

THE AKRON, OHIO KU KLUX KLAN

1921 - 1928

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A routine term paper lead to the undertaking of this project. When it was seen how much material was available and how little had actually been written on the Akron Ku Klux Klan the author proposed it as the subject for this thesis. One element of interest was the Akron Klan's claim of being the world's largest chapter in the Ku Klux Klan. Another was the almost total absence of any mention of this huge organization in the literature on the Klan.¹ This, in turn is due to a lack of organized knowledge on the subject. The development of this knowledge would also reveal the extent to which the Akron Klan resembled its counterparts elsewhere.

It quickly became clear that the evidence needed to develop any sort of historical continuity would have to be acquired piecemeal from original sources. This eventually resulted in the reading of nearly every issue of the city's two important newspapers over the period 1921-1928, the interviewing of at least thirty individuals, countless hours spent searching the Summit County files and records and considerable reading of secondary material. The newspapers yielded their bits and pieces, and sometimes a spectacular front-page story, to become the major source of this work. The framework thus established was filled out and substantiated to a considerable degree by material derived from the additional sources cited above. We thus have a fairly substantial picture of the Akron Klan's external activities. Unfortunately, a corresponding internal history could not be developed because the local Klan guarded the secrecy of its

1. In a speech in Akron on July 4, 1925, Clyde W. Osborne, head of the Ohio Ku Klux Klan, asserted that the Akron chapter was, at that time, the largest in the world. See Akron Beacon Journal, July 5, 1925. For numerical substantiation see Case No. 1291, Ninth District Court of Appeals.

internal politics well; very little of it has been recorded.

It might be supposed that nothing particularly resulted from the Klan's presence in Akron, but the evidence, now assembled, shows otherwise. There was no bloodshed or destruction. Rather, Akron's Klan No. 27 achieved its goals through influence and overwhelming political strength. The Klan's power over the ballot stemmed from a membership exceeding 52,000 in 1925. However, this membership was not derived from Akron alone. Ohio's Klan was almost always organized by counties; charters were issued from Columbus, the state headquarters, for county-wide chapters.²

The Akron Klan was an important element in the rapid growth of the national Ku Klux Klan. Like its parent, the Akron chapter enjoyed a few years of vigorous activity and then underwent rapid decline. During the years of its vigor, the Akron chapter dominated the city's politics and typified the conservative, superpatriotic Klansmen of post-World-War I.

The Post-World-War I Ku Klux Klan was the second of three separately begun organizations in the United States to bear the name. Both of the later organizations nonetheless laid claim to uninterrupted ties with the original Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction days which disappeared before the turn of the century. The post-World-War I Ku Klux Klan underwent a similar fate prior to the Second World War. The Ku Klux Klan of the post World War II period still exists, though in two separate versions.³

2. The exception was Hamilton County (Cincinnati), which had fourteen chapters.

3. The post-World War II Klan has some small factual claims to tenuous connections with the post-World War I Klan through some individuals having belonged to both organizations. However, it should be recognized that the post-World War II Klan has a rather different composition and outlook from the post-World War I Klan. Today's Klan is split into two different and opposing factions, each of which claims to be the "true" Klan, begotten in Reconstruction days. See David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism (Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1965), p. 61

Each of these organizations has a few major characteristics which it shares with the others. Collectively the Klan has enjoyed its greatest popularity during the relatively turbulent social and economic conditions existing immediately after a major war. It has always manifested itself as a socially conservative force in the midst of social upheaval. Its appeal has been its apparent concern to restore the peace, serenity and security of the past. It has always been the champion of white supremacy.

The original Ku Klux Klan has as many birthdays as it has historians. No one seems to have remembered exactly when in 1865 the original "Den" was organized in Pulaski, Tennessee. Even the original members disagreed.⁴ Intended in the beginning to be merely "something to do", following the South's defeat in the Civil War, the hooded order soon became the organizational focus for men who were grimly determined to reinstate the ante-bellum way of life as the South's dominant life-style.⁵ For this reason the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction days confined its activities to that nebulous entity known as "Dixie". Secrecy became a means of intimidation as well as protection for members who would otherwise become

4. William Pierce Randel, The Ku Klux Klan (Chilton Company, Philadelphia, 1965), p. 5. Also see Stanley F. Horn, Invisible Empire (John E. Edwards, Cos Cob, Conn., 1969), p. 9.

5. One aspect of this effort was an attempt to keep the freedmen docile. For example, hooded men carrying torches would ride into the yard of a former slave, rein up and call for the owner to come out. The black, probably in fear of his life, does so, to be informed by one of the riders that he wants a drink, a very large drink. This is brought whereupon it is drained, without stopping, to the last drop. Smacking his lips the rider hands the bucket back to its owner and, removing his glove, offers to shake hands with the black. Feeling better about the whole thing the black takes the proffered hand only to find he has grasped a skeleton's bony fingers. He runs shrieking back to his door while the rider laughs hideously, and, with the others who have been perfectly silent, wheels his horse and gallops off in the darkness. For more of this, see Randel, Ku Klux Klan. p. 9.

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targets for hostile retaliation by Northern-backed forces of the law.

As a further means of protecting members, masked regalia, secret ritual, pass-words and other devices were employed to deny information to non-members. Most of the Klan's activities were of the heavily-disguised, nocturnal sort, designed mainly to harass and intimidate. As time went on, however, atrocity was practiced more and more often. This resulted in congressional action. Martial Law was declared in many areas of the South, ultimately leading to the Reconstruction Klan's decline in 1871.⁶ While it existed, particularly in the last three years, the Klan bitterly opposed changes coming about in the South and for many Southerners it was the last great champion of an old and glorious way of life.

Any validity the post-World War I Klan may have had for claiming to have inherited the mantle of the original Klan must lie in the fact that, as a youngster, its founder, William J. Simmons, thrilled to the stories of Reconstruction days told by Aunt Viney, his black "mammy". He relates that even then he resolved he would revive the Klan.⁷

Simmons lived to keep his resolution. On the night of November 26, 1915, he and fifteen friends gathered on Stone Mountain, just outside Atlanta, Georgia, and formally swore the new organization into existence. Obtaining a charter from the State of Georgia for a "patriotic, military, benevolent, ritualistic, social and fraternal order" to be called "The Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc.", Simmons went on to copyright in his own name the constitution and ritual of his new Klan.⁸

And it was new. Conditions under which the old Reconstruction

6. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 19.

7. Cited in Embury Bernard Howson, "The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio After World War I" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ohio State University, 1951), p. 9.

8. Arnold S. Rice, The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1972), p. 1.

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Klan had flourished and the way of life it had sought to restore, were now nothing but memories for people of advanced age. The South had successfully removed whatever equality emancipation had conferred on its blacks as a class and effectively neutralized their political power.⁹ There was the war in Europe to distract the country from its provincialism and bring to it a stronger sense of national identity.

Simmons' Klan was a new fraternal organization with a new membership, but the name was old. Also retained was an advocacy of white supremacy and the use of hooded disguises which Simmons formalized into a standard regalia. In common with other secret fraternal organizations, Simmons' Klan also employed various secret oral and visual signs for recognition and exchange of information.

Simmons' advertisements, plus his own salesmanship, quickly established the new Klan as a functioning, though small, organization. With America's entry into the first World War Simmons enlisted in the Citizens Bureau of Investigation in Atlanta and the Klan assumed "the mein of a militantly moralistic and patriotic order."¹⁰ Klansmen sought out draft-dodgers, alien agents and strike leaders and turned them in to authorities along with any idlers, slackers or prostitutes they happened to discover.

At war's end, the Klan had about five to six thousand members scattered in Georgia and Alabama.¹¹ Simmons realized that he had met the limits of his own ability to organize and expand and therefore sought out professional help. In June, 1920, he signed an agreement with the Southern

9. C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (Oxford University Press, New York, 1955), p. 6.

10. Charles C. Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1965), p. 13.

11. Ibid., p. 6.

Publicity Association to "sell" the Ku Klux Klan. This firm had previously led successful drives for the Anti-Saloon League, Near-East Relief, the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Fund and other causes of a similar nature. The Southern Publicity Association was a partnership owned by Edward Y. Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. They decided the best results would be obtained by emphasizing a patriotic appeal to the widespread concern over the apparent moral decay following World War I. It is doubtful that this alone would have done much, but together with the promotional method employed, it resulted in a phenomenal increase in the size of the Klan. By 1922 the Klan could claim nearly one million members and had chapters in nearly every state in the Union.¹²

The transformation of the Klan from Simmons' rather provincial organization to one of national size and significance was accomplished in three ways, all of which are seen to have been coincidentally effective because of time and circumstance. First, the Klan represented itself as the epitome of American purity, pride, substance and esteem at a time when people were most apt to be looking for some way to come to terms with the weighty problems of "flaming" youth with its accompanying moral challenge, wide-spread violation of the Volstead Act, economic instability, and the twin political threats of anarchism and Red Communism.¹³ Second, Edward Clarke placed the Klan's recruitment on a sound organizational basis by dividing the entire nation into "domains", each headed by a Grand Goblin; domains contained "realms" (actually the contiguous states), each presided over by a Grand Dragon; the "realms" contained chapter units called

12. Ibid., p. 10.

13. Akron Beacon Journal, January 2, 1920 and January 3, 1920. These are front-page headline articles on the raids conducted by federal, state and local authorities on the "Communist party headquarters, Communist labor party, Anarchist, Syndicate and I. W. W. Hall".

variously "Klavern" or "Klanton", each headed by an "Exalted Cyclops". During the recruiting and organizing phase, the "Kluxing" as it was called, each "realm" was in charge of the "King Kleagle" who directed the home-to-home solicitations of the "Kleagles" or pitchmen. Third, as an inducement and reward for the hard-working salesmen, Clarke placed the recruiting on a commission basis. Each new recruit was required to pay a \$10.00 "Klectoken" which was utilized in the following way: the Kleagle kept \$4.00, returning the balance to his King Kleagle who kept \$1.00 and sent the balance on to the Grand Goblin whose share was \$.50. The Grand Goblin forwarded the remaining \$4.50 to Atlanta where Clarke and Tyler kept \$2.50 and deposited \$2.00 to the account of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁴

Many Kleagles were more interested in money than ideals and stand guilty of pandering to fear and prejudice. Numerous Klansmen soberly enrolled to fight off the alleged takeover of business by Jews, of education by Catholics, of political power by Catholics and Socialists; the Klan promised to "do something" about the moral disintegration they felt going on around them.¹⁵ Some Kleagles were as strongly convinced of this as any of their recruits and derived double satisfaction to see that the

14. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 34. This formula was somewhat altered after a chapter or "realm" had passed the recruiting stage. When a "realm" had gained a sufficient number of members the Imperial Wizard granted it a charter as it no longer was part of a recruiting "domain". Once a local chapter had passed the recruiting state it was issued a charter by the realm and acquired a measure of self-government including the election of its own officials. Until that time its affairs were totally controlled by its organizing Kleagle. With the charter, each local chapter also acquired control of its membership and could keep part of the Klectoken. However, under the terms of the Klan's constitution any or all of the local chapter's affairs could be taken over at any time by the state or national officers of the Klan.

15. Howson, "Klan in Ohio", p. 20. In a speech at Akron, July 4, 1925, Ohio Grand Dragon Clyde W. Osborne asserted that the original Summit County Kleagles were "money-grabbers".

Protestant ethic did indeed pay off.¹⁶

When it was seen how easy recruiting was and how favorable the chances for wealth and/or power were, Kleagles quickly surfaced in nearly every state in the Union and "kluxing" went on apace. However, when nocturnal attacks on alleged law or morals violators by groups of robed men began drawing the attention of the big city newspapers, public attention began to focus on the Klan on a national scale. The New York World published a sensational exposé of the Klan and its activities, attributing many acts of violence to Klansmen and even publishing a facsimile of the Klan's application for membership.

Soon after the exposé, a Congressional investigation ensued in which Tyler, Clarke and Simmons were called to testify. After little more than a week, the investigating sub-committee could find no basis for action against the Klan. If anything, the exposé backfired on the anti-Klan forces; Simmons was later to claim that the publicity from this event was instrumental in ensuring the rapid growth of the Klan on a national scale. At the time (October, 1921), the national membership of the Klan was about 100,000 and growing rapidly.¹⁷ Some of the most rapid growth of all was in Ohio; and in the growth of the Ohio Klan, Akron played a leading role.

16. Many however underwent financial ruin, as organizers had to pay their own expenses. Ibid.

17. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 38.

CHAPTER II

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AKRON AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE KLAN

Akron in 1910 was a city of 69,067 inhabitants, situated at the highest point on the Ohio-Erie Canal.¹ The city's diverse industrial interests included rubber manufacturing, cereal and agricultural machinery. During the next decade Akron underwent industrial and population growth of almost incredible proportions. By 1920 population had increased to 208,435; 5,580 of these were Negro.² The industrial boom that produced this tremendous population growth was centered in the rubber industry, and Akron was transformed into a one-industry city with an economy linked directly to the automobile industry. In 1914 Akron's booming rubber factories produced goods valued at \$301,000,000. By 1919 this figure had risen to \$3,138,000,000. Over the decade Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company stock paid a dividend averaging 50%; the dividend paid just before the economic slump in 1920 was 150%.³

The city had many of the characteristics of a frontier boom-town. With people moving into the city at an average rate of 1,190 per month over the decade, housing became extremely difficult to obtain. Families and individuals lived in boarding houses if they could find room, or in tents, basements, attics, garages and even in renovated chicken coops if they

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1. Population figures include 494 blacks. The city was also the western terminus of the Ohio-Pennsylvania Canal.
 2. This was a net increase of 139,368 (including 4,923 blacks). The surrounding metropolitan area in Summit County also was affected but not so much as the city. The county's total population increased 177,812, with 5,820 of these being Negro. The net county gain was 38,444. See: Census, Bureau of the, Population; 13th census, Ohio, and 14th census, Ohio (National Archives). Complete reference is in the Bibliography.
 3. Howard and Ralph Wolf, Rubber, A Story of Glory and Greed (New York: Covivi-Friede, 1936), p. 431. Also see Leon Friedman, "The Matter of Racial Imbalance: A History of Pupil Attendance Districts and Pupil Housing in the Public Schools of Akron, Ohio" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Case-Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 1966), p. 97.

could not. Rates varied from \$35.00 to \$85.00 per month.⁴ The shortage of housing was so critical that several companies "built barn-like structures to house hundreds of their newly recruited men".⁵ They lacked privacy, comfort and conveniences; their occupants spent idle hours drinking or gambling or fighting. Some enterprising home-owners were able to rent sleeping rooms on a three-shift basis, an arrangement referred to as "hot beds" as the beds were seldom without an occupant. Of course, all of this combined to produce an unsurpassed construction boom in Akron, and more houses were built from 1911 to 1920 than had existed in the city before that time.⁶ This in turn meant additional jobs for additional people.

By 1920, two of every three Akronites were new-comers and six out of seven were native-born Americans. Of the approximately 140,000 additional residents enumerated in the census of 1920, about 35,000 were European-born, 5,000 were black and 100,000 (over 70%), were native-born white.⁷ The population of the city was predominantly male as many of the new workers were single men, and many others came to work and find a home before moving their families in. Not unexpectedly, many social problems arose as Akron continued to be the fastest-growing city in America for several years. Downtown Akron was crowded twenty-four hours a day; restaurants and burlesque houses remained open around the clock to take advantage of the business. Gambling and vice became sizeable industries of their own.⁸

4. Karl Grismer, A History of Akron and Summit County, Ohio (Akron, Ohio: Summit County Historical Association, 1952), p. 379.

5. Friedman, "The Matter", p. 103.

6. Ibid., p. 102.

7. Ibid., p. 104. Mr. Friedman has this data well organized. It should be noted that the figures cited are net differences. Many were only temporary residents of Akron and came and departed between censuses without ever being counted. It was easy to attract men to "hire in" to the rubber shops, but many departed for home as soon as they had accumulated some money. From an interview with Dr. George W. Knepper.

8. Ibid., p. 105.

Almost overnight transportation became a problem of enormous proportions with every streetcar constantly loaded with as many patrons as it could carry. "Jitney" service became a thriving collateral transportation system. Officers of the law looked the other way as jitney drivers utilized seats, fenders and running boards to carry twelve to fifteen passengers in and on their private automobiles.⁹

The enormous gain in population was also reflected in the growth of the city's schools. In 1910 Akron had 250 teachers and 10,000 pupils housed in seventeen elementary and one high school. By 1920 the Akron system had grown to four high schools and twenty-six elementary schools housing 800 teachers and 32,000 pupils. The school-age population continued to grow ahead of facilities to house them. Temporary expedients included rental of storerooms and church facilities throughout the city, and holding classes in basements and corridors. There was no relief from this situation throughout the decade of the 1920's nor until enrollment finally peaked at 54,588 in 1931.¹⁰ Until then there were endless problems in financing, staffing and housing the ever-growing numbers of school-age children. This would seem to have been the result of the production of additional offspring because Akron's industrial population declined after 1920.

In an effort to hold the men successfully attracted from other regions, Akron's rubber companies repeatedly raised their wages. In 1913 the average annual wage paid to workers for a fifty-five-hour week was \$655.00. By mid-1919 the average annual wage had risen to \$2,600.00 while the work

9. Grismer, Akron, p. 381. The customary fare for such transportation was five cents.

10. Friedman, "The Matter", p. 110. One suggested measure of alleviation brought forward by the Bureau of Municipal Research in 1917 was the adoption of a junior high school plan "in certain congested districts". Ibid., p. 115. In addition, the Health Commissioner estimated that thirty per cent of Akron's pupils under age eighteen were effected by tuberculosis. Ibid., p. 117.

week had been reduced to forty-eight hours.¹¹ However, some of these gains may have resulted from Akron's first major altercation between labor and management.

In 1913 the Management of the B. F. Goodrich Company installed machinery which increased productive efficiency of their employees, but required them to work harder for the same pay. Many disgruntled workers joined the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), which soon gained strength enough to initiate a strike that received nationwide publicity. Production ground to a halt as pickets appeared at the company gates. The strikers wanted time-and-one-half for all hours worked over forty-eight, an eight-hour day and a wage increase of twenty percent. Goodrich management responded by hiring new men to replace the ones on strike and requested police protection for them. Most of the city regarded the I.W.W. as an anarchistic, alien organization out to destroy the American way of life and would not support the strike. A Citizens Welfare League was organized to assist the sheriff in maintaining law and order. When a clash between workers and police provoked the Mayor to declare martial law, the League enlisted 500 men and set about dispersing groups of workers wherever found. Touring the city in automobiles, these men soon proved effective and the workers returned to their jobs.¹² The I.W.W., however, remained active in Akron.

Though a failure, the strike had nonetheless made a strong impression on the rubber companies which now adopted a much more positive attitude toward their employees. Personnel directors were hired, recreational programs organized and the eight-hour day was adopted. In addition, both

11. Ibid., p. 100.

12. Ibid., p. 98.

Goodyear and Firestone acquired huge tracts of land east of their plants, and developed beautiful residential communities exclusively for their own employees. A fine house or home site could be purchased at quite reasonable prices. Unfortunately, the economic recession which the United States underwent in 1920 hit Akron with unparalleled severity, putting an end to any further activities of this kind and even jeopardizing the stability of the rubber industry itself.¹³

By the spring of 1921 over 50,000 workers had been released from their jobs. Thousands of these men headed back to their place of origin, stripping Akron of much of its male population, particularly the single men. Akron thereafter was predominantly a city of family men, and life in the downtown district lost much of its boisterousness.¹⁴ The rubber companies, made cautious by the near-disaster of 1920, adopted much more conservative business practices and continued them throughout the next decade.¹⁵ There was a gradual recovery from the economic slump of 1920 as the city shared with the nation the turbulence of the "roaring twenties". Akron also shared in another phenomenon of the 1920's: the Ku Klux Klan. In Akron the Klan's recruiters (its Kleagles), found a city full of white Protestant country people; the finest recruiting-ground they would ever find.

