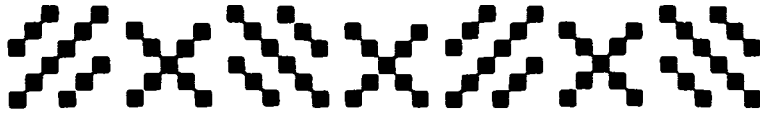




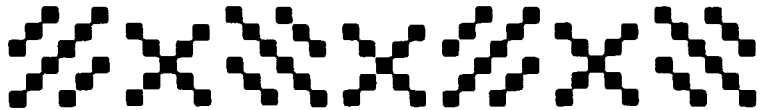
**GEORGE R. DALE: MAYOR OF MUNCIE, INDIANA,  
1930-1934**

Reproduced from Charles Roll, *Indiana: One Hundred and Fifty  
Years of American Development* (5 vols., Chicago, 1931), V, 191.



## Who Governed Middletown? Community Power in Muncie, Indiana, in the 1930s

*Carrolyle M. Frank\**



Fifty years ago, in 1929, Robert and Helen Lynd published *Middletown*, their sociological treatise on Muncie, Indiana. In *Middletown in Transition*, the 1937 sequel to the original "Muncie story," the Lynds noted that since their first study the community had fallen under the control of a prominent, local business family. Admitting that they had not previously perceived the central role played by the Ball family, whom they referred to as the "X family," the Lynds detected what they believed to be a consolidation of influence in the hands of this close-knit clan.<sup>1</sup> By the mid-1930s, the Lynds had concluded that:

Middletown has . . . at present what amounts to a reigning royal family. The power of this family has become so great as to differentiate the city today somewhat from cities with a more diffuse type of control. . . . The business class in Middletown runs the city. The nucleus of business-class control is the X family.<sup>2</sup>

The Lynds conceded that the Balls did not seek to exploit Muncie politically; their control was largely informal and unplanned, and their dominance tended to be unconscious rather than deliberate. The relevant fact, however, is that the Lynds were convinced that "at most significant points in the city's life, one of the X's stands at, or close to, the directing center of that particular local movement. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Thus, they concluded, Muncie, Indiana, a city of almost 50,000 people, was governed by a

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\*Carrolyle M. Frank is associate professor of history and urban studies at Edinboro State College, Edinboro, Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York, 1929); Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York, 1937), 74-101.

<sup>2</sup>Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 77.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

socioeconomic oligarchy or business-class elite clustered around the Ball family.

The five Ball brothers<sup>4</sup> came to Muncie from Buffalo, New York, in 1887 to take advantage of a local natural gas boom. They established a glass manufacturing plant which by the turn of the century was reputed to be the world's largest producer of mason canning jars. These astute entrepreneurs also acquired substantial investments in a number of other important commercial enterprises in Muncie, including an automobile transmission company, a metal furniture factory, a meat packing plant, a bank, the airport, the city's largest department store, and a daily newspaper, the *Morning Star*. Partly as a result of the Great Depression, George Alexander Ball gained control of a financial empire that owned the railroads passing through Muncie. The local state-owned teachers college and the community hospital were named in honor of the Ball family because of its contributions to those institutions. Most of the city's charitable and philanthropic organizations profited from Ball generosity and, presumably, were dominated by the benevolent family. When Robert Lynd revisited Middletown in 1935, two of the original founders of the fruit jar dynasty—Frank Clayton Ball and George A. Ball—were still living. By this time members of the second generation—E. Arthur Ball, Edmund F. Ball, William Hudson Ball, and, until his untimely death in 1936, Frank Eliot Ball—were assuming leading roles in the family business ventures.<sup>5</sup>

In their second Middletown study, the Lynds introduced the theory of "elitism," which holds that local affairs are manipulated behind the scenes by a small group of influential businessmen and social notables interacting together. For the next several decades that explanation of community power was

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<sup>4</sup>The five original Ball brothers were Edmund Burke Ball, Frank Clayton Ball, George Alexander Ball, Dr. Lucius L. Ball, and William Charles Ball.

<sup>5</sup>Frank Clayton Ball, *Memoirs* (Muncie, Ind., 1937), 76-80, 121, 137, 139, 142, 146; John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), II, 282-84, III, 3; "An Empire for Charity," *Business Week* (April 17, 1937), 17-18; Frank D. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County, Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1924), II, 36-38, 80-83, 648-49, 656-57, 664-66, 668-69, 675-76; Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 82-86, 89-90; Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, 1968), 297-302; Charles Roll, *Indiana: One Hundred and Fifty Years of American Development* (5 vols., Chicago, 1931), II, 524, III, 3-7, IV, 109, V, 67, 264; Glenn White, *The Ball State Story: From Normal Institute to University* (Muncie, Ind., 1967), 51, 55, 66, 79-80, 82-83.

the most fashionable model for sociologists.<sup>6</sup> In the 1960s, however, Robert A. Dahl challenged "elitism" by positing a "pluralism" paradigm. A community was not governed by a single elite, according to Dahl, but rather by competing interest or pressure groups motivated into political activity in response to issues directly affecting them.<sup>7</sup> Ritchie P. Lowry added a unique twist to the pluralism thesis; one that was especially useful in the present study. Based on research in Chico, California, Lowry asserted that pluralism can result in an abdication of leadership responsibility with the consequence that no one really runs a community.<sup>8</sup>

Recently another significant model of local decision making has emerged as a counterweight to both the Lynds' elitism and Dahl's pluralism. Daniel J. Elazar, in a concept designated as "federalism," postulated that major decisions concerning a community usually were not determined by either a local elite or by polythetic, hometown pressure groups. Elazar questioned the ability of an elite to dominate because of the diffusion of power created by numerous, overlapping governmental units (municipal, township, county, etc.) within the same locality. Yet civic pressure groups normally did not take the initiative to resolve problems either. Rather, solutions to local issues generally were encouraged, enforced, or stimulated by agencies or authorities "outside" the community, such as the state and federal governments.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See especially Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1953); Robert Presthus, *Men at the Top: A Study in Community Power* (New York, 1964); Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community* (Princeton, N.J., 1958); W. Lloyd Warner and others, *Democracy in Jonesville: A Study in Quality and Inequality* (New York, 1949); W. Lloyd Warner, ed., *Yankee City* (New Haven, Conn., 1963). Although the Lynds' "elitism" no longer enjoys the popularity it once did, a recent study suggests that local elites still exercise a considerable amount of subtle control in a community. Matthew A. Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution: A Study of Non-Decisionmaking in the Cities* (Baltimore, 1971). For the impact community power studies have had on historians, consult David C. Hammack, "Problems in the Historical Study of Power in the Cities and Towns of the United States, 1800-1960," *American Historical Review*, LXXXIII (April, 1978), 323-49.

<sup>7</sup>Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, Conn., 1961). Dahl developed his thesis by studying New Haven, Connecticut, but one of his students applied it to Muncie. Nelson W. Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven, Conn., 1963), 14-24; Nelson W. Polsby, "Power in Middletown: Fact and Value in Community Research," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XXVI (November, 1960), 592-603.

<sup>8</sup>Ritchie P. Lowry, *Who's Running This Town? Community Leadership and Social Change* (New York, 1965).

