

**UNREST IN MIDDLETOWN:
A STUDY IN MUNICIPAL PRESSURES**

A thesis submitted for Honors
in the department of Government,
Harvard College, by

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April, 1938.

"Writing about Muncie IS a hell of a job,
and about all I can say is 'your blood be on
your own head.'"

GEO. R. DALE (to R.S.Lynd)

"Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire, burn; and, caldron, bubble."

MACBETH
Act IV. Scene I.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. George R. Dale for her generosity in placing at my disposal material without which this thesis would have been impossible. And to Miss Virginia Dale my thanks for her help in checking the documentation.

Professor Robert LaFollette of Ball State Teacher's College, Muncie, and Professor J. T. Salter of the University of Wisconsin have made valuable suggestions as has Professor Robert S. Lynd of Columbia University who graciously offered his intimate knowledge and keen interpretation of Middletown.

To my tutor, Professor Fritz Morstein Marx, goes my sincerest appreciation for preserving my equilibrium.

M.D.S.

Kirkland House

Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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INTRODUCTION.

This is a case study in political conflict. It is a story that deals with some of the institutional cleavages to which post war American society has been subjected. The setting is Middletown; the hero, a political "reformer". The plot deals with the rise and fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middletown. The nexus between plot and setting is a phase in the career of the hero. "To some Americans this man, George R. Dale, was the best-known citizen of Middletown. When he died at the age of sixty-seven in March, 1936, the Associated Press obituary commanded space of half a column or more in the press of New York, Chicago, and other cities. Dale was a 'white-haired little man with the seat worn out of his pants' who for twenty years had edited a local Democratic weekly. Always fearless, he rose to national prominence when, almost single-handed, he fought the Ku Klux Klan which ruled the state and city in the mid-1920's."¹

¹Lynd, Robert S. and Helen Merrell, Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts, New York, 1937, p. 323. For the obituaries see the New York Times, March 28, 1936, p. 15; also the New York Herald Tribune, March 28, 1936, p. 10. The quotation about the "white-haired little man...." comes from Douglas, W. A. S., "The Mayor of Middletown", American Mercury, August, 1930, p. 476.

Middletown, now famous laboratory of the Lynds who gave its name to their two sociological studies, is in reality Muncie, Indiana. The first of these studies, Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture,² is a landmark in American institutional history not only because it is the first exploration into "the social anthropology of contemporary life", but because it put the weight of authoritative research behind the keen analysis and cynicism of Sinclair Lewis' Main Street and Babbitt. America saw the whole panorama of its very existence laid bare before it.

Contrary to popular belief, Middletown is not a "typical" community. Uninformed citizens of Muncie like to think that their's has been chosen the "ideal" American city. Never have the Lynds made such claims. Their aim has been not to prove an elaborate thesis but rather "to record observed phenomena, thereby raising questions and suggesting possible fresh points of departure in the study of group behavior".³ In searching for a representative American community they struck upon Muncie because it seemed more nearly than any other city

²New York, 1929.

³Middletown, p. 3.

to fit the objective standards of selection which has been determined beforehand. Climate, rate of growth, diversified industrial activities, cultural advantages, population, and geography were a few of the characteristics considered.

In order to insure a complete overall picture it was necessary to choose a city which would lend itself best to the technique of field research. With the obvious mechanical limitations in mind it was decided that a city of between 25,000 and 50,000 inhabitants would be the most easily studied. "A city of this size, it was felt, would be large enough to have put on long trousers and to take itself seriously, and yet small enough to be studied from many aspects as a unit."⁴ Furthermore, in a city of whose total population Negroes and foreign-born form only an infinitesimal part important problems of racial dynamics do not impinge upon those purely cultural. This consideration might in itself be enough to disprove any of Middletown's claims to being "typical". Racial conflicts certainly are important in much of present day American industrialized society.

Stressing "its characteristic rather than its

⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

exceptional features", the final selection was oriented toward Muncie because it had no special "social problems" overshadowing the entire life of the community. A decade later Muncie could no longer meet the same selective requirements.⁵

My own reasons for choosing this subject about which to write a thesis are obvious. Muncie has been my home for almost as many years as I can remember and although I was very young at the time I still have vivid recollections of the great turmoil caused by many of the events described below. Especially do I remember the Ku Klux Klan and Geoge Dale as Mayor of Muncie. It was only natural then, with a few years of maturing on the college level plus a goodly exposure to problems of government that my interests should be directed back to the community of which I am a part.

With literally oceans of untouched material at my fingertips and my interests crystalized by the work of the Lynds I set out to explore the politics of Muncie. Invariably my attention was drawn to George R. Dale.... of all people! The man who without much reflection I had looked upon, along with the rest of Middletown, as a sort of circus freak. It was a standing joke in my family to

⁵Middletown in Transition, p. 215.

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call my young sister, "George Dale", when, in childish stubbornness she was disobediant. Such an attitude superficially echoed Muncie's opinion of Dale, the incorrigible, the man who would not conform.

But curiosity turned to inquiry, inquiry to downright interest. As a result I have been studying this man's political career for over a year. In this thesis I have attempted to focus sharply upon what seems to me to be an important, if not the important phase of Dale's political life in connection with Muncie's

The difficulties of such an undertaking are obvious. First, there has been the problem of selecting material. Secondly, it is hardly an easy task to isolate a short period in the history of a community or a person and present an intelligible picture to the uninformed reader. Finally, the need for objectivity in a study of this kind does not have to be stressed. My own peculiar relation to the topic might go to prove Professor Lynd's statement the "the social scientist as an impersonal worker selecting problems and analyzing them with bloodless concern only for science exists no more than does the 'economic man'. Subjective factors inevitably intrude..."⁶

⁶Ibid, p. x.

Just a word on the documentation. Most of the material incorporated into this thesis has been taken from Muncie newspapers. Dale's attitude toward the community has been easily traceable through his own editorial columns. For a complete picture of Muncie's attitude toward Dale the task has not been so simple. The two daily papers, the Muncie Morning Star, and the Muncie Evening Press, are both Republican. That they can not be said to represent adequately local public opinion is shown by the Lynds.⁷ In an economy that dedicates itself to Mammon, "Middletown's press, like its pulpit, has largely surrendered its traditional role of leader; both have bartered their peculiar rights to proclaim sharply dissident truths for the right to be well supported by the reigning economy. And as a result, in the central areas of business, national politics, and civic pride they tend to reflect the point of view convenient to the purposes of this dominant core of business interests...."⁸ Such an analysis, however, could never be applied to Dale. The fact that money meant very little to him insured two things; one, that he could never accept the dominant symbols of the community and secondly, by

⁷Ibid., Chap. X, p. 373ff.

⁸Ibid., p. 381.

freeing himself from them he was able to write in any manner and about anything he pleased. He never bartered his birthright to the truth for a pot of the economic porridge.

Relatively speaking, the evening paper has always exercised the greatest amount of editorial independence.⁹ For this reason I have relied upon its editorials almost entirely to give the background picture of what Muncie thought of Dale. I do not pretend that the picture is accurate in detail but I do say that it approaches as nearly as is possible with the tools of research the general outlines of a nebulous public opinion.

⁹ Ibid., p. 374.

CHAPTER I.

BACKGROUND: THE POST WAR ERA.

To attribute all our American difficulties since 1920 to the first world war would be obviously stretching a point. But there are certain social trends which, if they did not actually begin with or were caused by the war, at least became evident during and immediately after the war period.

It is hardly necessary for one to be a trained psychologist or physiologist to understand what a war such as the last one can do to a whole nation. If the "nation in arms" is only the product of very careful and clever planning on the part of propagandists; if intelligent men suddenly become not only willing but eager to "make the world safe for democracy"; if the "civil state" suddenly becomes the "soldier state",¹ that all this will be quickly forgotten and eradicated from the nervous system of the nation as soon as the immediate pressure has passed is a non sequitur. It is much quicker process to anaesthetize the patient than to bring him out of it.

No great social pressure had forced the American people to feel very deeply on any significant national

¹Morstein Marx, Fritz, Government In the Third Reich, New York, 1937, (2nd. ed.) p. 15ff.

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problem since the days of Reconstruction. The obvious exception to this statement is again, the world war. The tremendous amount of nationalism and patriotism whipped up after 1916 touched off a spark difficult to extinguish when no longer needed. Granted the qualifications of such a thesis, I am personally convinced that much of the internal unrest in the United States during the 1920's may be traced directly to the nation's search for an emotional outlet - a pop-off valve - to allow for a more gradual escape of the super abundance of loyalties created but not nearly consumed by necessities of war.

On the national scene, the end of the war saw also the end of legal liquor and the coming of female franchise. "Normalcy" was ushered in with the return of the Republicans. The peace treaty still had to be signed and something had to be done about war profiteers - now that the war was over. Prices shot upwards and "the high cost of living" became a most important table topic.² America then had her big "red scare". Newspapers pictured the "communist menace", - dirty beards and bombs - lurking in dark places intent upon blowing the land of the free into complete anarchy and an era of black bread.

²Allen, Frederick Lewis, Only Yesterday, New York, 1931, P. 5.

Then there was always the cartoon of the "real Americans", New England Yankee type, kicking these "Furiners" all the way from the coast of Maine to the river Don. Even Harvard was "investigated" but Dean Pound and Felix Frankfurter were found not "subversive".

Strikes were an every day occurrence especially in the coal and steel industries. The Boston police strike echoed throughout the nation and caused many who had not done so before to ponder. Law and order were no longer taken for granted. Little wonder, then that this situation soon brought about a reaction. The vigilante spirit of the frontier days suddenly gripped many sections of the country; the Ku Klux Klan was becoming a powerful movement.

As the nineteen twenties rolled on tradition and faith were again given a severe test by the Scopes "monkey" trial in Dayton, Tennessee. Clarence Darrow's pointed queries about the Bible shook the beliefs of many more persons than William Jennings Bryan. The nation was wondering as never before about its morals; this was the "jazz age".

But all the while, the great panacea of all national ills - economic prosperity - was ostensibly healing the wounds made by those events. Prosperity gave

if not a real, at least an apparent stability to the social order which allowed it to progress. Prosperity made the nation quickly forget the Teapot Dome scandals and enabled it to recoup its investment nerves shaken by the Florida boom. Prosperity made America oblivious to economic warnings of the dark days of 1929.

Turning from the national to the local scene the picture is hardly changed. Because it is a part of the United States, Muncie, Indiana, was bound to feel the same impacts that affected the nation as a whole. This little city felt the war's aftermath keenly. The nation lost citizens but Muncie families lost husbands and sons. Grain prices rose on the Chicago Board of Trade but Muncie housewives were much more annoyed that bread prices went up a penny or two. Business indices moved up or down but Walnut Street Merchants were much more interested in knowing whether the week's business would be ruined if it rained next Saturday.

Aside from all these national factors, Muncie, like any other American community, had its own particular city joys, hopes, and sorrows. Proximity to local problems magnified their importance.

Muncie's great post-war joy was the advent of the General Motors which came to build a great plant and

a great city. This was in 1919 when labor trouble was something peculiar only to backward European nations. The General Motors was eagerly welcomed by all strata of society. Labor hoped for jobs, and business planned to profit as never before. Rumors were heard that four to five million dollars was to be spend in the city immediately. Muncie was in economic ecstasy. Bellowed a civic minded editor at the time of the announcement, "Are you ready to help Muncie become a city of 100,000?"³ Some time latter the people were solemnly informed that, "...MUNCIE IS BIG OR LITTLE ACCORDING AS SHE GRASPS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH THE GENERAL MOTORS OFFERS HER."⁴ Certainly officials of the General Motors had been faithfully promised by the "Chamber of Commerce crowd" that Muncie would tolerate no amount of labor activity. They also attempted to convince the mass of citizens - the laborers - of how well off was their state. Editorials insisted that notwithstanding higher costs of living "labor never in its history is so well off as today, never so wellpaid and never so discontented. Organized labor, especially has come into its own, is getting more nearly what is its due, and insofar as its new rates and

³Muncie Evening Press, Sept. 9, 1919 and following numbers.

⁴Ibid., Oct. 23, 1919.

privileges are making for happiness and better living, homes and better living conditions, everybody is pleased.

"But there has arisen in its ranks a radical element composed largely of foreigners, of disloyalists that seem bent on wresting control from the conservatives, the latter of whom have made possible all of labor's progress, industrially and socially up to this time. The radicals are the same to a large extent, that fought insidiously against this nation during the great war and they are opposed to American institutions and are the real foes of American labor."⁵

In the same issue of this newspaper was a picture of John L. Lewis under which was the warning caption: "If these men get a 30-hour week and 60 per cent more wages, for which they threaten to strike, coal prices will soar."⁶

Sixteen years later when the General Motors returned to the Muncie it had deserted during the depression, the attitude of "the business class" toward organized labor had hardly changed.⁷ "The plant moved back after, and because of, the bitter Toledo strike,

⁵Ibid., Oct. 20, 1919.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See Middletown in Transition, p. 36ff.

and the central issue in its return was the fact that Middletown is an open-shop town and its controlling business-men were prepared to pledge its continuance as an open-shop town."⁸ Next to its glass jars⁹ its transmissions became Muncie's pride and claim to fame in the world's markets.

The coming of the General Motors also brought with it minor problems with which the city had to cope before it became adjusted to its new economic advantages. There was an acute shortage of housing facilities. Said a local editorial, "We are not now in need of civic movement but a CIVIC MOVEMENT, the housing movement."¹⁰ There were cries set up against "rent profiteers", threats and exhortations but these were soon forgotten in the excitement of Muncie's political problems.

Throughout the first half of 1921 the most important political question facing every city in Indiana was what to do about the recently passed Knapp Act, which permitted certain classified municipalities to institute either a commission or a Commission-Manager form of government. Local opinion in Muncie was

⁸Ibid., p. 35.

⁹Ibid., p. 74ff. on the "X family: A Pattern of Business-class Control."

¹⁰Muncie Evening Press, Oct. 23, 1919.

definitely split on the question. The evening paper rapidly opposed the proposed change which was to be decided by popular referendum while the morning paper mildly supported it. The Muncie Evening Press supported a "Home Rule League" opposed to the strong minority favoring the possible change. City officials were naturally the most violent opponents of the new plan because they stood to lose most by it; therefore, they found many columns devoted to their opinions in the evening paper. The City Attorney accused the National Municipal League, the American Civic Association, the National Short Ballot Association, and the City Manager Association of attempting to seize control of the city. Some of his remarks were actually laughable. Said he, "The plan is.... to get absolute control of municipalities. They¹¹ are engaged in the business of manufacturing city managers and secretaries of commercial clubs and they must find a market for their finished product else their business fail.... But, thank heavens, the multitudes are fast becoming familiar with their deceptive arguments, and on the 7th day of June next, a righteously indignant people of this city will hurl from this municipality the heartless crowd of New York which is

¹¹ Referring to the above named organizations.

attempting to tear our liberties from their shrine and barter them away to the enemies of freedom.

"You voted against the League of Nations on last November, now are you going to vote for a League of Municipalities and place those New York 'birds' in control? Are you going to invite them to enter our gates and take possession of your persons and property?

"I class them as roving bandits of old, who under chiefs or leaders subsisted by sweeping down upon and plundering the people. They would take possession of ourselves and our prosperous city, subdue its people and divide the spoils between themselves. I cannot see any other object they have in mind except to get control."¹²

As the date of the referendum drew near this paper indreased its howls against a form of government that was "autocratic and subversive of American ideals"; against a remedy "worse than the disease" it was intended to cure.¹³ The days of war propoganda were not so distant that the people forgot their late hate against things Teutonic. The Muncie Evening Press stirred up old embers with telling effect saying, for example, "We must heed, too, the warning of the people in the towns that have

¹²Muncie Evening Press, May 20, 1921.

¹³Ibid., May 23, 1921

been afflicted by the imposition of the Germanic form of government upon them, and in the listening loss for the moment the clamoring voices of theorists and faddists who would bridle us in likewise."¹⁴ Querried the same paper a few days later in most ominous tones; "Wouldn't it be worse for the voters to find their hands tied by a man foreign to the community who had no interest in the community except his salary check, than to find themselves in the hands of their own citizens who would be fearful of the wrath of the voters if these officers misbehaved....?"

"Wouldn't it be worse to have a foreign burgo-master like the Germans have in charge of their cities - which is all that a manager would be - than to have an American mayor and an American council in charge of our American city as we now have? COULDN'T IT BE WORSE AND WOULDN'T IT BE WORSE?"¹⁵

The morning paper's milder support of the plan hardly compared with the force of the opposition and probably kept the fight from being more important than it actually was. This paper took the very safe position of advocating the hackneyed reformer's plea; that is,

¹⁴Muncie Evening Press, May 27, 1921.

¹⁵Ibid., May 30, 1921.

put the city on a business basis and throw out the political bosses. Suggested its editorials; "If any voter who is opposed to the present system of political government in city affairs fails to vote.... he should forever hold his tongue and say nothing about how the affairs of Muncie are conducted."¹⁶

The most emphatic editorial in support of a City Manager was an admonition to cast off the political yoke; "The proposal to put Muncie's government in the hands of a non-partisan board of commissioners in whose interest will be the interest of the taxpayers and not that of the Republican or Democratic party, should be supported by every man and woman who thinks of the safety of their homes and children."¹⁷

The plan was defeated in the referendum by a margin of 2 to 1. There was a real landslide against it in the poorer sections of the town and very noticeably in the colored districts. The morning paper was resigned to the outcome and weakly suggested that "the average voter requires an occasionally prodding to awaken within him his duties as a citizen.

"We believe that those responsibilities have been

¹⁶Muncie Morning Star, May 22, 1921.

¹⁷Ibid., May 26, 1921.

awakened and that the voters of Muncie will go into the primaries and nominate the men best fitted for the places which they aspire to fill"¹⁸ - just as if the good people had not always had a chance to nominate the "best" men but usually neglected too.

The Press was jubilant. It looked upon this defeat as a personal victory and an index of its own power in the community. Gloating, it wisely remarked that it was evident that the people "are not ready to place themselves and their affairs in the hands of one man as community boss and that they still preserve in their hearts the ideals of freedom and democracy inculcated by the constitution and be the founding fathers.

"The PRESS is glad of the part it played in this victory which it believes is distinctly that of the common people, and if the occasion should again arise when it felt called upon to defend the interests of the community it will have no hesitancy in doing so."¹⁹ And so was ended a short and bitter fight, which, if it did nothing more, proved that all was not complete accord within the community pattern. Fissures deeper

¹⁸ Muncie Morning Star, May 22, 1921.

¹⁹ Muncie Evening Press, June 8, 1921.

than partisan differences became faintly discernable.
The years were to clarify them.

* * * * *

Muncie's claim to fame, aside from being used as a sociological laboratory, from its Ball family and their glass jars, and from its basket-ball teams may be found in its politics about which few of its citizens like to speak publicly. The fair name of Muncie has been regularly splashed over the front pages of metropolitan newspapers in connection with some political scandal or other ever since 1919. In April of that year came a great political stench. For the first time in its history Muncie was aware of a small army of Federal investigators in its midst. During the next decade and a half similar situations were to become everyday occurrences and very little thought given them other than the usual explanation that something-must-be-wrong-at-city-hall-again.

The local papers announced that the federal officers were investigating a large ring of confidence men who were conducting fake prize fights and making fraudulent land deals. There were rumors of "big money" being taken from out-of-town "suckers". No names were as yet divulged but the evening paper saw a note of

subtle humor in the comical way in which "suckers" bite.²¹

It weakly admitted that vice conditions did exist in Muncie and that the city should be "cleaned up" but suggested that the federal men should cooperate with the local police if there was any investigating to do. Still, it was consoling to know that there was vice in every city and that it was impossible to wipe it out completely. "Surely there is a way to do this and surely public sentiment in time will crystallize to the point where it will demand that Muncie be made a thoroughly decent place in which to live. Enough has been divulged and is to be divulged by federal investigators to warrant the belief that with proper cooperation the local authorities may be able to accomplish a great deal toward ridding the community of its low dives, at least. This task is not a job for professional reformers, half-baked politicians nor men with axes to grind, however, and whenever any of these elements undertakes reformation the movement is foredoomed to failure before it begins, but certainly if the men whom the public has entrusted with the conduct of its affairs are sensible and right minded they should be able to

²¹Muncie Evening Press, April 17, 1919.

accomplish much."²² This same paper tried to laugh off the whole situation in editorials telling how much worse were crime conditions in Chicago²³ - a city sixty times larger than Muncie - and by admitting that" even if all the stories told about the swindles of the Muncie gang are true, the men did not do much robbing of Muncie people, preferring to work on outsiders. We should be careful to give proper credit in these little matters."²⁴

I do not imply when I quote from one of the local papers that either of them indicate the opinions of more than a very small portion of the community. But it gives an interesting insight into some of the political ideas of the "good people" of an average American community to note how editorials representing their opinions have and still explain the phenomena of local politics. The present example came at the height of the recent federal investigation. As yet everything was still in the secretive stage, no one knew who was going to be exposed although it was becoming evident that some local officials might be connected somewhere in the operations of the "ring". At such a time, the evening paper explained all the city's difficulties in these terms:

²³Muncie Evening Press, April 21, 1919.

²⁴Ibid., April 22, 1919.

²²Ibid., April 18, 1919.

*The principle reasons why viciousness has been so generally triumphant in the long run even when at times seemingly brought to bay, have been about these:

*Toomuch politics.

*Lack of temperence of speech and act on the part of those who have taken the lead in attacking vacious conditions.

*Unlimited 'nerve' and funds possessed by the lawless element.

*Protection of lawlessness by persons in high places.

*Lack of common sense leadership and lack of adequate organization on the part of the generally decent element....

"While we continue in our present state of disorganization, we can only trust that those outside the city who have been investigating things here will continue and will act upon the results of their investigation. Maybe we shall be together in some organized way, soon, but just now we need help from outside."²⁵

The city was "together in some organized way" in a few years.

The upshot of the investigations was the indictment of the mayor and prosecuting attorney along with others for violation of the United States postal laws.²⁶ Thus was begun the era of mayor troubles which even today Muncie has not been able to leave behind. In the case in

²⁵Muncie Evening Press, May 12, 1919.