In 1920, prior to the Congressional and New York World investigation, Klan organizers are known to have been operating north of the Ohio River, establishing themselves in the vicinity of Evansville, Indiana.

13. Ibid., p. 130.

14. Ibid., p. 135. Population gains after 1920 were accomplished largely through annexation of territory. For the city limits of 1920, the 1930 census showed a net gain of 15,000 persons. Also see Wolf, Rubber p. 445.

15. In consequence of this, the economic crash of 1929 caused the immediate release of "only" 14,000 workers, though most of these were family men.

From this point "kluxing" began in Ohio and, by the autumn of 1920, Worley M. Cortner of Muncie, Indiana, had organized the Springfield, Ohio Klan. About the time Springfield was organized, Dr. Charles L. Harrod, a Columbus dentist, was inducted into the Klan and set about organizing the Franklin County (Columbus) Klan with such success that he was shortly named Ohio's first King Kleagle by Imperial Headquarters. Until that time "kluxing" in the state had been coordinated by Charles W. Love, Grand Goblin of the Great Lakes Domain, from his offices in Indianapolis.¹⁶

By the summer of 1921 Klan strength and activity was openly evident in Ohio¹⁷ and recruiting was going on even in such heavily Catholic and immigrant-centered places as Cleveland, Toledo, Steubenville and Mercer County.¹⁸ No area of the state was viewed as an insurmountable obstacle.

After the publicity given the Klan by the Congressional investigation, membership in Ohio increased so rapidly that all attempts to bring efficiency to state-wide organization were overwhelmed by the huge number of new applicants. Finally, in September, 1924, efficient organization was achieved and the Realm of Ohio was admitted to the Invisible Empire.¹⁹ Contributing to the veritable avalanche of new members were many rural areas, largely untouched by recent immigration, where the Klan was so dominant that

16. Akron Beacon Journal, September 30, 1921.

17. The New York Times, June 19, 1921.

18. Membership in these places remained small. Another reason the Cuyahoga County Chapter remained small: its members refused to cooperate with the national KKK and, perhaps more serious, refused to pay its assessments. Its membership was said to be only about 400 (Akron Beacon Journal December 6, 1923). Nevertheless, the train which carried the Akron contingent to the National gathering in Washington, D. C. in 1926 made a special stop to pick up members from Cleveland.

19. By this time, however, Klan power was already at its peak and entering decline in Ohio. It should be noted that national Klan headquarters was reluctant to admit a new "realm" until there was a noticeable decline in initiation money being paid in.

masks were never lowered during its parades. Most of the Klan's numerical strength, however, was to be found in large urban centers such as Akron, Youngstown and Columbus.

Colonel Simmons saw cities as essentially evil things that contaminated patriotic Americanism.²⁰ It was therefore quite surprising for him to see his Klan become so strong in the northern cities, but, in retrospect, it seems logical for it to have happened for several reasons. One, Clarke had organized the promotion of the Klan on a commission basis and recruiting moves faster and returns are better where there are greater numbers of people. Second, if the cities were evil, they were in need of the very things the Klan sought to supply and the Klan would be welcomed for its concern and promise of action. Third, it might also be welcomed for its potential for handling certain kinds of "problems" such as blacks, Jews, Catholics, and foreigners.

In some northern cities an influx of job-seeking southern blacks came during the war years and inadvertently provided the Klan with a ready-made recruiting focus. Howson identifies this as particularly important for Springfield and Akron.²¹

Although many blacks were attracted to Akron's jobs, their number was exceeded by a ratio of at least twenty to one by the much greater number of Southern Appalachian whites who came for the same reasons.²² While it may be valid to list the influx of blacks as a point emphasized in the Klan's recruiting and one to which southern whites would respond (after all, the number of blacks had increased over 700%), there never was a racial

20. Howson, "Klan in Ohio", p. 16.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

22. The 1920 census indicates 4,923 more blacks residing in Akron than in 1910. The increase of native-born southern white residents during this same time span is approximately 100,000.

confrontation in Akron. In a letter to the author,²³ Ray C. Sutliff argues that while the Klan remained anti-Negro in the South, in the North it became bitterly anti-Catholic. Indeed, where one argument was slow to work, others were quickly brought to bear. Kleagles pointed to the immigration "problem" and talked about the desperate need to perfect an organization to fight the well oiled machine of the Catholics, and Catholics, it was alleged, were collecting guns in the basements of their churches.²⁴

On February 2, 1924, the Akron Beacon Journal printed a letter signed by "Former Marine" which set out in some detail the techniques used to recruit new members to the Ku Klux Klan in Akron. The insecurity of the average man made him susceptible to innuendo and vague but strong peer pressure such as "The Masons are going for it strong". "High employers," said the writer, casually let it be known they favored the movement."

Whatever may have prompted Akronites to join the Klan, it is certain that they did join in massive numbers. It is the writer's opinion that Klansmen recruiting in Akron could scarcely have found a situation more to their liking. The city's population was predominantly southern white Protestant inclined to the fundamentalist persuasion. In addition, Akron had only recently settled down from several tumultuous years as an industrial boom-town with frontier-like living and social conditions. Now Akron was a community of families and control of the social environment was a matter of serious concern. Further, the turbulent decade of the 1920's was underway with its speakeasys, flappers and jazz. Morals seemed to be slipping badly. By coincidence, the local Democratic Party machine was led by an

23. July, 1974.

24. See Gus Kasch's satirical letter in the Akron Beacon Journal, March 22, 1928. This was also mentioned in an interview with Mrs. Pauline Kramer, 137 Norman Street, Barberton, Ohio.

ardent Catholic, Cornelius ("Con") Mulcahy, providing the Klan with a ready-made political focus. It is not surprising, then, that the Akron Klan rapidly acquired a sizeable membership and turned its attention to politics at an early date.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF THE KLAN IN AKRON AND ITS POLITICAL IMPACT

Embry B. Howson points out that the Lohr brothers were among a minority of Kleagles to go back to their homes "substantially enriched".¹ They are important in this study as the founders of the Ku Klux Klan in Akron. No much else is known about them.

It is known that the Klan in Akron got its first big membership boost from the South Akron Civic Association, which was founded originally to demand that the School Board enlarge badly overcrowded South High School (now Thornton Junior High). When the School Board proposed leaving South High alone and building a new high school (Garfield) out in Firestone Park, the Association bitterly attacked the new high school plan. The infant, but growing Klan, took up the school issue, and made it a recruiting point, while keeping the Civic Association out in front to do most of the fighting against the School Board and Garfield High.

It is apparent that the rest of Akron was fertile ground for Klan recruiting efforts also, for the membership grew rapidly. An editorial in the city's most-read newspaper, the Akron Beacon Journal, September 1, 1921 announced that the newspaper had become aware of rumors of the Klan's recruiting activities in Akron and deplored the idea that any citizen would want to belong to such a secret organization. The newspaper went on to announce its opposition to any organization such as the Ku Klux Klan. As happened elsewhere, the publicity seemed to stimulate an increase in applications for

1. Howson, "Klan in Ohio", p. 20.

2. From an interview with Mr. Ray C. Sutliff, retired newspaper reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal. South Akron was almost a community unto itself and leaders there feared the divisive influence of a second high school.

membership.³

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On September 22 another editorial offered the advice that the Ku Klux Klan's recruiters were out for money first, that its jargon was ridiculous, its patriotism specious. Five days later front-page articles quoted city officials as saying that an Akron branch of the KKK would not be tolerated.

More articles concerning the Klan in general appeared that month, and a few afterward, but outwardly matters apparently subsided to a relatively quiescent level until May of the following year.

On May 22, 1922, Mayor D. C. Rybolt was asked by reporters what he was going to do about the Klan's intention to hold an open drive for membership in Akron. Handbills had been distributed throughout the city that day to the effect that an open meeting was going to be held at the Akron Armory on the night of May 24th to explain the Klan's purpose.⁴ The Mayor responded with a promise to investigate the rental of the Armory by the KKK; so did Safety Director Warren F. Selby, County Sheriff Pat Hutchinson and Akron Police Chief John Durkin. Mayor Rybolt would later be identified in court as a member of the Klan so his comment on this particular occasion points to the possibility of his having already joined the Klan himself;

3. A competing newspaper, however, reported the Klan's effort to organize was failing. See Akron Press, September 21, 1921 and September 22, 1921.

4. The circular said: "If you are 100 per-cent American, and believe in the tenets of the Christian religion, white supremacy, our free public schools, just laws and liberty, protection of our womanhood, separation of church and state, limitation of foreign immigration, upholding the Constitution of the United States, freedom of speech and press, preventing the cause of mob violence and lynching, law and order, you are invited to attend the big mass meeting at the Akron Armory Wednesday night, May 24th, to get the inside facts on the principles practices and purposes of the Ku Klux Klan". This circular was passed out on the streets of Akron and particular care was taken to have them outside practically every white protestant church in the city. Unfortunately, no surviving copies of the circular could be found. See Akron Beacon Journal, May 23, 1922.

"If the meeting is not 100 per-cent American and strictly for law and order legal steps will be taken to prevent it".⁵

In the meantime, on being questioned by reporters, several important people in the city admitted knowing of the Klan's recruiting activities for the past several weeks.⁶ Local Protestant ministers received personal invitations to attend, one of which started the Rev. Lloyd C. Douglas on his years-long denouncement of the Klan in print and from the pulpit.

On May 23 the Beacon Journal printed a news editorial recognizing that the Klan was about to become established in Akron. It again rebuked the Klan and repeated the editor's opinion that it was out of place in the Western Reserve. The Klan had by then already organized quite strongly,

5. Akron Beacon Journal, May 22, 1922.

6. Chief of Police, John Durkin (Irish and Catholic), County Detective James Corey and American Legion Post 19 Commander Wendell L. Willkie, an Akron attorney, were among those cited. Ibid. Willkie went on to play a key role in dispossessing the Klan of its power in Akron, by helping to organize the Non-Political Public School League. This organization in turn was able to effectively challenge the Klan's takeover of the Akron public schools (See Chapter IV for a description of this episode). Willkie himself went on to build a career so successful that in 1940 he was named the Presidential nominee of the Republican Party. He was at the time, however, a staunch Democrat and was chosen to attend the Democratic National Convention in 1924 along with "Con" Mulcahy, the local party chairman. Some of his fellow delegates were Klansmen and reported his vote for Al Smith back to the Klan in Akron. Willkie shortly received a telegram from the Akron Klan asking "when he had joined the payroll of the Pope." Sources give two versions of his reply: "When I ran out of money", and "The Klan can go to hell." The second is reported in Mary Earhart Dillon, Wendell Willkie 1892-1944 (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1952), p. 33. The first is in Ellsworth Barnard, Wendell Willkie: Fighter for Freedom (Marquette, Michigan: Northern Michigan University Press, 1966), p. 65. Dillon's account sounds much more like Willkie but Barnard's is the better book. Both are full accounts of his life. Willkie spent ten years in Akron, from 1919 to 1929, rising from a legal clerk for the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company to the best-known trial lawyer in Akron and director of several large companies including Northern Ohio Power and Light. An eloquent man with strong democratic instincts, Willkie's hatred of the Klan was deep and bitter. His good friend Robert Guinther later led the fight against the Klan on the Board of Education.

though quietly, in Akron, and by May 22 it publicly sought new membership through an open meeting at the Akron Armory which one of its out-of-town members had rented in advance.⁷ On the same day Governor Harry L. Davis responded to a shower of protests from the NAACP, Akron Jewish Community, Young Men's Progressive Club, and others, by closing the Armory to the Klan.⁸ The Beacon Journal subsequently reported learning of an unsigned telegram sent to the Governor which read, "Four thousand Klansmen, citizens and taxpayers solemnly and strenuously protest."⁹

The next day Ohio's King Kleagle, Dr. C. L. Harrod from Columbus, announced that the meeting would be held in the open-air. Homer C. Campbell, the City Manager, and Warren F. Selby, Safety Director, told reporters the Klan would be denied a permit to gather in any park or street or to parade.

At a meeting at the Calvary Baptist Church the following day, two local men, Ralph R. Weygandt and Paul Hudkins, were handing out literature and applications while Fred W. Yoos, an Akron resident of six years, appeared to be chairing the activities.¹⁰ The featured speaker, Billy Parker, former editor of the anti-Catholic newspaper, The New Menace, had barely begun when police arrived with an injunction granted to George W. Thompson, secretary of the "colored" Y.M.C.A.¹¹ Recognizing the favorable

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7. Apparently under an assumed name: E. C. Brown; residence unknown. Akron Beacon Journal, May 23, 1922. Also see Akron Press, May 23, 1922.
 8. Samuel T. Kelley, an NAACP representative, was said to have gotten this promise from the Governor. Since the Armory was owned by the State of Ohio, its use was controlled ultimately by state officials. Ibid.
 9. Akron Beacon Journal, May 24, 1922. Also Akron Press, May 24, 1922.
 10. Akron Beacon Journal, May 25, 1922. Also Akron Press, May 25, 1922. The story in the Press is best. The Akron City Directory for 1922 lists Ralph R. Weygandt's occupation as a worker at B. F. Goodrich Company; Paul Hudkins is listed as an inspector at the B. F. Goodrich Company.
 11. Four people had asked for the injunction; George W. Thompson, Samuel T. Kelley, local representative of the NAACP, Charles R. Lewis, M.D. and Leon Gordie, a grocer. All were black. Judge Ahern was quite reluctant to sign the injunction, yielding at last to repeated requests. He lost his office in the next election. From an interview with Mr. Leon Gordie. Mr. Gordie was with the officers delivering the injunction.

publicity potential in the injunction, the local organizers asked everyone to leave peacefully to demonstrate the Klan's devotion to law and order. There was some open anger shown but the men dispersed quietly and went home. Calvary Baptist Church had been used rent free. The Chairman of its Board of Trustees, A. L. Sullivan, later admitted that he had allowed its use, terming it "a mistake".¹²

Taking full advantage of public attention generated by the previous day's activities, Ralph R. Weygandt agreed to an interview in which he demonstrated considerable skill at manipulating the outcome to his, and the Klan's, advantage. Most of the questions put by reporters were refused answers, but it developed that he had been working for the Klan for about eight months and was now the Head Kleagle in Summit County, that 5,000 members had been initiated in Akron and that each applicant was subject to a reviewing board "composed of some of the highest officials in Summit County."¹³

The Beacon Journal's editor lashed out once again in an editorial on May 25. Terming membership in the Klan "the fool's errand", he went on to say that the Klan's justice was inherently unfair and once again deplored its existence. Thereafter, matters subsided somewhat though it was apparent that the Klan was now firmly established in Akron. Nearly a month later, on July 20, the Klan demonstrated its strength as 1,000 members gathered to hear the state's King Kleagle speak on the topic of opposition to the Klan.¹⁴

Although the Klan's presence was now manifest in Akron, it continued to consolidate its power quietly, befitting its "secret" nature. Organized

12. Akron Beacon Journal, May 26, 1922.

13. Ibid. The Klan's propensity to exaggerate its numbers should be noted. Still, if only 20% of the claims were true that's 1,000 Klansmen.

14. Ibid., July 20, 1922. Sources do not mention where the meeting took place.

opposition to its presence was just as quietly abandoned, at least outwardly, in the face of the hooded organization's tremendous popularity. The Akron Beacon Journal, already on record as opposing the Klan, pointedly ignored the organization, except for the sensational items, and played down any suggestion of its importance.¹⁵ The result of all this was the disappearance of the Klan itself from the newspapers and from general public notice until the following January.

On Friday, January 11, 1923, the newspapers suddenly found themselves interested in the Klan again. Articles had appeared concerning the Klan nationally, and Fred W. Yoos, disenchanted with the local Klan and having quit it the preceding December, suddenly announced he would reveal the inside of the Klan at "the proper time".¹⁶ He revealed that there was internal divisiveness within the Klan, that many had left with him and that membership had fallen off from the 5,000 announced the preceding October.

The following Tuesday, January 15, Yoos announced in an interview with reporters that he and others had an anti-Klan committee, and that he would expose Klan dishonesty, etc., in the previous November election. But not right then. This episode subsequently developed into a bitter and acrimonious exchange of words through the Beacon Journal's "Letters to the Editor" column. The Beacon Journal's Editor finally announced that the

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15. The Beacon Journal's publisher-owner, C. L. Knight, also owned the Springfield Sun. In Springfield, after a raid on Klan headquarters, the Sun broke openly with the County Sheriff who was a Klansman. For two years the name of the Sheriff of Clark County never appeared in the Sun columns. The Beacon Journal tried the same device against the Klan but without much success. There never was another reported instance of outward anti-Klan activity on the part of Akron's Negro or Jewish communities. From an interview with Ray C. Sutliff.
16. Akron Beacon Journal, January 12, 1923. Also Akron Press, January 11, 1923. The article in the Press would seem to indicate a takeover and purge in the fall of 1922 by insurgent elements. Among those purged was Fred W. Yoos.

controversy could go on and on indefinitely and he would print no more letters "at this time".¹⁷ Articles in the Akron Press make it appear that Yoos came under heavy pressure to be quiet about the whole thing.¹⁸

Hopes for an exposé may have been renewed in the excitement following the February 15, 1923 raid by police on the headquarters of the Klan in Springfield, Ohio in which the local membership list was impounded as evidence. Names on the list included George E. McCord, the Superintendent of Schools for Springfield. McCord stoutly denied membership charging a frameup, but reporters learned he had signed a \$1,000 bond for the arrested local Exalted Cyclops, W. E. Cortner.¹⁹ Brought to Cortner's conspiracy trial on February 22, as a witness, and now under oath, McCord not only admitted his membership but said, "I think it is about the best 100% American organization in the country."²⁰ Following this admission Superintendent McCord's career in Springfield ended within a year. He left Springfield and moved to Columbus where he became an architect. There he remained until events led him to take the Superintendent's post in Akron.

During the spring and summer of 1923 the Akron Klavern continued to recruit at a high rate and from time to time conducted initiation ceremonies for several hundred new members at a time for both men and women. October, 1923, became a month of even greater activity. There was an initiation for several hundred women at Springfield Center replete with

17. Akron Beacon Journal, March 8, 1923. The reader is referred in particular to letters in the column on February 15, 1923 favoring Yoos and February 21, 1923 by "Hundred per Center", scoring him. A letter on February 24, 1923 points to internal dissension around October 22 and speaks of domination by a few powerful men. Finally a letter printed on March 5, 1923 states that Mr. Yoos and 150 others were expelled for non-cooperation.

18. Akron Press, January 19, 1923.

19. Akron Beacon Journal, February 15, 1923.

20. Ibid., February 22, 1923, For the reader's interest there are signed letters on the Editor's page, this date, upholding the virtue of the Ku Klux Klan.

singing, music and fireworks; observers told of seeing a huge caravan of automobiles. Not to be outdone, the men staged their initiation the following night off Hawkins Road, their enormous caravan causing a traffic jam on Exchange Street.²¹

An example of the curious dichotomy often displayed by Klansmen occurred on October 16th. The Akron Klavern filled Goodyear Hall to hear "The Old Man" talk up the Klan. The mysterious speaker asserted the Klan was anti-nothing, only pro-American. Then, to clarify what pro-American, anti-nothing meant, he went on to say that changes to immigration laws should be made to prevent all but Anglo-Saxons from northern Europe from entering the country. A seventy-five piece band provided music for the occasion.²²

To bring the month's activities to a fitting and memorable close, a permit to parade in full regalia was successfully obtained from the city on October 23. It might indeed have been something to remember, but was unfortunately rained out.²³ On November 13th the Klan announced it would march in parade on Saturday, November 17, though a license to do so had not yet been secured. This particular parade would be part of a giant conclave²⁴ to be held rain or shine at the Akron Fairgrounds. Officials of the Klan said that 25,000 were expected to attend, all to be robed, though hoods would not be worn until evening.²⁵ Sheriff Chris Weaver announced he would detail all deputies to control traffic and maintain order.