<sup>9</sup>Daniel J. Elazar, *Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics* (New York, 1970), 367-416, 448-53. For a similar thesis see

A combination of Elazar's federalism and Lowry's version of pluralism presents an alternative model of community decision making to the Lynds' conception of elite rule in Muncie during the 1930s. No single group in Muncie could exercise its influence in local governmental affairs with any consistency. All too often the result was a deadlock in the decision-making process. When competing factions of municipal officials or interest and pressure groups were unable to arrive at answers to issues facing the community, the intervention of external political or governmental forces prompted solutions. Three major issues important to Muncie during the 1930s—the debate over the municipal airport, the disagreement about funding Civil Works Administration projects, and the decade-long controversy concerning river pollution and sewage treatment—will be used to test this revised hypothesis of political influence.<sup>10</sup>

One preliminary point must be made: much of the outside intervention in municipal affairs during the 1930s was the result of the Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Federal intrusion in local affairs did exist prior to the 1930s. On November 12, 1927, for example, thirty federal agents "invaded" Muncie to close some forty speakeasies, cigar stores, and poolrooms which were in violation of the Prohibition Amendment. Such action was necessary because municipal police officers had failed to carry out their duties. As historian Paul A. Carter has noted, "the Noble Experiment was among other things an enormous augmentation of the power of the Federal Government."<sup>11</sup> Other than law enforcement, however, federal interposition was limited prior to 1933. The depression decade marked a significant change in the relationship between municipalities and Washington, D.C.<sup>12</sup>

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Don Martindale and R. Galen Hanson, *Small Town and the Nation: The Conflict of Local and Translocal Forces* (Westport, Conn., 1969).

<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed analysis of local politics and decision making in Muncie in the 1920s and 1930s, see Carrolyle M. Frank, "Politics in Middletown: A Reconsideration of Municipal Government and Community Power in Muncie, Indiana, 1925-1935" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Ball State University, 1974). A summary of the thesis of this work is found in Carrolyle M. Frank, "Middletown' Revisited—Reappraising the Lynds' Classic Studies of Muncie, Indiana," *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly*, XXX (Spring, 1977), 94-100.

<sup>11</sup>Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties* (New York, 1977), 102; Muncie *Evening Press*, November 12, 1927; Muncie *Morning Star*, November 13, 1927.

<sup>12</sup>Daniel J. Elazar has argued that the increase in federal-municipal cooperation was the result of a gradual process rather than an abrupt transition. Elazar, "Urban Problems and the Federal Government: A Historical Inquiry," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXXII (December, 1967), 505-25.

The first of the three issues regarding local decision making, the municipal airport affair, originated early in 1928 when the Muncie Chamber of Commerce established an aviation committee. The Chamber desired to promote development of a publicly owned municipal airport to supplement a small, private flying field that had served the city since 1925.<sup>13</sup> Muncie's thirteen-man, all Republican city council gave the idea a warm reception.<sup>14</sup> Yet the council did little for the next year and a half to advance the project.

The council's inertia was shaken only when the Indiana General Assembly passed a law in 1929 providing for the creation of a department of aviation empowered to "acquire, establish, construct, improve, equip, maintain, control, lease and regulate municipal airports and landing fields. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Speaking in May of that year before a banquet of the Muncie Chamber of Commerce, Hoosier Governor Harry G. Leslie admonished the city council to provide municipal air services for the community.<sup>16</sup> These efforts on the part of outside forces, in the form of state officeholders, spurred the Muncie city council into adopting an ordinance providing for a municipal department of aviation.<sup>17</sup> Republican Mayor John C. Hampton appointed Abbott L. Johnson, II—already serving as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce aviation committee—to head the new department.<sup>18</sup> Although the second generation of the Ball family, especially Frank E. Ball, received much of the credit for the promotion of air transportation in Muncie, Johnson was a key figure. A grandson of one of the founders of Warner Gear and Glascock Brothers, he was a director of both these important local manufacturing firms as well as a flying enthusiast and licensed pilot.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>W. L. Gruenewald and others, *A History of Muncie and Delaware County* (Muncie, Ind., 1953), 71. Unfortunately the minutes of the Muncie Chamber of Commerce for this period are no longer available.

<sup>14</sup>City of Muncie, Indiana, Council Record No. 26, January 30, 1928, p. 109, February 6, 1928, p. 111 (Muncie City Hall, Muncie, Indiana).

<sup>15</sup>Indiana, *Laws* (1929), chap. 57.

<sup>16</sup>Muncie *Evening Press*, May 22, 1929.

<sup>17</sup>City of Muncie, Indiana, Ordinance Record No. 7, May 29, 1929, p. 237 (Muncie City Hall, Muncie, Indiana); Muncie Council Record No. 26, May 29, 1929, p. 153.

<sup>18</sup>Muncie *Evening Press*, June 14, 1929.

<sup>19</sup>C. Walter McCarty and others, eds., *Indiana Today* (Indianapolis, 1942), 361; Roll, *Indiana*, IV, 133-34. Frank E. Ball, son of the so-called "patriarch" of the famous fruit jar family, Frank C. Ball, was a "pioneer in Hoosier flying circles." Young Ball died at the controls of his airplane in May, 1936, at the age of thirty-three. Ball, *Memoirs*, 274-88.

Five weeks after becoming chairman of the city aviation department, Johnson purchased a 160-acre farm north of Muncie and donated it to the municipality as a site for the airport.<sup>20</sup> In response to requests from the aviation department, the city council in August, 1929, appropriated \$27,000 for development of the facility.<sup>21</sup> This amount was not nearly sufficient to carry the project to fruition. Before any further action could be taken on the airport, however, a new mayor and city council were inaugurated in January, 1930.

The new mayor was the irascible George Reynolds Dale, Sr., a Democrat and the muckraking editor-publisher of a weekly newspaper, the *Muncie Post-Democrat*.<sup>22</sup> During the 1920s Dale had waged a courageous campaign against the Ku Klux Klan in Muncie. His efforts attracted national attention after Delaware County Circuit Court Judge Clarence W. Dearth, an alleged member of the hooded organization, sentenced the editor to ninety days at the state prison farm for contempt of court.<sup>23</sup> Several attempts were made on Dale's life in the mid-1920s as a result of his editorial comments about the Klan and corrupt police officers.<sup>24</sup> Dale was elected mayor in 1929 as a result of his relentless exposure of graft in the Hampton administration and his promises to clean up the mess in city hall.<sup>25</sup> The sixty-two year old editor defeated busi-

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<sup>20</sup>Muncie *Morning Star*, July 20, 1929; Muncie Ordinance Record No. 7, August 20, 1929, p. 249.

<sup>21</sup>Muncie Council Record No. 26, August 19, 1929, p. 160; Muncie Ordinance Record No. 7, August 31, 1929, p. 257.

<sup>22</sup>For an analysis of Dale's career as a journalist and politician see Carlyle M. Frank, "Muncie Politics: George R. Dale, Municipal Reformer, 1921-1936," in Dwight W. Hoover and John T. A. Koumoulides, eds., *Conspectus of History, 1977: Cities in History* (Muncie, Ind., [1978]), 34-47.