²⁶Ibid., June 26, 1919; Muncie Morning Star, June 27, 1919; New York Times, June 27, 1919, p. 7.

point, the Mayor and his confreres were accused of being members of this swindling syndicate which carried on some of its activities through the mails. The political career of that mayor, Dr. ¹Robin Bunch, would indeed make a fascinating case study in itself. A real ward boss type of politician, he had built his personal organization on a firm social service foundation. As a "quick" physician, - but none the less a very able one - he has built up a large practice among the poorer classes and was known especially among the Negroes as a man who did not press his debtors too harshly. Elected mayor in 1914 he continued his chartible proclivities and if his methods of disbursing services were not always ethical, they were at least effective politically. Even if care of coal and flour were mysteriously robbed in Muncie freight yards, there were a good many families that were warm and had bread during the winter months. In 1916 he had been charged with accepting "protection" money from various "dives" and gambling houses in Muncie but the jury could not agree and his case was dismissed. He was reelected the next year by the largest majority ever given a candidate before that time.²⁷ Now he was to face a federal, not a county court.

²⁷ Muncie Evening Press, June 26, 1919.

The local papers made an honest effort to be impartial after the indictments had been returned and before the trial began. Editorial opinion admonished the people to "go slowly" in judging the accused men.²⁸ "We shall not prejudge the men who have been indicted and have no wish to do so, but we can judge ourselves and our community as harshly as we please and not be amiss. If Muncie's name has become a byword and a hissing throughout the state among decent persons, it is because we have allowed it to become so - and by 'we' is meant those who consider themselves decent citizens. If this reputation is to continue, we will be to blame."²⁹ This last opinion is very interesting in that it was one of the few occasions when either of the local papers was willing to make a distinction in its editorials between the "nice" people of the community and all others. As the trial drew nearer the papers concentrated upon Muncie's "wide open" vice conditions and the fact that something should be done about them.³⁰ But the community could console itself in the knowledge that Muncie was different from other cities suffering from unhealthy politics. In Muncie, "evil is resisted and

²⁸Muncie Morning Star, June 27, 1919.

²⁹Muncie Evening Press, June 26, 1919.

³⁰Ibid., Nov. 3, 1919 and following numbers.

apprehended and punished, whereas in many other cities it is tolerated, condemned and endured."³¹ In any case the defendents were found guilty,³² and the mayor and prosecuting attorney were sentenced to serve two years in prison.³³ A new mayor and prosecutor took office and announced a "clean-u-the-city" policy. Such a program has become as regular an event in the political life of the city as the annual Community Fund Drive.

The later career of the mayor is very interesting in view of the fact that after he was pardoned by President Coolidge in 1923, his name cleared and franchise restored,³⁴ he slipped back quietly into his practice and began repairing his broken organization. That his rehabilitation was successful is evidenced in the fact that he is the present mayor of Muncie.

The next political stir that came to the city was the announcement that federal indictments had been served upon a number of local liquor law violators.³⁵ Stories of graft and unholy political connections flew thick and fast.

³¹Muncie Evening Press, Nov. 6, 1919.

³²Ibid., Nov. 11, 1919; New York Times, Nov. 12, 1919, p. 14.

³³Muncie Evening Press, Nov. 25, 1919.

³⁴Ibid., Sept. 15, 1923; Muncie Morning Star, Sept. 16, 1923.

³⁵Ibid., Dec. 7, 1921 and following numbers in both local papers.

The evening paper bemoaned the fact that federal authorities always had to come into the city to clean out vice and corruption which local officials seemed unwilling to touch. The city would get a bad name if something were not done about this state of affairs. But there was a ray of hope. Said the Press, "Muncie is about to have a change in her city administration. We expect conditions here to be helped materially by this change because it is the understanding that there is to be a general cleaning-up of the police department, among other things."³⁶

Surely enough, as the first duly elected mayor since Bunch went to prison took office, there came the expected "shake-up" in the police department.³⁷ For a time Muncie politics ran smoothly.

Because of its greater editorial freedom and interest in local affairs, some editorial opinions of the evening paper are very interesting especially when written during periods of comparative political calm. There is, for example, a great deal of practical

³⁶Muncie Evening Press, Dec. 9, 1921.

³⁷In both local papers, Jan 3, 1922. It is unimportant but interesting to note in this connection that the new mayor was also a physician.

philosophy of government applicable to much of our American experience in the following excerpt from an editorial: "The American people are great 'kickers' about the way their government is run and about the kind of men that sometimes get into office, and yet when they make these objections they would be better made against themselves.

"We have about the kind of government we wish and have in office the kind of men that we ourselves are, in the mass, or rather better. The greatest difficulty is that we do our objecting after election instead of our investigating before election."³⁸

But even with the occasional outburst of a "common-sense" editorial, the local papers in Muncie could hardly be said to hold a consistent position in political attitudes. When, for instance, Muncie was faced with the city manager problem the Press screamed for "Constitutionalism" and the "good old American way" of running a government. It insisted that "the federal system with the primary election plan is the fairest method ever devised by man. It gives to each voter the right of individual expression, and for this very reason

³⁸Muncie Evening Press, April 12, 1922.

it is freer from abuses than any other plan.... that a public servant violates faith is no just criticism of the political system."³⁹ And yet, not a year later, came the following editorial on the direct primary where the same paper championed "change" and "progress" in government; "It was the idea of the nation's founding fathers that we should have a representative government. A pure democracy was found impossible after the nation had outgrown its swaddling clothes and attained a large population and it then became more than ever necessary that the people should select their officers through men delegated for that purpose. The system worked well and it produced the nation's great statesmen for a hundred years or more. It had come to be realized that the country had passed the town-meeting stage of its existence. Now there are those who would go back a century and a half and attempt to place us within the old shell that we have outgrown and cast aside."⁴⁰ This editorial went on to discuss the processes of government and has an interesting thought on civil service which might be of great significance if it represented the opinion of the entire community on this subject. This

³⁹Muncie Evening Press, May 28, 1921.

⁴⁰Ibid., April 18, 1922.

paper looked upon the creation of a civil service in American government as a "beautiful theory". In practice, it went on to explain, men appointed under civil service provisions tend to become lazy and inefficient because they know they will not lose their jobs. And by the same reasoning it concluded that appointive, political officials always will be best because the alertness needed for them to keep their jobs will mean that they will perform their duties better. This is not necessarily a naive sort of argument. It merely demonstrates how thinly developed among the people was any idea of having trained administrators to run their government as well as how deep-rooted were traditional faiths in the inherent goodness of their institutions regardless of how badly they worked. Editorials are not quite the same today; Muncie has begun to question this old symbols.

I have stressed these editorial opinions to suggest lines of division in Middletown's community pattern that were apparent in the early 1920's. The local papers were an inadequate but non the less important index to these divisions and therefore cannot be taken as irrelevant. But if the above-mentioned disturbances of the status quo were only embryonic at this early date, there would be little question of the tremendous strain put upon

the community by a new organization which suddenly engulfed Middletown - the Ku Klux Klan. Most important was the part played by this new group alignment in local politics for the next five years.

CHAPTER II.

THE KU KLUX KLAN.

When in June, 1922, a Negro in Muncie was kidnapped and either flogged or threatened with flogging by a band of "masked men",¹ Muncie hardly raised its eyebrows. The Press, however, was very careful to deny that an organization called the Ku Klux Klan had anything to do with the kidnapping. The city attorney, afterwards known as having Klan affiliations,² emphatically denied any Klan connections with the episode. Said the Chief of Police, "I haven't seen any masked men and I don't think there were any."³ There was no prosecution.

The rise of the Ku Klux Klan points to some very significant things about American political and mental processes and because it played such an important part in the political history of Muncie, I shall dwell upon it at some length.

¹Muncie Evening Press, June 12, 1922.

²This man, C. E. Benadum, has since been connected with similar movements in Muncie most notably the Silver Shirts which was essentially an anti-Semitic organization. He has also written a book called Blackshirt (Philadelphia, 1935) which tells about Klan-like activities of a fascist order in America.

³Muncie Evening Press, June 13, 1922.

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The "big Red scare" coming as it did on the heels of the war made the nation jittery. For the first time in its history America was conscious of real labor agitation. Strikes, higher prices, and a few scattered bombs convinced a large sector of the public that all this unrest was perpetrated by insidious "radicals".

"The American business man.... had come out of the war with his fighting blood up, ready to lick the next thing that stood in his way. He wanted to get back to business and enjoy his profits. Labor stood in his way and threatened his profits. He had come out of the war with a militant patriotism; and mingling his idealistic with his selfish motives, after the manner of all men at all times, he developed a fervent belief that 100-per-cent Americanism and the Welfare of God's own Country and Loyalty to the Teachings of the Founding fathers implied the right of the business man to kick the union organizer out of his workshop. He had come to distrust anything that was foreign, and this radicalism he saw as the spawn of long-haired slavs and unwashed East-Side Jews. And, finally, he had been nourished during the war years upon stories of spies and plotters and international intrigue. He had been convinced that German sympathizers signaled to one another with lights from mountain-tops and put ground glass into surgical dressings, and he had formed the habit of expecting tennis courts to conceal gun-emplacements. His credulity had thus been stretched until he was quite ready to believe that a struggle of American laboring-men for better wages was the beginning of an armed rebellion directed by Lenin and Trotsky, and that behind every innocent professor who taught that there were arguments for as well as against socialism there was a bearded rascal from eastern Europe with a money bag in one hand and a smoking bomb in the other."⁴

⁴Allen, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

When, in September, 1919, The Boston Police went out on strike many people were convinced that der tag had come; that "the dreaded revolution was beginning here and now."⁵

Then, as if all this was not sufficient proof of a great "red conspiracy" against the United States government, there came the great steel and coal strikes of which I have spoken above. Even the most level-headed were beginning to wonder. Suddenly the Government came into the picture, United States Attorney-General, A. Mitchell Palmer, the "Fighting Quaker" turned the Department of Justice into a very effective O.G.P.U. Red-baiting, arrests, raids, and deportations were the order of the day - with little concern for such incidental considerations as American citizenship, warrants or writs of habeas corpus. "Hysteria had reached its height."

"Nor did it quickly subside. For the professional superpatriots (and assorted special propagandists disguised as superpatriots) had only begun to fight. Innumerable patriotic societies had sprung up, each with its executive secretary, and executive secretaries must live, and therefore must conjure up new and ever greater menaces. Innumerable other gentlemen now discovered that they could defeat whatever they wanted to defeat by tarring it conspicuously with the Bolshevist Brush. Big-Navy men, believers in compulsory military service, drys, anti-cigarette campaigners,

⁵Allen, p. 53.

anti-evolution Fundamentalists, defenders of the moral order, book censors, Jew-haters, Negro-haters, landlords, manufacturers, utility executives, upholders of every sort of cause, good, bad and indifferent, all wrapped themselves in Old Glory and the mantle of the Founding Fathers and allied their opponents with Lenin. The open shop, for example, became the 'American plan'.⁶

Hardly a public-spirited citizen or civic group in the country did not at some time or other come under the dark cloud of accusation. The National League of Women Voters, the Federal Council of Churches, the Foreign Policy Association, even Jane Addams and Will Rogers bore watching.⁷ It was during a time such as this that "conformity" became the watchword of those who wished

⁶ Allen, pp. 58-59. It is interesting to note an almost identical opinion expressed to the writer by the present mayor of Muncie - the same Dr. Bunch who went to Atlanta during his second term - on the question of "radicalism" in Muncie. In an interview in December, 1936, when asked his opinion of the Massachusetts Teachers' Oath Bill, His Honor said, "...there are too many non-governmental institutions regulating our lives. They drape the flag and the Constitution around anything they want done. Then if someone won't support them, they are immediately dubbed 'un-American', 'communistic', etc." Certainly there is no better proof of the extent to which old ways of political thinking are breaking down in Middletown when a man steeped in the tradition of the political boss, and an active boss himself, makes such a declaration.

⁷Ibid., p. 60.

to be immune from suspicion. It is this same kind of "conformity" that still pervades life in Middletown.⁸

Intolerance became a commonplace.

"Almost inevitably it took the form of an ugly flareup of feeling against the Negro, the Jew, and the Roman Catholic. The emotions of group loyalty and of hatred, expanded during war-time and then suddenly denied their intended expression, found a perverted release in the persecution not only of supposed radicals, but also of other elements which to the dominant American group - the white Protestants - seemed alien or 'un-American'."⁹

Exigencies of the war caused a great migration of southern Negroes to the North. In fact, the great need for industrial labor brought also a movement of southern whites. But at least they were not so obvious as their colored brethren. Friction and maladjustment was bound to occur whenever large aggregates of one racial group noticeably impinged upon the social and economic spheres of another. The North began to see a problem with which the South had grappled for generations,¹⁰ And this awareness brought with it violence. There were race riots in Chicago and uneasiness in other large cities.¹¹

⁸See Middletown in Transition, Chapter XII, on "The Middletown Spirit."

⁹Allen, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁰Gosnell, Harold F., Negro Politicians, Chicago, 1935; op. xx, 1, 15.

¹¹Ibid., p. 63ff.

Henry Ford crystalized the latent anti-Semitism of many people with his series of articles called the "International Jew";¹² although he probably was not quite sure just what the stories signed by him in his Dearborn Independent - and written by his now well-known expounder of Sunday night Fordian philosophy, Mr. W. J. Cameron - actually implied. The old "international plot" tales were revived and there were those who were certain that every Jew in the world was connected with some sort of mysterious tong. Twenty million individualists, pants pressers and bankers, most of whom could not even understand each other, were to pounce upon the other two billions or less in the world and completely subjugate them.

Catholics, too, were dragged into the picture. Here was a large group of people who would not send their children to public schools. Furthermore, they were under complete control of a Pope who was not even an American. How many persons were convinced that the Vatican City would be transferred to Washington was well proved by Al Smith's presidential campaign. "It was in such an atmosphere that that the Ku Klux Klan blossomed into power."¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 64; Mecklin, John M., The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind, New York, 1924., p. 125.

¹³Allen, op. cit., p. 65. Cf. also, Johnson, J. E., (compiler). "Ku Klux Klan", The Reference Shelf, vol. 1, no. 10, for an interesting and valuable survey of early editorial, academic, and purely partisan opinion dealing with all phases of the rise of the Klan that are mentioned in this thesis.

In 1915 a dreamy-eyed mystic, William J. Simmons, a former professor of Southern history at a small Southern college, started the modern Ku Klux Klan. "Fascinated as he was from boyhood by the romantic story of the old Klan of Reconstruction days, which is looked upon in the South as the savior of Southern civilization, he called the new order the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan."¹⁴

The first five years of this "fraternal" organizations were uneventful and only scattered sections of the country were even aware of its existence. The year 1920, however, saw a sudden and most phenomenal rise in its membership and power. The whole nation took notice. Attacked by the powerful New York World and subject to Congressional investigation at an early date, the Klan weathered all opposition and soared to new heights of political power.¹⁵

This sudden expansion of the Klan in 1920 was the result of an internal reorganization by men who saw great financial possibilities in the hooded order. A propaganda machine that would have gladdened the heart of Herr Goebbels was set up by one Edward Y. Clarke whose former occupation had been organizer for such apparently

¹⁴Mecklin, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 3.

harmless movements as the Anti-Saloon League, the Roosevelt Memorial Fund, and the Near East Relief. To facilitate canvass and control from Atlanta, the national headquarters, the whole country was divided up into several geographical "domains". "Each 'domain' was divided into 'realms' or states. The head of the promotion department as a whole was Imperial Kleagle E. Y. Clarke. The head of the 'domain' was called a Grand Goblin. The head of the 'realm' or state, was called a King Kleagle, and the house-to-house solicitors, or legwork men, were called Kleagles. There can be little doubt that the purely commercial motive had much to do with the successful promotion of the Klan. The membership fee was ten dollars, which was divided as follows; four of the ten dollars went to the Kleagle, or local solicitor, when he signed up a new member; one dollar went into the pocket of the King Kleagle, or state sales-manager; the Grand Goblin, or district salesman, had to be content with only fifty cents, while the remaining four dollars and fifty cents went to Atlanta."¹⁶ With an organization of such pecuniary possibilities Emperor Simmons was hardly able to cope. He was soon left behind in the rush and a more paractical opportunist, Dr. Hiram W. Evans, a Texas

¹⁶ Frost, Stanley, The Challenge of The Klan, Indianapolis, 1923. pp. 42, 121ff.; Mecklin, op. cit., p. 8; Allen, op. cit., p. 66.

dentist, exchanged his drill for the toga of the Imperial Wizard.¹⁷

Granted the power of financial appeal, it alone hardly explains the phenomenal growth of "the giant in the white hood."¹⁸ If the Klan was a purely "taking" device it nevertheless gave back something for which its members were looking. Therein lies its great significance for American political history. To admit that men joined an organization which subtly played upon their prejudices and hatreds to the point of commercializing them is only half the story; the Klan made as strong a plea to the "patriotism and....moral idealism of its members. The baser motives were present, but they alone can never account for the spread of the Klan."¹⁹ Rather than being "un-American" as the New York World tried to paint it in its great expose, "the Klan was but the recrudescence of forces that already existed in American society, some of them recent, others dating from the more distant past."²⁰ It would be altogether a distortion of the Klan's real significance to dismiss it as something completely foreign to the American way of life.

¹⁷ Frost, op. cit., p. 20ff.

¹⁸ Ibid. Chap. I.

¹⁹ Mecklin, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰ Ibid.

Mecklin has tried "to show that the Klan drew its inspirations from ancient prejudices, classical hatreds, and ingrained social habits. The germs of the disease of the Klan, like germs in the human body, have long been present in the social organism and needed only the weakening of the social tissue to become malignant."²¹ The important thing is to discover what there is or was in American life at the time that called for and permitted an organization like the Klan to achieve such tremendous political and social power.

The answers to this query are innumerable. I can only present a few of those which seem to me most important.

To use Mecklin's figure, the "germs" which have long been present in the social order are found most obviously in those racial and religious hatreds mentioned above. In the case of the Klan, the anti-Catholic fever seemed to rise much higher than did hatred at Jews and Negroes -- although these were very much in evidence. The primary motive in many cases for joining the Klan was this anti-Catholic attitude.²² When Klan leaders had to find something to "sell" in order to entice new

²¹ Ibid., p. 14.

²² Ibid., p. 38.

members they struck upon the idea of catering to this hatred -- an old device used with singular success to enlist "that powerful body of middle class Protestant traditions which have registered themselves in the Know-Nothing Party of the middle of the last century and in the A.P.A. movement towards its close."²³ Childhood memories of many persons were brought back by Klan-circulated stories about Catholics, their nuns and priests. A most effective story in boosting Klan membership was that describing a secret Catholic ritual by which a rifle was buried under a church or a Knights of Columbus Hall every time a male Catholic was born. This rifle was to be suddenly siezed in two or three decades, well oiled and loaded, to be used in the great Papal plot to sieze control of the United States.²⁴ Out of their context these stories are absolutely ludicrous. Their effect, however, on the growth of the Klan was most amazing. Writing in 1923, when the Klan had just seized politics by the ears, in Indiana, Lowell Mellett said; "Worry about the Catholics....has been revived. It is part of the state of mind that accounts for the amazing growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the old Hoosier commonwealth;

²³ Ibid., p. 42; Frost, op. cit., p. 102ff.

²⁴ Mellett, Lowell, "Klan and Church", Atlantic Monthly, November 1923. p. 587; Mecklin, op. cit., p. 167ff.; Frost, op. cit., p. 103.

that enables Indiana to compete with Ohio for the distinction of having a larger Klan membership than any other State. It helped make possible the remarkable election results of last fall, when practically every candidate opposed by the Klan went down in defeat."²⁵

Aside from its scapegoats, the Klan found its greatest appeal in its promises to "clean up" things -- especially in local governments. The Post-war breakdown of traditional morality caused a reaction in favor of "law and order." If the legally constituted force of the state was unable to prevent this growing laxness, the Klan would. The appeal of the sheet struck the Robin Hood note in many cases -- as well as the Freudian.²⁶ That the common law had placed great emphasis upon the inviolability of personal integrity and one's private life made little difference to a group of self-appointed "reformers" who took the morals of the community under their own surveillance. If a woman's drunken husband disappeared too often she might appeal to the Klan to take him in hand. And woe to the Klansman who traded with

²⁵Mellett, op. cit., pp. 587-8.

²⁶Mecklin, op. cit., p. 40. In the early period between 1915 and 1920 "it is probable that the role of a vigilance committee rather than that of a purely fraternal order was the real attraction of the Klan. The traditions of the old Klan together with the lax post-war conditions acted to combine to turn the Klan into a sort of local hooded vigilantes."

a merchant not approved by his brethren. From the "slow of thought" the Klan received its support in these undertakings. Here was an organization that "got things done."²⁷ "I hear the Klan kind of fixes up things that ain't right"²⁸ expresses most forcefully the ideas of many people who looked upon the Klan as a panacea for almost every kind of personal grievance. The "nice people", too, in most communities supported the Klan at its inception because they saw a chance to rid their respective cities of corrupt political machines.²⁹ This situation, however, was more common in the South where the name of the Klan still brought back patriotic thoughts of the old organization's role in Southern history. The significant factor in much of this early attitude toward the Klan is the speed with which the breakdown of the traditional gadgets by which most Americans lived brought about a desire for authoritarianism to relace the indecisiveness of representative institutions. Comparisons with similar German experiences are most striking.

²⁷Frost, op. cit., pp. 161ff., 199.

²⁸Ibid., p. 167.

²⁹Mecklin, op. cit., p. 41.

But its very secrecy and unholy mystery lost the Klan the support of the "better elements". The novelty of "night riding" and tar and feathering parties soon wore off. There must have been and probably still is something in the make-up of the American people which made them extremely susceptible to such a movement, Partially due to its racial and religious restrictions but mostly because of its appeal, the Klan was essentially made up of solid middle class American stock. Klan organization was most effective in the small town where immigration and industrialization had not yet become a recognized part of community life. Mecklin explains the Klan as a "defense mechanism", an escape from the drab, everyday existence of the small town. "Its cheap moral idealism (filled) a need not met by business or social and civic life."³⁰ In sum, then, the rise of the Klan

³⁰Mecklin, p. 104. This author also makes some interesting analyses of the psychological factors which influenced the growth of the Klan. Ibid., pp. 107-8 "Here we have a curious side-light upon the psychology of the average man of native American stock who fills the ranks of the Klan. He is tossed about in the hurly-burly of our industrial and so-called democratic society. Under the stress and strain of social competition he is made to realize his essential mediocrity. Yet according to traditional democratic doctrine he is born free and the equal of his fellow who is outdistancing him in the race. Here is a large and powerful organization offering to solace his sense of defeat by dubbing him a knight of the Invisible Empire for the small sum of ten dollars. Surely knighthood was never offered at such a bargain! He joins. He becomes the chosen conservator of American ideals, the keeper of the morals of the community. He receives the

must be traced directly to "disturbed post-war conditions. The war, with its hymns of hate, its stories of poison gas and human carnage, its secret spyings upon fellow Americans, its accounts of Belgian atrocities, its imprisonment of radicals, its fearful tales of Bolshevist design upon American institutions, had opened up the fountains of the great deep of national feeling. After the armistice these hates kindled by the war and to which the nation had become habituated during years of bloodshed were suddenly set adrift because stripped of the objects and the ends around which they had been organized by the experience of the war. As a nation we had cultivated a taste for the cruel, the brutal, the intolerant, and the unchristian that demanded gratification. Here was an unparalleled opportunity for the Klan's 'salesmen of hate'. The Klan offered just what the war-torn distraught emotion of the nation demanded."³¹

The conclusion is obvious; that the American mass mind which has in the recent past accepted the dogmas of label of approved 'One hundred per cent Americanism'. The Klan slogan printed on the outside of its literature is "an urgent call for men." This flatters the pride of the man suffering from the sense of mediocrity and defeat. It stimulates his latent idealism. It offers fantastic possibilities for his dwarfed and starved personality. Membership in a vast mysterious empire that 'sees all and hears all' means a sort of mystic glorification of his petty self. It identifies his own weak incompetent will with the omnipotent and universal will of a great organization. The appeal is irresistible."