Much of Akron turned out to see 3,400 Klansmen, women and Junior

21. Ibid., October 12, 1923 and October 15, 1923.

22. Ibid., October 17, 1923.

23. Ibid., October 24, 1923.

24. Variousy, Konklave, or Klonklave in the Klan jargon.

25. The names of the Akron Klan's officials were well known, as they were in most other chapters.

Klansmen march from the Fairgrounds, up Furnace Street to Main, Main to Exchange, Exchange to Highland thence back to Furnace and to the Fairgrounds. Though attendance at the "Konclave" was not up to predictions, 12,000 did come which was enough to create a gala atmosphere. The local Klan band performed with the Women of the Ku Klux Klan's glee club. There were speeches to excite the zeal of Klansmen and a barbecue to provide for gustatorial needs. Then, with Rev. E. M. Annessansley officiating, a fifty-foot cross was burned, closing the Konclave.²⁶

Although the entire affair was without mishap, it could have been otherwise. Anti-Klan forces were known to be in the city and it is said that they were concealed, with weapons, along the parade route.²⁷ A Klan parade in Steubenville on August 16th had been attacked by an armed mob; a revolver battle ensued which resulted in three wounded and seven arrests. All this, however, was understood to be the aftermath of a bitterly fought election involving the Klan.²⁸ The political scene in Akron was peaceful; and Chris Weaver had at least 250 armed men on the scene to look after things. In any event, nothing disturbed the peace and Akron gained notice as a center of Klan strength. Marchers were hooded but at least one observer felt he could plainly see Mayor Rybolt's characteristic gait.²⁹

The Konclave was a rousing success; Klansmen from homes throughout the State went away with the certain knowledge that the mighty battle to

26. Akron Beacon Journal, November 16, 1923 and November 19, 1923. An article in the Akron Press alleged that the conclave was called to celebrate the Klan's victory in the recent elections; all but one Klan-backed candidate were said to have won. In retrospect, it is possible that many brother Klansmen lost. See Akron Press, November 16, 1923 and November 19, 1923.

27. Interview with Mr. Frank J. Yacobucci, formerly Clerk of Courts for Summit County.

28. Akron Beacon Journal, August 16, 1923.

29. Interview with Mr. Frank J. Yacobucci, Mr. Yacobucci was, at the time a young junior clerk in the city building and knew the Mayor quite well.

cleanse the country was well begun. What they had seen in Akron was convincing proof that success was just a matter of time.³⁰

As the Christmas season approached, measures were undertaken to enhance the reputation gained by the successful November, 1923, Konklave. Schools were presented with flag and Bible under conspicuous circumstances and favored pastorates were singled out for sizeable cash donations.³¹ Rev. E. M. Lewis, outspoken proponent of the Klan, was the first beneficiary, receiving \$1,200 on Sunday, December 23. That same day a delegation of Klansmen in full regalia entered the first United Presbyterian Church during survices and silently tendered Rev. Orin A. Keach a purse containing \$275.³² Generous donations to the Salvation Army and Volunteers of America to help the needy rounded out the Klan's Christmas giving for 1923. Klansmen proudly asserted that the Klan was doing "wonderful work"³³ throughout the country and that "the majority of our judges, our doctors, our lawyers and prominent business men are members of the Klan."³⁴

Rev. Richard R. Yocum, Pastor of the Miller Avenue Reformed Church, became the first recipient of Klan largesse in 1924, on January 20. Twenty-five robed Klansmen presented him with a purse containing \$50 for himself and \$260 for enlargement of the church.³⁵ The week of February 23rd the Klan rented the Akron Armory and invited the public to see "The Toll of Justice", purported to be the first pictures of the Klan in session. On

30. Visiting officials of the national and state Klan must have been impressed also. The Akron Klan received its charter just five days later, on November 23, 1923.

31. Akron Beacon Journal, November 27, 1923 and December 21, 1923. The gifts to the schools are discussed in Chapter IV. See also Akron Press, December 24, 1923.

32. Akron Beacon Journal, December 24, 1923, it should be mentioned that Keach had just preached on the need for the Klan. See Akron Press, December 24, 1923.

33. Akron Beacon Journal, January 4, 1924.

34. Ibid., January 22, 1924.

35. Ibid., January 21, 1924.

April 30th, Klansmen and Kamelias in full regalia entered during services at the Falls Church of Christ to present a Bible and flag to Rev. J. L. Fisher.³⁶

Here and there a few voices were raised in opposition to the Klan but the community generally seems to have adapted to the hooded order's presence. Gus Kasch, one of Akron's more colorful politicians, a Protestant and a man of considerable influence, spoke out fearlessly against the Klan even when the Klan was near the zenith of its power in Akron. In a letter to the Editor early in 1924 he mentioned Rev. O. A. Keach as preaching on the need for the Klan, then reiterated again that intolerance is not American and that if Protestantism was going to save itself at all it would be through its own merits and action, not through some secret order.³⁷ In February a letter signed "Akron Teacher" chided fellow teachers for silence toward the Klan since it was obviously using the flag and Bible as advertisement.³⁸ None of this seems to have excited sympathy, or interest, or public attention.

On May 14th plans were announced for another giant "Konclave" in Akron to be held on May 24. It was to be at least twice the affair the previous November's had been. Officials confidently (if somewhat optimistically), predicted 100,000 would attend; there would be a parade of 50,000 marchers, "floats of all descriptions...several miles in length."³⁹ At the Fairgrounds there would be fireworks replete with the burning of a huge fiery cross and the inevitable barbecue. Topping the agenda would

36. Ibid., April 8, 1924.

37. Ibid., January 2, 1924.

38. Ibid., February 2, 1924. The use of a pseudonym is also a form of silence. Akron's teachers were conspicuously silent during the McCord controversy in 1925. See Chapter IV.

39. Ibid., May 24, 1924. See also Akron Press, May 24, 1924.

be a speech by Dr. Hiram Wesley Evans the Imperial Wizard of the National Ku Klux Klan.

On the appointed day Sheriff Chris Weaver mobilized his safety forces for the expected crowd. There were over 5,000 marchers in the parade, including thirty robed horsemen, but hardly the 50,000 predicted. Moreover, much of the public seem to have had their curiosity satisfied by the spectacle of the previous November. The anticipated crowds simply never materialized. There were no disorders as the long parade wound itself around essentially the same route used the previous November.⁴⁰ No record remains of Evans' speech if indeed he gave one. Akron seems to have become very blasé about the Klan.

On July 4th the Klan retrieved a measure of public attention with an Independence Day celebration of its own design. Aerial cannons were discharged at the Fairgrounds off East North Street and, while everyone's attention was distracted in that direction, a twenty-five foot cross was hastily erected and ignited on the steps of the courthouse, just opposite the Municipal Police Station. This was no ordinary fiery cross. It was rigged with explosives set to go off at intervals, producing a resemblance to volleys of cannon fire. As it burned to the ground, the Klansmen, all unmasked and unrobed, dispersed. It was reported that a large group of Klansmen had gathered on the North Hill Viaduct to await the display.⁴¹

Niles, Ohio was to be the scene of another huge gathering of Klansmen on November 1, 1924. The Akron Klan made plans to attend en masse, sending a reported 10,000 members there with regalia. Some took weapons

40. Akron Beacon Journal, May 26, 1924. Also Akron Press, May 24, 1924. During the parade an airplane circled over the city with a bright red cross displayed over its entire underside. The Press also lists the contingents represented in the entire line of march.

41. Ibid., July 4, 1924.

also. There was a bit more to the Niles affair than the usual Konklave; there was the prospect of a pitched battle between the Klan and a militant rival organization, the Knights of the Flaming Circle.⁴²

Fighting did erupt and several people were injured, two of them very seriously. Governor Donahey declared martial law and ordered in several contingents of the National Guard, one of which was located at Akron. Quite a few Klansmen hastily departed for Akron to muster in, returning later with their respective units to preserve law and order.⁴³

Over 10,000 members attended the meeting at the South Main Street Extension grounds on the night of November 4th. Surprisingly, no opposition developed to Governor Donahey for declaring martial law at Niles. Reporters quoted Hanan as saying it was "the only thing that could be done under the circumstances."⁴⁴

However, a few Klansmen decided to let their feelings show and vented them on A. A. Crosier, the "Sage of Copley". Crosier was an eloquent and thoughtful man, in the habit of voicing his opinion on things in general through the "Letters to the Editor" column in the Beacon Journal. More than

42. The "Circlers", as they were called, admitted to membership all whom the KKK barred, held nocturnal meetings marked by a circle of fire, wore masks and generally directed its efforts against the Klan. Their flaming circle was usually an old auto tire, drenched in kerosene and held aloft with a metal rod or cable after ignition. From an interview with Ray C. Sutliff.

43. Both the Akron Press and Akron Beacon Journal ran front-page articles on the "Niles Riot" for several days beginning on November 1. The Beacon Journal featured a story by a female reporter on November 3, 1924 which said seven people had been injured and that two of them might not live. She also said that everyone was running around spreading rumors of what they had heard. One Guardsman, a sentry, was asked, "How many were killed?" "Fourteen", was his brisk reply. Mr. Ray Sutliff was on the scene, near the gunplay, but is of the opinion that the situation at Niles received much more attention than it deserved.

44. Akron Beacon Journal, November 4, 1924. Joseph B. Hanan was the local Klan's Exalted Cyclops (president).

once the Klan had been the target of his remarks and now a few of the members decided to "return the favor." Two carloads of Klansmen drove up to Crosier's home and, when he did not open his door to them, burned a cross in his front yard and departed. Crosier was quoted as saying, "I refuse to be cowed! Every time I write a letter to the Beacon Journal expressing my view on the Klan I get a threatening unsigned letter."⁴⁵ J. B. Hanan denied the local Klan had anything to do with it. "It is an iron clad rule of this organization", he said,

that no cross shall ever be lighted, outside of regular meetings, except with the special permission of the Exalted Cyclops, or the Executive Board of the Ku Klux Klan. Such permission was not given in the case in question and those responsible were either not Klansmen or were acting without authority. If they were Klansmen and can be apprehended, they shall be summarily dealt with.⁴⁶

Following the Crosier affair matters affecting the membership of Klan No. 27 settled down to a mundane level and remained at that ebb through the Christmas season.⁴⁷ Exalted Cyclops Hanan invited newsmen to attend a Klan meeting for the first time on December 1st. It was also the first combined meeting of men and women members. All who attended heard Rev. John L. Brandt of Kokomo, Indiana, speak on the ponderous topic of "The Greatness of the Nation Depends Upon the Character of its Citizens and Their Loyalty to Their Religion."⁴⁸

Prior to November, 1924, Klan No. 27 had held its meetings in the

45. Ibid., November 4, 1924.

46. Ibid., November 11, 1924.

47. In a letter to the Editor, Akron Beacon Journal, November 26, 1924, I. S. Corman described the Klan's appeal about as clearly as any historian has been able to see it since. In essence, important people join it for political gain such as Judge Zesiger and J. B. Hanan; the rank-and-file because the KKK seems extraordinary and has strong psychological appeal.

48. Ibid., December 1, 1924.

open or rented a spacious hall for the purpose. When the evangelist Bob Jones came to Akron in October, 1924, he helped provide them with their first good meeting place. Jones rented a spot near Goodyear Field for his Akron campaign and built there a huge "tabernacle" seating about 5,000 people, although 6,100 could get inside if standing room was included. Jones soon let his sentiments be known concerning the Klan: "Whenever the Klan is strong the Protestant churches are crammed on Sunday morning".⁴⁹ He went on to say that the Klan was for Anglo-Saxon Gentile Protestants to have an organization since the Roman Catholics and Jews had their own. He cited several instances in which the southern Klan thwarted attempted lynchings of Negroes by others and charged that the Klan was the worst slandered organization in the country. He drew heavy applause with, "We don't have popes and kings over here; we're all common people."⁵⁰ Thus it is not surprising that the evangelist was willing to have the Klan use his "tabernacle". In fact, upon leaving Akron he left the place to them for a small gratuity, with his best wishes. This gave Klan No. 27 a decent meeting place for the winter of 1924-1925. Klansmen immediately pitched in, dismantled the "tabernacle" and re-erected it at 944 South Main near the intersection of Main and South Street.⁵¹ This was understood to be a temporary arrangement as it was already well known that the local Klan was making plans for a permanent meeting place in Akron.

Until the Klan's permanent home was built, the "tabernacle" received heavy use, including the hosting of Akron's first Klonselver, or local convention. These conventions were being held throughout the state for each "province" at times that permitted the participation of the state officers

⁴⁹. Akron Times Press, October 21, 1924 and Akron Beacon Journal, October 21, 1924. Jones later founded Bob Jones University.

⁵⁰. Akron Beacon Journal, October 21, 1924.

⁵¹. Ibid., April 25, 1925.

of the organization in all of them. Accordingly, Clyde W. Osborne and thirty-three of his subordinates arrived in Akron for the fifth Province's first gathering, having just left a similar one in Toledo. They obligingly posed for photographs at the side of their chartered coaches but would not respond to questions by reporters. The company immediately left for Klan No. 27's headquarters in the Pythian Building downtown.⁵²

Although meetings were closed to newsmen, rumors that one of the speakers would be Fred W. Warnock, former Mayor of Youngstown, seemed confirmed when he was seen in Osborne's entourage. Aside from the big names involved, the convention seemed to be nothing more than another weekly gathering of the local Klan. It was learned that 2,000 attended the day meeting in the Klan's "tabernacle" at Main and South Street and a capacity crowd of 5,000 filled it for the evening meeting. At both meetings the Grand Dragon urged all to "be a member of some church" and spoke of the need for greater law enforcement. Dr. Bertram C. Tipple, President of Methodist College in Rome, Italy, spoke of America's "good conditions and many opportunities."⁵³ At the conclusion of the evening ceremonies the Grand Dragon and his entourage reboarded the train for Canton and another Klonverse. Provincial delegates departed to their various homes; the city, now accustomed to the presence of the Klan, took little or no notice of their going.

By January, 1925 property had been acquired at 77 Fir Street⁵⁴ next to the University Club and a company organized to build a \$500,000 auditorium on the site. The Company was called the Summit County Auditorium

52. Akron Beacon Journal, January 20, 1925.

53. Akron Press, January 21, 1925. Also Akron Beacon Journal, January 21, 1925.

54. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company sold the property to the Klan for \$70,000. Akron Press, January 20, 1925.

Company and J. B. Hanan was its President. Capital was to be raised through the sale of stock to local Klansmen and women.⁵⁵ Exalted Cyclops Hanan said the new auditorium would break the "monopoly" on entertainment enjoyed by the local theaters, benefitting the public with reduced prices. The second and third floors of the building would house the Klan's offices.⁵⁶ The Klan's fortunes never seemed better.

Early spring weather was good, so the "klavern" (as the "tabernacle" had come to be called), was torn down and disposed of. Meetings would be in the open until winter, by which time the new facility on Fir Street was expected to be ready.

In an outdoor meeting on Sunday, May 24th, more than 500 robed men and women of Klan No. 27 were present at the Wooster Avenue Reformed Church for ceremonies in which flags were presented to the church and its troop of Boy Scouts: Rev. H. D. Diefenbach accepted the flag, in an elaborately planned ceremony, from Exalted Cyclops Hanan. Afterward, C. E. Longsbury, Director of Boy Scout Troops responded to Mrs. E. M. Anneshansley's presentation of a flag to the Boy Scouts. In addition to the Klansmen and women seven hundred members of the church's congregation looked on and enjoyed limited participation.⁵⁷

On June 7th the Klan held a conclave and paraded in Barberton, setting a new community standard for orderliness. J. B. Hanan and other officers led the parade through town. It was quite routine; after the usual ceremonies and speeches, the traditional cross was burned, but for Barberton, it was something to remember for years.⁵⁸ It is evident from

55. Akron Beacon Journal, April 7, 1925.

56. Ibid., January 20, 1925. Also Akron Press, January 20, 1925.

57. Akron Beacon Journal, May 25, 1925. Also Akron Times-Press, May 25, 1925.

58. Akron Beacon Journal, June 5, 1925. Also from an interview with Burns L. Culver, a life-resident of Barberton.

these ceremonies that the Klan had achieved a new high in respectability despite the current troubles involving Hanan at the Board of Education.

J. B. Hanan had been named as Exalted Cyclops to serve out the term for Judge Ernest E. Zesiger. He did a creditable job; even the Klan's enemies acknowledged this. But there can be no doubt that the job was burdensome, especially to as conscientious a man as "Joe" Hanan. On May 4th he was renominated without opposition for another year in spite of his request not to be considered. At the time it was said this caused some dissension in the ranks as the nomination was done by a special committee without membership participation. In retrospect this was a little ironic as Hanan really did want out, putting Klan No. 27 on the verge of a crisis.⁵⁹ Hanan finally admitted to reporters on June 13 that he might resign, possibly after the fall elections.⁶⁰ He cited the pressure of business and other activities requiring his time. He said he did not want to resign "with the school board under fire". "Before I do resign there are a number of things which I believe are right, that must be done."⁶¹ He went on to say that the Klan would definitely support a candidate for Mayor, denying that it would necessarily be Kyle Ross, Klansman, Councilman-at-large and an announced candidate. He also announced that a state Klan meeting would be held in Akron on July 4th as in the previous year.

On July 27th Hanan again announced the July 4th "Konklave" which

59. New by-laws provided a \$100 per month salary for the Exalted Cyclops. Previously, no officer received any salary. Also, candidates for a public office were required to resign their Klan office if any were held. Akron Beacon Journal, May 4, 1925. Also Akron Times-Press, May 4, 1925.

60. In April there had been rumors that Hanan might resign, and, in light of later developments, he may have been the source of them himself. However, he denied them for the time being. Akron Beacon Journal. April 15, 1925.

61. Akron Beacon Journal, June 13, 1925.

50,000 were expected to attend. The usual parade through downtown would start off at 4:00 p.m.; Klansmen would be robed but not masked; meetings and speeches at the Fairgrounds would be open to the public.⁶² On the appointed day the inevitable parade, 4,000 strong, wound its way through downtown Akron, led by Grand Dragon Osborne who was followed by mounted Grand Marshalls in full regalia, No one seemed to notice that the traditional Independence Day parade had been taken over by the Klan.

By 1925, its political power made it easy for Klan No. 27 to obtain a parade permit, even on Independence Day. The Klan was not founded as a political organization, but when Hiram W. Evans took over control of the national Ku Klux Klan in the fall of 1922, he immediately began a re-organization that had a two-fold purpose. His most immediate concern was to improve the efficiency of the Klan's internal revenue collection. His ultimate goal, however, was to transform the Klan into a potent political force. On the first count he achieved an unqualified success. On the latter, whether he succeeded at the national level or not, he certainly did provoke a strong response at the local level. In many cities throughout the United States membership in the Klan became the prerequisite to political success. In Ohio this was true of such major cities as Youngstown, Columbus, Dayton and Akron. In Akron the response was immediate.