<sup>23</sup>David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York, 1965; paperback ed., Chicago, 1968), 167, 174; *Dale v. State*, 198 Ind. 110 (1927); "A Fight for Freedom of the Press," *Literary Digest*, XC (August 14, 1926), 9; Roll, *Indiana*, V, 191-92; Hugh Evander Willis, "Punishment for Contempt of Court," *Indiana Law Journal*, II (January, 1927), 309-14. Judge Dearth was subsequently impeached by the Indiana House of Representatives for his continued harassment of Dale. *Indiana, House Journal* (1927), 577-78, 700-702.

<sup>24</sup>Arthur L. Gilliom, Attorney General of Indiana, to the mayor and chief of police of Muncie and the prosecuting attorney of Delaware County, December 6, 1926, George R. Dale Papers (Ball State University Library, Muncie, Indiana); *Muncie Post-Democrat*, March 31, 1922, November 25, 1926.

<sup>25</sup>W. A. S. Douglas, "The Mayor of Middletown," *American Mercury*, XX (August, 1930), 478-86; Frank, "Politics in Middletown," 207-71; Martin D. Schwartz, "Middletown's Maverick Mayor," *Harvard Guardian*, II (November, 1937), 30-36. According to Warren L. Bassett, editor of the *Fourth Estate*, Dale was one of only three newspapermen serving as mayors of American cities in 1930. Warren L. Bassett to Dale, February 6, 1930, Dale Papers.

nessman Robert Denver Barnes, who had the financial support of the Balls and other prominent commercial leaders, who tended to be Republican and who regarded Dale as anathema because of his scathing criticism of them over the years.<sup>26</sup>

In March, 1930, Johnson's aviation department requested \$125,000 from the new city council, nine of the members of which were Democrats, in order to complete construction of the airport. At a public hearing, on March 17, attorney Tod Whipple presented a petition, which he claimed contained three thousand signatures, urging the municipal lawmakers to deny approval of the appropriation because of the depressed state of the local economy. Despite Whipple's protestations, the city council by a margin of ten to three passed an ordinance providing for a bond issue in the amount requested by the aviation department.<sup>27</sup>

Mayor Dale's views on the airport were not known publicly until March 29, when he unexpectedly vetoed the bond ordinance. Contending that he represented the opinion of 90 percent of Muncie's citizens, Dale explained that the city was incapable of shouldering such a heavy financial burden at a time when there were more pressing civic demands.<sup>28</sup> At its April 7 session the council majority mustered only eight votes, thus failing to override the mayor's veto by the required two-thirds margin. Two Democratic councilmen from the south side, working-class section of the city, Clarence R. Hole and Ora T. Shroyer, changed their votes to help sustain the veto.<sup>29</sup> Hole defended his reversal on the grounds that he had been besieged with telephone calls, personal visits, and a petition, bearing the names of over two hundred of his constituents, to vote against the measure. Shroyer admitted that he still favored the airport but switched his vote due to pressure from the taxpayers of his ward.<sup>30</sup>

The mayor's veto of the council's ordinance was not an aberration in the relationship between Muncie's executive and

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<sup>26</sup> Six members of the Ball family donated \$150 each to Dale's Republican mayoral opponent. *Muncie Evening Press*, November 27, 1929. For an example of Dale's editorial castigation of the Muncie Chamber of Commerce and local businessmen in general, see the *Muncie Post-Democrat*, April 20, 1923.

<sup>27</sup> *Muncie Council Record* No. 26, March 17, 1930, pp. 186-88.

<sup>28</sup> *Muncie Evening Press*, March 29, 1930. Dale probably shared the viewpoint of Democratic Councilman Robert Tumelson who referred to the airport project as a playground for the wealthy.

<sup>29</sup> *Muncie Council Record* No. 26, April 7, 1930, pp. 191-92.

<sup>30</sup> *Muncie Evening Press*, April 8, 1930; *Muncie Morning Star*, April 8, 1930.



legislative branches during the Dale administration. Dale and his council rarely saw eye-to-eye on any major issue confronting the city during the five years the editor-mayor held office. The causes of the conflict between Dale and the city council were numerous and complex. Factionalism within the Democratic party in Muncie, personality clashes between Dale and leaders of the council, and the mayor's quixotic and uncompromising nature were among the reasons for the differences. From 1930 through 1932, ten members of the municipal legislature voted against Mayor Dale consistently—and six of the anti-administration faction were Democrats. During the period 1933-1934, Dale actually gained the support of seven councilmen on most major issues. Yet, the council majority did not back the mayor with any enthusiasm during those last two years.<sup>31</sup> The pinnacle of the bitter divisiveness was reached in September, 1932, when the council impeached Dale. The office of mayor was declared vacant on the grounds that Dale was not eligible to retain the post due to his conviction in federal district court for alleged violation of the Prohibition Amendment.<sup>32</sup> After seemingly interminable litigation and an eventual pardon from President Franklin D. Roosevelt in December, 1933, Dale was able to remain in office until the end of his term.<sup>33</sup> This intense Democratic party factionalism and intra-governmental disharmony in Muncie were among those reasons why community leaders were unable to resolve local issues without guidance from outside forces.

After Dale's veto of the municipal airport bond issue in March, 1930, nothing further was done to advance the progress

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<sup>31</sup> Frank, "Politics in Middletown," 578-677. The extent of council opposition to Dale is demonstrated in Guttman scalogram analysis found in *ibid.*, 580-82, 585.

<sup>32</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, September 22, 1932, pp. 323-26; *Dale v. U.S.*, 66F. 2d 666 (1933). According to all indications, Dale was framed on charges of prohibition violations and was convicted on the basis of perjured testimony. Bootleggers and gamblers (whom Dale had put out of business), along with political enemies in both parties, appear to have been involved in the contrived case against Dale to get the meddlesome mayor out of the way. Frank, "Politics in Middletown," 498-523.

<sup>33</sup> Dale to Josephus Daniels, February 16, 1934, Dale Papers; *Dale v. Common Council, et al.*, Cause 8192, Delaware County (Indiana) Superior Court, Civil Order Book 24 (1932); *Dale v. Hubert L. Parkinson, et al.*, Cause 9093, Delaware County (Indiana) Circuit Court, Civil Order Book 154 (1932); *State of Indiana ex rel. Earl Everett v. Dale*, Cause 8243, Delaware County (Indiana) Superior Court, Civil Order Book 24 (1932); *State of Indiana v. Dale*, Cause 10151, Delaware County (Indiana) Circuit Court, Civil Order Book 155 (1933). All of Delaware County Civil Order Books in this footnote are housed in the Delaware County Court House, Muncie, Indiana.

of the airfield under public ownership. Johnson finally resigned as chairman of the city aviation department in October, 1931. Dale requested and received the resignations of the three remaining members of that body and it became defunct.<sup>34</sup> Johnson filed a quiet title suit in January, 1932, in order to regain possession of the 160-acre farm he had donated to the municipality on the grounds that the city had not used the property in the manner for which it was intended. In March, 1932, Judge Robert F. Murray of the Delaware County Superior Court ruled in Johnson's favor.<sup>35</sup> With the property once again his, Johnson along with Edmund F. Ball and Frank E. Ball organized a private corporation and commenced development of the site. In September, 1932, the new airport was dedicated to the accompaniment of the "greatest air show Muncie [had] ever seen. . . ."<sup>36</sup>

Although the municipal airport issue is not a classic case of Elazar's federalism, it does suggest the pluralistic nature of Muncie governance. In this particular instance outside forces were not able to get the municipal government to build the airport. The facility was ultimately constructed, but with private funds rather than taxpayers' money. Johnson, the younger members of the Ball family, and the Chamber of Commerce failed to exert enough pressure to get city officials to do their bidding. Mayor Dale, who claimed to represent the majority of Muncie citizens, managed to thwart powerful business interests. The important point concerning the resolution of the airport issue is that it certainly does not appear to be a prime example of "power elite" in operation.