³¹Mecklin, pp. 121-2.

the Klan under certain given conditions would certainly repeat their attachment to a Klan-like fascist movement if such conditions were to reappear. In an era of "general unrest and dissatisfaction with both local and national conditions" when all men were greatly distressed by "the high cost of living, social injustice and inequality, mal-administration of justice, political corruption, hyphenism, disunity, unassimilated and conflicting ideals and standards"³² the Klan offered a solution.

What did the Klan mean for Muncie, Politically it meant a new and powerful force straddling both political parties and threatening to become a dictatorial govement. Socially, it meant that an already distrubed community was to be divided again on a new issue. Such experiences were in no way peculiar to Muncie, They became a commonplace over most of the Mid-west and parts of the South and far West.

"Coming upon Middletown like a tornado, catching up many.... latent differences into a frenzy of activity, the Ku Klux Klan,... emphasized, during its brief career in Middletown, potential factors of disintegration. Brought to town originally, it is said, by a few of the city's leading business men as a vigilance committee to hold an invisible whip over the corrupt Democratic political administration and generally 'to clean up the town' its ranks were quickly thrown open under a

³²Frost, op. cit., pp. 170-1.

professional organizer, and by 1923 some 3,500 of the local citizens are said to have joined. As the organization developed, the business men withdrew, and the Klan became largely a working class movement. Thus relieved of the issue that prompted its original entry into Middletown, The Klan, lacking a local issue, took over from the larger national organization a militant Protestantism with which it set about dividing the city; the racial issue, though secondary, was hardly less ardently proclaimed. So high did the local tide of Klan feeling run that in 1924 a rebel group in Middletown set up a rival and 'purer' national body to supersede the old Klan. Tales against the Catholics ran like wildfire through the city.... Local Klansmen vowed they would unmask 'whom and not until the Catholics take the prison walls down from about their convents and nunneries,' and the 'confessions' of Helen Jackson, 'an escaped nun', were widely sold at local Klan rallies. Fed on such threatening rumors, Klan enrollment boomed.... To this Catholic hatred was added Negro and Jewish hatred fed by stories that the Negroes have a powder which they put on their arms which turns their bodies white, and that the Jews have all the money, but when the Klan gets into power, it will make a new kind of money, so that the Jew's money will be no good... Klan feeling was fanned to white heat by constant insistence in season and out that 'every method known to man has been used and is being used by the alien-minded and foreign influence to halt our growth.' Social clubs were broken up and church groups rocked to their foundations by the tense feeling all this engendered. The secret of this eruption of strife within the group probably lies in the fact that it blew off the cylinder head of the humdrum. It afforded an outlet for many of the constant frustrations of life, economic tensions and social insecurity, by providing a wealth of scape-goats against whom wrath might be vented; and two of the most powerful latent

emotional storm-centers of Middletown, religion and patriotism, were adroitly maneuvered out of their habitual uneventful status into a wild enthusiasm of utter devotion to a persecuted but noble cause. The high tide of bitterness was reached in 1923, and by 1925 the energy was mainly spent and the Klan disappeared as a local power, leaving in its wake wide areas of local bitterness.³³

Not until the summer of 1922 did Muncie papers begin to carry stories about Klan activities in other sections of the country. Although her citizens knew the Klan existed in Muncie, Saturday night Klan parades were the only obvious manifestation of such existence. Suddenly the city was made acutely aware of the Invisible Empire. There was a "shake-up" in the police department. The Chief of Police was accused of disregarding orders to keep the streets of the business section open during a Klan parade a week previously.³⁴

If the good people of Muncie were not aware of how much control the Klan wielded over their city they soon learned. Three days after the above mentioned incident local papers candidly admitted that Klan pressure had forced Mayor Quick to reinstate the Chief-of-Police and also ask for the resignation of the Board of Safety.

³³Middletown, p. 481ff.

³⁴Muncie Morning Star, and Muncie Evening Press, Oct. 4, 1922.

The Press carried the following news story on its front page:

✓ "Hundreds of members of the Ku Klux Klan gathered in the Campbell auditorium Friday evening in a protest meeting against the discharge of Van Benbow as chief of ✓ police and a number of fiery speeches were made on the subject. Then the members in scores of automobiles came up town and crowded the city streets with their vehicles from which bills were passed calling for an 'indignation meeting' in the courtyard Saturday night for the purpose of making further protest against the removal of Benbow. The handbills said the object of the proposed meeting was to 'Save Muncie'. It is understood, however, that the leaders of the project, now that their object has been accomplished in keeping Benbow in his job, have called off the meeting.

"The retention of Benbow....and the ending of the official careers of Rosenthal and Collins as members of the Board of Safety, all are regarded as constituting a complete and sweeping victory for the local Ku Klux Klan to which Mayor Quick has been bitterly opposed. The mayor became a member of the Klan soon after taking office, but later withdrew from it and denounced it after the Klan had demanded of him that he get rid of five³⁵ police officers objectionable to the Klan."

Such blunt reporting makes further elaboration upon political conditions in Muncie during this period unnecessary.

The extent to which the Klan controlled Muncie became legend all over the state of Indiana. And Muncie, in turn, became a hotbed of Klanism. The Kamelia, the

³⁵ Muncie Evening Press, Oct. 7, 1922.

female Klan auxiliary, was organized in March, 1923.³⁶

"Kluxing became a thriving and profitable business. But superfluouity of finances was bound to bring internal discontent and before 1923 was half over, there were rival Klans vieing for control in Muncie. In the meantime, many good Muncie citizens succumbed to the lure of the night-shirt and a real 100% American "naturalization". Here it was, true "patriotism" dispensed for a mere \$10! The Klan was creating a monopoly on loyalty.

Then Muncie was subjected to its periodic illness - mayor trouble. The year 1924 was ushered in with the usual police department upheavel.³⁷ A few days later the mayor was indicted on charges of interfering with his Board of Safety.³⁸ The situation pointed to Klan interference but three days later the city council refused to sanction an attempted impeachment and dismissal of the mayor. Concluded the Press, "It has been evident that the attempt to 'get the Mayor at this time has had

³⁶Interesting to observe is the superficiality of ideologies when one considers the difficulty with which a Muncie woman of obvious Jewish origin convinced her housemaid, a proud Kamilia, that her employer was hardly a potential member of the new organization.

³⁷Muncie Morning Star, Jan. 1, 1924; Muncie Evening Press, Jan. 2, 1924.

³⁸Ibid., (in both papers) Jan. 5, 1924.

little popular sympathy, since it has not appealed to the public's sense of justice and fair play."³⁹

Rumors were persistent throughout the winter of new Klan organizations being formed. Muncie soon mothered the Klan of the North⁴⁰ and the Independent Klan of America⁴¹ which came to be the real powerful Klan in Muncie due to the genius of its local organizer. Then came the expected split. The Independent Klan held its first national convention in Muncie and began charging the parent organization with graft, corruption and all sorts of mismanagement.⁴² In June of the same year the old Knights of the Ku Klux Klan sued the upstart branch^h for damages charging that property had been illegally taken from the older group.⁴³ Several days later the old Klan asked for a receiver for its bankrupt organization.⁴⁴ The Klan issue was hardly dead over the nation. It almost wrecked the Democratic National Convention of 1924. But in Muncie it still remained powerful for some time.

³⁹Muncie Evening Press, Jan. 8, 1924.

⁴⁰Ibid., March 1, 1924.

⁴¹Ibid., March 15, 1924.

⁴²Ibid., March 24, 1924 and following numbers.

⁴³Ibid., June 13, 1924.

⁴⁴Ibid., June 18, 1924.

The staggering blow to Klan dominion in Indiana and consequently in Muncie came with the trial and conviction of D. C. Stephenson, former Grand Dragon of the Indiana Klan, for having caused the death of a girl who took poison after he attacked her.⁴⁵ The moral sense of the whole state was shocked and disgusted. Even though the Klan repudiated the ex-Dragon and even passed resolutions bitterly condemning him⁴⁶ the public never separated his name from the organization.

In the meantime, the Independent Klan of America with national headquarters in Muncie, was struggling against great odds to maintain its former power. By court order it was forced to drop the name "Klan" because of prior use by the old Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁷ The new organization, now called the Knights of American Protestantism, came into a very weak and gradually disintegrating existence.⁴⁸ In a year it was bankrupt.⁴⁹ Two months later a rather sad remnant of the old Klan held a parade in Muncie for the sole

⁴⁵ Muncie Morning Star and Muncie Evening Press, April 4, 1925 and following numbers. For details see almost any American newspaper for these dates.

⁴⁶ Muncie Evening Press, April 28, 1925.

⁴⁷ Ibid., March 31, 1926.

⁴⁸ Ibid., June 14, 1927.

⁴⁹ Ibid., June 15, 1927.

purpose of showing that it still existed.⁵⁰ In a last feeble effort at regaining its former grandeur the national organization unmasked and changed its name to the Knights of the Great Forest.⁵¹ The Ku Klux Klan became a dead issue until 1937 when it was revived for a time by the appointment of Hugo Black to the United States Supreme Court. Muncie looked back upon her Klan history a little sheepishly.

⁵⁰Muncie Evening Press, August 27, 1927.

⁵¹Ibid., Feb. 22, 1928; also in the Muncie Morning Star.

CHAPTER III

GEORGE R. DALE: Editor....

It would be difficult to present a highly documented picture of Muncie during the two or three years of complete Klan control. The two daily papers were judiciously silent in their editorial columns about Klan activities. After all, in this commercial world a newspaper has to exist and to does so by paid advertising. It would have been economic folly to jeopardize the papers' incomes merely because of deitorial policy. If the papers fought the Klan they would be exposed to the wrath of an Invisible Empire that could miraculously stop advertizing intimidation. On the other hand, there were the Jewish merchants and small Cargolic minority and others who might refuse to advertise if the papers became too obviously pro-Klan. The result was no editorial policy of any kind with respect to the Klan. This was roughly the situation that prevailed over the entire state of Indiana.

There was, however, one exception to this rule --and a glaring one. That was a four-page weekly newspaper called The Muncie Post Democrat,¹ edited by an insignificant little man well past his prime who at first glance seemed to dispel any doubts as to the certainty of Darwin's theory of evolution.

¹The name was later changed to the Post-Democrat.

With quick wit and a sharper tongue, George R. Dale became the terror of the Klan. An iconoclast, a crusader, it was he who made the first visible inroads into Klan dominance in Indiana. It was he who gave heart and in fact shamed the great metropolitan newspapers into following suit in attacking the movement he so bitterly disliked.²

There is no specific explanation for George Dale's intense and bitter hatred of the Klan other than in his dislike for hypocrisy and sham he would have attacked any person or organization which he felt embodied these elements. He would have been the first to attack any organization smacking of fascism. He might have been a counterpart of Sinclair Lewis' Doremus Jessup.

Loved by some, hated by more, but respected by all for his abilities, he left an important mark upon Muncie and wrote a fascinating page in the history of American journalism. A master of invective and diatribe he proved once again the political power of the pen. And if his personal weaknesses prevent the honest observer from dubbing him a "great" man in character, at least the principles for which he stood have been those of great men.

² See Douglas, W.A.S., op. cit., p. 484. For a brief resume of Dale's fight with the Klan see Seldes, G., Freedom of the Press, Indianapolis, 1935, p. 335ff. He says that "among the outstanding examples of achievements of the American free press as listed by Col. McCormick of the Chicago Tribune are the destruction of the K.K.K. and the case of George R. Dale, Muncie, Ind., publisher, sentenced for contempt of court".

Known as a "character", a fighter, a person who could be counted on to be "agin' it" when some controversial issue was facing the city, he remained an outsider all his life. He was a non-conformist who never "belonged" with the "nice people" of Middletown. He lived by a set of values completely foreign to theirs. What an exasperated community thought of him during the middle of his term as mayor of Muncie was well summed up in the opinion of the editor of the Press: "His nearly complete failure in administration of the city's affairs...may be ascribed almost wholly to his lack of judgement and to a misconception of his own ability."³ This attitude "represents the judgement of a culture living by compromise and indirection regarding the frank, often mixtaken efforts of a lifelong crusader forced by temperament and circumstances to 'go it alone.' The life of George Dale provides an interesting commentary on the culture in which he lived: it could not use him and he could not use it."⁴

Born in Monticello,⁵ Indiana, in 1869, Dale lived there just long enough to receive his formal education

³Muncie Evening Press, Feb. 1, 1933.

⁴Middletown In Transition, p. 324 n.

⁵The following biographical material comes almost entirely verbatim from Mrs. Dale. Some may be found in Roll, C.: Indiana, Chicago, 1931; vol.5, p.191. Most of his obituaries mentioned before carry some information of this sort. See also my article "Middletown's Maverick Mayor", in the Harvard Guardian, vol. II, no. 2; p. 31.

in the public schools. His father, a Civil War veteran, practised law and had a reputation for being a great fighter and political reformer. This is the only possible environmental explanation for Dale's own missionary zeal. The fact that his father was almost beaten to death before his eyes by thugs after winning a case left an indelible impression upon young Dale's mind. For the first time he saw how much the truth could hurt. Whether this incident had much to do with formulating his own crusading character is highly doubtful. As his wife said, many years later, when asked to what she attributed her late husband's disregard for the accepted values of the community in favor of the reformer's mantle; "There is no explanation. Every once in a while there's one of them born."

At the death of his parents, Dale went to Hartford City, Indiana, and worked in a factory just long enough to decide he would never be a manual laborer. He was 21 when, with a friend he started his first newspaper in Hartford City. From that time his career was journalism. He edited, at various times, several newspapers in and around Hartford City. One thing common to all his publications was that they were factious; always dedicated to "cleaning up dirty politics" in one place or other. In time his unique journalistic style evolved;

biting yet humorous, tactless but always truthful. Satirical and blunt on the one hand, he was equally a master of innuendo on the other. Ridicule tempered with wit, audacity tempered with more audacity made his name a fearful thing to those he opposed.

When Hartford City was incorporated Dale served as its first city clerk. It was the only political office he held until he became mayor of Muncie. Politics was his avocation. Often he remarked that he was much more interested in making or breaking someone else political-ly with his pen than in holding office himself.

Most of his early editorial battles were waged around the issue of prohibition. At a time when many counties in Indiana were instituting local option the county in which Dale published his papers was wringing wet. One of his papers, the Hartford City Journal, was financed by a group of local "drys", representing both political parties, who asked Dale to "clean up" the city with it. He refused the help of the "sanctimonious old hypocrites" in the Anti-Saloon League and did the cleaning job so well that he was once heard to remark while passing through Hartford City years later, "Didn't I fix this town,? It's sure a dead hole now."

In fact he "fixed" his home town so well that there was not much left against which he could crusade. Then

too, economic pressure caused by a growing family induced him to move to Muncie, a much larger city, where he had been offered a third interest in a new political paper sponsored by Dr. Bunch, then mayor. But with Bunch's fall from grace there was little more incentive to continue with the paper and Dale sold his interest. In 1921 he decided to start his own paper again.

During the first year of its publication, the Muncie Post-Democrat cried out against public utilities privately owned, vice, and the Republican party but carried very little Ku Klux Klan information with the exception of a few scattered remarks about anonymous letters and threats that suggested Klan tactics. Dale's remarks were so abusive and outspoken that few people in Muncie did more than shake their heads when the following editorial appeared on the front page of his paper. It carried a challenge and a declaration of faith:

"Last Friday night a band of armed thugs, with their faces completely obscured by black masks, jumped from an automobile.... and murderously assaulted the editor of the Post-Democrat and his eighteen year old son.

Another automobile accompanied the death car, but the skunks occupying that car did not get out. Guns were stuck in the faces of the editor and his son and they were ordered to throw up their hands. The former grasped the gun and succeeded in discharging it at the thug who held him up, possibly wounding him.

Just as the shot was fired, one of the gangsters struck the publisher a severe blow with a blackjack and at the same time one of the scoundrels beat the boy over the head with the butt of a revolver, after the boy had shown resistance. The gangsters then jumped into their car and drove away, accompanied by the other car.

Before leaving, however, the assassin who had beaten the defenseless youth, took deliberate aim at him and shot, the bullet going wild, however.

The attack was cowardly, and was evidently the work of men who would fear to show their ugly faces in open combat. It was very evidently the work of men who fear the Post-Democrat, and who took that method of attempting to instill fear into the heart of the publisher....

The Post-Democrat wishes to serve notice, here and now, to those who hope to intimidate us into servile fear of reprisals, that they have picked the wrong bird. The rule of the blackjack, the automatic, the black mask and the dark lantern, never works.

It might be possible for these dastardly cowards, who did not hesitate to beat up a boy because of their hatred and fear of his father, to inflict some serious injury on their victim, or even murder him but sure and sudden punishment awaits the perpetrators.

This is a civilized community, populated by people who believe in law and order and who abhor crookedness either in business or politics.... Muncie is not going to submit to the rule of such a small majority. If bands of gangsters are allowed to go unpunished, then law and order ceases and every man should carry a gun to protect his life.

The Muncie Press was the only one of the two dailies here to find fault, editorially, with the vicious assault of the masked assassins. It very truthfully said that the men should be apprehended and given the maximum punishment provided for by law. It might have gone farther and said that the cowards who hid in their obscure offices and inspired the attack, should also be dealt with as severely as the men who wore the masks.

The Star did not consider it worth while to make editorial comment on an act which was meant to strike at the very heart of the freedom of the press.

02

The Star evidently fears to antagonize the thugs. Possibly the editor would be afraid to go home in the dark if it said naughty things about the rude thugs who wore terrifying masks and carried pop guns.

There are some who seem to think that the attack was made by common, ordinary gangsters, working under orders issued by some common underworld boss. We are inclined to believe that there will be some surprises when the real facts are known and when the dirty skunks are compelled to stand before the bar of justice with the masks stripped from their engaging maps.

The Post-Democrat does not intend to be throttled by fear of personal violence. It will continue to tell the truth about the activities of crooked politicians and their lawless understrappers, in spite of the terrorist program which seems to have been inaugurated in Muncie.

Citizens who believe in law and order, and who do not want to see the city turned over to scoundrelly Apaches with masks over their faces and murder in their hearts, should stand behind the Post-Democrat in its efforts to promote decent government and to expose crooked politics."⁶

Sparing no names, Dale had been laying bare the state of Muncie's politics and from the above editorial it is clear that he looked upon the attack as a result of personal animosity on the part of persons he had exposed. The Klan was scarcely mentioned. Had Dale the slightest notion that the Klan was connected with this attack he would have certainly referred to it in his next editorial. He was later convinced that the attacked whom he "possibly" wounded died the next day.

To show how little he was frightened, Dale published a scathing editorial the next week about "A Villainous

⁶
Muncie Post-Democrat, March 31, 1922.

Political Gang" in which he continued his serious charges against Muncie's political mogul and their unholy practices. Said he,

"We have the evidence that this attack was inspired by an article published in the Post-Democrat the week before which exposed the infamous deal whereby certain democrats and republicans in Muncie, threatened with prosecution in the federal court, had been assured by corrupt republican politicians that 'everything would be Jake' with the criminals if they would organize the secure votes for Senator New and the local candidates on the Billy Williams (Republican) slate.... The Post-Democrat put in print what was in the minds of many, namely, that there was ample ground for the suspicion that votes were to be traded for immunity and almost immediately after that the armed and masked thugs attempted to murder the publisher and his son.... When a desperate band of bi-partisan politicians, fearing that justice will overtake them, boldly attempt to murder a man who has the courage to make a battle in the interests of the citizens of Delaware county, it is high time for everybody to wake up."⁷

For the next few months Dale settled back into his usual role of "hell raiser" and levelled a steady barrage at his pet peeves of the moment; the "bi-partisan" machine which he insisted had complete control over Muncie and the vice conditions which that machine was allowing to run rampant. Soon he found a real subject for attack in the Ku Klux Klan.

Until this time the name of the Klan meant very little to most Muncie citizens. The daily papers had carried a few scattered stories about the activities of a hooded

⁷ Ibid., April 7, 1922.

organization but most of these reports came from the South and Southwest and few people gave more than a passing thought to the possibility that this organization might come to Muncie. Dale's was the first newspaper in the city to even discuss the new organization, yet there was nothing in his earliest comments to suggest that in a very short time he would engage in mortal combat with the white sheets. In fact he even seemed to look with favor upon the new "patriotic" organization. Here was a group of vigilantes standing for "law and order" and were not these the same things for which he stood! But this favorable attitude lasted only a short time. It soon turned to one of jesting about big men in masks. The jests became vicious sarcasm and bitter verbal lashing. Dale was fighting the Klan.

When the little publisher wrote the following editorial-story he had not yet seen the implications of his suggestion:

"Last Sunday night twelve robed and shrouded knights of the Ku Klux Klan, marched into the Methodist Church at Eaton, (a small town in the same county as Muncie) while services were in progress and took charge of the service. They left, after presenting the minister an envelope containing thirty-five dollars.

A note accompanied the gift, on Ku Klux stationery, indicating the Klansmen belonged to a Muncie organization. Very few people outside of those who belong, were aware of the fact that the Ku Klux have an organization here, but it is known that the order is strong here and that there are probably six hundred members in Muncie.

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The Knights declare in their letter....that they stand for law and order and for fair play. There is certainly plenty of room for an organization of this kind to work in Delaware County.