Nearly all Akron Klansmen were able to strongly identify with the Republican Party because the local Democratic Party Chairman was "Con" Mulcahy, a staunch Catholic. This was the reason for the Republican landslide in Akron in the fall of 1922, though the existence of a Klan-favored slate of candidates was not known until much later. Among the winners,

62. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1925. Attendance at church services by Klansmen was still holding up. A large delegation of Klansmen and women attended a revival at Central School in Kenmore in full regalia. They heard Rev. Robert Lewis speak on "A Full Blooded Man or a Mutt?"

there were non-Klansmen as well as members who preferred to keep their membership truly secret for political and personal reasons. Among the latter was incumbent Mayor-elect D. C. Rybolt whose membership was not public knowledge until 1928, after he had moved to Ashland, Ohio.⁶³ County Sheriff-elect Chris Weaver was widely known to have the backing of the local Klan, yet no apparent stir was made over whether he was indeed a member.⁶⁴ This began an era of political control so tight that one citizen remembers the city and county government as having a couple of Catholics around the place just for contrast.⁶⁵

As the fall of 1924 approached, the Akron Klan turned its attention to the state gubernatorial elections. Joseph B. Sieber, an Akron attorney and Klansman, announced his intention of running in the Republican primary for Governor, opposing former Governor Harry L. Davis for the G. O. P. nomination. In May, 1922, Governor Davis had closed the Akron Armory to the Klan when attempts were being made to organize the Akron chapter. The Klan thus had a score to even and set about working for Davis' defeat; it had a considerable disadvantage to overcome in the candidate it had selected to back. Joseph B. Sieber was almost totally unknown outside of Akron and

63. D. C. Rybolt was former Principal of Akron High School, which became Central High when South High was opened in 1911. Rybolt had strong private reservations about the Klan but as he had been picked up by the local Republican organization, which wanted to make him Mayor, he went along with Klan sentiment. His administration was a good one and the Beacon Journal, a strongly anti-Klan newspaper, endorsed him all three times he ran for Mayor. Rybolt's endorsement was one of the few exceptions C. L. Knight (the Beacon Journal's owner), made in his fight against the Klan. Chris Weaver, at least once, was also.

64. Possibly because the defeated candidate found it inexpedient to complain. With the huge membership in Akron, the problem of two or more candidates from within the Klan for a single office resulted in internal conflict and a refusal of the Klan to endorse a candidate for that particular position. Not long after assuming office Sheriff-elect Weaver deputized about 250 Klansmen as auxiliary police with full authority to arrest anyone for any offense. Also see the Akron-Press, November 1, 1924.

65. From an interview with Mr. Ray Sutliff.

was chiefly known there for the two American flags he always had draped over the hood of his automobile. Invited to speak before the League of Woman Voters on July 21st, he said he'd "apply common sense business practices to the administration of the state government", and make Ohio "dry in fact as well as in name", if elected Governor. He also declared that he was "opposed to elaborate and costly prisons".⁶⁶

On August 7th, the state headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan wrote a letter to every chapter in Ohio naming Sieber as a Klansman and asserting the Klan's indebtedness to him for "many splendid services".⁶⁷ However, the letter disclaimed coercion and specifically released members from any binding endorsement. Sieber therefore received no definite endorsement but was commonly known as the Klan candidate and the supposed beneficiary of a word-of-mouth campaign to be carried on among the Klan membership of the State.⁶⁸ As the primary approached, Sieber's Klan support took the form of telephone calls to "every county urging vigorous organization work in his behalf."⁶⁹

For an unknown, Sieber did surprisingly well in the primary; he finished second, beaten only by Harry Davis, the former Governor.⁷⁰ However, to finish second was to lose and Sieber announced he would run for Governor as an independent. Clyde Osborne, Ohio's Grand Dragon, termed him "Ubiquitous Joe" and turned his efforts to the defeat of Davis, an outspoken critic of the Klan.⁷¹

Between the primary and the fall elections Joseph B. Hanan was named

66. Akron Beacon Journal, August 1, 1924.

67. Ibid., August 11, 1924.

68. Ibid., August 14, 1924 and Akron Press, August 11, 1924.

69. Akron Beacon Journal, August 12, 1924.

70. The margin of defeat was fairly substantial, however: 74,000 votes.

71. Akron Beacon Journal, April 21, 1925. It meant backing the Democratic incumbent Vic Donahey but at least the Klan had the satisfaction of seeing Davis defeated in the fall elections.

to succeed municipal Judge E. E. Zesiger as Klan No. 27's new Exalted Cyclops. Hanan's success in getting compulsory Bible reading for Akron's public schools⁷² seems to have been instrumental in his elevation to the headship of Klan No. 27. He seems to have been a thoughtful man, enjoying a high degree of community respect. It is fair to say that with his accession to the leadership of the Klan in Akron, that organization achieved the highest level of respect and acceptability it was ever destined to have. Even the Beacon Journal relented and began to report endorsements of the local chapter's Executive Board of Directors concerning such issues as the street-car franchise and the issuing of bonds to cover the operation of buses.⁷³ Hanan brought order and a high level of efficiency to the Klan's business. He saw to it that the organization properly reviewed and published its recommendations on issues before the public's attention. When he stepped down the following year the Klan could not find a replacement with anywhere near his qualities. A decline set in which continued until scandal finished the destruction of the organization in 1928.

In 1924 the Klan's continued success seemed certain. Hanan was inducted as the Akron Klan's Exalted Cyclops on the night of October 14. The importance of the occasion was indicated by the presence of several state Klan officials including Grand Dragon Osborne, who urged cooperation with the local organization's new leader.⁷⁴ Osborne went on to talk in some detail about work the organization had to do; he was followed by

72. See Chapter IV.

73. Akron Beacon Journal, April 21, 1925. The Klan endorsement was seen as substantially improving the chances of the proposed streetcar franchise to Northern Ohio Traction and Light Company. Also see the Akron Press, October 25, 1924.

74. Akron Beacon Journal, October 15, 1924. The meeting was conducted at the open air meeting grounds on South Main Street Extension near the Portage Lakes.

Judge Zesiger who once more urged loyalty and cooperation with the new Cyclops. It also became known that night that the local Klan chapter was considering the purchase of a site in Akron for its permanent headquarters.

Losing no time, the Akron Klan's new leader immediately involved his organization in a local political issue. Two weeks from election day Hanan announced the Klan would endorse the \$3.5 million sewer bond issue.⁷⁵ A week later, under Hanan's prodding, the Klan's executive board endorsed the Northern Ohio Traction and Light Company's proposal to operate the city's street cars through a franchising agreement. Just three days before the fall balloting the Klan endorsed a proposal for nonpartisan balloting in future elections.⁷⁶

The Klan's leaders refused to take a position on a hotly contested 3-mill tax levy, a proposal to buy \$3 million worth of motor buses and the bond issue for new schools. The last mentioned issue was not considered because Hanan was on the Board of Education and the Klan's Exalted Cyclops at the same time, thus publicly demonstrating the Klan's sense of propriety.⁷⁷

The Akron Klan restricted its endorsements to issues and not individuals for an important reason. The Klan's behind-the-scenes control of political life in Akron was so pervasive that anyone with political aspirations found it expedient to join. The results were two-fold. First, since they were unable to join, Catholic, Negro and Jewish elements were effectively shut out of serious political contention for all but a few

75. Hanan also announced the Klan's opposition to the local showing of Dixon's "The Clansman". Ibid., October 25, 1924.

76. Ibid., November 1, 1924.

77. Ibid., November 1, 1924.

seats on City Council.⁷⁸ Second, since nearly all the major offices were held by Klansmen, candidates for such important offices as Mayor, County Prosecutor, County Sheriff, etc., found themselves opposed by fellow Klansmen. This would have made endorsement divisive within the Klan or, equally bad, restricted endorsement to those contests between members and non members, a virtual expose of Klan membership. Instead, members were given "inside"⁷⁹ information on non-member candidates and then left to vote as conscience dictated. There was not much else to do.⁸⁰

Membership in the Klan did not prevent an elected candidate from performing well while in office. In spite of the fact that Chris Weaver had been elected Sheriff of Summit County as the Klan-favored candidate, the Beacon Journal, an anti-Klan newspaper, endorsed him for reelection for the "fine service he has rendered".⁸¹ One reason the newspaper

78. The Klan's strength on City Council manifested itself in mid-January with the passage of legislation which banned both public and private dancing on Sunday. The effective date was February 12, 1925; the vote was eight to three. Klan No. 27 gave it enthusiastic support, citing the national KKK's effort to "restore the Sabbath and fight further encroachment of the commercialized Sabbath." Akron Beacon Journal, January 13, 1925. Although not passed, consideration was later given to closing Sunday business down as well, allowing stores selling milk and perishable goods to open from seven to nine a.m. only. Interestingly, councilmen told reporters they had all received letters distributed from the Mayor's office either congratulating them for their vote in favor of the Sunday dancing ban or exhorting them to "see your way clear to vote for this ordinance." Ibid., January 14, 1925.

79. Ibid., November 4, 1924.

80. Hanan admitted that endorsement of incumbent Governor Vic Donahey had been discussed and adopted by state KKK leaders and Clyde Osborne's subsequent denial appears to have been a move to prevent embarrassment of the Governor whom the Klan favored over its old opponent, Harry L. Davis, G. O. P. nominee. Donahey's statement denying overt KKK support is interesting: "I have not solicited and do not solicit the endorsement of any organization but do want the support of all citizens of Ohio who believe in Constitutional government and economy and efficiency in public office." This is not exactly rejection either. Ibid., October 21, 1924. Also see Akron Press, October 21, 1924.

81. Ibid., October 18, 1924.

liked him was for his creation of a unique, county-wide system for control of the "Sunday driver". This involved deputizing an enormous number of men, ostensibly to control traffic. Weaver was able to draw his deputies from a pool of several thousand more-or-less-eager Klansmen and several hundred volunteers were easily found. Traffic control was not their only duty since these men were commissioned special deputies with full power to carry arms and arrest anyone for any offense. Chris Weaver thus had a small army at his disposal for practically any use he wished.⁸²

Though these men were unpaid for the most part, their Klansman's zeal soon led them to participate in impromptu liquor and vice-raids. It was only a question of time before someone succumbed to the temptation to dispose of confiscated liquor in his own way.

When Mayor W. R. Lodge of Silver Lake tracked the evidence he needed to prosecute a liquor case to the home of George Nichols, a former special deputy, he sent an official complaint through the County Prosecutor's office directly to Governor Donahey.⁸³ The Governor immediately ordered an investigation and, since illicit liquor was involved, asked for help from the federal government. The results of the investigation, while quite embarrassing to Weaver, never quite implicated the Sheriff in any wrong-doing though several of his special deputies were arrested.⁸⁴

Donahey ordered him to clean house or face removal.

Weaver's biggest embarrassment was the disappearance of all but 45 out of 175 gallons of confiscated "moonshine". It was also alleged that

82. Akron Press, November 1, 1924 and Akron Beacon Journal March 24, 1925.

83. G. Walter Booth, the County Prosecutor, was quick to oblige Mayor Lodge, as he apparently was looking for ways to embarrass Weaver, a fellow Klansman. This led to the best documentable confrontation between brother Klansmen in Akron politics.

84. Akron Press, February 24, 1925.

he played favorites in enforcing weight limits on trucking concerns; all this, however, paled into insignificance beside charges that the Sheriff's office was controlled by the Ku Klux Klan. Hotly denying the last charge, Weaver proceeded to meet the Governor's demands by dismissing 327 of his special deputies and reforming the procedures of his office. The Governor then relented and withdrew his ultimatum.⁸⁵

Donahey's actions have the appearance of a calculated effort to strip the Summit County Sheriff of his oversized force of deputies. He did not directly accuse the Klan of any wrongdoing but there can be little doubt the episode was embarrassing. Klan No. 27 for its part suspended several of its members who were found to be bootlegging liquor in various parts of the county. Not feeling totally purged, Klan officials threatened suspension for any other member "guilty of the same offense".⁸⁶

It is apparent that Governor "Vic" Donahey did not act as drastically as he could have; he could have removed Weaver for malfeasance in office. This however could have had serious political repercussions for the Governor inasmuch as Chris Weaver was a Klansman in good standing as was nearly every important office holder in Summit County. Prompted by the Governor's angry ultimatum, Weaver put his office in order and Klan No. 27 purged its ranks to show its innocence. U. S. Commissioner Dow Harter later dismissed charges against the former deputies arrested in the county liquor scandal.⁸⁷

85. Ibid., March 7, 1925. The Klan issued a strong denial to the charge of control over Weaver's office. Also see Akron Beacon Journal, March 7, 1925.

86. Akron Beacon Journal, March 23, 1925.

87. Ibid., April 2, 1925. Harter was later identified as a Klansman.

Chris Weaver had much yet to endure. The state officers of the Ku Klux Klan now began a probe of their own into Weaver's affairs. The Beacon Journal reported on April 15th that the State KKK was out "after his scalp". Weaver angrily dared the Klan or anyone else to try to oust him. J. B. Hanan said he had heard nothing about such an effort, yet on April 20th the head of the Klan in Ohio appeared in Akron.⁸⁸ Grand Dragon Osborne met with County Prosecutor Booth and tried to slip away afterward in thin disguise but was seen by reporters. Adroitly turning aside questions concerning the Weaver case, he gave reporters nothing but some testy comments about "Ubiquitous Joe" Sieber and a curious statement that he would not be in Columbus for a week.⁸⁹

The following day Osborne not only was in Columbus, he was again in conference with Booth. Booth, it was learned, also had an appointment to see the Governor.⁹⁰ There was no evident result from this meeting but it is probable that Sheriff Weaver did not benefit from it.

Booth and Weaver had both been elected to office with the backing of the Ku Klux Klan. Neither expressed much love for the other, and, when Weaver seemed discredited over the liquor incident, Booth let it be known that his detective, W. W. Mathis, was favored both by himself and the state KKK to replace Weaver in the event he was removed.⁹¹ Mathis was, for a period of time, the Secret Service Officer for Klan No. 27 as well as a county detective working out of Booth's office.

88. Ibid., April 15, 1925. Unfortunately, there are no available copies of the Akron Times-Press for the month of April, 1925.

89. Ibid., April 21, 1925.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid., April 20, 1925. Booth probably had some influence on Donahey's prompt investigation into the liquor case. Weaver later said he felt Booth was at the bottom of an attempt to discredit him.

In an open attempt to embarrass the Sheriff, Booth wrote a formal letter to Weaver giving his opinion that betting at the Northampton race track was illegal. Then, in a press conference, he said, "betting at the track is clearly illegal and ought to be stopped. The laws give me no police power. It is clearly up to the Sheriff".⁹²

Weaver, who proved surprisingly adept at rebuttal, was not taken in by these machinations. He countered with a statement to the effect that, unless ordered by the Prosecutor to stop the betting, he would ignore the letter. He then retaliated by cancelling Mathis' special Deputy Sheriff's Commission. This commission was a traditional one, dating from past practice, which gave the Prosecutor's agent the power to arrest and to carry arms. The Sheriff explained that Mathis had over-stepped his authority and was making arrests without proper authorization. Mathis was quoted as saying: "I don't know how I could have offended Chris unless it was by bringing Ensminger back from Chicago or by going out the other week and knocking off twenty-one bootleggers. I'm sorry if that offended him".⁹³ However, Weaver's aggressiveness seems to have brought about a reconsideration by Booth and on April 25th, it was announced that Weaver and Booth were patching up their differences. It was said to be a simple misunderstanding. Yet the state Klan continued its investigation into irregularities in

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., April 21, 1925. Mathis had gone to Chicago, arrested and returned to Akron with Harlan H. Ensminger who had been secretly indicted by the Summit County Grand Jury. The secret indictment went to Mathis. He went to Governor Donahey who gave him extradition papers for Ensminger. Mathis next went to Governor Small of Illinois who issued a warrant of extradition. Proceeding on to Chicago, Mathis obtained custody of Ensminger and returned to Akron where Booth met them and interviewed the prisoner. Sheriff Weaver was upset to say the least. He said that the County Sheriff should receive all indictments and that since he had no record of any indictment or arrest he could not be accountable for the prisoner.

Weaver's office.

On April 20th the rumor mill dragged Hanan and the local Klan into the picture. Asked about rumors that the local Klan was planning his removal for allowing the state KKK to get all the credit and publicity in the Weaver case, Hanan allowed that he had heard it too but was not particularly worried because he felt that he and the Grand Dragon were in "perfect accord".⁹⁴ So later it proved to be.

On May 19th Grand Dragon Osborne announced his decision to drop the probe into the Weaver case since Booth and Weaver had patched up their differences and the Sheriff's office was being run properly. Osborne probably did not fail to note that the local Klan was mostly on Weaver's side and wanted no interference. Osborne had candidly stated before that he valued his role in the Klan largely for the political and financial gain it provided. Noting that the report on Weaver was not so pressing as he had at first thought, the Grand Dragon retired from the case to attend to his other concerns.⁹⁵ Not the least of his concerns was the headway being made by a Klan majority on the Akron Board of Education.

94. Ibid., April 21, 1925.

95. Ibid., May 19, 1925. Osborne alleged at the time that he was awaiting the outcome of a "more sweeping" investigation by "other" forces whom his staff inferred were federal agents. See Also Akron Press, May 19, 1925.

CHAPTER IV

THE KLAN IN AKRON SCHOOL POLITICS

The Ku Klux Klan became a powerful influence in Akron in 1923. By 1924 it is said that every block in the city was constantly being watched by at least one Klansman.¹ City and county politics were increasingly under its control, yet there remained the difficult business of purging the community of unwanted moral influences. To get at the roots of the problem the Klan turned its attention to the schools.

One man who was particularly irksome to local Klansmen was C. J. Bowman, Principal of South High School. Through the South Akron Civic Association attempts were made to oust him, but without success. On Tuesday, November 27, 1923, Bowman was conducting a chapel assembly for students at his school when eleven robed and hooded men entered during the enactment of a play, "The First Thanksgiving Dinner". Standing against the wall until the play was finished, the Klansmen then formed ranks and marched to the front of the auditorium. The place became utterly silent; no one said anything to anyone. The hooded figures silently presented a flag and Bible to Bowman and, without saying a word, departed. A note in the Bible advised that it be read in school and that the flag be displayed either in or outside the building.² The Board of Education ordered the gifts returned to the Klan in a unanimous resolution that same Tuesday afternoon. Board President Charles E. Smoyer introduced the resolution himself, saying that he felt no organization could monopolize the flag and Bible. The Board further resolved that thereafter gifts to the

1. Howson, "Klan in Ohio," P. 59.

2. Akron Beacon Journal, November 27, 1923, and Akron Press, November 27, 1923. Bowman was later transferred to Central High as Principal in June, 1924. See Minutes of the Board of Education of the City School District of Akron, Ohio June 10, 1924. Also see Minutes, November 27, 1923. It happened that the Board was meeting that afternoon.

schools would have to be by individuals without masks or regalia. The schools, it developed, were already equipped with flag and Bible.³

On December 21 the High Street School in Barberton was visited by a committee of Klansmen who presented a flag and Bible for the school's use. In a slight miscalculation the committee found itself too late to present the gifts during chapel service as had been planned. No regalia was worn.⁴

There were no further contributions to schools until Klansmen in Barberton acted once again on March 4, 1924. Two men called at Highland School in Barberton to present a flag and Bible in the name of the KKK. They were said to be prominent men of the city.⁵

The fall elections of 1923 resulted in three Klansmen gaining seats on the Akron Board of Education, leaving them one short of a majority. This was not clear at the time, owing to the Klan's secrecy, though the most prominent of them, Joseph B. Hanan, Assistant Office Director at the B. F. Goodrich Rubber Company, was known to be influential in the Klan.⁶

Hanan immediately became the recognized leader of the effort to have Bible reading made compulsory in the city's public schools. The

3. Akron Beacon Journal, December 1, 1923. Not everyone agreed with the Board's action. The following Sunday Rev. John T. Alton, Pastor of Grace M. E. Church, told his congregation the school should have kept the gift.

