk," Newsweek 77 (Feb. 15, 1971), 81; Speech of R. P. Merridew, Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 56th Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1971, 98-104.

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as a link between work and leisure; private enterprise and social responsibility; and local, national and international concerns.

The problem the clubs faced in recent decades, and the reason their "relevancy" might be declining, does not stem from the failure of clubs to keep pace with the issues of the day. Articles in recent issues of club magazines discuss not only pollution and drug addiction, but also urban renewal, world hunger, care for the elderly, and computers in small business. Despite their attempts to keep up-to-date, however, the mediating functions these clubs once served no longer seem effective. Even in those metropolitan areas where the native white middle class retains a degree of influence, suburbanization appears to have undermined even the "community of limited liability,"[36] and bureaucracy both public and private has overwhelmed all but the most trivial expressions of altruism. The leadership of the service organizations may themselves have damaged their relevancy to these changed local conditions, by downplaying community service in the name of national prestige. If Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and other kindred organizations wish to survive in contemporary society, their sociability must once again connect personal

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[36]Miller, in Suburb, 203-226, observed in Forest Park a further "turning-inward tendency" in the seventies; see also Sylvia Fava, "Beyond Suburbia" in Warren, ed., New Perspectives on Community, 226-245.

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concerns with public responsibility, or, to put it in club terms, fellowship with service.

A New Sociability?

Nothing better illustrates the changed context for club sociability than an incident at the 1971 Kiwanis convention. Addressing the assembled delegates, the 17 year old president of the Key Club, the youth group sponsored by Kiwanis, was sharply critical of his elders. He had heard that several local clubs had refused to sponsor youth clubs at an integrated school, and wondered how that squared with the clubs' service ideal. His brash observation exposed a contradiction within club life. Although members talked of toleration, and "breaking down barriers of prejudice," through their international service, American service clubs had virtually no black members. For years at conventions, they had tolerated "colored" members from foreign countries, but did not want to associate on a weekly basis with black businessmen from their own town. The inclusiveness of the service ideal clashed with the sociability of club life, and, as was the case in every such conflict, sociability prevailed. By the late 1960's, however, a significant number of Americans

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could no longer accept such discrimination in the name of fellowship.[37]

Service clubs proved themselves more flexible than many other sociable associations, and today have a small percentage of black members. Yet the 1980's has witnessed another breach in the barriers guarding club sociability. In May, 1987, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a local Rotary club in their suit against the Rotary International. The clubs must now allow women to enjoy all the privileges and pleasures of serving the community through fellowship. Rotary had actually debated the admission of women at one of its early conventions, in 1911, but decided against it, as they did with another proposal in the twenties. The formation of businesswomen's service groups--Soroptimists, Zonta, and Quota--in that decade had effectively removed the issue from discussion, until it emerged once again, with the force of law behind it, in the 1980s.[38]

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[37]Key Club President Stephen E. Kolzak, Kiwanis Intl., Proceedings, 1971, 93. Club members are understandably reticent about their past failures in racial tolerance. While an early whites-only clause was removed in the twenties, in deference to dark skinned foreign members, I find no references to black American members until the 1960's. Blacks begin appearing in club magazines in the later sixties, with notations "joined the Pittsburgh club in 1956." I assume, therefore, that the big city clubs finally yielded to desegregation pressures as the Civil Rights movement gathered momentum.

[38]The Supreme Court ruling forcing Rotary International to admit women provides an illuminating perspective on club activities. The suit which resulted in

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All three service organizations will probably recruit women, now that they must admit them, just as all three have increased black membership in recent years.[39] Perhaps the organizations will use this new, genuinely inclusive membership to invigorate their institution, which, in America, has shown some signs of malaise in the last two decades. Perhaps, instead, the clubs face the fate of the lodges in the twentieth century--hanging on through sheer social inertia, attracting a hard core of dedicated members but few others, with even their public insignias unintelligible except to the initiated.

Yet whatever happens to the service clubs, the American middle class appears to have reached yet another of

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the decision was brought by a local club from Duarte, California, which admitted women to bolster a declining membership, and then was ejected by the International organization. The hostility observable in the twenties between local clubs and the organizational bureaucracy remains--one of the women members responsible for the suit was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as saying "I don't feel I was fighting for the rights of women; it was the right of the club to determine the matter for itself." Los Angeles Times (May 5, 1987). Justice Brennan, who wrote the majority decision, ruled against Rotary International by reason of its "public" nature. It fell into that category because it attracts many members, has a high turnover rate, welcomes the participation of non-members, and seeks coverage by the press. Except for the high turnover rate, club leaders have long attempted to sell these qualities to members and the public. For those who wanted to preserve Rotary's male exclusivity, it seems they did their job too well.