The Post-Democrat would suggest that the doubtful klansmen don their pillow case helmets and white robes and call upon a few of the political double crossers who are now at work trying to put across a slate of candidates whose election will make law and order a joke in Delaware County.

They might also make a tour of inspection out at the county infirmary and get at the truth of some things which the recent grand jury seemed to have overlooked.

They might investigate why vicious criminals are allowed to go practically scot free after the commission of abominable crimes and why brutal murders and attempted murders have not even been investigated by the officers whose sworn duty it is to uphold law and order in Delaware County.

It is the failure of sworn officers of the law to act in behalf of the public welfare that encourages the formation of the KuKlux and kindred organizations.⁸

In this last sentence Dale summed up one of the still most powerful incentives to the fascist solution. Still unaware of the heights to which Klan power would soar about him, he could well afford to be mild in his opinions toward it. Had the Klan stayed out of politics, George Dale might never have fought it,

Muncie began reading in its daily papers more about Klan activity in other parts of the country during the first part of the summer of 1922. George Dale began to tell about Klan activity in Muncie. Now openly questioning the motives of the secret organization he was issuing

⁸ Ibid., April 28, 1922. The italics are mine.

Mild warnings to Klan members to examine the orders of their leaders. "If the Kluckers expect anybody to take them seriously, they had better wake up and find out whether those who are directing the movements of the organization are in it for patriotism or for politics and revenge."⁹

In the same issue of the Post-Democrat there was a news story accusing the Klan of slipping in one of their members on a jury trying another Klansman. The prosecuting attorney was a well known Klansman by this time.

Said Dale of this situation;

"Strange things are happening in Muncie these days, Hundred of citizens here, many of them being men of high character, are joining the Ku Klux Klan, but we question very much whether or not a very large percentage of these are really aware of the things pulled off by an inner circle of Kluckers, who, most likely, refrain from informing the rank and file....of their maneuvers.... The courts are the final resort of citizens seeking fair play. If unscrupulous members of the Ku Klux Klan make any further attempts to put over funny business in the court room there is bound to be a reaction. The attempt on the part of the highest officers of the local Klan to cause the removal of officers who have been especially active against law breakers, ought to make the honest members of the Klan sit up and wonder why an order which claims to stand for law and order should attempt to destroy officials who stand for law and order, at the command of men who were elected to office by the solid vote of the law breaking element of Muncie."¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., June 9, 1922.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Joked Dale on his editorial page;

"The Ku Klux does not initiate, it 'naturalizes'. If only those who belong are naturalized, what is the status of those who do not wear a Mother Goose cap and parade in a nighty?"¹¹

By June 1922 Muncie was completely covered by the Klan tidal wave. The Klan became bolder in its claim of political control in the city. Its rapid growth could be measured visibly in almost regular Saturday night parades where the numbers of ten dollar bills that had been pried from their owners during the past week was attested to by the increasing length of the parades. Woe to the Negro who might be caught on the streets during these parades; woe to anyone who failed to salute the flag as it passed -- being used as a saddle blanket over a worn-out plow horse. The Klan became arrogant. It took over the public parks for its "naturalization" rites and kept out all but its members. Its control over the police was a fait accompli. Muncie shrugged its shoulders; Dale became violent in his attacks.

"One hears it every day on the street that the Ku Klux Klan here is made up of 'our very best citizens.' This is repeated so often that those who hear it are willing and ready to say the same thing, parrot like, whenever it occurs to them to do so.... Under the guise of being

¹¹Ibid.

strong for law and order, unscrupulous members are grinding axes for a rotten, corrupt, bi-partisan gang who hope to obtain political supremacy here and keep themselves out of federal prison by threatening free born white people with the wrath of the Klan."¹²

Convinced now that the Klan had been responsible for the attack upon his life Dale roared: "The thing that looms big is the fact that if the Klan wants to murder a citizen and does murder him, it ought to feel fairly safe, with the prosecuting attorney and other public officers belonging to the order.... It may be possible that by reason of numbers the Klansmen may be led into assaulting or probably murdering some fearless individual who does not believe in ghosts, but in the end law and order will prevail, even if rivers of blood flow down the streets of Muncie, in the accomplishment of that purpose."¹³

It seemed as if David had picked an invulnerable Goliath. To many of the disinterested people of Muncie this fight looked a little silly, if not sad --one insignificant old man fighting a powerful and wealthy organization like the Klan. Life was to become rather difficult for the little editor during the next few years but he was

¹²
Ibid., June 16, 1922.

¹³
Ibid.

also to have his day -- even if it was a short one.

He continued his bitter anti-Klan editorials. Angered at the fact that the Klan controlled the police he exclaimed; "The impudence of the assumption on the part of the Klan that it is the ordained keeper of the conduct and the morals of all who refuse to wear a masked peaked cap and night gown, is galling to those who know something of the personnel of the Klan."¹⁴ In his editorials he tried all the tricks of his facile pen to discredit the Klan. He ridiculed -- his most potent method of attack -- the foolish mummery and regalia of the organization; he laughed at Klan antics, he swore at the Klan. And the Klan swore at him but could do very little about it. At times he stopped to real "yellow" journalism as in the following example but he put over his point in the process:

"The Ku Klux had better order out their nighties and send another mob around after the editor of the Post-Democrat, for we are now preparing the data for an interesting short story entitled, 'Law, Order, Morality and Americanism as exemplified by Blodd Puddin' Hank, the Ho Vamp of the Ku Klux.'

The hero of this exciting tale is one of the most prominent members of the Ku Klux Klan. Reading from the card signed by every applicant to the order we find that the Klucker must stand, among other things, for 'Protection of Our Pure Womanhood.'

This dirty scoundrel of the peaked hat and lily white gown, seduced the wife of a brother Klucker

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Ibid., June 23, 1922.

and broke up his home, thus demonstrating to his brethren that it may be wrong to debauch the wife, or sister of one who does not belong, but that a member may go as far as he likes within the sanctified precincts of Kluckerdom.

The libertine who debauched the wife of another Klansman is still a member in good standing, with the accent on the standing. He is one of the elect who has enlisted with the rest of the sanctified and glorified brethren who have set out to readjust the morals and behavior of the citizenship of Muncie.

We will give the Ku Klux exactly five days to tar and feather, expel and publicly expose this rotten libertine, who poses as a 'protector of fine womanhood' and exponent of law and order."¹⁵

Every week Dale came out with more Klan stories. He reported every Klan move during the previous week and always capitalized upon the slightest misstep of a known member. Especially sarcastic about the secrecy of the organization he never lost a chance to strike at it. "Doesn't it seem strange", he asked, "that the only real one hundred per cent Americans in Muncie, who belong to an organization that would commit no crime greater than slitting a throat or burning a barn, should be so terribly ashamed to be recognized as a member?"

"It is said that there are two thousand members in Muncie but every man who belongs denies it. Apparently

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Ibid., June 30, 1922. See Middletown, p. 122n., for a situation which suggests that the above editorial might have been more significant than mere "dirt" in showing what the Klan was doing to upset the institution of the family in Muncie.

the prime requisite of klansmanship is to be a damned liar, to quote the words of our esteemed district attorney."¹⁶ Furthermore Dale constantly admonished the Democratic party to steer clear of the Klan which he looked upon as a Republican organization. He warned that "Inasmuch as the machinery of the local Ku Klux Klan is in the hands of the high priests of the republican standpat machine, and as these able machinists deliberately affiliated with, and assumed management of, the lawless organization for the purpose of obtaining control of the police department and the county offices in the fall election, democrats should shun this grotesque outfit as they would the cholera."¹⁷

Dale now became crazed with the fight. Almost every item in his four-page weekly had something in it attacking the Klan. A note of masochistic joy in the struggle, hysterical laughter in the face of overwhelming odds, began to play about each new editorial. Samson was wrecking havoc among the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass and yet secretly wishing to become a martyr at the same time. He made editorial capital of each new attack upon himself. In August, 1922, the headlines of the Post-Demo-

¹⁶ Muncie Post-Democrat, July 21, 1922.

¹⁷ Ibid., August 11, 1922.

crat read thusly: SKULL AND CROSS BONES ADORNS LETTER SENT PUBLISHER BY ANONYMOUS WRITER. Under this heading came the following story:

"The editor of the Post-Democrat receives many anonymous letters. Some of them seem to be from friends, while others are vindictive and full of malice.

"One received this week charged us with fighting the Protestant faith and made the threat that some day 'three thousand of us' would wreak vengeance.

"The letter was signed by three initials, was adorned by a crude drawing of a skull and cross bones and wound up with the heavily underscored words, 'Better Check Out Now.'

"We will merely state to this cowardly sneak who hides his identity behind false initials, the same as he conceals his carcass in a sheet and his face behind a mask when he attends the Ku Klux ghost dance, that he has the number sized up about right.

"It would take just about three thousand such cattle as that to even attempt to frighten one man who is not afraid of the scalawag outfit that he belongs to.

"We take it that this anonymous skunk is threatening us with the vengeance of the Ku Klux Klan, because we happen to be exposing the real purposes of the gang who control the machinery of the outlaw organization here.... It will take more than threats of violence to frighten us. We fear no cowardly masked and sheeted organization that claims to be God's chosen people and the only one hundred per cent Americans in existance...."18

In the same issue Dale showed how the Klan was playing on the emotions of simple people by walking into churches during services, donating money, praying, that Klan leaders were making a gooddeal of money on klan "suckers"

18
Ibid., Aug. 18, 1922.

was another favored argument.¹⁹ Every week, aside from his own editorials, Dale's paper carried anti-Klan opinions of various prominent persons and publications from all over the country. Important national Klan information was easily available because high Klan officials made the important Klan stronghold, Muncie, a frequent rendezvous. Hiram Evans was often around and it was in Muncie that E. Y. Clarke, the real organizing genius behind the Klan, met his Waterloo by having liquor found among his possessions.²⁰ As the fall elections drew close Dale begged the people of Muncie to "forget politics and kill this thing (the Klan) off at the polls."²¹

When in October, 1922, the vacillating mayor of Muncie admittedly gave in to Klan pressure,²² Dale was furious. The idea of anyone bowing to his despised antagonists was more than he could bear. Venting his wrath upon an already cringing chief executive he sneered; "To the infantile and confused mind of the man who still has the temerity to call himself the mayor of Muncie, this idiotic tempest in a teapot sounded louder than the guns

¹⁹ Ibid., Oct. 6, 1922.

²⁰ Ibid., Sept. 8, 1922.

²¹ Ibid., Sept. 22, 1922.

²² See Chapter II, n. 35, supra.

of the battle of the Marne.

"He fell at the first fusillade of blank cartridges and agreed to do anything in the world that the Ku Klux or anybody else would tell him to do, provided they told him quickly in order that he might obey orders without the slightest delay."²³

The Klan was not deaf to Dale's attacks. The difficulty was how to silence him. Violence would immediately be attributed to the Klan and would be bad publicity for 100% Americanism. More subtle counsel prevailed within the order and there began a series of reprisals against Dale which did not necessarily bear the Klan stamp. After the attack upon him and his son, Dale asked the Klan Chief of Police for a permit to carry a gun -- for self defense. The permit was cheerfully given -- almost too cheerfully -- because one day Dale found himself arrested by the Klan Sheriff on charges of carrying a concealed weapon.²⁴ Dale saw in the concealed weapon charge an attempt to "frame" him. He was rearrested on a bench

²³ Muncie Post Democrat, Oct. 13, 1922. Incidentally, it was during this storm in question that Dale announced the jump in circulation of his paper from 2,000 to 5,000 copies per week. The demand was exceeding the supply. (Ibid., Oct. 27, 1922). Muncie was beginning to take slight notice.

²⁴ Ibid., Nov. 10, 1922.

warrant from the circuit court and his case taken from the city to the county court. "PROMOTED, B'GOSH" was the heading of his editorial which went on:

"It is a distinct pleasure for the Post-Democrat to be able to confirm, thus early, its pre-election predictions. In its secret councils the moving criminal spirits of the Ku Klux Klan declared that it would 'get' Dale and how the stage is set. The arrest was made by a Ku Klux sheriff, the case filed with one Ku Klux judge who transferred it to the jurisdiction of another Ku Klux judge and the state is represented by a Ku Klux prosecutor.

In conclusion we arise to remark to the low down, grafting, good for nothing and wholly criminal Ku Klux outfit and its savelings in office.... that they are all going to have a hell roaring lively time 'getting' the Post-Democrat."25

Dale now found a new target, the Judge of the county circuit court, and he proceeded to blaze away. Especially bitter at the judge's sanctimonious attitude toward erring youth, he made His Honor appear rather silly at times when he would sentence a young person to the penal farm from the avowed purpose of making him a "better citizen". Dale ridiculed what he considered the hypocritical "reforming" attitude of this Judge who was one of the guiding lights behind periodical "clean-up" campaigns in Muncie. He reviewed the personal life -- a sordid one, at that, -- of the prosecuting attorney who asked a jury to give a liquor violator the maximum sentence under the law just because Dale was present in the guilty person's

25
Ibid., Dec. 1, 1922.

restaurant when the arrest was made.²⁶

But if Dale was an editorial opportunist when dealing with personalities he was none the less effective in presenting arguments which appealed to higher sensibilities of the people. It was unfortunate for the support of his policies that he usually alienated the "nicer elements" of the community who, shocked by his indelicate treatment of private lives, neglected to read such truly patriotic editorials as the following:

ONE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICANISM -- WHAT IS IT?

"There should be such a thing as one hundred per cent Americanism, but the man or group of men who claim to be true hundred per cent Americans and hold others to be enemies to their country who do not believe and act as they do, are not true Americans.

"The real one hundred per cent American does not boast continually of his patriotism.

"The isolationist, who declares himself to be the only true American, is merely stupid, and demonstrates his lack of historical information, sacred and profane.

"If Americanism means what the isolationist declares it to mean, the true American has no call to need the divine injunction 'go ye unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'

"If the false one hundred per cent American cult is to be the standard, then why send money to suffering Armenia, supplies to starving Europe or famine stricken China, or missionaries to the heathen races of the world?

"If Americanism means contented isolation while the entire world goes to ruin, then we want none of it in ours.

"And finally, if the real Americanism of this country is going to stand much longer for the false

assumptions of an 'invisible empire' which claims a monopoly on Americanism, then will we begin to lose faith and hope in American institutions.

"Muncie is cursed by the presence of this organization, and has been compelled to listen to its hypocritical pretensions of one hundred per cent Americanism and is compelled to look to members of this organization for official management of the affairs of the city and county.

"Judge Dearth, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, sits supreme in the court house, in a position of power, and the hundred percenters openly boast that they are able to punish enemies and reward friends through their locally controlled courts.

"The crimes that have been committed in the name of patriotism are legion, and unless some strong hand intervenes and tears the mask completely from the face of this insidious, sneaking organization in Muncie, no citizen who dares to lift his hand against its aggressions may consider himself safe from persecution, or possibly assault and eath.

"No true American could belong to an order which assumes to be greater than the government. In Muncie and Delaware county, the Klan has set up a super-government, which boastfully declares its control of state and government officials, and that its dictum is the final word of authority.

"Men meeting furtively at night....wearing gown and mask, and actuated by malice, hatred and bbgotry, conspire against enemies of the Klan and serve notice on public officials that these men shall be punished by boycott, loss of position, or framed up prosecution.

"Juries are selected at these criminal sessions of masked outlaws and verdicts are rendered in advance and sentences of social and business ostracism passed upon men and women who fail to measure up the Americanization standard of the Ku Klux Klan.

"Real Americanism will eventually drive fake Americanism to the wall." The traitors in the saddle are riding to a swift and certain fall. It is inconceivable that a free city like Muncie will stand for this evil thing much longer."27

The implications are apparent. Here was a single individual beginning to see the real significance of the

27 Ibid., Feb. 23, 1923.

Klan for America. If patriotism is one of "the most powerful latent emotional storm-centers of Middletown"²⁸ it would be hardly stretching a point to apply this analysis to the whole nation. Patriotism and nationalism are handmaidens. The strength of its appeal to patriotism is usually a good indication of the strength of a government. Dale had begun to see that if any great mass movement could swing the traditional symbols -- of which patriotism was one -- behind its activities, it would soon gain control of the government. He saw such a situation in Italy and was to see a similar one take place in Germany. If the Klan was to corner the market on "Americanism" it would soon corner the government. If the Klan came so near to achieving this goal why could not a similar organization achieve it at some future date if it avoided the mistakes of the Klan, the A.P.A., and the Know Nothings? Why not the Fascist or National Socialist appeal in the land of the free?

Dale was now striking at the very roots of Klan appeal. Furthermore, he was openly offending the Judge before whom he was soon to be tried. He became more defiant and more fearless. The more the Klan threatened and warned the more he published.

In February, 1923, while helping federal agents

²⁸ See Middletown, p. 481ff.

investigating political conditions in Muncie, Dale was indicted by the grand jury for "manufacturing, possessing, bartering and giving away liquor and helping maintain a liquor nuisance."²⁹ He had been present in the office of a local attorney when police entered and found a liquor bottle there.³⁰ Seeing unholy workings of the Klan back of this indictment, said Dale,

"Klan members have openly threatened to "get" and to "frame" Dale, time and again, but we have about as much fear of this cowardly gang as we have of a flock of jack-rabbits. When we get through with them their strangle hold on Delaware county will be broken, if God spares our life until the task is completed.

And in the meantime we are expecting further demonstrations from their puny courts and Klux dominated "law enforcement" agencies.

The Post-Democrat refuses to regard any public official free from suspicion, from constable to judge, who belongs to this masked aggregation of night riding fools and knaves.³¹

Affairs now moved swiftly. In his March 2, 1923 paper Dale openly accused city and county officers of "shielding, protecting and failing and neglecting to prosecute numerous and divers persons to them well known to be engaged in the illicit and illegal sale of intoxicating liquors in the city and county."³² He further

²⁹ Muncie Post-Democrat, Nov. 30, 1923.

³⁰ Extensive inquiry as to whether or not Dale drank has resulted in a uniformly negative answer. This is especially interesting in view of the fact that many of his legal troubles where in connection with alleged violation of liquor laws.

³¹ Muncie Post-Democrat, Feb. 23, 1923.

³² Muncie Evening Press, March, 14, 1923.

anatagonized Judge Dearth by insisting that his jury commissioners "...said sheriff, said prosecuting attorney and many of said police officials are members of a secret organization known as the Ku Klux Klan and they use their offices for the purpose of favoring and protecting other members of their organization."³³

The Judge, charging him with indirect contempt of court for these accusations, sentenced Dale to 90 days in jail and imposed a fine of \$500.³⁴

Commented the Judge; "If Dale and the others of his character do not like this country they should go to Russia where anarchy rules."

Commented the Prosecuting Attorney; "He would even slander a child as it played about its mother's knees". His publication is a "dirty scandal sheet and not a newspaper." Advertisers in the Post-Democrat were roundly shamed.

Commented the Press; "When Judge Dearth had announced his finding some of the persons in the court room moved forward to congratulate him. The court only replied that 'The court was just doing its duty.'"³⁵

If anyone thought this sentence would silence Dale he

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., Muncie Morning Star, March 15, 1923.

³⁵ Muncie Evening Press, March 14, 1923.

was due for a surprise. The next week the Post-Democrat repeated and elaborated upon its previous accusations in answer to Dearth's decision. Enraged, the judge now charged Dale with direct contempt of court and doubled the sentence.³⁶ On the same day the Press carried an editorial on reformers:

"Professional reformers should, but never will, understand that the people do not wish to be professionally reformed by the brainless blatherskites that commonly are in the game of interfering with other people's business for revenue only or through pure meddlesomeness. When the people believe they need reforming, they do it themselves and do a thorough job of it, their reason having been convinced by acts uninfluenced by the narrow prejudices of witch burners."³⁷

This editorial more or less representing the opinion of "upright" Muncie came too closely upon the heels of Dale's sentences not to have referred to them. It carried with it the I-told-you-so attitude of a community addressing its burnt child.

Dale spent the next eleven days in jail, the last three in the state reformatory, until released on bond by order of the Indiana Supreme Court.³⁸ The next day he called upon the Governor to criticize the state penal farm and the way it was operated.³⁹ Eagerly he seized upon his new difficulty to publicize rotten prison conditions. Furthermore he warned

³⁶ Ibid., March 17, 1923; Muncie Morning Star, March 18, 1923.

³⁷ Muncie Evening Press, March 17, 1923.

³⁸ Ibid., March 28, 1923.

³⁹ Ibid., March 29, 1923.

those responsible for his "framed" conviction that he would hunt them "down until the last man who participated in the vicious plot will be exposed in his infamy."⁴⁰

Muncie heard a good deal about "that dire and dismal hell hole and blot in the fair name of Indiana -- the state penal farm."⁴¹ Pathos, humor, and indignation were registered in Dale's stories about his three days in prison. His readers laughed with him as he told about how he went through the routine of becoming a full-fledged "jail-bird"; how his head was shaved to resemble a billiard ball; how his "manly form" was encased in the "gorgeous habiliments" presented all prison inmates. Revolting were his reports of prison food, sanitary conditions, and brutality.⁴² The reformer was beating his drums.

But reforming and crusading require financial backing no matter how holy the mission. Dale had very little of this and recent developments were cutting down his already meagre income. His paper was little more than a year old and not too much space was devoted to advertising. The revenue from official notices of the county was unsteady be-

⁴⁰Muncie Post-Democrat, March 30, 1923.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., also issue of April 26, 1923.

cause trustees were not always prompt in paying their bills. Dale was often forced to go to threaten suit to get his county advertising bills paid.⁴³ His court fights were increasing. After his release from the penal farm he was sued by a Muncie grocer for criminal libel for calling that person a "hundred per cent draft dodger."⁴⁴ Conditions eventually became so pressing that Dale had to ask the public for help to enable him to continue fighting. Said he,

"'Getting' the publisher of the Post-Democrat by a never ending series of petty prosecutions may appear to some to be a simple and easy way to destroy the newspaper, but we are still on the job, thank you, in spite of arrests, jails and penal farms..."⁴⁵

He went on to show that the powers of arrest and prosecution in Muncie lay with acknowledged Klansmen and that at the taxpayer's expense these persons were having a fiasco with Dale by administering "Klucker's Revenge."

⁴³Ibid., April 13, 1923.

⁴⁴Ibid., April 6, 1923. This grocer was an agent for the Firey Cross, an official Klan publication.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 30, 1923.

He explained:

"They know that the editor of the Post-Democrat is handicapped by having to pay lawyers for defense ...and knowing that we have not got money enough to pay this enormous expense they feel certain that the end is in sight.