4. Ibid., December 21, 1923 and Akron Press, December 21, 1923.

5. Akron Beacon Journal, March 4, 1924.

6. The ease with which little-known candidates George Beck, J. A. Cunningham and Joseph B. Hanan were elected to the Board of Education is well illustrated in the Minutes, November 27, 1923, in which the results of the election are summarized. The margin of their win was almost 2-1. This surprise win was over incumbents J. F. Barnhardt and Walter F. Kirn, and aspirant Mrs. Francis G. Hunsicker. Kirn had been serving but six months as he had been appointed to fill an unexpired vacancy on the Board. Mrs. Hunsicker had no definite platform but was well known in the community.

issue had been debated before but its persistent backers had not been members of the Board of Education. After numerous hearings, debates and discussions lasting several months, the Board adopted compulsory Bible reading for the schools on August 1, 1924 with five of the seven Board members voting for it, two against. Interestingly the two negative votes cast were by the two women on the Board, Mrs. A. Ross Read and Mrs. C. W. Garrett.⁷

This success probably had much to do with Hanan being named the following month to replace Municipal Court Judge Ernest E. Zesiger as Klavern No. 27's Exalted Cyclops.⁸ It also led some Klansmen to speak a little more openly, and signed letters lauding the Klan's ideals began to be printed routinely on the Beacon Journal's editorial page.⁹

In late December Board member Harry Huber resigned his seat for what he said were business reasons.¹⁰ A lengthy debate followed concerning a replacement. In retrospect, it is apparent that the Klan

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7. In a letter to the Akron Beacon Journal's Editor printed June 17, 1924 A. A. Crosier, the "Sage of Copley", presented a strong case against adopting compulsory Bible reading, citing Hanan's proposed resolution and excerpts from the State Constitution which he said prohibited it. The resolution called for daily reading of the Bible in public school-rooms for "Character Building". Pupils could leave the room if the reading was objectionable to their own religious beliefs. Many organizations in the city (including the Klan), had sent in petitions favoring the idea. Akron Beacon Journal, August 2, 1924. Hanan's resolution was introduced June 3, 1924. See Minutes, June 3, 1924.
 8. Meetings of the Akron Klan resembled large, but orderly, mobs. This particular meeting was attended by 7,000 members at the South Main Street Extension meeting grounds. Judge Zesiger was accepting a State appointment and found it necessary to step down.
 9. Letters printed in the Akron Beacon Journal on October 14, 1924 are illustrative. One, by Ira J. Horner, 150 Forbes Ave., and another by "KKK" praised J. B. Hanan for his "back-bone" in the school Bible-reading issue.
 10. His resignation may have been forced because Huber was Jewish. This is an allegation made by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois in the "Klan Symposium", North American Review: (March-June 1926), pp. 36-63. Also see Minutes, December 30, 1924.

contingent was bent upon adding a fourth to their number on the Board. This would give the Ku Klux Klan majority control of the Akron Public Schools. When Charles Sweeny's name was proposed, objection was raised on the grounds that he belonged to "an organization" which, though not specifically named, was understood by all to be the Ku Klux Klan.¹¹ However, Sweeny and H. T. Waller, President of the Board, were friends and, through a secret political arrangement that only became known much later, Waller agreed to vote for Sweeny in a special Board meeting January 5, 1925. The Klan now controlled the Board of Education, 4-3, and was so reported in next day's newspaper.¹² Sweeny was well known and respected in Akron; he and his brother were partners in a mortuary.

At the regular meeting on the same day, H. T. Waller was unanimously returned to another term as President of the Board; a post he accepted with apparent reluctance. His acceptance statement contained a plea to fellow members to forget individual differences and work together to "bring out the potential strength of the underprivileged communities".¹³ Considering the turbulence that followed in subsequent meetings considerable irony attaches to that statement.

Since they possessed control of the Board the Klan-oriented members conducted their own secret meetings on how particular issues were to be decided. Afterward, at the official meeting, they would ram their

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11. Akron Press, January 6, 1925. Also see Akron Beacon Journal, January 6, 1925.
 12. Ibid. The Klan forces: J. B. Hanan, George Beck, J. A. Cunningham and Charles Sweeny. The minority: H. T. Waller, Mrs. A. Ross Read and Mrs. C. W. Garrett. Mrs. Garrett was returned as vice-president for another term. Minutes, January 5, 1925. The two ladies' names are the ones by which they apparently preferred to be known by the public. It is most difficult to find them listed otherwise.
 13. Akron Beacon Journal, January 6, 1925.

decision through by majority vote. Klan vs anti-Klan rivalry became apparent at nearly every meeting. There does not appear to have been organized domination emanating from the Klan itself, perhaps owing to the presence of the Exalted Cyclops on the Board, but it is clear that they had a policy which adhered closely to typical Klan attitudes concerning the treatment of such "dangerous" elements of the population as blacks, Catholics, Jews and foreigners.

The regular meeting conducted on March 23, 1925, is instructive in several ways. First, it reveals that the Klansmen had a consensus, probably because they had discussed the issue previously; and secondly it shows that the Klan presence on the Board, while formidable, had not cowed or intimidated other members.

The issue before the Board concerned the financing of new Garfield High School. The Klan forces were solidly for cutting down the size of the new high school to permit the use of the money in other badly needed areas, notably at South High and West High, and the erection of school facilities on Storer Avenue. After a bitter, acrimonious debate punctuated with several personal insults (some of them coming from spectators), the plan favored by the Klansmen was passed, 4-2. Mrs. Garrett had left the meeting in apparent disgust, recognizing her vote was useless. The Board's power was in the hands of the Klan.¹⁴ The Klan's next move was to replace the Superintendent of Schools with a man of their own choosing.

During the early 1920's Akron had a first-rate Superintendent of

14. Ibid., March 24, 1925. Note, however, that the Klansmen no longer opposed the building of the new high school. A burgeoning school population had eliminated any possibility of maintaining just one high school in South Akron. See also Akron Press, March 24, 1925.

Schools in Carroll R. Reed. In the economic slump of 1920-21, Superintendent Reed voluntarily cut his salary by \$1,000 to help alleviate the financial distress the schools were undergoing at the time. By 1925 matters were obviously much better and Reed sought to have the \$1,000 restored to his salary. Law Director Henry Hagelbarger informed the Board that Reed's salary could not be legally increased until his term expired. The Board regretfully informed the Superintendent of this decision, and Reed thereupon announced his resignation to take a similar position with Bridgeport, Connecticut at a substantially increased salary. The whole situation seems to be one of premeditated acts; the question is who was the instigator?¹⁵

Reed was asked to reconsider what he had done, but he refused even to entertain the idea. It is apparent that Reed had thoroughly washed his hands of the whole affair, but it is difficult to imagine a man with his qualities and reputation developing such petulance so suddenly. Indeed, the Beacon Journal later printed statements and letters hinting that Superintendent Carroll Reed had left "by reason of outside influence".¹⁶

Superintendent Reed's resignation led to much speculation about a successor. With the well-known fact that the Klan possessed majority voting power on the Board of Education, much of the speculation centered

15. What little evidence there is would seem to implicate the Klan. With Klan control of the Board of Education, a Superintendent could be found to reflect the Klan credo in his policies. This in fact did happen when the Klan majority on the Board brought in George E. McCord, to the consternation of the other members of the Board. Reed's resignation was effective immediately and as soon as arrangements could be made, he moved to Connecticut. Akron Beacon Journal, May 29, 1925. Reed's resignation is recorded in the Minutes, May 26, 1925.

16. Akron Beacon Journal, June 9, 1925.

on the possibility that J. B. Hanan might well become the next Superintendent of Schools. Hanan put the matter to rest at an adjourned meeting of the Board on May 28 where he announced he would not be a candidate for the post. He further stated that Assistant Superintendent Frank D. McElroy looked like the best candidate for the job.¹⁷ He went on to say that the Board could take its time as school was almost over for the year.

In light of later circumstance, there is room for speculation as to whether this was a premeditated delaying tactic or if he was really sincere about Frank McElroy. It is a difficult matter to judge but the evidence does not permit accepting Hanan's statement at face value.¹⁸

Future Klan-anti-Klan antagonism on the Board began taking shape with the announcement that Hanan, Beck, Sweeny and Cunningham would interview Frank McElroy on his qualifications, views and policies. Board President Waller, Mrs. Garrett and Mrs. Read were already on record as favoring McElroy for the job. Amid rumors that Klan forces had "influenced" Reed's resignation, Board members unanimously denied knowledge of any such thing, but the actions of the four Klansmen boded ill for the future.¹⁹

Prior to the Board's meeting on Monday, June 1, 1923, Charles Sweeny was quoted as saying, "It looks very much in Mr. McElroy's favor", but neither he nor Hanan would divulge how they would vote. George Beck flatly stated he would not support McElroy in spite of his qualifications and indicated he might introduce other candidates. J. A. Cunningham's vote was in "doubt".²⁰

17. Ibid., May 29, 1925. Also see Akron Press, May 29, 1925.

18. It was just eleven days later that McCord was hired.

19. Akron Beacon Journal, May 29, 1925.

20. Ibid.

Not unexpectedly, the Klan forces were able to prevent any action on the selection of a new Superintendent of Schools. Despite pleading by the other three members of the Board for at least some indication of policy or action to preserve teacher morale, Hanan asserted that matters ought to be delayed until the Board's selection had unanimous support. In a statement that now appears as a delaying tactic he asserted "The new Superintendent should feel that the Board is solidly behind him".²¹ He went on to say that another week would be sufficient for members to weigh the problem carefully.

By Saturday there was still no indication of whom the Board would choose as Carroll Reed's successor. No names other than local people had been mentioned and Frank B. McElroy still seemed the probable choice. Whatever hopes Frank McElroy may have had (and subsequent developments make it possible to infer he had high hopes of becoming Akron's next Superintendent of Schools), must have been destroyed on reading Monday's newspaper. Through his personal friendship with Charles Sweeny, H. T. Waller had learned that the four Klansmen had held a private executive session Sunday and decided that George E. McCord, the deposed Superintendent of Schools in Springfield, Ohio, should succeed Carroll Reed. Waller asked not to be identified, a request honored by the reporters though it must have been obvious to knowledgeable readers who the source was.²² Questioned by reporters, George Beck said he would definitely vote for McCord. He said he had made a trip to Springfield where he had interviewed

21. Akron Press, June 2, 1925. Also see Akron Beacon Journal, June 2, 1925.

22. Akron Beacon Journal, June 8, 1925. George Beck later confirmed this when he told reporters that no more secret meetings would be held such as the one cited above. See Akron Beacon Journal, June 11, 1925.

McCord's former associates, friends and enemies. Even his enemies, he asserted, thought well of his work there.

Amid reports that Grand Dragon Clyde Osborne had met with the four Klansmen-Board members Saturday night, Akron was rife with rumors about the organization's role in McCord's selection. J. B. Hanan attempted to put them straight. He denied Clyde Osborne had been to Akron Saturday night and said he did not know if Osborne was interested in McCord's candidacy. He did say that McCord was in town, a candidate, and calling on Board members individually.²³ All this preceded the regular, Monday evening, Board meeting.

In a heated, bitter and dramatic confrontation between the Ku Klux Klan majority of four and the so-called "Old Regime" minority of three, Frank D. McElroy was proposed as the new Superintendent of Schools for Akron. The vote rejecting him was 4-3.²⁴ Beck then formally nominated George E. McCord for the Superintendency, saying that he personally had investigated his qualifications:

I went to Springfield and interviewed dozens of people. I talked to lawyers, doctors, teachers, bankers, many others in high positions whose judgement could be relied upon..Even his enemies were hearty in saying he had done wonders for the schools of Springfield.²⁵

He then moved that McCord be tendered a three-year contract.

In an atmosphere charged with hostility Mrs. A. Ross Read requested a chance for the minority members to investigate the nominee's

23. Ibid., June 8, 1925. Osborne denied this aspect also. See Akron Times-Press, June 10, 1925.

24. McElroy subsequently informed reporters he would quit the system also, but would serve out his contract which expired September 1, 1925. Ibid., June 9, 1925.

25. Ibid., The Times-Press also used much of its front page on this story, but seems not to have done as good a reporting job as the Beacon Journal.

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credentials for themselves, saying "I refuse to accept Mr. Beck's judgment rather than my own."²⁶ J. B. Hanan thereupon took up the argument in McCord's behalf only to be interrupted by Gus Kasch who asked if McCord were a Klansman.

"So far as I am concerned," Hanan replied "it makes no difference to me if the Superintendent is a Klansman or not."

"He has the endorsement of Clyde Osborne, doesn't he?" asked Mrs. Garrett.

"That makes no difference either," Hanan replied. "I defy Clyde Osborne or anyone else to put pressure on me."

Gus Kasch leaped to his feet to make a second plea for the people of Akron to have a chance to express themselves before McCord's appointment was voted upon. "Joe", he said earnestly, addressing Hanan,

I have known you a long time and respect you. I tell you now as a friend who has regard for your sincerity, that you are making a big mistake....I tell you that if the people of Akron have a chance to express themselves you will be surprised at what happens.

"I would take your advice, Gus," Hanan replied, equally in earnest, "except that I have figures that prove my case. I know what the majority wants." Kasch hesitated a moment in evident surprise then put another question to Hanan. "Do you mean the majority in Akron are Klansmen?" "I certainly do" was Hanan's reply.²⁷ Speechless, Kasch sat down. Voting followed. McCord's appointment was confirmed, 4-3, to no one's surprise.

H. T. Waller then addressed the Board from the chair deploring the recent turn of events. He said that he would not have voted for Sweeny

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid. Italics are the author's. The Press gives a slightly differing account of Hanan and Kasch's exchange.

if he could have foreseen the developments which followed:

My friends said at the time that I had decided unwisely. God knows after what has happened the last 24 hours I believe I didCertain things were immediately reversed. I have no quarrel with ideas or purposes of the new majority group that then came into being. I do have a quarrel with secret sessions. I resent that we who have given years of service are dictated to, that we be given printed sheets prepared in secret sessions, with recommendations on how to vote.²⁸ Some of us have been members of minorities on the School Board before. But the majority never closed its doors on the minority then. Since the change we have never been given an opportunity to have a voice in the discussion of the important issues....I was under the impression there was a majority who would vote for McElroy because he was closest to Mr. Reed.... If he were not the man to be elected then it seemed right to give an opportunity to the Board to look about....picking the best man who could be found anywhere....And now we come up against another secret session which determines that without seeing the man or knowing anything about him, we....must vote for him at this meeting or be ridden over by the majority. It merely means we must tender our resignations. If we are not fit to sit with you we should give our places to those who are....²⁹

Mrs. Garrett thereupon read her resignation into the minutes, followed by similar statements from Mrs. Read and President Waller. The resignations of the minority members came as a complete surprise to the Klansmen who stumbled through the motions of official acceptance.³⁰ Following the meeting Hanan made Waller a present of the gavel he had wielded for several years as Board President.

George E. McCord was in attendance at the meeting and quickly became a focal point for reporters. Questioned about his attitude toward Catholic teachers and current school policies he said, "I do not have any changes in mind." Asked if he was a Klansman he replied, "There are organizations which do not permit members to acknowledge membership. I believe you know what I have in mind."³¹ He left immediately for Columbus

28. Author's italics.

29. Akron Beacon Journal, June 9, 1925.

30. Minutes, June 8, 1925.

31. Akron Beacon Journal, June 9, 1925.

to attend his daughter's graduation from high school.

McCord had had a stormy career in Springfield where he seems to have been grimly determined to build a junior high school system and, through it, effectively isolate the city's blacks into one school. He succeeded in getting a one-million-dollar levy passed and with this revenue built four new junior high schools, staffing one of them (Fulton Junior High), largely with a black faculty.³² When he asked for \$600,000 more from a Board of Education which he largely controlled, a reaction began which ultimately led to his resignation.

Seeking yet more money for yet more construction, George McCord had to go to the voters, a move which ended in defeat at the polls. He thereupon utilized a little-known clause in State law which permitted his Board of Education to issue bonds for two mills anyway. Disregarding an enraged public he began the erection of yet another new school building. His days as Superintendent were nearly over however. In February, 1923 came the raid on Klan headquarters in Springfield and it was revealed he was a member. In November the voters elected a Board of Education predominantly hostile to him. Realizing he had lost control and that the "writing was on the wall", he resigned and moved to Columbus. He was there when opportunity beckoned in Akron.³³

In Akron, community reaction to McCord's appointment was almost universally negative. The method for selecting McCord for the Superintendency was denounced by President J. G. Robertson of the Chamber of Commerce the next day (June 9), who called it a threat to political stability and alleged that Superintendent Reed left "by reason of outside influence

32. Ibid. This became an issue which split Springfield into Klan and anti-Klan factions.

33. Ibid.

completely dominating".³⁴ He was followed by H. P. Cahill for the Exchange Club, Wendell Willkie, President of the Summit County Bar Association, Mrs. R. L. Kanaga, President of the Home and School League and Harry Levering, President of the Optimists Club, all of whom condemned the Klan-dominated Board's action.³⁵ The Beacon Journal's Editor deplored the fact that control of the city's schools had fallen into the hands of sectarian politicians but concluded that "as we make our bed so must we lie upon it, at least until we wake up and get up."³⁶

On June 13 the Rotarians deplored the recent action of the Klan majority on the Board of Education as politically motivated, and, June 22, underscored its stand by repeating its earlier statement.³⁷ The Chamber of Commerce went on record as backing its president's earlier stand June 24.³⁸ Clyde Osborne officially denied the state Ku Klux Klan had any connection with the hiring of McCord: "It was purely a local proposition, and the state Klan organization had nothing to do with it."³⁹

Not that there was no support for the Klansmen too! The Atlas Club, composed of Chiropractors, approved a resolution supporting the majority on the Board for naming McCord and extending support for McCord himself, saying that the community ought to extend the courtesy of fair play and let him prove or disprove himself "by what he does". A letter from Commodore Perry Council 209 and a resolution signed by "a number of taxpayers" commended the Board on its recent action.⁴⁰ The "Letters to the

34. Akron Times-Press, June 9, 1925.

35. Ibid., Many of these people, especially Willkie, were already engaged in organizing the opposition.

36. Akron Beacon Journal, June 10, 1925.

37. Ibid., June 23, 1925.

38. Akron Times-Press, June 24, 1925.

39. Akron Beacon Journal, June 10, 1925.

40. Ibid., July 13, 1925. Also see Minutes, June 15, 1925.

Editor" included a good deal of favorable comment, but in the column on Saturday, June 20, 1925, beside an eloquent letter signed "Amused", concerning the unfortunate nature of events in the city involving the School Board and the Klan, was a letter signed "Crosby Street", which somewhat less eloquently supports the action of the Klan and concludes with this bit of Americana:

I would like to see the school board place a statue of liberty on top of every school building ...and place in her upraised hand the fiery cross, drape her form with a sheet and cover her face with a hood. By so doing we will have our schools 100 per cent.

The resignations of the three opposing Board members presented the Klan majority with some difficult decisions. There being no President of the Board, J. B. Hanan was unanimously chosen temporary chairman for each meeting and became the focus for questioning reporters. In answer to these questions, he said that selection of new Board members to serve out the terms of the resigned members would not necessarily be from the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan. He had nothing to say about replacing Frank D. McElroy as Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Questioned about the hiring of new teachers he said the new Board would no more heed religion than the previous Board had. Furthermore, as far as present employees were concerned, "The only ones who have anything to be afraid of are those who are loafing on the job."⁴¹

By June 16, the four Klansmen were still by themselves on the Board

41. Ibid., June 10, 1925. J. B. Hanan later said he could see no reason not to hire Catholics as long as they taught school and not religion. He said no one has any business teaching religion in the public schools. "The matter of religion should not enter into the employment of teachers". See Akron Beacon Journal, July 6, 1925. However, an Akron teacher had written in the New Republic, January 9, 1924 that he had been warned by his school principal that a committee of Klansmen had objected to statements made in the classroom and had sought his dismissal. Also see Friedman, "The Matter", P. 166.