The Civil Works Administration projects of the early 1930s provide a second illustration of the inability of Muncie's business elite to control local government. Since industry in Muncie concentrated on producers' and consumers' durable goods—automobile parts, foundry products, steel wire, and glass canning jars—it was hit especially hard by the Great Depression. By 1930 one of every four workers in Muncie had lost his job. Two years later 25 percent of the city's families were on relief, and the community's private and public charitable institutions were staggering under this abnormally heavy burden.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, October 11, November 5, 6, 1931.

<sup>35</sup> *Abbott L. Johnson v. City of Muncie*, Cause 7618, Delaware County (Indiana) Superior Court, Civil Order Book 23 (1932).

<sup>36</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, March 14, September 11, 1932. The quotation is from *ibid.*, September 11, 1932.

<sup>37</sup> Marilyn A. Domer, "The Development of Federated Fundraising in Muncie, Indiana, 1925-57" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Ball

Possibly because of the notoriety the city had received from the Lynds' first Middletown study, volunteer schemes devised in Muncie to assist the unemployed received nationwide attention. The first of the so-called "Muncie Plans" was sponsored by the Community Garden Association, founded in January, 1931. This volunteer group included on its executive committee three members of the Ball family—George A. Ball, E. Arthur Ball, and Mrs. Bertha Crosley Ball. The association promoted the concept of subsistence vegetable gardens, consisting of a "community garden," where men on relief rolls were required to work one day a week in order to receive financial assistance, and "home gardens" from which the products grown belonged to the person tending the plot.<sup>38</sup> A second "Muncie Plan" was launched in the spring of 1931 by the local Chamber of Commerce to ease joblessness in the building trades. Through an intensive campaign, the Chamber urged property owners to repair, modernize, or otherwise improve their homes in order to provide work for bricklayers, carpenters, painters, and plumbers. According to journalist James Harold Hawkins, unemployment in the light construction industry was reduced in Muncie from 70 percent to 20 percent during 1931.<sup>39</sup>

Soon after his inauguration, Mayor Dale began to advocate municipal public works projects to provide jobs. In April, 1930, he proposed a \$100,000 bond issue to improve streets on the periphery of the city in newly annexed territory. Predictably the city council turned a deaf ear to the mayor's idea.<sup>40</sup> The feud between Dale and the council, as well as the depressed condition of the local economy and tax base, prevented Muncie

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State University, 1968), chap. 4; Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 7-9, 16, 102-17; "Middletown—Ten Years After," *Business Week* (May 26, 1934), 15-16, (June 9, 1934), 12.

<sup>38</sup> Erving P. Hayes, *Activities of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment* (Concord, N.H., 1936), 114; "Middletown—Ten Years After," *Business Week* (June 9, 1934), 12; *Muncie Morning Star*, January 25, 1931; Paul Potter, "Gardens Solve Food Problem for the Needy," *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 1931. This "Muncie Plan" was antedated by Detroit Mayor Hazen S. Pingree's "potato patch plan" during the depression of the 1890s. Melvin G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics* (New York, 1969), 70-72. Bertha Crosley Ball was the widow of Edmund B. Ball. Ironically the revival of home gardening and canning, encouraged by the Ball family dominated Community Garden Association, was a boon to Muncie's largest industry, Ball Brothers Glass Company. "Middletown—Ten Years After," *Business Week* (May 26, 1934), 16, (June 2, 1934), 18.

<sup>39</sup> James Harold Hawkins, "How the Muncie Plan Creates Employment," *Ladies Home Journal*, XLIX (January, 1932), 22, 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Muncie Evening Press*, April 16, 1930; *Muncie Morning Star*, April 18, May 6, 1930.

from taking the initiative in providing jobs through public works projects. With the advent of Roosevelt's New Deal in March, 1933, however, federal funds gradually became available to communities for work relief. Dale was not hesitant about taking advantage of Washington's generosity.

In mid-November, 1933, the Roosevelt administration established the Civil Works Administration (CWA) to provide localities with federal funds for small-scale, "make-work" projects which required a minimum of planning and could be implemented quickly.<sup>41</sup> After attending a conference in Indianapolis on November 17, where Democratic Governor Paul V. McNutt explained procedures for acquiring funds, Dale began applying for CWA appropriations. By virtue of his position as Delaware County chairman of the Governor's Commission on Unemployment Relief, E. Arthur Ball was placed in charge of CWA operations in Muncie. At the time he assumed this responsibility, Ball was considered an "independent" Republican, but in the spring of 1934 this son of staunch Republican Frank C. Ball converted to the Democracy.<sup>42</sup>

Many of Muncie's initial CWA projects were of the "leaf-raking" variety, but by November 25, 1933, when the first weekly payroll arrived, over four hundred men were employed on more substantial community improvements. Among the important CWA endeavors in Muncie were: the building of an earthen levee and flood prevention wall along White River;

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<sup>41</sup> Searle F. Charles, *Minister of Relief: Harry Hopkins and the Depression* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963), 47-65; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), 263-78; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948; paperback ed., New York, 1950), 44-57. CWA was intended to be a federal operation from top to bottom. Nevertheless standard monographs on the New Deal generally have overemphasized the centralization of CWA and the direct federal control the agency exercised. Neglected by these accounts are the important planning, recommendation, and supervisory roles of local governments. See for example James N. J. Henwood, "Experiment in Relief: The Civil Works Administration in Pennsylvania, 1933-1934," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXIX (January, 1972), 69.

<sup>42</sup> *Indianapolis News*, November 17, 1933; *Muncie Morning Star*, November 18, 1933; *Muncie Post-Democrat*, June 1, 8, 1934. Just thirty-eight years old when he became CWA director, Arthur Ball had interrupted his studies at Yale University to serve as first lieutenant of infantry in France during World War I. Returning to Muncie he became treasurer of Ball Brothers Glass Company in 1919. He also helped to found Delaware Post No. 19 of the American Legion and was elected state commander in 1923. Ball was a member of those organizations to which Muncie's business and social elite were expected to belong, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Delaware Country Club, the Kiwanis, the Masons, and the Shrine. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County*, II, 656-57; Roll, *Indiana*, III, 6-7.

erection of permanent bleachers and a scoreboard at the McCulloch Park baseball diamond; removal of over eleven miles of abandoned trolley-car tracks; grading and gravelling of unimproved streets; installation and repair of traffic lights; remodeling and painting of city hall and five fire stations; and, the largest single enterprise, construction of a swimming pool at Tuhey Park.<sup>43</sup>