There has been some response to the request for financial aid from those who see in this remarkable tug of war a test which will finally determine whether or not right and justice shall rule. It is absolutely necessary that more funds be raised. It is your fight as well as ours. Every friend of freedom and justice should contribute.

It is very likely that there will be other prosecutions. We were informed the other day that at a Ku Klux meeting held a short time ago it was decided to bring some criminal libel actions. Nothing would surprise us now, after the transactions of the past three weeks.

Contribute to this cause at once."⁴⁶

Forseeing the intensity of the storm which had already broken he was trying now to enlist the aid of the people. The problem was to convince them that what had up until this time been a purely private battle was being waged in the public interest. But here a dilemma which Dale faced all his life came into sharp relief. Fighting required money. By its own standards Middletown regarded the possession of money the index of a man's standing in the community; that is, of his measure of "success". In these terms Dale was never a "successful" man. He had substituted crusading for the profit motive -- a thing completely alien to his environment. Thus when circumstances forced him to appeal to the community for financial aid his problem was much more diffi-

cult than it would have been had he moved in planes familiar to local society. In the end he did get support, but it came from the American newspapers, not the people of Muncie.

The conflict was evidenced by his fighting for city and county legal advertising which he insisted was due him as the only publisher of a Democratic paper in the county.⁴⁷ When there were rumors of a rival Democratic weekly to be created in Muncie he sensed a Republican backing which promised the legal advertising to this new paper. Snorting his defiance of a group of so-called Democrats who would sell their souls "for a little measly legal advertising", he proceeded to make clear his own position in money matters as follows: "If the Post-Democrat were in business solely for money, we would probably fawn at the feet of every two by four republican city, county and township statesman who has a nickel's worth of advertising to give out but, strange as it may seem....the editor of this paper refuses to play Fido at a republican feast and sit up on his hind legs and 'speak' for a bone and lick the boots of the giver."⁴⁸

⁴⁷The state law guarantees publication of all legal notices in at least two newspapers; one representing each political party.

⁴⁸Muncie Post-Democrat, April 13, 1923.

For the next few weeks there was a lull between tempests. Not a clever propagandist like Dr. Goebbels, Dale knew no "scientific" theory of "dosing" the public in proper amounts.⁴⁹ The effect of falling back into his regular routine of lambasting several things at a time instead of one was bound to be a let-down from the more concentrated attacks of the past weeks. In any case the Klan still held first place on his "fight" list. Then came another pet hate, "business class" control of the city's affairs. The proposal of the "chamber of commerce crowd" that a new river boulevard be built in Muncie and the enactment of this proposal by the city council brought down a storm of pent-up venom from Dale. He reviewed all the things wrong with the city in showing why that boulevard should not be built.⁵⁰ He charged the city administration with having no interest in the poor man; with being the tool of wealthy interests. Attacking tax-evasion by the rich he pointed out how this class was paying much less than its rightful share of the city's expenses while the poor man was overtaxed on everything "down to his false teeth and his jack knife." He began cutting deeper into

⁴⁹ Cf. Morstein Marx, F., op. cit., p.104 where the German Propaganda Minister is quoted as follows; "In the field of propaganda all depends on prudent dosing and the selection of the right moment."

⁵⁰ The boulevard was actually begun a decade later during Dale's term as mayor.

the social pattern by characterizing Muncie as a "community ...governed by two sets of rules--one set for the obscure, uninfluential and financially helpless, and the other set for the financial gents who meet in the commercial club with the sycophantic ministerial association to thank the good Lord that they are not as other men and to order the passage of laws and ordinances for the governing of others, but not themselves.

"It is true that Muncie has an underworld and a redlightIt is there in all its sordid ugliness, block after block, occupied almost wholly by white and colored prostitutes, coke peddlers and "snow sniffers," bootleggers, booze runners and thieves.

Why is it there,....Gentlemen of the clergy, you who have signed a blanket endorsement in behalf of ALL city and county officials, take a trip down there, get acquainted with the denizens of the redlight, go through the miserable shacks, shanties and bug roosts they occupy, and then get down on your knees and find out whether God will ever forgive you for pleading not guilty for public officials who permit the redlight to flourish in order that jails may be filled with penal farm fodder and ballot boxes stuffed with the votes of protected law violators.

Boulevards, parks, shade trees, beautified river front, harps, wings, halos--damnation! Forget it for awhile and clean out the redlight. Condemn and tear down the shacks which fester in the midst of a city of decent people. A great work could be done there. The entire south end of the city is contaminated by the redlight. It is due to the people of the Southside that the redlight be torn down and that residences of modern type, occupied by law abiding citizens, be erected in their place.

It's all right to reach the ornamental stage at the right time but the time is not yet. Leaving the unspeakably filthy, lawless and obscene redlight as it is and spending the people's money for mere ornamentation of a favored portion of the city, is the height of folly. It is absurd and unthinkable. It's too much like shaving the lawn in front of a magnificent residence and permitting jimson weed to grow in the back yard; or hanging a hundred thousand dollar painting in the parlor and harboring cockroaches in the kitchen and bedbugs upstairs."⁵¹

⁵¹ Muncie Post-Democrat, April 20, 1923.

Such accusations and challenges at a time when his name was becoming a familiar sound in Muncie was like pouring salt on the community's open wounds. Dale was crystallizing and bringing into the open what many people in Muncie were beginning to feel and yet not willing to admit. It did not fit with the traditional symbols of American democracy; with the "Middletown Spirit";⁵² to say that the city was divided by the railroad tracks. It was irksome to the "city fathers" to hear someone shout that they were under the control of the "chamber of commerce crowd"; it annoyed the Chamber of Commerce to have someone suggest that it was working in the sole interests of the people on the northside; it made people on the southside wonder about the values by which they were trying to live. Microcosmic Muncie was beginning to give evidence of the great social change which has not as yet been completed in America; that is, the trend from a dynamic to a static society. Free social mobility was giving way to class stratification. Here was the first intimation of a change in Muncie's life that was to produce acute pains ten years later. And George Dale was one of the first to see it; probably the first to admit it. It was he who threw the first stone into the hornets nest but the resulting buzzing has been so loud that only a few of Middletown's strongest souls have dared follow suit.

If Dale alienated the monied classes of Muncie with this sort of accusation, he certainly endeared himself to the hearts of those "on the other side of the tracks", the same group of people who sent him into the mayor's office in 1930 with the greatest plurality any candidate up to that time ever had received.⁵³ Here was a champion who was willing to give direction if only the people followed. But it was too early for Dale to even consider being on the inside politically. He was being much more effective hammering away at the opposition. Besides he had just begun to fight the Klan.

His next object for editorial derision was Helen Jackson, the "escaped nun," who caused quite a stir in Muncie during the spring and summer of 1923⁵⁴ and incidentally made a good deal of money in the process. Speaking before large crowds under Klan auspices, she was able to give "first-hand" corroboration to all sorts of Catholic horror stories

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Ibid., p. 323

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See Chapter II, n.33, supra.

which the gullible were wont to believe.⁵⁵ Concluded

editor Dale speaking about the "escaped nun":

"When the Post-Democrat takes a shot at some measly pro-German ex-saloon keeper and bootlegger who happens to belong to the Klan, the klansters at once demand that the editor be sent to jail, but when an imposter of the Helen Jackson type hits town and wantonly libels a religious creed and the entire membership of a church, a great howl goes up when an insulted and reviled church congregation demands that she be denied the right to insult their religion.

This is one of the consistencies of one hundred percent Americanism."⁵⁶

Continuing in the same vein he rapped mass ignorance that was fostering Klan growth and allowing such preposterous ideas to take the community by storm:

"The success of Klan propagandists in securing members is based largely upon their ability to make suckers believe preposterous things which never happened and never will happen. However, organized ignorance and credulity is a hard combination to battle. The mule, generally regarded as being rather low in the animal scale, can never

⁵⁵ Just how far these Catholic bogey tales had sunk into the minds of the average Middletowner is shown in Middletown, p. 482, where the Lynds quote the following interview of a member of their staff with the wife of a well-to-do factory worker: "Lady...you have asked me a lot of questions, and now I want to ask you some. Do you belong to the Klan?.... (reply negative)...Well, it's about time you joined the other good people and did something about this Catholic situation. The Pope is trying to get control of this country, and in order to do it, he started the old Klan to stir up trouble among the Protestants, but instead of doing that he only opened their eyes to the situation, and now all the Protestants are getting together in the new Klan to overcome the Catholic menace. I just want to show you here in this copy of the Menace--look at this picture of this poor girl--look at her hands! See, all those fingers gone--just stumps left! She was in a convent where it was considered sinful to wear jewelry, and the Sisters, when they found her wearing some rings, just burned them off her fingers!" Little wonder, then, that this type of story repeated many times should be accepted for gospel by people who were sure that a few years previously German soldiers had done the very same things to French and Belgian babies.

⁵⁶

Muncie Post-Democrat, April 27, 1923.

be taught that it is not proper to balk and kick. Coaxing and beating only serve to intensify these mulish attributes. Likewise life is too short to try to quicken the intelligence of the average klucker, who lies awake of nights, oppressed by the horrible thought that the pope is about to emigrate to America and run for president.

It is such fellows as that who believe the gruesome and altogether improbable tales of Helen Jackson, the "escaped nun," who shrewdly capitalizes mass ignorance, with no apparent concern or care as to the consequences of inflaming ignorant and inflammable minds with false doctrines which might easily lead to wholesale blood letting....Men and women who really believe the preposterous falsehoods which are deliberately promulgated for the despicable purpose of getting money, are usually persons of limited intellectual power, and such people allow prejudice, instead of reason, to sway them.

With hundreds of people here believing that the Jews are preparing to demonetize the rest of the world, that the Pope is coming over to establish a Roman Catholic empire in America and that the Jews and Catholics are financing a plot to cause a negro uprising that will have for its purpose intermarriage between blacks and whites, it is regarded strange that blood has not flown like water in the streets of Muncie.

Hasten the day that the conservative, thinking people of Muncie combine to put their united stamp of disapproval upon a movement which is destined, if not checked, to lead to dreadful disaster!⁵⁷

Although ex post facto examination of Dale's newspaper tirades show them to be powerfully blunt and to the point, their immediate effect upon the Klan was not very great at this early period. By this time the Klan and its motives had been "exposed" time and again. If there were people convinced that these motives were base, they said little about it in public. If they agreed with the principles for which George Dale was fighting they were not willing to offer more than moral support. Dale needed real support. He got it eventually through his appeal to the constitutional guar-

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antees of freedom of the press. Still he laughed in the face of his enemies:

"The editor of the Post-Democrat was threatened with five hundred additional prosecutions at the time he was sent to jail for contempt. Possibly there were some foolish enough to believe that threats of that kind will serve to stifle the truth in Muncie. The Post-Democrat publishes only the truth and since actual attempts at murder and frequent threats of murder have failed to scare us into silence, fear of bodily imprisonment is our slightest concern....

With the repeal of the infamous sedition act a hundred and twenty-five years ago it was thought that free speech and a free press were guaranteed to the people of America, but from time to time political tyrants, invested with brief authority, have sought to inflict outrageous punishment upon those who dared to publicly criticize their official acts. Invariably these puny despots have been men of little education and vast conceit, each of whom fondly hope that history, which invariably records the speedy descent of these petty tyrants into political oblivion will not repeat itself in his particular case.

The question of whether or not a Muncie newspaper is to be permitted to tell the truth about conditions in Muncie, is a matter of much greater importance to the citizenship as a whole than it is to the editor whose liberty is threatened.

There are a few people here who cheered mightily when the word was sent out that the editor of the Post-Democrat was in jail and that the Post-Democrat would soon be a thing of the past. Such people are not fit to live in a free republic. Their place is rightfully at the feet of some hereditary monarch. These boot lickers to royalty do not believe in free speech and a free press. They are so lacking in common intelligence that they do not recognize the fact that real ONE HUNDRED PERCENT AMERICANISM demands freedom of the press, and not jails for newspaper writers who seek the redress of wrongs perpetrated on the people by the men they elect to office.⁵⁸

Here again was an attempt to bring the public to his support; Dale was trying to make his fight the people's fight. In this attempt he failed for two reasons; one, because the community as a whole was not aware of the implications of suppres-

⁵⁸ Ibid., April 27, 1923. The italics are mine.

ing the press. On the other hand, he alienated the support of the "business class" elements in the city many of whom could and did see the implications of the Klan and its suppressive activities and who could have given Dale the financial aid he needed to fight it. There was a third reason.

One of his greatest personal faults was blind stubbornness. When he found a target he would hurl himself upon it heedless of the effect of his efforts. Furthermore, his lack of subtlety, although making for clear and understandable reading, lost its effect when hammered out week by week in the same vein. Wit and sarcasm can be dulled by constant repetition and Dale never learned the clever arts of a first-rate propagandist. In his enthusiastic bitterness he failed to clarify issues and crystalize a powerful body of public opinion behind him; he rather confused many who would have liked to support him if they could only be certain of the principles for which he was fighting. His own lack of direction, in the last analysis, kept him from being an effective leader of others. Then, too, his indiscriminate attack upon groups in the community as well as individuals prevented any real coordinated support of his ideals from the community. In attacking the "inner control monied group" whom he charged ran the city, he took into his anathema the whole Northside, business men, and the clergy. Such indiscriminate attacks naturally offended many.

CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The strangest about Dale's appeal to freedom of the press was not the fact that he used it, but rather, that he waited so long before resorting to it. Seeing his entreaties making little impression upon the community, he began to direct them toward the entire American press. He warned his newspaper colleagues in the state that:

"If it is the law in Indiana that free speech and free press is a thing to be set lightly aside by court edict, it will mean that no newspaper in the state hereafter will dare to criticize public officials without danger of being sent to penal servitude at the penal farm for many months, besides being compelled to pay excessive fines.

If the libel and contempt laws are to be employed as a club to drive Indiana newspapers into a state of slavery and peonage, the newspaper men of the state ought to know it and get ready for the blow, in case the inconceivable thing should happen, and the law be interpreted to mean that the free and open discussion of public affairs is to be construed to be a crime, punishable by heavy fines and long terms in state penal institutions."¹

Dale warmed up to his topic as successive weeks rolled by. In this new fight for freedom of the press he began to be eloquent and emotional. Not adverse to over-emphasizing history in support of his own arguments, he talked of "mediaeval tyrants", George III, and other persons who had tried to stifle a free press and how eventually truth triumphed. Some of these editorials

¹Muncie Post-Democrat, May 4, 1923.

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would have done justice to Mr. Hearst. Said Dale:

"It was also Lord Mansfield, we believe, who wrote into the law of England, through court mandate, the rather far-fetched thought "the greater the truth the greater the libel.

It was held that inasmuch as monarchs could do no wrong newspaper attacks on the syphilitic bums who inherited kingdoms constituted sedition and treason, since the people had no vote in the matter and could not take part in a peaceful revolution by the use of the ballot!"²

Applying his arguments to the situation in question, Dale struck at the root of his troubles in Muncie. He talked about truth. He wrote the truth. The truth was the cause of all his difficulties. Friends and enemies alike agreed on this point. And if he colored his interpretations, the facts behind such interpretations were always unimpeachable. Pinching a tender nerve of the polity he said:

"The truth hurts in Muncie and there are those who seek to stifle truth. For daring to presume that our constitution, which endows every individual with sovereign rights and guarantees the right of free speech and the right to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, the editor of this newspaper has been imprisoned, fined huge sums and pursued by flunkies and understrappers of manesty who seek his ruin in order that the truth may be stifled in Muncie.

It is almost unthinkable that in this free and enlightened city, in an age of progress unparalleled in the world's history, and with history, recording in black and white the fate of those who seek to throttle public discussion and keep the people in ignorance of the conduct of their servants in office, that such a thing should happen.

²Ibid., May 18, 1923.

What the ultimate result will be no one knows, but one thing is certain, and that is that I will not surrender my right of free speech, nor will I disgrace the memory of newspaper men who died in the tower of London for daring to print the truth--men who blazed the way and flaunted the torch of freedom in the faces of despotism, cruelty and oppression.

The Post-Democrat will continue to tell the truth in Muncie and there are not enough jails or penal farms this side of hell to prevent it. I would rather rot in jail than suffer the humiliation of running a newspaper that did not dare to discuss the acts of public officials or feel free to warn its readers when public officials are unworthy of trust."³

George Dale, the reformer, the misfit, was fighting for a principle. Combustible were his materials, but out of the explosions rang soul-stirring echos of a Zola, a Bunyan, a Garrison, even a Mann. He had thrown down another challenge.

For a time there was quiet. Dale returned to routine attacks on the Klan. A new pet editorial topic was the way in which the county Orphanage was being used as a "political football".⁴ He was especially bitter in this case because Judge Dearth was behind recent personnel changes on the Board of Children's Guardians.

If the Klan was having slight success in silencing Dale by intimidation, it still held a more powerful weapon

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., May 25, 1923: June 22, 1923.

with which to smite the annoying editor--the boycott. That the small amount of advertizing in the Post-Democrat suddenly began to shrink, evidenced the Klan's power in Muncie, more accurate explanation would probably be that no one was quite sure just how strong the Klan was or who belonged to it and rather than risk loss of Klan trade or Klan violence, potential and actual Post-Democrat advertizers felt safer in forgetting this newspaper for a while.⁵ Dale, too, knew this most vulnerable spot. He had to have money to continue. Came his "last" editorial appeal to the people of Muncie for support. Once more he tried to prove his battle theirs. A note of desperation and exasperation crept into the editorial which he headed:

IT TAKES REAL MONEY

"The Post-Democrat needs the practical support of the people of Muncie and this section of Indiana who believe in political honesty, the rule of a visible government and the destruction of a masked super-government which controls police and judiciary and advocates crimes of violence, the boycott and oppression of those who refuse to bow to the invisible empire.

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Some individual's internal conflict was well demonstrated in the Post-Democrat when there appeared the following two column notice which ran for several weeks: COMPLIMENTS OF A FRIEND AND WELL WISHER (issues of June 22; June 29; July 6; July 13, 1923 and following numbers.) Torn between a conscientious desire to support the principles for which Dale was fighting on the one hand, this "friend and well wisher" was also trying to protect himself from a danger he could not actually see.

"It takes money to run a newspaper and the very fact that merchants hesitate to advertise in the Post-Democrat for fear of a Klan boycott ought to impel those who are not afraid to get in the fight with their money and their influence.

The Post-Democrat is fighting YOUR battle. We will need a big defense fund to carry our cases through the supreme court. No pains should be spared to have these cases properly presented. YOUR liberties as well as those of the editor of the Post-Democrat are directly involved.

You gave millions to keep the German menace from America shores. An enemy a thousand times more vicious is at your very threshold. Do you think more of your lousy dollars than you do of your liberty and your right to wear your hat in the presence of the masked enemy? If you do, hang onto them, and God help you. If you believe in preparedness give, and give quickly to the Post-Democrat defense fund. If this doesn't get through your hide, nothing will, so this will be the last printed word on this subject.

It is not charity we are asking. We are instead offering you the priceless privilege of lending a hand in a great fight for human liberty."

Dale certainly spoke the common man's language but he could still produce no mass action behind him. Then he showed an inconsistent streak. A champion of Catholics, Negroes, and Jews because they suffered Klan abuse, Dale would sometimes bitterly attack those groups because they lacked his courage and would not openly back him in what he felt was their fight. He was especially vicious against Catholic and Jewish merchants who would not advertise because they feared Klan boycott.⁷ Desperation and dilemma

⁶Muncie Post-Democrat, June 22, 1922.

⁷Ibid., July 13, 1923.

again evident, Dale was now attacking the few he might have counted upon for moral support at least. But he needed money and struck blindly.

As the summer of 1923 rolled on the Post-Democrat laughed at the way in which women were being duped by the Klan as badly as the men; ranted about reports of bad food in the penal farm; made Judge Dearth appear ridiculous with his decisions. Once again Dale put forth his credo explaining "that the Post-Democrat has been dedicated to the public as a vehicle of expression for the under-dog. Plain speaking is necessary, sometimes, in order to make clear to the public just what is meant."⁸ But "plain speaking" did not bring in more money and a note of supercilious contempt for those whom he thought should support him characterized some of Dale's editorials. "Talk is cheap", said he, but it was not being backed up with action. More specifically, advertising had practically ceased. The Klan was really crushing him. Going to the root of the problem he exclaimed:

"Instead of getting business from merchants who believe that we have been making an honest campaign for good government, we find ourselves in the astounding predicament of being subjected to a boycott on the part of our supposed friends.

⁸ Ibid., August 3, 1923.

They privately tell us that they are for us, but for business reasons they deem it inadvisable to advertise in a newspaper that has been telling the truth about so many people....The Lord knows, I am not mercenary; if I had been I would not have been fighting the grafters and the big interests whom I have repeatedly pointed out as being enemies of the people. The point is that I am simply sick and tired of stepping out for the best interests of the community and being penalized for it by those who offer private encouragement and then walk across the street when they see me coming, fearing to be seen speaking to an agitator.⁹

Here Dale showed one of his worst personal limitations. Although he accurately explained the situation he made no attempt to understand it, nor would he admit that there was ample reason for this lack of support. His own reforming zeal was so intense that he was unable or unwilling to understand the psychology of a community prevented by fear from ostensibly supporting him. In his lack of patience, the reformer defeated his own purpose. If the community failed to follow him after he had been beating the drums for so long in its ears he could only explain it as a weakness in the stuff of which that community was made. Never did he suggest the possibility that his appeal lacked something. Nor did it occur to him that he had deafened those to whom he was screaming as to the real merits of his pleas. Instead of gaining the confidence of the pup with kind words and a lump of sugar, he

9

Ibid., August 24, 1923.

threatened first and whipped afterwards. George Dale was not a leader in the sense of one who inspired great admiration and attachment to a cause by his personal magnetism; politically he gained support by showing he could browbeat better than his opponents and that therefore it would be better to be his friend than his enemy. What power he ever enjoyed in Muncie came with the aid of those who admired his honesty on the one hand and his fearlessness on the other.

There is something about a man who is insensible to fear which inspires the secret admiration of the average person. The example of a courageous personality also stirs longings in the breasts of those who "conform" to the standards set up by the community to break away from the well worn path of "keeping up with the Joneses" and striking out in the world along some tangent uninhibited by those standards. The example of George Dale struck the imaginations of many men and women caught up in the hum-drum life of a small community. He epitomized the freedom for which they were searching. Here was romance under their very noses! Here was a story-book character in Muncie! But if they had any intention of converting moral into practical support they were stopped short by the impact of the reality of the situation. They had to live; their families had to live; the power of the Klan was a very real thing in Muncie.