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of Education, apparently unable to select replacements for those who had resigned. In apparent response to their dilemma, the Board petitioned for help from the very people who had been critical of them; the city's civic organizations. The response was a renewal of the criticism. On June 23 the Rotary again condemned McCord's hiring as political, and on June 24, the Chamber of Commerce followed suit.⁴²

Adding to the Board's embarrassment, the new Superintendent indulged in the ancient practice of nepotism late in June when, at his request, his son, James E. McCord Jr., was hired for summer work as a tracer in the school architect's office. A trifling matter perhaps, but illustrative of McCord's disregard of public opinion.⁴³

Finally, on June 29, two of the three vacancies were filled and formally announced at the Board's regular meeting. They were Mrs. Hazel D. Osborn, wife of an Akron physician, and Charles Stahl, an attorney. Both afterward denied they were members of the Klan. At the same meeting McCord's acceptance was read into the minutes as well as letters from the Rotary and the Arlington Street Baptist Church. The two letters are interesting for the contrast they provide. The one from the Rotary was signed by C. W. Seiberling, President, refusing to suggest candidates for the Board vacancies, "because of the events that have taken place".⁴⁴ The other letter, from the Arlington Street Baptist Church, condemned the three resigning Board Members for acts to "stir up trouble". It went on to pledge support for the Board.⁴⁵

On July 4 the Akron Ku Klux Klan hosted a spectacular State Konclave

42. Ibid., June 23, 1925; June 24, 1925.

43. Minutes, June 29, 1925.

44. Akron Times-Press, June 30, 1925, and Akron Beacon Journal, June 30, 1925. Also see Minutes, June 29, 1925.

45. Ibid.

featuring a giant parade led by Clyde Osborne, Ohio Grand Dragon. Adapting his remarks to fit the local situation Osborne spoke on the need to "have 100 percent American teachers to instruct the 100 percent Americans of tomorrow."⁴⁶ He went on to say that the Klan had been able to place seven school Superintendents in Ohio in the preceding year but made no direct reference to whom he meant.

At the Board meeting on Monday, July 6, J. Grant Hyde, prominent Akron businessman and member of the University of Akron's Board of Trustees, was named to fill the remaining vacancy on the Board of Education. At the same meeting J. B. Hanan was voted in as the new President of the Board. He immediately named new chairmen to the Board's various committees.

The new Board found itself confronted with the formidable task of conducting business-as-usual with the inevitable lack of funds for what it wanted to accomplish. However, the four Klansmen found it easy to obtain approval of whatever they wanted from the three new members of the Board. They soon found it expedient to ask the voters for additional revenue. In a better political climate it might have been forthcoming, needing only a few well-timed appeals from well-known people. Now, however, in spite of Board members going out of their way to say there would be no more secret meetings, the whole situation had an air of intrigue.

Their situation was made yet more difficult by the three former Board members who did not merely retire and lick their wounds. These three able people immediately began work building a new organization for the sole purpose of removing the Klan's control over the Board of Education. Elections would be in November and the law required voter approval

⁴⁶. Akron Times-Press, July 5, 1925. Also see Akron Beacon Journal, July 6, 1925.

of all members of the Board. Four seats could thus be in contention because the three new members were serving out terms that expired at the end of the year. The fourth seat was Sweeny's who held it under the same conditions.

With Charles Sweeny's announcement early in August that he was resigning, Mrs. Ruby Kahler was named his replacement and said she would run in the fall election.⁴⁷ The opposition immediately surfaced, announcing that a "Committee of 100" citizens had been formed "for removal of all political and fraternal groups or blocs in control of education work of the Akron Public Schools." The new organization would be called "The Non-Political Public School League", and intended to field four candidates for the Board, possibly from its own number.⁴⁸

On August 22 the Chairman of the Nominating Committee for the Non-Political Public School League, Wendell L. Willkie, announced a field of four candidates for election to the Board of Education. These candidates, the best the League could find, were Robert Guinther, attorney, Wade De Woody, also an attorney, Walter F. Kirn, a businessman and L. Roy Reifsnider, a realtor. Officers of the League were quoted as saying,

"This is not an anti-Klan organization; we are not out to get anyone but are fighting for a principle. We are determined only to free the School Board from the domination of any organization bloc or party....The four candidates... have not been asked to commit themselves."⁴⁹

47. Akron Beacon Journal, August 5, 1925. He cited expansion of his business as the reason he would seek no further political offices. However, he attended meetings of the Board until the end of the year, and Mrs. Kahler had to run without experience to cite. Sweeny's presence at Board meetings is confirmed in the Minutes.

48. Ibid., August 8, 1925 and August 3, 1925. Also see Akron Times-Press, August 8, 1925, which lists the names of the "Committee of 100".

49. Ibid., August 22, 1925. Also see Akron Times-Press, August 22, 1925.

Each of the incumbents except Sweeny announced his intent to remain in office, signalling a hot fight for the four contested seats on the Board.

While political lines were forming, the new superintendent was building his administrative staff. McCord showed he could choose good subordinates; Ralph C. Waterhouse was named to succeed Frank McElroy when the latter's contract expired on September 1, and Ralph H. Erwin would then take Waterhouse's old position as head of vocational training.⁵⁰ But it was about the last thing McCord did which was not later cited as conspiratorial, diabolical, inept or unreasonable. Political sagacity does not appear to have been among George McCord's best talents. First, there was the hiring of his son as mentioned before. Then there was the Lechner affair.

On September 8, 1925 on George Beck's recommendation, the Board of Education unanimously agreed to hire C. D. Werstler as Assistant Superintendent of Maintenance, a position not previously existing. Werstler was Treasurer of the South Main Street Methodist Church and a candidate for City Council as well. At the same time Superintendent of Schools McCord announced the resignation of Ross Lechner, who had been Superintendent of Maintenance for the Akron Public Schools for 18 years. McCord said as far as he knew, Lechner was moving to Florida. Both Lechner and his wife denied this, saying their trip to Florida was only a vacation. Asked if Klan influence may have figured in his "resignation", Lechner said, "I've decided that the best thing I can do is to keep my mouth closed about the whole matter. Later I might have something to say."⁵¹ Members of the School Board vehemently denied any outside influence in their decision to

50. Ibid., July 17, 1925.

51. Ibid., September 2, 1925. See also Minutes, September 8, 1925. Lechner's secretary also resigned.

hire an Assistant Superintendent of Maintenance and proceeded to accept Lechner's resignation.

The following Monday the city civil service commission entered the Lechner affair, saying it would not certify the payroll for the month of September because "the appointment is contrary to law". The commission contended that a competitive examination should have been held to fill the position created for Werstler, and that "practically every school building custodian in the city would have filed". On being asked if applications were being taken, the reply was, "We can't do anything until we have been notified by the Board that there is a vacancy to fill. All that we have heard....of this position... has been from the newspaper."⁵²

The next day McCord issued a statement to the Board of Education in which he denied that Lechner was ignorant of the creation of the new position and, further, had been requested to name his new subordinate. This Lechner declined to do, according to McCord. Moreover, the Superintendent felt that department heads and their immediate subordinates were exempt from competitive examinations.⁵³

The Lechner affair subsided after that, out of sight but not out of mind, for it, along with other things, was used as ammunition in the campaign by the Non-Political Public School League to oust the Klan from control of Akron's Board of Education.

The pro-McCord forces on the Board opened the campaign over control of the schools, appearing with the Superintendent himself before the

52. Ibid., September 8, 1925. The Civil Service Laws of Ohio was the law the commission had reference to. A clause was found which allowed Werstler to serve temporarily. He was subsequently appointed to Lechner's vacant post. See Akron Times-Press, September 9, 1925.

53. Ibid., September 9, 1925.

Margaret Park Civic Association on Saturday, September 14. This association had already been castigated by the Non-Political League in political advertisements in the newspapers as "used" by Klan forces.⁵⁴

One week later McCord and several Board members came to speak again before the Margaret Park Civic Association. That night they received their first intimation that victory in the November election was a long, hard fight away. Nothing happened until the speeches were done. Then several members rose to their feet and called for a repudiation of the Association's endorsement of the incumbent candidates, charging that it had been made "for and in behalf of the Ku Klux Klan".⁵⁵

Finding even this supposedly friendly territory somewhat hostile, McCord and the incumbent Board members retired from the public eye for a while, awaiting a show in force from the opposition. Meanwhile, both sides produced and distributed campaign literature in moderate amounts, seemingly waiting for a move by the other side.

The Non-Political League took steps to get its own members in the right mood. On Friday, October 3, Walter Wanamaker, a prominent Akron attorney, bitterly attacked the three new Board members in a speech before the League's members. He termed them a "yes-yes" chorus, "in cahoots" with the other Board members, or just thoroughly incompetent; he also included George McCord in his slashing attack. Wanamaker asserted that Stahl, Hyde and Mrs. Osborn had assented to some very heavy expenditures

54. Ibid., September 14, 1925. The apparent contradiction in terms stem from the League's announced purpose of restoring control of the city's schools to the people. It was, of course, a political organization. The shorter name, now used here, is the one commonly used by all, even its opponents, after the organization became widely known.

55. Akron Times-Press, September 19, 1925. Also see Akron Beacon Journal, September 19, 1925.

of money within minutes of first being sworn in.

On the same program with Wanamaker was a short but bitter speech by Charles Trommer who had been recently dismissed from his job as Purchasing Agent for Akron Schools. Trommer was allegedly let go for the sake of economy and his duties assumed by McCord and Ralph Waterhouse. Trommer charged that McCord had done it to use the purse for political gain, just as he had previously done in Springfield.⁵⁶

Just three weeks before the November elections the Non-Political League's field of candidates entered the fight with Wade DeWoody's denouncement of McCord's partisan backing of candidates as unseemly behavior for a Superintendent of Schools. He said that referring to McCord as "Dr." McCord was hardly legitimate since the Superintendent did not actually possess the Ph.D. He charged McCord with dishonesty in permitting its use. Further, he alleged that though both Mrs. Osborn and Mrs. Kahler were members, the Klan had already given up hope of their election.⁵⁷

The Non-Political League sent speakers out all over the city to back its candidates. On October 20, at Rose Hall, a large audience reputedly composed mainly of Klansmen and women listened without protest to Attorney A. D. Zook's attempt to discredit McCord and the Klan's leadership. Zook pointed out that the rank-and-file Klansmen had repudiated George McCord in Springfield where all Klan-endorsed candidates had won election except those who were affiliated with McCord. These lost by heavy margins. The school board fight in Springfield thus was not a Klan vs anti-Klan fight but a McCord vs anti-McCord fight, and Zook urged the local Klansmen to

56. Akron Times-Press, October 3, 1925. Trommer said he had learned of his discharge "from the garage man".

57. Akron Beacon Journal, October 13, 1925.

think it over.⁵⁸ Walter Wanamaker then stepped up to sow a little dis-
 sension in the ranks of the local Klan. Charging that Clyde W. Osborne
 had set up another dictator in Akron, he said, "in your 100 per cent or-
 ganization your dictator has eliminated the American system of government
 and control of your local organization and your local funds. Every one
 of your local officers was made to get out by his boss and dictator Clyde
 Osborne."⁵⁹ Wanamaker repeated the assertion that McCord was a pseudo
 Doctor, saying that, "People of less pretension than Mr. McCord doing a
 similar thing might be called imposters or hypocrites or bunco men."⁶⁰

Mrs. A. Ross Read next related how Charles Sweeny had gone to then-
 Superintendent Carroll Reed and asked how they could get rid of Catholic
 teachers. Reed replied no such thing would be done. Sweeny told him he
 would have to get rid of them. Mrs. Read went on to accuse Joseph B. Han-
 an as the originator of petitions, circulated all over South Akron, bear-
 ing the title, "We Want a Protestant Superintendent for Our Schools". She
 finished by charging that under Klan control Akron's modern platoon system
 as well as its Catholic teachers were slated to go. Not one voice was
 raised in protest to these words or to the others.⁶¹

George McCord conducted a rather inept campaign until J. B. Hanan
 entered the contest. In one of the most curious Sunday church services
 ever held in Akron, McCord and the four candidates who favored him heard
 themselves warmly praised by Rev. E. M. Lewis, Pastor of South Main Street

58. Ibid., October 21, 1925. This meeting was also well-reported by the
 Akron Times-Press, October 21, 1925.

59. Ibid. The reference was to the wholesale quitting of the local Klan's
 officers, and its affairs being brought under Osborne's designate,
 Dr. W. K. Smith, an "efficiency expert" in the national Klan's em-
 ploy.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid. Platoon teaching makes the best use of teaching specialities
 by circulating students, a room at a time, to each teacher, each day
 in grades five through twelve.

Methodist Church. Lewis shared his sermon with them, declaring he was amazed at efforts to tear down confidence in the public schools. "Superintendent McCord is a Christian gentleman who believes in having the Holy Bible, the only book that teaches us how to live, in the public schools. It is there and we want to keep it there."⁶²

The entry of Joseph B. Hanan as an active participant in the campaign marks the point at which the contest became a bitter duel characterized by sharp exchanges of charges and countercharges. Campaign literature sent out by the Non-Political League at this point bore a large black-lettered caption: "LIBERATE AKRON SCHOOLS FROM CONTROL OF THE KU KLUX KLAN."

On Monday, October 26, again at Rose Hall, Charles Smoyer, an attorney and a former president of the Board of Education, charged that McCord had dismissed all Catholic teachers in Springfield. Smoyer's speech was short, however, for he wanted the League's Secretary, H. B. Yarnell, to read a letter from Walter B. Evans, leader of the anti-McCord forces in Springfield. Yarnell read the letter verbatim. Among other things Evans termed McCord a grafter, a liar and "essentially a coward". He charged McCord with

the complete domination of our schools until he had many principals and teachers acting as political agents, using the dirtiest sort of ward heeler tactics. His political 'board of strategy' was composed of made principals under his complete domination due to advancement in position with which he had awarded their support. This board under his direction, spread the most vicious sort of falsehood broadcast to discredit his enemies. No one was immune from attack if, by so doing, McCord could gain an advantage....Our schools under McCord were honeycombed by a system of spies which made life a burden for our entire corps of teachers.

62. Ibid., October 26, 1925. Each of the candidates also spoke briefly in his own behalf. When Rev. Lewis first began making speeches for the Klan someone called him "Everlasting Meddling", referring to his initials, and the name stuck. From an interview with Ray C. Sutliff.

I haven't touched on the financial side of our McCord experience but it was unpleasant. McCord wanted to do all the buying, for what purpose, of course, I am unable to state."⁶³

Meanwhile, in South Akron, the opposition had put an organization together called the Citizens School League whose sole aim was to elect the McCord-favored candidates. This organization was chaired by Fred M. Weber; M. C. Heminger was its secretary, and it had a platform of seven planks:

1. Economy without stint.
2. Cooperation between the Akron schools and the University of Akron.
3. A comprehensive building program.
4. Peace and harmony among all connected with the Akron schools.
5. Broader vocational training.
6. Give mothers a part in the direction of the schools.
7. Whatever is best for Akron's 34,000 school children.⁶⁴

Weber and Heminger totally ignored their opponents and concentrated solely on accentuating the positive. They stressed "a continuation of the present business and educational policy of the board of education", and asserted that their candidates were "wholly free from any political influence and will represent all the people, with justice to all and malice toward none".⁶⁵

Directly participating for the first time on August 16, J. B. Hanan addressed a meeting at Harris School where he defended the selection of McCord and heaped scorn upon the former minority on the School Board. Saying that McElroy wasn't "a big enough man for the job", he charged that the former Board minority had demanded approval of McElroy in a secret executive meeting. They "wanted their candidate or nobody. In McCord we found the man we were seeking."⁶⁶

63. Ibid., October 27, 1925. See also Akron Times-Press, October 27, 1925.

64. Ibid., October 27, 1925.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., August 17, 1925.

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With Hanan was George Beck who characterized H. T. Waller as a "disgruntled boy".⁶⁷ He also said that Carroll Reed had gone to Bridgeport, Connecticut because he, George Beck, refused to meet the Superintendent's "impossible" demands for a 5-year contract, a \$1,000 salary increase, and a unanimous promise from Board members for "a free hand in school control".⁶⁸

Hanan spoke again on October 27, claiming that a small group of contractors within the Chamber of Commerce was behind that body's antagonism toward the Board. "Superintendent McCord was regularly elected at a regular meeting", Hanan said, and went on to explain that Grand Dragon Osborne had nothing to do with McCord's selection but that Vernon M. Riegel had tried to influence the choice in McElroy's favor.⁶⁹ He spoke to an enthusiastic audience and was applauded several times during his remarks.

It was a different kind of audience that greeted speakers at the Non-Political League's final rally on October 29, at Rose Hall. There the Klan displayed the disruptive side of its character as cat-calls and heckling nearly succeeded in breaking up the meeting. Rev. Lloyd C. Douglas, Pastor of the First Congregational Church and arch-foe of the Klan, was speaking of his concern for the community: "The City of Akron is sick. It is full of personal prejudices, hatred and narrowness. Akron is the biggest little town in the country."⁷⁰ These and other remarks

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., October 28, 1925. The Non-Political Public School League later read reporters a letter from Riegel explaining that C. B. Ulery, Chief Supervisor of High School Education in Ohio, had written Hanan to remind him of McElroy's high qualifications for the office of Superintendent, but it was done as a personal matter and was not official. See Ibid., October 30, 1925. Also Akron Times-Press, October 27, 1925.

70. Ibid., October 30, 1925.

were interrupted with jeers, yells, whistles, boos and shouts of, "Aw you make me sick!" and "Why don't you get out of town!" and "Go on back to Michigan!"⁷¹

The next speaker, E. L. Brouse, attorney, also received a healthy share of abuse at the hands of the hostile audience. Brouse charged that taxpayer's money, city cars and employees were used to distribute 36,000 copies of the School Herald, allegedly campaign literature, to the city's school children. This provoked shouts of "That's a lie!" and "Prove that statement!"⁷²

The audience listened much more respectfully as Rev. Dr. George C. Baner disclaimed any scheme on the part of the Chamber of Commerce to oust George McCord. Mrs. C. W. Garrett was also allowed to speak her piece in silence. She explained how McCord had interviewed with her: A man named McCord phoned and asked for an appointment without saying what for. When he came for the appointment he said he wanted to be Superintendent of Schools and offered to show Mrs. Garrett a photograph of his family. Mrs. Garrett said she wasn't interested in his family and that the position was filled owing to her conviction that Frank McElroy was going to get a one-year trial contract. Later that same day she heard of McCord's selection by the four majority members of the Board.⁷³ She added that Hanan was a liar.⁷⁴

71. Ibid. Rev. Douglas also received jeers for "Every family in the United States were immigrants at one time, and these families of foreigners against whom there is so much bitterness will be just as good citizens and Americans in the few generations as anyone here." Rev. Douglas was not exactly famous for ingratiating remarks: he had referred to Akron as a "hick town" on a previous occasion. Also see Akron Times-Press, October 30, 1925.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Akron Times-Press, October 30, 1925.

Rev. Charles T. Hull pointed out the precariousness of ruling through a majority of one and went on to relate how a church in Akron had spent four weeks investigating the character of a man before employing him as a janitor. He then contrasted this with the precipitate action of the Board majority in naming McCord as Superintendent.⁷⁵

On the same night that Rev. Douglas and Brouse were taking verbal abuse from hostile forces, the Citizens School League was holding a meeting for its champions in a much friendlier setting. Charles H. Stahl told the audience that over \$1,200 was expended to print 50,000 copies of a four-page newspaper for the Non-Political Public School League, an indication of heavy financial support. Then he challenged the opposition to answer six questions:

1. Is it true that the Committee of 100 has raised a slush fund of \$50,000 to defeat me and my associates for the board of education?
2. Is it true that most of this money has been contributed by dis-appointed contractors and their allies, certain material men?
3. Is it true that part of this slush fund has been raised by the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Akron?
4. Is it true that Ed Helm, campaign manager of the Committee of one hundred, has been promised \$5,000 for his services as such?
5. Is it true that if his four candidates are elected to the board of education he will be appointed purchasing agent for the board of education at a salary of \$10,000 per year?
6. Is it true that you have paid workers in every precinct in the city of Akron to defeat us for the board of education?⁷⁶

Kyle Ross, avowed Klansman, Councilman, and candidate for Mayor of Akron, added to Stahl's remarks about the Non-Political League's campaign literature. Standing and waving a copy of their four-page newspaper at the close of his talk Ross shouted, "Con Mulcahy is the man who financed

75. Akron Beacon Journal, October 30, 1925.

76. Ibid.

this dirty sheet!"⁷⁷

Joseph B. Hanan spoke out at what he considered to be shabby campaign tactics by his opponents. Saying that he sometimes wished he could manage the opposition's campaign for them as he "Could have made a better job of it",⁷⁸ he went on to deplore their having distributed campaign pamphlets in five different languages. He let his Klansman's feeling show when he said, "The opposition is appealing to the people who can't read the English language to win the election for them. I would rather lose the election than win it through influences and votes of that kind."⁷⁹ He finished with an invitation to attend the final rally at the Akron Armory two nights hence.