Normally united in their opposition to the Dale administration, the editors of Muncie's two Republican daily newspapers apparently held opposite opinions of local CWA activities.<sup>44</sup> Frank E. Harrold, editor of the *Morning Star*, praised the creation of jobs for the unemployed, but expressed concern that allocation of federal funds for CWA might jeopardize "Muncie's one big project . . . the building of intercepting sewers and a sewage disposal plant."<sup>45</sup> Assured that the sewer project, for which the city was seeking a one-million dollar grant and loan from the Public Works Administration, was not endangered simply because Muncie was already receiving other federal subsidies, Harrold urged the city to get all the money it could from Washington, "so long as we do not overburden ourselves with costs for materials."<sup>46</sup> Early in December, 1933, the *Star* offered its congratulations to local officials for their harmony in promoting the CWA program:

Under the guidance of E. Arthur Ball, . . . all units of government in Delaware County are now co-operating as they have not co-operated before with the result that hundreds of men are being paid real money in the form of wages and the city and county are going to get some worth while improvements at a considerably lower cost than would have been possible in normal times. Right now the taxpayers are getting a good example of what can be done when units of government work together for the benefit of the community.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Civil Works Administration Files, Indiana, Delaware County, Project No. 47, 79, 574, 1525, 1529-32, 1534-37, 1545, 1893 (National Archives, microfilm); Muncie *Morning Star*, November 26, 1933.

<sup>44</sup> The Muncie *Morning Star*, part of the *Star League* chain, was published by former Hoosier John C. Shaffer of Chicago and edited by Frank E. Harrold. Frank C. Ball once had held controlling interest in the *Morning Star*, and the Ball family retained partial ownership after Shaffer took charge. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County*, I, 278; Claude G. Bowers, *Beveridge and the Progressive Era* (New York, 1932), 164-65; Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 116, 527-28. Until his death in 1932, Colonel George B. Lockwood owned the Muncie *Evening Press*. A former Munsonian living in Washington, D.C., Lockwood was also publisher of the monthly *National Republican*. The editor of the *Press* was Wilbur E. Sutton who assumed that responsibility in 1918. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County*, II, 583-84; Frank McKinley Hubbard and others, eds., *A Book of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1929), 422, 461; McCarty, *Indiana Today*, 159, 390; Roll, *Indiana*, IV, 146.

<sup>45</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, November 22, 1933.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, November 26, 1933.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1933.

Harrold might have added that the unaccustomed rapport among local governmental units had been stimulated by an external entity, the Roosevelt administration. According to Dale, Wilbur E. Sutton, editor of the Muncie *Evening Press*, did not share Harrold's enthusiasm for CWA. Supposedly Sutton was particularly critical of the construction of a concrete retaining wall along White River. Dale did not elaborate as to the cause of Sutton's opposition to CWA efforts, but he did suggest that the *Press* editor was disenchanted with the New Deal in general.<sup>48</sup> Curiously Sutton made no reference to CWA in his daily editorial column.

CWA provided federal funds to pay for labor, while the city contributed money for equipment and materials. In order for the municipality to finance its share of the agreement, Mayor Dale requested that the city council pass a \$100,000 bond issue. As eager in this case to take advantage of the federal largesse as Dale, the usually antagonistic council temporarily put aside its quarrel with the mayor and unanimously approved the bond issue on December 11, 1933.<sup>49</sup> Adoption of the bond issue by the city was one matter; getting someone to purchase the bonds were quite another story. When the city offered the bonds for sale on December 29, there were no bidders. City Controller Lester E. Holloway, Mayor Dale's son-in-law, contended that he had made every effort to persuade local financial institutions to purchase the bonds.<sup>50</sup> As a result of the Depression, only one bank and an affiliated trust and savings company remained in existence in Muncie. E. Arthur Ball, George A. Ball, and William H. Ball were members of the board of directors of the Merchants National Bank, while Edmund F. Ball and George A. Ball held identical positions at the Merchants Trust and Savings Company.<sup>51</sup> It is not known what attitude CWA director Arthur Ball held, as a member of the board of the Merchants National Bank, concerning the purchase of the

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<sup>48</sup> Muncie *Post-Democrat*, February 9, 1934.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, November 24, 1933; Muncie Council Record No. 26, December 11, 1933, pp. 412-13; Muncie Ordinance Record No. 7, December 11, 1933, pp. 492-97.

<sup>50</sup> Muncie *Evening Press*, December 30, 1933. For biographical sketches of Holloway, who later became mayor of Muncie, see Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, IV, 573; Roll, *Indiana*, V, 192.

<sup>51</sup> Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 78; Muncie *Morning Star*, March 14, 1933, January 10, 1934; Roll, *Indiana*, III, 3, 6, V, 67, 264. The president of the Merchants National Bank was Frank B. Bernard, reputed to be George A. Ball's financial advisor. John Bartlow Martin, *Indiana: An Interpretation* (New York, 1947), 82.

bonds, but both Ball-controlled institutions refrained from investing. Dale insinuated that out-of-town lending establishments were reluctant to buy the bonds after local credit firms had rejected them.<sup>52</sup>

The mayor was at a loss to explain why Muncie's banking houses had failed to express confidence in the municipality and its citizens. Muncie not only had an excellent credit rating, but it was the sole second-class city in Indiana which had not exceeded the constitutional limitation on its bonded indebtedness. Reportedly, local banking officials refused to purchase the bonds because of the low interest rate of 4½ percent. They also expressed anxiety concerning the ability of the municipality to liquidate its financial obligations because of a 1932 state law that placed a \$1.50 ceiling on the combined tax rate of all local governmental units.<sup>53</sup> According to one hypothesis, Dale had antagonized bankers in Muncie by paying off the city's bonded indebtedness prematurely, thus depriving local credit houses of anticipated interest. The bankers therefore had retaliated by refusing to buy his CWA bonds.<sup>54</sup> When asked about this nearly forty years later, Controller Holloway did not substantiate this hypothesis, but he did intimate that local bankers were never friendly to his father-in-law "and were not about to do anything that would help the Dale administration."<sup>55</sup>

Unwillingness by Muncie's banks to buy the CWA bonds placed the city in a bind. By the end of 1933 CWA projects employed some sixteen hundred men in Muncie. Failure to sell the bonds would cancel the projects, and those working on them would have to return to the welfare rolls. Local businessmen had supplied tools and materials to the city on credit after a gentlemen's agreement among the councilmen to pass the bond issue, so the municipality was obligated to produce the money in some manner. The problem was serious enough that William A. "Red" McClellan, a member of the Muncie board of public works, who was in Washington, D.C., on other business, inquired into the possibility of selling the bonds to the Recon-

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<sup>52</sup> Muncie *Post-Democrat*, February 16, 1934.

<sup>53</sup> Indiana, *Laws* (1932), Special Session, chap. 10; Muncie *Evening Press*, January 3, 1934; Muncie *Post-Democrat*, December 29, 1933. Dale complained that in spite of the \$1.50 tax law, local banks had recently purchased \$216,750 worth of bonds issued by Center Township (in which Muncie is located) to cover poor relief costs.

<sup>54</sup> Schwartz, "Middletown's Maverick Mayor," 35.