And so Dale had to fight on alone. Much as he tried, he was never able to make the community understand him; much as it tried, Muncie never fathomed Dale.

From the standpoint of a practical newspaper man Dale had both feet on the ground. And although he bitterly decried the editorial meekness of the two dailies, he admitted that their indecision was most pragmatic from the standpoint of financial gain. His own experiences were teaching him the importance of financial backing. A keen sense of stubborn facts was evidenced by the following comment:

"No other newspaper in Muncie had the nerve to take a stand on the Klan question. They preserved a middle of the road attitude, as they do on all questions of moment, the theory being that it is better to stay on the fence and get business from both sides than to take a bold stand and get ripped wide open by friends and enemies alike.

In the sense that newspapers are business enterprises, run for the money, they are right. They are also wise enough to know that the people here are not yet ready for reform.

Possibly after a season of repentance in sack cloth and ashes, the people of Muncie may come to their senses and thank God that there is at least one newspaper in Muncie that is not afraid....Until that repentance matures the Post-Democrat is not going to work up a sweat any further in behalf of the dear people."¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., The italics are mine.

Admitting that Muncie was not yet "ripe" for reform, he was threatening to forget all about the "dear people," to let them become completely cowed, politically, by the Klan and its servants in office. To those who knew him best this was meaningless. Dale was like a fish out of water when removed from the din of battle. The fact that he and the culture in which he lived never accepted each other did not preclude his orientation as a reformer in behalf of that culture. "Sometimes we almost think the people are not worth saving,"¹¹ said Dale, but the next week his paper was as full of diatribe in the interest of the people as ever before. Dale,^{the} reformer, could not have stopped had he wanted to. He indicated his intention to create another newspaper in Indianapolis to fight the Klan.¹² The people were not to be "let down". But this new literary venture soon petered out under pressures more immediate.¹³ Dale was found guilty in Judge Dearth's court of libeling the grocer he dubbed a "draft dodger".¹⁴ Insisting that his conviction was the result

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Ibid.

12

Ibid., August 31, 1923.

13

See Ibid., December 21, 1923, where he announced that instead of the new paper he would concentrate upon expanding the circulation of the Post-Democrat and thus serve the same ends the new paper was to have served.

14

See Chapter III, n. 44, supra.

of Klan control of the court,¹⁵ he announced the case would be appealed.

The Post-Democrat was now carrying the following coupon on its front page each week:

MY CONTRIBUTION TO LIBERTY

George R. Dale,
Editor Post-Democrat
Muncie, Indiana.

Enclosed find \$____, my contribution to the Post-Democrat defense fund. Use this in your great legal battle to defend the right of free speech and to expose the hidden hand of the Invisible Empire.

Signed _____
Address _____

This is For Your Defense as Well as Mine.

George Dale still sought the people. Said he; "Contribute to this fund now. It will be the best investment you ever made, since it is in defense of a principle as eternal as the hills, the right of free speech, without which a free government cannot survive."¹⁶ By this time his pleas had met with some response from the citizens, but still not enough.¹⁷

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Muncie Post-Democrat, October 26, 1923.

¹⁶

Ibid., October 26, 1923.

¹⁷

Ibid., November 2, 1923.

Evidencing a genuinely puzzled attitude as to its meagreness he said: "A few have responded to the request for funds to assist in the Post-Democrat's great legal battle. Just why the response is not more general is more than we can understand."¹⁸

By the end of 1923 Dale six cases pending in Iddiana courts. The two contempt cases were before the state supreme court, a new trial had been moved in the libel case. With a change in venue the concealed weapon case had not yet been tried nor had the "liquor" indictment.¹⁹ The editor of the Post-Democrat was certainly standing before the bar of justice and public opinion. And the need for money was becoming acute.

Raising the copy price of the Post-Democrat from five to ten cents²⁰ did not solve the problem, but Dale began to see that he had a freak appeal. People were actually buying his paper just to see what this funny old guy had to say. Lacking psychological, Dale was clever enough to understand box office tricks. He knew he must appeal to

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Ibid., November 23, 1923. The next week (Ibid., Nov. 30, 1923) Dale announced somewhat humorously a series of articles dealing with the history of the Republican Party in Delaware County. He explained that he was "going through this ordeal with much the same spirit that impelled Diogenes to fare forth with a lantern." And as an afterthought he added; "By the way the old boy must have missed Delaware County in his travels, for history fails to record that his lantern was stolen."

19

Ibid., November 30, 1923.

20

Ibid., January 4, 1924.

the common people, the working class. He knew they were uneducated for the most part, but if Dale had any consistent theory about journalism it was that the common man could understand ridicule much easier than unemotional editorializing. Truth tempered with wit afforded him a potent sword. When the Klan's latest browbeaten victim, the mayor, was quaking in his boots in fear of the white hoods, Dale came out in his defense, showed how funny it was to fear the Klan. Said he: "When I fight I can't laugh, and when I laugh I can't fight....I don't want to alugh, for it is no laughing matter. I want to cut loose with this old typewriter and ~~lam~~ the liver out of somebody, but just about the time I have figured out how to spell damitohell, I get tickled again and couldn't fight a baby rabbit."²¹ In coining new words Walter Winchell would be an amateur compared with Dale. "Kluckerino" was applied to all Kamillas; "Whirling dervishes", Hooded Hyenas", "Koo Kooos of Kokomo(Ind.)" were just a few of the titles he created for his mortal enemies. And people bought the Post-Democrat.

By 1924 there were indications all over the United States and more specifically in Indiana that all was not

²¹

Ibid., January 11, 1924

well with the Klan. Outrages, avariciousness, and political corruption were traced to that order. Similar actions to that of the Muncie Klan in passing a unanimous resolution endorsing Jesus Christ could only result in shuddering disgust from the community and the alienation of every Klan "member possessed of a shred of respectability or religion."²² But if the Klan was losing its original nucleus of "respectable" citizens the majority of its members still held together from the inertia of self-seeking or desire for self-expression. The Klan was by no means a dead issue. In Muncie the Klan was still all-powerful.

In April of this same year the liquor case against Dale was thrown out by Judge Dearth on a motion from the prosecuting attorney because of lack of evidence. Liquor had only been "smelled" somewhere in the office building where Dale was arrested. In his next editorial Dale regarded his vindication from these charges as proof of the accusations which led to the two contempt proceedings²³

22

Ibid., Feb. 1, 1924. At the same time this resolution was ammended "to the effect that Jesus was not a Jew, but a native born, white Protestant American."

23

Ibid., April 4, 1924. It is an interesting sidelight into Dale's character that when during this same period his son was one of several boys arrested for visiting a house of ill fame he did not hesitate to mention the fact in his front page editorial. Not willing to judge his own boy until he heard the facts in the case he looked upon the publication of the names of the arrested boys in the local dailies, an unusual practice, as an attempt to discredit the elder Dale himself. Truth was truth even when it hurt himself or his family. (Ibid., March 28, 1924.)

-- that Dearth's court was dominated by the Klan.

And still the Post-Democrat continued to grow. Over half the entire paper now containing only Klan abuse was devoted to information of interest specifically to other communities in Indiana and Ohio. In a little more than a year the circulation of the Post-Democrat had jumped from approximately twenty-five hundred to sixteen thousand copies weekly.²⁴ In recognizing that his appeal had ceased to be a purely local one, Dale changed the name of his paper to The Post-Democrat.²⁵

One thing about Dale's public career that stood out most prominently was that no matter how bitterly he fought at any given moment, he never forgot that basically he was attempting to alter the political status quo. Political reforming was the one consistent line by which

24

Ibid., May 30, 1924. Compare these figures with those given in Middletown, p. 471, for the circulation of the two dailies one being 8,851 and the other 6,715 copies per day. This would indicate a significant increase in Dale's potential power in Muncie with regard to the number of people he was in a position to influence as compared with the two Republican dailies. Due allowance, however, must be made for the fact that much of this increase was accounted for in the growth of out-of-town circulation.

25

Post-Democrat, July 18, 1924.

his career could be traced. If not the most bitter of his many struggles his antagonism of the Klan was certainly the longest and hardest. Withal his tendency to lose himself in the smoke of battle, to become oblivious to the possible outcome of his sometimes irrational activity George Dale's mind was seared with the belief that his was always the battle for rights. Those who have real faith can find almost super-human strength in its embrace. George Dale had a faith, a belief, in the necessity of preserving the ideals of democracy. True, his definition of those principles may not have been that of the culture in which he lived but such considerations bore little weight with him. Fused in the crucible of reforming zeal, missionary and idealist became a powerful political influence.

Thus it was with the interest of his party in mind that Dale attempted to identify the Klan with the Republican party. In so doing, he was forced to deviate continually from the Democratic party in attacking Democratic Klan members. Astride two mounts, he was often thrown off. But whether in or outside the good grace of his party he remained consistent with himself never conceding favor to anyone connected with the Klan no matter what his political affiliations. Had he not

veered from the "party line" he would never have lacked for funds. Had he never veered few people outside of Muncie would have heard of Geoge R. Dale.

* * * * *

When the split in Klan ranks came to Muncie²⁶ and the old organization gave way to the Independent Klan of America, brainchild of Muncie Klansmen, Dale looked upon the death of the old order as a direct result of his attacks upon it.²⁷ It was with a note of egotism that he impressed upon his readers the fact that only he had dared openly defy the Klan. Here at last was some reward for what had looked like a thankless self-appointed task. If the giant-killer overestimated the fatal effects of his pen few begrudged him his moment of glory. Dale's star was on the ascendent - for the moment, at least.

But if he thought his many enemies made in the process of antagonizing the Klan were ready to "forgive and forget" he was sadly mistaken. On the other hand, he had no illusions about the power of the Klan name, It was still a potent force in the community. No sociologist, Dale saw deeper into the cleavage in the community which were brought about by the Klan. The fact that he

²⁶See Chapter II, n. 42, supra.

²⁷Muncie Post-Democrat, June 27, 1924.

saw a correlation between the growth of the Klan in Muncie and the increase in divorces during the same period would be unimportant if the same conclusions were not reached by more expert investigators.²⁸ If the Klan as an organization was no longer active, its psychological effects as a disrupting influence in the community remained in some form or other until the end of the 1920's.

That the Klan was a dead issue was quickly disproved when eleven hundred and fifty copies of the Post-Democrat charged with being obscene literature, were seized and burned by the municipal police of Newark Ohio. The paper had been carrying a weekly column exposing Klan politics in Newark. Dale was furious. Admitting that to publish the names of Newark Klansmen was probably obscene in itself he defied any "two by twice city judge" to constitute himself censor of a newspaper accepted in the United States mails.²⁹ With an editorial note to the people of Newark asking them to see if they could find anything "obscene" in it, he reprinted the article "showing up the slimy reptiles of the 'Invisible'

²⁸Muncie Post-Democrat, Aug. 1, 1924. See also Chapter III, n.15. supra.

²⁹Post-Democrat, August 29, 1924.

Empire".³⁰ Repetition of the confiscation and burning the next week had little effect in silencing him.³¹ The third week the Newark police allowed the Post-Democrat to be distributed for about two hours before seizing the remaining issues.³² Referring to the "budicrous aspects" of the whole affair Dale commented: "These foolish officers, who make themselves the laughing stock of Ohio, have started something. They are too stupid and too obstinate to change their course. Wise men change their minds, but wisdom and kluxism do not go hand in hand."³³ Had he followed the sage philosophy put forth here his own future political career might have been much less rough. Legally Dale's cause fared badly. An Ohio court of equity refused to enjoin the Newark police from further confiscations saying in part;

"The character of the paper which the court has examined is such that it might be that the next issue of the paper would be such that it would be the cause of public disorder, and the police in the exercise of their discretionary

³⁰Post-Democrat, August 29, 1924.

³¹Ibid., September 5, 1924.

³²Ibid., September 12, 1924. In this same issue Dale was pleased to announce the "self-inflicted death" of the Delaware County Democrat, the rival Democratic paper set up a year before.

³³Ibid.

powers in maintaining peace and order, should be permitted to determine whether or not any particular issue of this paper should be circulated."³⁴

Answered the editor:

"Of course the Post-Democrat will not permit such a finding to go unchallenged....If the ruling....is to stand as the law of the land, then the freedom of the press will have been utterly destroyed and the right of irresponsible, Klux controlled police to burn, pillage and destroy thoroughly established."³⁵

The confiscations continued.³⁶

The next round of struggles went to Dale when a court in another county to which the case had been venued awarded Dale judgement against township trustees who had refused to pay their legal advertising bill to the Post-Democrat on the grounds that it was not a "Democractic" paper, "and was therefore disqualified under the law to carry legal advertising which public officials are requized to place in political newspapers".³⁷

This was but a feeble victory. The Klan, or rather its members in public office, whom Dale continued to pursue editorially had other plans for the editor. Finding his weakest spot a lack of money to support a family of nine

³⁴Post-Democrat, September 26, 1924.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., October 3, 1924.

³⁷Ibid., October 10, 1924.

people and publish a paper with small revenue, his enemies were pursuing a policy of loading him "down with criminal prosecutions".³⁸ Again Dale turned to the people pointing out that he had sacrificed "time, money and liberty in defense of the constitutional rights of the people" and therefore they should come to his aid. Once more he stood upon familiar arguments in attempting to synthesise his own best interests with those of the people. Since it was their fight, he argued, the people should be willing to finance "some of the harassing litigations instigated by the Klan".³⁹

In the fall of 1924 Dale, thrusting the Klan more into the inside pages of the Post-Democrat, turned for a time to more orthodox forms of muckraking. This time he began to expose to his readers the story of how their road commissioners were making money from illegal gravel contracts.⁴⁰ He finally ran a "gravel edition" of the Post-Democrat in which the whole situation was put before the public together with dates and figures and accusations against city and county political officials.⁴¹ That the most bitter of these

³⁸ Post-Democrat, October 10, 1924.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., September 12, 1924 and following numbers.

⁴¹ Ibid., October 31, 1924.

attacks were made upon the Republican machine while at the same time Dale prayed for its defeat in the coming elections was one of the few times his personal and party interests coincided. But to no avail for although new county commissioners were elected they were soon up the the contract letting tricks of their predecessors. Dale fumed and promised to "keep the people...posted" on all the graft developments.⁴² He attributed the defeat of the Democrats to the crooked activities of the Republican machine and its backing by practically every articulate interest group in the community from the W.C.T.U. to the bootleggers.⁴³

Now Dale announced the death of the Klan in Indiana claiming it to have served its final avowed purpose in electing Ed Jackson Governor.⁴⁴ Such statements only indicated more wishful thinking. Possibly Dale had thought so much about the death of the Klan he was actually beginning to believe it. For Klan anathemas he now substituted obituaries.⁴⁵ That events belied his hopes soon

⁴²Post-Democrat, Nov. 14, 1924. Of some significance to Dale was the fact that in a state and county which voted Republican in the 1924 elections, Newark, Ohio, went Democratic and anti-Klan. Dale looked upon this as a sort of personal vindication and victory.

⁴³Ibid., November 21, 1924.

⁴⁴Ibid., November 28, 1924.

⁴⁵Ibid., January 2, 1925 and following numbers.

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became evident. Even if the organization of the Klan was dead its spectre continued to haunt Muncie. Ghost or real the effect was the same. Potential advertizers were still afraid to patronize the Post-Democrat. Added to this was the cost of pending legal battles. As usual, Dale needed money and once again he appealed to the people. "THE WAR IS ON", said he, the Klan is not dead!⁴⁶ Insisting that the government of Indiana had been delivered to the Klan in the last elections he argued:

#This is the only newspaper in Indiana that had the audacity to put all its eggs in an anti-klan basket and risk exposure to the stink pots and poison gas of the klan....This is no time to go to sleep. It is time for action. The Post-Democrat is here at your service to do your fighting. We know where to shoot and what to shoot at, but it will take plenty of ammunition...If the post-Democrat is to continue in existence, it is absolutely necessary...to rally to its support."⁴⁷

The degeneration of the "new" Klan which had been started in Muncie soon became apparent when it announced that the ban on Negroes had been lifted and from that time on "the descendants of Ham", as Dale called them, were to be admitted to the sacred realm of one hundred per centism. Such a deviation from its traditional ideology could mean only one thing. A new reservoir of ten dollar bills was being tapped. Sneered

⁴⁶Post-Democrat, January 9, 1925.

⁴⁷Ibid.,

Dale, "The ultimate in klan idiocy has at last been reached in Muncie."⁴⁸ And Muncie was inclined to sneer along with him.

Very active in the primaries of 1925 Dale turned again for a time from the Klan to his role of Republican curser at the same time reaffirming that his newspaper stood "for the things that are right and decent" as opposed to the Republican machine and its robots in office. But although the people of Muncie may have been well aware of the fact that he was fighting for "the right of justice and decent government"⁵⁰ they paid little heed and returned the Republicans to office.

Whether to renew faith in himself and the things for which he was fighting or to reassure the community that he had not backed down an inch under any kind of pressure, Dale often printed a resumé of his troubles since he first established the Post-Democrat. These resumé's were becoming longer and more detailed as the editor's difficulties piled one upon another. Always the argument was the same - "It has been a weary and thankless task" but Dale stands adamant.⁵¹ If he ever wondered whether such tremendous

⁴⁸Post-Democrat, February 13, 1925.

⁴⁹Ibid., May 8, 1925.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., May 15, 1925.

personal sacrifice was worth the little return he quickly dispelled such notions at the end of most of his editorials with the new familiar "we defy any man..."⁵² Still Muncie was not convinced that he had its best interests at heart.

All through the summer and into the fall of 1925 Dale concentrated upon exposing the Republican slate. In so doing he was unusually careful to single out personalities for attacks. One of these was Judge Dearth. Crooked deals and past histories were raked into the open. It was mud-slinging of a highly technical nature. It seemed as if the Klan was being relegated more and more into the distant past. Dale still called his enemies Klansmen but that title was now used as a curse or a sneering tag. To no avail, however, for the Republicans swept back into control of the city. Coolidge prosperity healed many breaches in the economy. The Klan was something that had paraded a few years ago and was hardly a political issue any longer. Sadly, Dale announced that "having squeezed the county dry the gangsters will take the city hall on January 1."⁵³ And so he girded his loins once more and began to fight again. Once more he played the familiar ~~theme~~^{theme} - everything in Muncie politics is ~~corcked~~^{corcked}; it must be reformed!

⁵² Post-Democrat, May 15, 1925.

⁵³ Ibid., November 12, 1925.

Hardly a modest person, if Dale thought he had done something laudible and worth while he was the first to recognize it in his paper. Fortunately he never carried personal praise beyond the point of showing why it was due him; the reason always being the people's interest, not his own. No one ever disputed his often repeated claim to a reputation for "truth and veracity". It gave him great pleasure to inform his readers of how much his paper instilled fear into the hearts of local gangsters.⁵⁴ Proudly he announced that after the first of the year, when the new Republican administration would take office, "the Post-Democrat will be the only 'policeman' left on guard to give the 'stop' sign to the reckless political speeders who are looking forward to an undisturbed era of loot and pillage."⁵⁵

The next week Dale's old concealed weapon case was retried before judge Dearth and the editor was found guilty.⁵⁶ He immediately announced plans to appeal. The front page of the Post-Democrat for that week carried a full description of the "kangaroo Court", as Dale called it, together with comments on the personal lives of the jurors and court officers. Sometimes later he was to

⁵⁴Post-Democrat, December 3, 1925.

⁵⁵Ibid.,

⁵⁶Ibid., December 10, 1925.

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have another libel case on his hands as a result of some of the comments about one of the jurors.⁵⁷ The case had been reopened after Judge Dearth and the prosecuting attorney had appeared before a special judge to prove that the Grand Jury which had originally indicted Dale on the gun charge in 1924 had been illegally impaneled. Commented Dale, "If anybody knows they ought to."⁵⁸ He had been charging illegal impanellings for some time now and had two contempt cases under appeal because of such accusations.

By the beginning of 1926 the Klan was mentioned only sporadically in the Post-Democrat. Dale was concerned now with fighting the county and city Republican machine. But American justice grinds out slowly and often enables the past to have a large measure of control over the present. Such was Dale's fate. He still had several cases on appeal in the courts. Their outcome was to write the final and most thrilling chapter in his fight with the dying Klan.

In March, 1926, three years after the original contempt cases, the Indiana Supreme Court hadned down its decision throwing out the indirect contempt charges but

⁵⁷ See Chapter V, n. 27, infra.

⁵⁸ Post-Democrat, December 17, 1925.

upholding the circuit court in the direct contempt decision. For the moment Dale kept his editorial temper and only sneered,

"The fact that the publication may be true in every respect cuts no figure whatever. The judge may be a burglar by night and occupy the bench in daytime, but the one who writes or speaks about the judge's nocturnal peculiarities must go to jail for it.

"No, they can't determine what the people may and may not read - like hell!

"They 'can't put you in jail for that,' either, but they do."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Post-Democrat, March 11, 1926.

CHAPTER V.

"THE TRUTH IS NO DEFENSE."

Then Dale struck upon a catch phrase that was soon to bring help from all over the nation. "The truth is no defense", he cried. "IS LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, SPEECH AND PRESS TO BE NAILED TO CROSS?" was the headline for his next paper.¹ Here at last was the appeal for which he had been searching since the beginning of the decade. He argued, calmly this time, and very convincingly that the prosecuting attorney and Judge Dearth had tacitly admitted the truth of his "contemptuous" allegations when they threw out the "liquor" indictment in regard to which he had written the two editorials for which he was charged with contempt. How could the Constitution mean anything or protect Americans if it could be so flagrantly violated by the courts? Undoubtedly lack of technical training does prohibit newspaper reporters and the reading public from understanding thoroughly all questions involved in a legal action. Little wonder, then, that courts receive much praise or censure from a public not familiar with intricacies of the law. In the

¹Post-Democrat, March 18, 1926.

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cases in question a fairminded reader must admit, even if he disagrees with the decisions, that facts were not completely lacking upon which Dearth could make our a case against Dale. Legal opinion in the state agreed that the Supreme Court of Indiana had precedent for its decision but criticised that court for distinguishing between the two cases as well as not clarifying state laws on contempt.² These decisions were just what Dale needed. For once he caught the spirit of the people.

"Who's Boss, Anyway?"³ the people or the judges, he asked;

"The...judge...is a servant of those who who elected him. It is his business to interpret the law, not make it. If a judge is a poor judge, an indifferent scholar, a petty tyrant or a boodling bribe maker, his masters, the people, have the God-given right to protest and criticize, both orally and in public print.