Stahl may have thought his six questions too hard, too embarrassing or too late to answer before elections could be held. They were, of course, designed for propaganda value, but Stahl found himself bested by the opposition's reply. The morning following Ross' charges and Stahl's questions, Ray M. Ellsworth called reporters and answered the questions in the order they had been given:

1. Absolutely not. The total amount raised is \$8,541.50. The money is used to defeat you---not because you are you but because you have tied yourself hand and foot to the Klan.
2. No: no individual has contributed any amount larger than \$100.00
3. No: no organization or corporation has contributed one cent to

77. Ibid., Con (Cornelius) Mulcahy was Irish Catholic, a staunch and prominent member of St. Vincent's Church and president of Carmichael Construction Company, the largest building firm in Akron. His firm built a number of schools and large downtown buildings including, in the late 1920's, the First Central Tower Building. Mulcahy was for years the Democratic county chairman and a power in local and state politics. He accompanied Wendell Willkie to the Democratic National Convention in 1924. From a letter from Ray C. Sutliff to the author, July, 1974, and Bernard, Wendell Willkie, p. 65.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

this cause. How much has been paid out of the Klan treasury to print your picture?

4. No: Ed Helm gets only a small part of the figure named by you for his services in conducting the campaign.
5. No: Ed Helm has no idea of being a purchasing agent: our candidates have no idea of selecting him.
6. No: There is not a single paid worker in any precinct in Akron. There are thousands⁸⁰ of people who can't contribute money but are giving time.

In reply to Kyle Ross' charge that Con Mulcahy financed their newspaper, Ellsworth retorted, "Con Mulcahy has not paid for anything done, either by way of advertising, circulars or otherwise, in this campaign."⁸¹

He then proposed eight heavily loaded questions for Stahl to answer:

1. Are the Ku Klux Klan and the Invisible Empire one and the same thing?
2. Will you answer truthfully the question: Are you a citizen of the Invisible Empire?
3. Have you not concurred in and agreed to plans for the removal of school employees to make room for Klan henchmen?
4. Has there been anything in your action or votes or in your campaign which would indicate that you are not in complete agreement, accord and sympathy with the McCord-Klan organization which is supporting you?
5. Do you approve of the expenditure of our taxpayer's money for the publication of "The School Herald" as a campaign document for your candidates, and the expense incident to light and heat in our public schools used night after night for your campaign speeches?
6. Why did you go out to the South Main Street Klan church; talk in your own behalf in a church service; allow its Klansman preacher to pray over you and preach a political sermon about you? Don't you think you are prostituting some church ideals?
7. Why do you accept the services in your behalf of Klansmen Hanan, Beck, Clarke, Smith and Lewis and still attempt to say that you are unobligated to him? (sic)
8. If you are not now a member of the Klan, what date after election is set for your initiation?⁸²

Except for some last-minute newspaper advertisements on the day preceding the elections, this brought the Non-Political League's campaign to a close.

The Citizens School League, on the other hand, wound up its campaign

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

the Saturday before elections with a huge rally at the Akron Armory. Hanan opened the meeting, revealing that H. T. Waller had agreed to vote for Charles Sweeny to take Harry Huber's seat on the School Board on the understanding he would receive Klan support in the fall elections. Waller, Hanan alleged, had originally proposed that Robert Guinther fill Huber's vacant seat. Hanan then referred to Mrs. Garrett's remarks of the previous Thursday in which she had called him a liar:

I judge that the men of the opposition had to get a lady to say that. If any man had said it he would have gotten his face smashed in or I would have. Mrs. Garrett and I just naturally never could agree so we'll let it go at that.⁸³

At that moment the candidates came up an aisle to prolonged applause. Subsequently, as each of them or McCord, Hanan or any other speaker made reference to Bible, flag or the Ku Klux Klan, heavy applause was his reward. George Beck again asserted that Con Mulcahy had financed the newspaper put out by the Non-Political League.⁸⁴ Charles Stahl returned to the Non-Political League's finances, charging that the money collected must be several times the figure given, that "our opposition had spent \$8,000 on postage alone."⁸⁵ He also questioned Ellsworth's statement that Helm was only getting a small part of \$5,000 for his position as publicity man, saying that Helm himself had told him he wasn't doing it "for his health".⁸⁶ However, he did not address himself to Ellsworth's eight questions, saying only that "if the questions I asked them hurt, the ones they asked me didn't."⁸⁷

83. Ibid., October 31, 1925.

84. Beck was an intensely idealistic man and when he later discovered he was wrong, wrote a letter to Mulcahy apologizing for it. Mulcahy received it in time to have it published before the election.

85. Akron Beacon Journal, October 31, 1925.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

Mrs. Hazel Osborn said, "I would not stand outside and throw mud at the woman who had picked up my job and carried on." Referring to Wana-maker as a speaker for hire she said, "I would rather have his mudballs than his roses."⁸⁸ Mrs. Ruby Kahler said that she was not only in favor of the Bible in the public schools but that she would also like to work towards having every child in Sunday School. J. Grant Hyde, as he had during the entire campaign, criticized no one. Simply saying, "If my character doesn't speak for itself there's no use talking about anyone else."⁸⁹

George McCord spoke on the three things which made for a good school system:

1. Such a man as Hanan as head of the Board of Education.
2. Continue the present policy with the Board behind its President.
3. Good teachers.

In addition he said each classroom needed a flag, scripture to begin the day's business, and parents who cooperate. At the conclusion of McCord's speech Mrs. E. M. Annessansley rose to fairly shout, "Do any of you wonder now why the Ku Klux Klan is backing McCord? We don't hesitate to tell that we are backing him."⁹⁰

Even though Kyle Ross, an avowed and outspoken Klansman, was running for Mayor against "Dan" Rybolt, major interest centered on the School Board fight. It was the hottest, hardest fought campaign in the city's history. It was also the most uncertain as to outcome.⁹¹ Veteran observers readily predicted Rybolt's win but would not guess at the outcome of the fight for control of the city's schools. This was the first time the Klan had been

88. Akron Times-Press, October 31, 1925.

89. Ibid.

90. Akron Beacon Journal, October 31, 1925.

91. Ibid., November 3, 1925.

made a major issue, and predictions were made that Akron would shortly
learn the true extent of Klan influence within the City.

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Both sides confidently predicted winning, and both sides, as it turned out, had reason to claim a victory.⁹² The unofficial results gave J. Grant Hyde second place in the balloting and the Citizens School League announced it was well satisfied. However, first, third and fourth went to Walter Kirn, Robert Guinther and L. Roy Reifsnider respectively. The Non-Political League had thus dealt the Klan a hard enough blow to satisfy themselves. At a meeting on November 4th they decided not to ask for a recount if the official returns agreed well with the earlier count.⁹³

Ray C. Ellsworth, as Chairman for the Non-Political League, issued a statement to the effect that his organization did not really consider Hyde a member of the Klan or committed to its policies. Since this was in fact true, J. Grant Hyde became the umpire and pivot-man in every subsequent split between the opposing forces on the School Board, serving as a buffer between them. However, he usually voted with the Klansmen.

Although they had elected a candidate to office, he was not the man the Klan-McCord forces had most wanted. In their failure to elect Charles

92. The Klan-McCord forces had the easier time of it. With any one of its candidates winning, majority control of the Board of Education was assured. To gain control, the Non-Political League had to elect all four of its candidates. The earlier resignation of the three minority Board members over the selection of McCord was frankly acknowledged a "mistake". Ibid., November 4, 1925.

93. Fifth through eighth place went to Wade DeWoody, Charles Stahl, Mrs. Osborn and Mrs. Kahler. Ibid. Also see Minutes, November 16, 1925. No candidate received less than 20,000 votes. Prior to the Klan's entrance in Akron School politics, any candidate with over 13,000 votes usually won. See Minutes, November 27, 1923.

94. This was almost certainly an attempt to mollify and pay court to Hyde as the Non-Political League insisted throughout its campaign that electing only three of its candidates was the same as electing none; that all four must be elected. Also, Hyde was designated one of the yes-yes chorus or perhaps Klan controlled. See Ibid., November 5, 1925.

Stahl, the Klansmen had to overcome a great deal of discouragement. Newspaper reports that the Klan had sustained a pronounced defeat in their greatest strong-hold and didn't seem to be so dominant as once thought did nothing to raise their spirits. On Thursday official returns made it certain that the Klan in Akron had suffered repudiation of its endorsed candidates for the first time. There was talk of a decline in the Klan's influence and power.⁹⁵

The election now behind, both sides heaped praise on J. Grant Hyde in an effort to gain his good will. J. B. Hanan took steps to remove suspicion that the Klansmen might again secretly conspire to have their own way. As soon as official returns were posted he extended a public invitation to the newly elected Board members to attend remaining meetings of the School Board before their swearing-in, promising that they would also be informed of any special meetings.⁹⁶ Then, at the first meeting to which Guinther, Kirn and Reifsnider had been invited, he introduced a matter that seemed designed to recenter attention on the schools. Hindsight now shows it to have possibly been a subtle move designed to break the ground for a rearrangement of the Akron schools to suit Klan desire.

Hanan presented results from a survey the Superintendent was making in all Akron high schools, but completed in only one at the time: in a general test for geographic knowledge, new high school freshmen did very badly; over a third of them could not identify Indiana as the state west of Ohio. Hanan declared this to be an indication of need for a "shakeup" of Akron's schools and promised proposals on this at future meetings.⁹⁷

The "proposals" Hanan had in mind were revealed at the December 14

95. Akron Beacon Journal, November 4, 1925.

96. Ibid., November 6, 1925.

97. Ibid., November 17, 1925.

meeting in executive session as Superintendent McCord proposed that the Board adopt ex-Superintendent Carroll Reed's recommendation to transform the Akron Schools from an 8-4, elementary-high school system to a 6-3-3, elementary-junior high-senior high system. Reed had proposed this idea to relieve overcrowding and allegedly to save money at the same time. McCord employed the same rationale as Reed, and everyone, including the newly elected Board members, seemed to favor it; L. Roy Reifsnider declared it a sound business proposition.⁹⁸ In the spirit of the evening, with everyone straining to be cordial, nothing negative was said. However, Robert Guinther immediately undertook an analysis of the proposed changes which later led him to fight the proposed new system with all his ability. Once the lines were drawn, Reifsnider and Kirn were not slow to side with him against the Klan-McCord forces. In Robert Guinther, the Klansmen acquired a formidable opponent. He quickly became the articulate spokesman for an intelligent, alert minority.

At the first meeting of the new Board in January 1926, the members found themselves so badly divided they could barely organize for business. In the attempt to choose a president it quickly became apparent that the old Klan, anti-Klan division still existed. Robert Guinther nominated J. Grant Hyde as the new Board president. Hyde gracefully declined and nominated Hanan instead. Guinther asked that Hyde's nomination stand. Hanan's election followed with Hanan voting for himself to clinch it. That done, Guinther was the unanimous choice for vice-president.⁹⁹

For a month the Board occupied itself with routine matters with relative peace prevailing among the members. Then, on February 8, McCord

98. Ibid., December 15, 1925.

99. Ibid., January 5, 1926. The Beacon Journal represented this as a confrontation with "drawn swords", which probably reflects the charged atmosphere of the meeting. See also Minutes, January 4, 1926.

went before the Board to outline his proposition for changing the Akron schools over to a junior high system. He alleged that it could be done fairly easily since there were several schools being built in the city's effort to stay even with its high population growth rate. Again there was no voiced opposition to the proposal as the Superintendent was told to develop detailed plans. The Board returned to routine matters and concerns.¹⁰⁰

For the March 29th meeting Board members adjourned to Central High School's auditorium for a public hearing on the junior high proposal. It immediately became apparent that the audience of over 1,000 citizens was heavily in the support of George McCord and whatever he wanted. As he entered, McCord was treated to a standing ovation which lasted for three minutes and would have gone on but for Hanan's appeal for order. McCord then presented a prepared speech favoring the proposed junior high system to a quiet, receptive audience.

Robert Guinther had scarcely begun to speak when groans, coughing, loud throat-clearing and other noises plainly intended to upset the speaker broke out in the audience. Hanan rapped for order. Guinther's attempt to proceed resulted in a disturbance louder and more intense than the first. Jeers, moans and catcalls were added to the crowd's response.¹⁰¹

100. Ibid., February 9, 1926. Leon Friedman observes that "The Superintendent's motivation for the introduction of the Junior High System is not known. It may have been to allow him to design attendance districts for racial purposes. Reifsnider said that his colleagues were unaware of the motivation, but were so distrustful of the Superintendent, that every move, not clearly in the public interest, was vigorously opposed. Because of McCord's practices in Springfield, Ohio, and his close association with Hanan...there was little doubt about his propensity to pursue the philosophy of the Klan." See Friedman, "The Matter", p. 174. Typical Board meetings at the time were characterized by "bitter debates and heated discussions", usually with "forty to fifty interested citizens in attendance also". Friedman, "The Matter", p. 173.

101. Ibid., March 30, 1926.

In spite of the noise and hostile audience Guinther managed to get through half of a carefully prepared refutation of any need for a junior high system for the Akron schools. McCord had said that Akron was the only city of its size in the country not to have a 6-3-3 system. Guinther found, through eight weeks of careful analysis that only 8% of McCord's claim was correct, and that several cities had actually abandoned the idea after trial. Further, Guinther gave three detailed arguments which opposed the need for such a system:

1. The claimed advantages may be introduced into the present system by proper administration.
2. Pupils attending the proposed junior highs would have to travel farther, necessitating transportation and the purchasing of meals.
3. The proposed junior high system will be vastly more expensive than the present system.

At the point of going into the details of the costs a heckler called out that they had heard enough from Guinther. Hanan said both sides should be heard, but the voice rejoined, "Call on other board members, let us hear from them."¹⁰² Cat-calls and taunts greeted Guinther's protest that he wasn't done yet.

Hanan called on Hyde who then said, "If I had spent weeks I could not have presented the subject better than Mr. Guinther. Will you allow him to finish?"¹⁰³ Very thin applause rewarded this remark. Reifsnider and Kirn were called on but refused to talk on the matter. George Beck spoke briefly, urging adoption of the 6-3-3 plan. J. A. Cunningham said that since Guinther had not been allowed to speak neither would he.

A voice from the audience called, "What do you say, Mr. Hanan?"¹⁰⁴ Hanan said he favored the 6-3-3 plan and could refute all of Guinther's

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

arguments but would not since Guinther had not been allowed to finish. Robert E. Lee, the executive vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce asked if the Board would commit itself to the junior high plan without studying all possible angles. Hanan replied that the Board would either adopt the plan temporarily or continue to build annexes to existing schools. Lee then again urged a complete study of the situation.

Another voice then shouted for Guinther to finish his paper. McCord interjected that Guinther had certainly done a thorough job but that each point could be refuted. Guinther then finished his speech, citing the increased costs of such a system as he saw them. Gus Kasch rose to challenge the figures cited but does not seem to have actually done so. Instead, he devoted his remarks to ways to make recalcitrant taxpayers pay up, giving Hanan a few valuable minutes to assemble his thoughts.¹⁰⁵

After Kasch resumed his seat Hanan took the floor to rebut Guinther's opposition to the junior high plan: 1. The present plan is very costly but could give the same advantages. However, the schools should concentrate on equipment and teaching. 2. The added distance would be offset by the better training to be had. 3. Cost is purely a matter of administration and can be made more or less than current. Costs depend on results obtained.¹⁰⁶

Rev. E. M. Lewis obtained recognition, and prefaced his remarks with an expression of concern for the youth of the city's schools. Shouting at one point that he positively knew that there were school girls in "hospitals tonight because of their loose morals!", he condemned the city's youth for their moral laxity and alleged that many were fated to find

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., The extemporaneous nature of Hanan's rebuttal may be partly responsible for the lack of clarity.

themselves in even worse circumstances than hospital wards. Walter Kirn disagreed with Rev. Lewis, saying that as far as he was concerned history had never produced a better generation of young people. Rev. Lewis then moved that the citizen's committee endorse the junior high school plan, Councilman W. C. Crimmer seconded, and the citizens present overwhelmingly approved.¹⁰⁷

Citizen's resolutions, however, do not a policy make. Robert Guinther knew this and knew also that, though roughly treated by the crowd, he certainly was not a defeated man. In July and August, when Joseph Hanan became incapacitated because of illness for several weeks Robert Guinther, as vice-president, sat in the president's chair at all Board meetings. Factionalism, for the time being, was forgotten. Without Hanan present to support him McCord did not press for the junior high proposal, except to point out its advantages from time to time.

At the April 5th meeting J. Grant Hyde moved that one wing of new Garfield High School be used to give the junior high plan a year's trial. McCord did not object and when Reifsnider suggested that Hyde's idea plus adding grades seven and eight to South High would materially relieve the overcrowding in South Akron's schools, the Board gave the combined resolution unanimous approval. This would also give the Chamber of Commerce time to make a survey it wanted concerning the proposed junior high system.¹⁰⁸ The Board then turned its attention to other pressing concerns.

The biggest problem facing Akron's Board of Education in the mid-

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid., April 6, 1926 and Minutes, April 5, 1926. This survey may well have been part of the minority's strategy to play for time in which to either secure McCords' removal or to eliminate any possible doubt as to the value of the junior high system. It was not published until after the November, 1927, elections.

twenties was its burgeoning school population. Akron's school children were attending classes in 1926 under conditions that would today be considered intolerable. The four hundred students attending classes on the fourth floor of Goodyear Hall were collectively known as Hotchkiss School, and there was a new school to be built that would bear that name and house them all. But no one could be sure if it would indeed be big enough by the time it was built to properly house all of its students. Teachers were taking classes of forty-eight to seventy students each in two half-day sessions every day; their pupils double-seated or sitting on the floor.¹⁰⁹ Amid these problems the Board sought solutions in the form of new buildings, annexes to old buildings and requests for more millage with which to finance its construction program.

In Hanan's absence the Board's voting shows no particular pattern at all; on nearly every vote the split would be different. All in all, they were a capable group who faced up to their problems and made some headway against them. It is doubtful that Hanan's presence would have materially altered matters, for, except in one instance, the routine nature of the Board's business for several months had caused reporters to look elsewhere for excitement.¹¹⁰ The exception came in mid-May of 1926 when George McCord fired East High Principal M. E. Hawk, charging that the School was in turmoil and that several teachers, including the Assistant Principal had resigned because of it. Hawk and many parents of East High protested, alleging foul play. The former Assistant Principal, F. L. Simmons replied in the newspapers that he quit because of McCord, his

109. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1926.

110. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1926; July 13, 1926; September 14, 1926. The Board's Klan contingent continued to review the applications of all new teacher candidates for "proper background", however. See Friedman, "The Matter", p. 165.

methods and the organization he represented. McCord nonetheless persevered, and a majority of the Board refused to reconsider or grant Hawk's request for a hearing.¹¹¹ McCord seemed to be building a political machine in the Akron school system as he had earlier done in Springfield.

Late in August Hanan, recovered from his illness, returned to chair the Board meetings. It was not long before McCord was again urging the adoption of his junior high plan. At the September 13th meeting he recommended a \$1,000,000 building program to relieve overcrowded schools and again pointed to the convenience of adopting the junior high system while the building of new schools was proceeding at such a rapid pace. Faced with a twenty-one per cent increase in enrollment while the tax duplicate increased only one per cent in the same period, the Board nonetheless failed to approve a resolution to place a one-mill levy on the November ballot. Surprisingly, Beck, Cunningham and Hyde voted against it, thus defeating the resolution. Thoroughly angry, Hanan threatened to quit the Board, complaining bitterly about the people being deprived of a say in their schools.¹¹²

Hanan, however, was present on September 27th when McCord suggested the Board ask the Chamber of Commerce for a report on its junior high survey which was said to be nearing completion. Apparently a negative

111. Ibid., May 18, 1926. Parliamentary law, by which the Board operated, forbade reconsideration unless suggested by one who had originally voted for the dismissal.