<sup>55</sup> Author's interview with Lester E. Holloway, June 3, 1972, Muncie, Indiana.

struction Finance Corporation (RFC). That avenue likewise proved to be unproductive.<sup>56</sup>

Eventually Controller Holloway managed to dispose of the CWA bonds. In February, 1934, the Muncie firemen and policemen pension fund trustees subscribed to \$36,000 worth of the bonds; the balance of these securities finally went to the C. W. McNear Bonding Company of Chicago in April, 1934.<sup>57</sup> Until the bonds were purchased, Mayor Dale did not miss an opportunity to censure local financiers for their failure to help provide employment for the jobless. He accused the bankers of "Sell[ing] Muncie Short,"<sup>58</sup> and singled out the "so-called philanthropic Ball family" for especially bitter denunciation.<sup>59</sup> Dale charged that the moneyed elite of Muncie had rejected the CWA bonds in order to discredit his administration.<sup>60</sup>

Despite adverse circumstances the persistent mayor and his city controller managed to salvage the CWA projects in Muncie. Before the CWA program terminated in the spring of 1934, the federal government spent an estimated \$407,976 in Muncie and its immediate environs.<sup>61</sup> The program provided temporary employment for over sixteen hundred men during the winter of 1933-1934. Thus, when local economic conditions and a hostile city council prevented Dale from fulfilling his public works objectives, he was able to turn to a beneficent federal government. When Muncie bankers and wealthy industrialists failed to cooperate with the CWA program, the mayor looked to Chicago for financial assistance. Dale, therefore, neutralized the negative influence of Muncie's vaunted power elite by appealing successfully to agencies and institutions beyond the boundaries of the community.

The final example of this "pluralism-federalism" interpretation of community power in Muncie encompassed a longer period of time and was even more complex than the two previously cited episodes. The White River, which bends through the

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<sup>56</sup> Muncie *Evening Press*, December 30, 1933; Muncie *Morning Star*, December 31, 1933. For the background and purpose of RFC, see especially Jesse H. Jones with Edward Angly, *Fifty Billion Dollars: My Thirteen Years with the RFC, 1932-1945* (New York, 1951); Gerald D. Nash, "Herbert Hoover and the Origins of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVI (December, 1959), 455-68.

<sup>57</sup> Muncie *Evening Press*, February 14, 1934; Muncie *Post-Democrat*, April 20, 1934.

<sup>58</sup> Muncie *Post-Democrat*, January 12, 1934.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1934.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, February 16, 1934.

<sup>61</sup> See CWA records cited in note 43.



northern portion of Muncie, had become badly polluted with domestic and industrial wastes. Although Robert Lynd found the condition of the river deplorable when he first visited the city in 1924, nothing had been done to improve the situation by the time he returned in 1935. Living along the north bank of the river in a row of stately mansions, the Ball family had long agitated for sewage reduction in the watercourse. Property owners in the working-class south side section of Muncie, however, were reluctant to help finance a sewage system that would benefit primarily the Balls and other wealthy businessmen who inhabited the upper-class north side residential area. Thus city councilmen from the south side failed to support proposals that would improve the color, odor, and purity of White River. The Lynds, despite acknowledgement that south siders had been able to obstruct a municipal sewage treatment program, saw no reason to alter their concept of elite rule in Muncie.<sup>62</sup> Yet Nelson W. Polsby, in his analysis of Middletown, regarded the ability of the city's working class to block the sewer project desired by upper-class business interests as an excellent indicator of pluralism.<sup>63</sup>

Cheered on by the local Izaak Walton League, the all-Republican Muncie city council in March, 1926, had established a river committee—composed completely of south siders—to consider the prospects of sewage treatment. Following this initiative, the city planning commission—consisting entirely of north side residents—agreed to spend \$3,000 to conduct a detailed survey of the river pollution problem.<sup>64</sup> In April, 1927, Pearse, Greeley, and Hanson, the Chicago engineering firm hired by the city planning commission, delivered its report. These consultants recommended construction of an intercepting sewer system that would carry waste material to a sewage reduction plant to be built west of the city. Estimating the cost of the project at \$1,306,100, the Chicago engineers proposed that the municipality create a department of public

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<sup>62</sup> Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, 340-41. The Lynds saw the dichotomy between north side and south side as part of the major cleavage that separated citizens of Muncie—the division between the city's business class and working class.

<sup>63</sup> Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory*, 19-20; Polsby, "Power in Middletown," 600.

<sup>64</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, March 1, 1926, p. 25; *Muncie Morning Star*, September 21, 1926. Although all nine members of the city planning commission lived on the north side, none of them could be considered as part of Muncie's business-class elite. *Emerson's Muncie Directory and Delaware County Gazetteer, 1927-28* (Cincinnati, 1927), 13, 137, 159, 169, 308, 315, 338, 488, 590.

sanitation—constituting a separate taxing district—to construct the sewage system.<sup>65</sup> Acting on the report, the river committee suggested in September, 1927, that an ordinance be introduced to establish such a department. However, in January, 1928, after a public hearing held the previous month, the river committee reversed its position.<sup>66</sup>

At this point, north side Councilman Frank W. Budd, a member of the city's planning commission, proposed that a blue ribbon committee of five prominent citizens be chosen to offer guidance to the city council. Selected from Budd's list of twelve economic and social notables were George A. Ball and four other distinguished gentlemen.<sup>67</sup> Since all of the appointees to this "special citizens' sewer committee" were residents of the north side, the council corrected the "oversight" by adding five taxpayers from the south side.<sup>68</sup> In May, 1928, this blue ribbon panel, despite its somewhat more heterogeneous composition, recommended the establishment of a department of public sanitation.<sup>69</sup> Despite the stand of Mayor Hampton, the city planning commission, and the sewer committee in favor of the creation of such a department, the city council in July, 1928, acting on the advice of its river committee, defeated the ordinance that would have established the new taxing district. Five of the eight negative votes cast came from south side councilmen. A week later the council decided to place the municipal board of public works in charge of the sewer project.<sup>70</sup> Nothing further was accomplished during the Hampton mayoralty. Thus, a Republican administration and an all-Republican city

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<sup>65</sup> Pearse, Greeley, and Hanson, Engineers, "Muncie, Indiana: Report on Intercepting Sewers and Sewage Disposal, April, 1927" (mimeographed, Chicago, 1927), 46-57, 77-79, 125-27.

<sup>66</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, September 12, 1927, p. 93, December 12, 1927, p. 103; Muncie *Evening Press*, January 3, 1928.

<sup>67</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, January 30, 1928, p. 110; February 6, 1928, p. 111. Also appointed to the committee were Myron H. Gray, an attorney and bank director; J. Lloyd Kimbrough, general manager and treasurer of the Indiana Bridge Company; A. Herbert Kruse, president of the People's Trust Company; and Philip W. McAbee, president of the Hemingray Glass Company. Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County*, II, 325, 594, 605-608; Hubbard, *A Book of Indiana*, 450, 470.

<sup>68</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, March 5, 1928, p. 115. Included among the new members of the special committee were a foreman at Ball Brothers, a foreman at Hemingray Glass, a bank cashier, a druggist, and John M. Stetter, president of the Muncie Cap and Set Screw Company. *Emerson's Muncie Directory . . . , 1927-28*, pp. 310, 437, 475, 481; Haimbaugh, *History of Delaware County*, II, 201-202.