"And honest square, upright, scholarly judge does not require the protection of a "contempt" statute to shield his court from unwarranted criticism. The judge who holds himself to be the servant, and not the master, of those residing within his jurisdiction, is respected, and not held in contempt.

"The small minded, shyster lawyer, who achieves judicial powers through the klan, the political machine, or some other device for trapping votes, is generally the one who feels the con-

²Cf. Willis, H. E , Indiana Law Journal, XXX Vol. II, No. 4, P. 309ff.

³Post-Democrat, April 1, 1926.

tinual need of threatening this or that person with punishment for contempt of court."⁴

For the next few weeks Dale busied himself with the primaries by continuing to denounce the Republicans and Judge Dearth. Gleeefully he headlined the defeat of the prosecuting attorney, one of his bitterest enemies.⁵ Things quieted for a time. The Post-Democrat took on the aspect of large newspaper. Politics was the chief topic in both news and editorial columns, but advertising had begun to reappear. This latest appeal was bringing in revenue from national advertizers. Dale's stock was on the upswing. He even ran a circulation contest giving an automobile and other cash prizes to the winners, But he never lost sight of the fact that Muncie needed Political overhauling. New exposures came every week.

For the moment vice conditions in Muncie and their protection by city officials became his special target.⁶ Here was "classical" muckraking. Vice control was the special avocation of Judge Dearth and it had always pleased Dale to ridicule him for it because he was a part of the Republican machine which Dale considered guardian angel of the "redlight". In the midst of Dale's current attack on

⁴Post Democrat, April 1, 1926.

⁵Ibid., May 6, 1926.

⁶Ibid., June 3, June 10, 1926 and following numbers.

vice the local papers announced that Judge Dearth was inaugurating his own private vice investigation and war.⁷ A few days later the Press reported Judge Dearth's crime crusade a success; "Red lights burn a pale pink....All is quiet upon local vice front...country is clean".⁸

Then came one of the most astounding proofs of Dale's integrity and sincerity. Dearth publicly denounced the city and county administrations for protecting the rotten conditions he had been investigating. Convinced of his most hated enemies sincerity Dale editorialized:

"The Post-Democrat urges all good citizens of Delaware county to give Judge Dearth their earnest support and stand behind him as a solid unity in his "clean-up" campaign.

"The editor of this newspaper has less reason, probably, than any other individual in the county to be personally enthusiastic in behalf of Judge Dearth, but in matters of public welfare we are always ready to subordinate personal bias and prejudice and welcome recruits to the army of decency and good government.

"It took considerable courage for Judge Dearth to definitely break with the political machine to which he was obligated in a great measure for his election as judge and to place himself in a position which makes it impossible for him to secure future political favors from that source."⁹

⁷Muncie Evening Press, June 5, 1926; Muncie Morning Star, June 12, 1926.

⁸Muncie Evening Press, June 8, 1926.

⁹Post-Democrat, June 10, 1926. The italics are mine.

Such a complete reversal of position could only be a demonstration of character to the people of Muncie. The risk of "losing face" would have been too great if Dale were completely an opportunist. When his ideas coincided with someone else's he was the first to admit it.

Backed by his most violent enemy Dearth continued his vice crusade and called the grand jury to consider indictments arising from the investigations.¹⁰ Said Dale,

"Our differences with Judge Dearth as expressed from time to time in this newspaper were wholly on matters of public opinion. We have never attacked his moral reputation, which we believe to (be) unimpeachable and have never accused him of a crime, and never will unless he actually commits a crime."¹¹

In the midst of the vice fight came word from the Indiana Supreme Court denying Dale a rehearing on its recent decision.¹² A few weeks later Dale was pleased to announce that the newspapers of Indiana (even the Republican papers!) had decided to back his appeal to the United States Supreme Court.¹³ Dale warned that "if the highest

¹⁰Post-Democrat, June 17, 1926; Muncie Evening Press, June 14, 1926.

¹¹Post-Democrat, June 17, 1926.

¹²Muncie Evening Press, June 11, 1926; Mucie Monning Star, June 12, 1926.

¹³Post-Democrat, July 1, 1926.

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court in the land affirms this decision than the entire press of the country will be jeopardized. Even as it is, the latest Indiana contempt case may be cited in other states as a precedent for similar action."¹⁴ The sudden response from newspapers all over the country surprised even Dale. With such impetus he definitely decided he would take his case to the supreme Court.¹⁵ The local papers even began to print stories of his past history and fight with the Klan emphasizing Dale's boast, "I killed a man" which captioned a series of posed pictures demonstrating how Dale and his son were attacked by masked assassins a few years before.¹⁶

Impoverished by his long fight with the Klan Dale would have been unable to appeal his case had it not been for the aid of interested individuals and newspapers. The powerful Chicago Tribune, the Baltimore Sun, the Hearst Syndicates, the Brooklyn Eagle, and most pointedly the New York World took up the fight for Dale. Editor and Publisher was especially interested in the case and for a time the American Civil Liberties Union promised aid, later refused.

¹⁴Post-Democrat, July 8, 1926.

¹⁵Muncie Evening Press, July 10, 1926; Muncie Morning Star, July 11, 1926.

¹⁶Muncie Evening Press, July 14, 1926. Incidentally, these same pictures were carried in all the Hearst papers; e.g., the Chicago Herald and Examiner, July 25, 1926. See Chapter III, n.6, supra on the Klan attack.

The gap was soon filled. Many newspapers asked their readers for contributions to send Dale. Most interesting and successful of these campaigns was that of the New York World which instituted a GEORGE DALE DEFENSE ^{Fund,} ~~AID.~~

Muncie was astonished at the sudden publicity to which she was being subjected. Could there be something to this George Dale? And Dale printed a thought of many who did not like to think it when he said, "Drenched in the white light of publicity Muncie and Delaware County stands forth before the world as a city that has been run for four years by the Klan. Thousands of newspapers in every state of the union have made plain our lowly state."¹⁷

Such a statement was hardly an exaggeration. Public opinion all over the state could not help but cringe and look more favorably upon Dale when editorials such as the following (chosen at random) appeared in the American press;

"Indiana, by its own interpretation of law, abridges the freedom of speech and freedom of the press through the decision of the Indiana judge, which is sustained. If this can be reported to in favor of the Klan, it can be brought into activity for any number of fanatical organizations that may be founded. It may be the Ku Klux Klan today and some other organization tomorrow, both of them detrimental to our form of free government and free speech.... If you want autocracy, then the place to build it is in Indiana. The voice of the people would

¹⁷ Post-Democrat, July 15, 1926.

soon be stilled, and these autocratic czars, governed, not by rules of reason, but by those of narrow and bigoted organizations, would prevail. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press would be as scarce as near beer in a distillery.

"How we would like to be down in Indiana for just a short period to shake up the old bones in some of these cobwebbed court rooms where the mask is recognized as an asset for good citizenship!"¹⁸

But although moral support came from every ^{section} ~~nation~~ of the country the first real financial aid came from a group of Chicago men headed by one Emmet Cavanaugh, a wholesale meat dealer, who became interested in Dale's case after reading about it in the Chicago Tribune. On July 9, 1926 Cavanaugh sent the following explanatory telegram to Dale; "ANSWERING BELIEVE I CAN ASSIST YOU MATERIALLY IN OBTAINING FUNDS HERE TO BE USED FOR YOU APPEAL NEWSPAPERS HERE TODAY DEVOTING MUCH SPACE TO YOUR CASE AND YOUR PRESENCE IN CHICAGO IMMEDIATELY WILL INSURE MYSELF AND FRIENDS MAKING A SUCCESSFUL DRIVE FOR MONEY NECESSARY TO SEE YOU THROUGH I AM A BUSINESS MAN HERE AND MY ONLY REASON FOR COMMUNICATION WITH YOU IS TO ASSIST YOU BECAUSE OF THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED BORROW THE MONEY TO GET HERE AND WILL REIMBURSE YOU UPON ARRIVAL." A few days later Chicago papers carried pictures and a story

¹⁸The Sheboygan (Wis.) Press, July 14, 1926.

about Dale receiving his first check of \$500 from Cavanaugh's group.¹⁹ The New York World announced that without solicitation money had been sent to be used in Dale's defense after his story had been printed in that paper.²⁰ Here was real human interest and the World lost little time in capitalizing on it for its own as well as Dale's interest. Commented the New York Sun, "George Dale belongs to a dying race - the old time weekly editor. He is redolent of printer's ink and he thinks more of the newspaper as an agency of reform than an an agecy for producing wealth."²¹ The American newspaper profession was frankly proud of Dale. Here was a brother who stood for real journalistic idealism. For the public there was romance in the story. On August 10, 1926, the New York World wired Dale that it had collected \$1,000 for his defense. Editorialized the World,

"The right of the press to print the whole truth in the public interest should not be jeopardized because of the mere inability of one editor to raise a little money. There are other rights whose defense may be equally important. The American press has developed a considerable array of associations for commercial or news purposes, some of them

¹⁹Chicago Herald and Examiner, July 18, 1926; Chicago American, July 19, 1926.

²⁰New York World, July 18, 1926.

²¹New York Sun, July 30, 1926; also in the Atlanta (Ga.) Journal for the same date. The New York Times also carried stories about Dale and his fight in its issues for July 30, 1926, August, 2, 1926.

powerful. It is strange that with its pride in a tradition of freedom which stretches back to Peter Zenger it should have no general legal agency to protect its weaker members, and steps should be taken to remedy the omission."²²

That Dale typified for many newspapers editors the type of fearless writers they would like to have been - rather than the tools of "commercial" or "news" interests - may have explained much of their eagerness to help. Editor and Publisher had an EDITOR DALE'S FUND to which newspapers were asked to contribute. Gifts were acknowledged in "fraternal appreciation".²³

Dazed by the sudden response in his behalf, Dale could only say;

"It is simply impossible for the editor of the Post-Democrat to express in cold type how it feels to be treated the way we have been by strangers in every part of the county who didn't know us from Adam's off-ox, two weeks ago.

"Overwhelmed by letters containing offers of assistance, financial and legal, telegrams containing contributions to the cause arrive in such profusion that answering them all promptly is simple out of the question.

"I am going to send a marked copy of the Post-Democrat to every one of them this week so when they see this they will know why they have not been answered. One of these days I am going to take a day off and answer every one of them, God bless 'em."²⁴

²²New York World, July 23, 1926.

²³Editor and Publisher, July 14, 1926.

²⁴Post-Democrat, July 22, 1926.

Simultaneously his case went to the United States Supreme Court on a writ of error.²⁵ Preceded two weeks or more by other newspapers the Muncie Press finally produced an editorial stressing the importance of Dale's case for newspapers and freedom of speech. The important question, said the Press, is whether judges shall take precedence over the Constitution.²⁶ ^{Mun} Muncie was at last ^Ttaking Dale seriously.

Then two startling things happened. The grand jury which Dearth had called to investigate crooked dealings in Muncie suddenly adjourned and Judge Dearth took a vacation leaving his vice war in the air. A few days later Dale was arrested on charges of criminal libel preferred by one Raymond Warner, one of the jurors in the recent concealed weapons trial whom he attacked in his paper.²⁷ True to form, Dale went out to meet the enemy and repeated all the accusations made against Warner plus a few more. Sneered he, "Thick headed stupidity and

²⁵New York Times, July 20, 1926; Muncie Evening Press, July 19, 1926; Muncie Morning Star, July 20, 1926; Post-Democrat, July 22, 1926.

²⁶Muncie Evening Press, July 20, 1926.

²⁷Ibid., July 28, 1926; Muncie Morning Star, July 29, 1926; Post-Democratic, July 29, 1926. See also Chapter IV, n.57. supra.

bull headed vindictiveness have marked the series of events. The latest arrest, the last of a series of six since war was declared in the spring of 1922, is the silliest performance of all."²⁸ Dearth ^{had} issued the bench warrant by which Dale was arrested in this case. Obviously the feud was on again.

And still praise, encouragement, and money came in to help in the contempt cases. Even world attention was being focused on Dale's case when Editor and Publisher announced that it would be considered by the Press Congress of the World at Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland, in September 1926.²⁹ Yet with all the excitement of which he was the center, Dale did not forget his ¹role as reformer. The Post-Democrat varied little from week to week; always the exposures; always the muckraking; always the Republican administration at fault.

When in the November elections of 1926 Democratic county commissioners took office Dale reported that the hated Republican machine was "not tottering, but wrecked!"³⁰ He had always insisted that the chief source of Republican graft were the county road contracts. Now Democrats were

²⁸Post-Democrat, July 29, 1926.

²⁹Editor and Publisher, September 4, 1926; Post-Democrat September 9, 1926.

³⁰Post-Democrat, November 4, 1926.

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to have control. Dale looked upon this as partially his victory. And still he continued to accuse personalities. His libel trial was at hand when he found another reason to scream editorially.

Later that month Dale announced in five inch headlines that a bullet had been shot into his home and that stones had been thrown through his windows for the past week.³¹ For once in his life he was perturbed; not that he feared personal violence but because his family had narrowly escaped injury. He was quoted in an Indianapolis paper as saying; "I am willing to face them myself, but I am not willing to have members of my family killed or wounded because of my activities."³²

A week later he went on trial for libeling Warner.³³ A day later the jury handed down a verdict of guilty. Dearth fined Dale \$400 and sentenced him to ninety days in prison. Less than half an hour after the verdict another bullet came crashing through a window of Dale's home but failed to hit anyone.³⁴ He accused the prosecuting attorney of being one of the perpetrators

³¹Post-Democrat, November 25, 1926; and both Muncie dailies for the same date. See also the New York Times, November 26, 1926;

³²Indianapolis News, November 29, 1926; also in the New York Telegram Mail, November 30, 1926.

³³Muncie Evening Press and Muncie Morning Star, Dec. 4, 1926; New York Times, December 5, 1926.

³⁴Muncie Evening Press and Muncie Morning Star, December 6, 1926; Post-Democrat, December 9, 1926.

of the attempted assassination because during the trial he advised that the people take the law into their own hands with regard to Dale.³⁵ Angered, Dale announced that he would "stick around" and fight.³⁶ Public opinion was becoming so incensed by his treatment in the courts and at the hands of his enemies that the Governor of Indiana (a reputed Klansman) was forced to take some action. The following letter dated December 6, 1926, was addressed "to the Mayor and Chief of Police of the City of Muncie, and the Prosecuting Attorney of Delaware County,

Dear Sirs:-

Information has reached the Governor that during the past several days assaults upon the family of George Dale of Muncie by shooting through windows and doors of his house have been occurring. The Governor has conferred with me and we both feel the necessity that immediate steps be taken to protect this house from such assaults for the safety of its members and to prevent a blot on the name of the State which might result unless such steps are taken.

I am, therefore, requested by the Governor to call the matter to your attention and to convey our joint request to you that all necessary steps be taken to afford the needed protection and to apprehend and punish those already guilty of these assaults. The State prefers at this time to look ~~at~~ local officers to accomplish these results because we believe it is wholly within your power to

³⁵Post-Democrat, December 9, 1926.

³⁶Indianapolis News, December 9, 1926; see also the Indianapolis Times, December 6, 1926.

accomplish them. Please give these matters your immediate and serious attention.

Respectfully,

(A. L. Gilliom)
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF INDIANA.

Even then Dale discounted proposed efforts of the police either to guard him or the punish the guilty parties. He just continued to fight. Dearth was again the target. Dale accused him of having dismissed the grand jury when it would not indict him for libeling Warner and then allowing a private action instead. The case was appealed.

"HELL@ MUSSOLINI" was the headline in his next paper. The leading story told of how Dearth was assuming the "role of newspaper censor" by warning a news dealer to stop selling the Post-Democrat.³⁷ "Dale has been razzing us without mercy and we are going to put a stop to it," he quoted Dearth as saying.³⁸ Furthermore he accused Dearth of ordering the police to take the names of all Dale's newsboys. "No self-appointed dictator is going to stop the sale and distribution of the Post-Democrat," he concluded.³⁹ Thus ended the year 1926 with the cauldron still boiling.

The new year opened with bad news for the editor.

³⁷Post-Democrat, December 23, 1926.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

The United States Supreme Court dismissed Dale's appeal because the court record had not been properly filled.⁴⁰

The Press for the first time editorialized in his behalf:

"It is unfortunate from the stand point of the people that the United state Supreme Court threw out on a technicality the appeal of George R. Dale without deciding the vital point at issue which is whether the truth in a case of contempt of court is or is not a sufficient defense....The common belief that this matter is of more importance to the newspapers than to the citizens generally is without warrant, for the principle applies to the lowliest citizen as well as to the greatest corporation.If a citizen may be punished for contempt of court by making truthful charges against a judge, and the practice of punishing along these lines were constantly indulged in, then that would be the end of all our liberties; popular government would be replaced by a government of courts, and judges, from being interpreters of the law, ...would become the makers of law....Whether Dale himself was right or wrong in this particular case was of no vital importance to anybody except himself and the particular judge he offended. If he were guilty of contempt of court by making false charges, of course he deserved and deserves punishment, just as he might deserve commendation if his charges were truthful, but when a judicial body such as the supreme court of Indiana declares that it does not matter in a contempt case whether the statements concerning a court are true or false, provided only they be prejudicial to the court's operation, then it is time that something were done about it....The issue failed to get before the highest court because of a defect in presenting the case which rendered the appeal of no value, and so the vital part of the matter stands where it has stood since the Indiana supreme court's decision, virtually upholding the ancient contention that the king can do no wrong; the king in this instance being any Indiana court."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Muncie Evening Press, January 3, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, January 4, 1927.

⁴¹

Muncie Evening Press, January 4, 1927.

Although tardy, here was the first clear evidence that Muncie was looking at Dale in a more favorable light. Whatever else may be right or wrong with "the Middletown Spirit", certainly fair play was a part of it. The people were beginning to wonder whether something should not be done to "make it all up" to Dale for the suffering he had received in their midst. The events of the next few months strengthened any such latent ideas. For the moment Dale could only ask to reinstate his case before the United States Supreme Court.

The new year also brought a new prosecuting attorney who had taken office free from taint of corruption--so far as Dale was concerned. A week after he went into office, the new prosecutor announced that he had investigated Dale's recent libel case and was convinced that he was not given a fair trial.⁴² A few days later after a heated court session between the old and new prosecutors, Judge Dearth denied the motion for a new trial.⁴³ Again Dale could only appeal. In the meanwhile he continued his attacks upon corruption and especially the circuit court.

Events soon came to a head. While Dale was in

⁴² Ibid., January 8, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, January 9, 1927.

⁴³ Ibid., January 12, 1927 in both papers.

Washington trying to get his contempt case reinstated before the Supreme Court, Judge Dearth ordered the Post-Democrat taken off the streets of Muncie because it contained charges, very common lately, that Dearth was tied up with political corruption and lawlessness in Muncie. About fifty of Dale's newsboys were taken before Dearth by city police and threatened with "juvenile detention" if they persisted in peddling the papers.⁴⁴ Dale, obviously, could not be arrested since he was out of the city but Dearth insisted he would be charged with something as soon as he returned--his Honor admitted he was not quite sure what the charges would be. Then without the sanction of the prosecuting attorney Dearth called the grand jury to investigate Dale and his paper.⁴⁵ The people, however, had stomached enough. Rumors of impeachment were rife throughout the city and state. In its next issue, the Post-Democrat carried cartoons of policemen chasing little newsboys while at the same time prostitution and drunkenness ran riot in the city.⁴⁶

⁴⁴
Muncie Evening Press, February 19, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, February 20, 1927. See also the New York Times for the same date.

⁴⁵
Muncie Evening Press, February 21, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, February 21, 22, 1927.

⁴⁶
Post-Democrat, February 24, 1927.

Dale succeeded in having the Supreme Court reinstate his case and then announced he would remain in Ohio until the controversy was settled. Dearth continued to hurl defiance and threaten prosecution. Then came word from the Indiana House of Representatives that it would consider impeachment petitions against Dearth.⁴⁷ Newspapers all over Indiana pressed for the impeachment.⁴⁸ But state legislators were hesitant to pick up a hot political potato. Democrats considered it a Republican matter, Republicans would have liked to forget it.

Dearth made the next move by filing charges of contempt against Dale for his recent publications. Editing from Greenville, Ohio, said Dale, "I am going to stay here to see if they really want me in Indiana. If they want me, they'll come and get me if they can." Answered Dearth, "I don't want him that bad....He can stay there."⁴⁹ Dale

⁴⁷
Muncie Morning Star, February 23, 1927; Muncie Evening Press, February 24, 1927.

⁴⁸
Bent, Silas, Ballyhoo, New York, 1927., p. 284ff. The author tells of how the powerful Indianapolis Times, a Scripps-Howard paper, got behind Dale in the last stages of his Klan fight and was the most articulate paper in the state in pressing for Dearth's impeachment.

⁴⁹
Muncie Evening Press, February 25, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, February 26, 1927.

replied that he would not return until given absolute
 50
 assurity that his bail would be accepted. Editorial
 opinion in Muncie meekly suggested that everyone remain
 calm and cool, whined about how Muncie was being hurt
 by bad publicity, concluded, however, that a free press
 51
 should be maintained. Dearth issued a bench warrant
 against Dale and sent it to an Ohio sheriff who arrested
 the editor. He was immediately freed on bond.⁵² On the
 same day the Judiciary Committee of the Indiana House of
 Representatives accused Dearth of "high crime and corrup-
 tion" in supressing Dale's paper. "The Mussolini of
 Muncie", as he was now being called by legislators on
 the floor of the House and by newspapers, was impeached
 by a vote of 93 to 1.⁵³ "Remember the Ides of March",
 said Dale as he noted that just four years ago this month
 Dearth had charged him with contempt of court.⁵⁴

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Muncie Evening Press, February 26, 1927. See also the
New York Times, February 26 and 27, 1927.

51

Muncie Evening Press, February 25, 26 and 28, 1927.

52

Ibid., March 1, 2, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, March 2,
 1927. The New York Times carried the entire story in great
 detail throughout the months of March and April, 1927.

53

Post-Democrat, March 3, 1927.

54

Ibid.

Dale remained in Ohio "catching up on sleep" until the end of the month when he returned to Muncie, and was arrested but immediately released on bond.⁵⁵ Said he of the \$3,000 bail, "exorbitant, it oughtn't to be over \$2.75, at most, for this particular charge."⁵⁶ The next day Dearth's trial came to an end when he was acquitted by the State Senate on all seven counts against him. On the second count he lacked conviction by only two votes. He resumed his place on the Delaware County bench.⁵⁷ Politically, however, the Judge was ruined as was evidenced in his weak showing and defeat in the next election.