[39]I do not discount local resistance, but I believe the desire to expand membership will force the issue. In late August 1987, for example, the Cleveland Rotary club, the third largest in America, announced they had admitted four new women members.

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Denney's "transformations in sociability." It comes, not because of the death of the service ethic, but rather from the fulfillment of its inclusive ideal. If blacks and women achieve parity in sociable organization membership, then groups such as service clubs will be authentically living up to their claims, much repeated through their history, that they destroy "age-old barriers to friendship." On the other hand, genuine inclusiveness will completely alter the type of sociability the business club fosters. Forced first name calling may still be the rule, as might group singing and an occasional practical joke, but the natural bonhomie of men confident of similar experiences and common backgrounds will be disturbed. The service ideal might reach fuller realization, but the fellowship will not be the same.

Conclusion

Even if the clubs had remained all male, however, change would have likely occurred. The service club appeared at a moment when America's traditional middle class felt itself on the defensive. Both its occupational structure and its community life appeared threatened by encroaching urbanism and corporate development. The club assumed a sociability designed to solve some of the

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problems caused this part of the middle class by a modernization that appeared to be passing them by. The service club limited membership, attempting to give selected small businessmen status as community leaders; it exaggerated friendliness and informality, in order to prove the continued neighborliness of growing towns and cities; and it ignored the diverse interests of changing communities, assuming consensus as a way of fostering community spirit and continued economic growth.

As its practices became fully developed, the service club proved most attractive to those communities whose traditions it recalled: businessmen and professionals in small town and cities with largely native white populations. While satisfying local needs, it gave these businessmen contacts with an international movement. Interestingly, businessmen in other countries, with vastly different traditions, also found the American service clubs appealing. For them, the service club movement supplied contacts with the powerful American business community, and also aided in consolidating the business class of their own countries.

After World War II, the service clubs experienced phenomenal world-wide growth. Abroad, developing third world countries proved particularly receptive to this American import. At home, residents of the new middle class suburbs joined many associations, but found a

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movement recalling small town community particularly congenial. Yet as membership continued to climb through the sixties, continuing metropolitan deconcentration began to work against the spirit of community upon which the clubs capitalized. Although it appeared that America might once again become a nation of small towns, they were towns without the residential tradition and business community necessary for the club's brand of sociability.[40] Service clubs remain active in contemporary America, but their future is uncertain.

In 1941, Rotary Secretary Chesley Perry, who had done nearly as much as founder Paul Harris to shape the service club movement, gave a valedictory address to the Rotary Executive Committee. Soon, he would retire, after more than 30 years of service to Rotary, and he felt slightly disgruntled with his recent experience in club life. Businessmen, he believed, had not responded well to the depression. Faced with a crisis, they had not acted in "the spirit of unselfish service." Neither had the Rotary club accomplished much with its international program. Rotarians, Perry felt, needed to keep in mind that "our

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[40]For descriptions of the continued population dispersal and its cultural impact, see Sylvia Fava, "Beyond Suburbia;" Mark Baldassare, Trouble in Paradise: The Suburban Transformation in America (New York, 1986); and John Herbers, The New American Heartland: America's Flight Beyond the Suburbs and How it is Changing Our Future (New York, 1986).

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Rotary movement has existed for more than a quarter century on the thesis that business should be service, that is to say above the acquisition of great wealth and power." The need still remained, as it did when Rotary was founded, for a group of businessmen, "a hardy core of citizenry in every country who are clear in their thinking, energetic in their action, pervasive in their influence. Theirs is the task of invoking the spirit of tolerance, respect for others, and cooperation."[41]

If the clubs' influence in twentieth century America was less than pervasive, it was not for lack of effort. In thousands of projects, members demonstrated their energy. Virtually no community in America is without a park, clinic, or scholarship program sponsored by service clubs. Ultimately, the clubs, designed primarily for fellowship, could do little to intensify club members' impact on twentieth century social trends. But by stressing public responsibility and community action, clubs mobilized small businessmen who might otherwise have been quietly absorbed in the corporate mainstream, and pressed members to extend their horizons beyond private interest.

It appears, in the 1980's, that Perry's hope that the service club movement could provide an inspirational "core

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[41]"Remarks by General Secretary Perry," Meeting of the Executive Committee, 31 Oct., 1941. On file at Rotary International. Perry later rewrote his talk under the title, "Shall it Be Rotary?" which was published in the June, 1942, Rotarian.

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of citizenry" may not be fulfilled. Yet for all their limitations, for all their occasional descents into naivete, buffoonery, and prejudice, these "men of vision," as Mencken sarcastically referred to them, still express a worthwhile ideal. In a society in which corporate responsibility usually means no one takes the blame, where private enterprise is often accompanied by public loss, perhaps the best we can hope for are business leaders willing to share the ethic, if not the fellowship, of the service club.

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