<sup>69</sup> Muncie *Evening Press*, May 15, 1928.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 1928; Muncie Council Record No. 26, July 9, 1928, p. 129.

council failed to provide the sewage disposal system so earnestly desired by the predominantly Republican, north side, business community.

When Dale became mayor in 1930, he immediately vowed that the sewer project would never be started while he was in office. As editor he had opposed construction of the sewage system because he feared that the one million dollar endeavor would be an irresistible opportunity for graft for the already corrupt Hampton administration. As mayor he opposed the sewage system because the city could not afford it. Dale contended that most of the pollution in the river was the result of untreated industrial discharge. Therefore, he argued, if Muncie's industries would stop polluting, a sewage reduction plant would be unnecessary.<sup>71</sup>

Dale had been in office for less than a month when Dr. William F. King, secretary of the Indiana State Board of Health, began to pressure him to take immediate steps to prevent continued defilement of White River. The mayor refused, beginning a two-year confrontation between Dale and King, which often assumed the stature of a farce.<sup>72</sup> King received ammunition for his offensive against the Muncie mayor when in October, 1930, the State Department of Sanitary Engineering concluded a five-year study of White River. Describing the waterway as having "the appearance and odor of an open sewer," the report charged that contamination by Muncie rendered the drinking water of Anderson unsafe for human consumption. The report also substantiated Dale's claim that industry contributed heavily to the pollution. The Ball Brothers Paper Mill and the Kuhner Packing Company, in which the fruit jar family had financial investments, were among the chief culprits.<sup>73</sup> Unable to daunt Dale with evidence that Muncie was in gross violation of the state's anti-pollution laws,

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<sup>71</sup> Muncie *Post-Democrat*, March 18, May 17, June 24, July 1, 1926, December 21, 1928, June 26, August 7, 21, 1931.

<sup>72</sup> James M. Ogden, *Opinions of the Attorney-General, Indiana . . . January 1, 1929-January 1, 1931* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1931), 782-86; Muncie *Evening Press*, January 27, February 4, September 3, 30, 1930, April 7, 1931; Muncie *Morning Star*, February 4, September 27, 30, October 1, November 5, 13, 1930, July 10, 1931, May 27, 1932. On one occasion when the state health board issued a decree designated as Rule 75, Dale promulgated his own Rule 76 ordering "Dr. King to keep his nose out of our pet sewer." Muncie *Evening Press*, January 19, 1931.

<sup>73</sup> Indiana State Board of Health, Division of Chemistry, Department of Sanitary Engineering, "Report of Cooperative Sanitary Survey of White River: Muncie to Anderson, 1925-30" (mimeographed, Indianapolis, 1930), 2, 3-4, 20, 23-26, 28-29, 31, 33, 82.

King appealed to the city council. Hubert L. Parkinson, council president and north side Democrat, responded that the municipal solons were sympathetic to King's objectives but that the mayor constituted an insurmountable obstacle to sewer construction.<sup>74</sup> Thus as late as August, 1932, outside forces were unable to persuade Mayor Dale of the necessity of building an expensive sewage treatment system. Legislation adopted by the federal and state governments that year not only weakened Dale's adamant opposition but converted the mayor into one of Muncie's leading advocates of sewage disposal reform.

In January, 1932, Congress created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) and later authorized that agency to extend loans for local, self-liquidating, public works. That same year in August the Indiana General Assembly passed a law (amended in 1933) enabling Hoosier municipalities to build sewage systems financed by special revenue bonds which could be sold to RFC.<sup>75</sup> Since the revenue bonds could be liquidated out of a special fund accumulated from fees paid by sewer users, Dale envisioned construction of a sewage system without an increase in city taxes.<sup>76</sup> Before Muncie made a formal offer to sell one million dollars worth of bonds to RFC, however, the New Deal Congress in June, 1933, established the Public Works Administration (PWA). Congress empowered the new agency to lend up to 70 percent of the cost of non-federal, public works, while the remaining 30 percent could be donated as outright grants. From July, 1933, to March, 1939, 65 percent of the new sewage treatment plants in the United States were built with financial assistance from PWA.<sup>77</sup>

In November, 1933, the city of Muncie presented an application for a PWA grant and low-interest loan. Two months later, PWA awarded \$1,060,000 to the municipality, \$270,000

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<sup>74</sup> Hubert L. Parkinson to William F. King, January 17, May 19, 1931, Indiana State Board of Health, Division of Water Pollution, Survey Section Files (Indiana State Board of Health Building, Indianapolis). Parkinson was the leader of the Democratic faction of the council which opposed Dale. The animosity between the two had existed since at least early 1924. Muncie *Post-Democrat*, February 8, August 8, 22, September 12, 1924.

<sup>75</sup> Indiana, *Laws* (1932), Special Session, chap. 61; Indiana, *Laws* (1933), chap. 187.

<sup>76</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, August 31, 1932; Muncie *Post-Democrat*, September 2, 1932.

<sup>77</sup> Harold L. Ickes, *Back to Work: The Story of PWA* (New York, 1935), 12-16, 41-47, 60-66, 235-55; Public Works Administration, *America Builds: The Record of PWA* (Washington, D.C., 1939), 1-8, 33, 39, 73-78.

being in the form of a grant.<sup>78</sup> Before Muncie could receive PWA funds, however, it was necessary for the city council to pass a series of ordinances accepting the federal largesse, authorizing construction of the sewage system, and establishing a rate schedule for sewer users. Continuing its prolonged confrontation with Dale, the council procrastinated for ten months, resulting in cancellation of the grant and loan by PWA. Among the leading opponents of the project was Clarence R. Hole, south side Democrat and chairman of the council sewer committee, who objected to the proposed method of financing PWA bond-debt liquidation because it would impose an inequitable hardship on residents of the south side.<sup>79</sup>

Despite repeated warnings from PWA officials to take the required action or lose the grant and loan, the council continued to delay. Out of desperation, Dale in August, 1934, appointed a special citizens public safety committee consisting of seventy eminent residents, including George A. Ball and the presidents of almost every civic organization in the community. Although members of this ad hoc body met with representatives of the council, they accomplished nothing.<sup>80</sup> At last on November 3, 1934, south side Democratic Councilman Emmett Grady introduced a motion "that this thing be brought out and acted on, one way or the other." Grady's motion was defeated by a vote of eight to four.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly five of the negative votes were cast by north siders and seven of those voting no were Democrats. It would appear that the vote reflected Demo-

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<sup>78</sup> Verne K. Harvey to George R. Dale, November 24, 1933, Indiana State Board of Health, Division of Water Pollution, Survey Section Files; Muncie *Post-Democrat*, January 5, 1934. When a PWA grant and loan was rescinded, as in the case of Muncie, the federal agency discarded all the documents pertaining thereto. Therefore no records are available in the National Archives on this matter. Apparently all of the grant application records in Muncie were also scrapped.

<sup>79</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, April 2, 1934, pp. 440-41, August 6, 1934, pp. 461-64.

<sup>80</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, August 29, 30, 31, 1934. Among the more prominent members of the special committee were Frank B. Bernard, president of the Merchants National Bank; Lester C. Bush, executive-secretary of the Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Clarence L. Bock, president of the Delaware-Blackford County Medical Society; and John H. Maxon, president of the Central Indiana Gas Company.