A short while later, Chief Justice Taft, speaking for the Supreme Court announced that that court had no jurisdiction over Dale's case because no federal question was involved.⁵⁸ Insisting that he was "neither down nor out" Dale promised to continue the fight. "I will not acknowledge final defeat until I hear the referee count ten. I will go further than that. I will have to be so

⁵⁵Muncie Evening Press, March 31, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, April 1, 1927.

⁵⁶Muncie Evening Press, March 31, 1927.

⁵⁷Ibid., April 1, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, April 2, 1927.

⁵⁸Ibid., April 27, 1927; (in both papers) also in the New York Times for the same date.

far out when he counts that I can't hear him pronounce the last word.

"The Supreme Court of the United States has dumped Indiana's filth back on Indiana soil, where it really belongs."⁵⁹ Rumors began to float about the city about a gubernatorial pardon for Dale.

And so Dale turned once again to muckraking, The national publicity he had received a year before was just a memory now as was the financial and moral aid it brought. Undaunted Dale again made one of his old time appeals to the public to enable him to carry on his fight.

"It is not charity I am asking", he said, "It is a request for patriotic citizens to help in a cause which has for its purpose a redemption of our citizenship from crooked political control and the intrigues of venal courts."⁶⁰

There was only one thing left that could save Dale from serving his sentence, a pardon from the governor. In permitting his wife to petition for a pardon Dale made it clear that such action was not being done for the purpose of merely avoiding "the rigors of penal servitude" but rather to give the governor a chance to "right a great wrong and to serve notice on those who would throttle a

⁵⁹ Post-Democrat, April 28, 1927.

⁶⁰ Ibid., May 12, 1927.

free press and imprison those who publicly denounce crooked officials that Indiana will not permit the constitutional liberties of her people to be trifled with."⁶¹ Even the new Prosecuting Attorney supported the petition for pardon.⁶²

Public opinion in the state led especially by the Scripps-Howard Indianapolis Times pressed the Governor who finally left the matter in the hands of the board of trustees of the state penal farm.⁶³ Dale said he would appear personally before the prison board to present his petition.⁶⁴ How strong public pressure for his pardon eventually became was evidenced in the fact that he was even allowed to appear personally before the prison board to present his case in violation of the board's rules.⁶⁵ That the good people of Muncie were now supporting Dale was shown when the previously indifferent Press editorialized as follows:

⁶¹Post-Democrat, June 9, 1927.

⁶²Muncie Evening Press, June 9, 1927; New York Times, June 10, 1927.

⁶³Post-Democrat, June 16, 1927.

⁶⁴Muncie Evening Press, July 12, 13, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, July 14, 1927.

⁶⁵Muncie Evening Press, July 14, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, July 15, 1927.

"From every angle of common sense, the board should grant the pardon. To cause Dale to serve this sentence would arouse again in the community the old animosities that now, happily, appear to be dying out, and renew troubles that the public does not wish to be renewed.

"Without entering into the merits or demerits of the case...it may be said confidently that the best judgement of the community is that this whole matter should be ended at this time by Dale's position toward Dearth is much improved. If that guess is correct, it is a good thing for everybody concerned.

"If the Board of trustees were acquainted with local sentiment that fact would aid it greatly in making its decision, but it is unlikely that it is well informed upon that subject, so it may, or it may not, make a mistake today."⁶⁶

And so a day later the prison board made its recommendation and the governor paroled Dale. The \$500 fine, however, was removed.⁶⁷ Congratulations and hosannahs rolled in; it was a red-letter day for freedom of the press. Commented the Press;

A great deal of water has passed over the dam in the four years since Dale made the charges that constituted his supposed offense. He has pursued his enemies here with rare venom since that distant date, and they have been equally hot on his trail. The revelations that have come out of it all have not been such as to add to the glory of the community, but maybe the various ex-

⁶⁶ Muncie Evening Press, July 13, 1927. The italics are mine.

⁶⁷ Ibid., July 15, 1927; Muncie Morning Star, July 26, 1927. Post-Democrat, July 22, 1927; New York Times, July 12, 14, 16, 1927.

posures were, after all, a cleansing process that has been beneficial. Boils are far from pleasing visitors but they remove impurities from the system.⁶⁸

Concluded Dale;

"I am content in the knowledge that I have gained in the love and esteem (of) my immediate neighbors and that public sentiment in every section of Indiana as well as other states has been whole heartedly manifested in my behalf."⁶⁹

One minor concluding note of humor remained to end the story. In order to be paroled, Dale had to go to the State prison to be enrolled a prisoner. The first time he went he was refused admittance because he had not brought proper commitment papers.

"Dale turned away minus lunch", read the Press.⁷⁰ When he returned with the proper papers the Press announced his intention to "storm the penal farm anew".⁷¹

"I wonder", said Dale, "if they'll record my fingerprints and give me a free haircut. I've paid the state enough to entitle me to a free haircut and I certainly need one."⁷²

Thus was ended one of the most fascinating phases

⁶⁸Muncie Evening Press, July 16, 1927.

⁶⁹Post-Democrat, July 22, 1927.

⁷⁰Muncie Evening Press, July 26, 1927.

⁷¹Ibid., July 28, 1927. See also the New York Times, July 27, 1927.

⁷²Muncie Evening Press, July 30, 1927.

of a fascinating career. In a period of five years George Dale had risen from obscurity to a position of fame and respect in the community. From the ashes of the Ku Klux Klan which he helped destroy he rose to national prominence. Yet never once did he cease to be the reformer. The power of his name alone gave him more than 50,000 votes for Governor of Indiana at the next election.⁷³ From then on one of the most remarkable political careers Muncie has ever seen began to flower.

Thus also was ended a period of political and social unrest in Middletown which had stirred the community to its very core. Now the "house divided against itself" for almost a decade wanted peace. United by its dominant symbol - "success" in terms of money - Middletown forgot differences of the immediate past in the mad scramble to cut itself a piece of the cake of prosperity. For a time cleavages in the community pattern were healed - at least on the surface. That George Dale became mayor of Muncie showed how superficial was this recovery.

⁷³ Douglas, W. A. S., op. cit., p. 484.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

A culture truly in transition is Muncie's. For the past twenty years it has undergone changes which have undermined its complacent belief that "things always come out all right in the end". Never before has it been subject to so many new pressures. Reluctance to change, in other words, the inertia of traditional symbols such as the "good old days", "the American way", and "every poor boy can get to be President of A.T. and T." has been forced to cope with realities of the day as seen in the need for change, new pressures on the polity for services, new technical developments. And although people in Muncie would cringe at the thought that they lived by "theories" and were not very practical "down-to-the-earth" individuals, the fact remains that much of their inability to cope with these new stresses and strains is a result of the widening divergence between traditional values, the theories by which they live, and the way they really live.

Insecurity is the word which best describes the reasons for this dilemma. Life has ceased to be simple in Middletown. No longer is the individual sure of his place in the community. He finds himself buffeted by

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forces bigger than himself which he is unable to control. He knows there is something wrong somewhere but he never questions that the fault lies within himself or the people around him. He is certain that "the system is fundamentally right and only the persons wrong; the cures must be changes in personal attitudes, not in the institutions themselves."¹

Events of the past two decades show what will happen to a culture when its own sense of instability and insecurity begin to weigh too heavily upon it. Clutching wildly in the dark for something firm in a world suddenly gone liquid Muncie espoused the Ku Klux Klan. Fortunately, for those who still see democracy as the best principle to guide American government, that Klan proved as nebulous as those who sought its comforting support.

It would, however, be extremely foolish to dismiss the lessons of the Klan as completely irrelevant to the future of American democracy. Two facts become at once evident in this connection. One is that there must be something inherent in the American people, as has been the case with other peoples, that makes them peculiarly susceptible to the type of appeal put forth by the Klan.

¹Middletown In Transition, p. 493.

Secondly, if they accepted such appeals and such an organization at one time why would they not be willing to espouse a similar organization under similar conditions? More recent examples of Dr. Townsend, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin are certainly evidence that the American people are no more immune to the techniques of propaganda than are the Germans or Italians.

"It is not inconceivable that such a society of individuals who feel themselves floundering might go over like a row of cards and vent its pent-up anxiety in a mighty whoop of affirmation, if the right individual came along and gave it the right assurance in symbolic patriotic phrases. The working class, unorganized and devoid of symbols of its own, in 1924 served as a keyboard on which Klan organizers played fortissimo on the keys of patriotism and religion. In 1932 an ex-Klan leader started an abortive brownshirt movement, with meetings replete with the fascist salute and other trimmings. If, when, and as the right strong man emerges - if he can emerge in a country as geographically diffuse as the United States - one wonders if Middletown's response from both business class and working class will not be positive and favorable. For unless there is a sharp rise in working-class solidarity in the interim, this Middletown working class, nurtured on business-class symbols, and despite its rebellious Roosevelt vote in 1936, may be expected to follow patiently and even optimistically any bright flag a middle-class strong man waves."²

This highly conventionalized community pattern is so delicately balanced upon its inflexible institutional

²Middletown In Transition, p. 509.

framework that if the smallest peg is jarred the whole structure shudders. Resting upon such precarious and mechanical security it is little wonder that such a community should harbor vast potentials for irrational action.

George Dale was an index of that potential, a result of dislocations in the rigid pattern which came in the post-war period. If he was a ripple on the surface of that pattern it was only because the surface was troubled underneath. Viewed against the background of Middletown~~as~~ Dale's career only served to emphasize the disturbances in that background picture. George Dale was one of the many indications of unrest in Middletown.

EPILOGUE

The story of Dale's campaign and his term as mayor of Muncie reads much like a dime novel. Muncie never before nor since had seen anything quite like it. His success at the polls was almost as much a surprise to Dale as to the rest of the community. I can only sketch briefly some of the many incidents that were crowded into Dale's term of office and the last years of his life.

His campaign was typical of the reformer's clean-up-the-city plea. But his keen sense of political reality and showmanship enabled him to keep his hand on the pulse of the people, especially those "on the other side of the tracks". The night before the primary election he said to them, "You Democratic terriers on the Southside, I know you and I love you all! Get your paint on tonight and hit the war trail at daylight tomorrow morning.

"You stood by me last spring when my name appeared on the ballot and when the same gang was fighting me....I have fought for you and have stood by you in all your labor troubles and have never been found skulking in the rear when a voice was needed to champion your cause.

Stand by me now, as you have done before and you will have a real friend in the mayor's office...."

The fight was, as usual, carried on through the medium of the Post-Democrat. To this was added the first intensive radio campaign ever made by a mayoralty candidate in Muncie. Fortunately, Dale was able to speak as effectively as he wrote.

When he won the Democratic nomination the local papers were slightly surprised. They suggested that they only through some accident would Dale ever be elected. The accident happened¹ and the Press was generous enough to ask that the people at least give Dale a chance to make good as mayor.² This paper also tried to calm the more apprehensive;

"Those who fear that the mayor-elect is a radical whose deeds and utterances might be harmful to the community, should know that in most cases there is a vast difference between a candidate for an office and a holder of an office. The candidate is without responsibility but the one in office has many responsibilities. Usually these responsibilities have a sobering influence and those considered most erratic before election often become most conservative and most careful afterwards...."³

¹See Middletown in Transition, p. 322-3; "Ordinarily the machinery controlling Middletown's office of mayor, like the rest of its governmental machinery, operates behind the scenes, with only a chronic rumble of minor protest in the open. But the mechanisms of control come somewhat more into the open in an occasional brawling civic scene when the controls have slipped momentarily and maverick candidate rides into power. This last had happened in the fall of 1929...."

²Muncie Morning Star and Muncie Evening Press, November 6, 1929.

³Muncie Evening Press, November 6, 1929.

Keener observers, knowing George Dale as they did, had few illusions about his ever changing into a "conservative" just because he was in office. Remarked the editor of the Press in his daily column, Comment;

"the worst thing that ever happened to George Dale in his long and tempestuous career, if I may be permitted the opinion, is that he was elected. In an office and clothed with responsibility he will be as much out of water as a frog in a tree.

"With his temperament, he can get nowhere in particular without fighting somebody and now he will have to fight himself or nothing. James Whitcomb Riley wrote fantastically of 'the squidgicum-squees, 'at swallows themselves', but Dale cannot do that. He probably would find himself as indigestible as his enemies."⁴

Events of the next five years proved this opinion hardly wrong.

And so with the "common man" behind him and with only the meagre tolerance of the "nice people" he entered office.

"His administration showed a quixotic disregard for 'playing ball', 'making deals', and political 'face saving'. As an independent, lone-dog candidate unpopular with the businessmen, he entered office lacking the possibility of calling upon local men of ability to help him."⁵

⁴ Muncie Evening Press, November 9, 1929.

⁵ Middletown in Transition, p. 325.

Said Mayor Dale as he sat down at his new desk and rapped it with his gavel immediately following his inauguration; "I like to do this....I've had a judge do this to me frequently."⁶ His first official act was to fire the police force and appoint a new one. Simultaneously he announced tha Muncie would be "cleaned-up".⁷ That Dale attempted to carry out his campaign promise throughout his term as mayor was a fact so astonishing as to be incomprehensible to Muncie.

From the first day he took office it was evident that his administration lay in no bed of roses. He lost control of the city council from the start and only the pressure of immediate necessities ever got the mayor and council together again during the next five years.

His first major encounter was with the police judge who had been elected on the same ticket with the new mayor. The two men intensely disliked each other and the judge had announced publicly before the election that he was running only to embarrass Dale. When swept into office together the feud was carried into the administration of the city's affairs. The judge refused to sentence

⁶Muncie Evening Press, January 6, 1920.

⁷Ibid., and Muncie Morning Star, Jan 6, 7, and following numbers.

the many liquor violators brought in by the zealous new police force.⁸ The affair dragged on for months spotted here and there with ridiculous incidents which, when the fight eventually ended in a draw, could have resulted only in a serious loss of prestige for both men - especially Dale.

The city was surprised at first by the intensity with which it was being "cleaned up." Dale acted as if he was trying to make a New Atlantis out of Sodom. Muncie was not so sure it was so bad as Dale said or that it wished to be so good as he desired. Dale began to lose the spirit of the people from the first.

Unfortunately for himself and the city Dale was inadequate at the gentle art of compromise. In his sincere belief that he was always right, or if he was not right, at least his belief in taking a stand and remaining there, he alienated his own appointees and officials from the start. Trouble with his health commissioner, his board of safety, his police, his council, and almost every other city official at one time or other undermined his own power and prevented him from seeing to a successful conclusion many of the projects which he wanted and which would have been for the best interests of the city.

⁸Middletown in Transition, p. 324; Douglas, W. A. S., op. cit., p. 484-5; Muncie Evening Press and Muncie Morning Star, January 29, 1930 and following numbers.

Touching one of the sorest spots in the city government - road paving contracts - he canceled many that had been made by the previous administration and ordered new ones let. Furthermore he seriously embarrassed companies selling fair apparatus by requiring them to quote legitimate prices for their products and not to provide for the usual graft expected by most city governments. By paying off the city's bonded indebtedness before it was due he angered local banking interests so that when he wanted to issue more bonds he could find no home market for them. He was forced to sell them personally in Chicago.

Little wonder then that the army of enemies he was creating would be out to "get" him. They made his public life as difficult as possible. Finally came the first real attack. He and several of his police officers were indicted by a federal grand jury for violation of the 18th Amendment. The indictment was based on "the eloquently righteous charge that the mayor had caused a gallon of whicky to be transported to the State Democratic Convention".⁹ Dale swore he was framed. Some time later he was found guilty fined \$1,000 and sentenced to eighteen

⁹Middletown in Transition, p. 326; Both Muncie dailies and New York Times, March 6, 1933 and following numbers in all these papers for details of the trials.

months in prison.¹⁰ The case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The local papers advised that he resign. They had forgotten to whom they were making such suggestion.

Momentarily stalled in the attempt to get rid of Dale, the city council tried to vote his office vacant, and elect one of their own body mayor. Dale laughed at them, remained on the job and continued his hectic administration. While his case was still on appeal he was pardoned unconditionally by President Roosevelt.¹¹ "The pardon took specific notice of perjury by witnesses against the mayor during the trial."¹²

Hardly was this case settled when the mayor found himself and several others of his official family under new indictments for conspiring to "coerce" city employees in to making "voluntary contributions" for a "defense fund" to enable Dale to carry his late liquor charge to the the Supreme Court.¹³ Undoubtedly connected with this crime, if it was a crime, Dale was merely using a commonly accepted form of political financing which never before nor

¹⁰Muncie Evening Press, June 3, 1932; New York Times, June 4, 1932.

¹¹Muncie Evening Press, December 14, 1933; New York Times, December 15, 1933.

¹²Middletown In Transition, p. 326.

¹³Ibid., p. 327; Muncie Evening Press, January 31, 1933 and following numbers.

since has been questioned in Indiana. The idea behind the "defense fund" was the same that instituted former Governor Paul McNutt's now famous "2% Club" which collects that amount from the salary of every state employee for the party war chest. The present city administration of Dr. Bunch has its own private little "Welfare Organization" which is reported to be very "effective".¹⁴ In July, 1933, the indictments were quashed by a federal court.¹⁵ There was one more way to "get" George Dale and that was to prevent his reelection. Here his enemies were successful.

Even the stoutest heart must bow to time. George Dale privately admitted for the first time in his life that he was "getting tired". His age began to tell upon him. His health was broken by the terrific strain of the past few years. But once more he took up his pen and began his last fight, a short one this time, for he was beaten by Dr. Bunch in the primaries. The carefully laid out plans of his opponents backed by the money of business interests who wanted a return to "normalcy" plus the general disgust of the people with the constant turmoil of their politics all contributed to his defeat. Middletown repudiated the leader she never really understood and who was unable to understand her.

¹⁴ Middletown In Transition, p. 327; Muncie Evening Press, January 31, 1933 and following numbers.

¹⁵ Ibid.; Muncie Evening Press, July 24, 1933.

Dale lived a year or so longer. For the last time he was the reformer, the outsider looking in and analysing the evils of the city's politics but for the most part he was forgotten by the city to which he had given low taxes, real parks, public projects, efficient administration, little graft. But when he died in March, 1936, Muncie already had had a year of the "old guard" in the political saddle. Enough time had elapsed for the community to look back upon his administration and wonder whether it had really understood what Dale had been trying to do. Middletown had approached the ideal of "good government".

Little wonder then that both the Star and Press carried such positive editorial obituaries as these:

"George D. Dale was a zealot, and while zealots only occasionally have their way because zeal does not necessarily conform to reason and to orderly processes, they serve a high social purpose. When they are wrong, they emphasize the wrongness of their position; when they are right the cause which they foster, although immediately defeated, eventually triumphs... Had Dale awaited considered judgment before speaking or action he might have gained more for himself and the causes he espoused, he would have saved himself much grief and others - both friends and foes - much distress, but at the cost of the destruction of his own picturesqueness, and, there is much reason to believe, at the additional cost of cheating himself out of a good deal of fun, for he joyed in the fight for the fight's sake.

"His serious error in public life and as an editor was his inability to win others to his purposes by persuasion and his willingness to embroil himself in a controversy when the use of peaceful methods might have accomplished more.

"But the very fact that he was no "pussy-footer" won the reluctant but generally secret admiration of those who decried his methods and even denounced his motives....If you are an average citizen, you probably opposed many of the things for which George Dale stood, and because he had the special faculty of exciting prejudices against himself and his works by his utter lack of diplomacy, you may have declared in your exasperation at times, that he was never right about anything. And there you would have been wrong, for he was right about many things. As we look back coolly upon his administration as mayor of Muncie since he left that office, we are able to say among other favorable things that it was devoid of extravagance at a time when extravagance was common among public officers; that the city's affairs generally were cared for with efficiency....And whether you were a partisan of George Dale or an enemy, you give him credit today, at a time when it will do him no good whatever, for courage - a courage that was reckless at times, but nevertheless, courage in a day when too many men and women are prone to say, 'On the one hand, but, again, on the other'."

"The newspapers of the country owe something to George Dale for his taking up the cudgel in behalf of the well-established principals, then under attack, the truth is a sufficient defense when libel is alleged. He helped to make newspaper history by his firm demand that this principle continue to be recognized.

"It was unfortunate for George Dale that he was unable to separate persons from causes. It was a weakness of character that probably brought him more distress than those he attacked

for, although he professed imperviousness to assaults upon himself which his attitude naturally provoked, actually he was sensitive to criticism, as are so many who profess that their spear knows no brother. His supposed callousness was a mere shell."¹⁶

"Whatever you may have thought of George Dale, some color has been taken out of his community by his passing; some spice is gone from the confection of many ingredients we call "society"."¹⁷

"...no Mayor of Muncie ever put the vivid color into public affairs as George Dale did."¹⁸

"For Dale it will be the end; but for his work, into which he breathed much of his stormy many-sided personality, it will be only another event in the annals of time....He became a national figure in the eyes of all who stood for tolerance toward all persons, regardless of race, of color, of religion....He was a master of satire and of irony and, armed with these two weapons, he ridiculed and belabored those against whom he was opposed....He had the courage of his convictions and he fought for a cause he believed was right regardless of whose toes he stepped on, to the distress of himself and his family....It was 'thirty' for George Dale and there will never be another who can take the place that he filled in this world."¹⁹

But no one could ever know what went on in Dale's mind better than himself. Last year the following letter written by Dale was found by a friend and published in the Muncie Star because

¹⁶Muncie Evening Press, March 27, 1936.

¹⁷Ibid., March 28, 1936.

¹⁸Ibid., March 30, 1936.

¹⁹Muncie Morning Star, March 28, 1936

it seemed to express Dale to the environment in which he lived much better than he had been able to during his lifetime. Many who had never quite fathomed him could now feel that they had missed a dash of sparkle in Middletown.

"E....:

I was a hell of a good mayor. I flushed their sewers, gathered their dead dogs and cats, collected their garbage and ashes, put their bootleggers in jail, and let the bankers and chamber of commerce run loose.

But honestly, I would rather be mayor of Lincoln (Ind.) or Grassy Point (N.Y.) than mayor of Muncie. The sewers in those places are less complicated, there is no city planning commission to worry the mayor about filling station sites and there's a stove to spit at in the wintertime. The simple life isn't so simple after all.

I hanker for the homely virtues of a Lincoln or a Grassy Point, where society adjusts itself admirably without even a constable for a referee and whose humble environments incubate great newspapermen and great statesmen."

George R. Dale.²⁰