<sup>81</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 26, November 3, 1934, p. 478. Because of obvious discrepancies in the voting tabulation recorded in the council minutes, that account was not accepted as official. Rather the tally used by the author was a composite based on the council minutes and the two daily newspapers. The author's version of the November 3 decision conforms to a vote taken two days later to accept a report of the sewer committee, which amounted to further delay. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1934, pp. 477-80.

cratic factionalism as much as it did the publicized north side-south side dichotomy. When the council made no further decision concerning the sewer, PWA notified Mayor Dale on December 21, 1934, that the federal grant and loan had been rescinded.<sup>82</sup>

Muncie did build its sewage system before the decade ended. Local political factionalism, geographic bipolarization, and negative pluralism were eventually overcome by the inducement of federal government funding. When Dr. Rollin H. Bunch, the Democrat who succeeded Dale as mayor, first attempted to revive the sewer issue in 1935, he also met with resistance in the city council. "I don't want to even hear anything about the sewer," Councilman Hole exclaimed at a June session and stomped angrily out of the council chamber. He was soon followed by Council President Ora T. Shroyer, another south side Democrat.<sup>83</sup> Gradually, however, council opposition melted before Bunch's persuasiveness. In November, 1935, Muncie submitted an application to Works Progress Administration (WPA), asking for a grant of \$349,172 to aid in the construction of an intercepting sewer. WPA approved the request early in 1936.<sup>84</sup> Since the funds provided were for labor only, the city had to furnish the money for equipment and materials. To meet this obligation, the city council passed a \$180,000 bond ordinance in March, 1936.<sup>85</sup> In September, 1937, Muncie applied for another WPA grant amounting to \$457,226 for labor costs toward erection of a sewage disposal plant. Two months after this request was approved, the city council in March, 1938, voted unanimously to float an \$880,000 bond issue to cover Muncie's share of the expenses.<sup>86</sup> With encouragement and assistance from the federal government, the city

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<sup>82</sup> Muncie, Indiana, Board of Public Works, Minute Record No. 9, December 21, 1934, p. 28 (Muncie City Hall, Muncie, Indiana). Muncie's rejection of a million-dollar subsidy was not as unique as one might imagine. Studies of Pittsburgh and Boston, for example, have revealed that parochialism and political factionalism retarded New Deal objectives in those cities as well. Bruce M. Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah: Pittsburgh Machine Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1970), 115-16; Charles H. Trout, *Boston: The Great Depression and the New Deal* (New York, 1977).

<sup>83</sup> Muncie *Morning Star*, June 25, 1935.

<sup>84</sup> Works Progress Administration Files, Indiana, Second District, OP 65-52-3611 (National Archives, microfilm).

<sup>85</sup> Muncie Board of Public Works, Minute Record No. 9, March 2, 1936, p. 132; Muncie Ordinance Record No. 8, March 2, 1936, pp. 222-26.

<sup>86</sup> Muncie Council Record No. 27, March 8, 1938, p. 165; Muncie Ordinance Record No. 8, March 8, 1938, pp. 425-32; Works Progress Administration Files, Indiana, Second District, OP 465-52-2-241.

of Muncie finally completed the badly needed sewage disposal system that the elite of the community could not convince the municipality to provide previously.

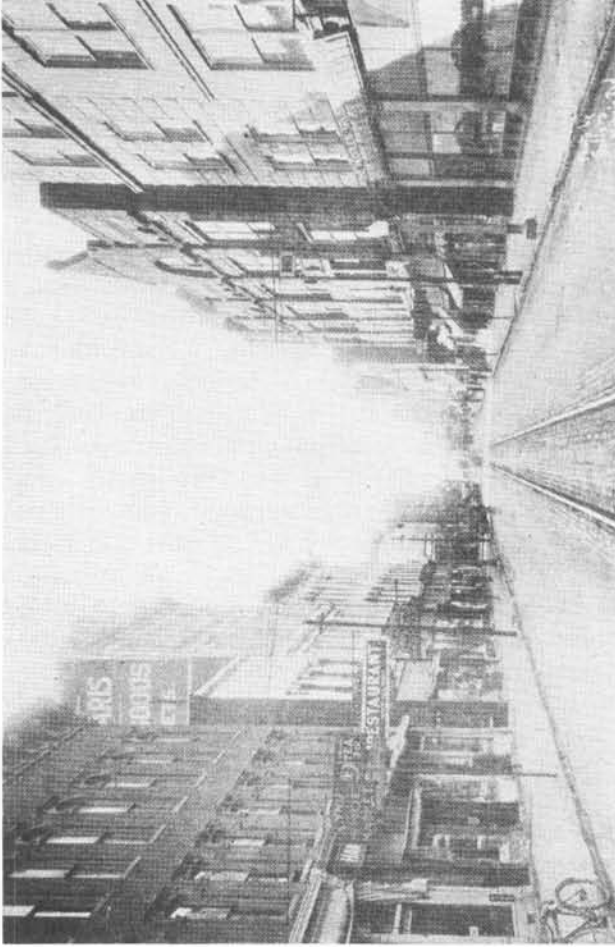
Commenting on *Middletown in Transition* two decades after its publication, Maurice R. Stein observed that there were signs by 1936 that the power wielded by the Ball family would decline in the near future.<sup>87</sup> In his journalistic appraisal of the Middletown scene in 1944, John Bartlow Martin hinted that the Balls' grip on the community had begun to slip.<sup>88</sup> Yet analysis of three major issues important to Muncie during the 1930s suggests that the Ball family never exercised the control over local affairs that Robert and Helen Lynd indicated in *Middletown in Transition*. The Balls especially do not appear to have been omnipotent concerning municipal matters during George Dale's term as mayor from 1930 to 1935. Because Dale could turn for help to agencies and institutions, both private and public, beyond the boundaries of Muncie, he was able to enhance his influence in relation to that of the Balls. If Middletown had been an isolated, self-contained city-state, the Lynds' image of Ball family dominance might be more plausible. As Elazar has noted, however, American cities did not exist in a vacuum. Communities such as Muncie were not autonomous but were parts of a larger and more complex political system. Under these circumstances it was difficult for a local elite to reign supreme.<sup>89</sup> Nothing in these observations should be construed to insinuate that the Balls were without considerable influence. Certainly their wealth and prestige enabled them to register a great amount of clout in civic affairs. Yet in the community which many scholars tend to regard as the personification of an elite-ridden society, there is room for reasonable doubt concerning the untrammelled authority of the legendary "X family."

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<sup>87</sup> Maurice R. Stein, *The Eclipse of Community: An Interpretation of American Studies* (Princeton, N.J., 1960; paperback ed., New York, 1964), 59-60.

<sup>88</sup> John Bartlow Martin, "Is Muncie Still Middletown?" *Harper's Magazine*, CLXXXIX (July, 1944), 102.

<sup>89</sup> Elazar, *Cities of the Prairie*, 367-69, 383-87.



**MUNCIE, INDIANA: WALNUT STREET LOOKING  
SOUTH FROM MAIN, 1923**

Reproduced from Frank D. Haimbaugh, ed., *History of Delaware  
County, Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1924), I, 433.