112. Ibid., September 14, 1926. Beck, Cunningham and Hyde later called reporters and explained that they favored a levy but simply wanted to be certain about how much was needed before asking. A special meeting was called the next evening with identical results. See Minutes, September 14, 1926.

reply was received as the Board continued to attend to routine matters.¹¹³

The Board of Education began the new year by organizing anew as it had in the past. J. B. Hanan was reelected president without opposition; Robert Guinther was again chosen vice-president in an amicable atmosphere. The next regular meeting, however, was dominated by a new controversy involving George E. McCord.

The preceding fall, the position of Chief Attendance Officer was eliminated on grounds of financial exigency and George L. Harding, who had held that position, reverted to being an attendance clerk. Not one to undergo that sort of thing gladly, Harding sought reappointment to his old position and hired attorney Lee J. Myers to conduct his case. Board members learned that state law did indeed provide for a chief attendance officer and designated the Superintendent to confirm it with Law Director Henry Hagelbarger. Hagelbarger in turn advised McCord that it was true.

With characteristic adroitness McCord thereupon recommended John T. Shumaker as new Chief Attendance Officer for Akron Public Schools. Shumaker was a former resident of Springfield, Ohio where McCord had been Superintendent of Schools. He had been employed in the Attendance Department of the Akron Public Schools for about eight months. Robert Guinther accused McCord of usurping authority which properly belonged to one of his assistants, Ralph Waterhouse, but the recommendation was approved four to three along the now familiar, factional lines.¹¹⁴

113. The Akron Chamber of Commerce lists this report as being completed in 1927, shortly after the November elections. An extremely elaborate, technical, data-packed document, the study concluded the junior-high system to be \$3.0 million more expensive than the current plan. See Akron Board of Education and Chamber of Commerce Bureau of Municipal Research Cooperative Junior High School Study of 1926. (Akron, 1927). The Akron Public Library has a copy.

114. Akron Beacon Journal, January 18, 1927. Also see Minutes, January 17, 1927.

Seemingly defeated at the hands of the Klan majority on the Board of Education, Harding went to the courts and obtained a writ of mandamus against McCord on the grounds that Shumaker had not taken the civil service examination and was therefore serving the position illegally.¹¹⁵ The court agreed and ordered Harding restored to his former position. McCord immediately appealed only to see the writ of mandamus reconfirmed. The Appellate Court further stipulated that Harding could only be denied his old position through the filing of charges with the civil service commission since he was under the civil service statutes. Harding had thus won his case.¹¹⁶

Defeated in the courts, McCord and his backers on the Board assembled their evidence, and, filing charges of inefficiency and discourtesy against Harding, voted his dismissal, four to three.¹¹⁷ Harding, in turn, requested a hearing. All told, nearly forty witnesses testified before the hearing ended. Harding's attorney, Lee J. Myers, was able to present testimony from a dozen of the most experienced principals in Akron that contradicted the charges. Parents also testified that he had been fair in disciplinary measures taken with truant children. Of course, many witnesses were produced to testify in support of the charges also, confronting the commission with a difficult choice to make.

The commission's solution was to require the civil service examination for every position in the Attendance Department. This meant that the five other attendance clerks in the department would have to take the

115. Ibid., February 2, 1927.

116. Ibid., April 1, 1927. McCord had asked the Board to dismiss Harding while the Appellate case was pending. On Guinther's motion action was tabled to await the outcome of the decision. See Minutes, March 28, 1927.

117. McCord's letter of evidence is entered in the Minutes, April 18, 1927.

civil service test in order to keep their jobs. There was also the additional threat that any other qualified person could compete for their jobs simply by taking the examinations. An additional test would then be given for those who wished to compete for the position of Chief Attendance Officer.

In the resulting competitive examination, McCord's nominee, John Shumaker, scored next to last while three persons from outside the Attendance Department placed first, second and fourth. McCord stubbornly refused to respect the results of the tests and recommended appointment of the incumbents instead, with John T. Shumaker at the top of the list. This occasioned another breach among the members of the Board. Robert Guinther asked that the four top-scoring candidates be appointed. McCord refused. Guinther insisted. McCord replied it would throw people out of work. Guinther replied that it had not seemed to matter when Harding had been dismissed. After one-half hour of bitter wrangling between Guinther and McCord, the Board voted to table the matter for further study.¹¹⁸ In a subsequent meeting on July 22, the Klan faction followed the Superintendent's recommendation by the usual majority vote.¹¹⁹

In late August the civil service commission held the competitive examination to select a Chief Attendance Officer. George L. Harding received the top score. Since the civil service commission certified only the top scoring candidate for placement, the Board of Education had no choice but to appoint Harding. Harding, for his persistence and perseverance in the face of great expense and what must have been heavy social pressures, had

118. Akron Beacon Journal, July 19, 1927. Guinther made a point of the Civil Service Examination results being entered in the Minutes, July 18, 1927.

119. The actual vote was four to two as L. Roy Reifsnider was absent. Minutes, July 22, 1927.

dealt McCord one of the biggest defeats of his career.¹²⁰

On August 29th three new candidates for the Board of Education were announced. They were George W. Sherman, President of Akron Industrial Salvage Company, Willis W. Thornton, a retired newspaper executive and Milton E. Murphy, an architect.¹²¹ This time it was J. B. Hanan, George Beck and J. A. Cunningham who were the defending incumbents. Just four days later Hanan, Beck and Cunningham announced they would not seek re-election.¹²² This, however, did not mean they had abandoned all efforts on the behalf of the Klan.

At the October 10th Board meeting, the Klan majority plus an acquiescent Hyde forced through an offer to purchase the Klan property at 77 Fir Street for \$31,000. The reason given for the purchase was that it was for a vocational training site. The meeting ran a little longer than usual as Guinther, Reifsnider and Kirn held off a vote for nearly four hours.¹²³ The subsequent rejection of the offer by the Klan-backed Summit County Auditorium Company must have given Hanan second thoughts, however, for at a specially called meeting of the Board just one week later, Hanan changed his vote and the offer to buy the Klan-property was withdrawn. Hanan clearly was ranged against his former associates that night because he also voted against adjournment until the offer was

120. Akron Beacon Journal, August 25, 1927. Superintendent McCord, however refused to recommend him. J. Grant Hyde and George Beck voted with the minority, blocking a request to the Civil Service Commission for the certification of another candidate. The result was that Akron schools went without a Chief Attendance Officer for almost a year, until Harding received his appointment on the recommendation of Akron's new Superintendent, Thomas Gosling. The Board apparently felt the new Superintendent should initiate the recommendation. See Minutes, July 9, 1928.

121. Ibid., August 29, 1927.

122. Ibid., September 2, 1927.

123. Ibid., October 11, 1927. The offer to sell was received September 9, for \$33,000. Minutes, September 9, 1927.

rescinded.¹²⁴

The outcome of the November election was a foregone conclusion although George Beck did change his mind and run. He was defeated; George W. Sherman, Willis W. Thornton and Milton E. Murphy were elected to the Board of Education.¹²⁵

Apparently abandoned by the Klan, George McCord had arrived full circle to the same situation he had faced several years earlier in Springfield. This time, however, he did not resign.¹²⁶ Anticipating the loss of his job when his contract was due to expire in the coming summer he began job-hunting. Besides interviewing wherever he could for the position of Superintendent of Schools, it is known that he also filed for the position of district enforcement officer for the federal prohibition agency.¹²⁷ Sometime before May, the following year, he was hired as Superintendent for the Fostoria, Ohio schools.

Not unexpectedly, Robert Guinther was chosen president of the 1928 Akron Board of Education while George W. Sherman was chosen vice-president. J. B. Hanan was presented the gavel he had wielded as a token of his service and stepped out of the picture. When asked about McCord, Guinther said he was of the opinion that the Superintendent would serve

124. Ibid., October 18, 1927. Also see Minutes, October 17, 1927.

125. Ibid., November 9, 1927.

126. On September 20, "Akron's conscience", Gus Kasch wrote an open letter to McCord which said in part, "the school children of Akron are being punished because you are Superintendent". He asked McCord to resign and thus remove the controversy from the Akron schools. McCord did not reply. See Akron Beacon Journal, September 20, 1927.

127. Ibid., November 19, 1927. One reason why the Klan faction on the Board may have found it easy to leave McCord to his own devices was a statement he issued May 16. He had announced he would accept the Superintendency at Indianapolis, Indiana if it were offered. He said it would be a definite promotion for him and that he had definitely been interviewed for the job. In an ironic twist of circumstances, two days later the Beacon Journal reported that McCord was not acceptable to the "controlling faction" on the Indianapolis school board. See Akron Beacon Journal, May 19, 1927 and May 21, 1927.

out his contract but that he would not be rehired.¹²⁸

At the March 19, 1928 meeting the Board made it official as McCord was formally notified he would not be rehired.¹²⁹ It became known that Robert Guinther and L. Roy Reifsnider were on a trip through the mid-west interviewing prospective new Superintendents. These were some of the more than fifty applicants which had contacted the Board following the fall elections. Others had been interviewed by Walter Kirn and George W. Sherman at a superintendents convention in Boston, a meeting that McCord and Assistant Superintendent Ralph Waterhouse also attended.¹³⁰

The meeting of May 7th was to be the occasion of George McCord's final official report to the Board. Accordingly, an executive session was scheduled which would ordinarily be closed to outsiders. However, reporters were admitted providing they used discretion in reporting what was seen and heard. What followed was apparently totally unexpected.

Charging Ralph C. Waterhouse with incompetency, McCord demanded that the Board discharge him. This was rather peculiar as McCord had recommended Waterhouse's appointment in the first place and his reappointment each year since. Nevertheless, they seem to have had their differences to judge from J. Grant Hyde's reaction to McCord's charges. "I can see nothing but vindictiveness in this", Hyde was on his feet, speaking directly to McCord,

Nothing you could have done would have aroused the animosity of the board against you like this. You are at the end of your term, about to step out, and you bring a charge like this. You said nothing to me about this, and I should have known it as chairman of the teacher's committee. I saw you within the last forty-eight hours and you could have told me. You have made another mistake and I would have told you you had made a mistake, just as I have pointed out other mistakes you have made."¹³¹

128. Ibid., January 3, 1928.

129. There is no mention of this in the Minutes though reported in the Akron Beacon Journal, March 20, 1928.

130. Akron Beacon Journal, March 20, 1928.

131. Ibid., May 8, 1928.

Waterhouse was present and Guinther asked if he cared to answer McCord's charges. He replied that "It is so openly full of personal feeling that I do not believe I should answer it."¹³²

McCord denied vindictiveness played any part in his action and produced a letter, alleging a teacher had written him asking for a transfer which involved Waterhouse. Tension in the room immediately rose. Board members demanded to see the letter. McCord replied he was willing to show the letter but that the board meeting was not the time or place for it. L. R. Reifsnider responded, "Show the letter now or never."

Hyde began again, "If you want to talk with me, McCord, you've got to do it here and now. I'm through with this beating around the bush. Produce the letter or never mention it again", he said, thumping the table.¹³³

After another ten minutes of similar wrangling, Guinther informed McCord he had just thirty seconds more to show the allegedly incriminating letter. McCord, his hand forced, handed the letter over to Hyde who read it aloud.

The letter did indeed speak of a requested transfer because of unwanted attention from another teacher. However, it was not Waterhouse. Waterhouse, it developed, had only offered the lady a cigarette at a gathering of teachers in a local restaurant.

There was a brief silence as Hyde finished reading. Then George W. Sherman moved that the Board act separately on the appointment of new Superintendent, Thomas W. Gosling of Madison, Wisconsin. Six loud and emphatic, affirmative votes were given. McCord, his face set, seized his books and papers and left without another word.¹³⁴

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

Just two days later the Fostoria, Ohio, Board of Education announced it was rescinding its decision to hire George E. McCord for Superintendent of Schools.¹³⁵

McCord never attended another Board meeting. At the meeting on May 21st he requested (through Hyde), a month's leave of absence and that his contract terminate on June 1 rather than July 1. The Board granted the request without comment.¹³⁶

The departure of George E. McCord was the last act in the dramatic history of the Post World War I Ku Klux Klan in Akron. While the episode with the schools was running its course the Klan was undergoing dissension and collapse.

135. Ibid., May 9, 1928. Goerge McCord was never able to find employment of any kind with public education in Ohio. It is said he needed less than one year's additional service to have established longevity credits for retirement purposes but could never get it, even as a custodian. See Akron Beacon Journal, June 20, 1929.

136. Ibid., May 22, 1928; Minutes, May 21, 1928.

CHAPTER V

DISSENSION AND COLLAPSE OF THE KLAN IN AKRON

The July 4, 1925 Konclave marks the turning point in the Akron Klan's history for it marks the absolute pinnacle of the Klan's power, prestige and success. Ironically, the decline of the Akron Klan also began that same night with the resignation of Joseph B. Hanan. Grand Dragon Osborne announced to those gathered at the Fairgrounds (after his speech on the need for 100 percent American teachers), that with over 52,000 members the Akron Klan stood first in Ohio and first in the nation in number of members, ahead of Indianapolis, Indiana which formerly held the lead.¹ Immediately following the concluding ceremonies Hanan tendered his resignation to the Grand Dragon and Klan No. 27's Board of Directors. Asked to name his own salary he declined, saying money was not considered. He cited personal business coupled with the increasing burden of the Exalted Cyclops.²

Joseph Hanan may have been at peace again but the local Klan was in turmoil. They could think of no one to replace him. Apparently no one wanted the job; it was seen as too much for one man. R. L. Fouse, a teacher at South High was mentioned as a possible successor but this came to nothing.³ There was supposed to be a Vice-President, said to be Rev. E. M. Lewis, Pastor of South Main Street Methodist Church, but apparently he could not be talked into taking over.

Reverend Mr. Annessansley was definitely not interested but it was

1. Akron Times-Press, July 5, 1925. Attendance was less than half of the official expectation. Some of the loss was due to the Massillon and New Philadelphia Klans holding combined activities of their own.
2. Ibid., July 6, 1925. Hanan remained president of Summit County Auditorium Company. The Beacon Journal made Hanan's resignation its front-page headline story for July 6th.
3. Akron Beacon Journal, July 8, 1925.

he who became the Klan's spokesman. On July 21, Rev. Anneshansley announced that a new Cyclops in all probability "would not be named until after the November elections".⁴ Meanwhile, the Vice-President was said to be in charge. Asked if the Directors had taken any action in support of any candidate for Mayor in the upcoming elections, Rev. Anneshansley replied, "We have not and probably will not vote to back any certain candidate at the primaries. You can say this, however, we will not back Gus Kasch."⁵ Later in July Rev. Anneshansley announced to a press conference that the Klan endorsed the bond issue for a heating plant in the County Children's Home. In the same release he also announced the local Klavern intended to send 1,000 delegates to the national Klan gathering in Washington, D. C. A special B & O train would take them, along with delegations from Cleveland and Youngstown.⁶

Primaries, national convention and all else was forgotten the next day when Klansmen learned that William Jennings Bryan had died. Meetings were held throughout the state that night in his honor. In a rare display of executive efficiency, the state headquarters issued immediate orders that crosses be burned carrying the inscription; "In Memory of William Jennings Bryan, the Greatest Klansman of Our Times. This cross is burned. He stood at Armageddon and he battled for the Lord."⁷ In the area around Akron, meetings were held and crosses burned at Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Kenmore and Lakemore. In the largest gathering of them all, Akron Klansmen met and burned their cross on Goodyear Heights.

4. Ibid., July 21, 1925.

5. Ibid., Kasch had written an open letter to Mayor Rybolt on July 16, naming Kyle Ross and J. W. Short as Klan favored candidates. He asked the Mayor to take a stand against the Klan and become an avowed anti-Klan candidate. Rybolt refused to reply. Ibid., July 17, 1925.

6. Ibid., July 31, 1925. Planned for August 6-9, 1925.

7. Ibid., August 1, 1925.

On Friday, August 7, a special 12-coach train left Akron, carrying nearly 1,000 Akron Klansmen and women to the national Konklave in Washington, D. C. With them were smaller contingents from Cleveland, and Youngstown. The national capital hosted "the most picturesque assembly in its history."⁸ For once the anticipated attendance of 50,000 materialized. The Texas delegation brought with them a posse of Texas Rangers to "help maintain order."⁹ The U. S. Marines were called in to help Washington's police guard the gala celebration. Capping the whole affair was the inevitable Klan parade, though there would never be another to rival this one. The Klansmen marched down a one-mile route on Pennsylvania Avenue, 16 abreast, from 3:00 p.m. until midnight.¹⁰ Akron's delegation complete with women's glee club was large enough to march as a single unit, one of only two such Klaverns in the entire parade.¹¹ Boarding the train soon after the parade, the majority of the Klansmen were home by Sunday, nearly everyone else following the next day.

There was scarcely time to allow a return to normality before another great National Conclave opened at Buckeye Lake, Ohio on August 25. Clyde W. Osborne hailed it as the launch-point for a new, national crusade by the Klan against "enlightened paganism".¹² Terming the Konklave the greatest Ku Klux Klan gathering in history, Osborne said that preparations were being made to receive one-half million people. He went on to say that the Klan was not abandoning its stand on immigration and the schools; rather, these issues had been successfully brought to the attention of the

8. Akron Times-Press, August 8, 1925. Also Akron Beacon Journal, August 8, 1925.

9. Akron Beacon Journal, August 8, 1925.

10. Ibid.

11. The other unit was the Pittsburg delegation. See Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 288.

12. Akron Beacon Journal, August 22, 1925.

American people. The Klan now would be the voice of the submerged church majority in American as it fought to defeat the minority but dominant forces of agnosticism and paganism.

About 5,000 Klansmen from Klavern 27 attended the "doings" at Buckeye Lake, heard Osborne and Evans speak, saw the Imperial Wizard's bodyguard,¹³ witnessed pageants and maybe saw Bessie Henson and Ralph O'Rourke get married in full regalia.¹⁴

On October 8, just as Akron was learning Rev. Amos O. Henry had been designated as the new Exalted Cyclops in Akron, the city was flooded with letters address, "Attention Klansman" and soliciting contributions for D. C. Stephenson. Stephenson was a fallen Klan leader in Indiana and was accused of murder in the death of Madge Oberholzer, his secretary. He had allegedly forced himself upon her after she rejected his advances. Miss Oberholzer later took poison, leaving a letter which blamed Stephenson for her death. Akron was a natural place to look for help as Stephenson had lived in Akron for several years prior to his successes in the Klan, and had made many friends there. At the time, however, he was not in the good graces of the Klan and both Hanan and Osborne condemned the letters as bogus and said that they should be ignored.¹⁵

It was apparent that something was wrong with the Akron Klan by the middle of October. Rumors that the organization was badly divided were hardly out when the news came that Rev. E. M. Annessansley and most of the other Klan officers had resigned en masse, to be replaced by an outsider

13. Largely, if not entirely, composed of National Guardsmen, in full uniform, from Akron.

14. Both were from Columbus. Akron Beacon Journal, August 31, 1925 and Akron Times-Press, August 30, 1925.

15. Akron Beacon Journal, October 8, 1925. Newsmen sought out Hanan rather than Rev. Henry.

brought in by Grand Dragon Osborne. The outsider was Dr. W. K. Smith of Chicago, a national service man for the Ku Klux Klan.

There ensued a brief but hectic series of rumors, denials and specious sounding rationale; none of it was good for the Klan's public image. The new Exalted Cyclops, Rev. A. O. Henry, had nothing to say. Rumors had it that the split in the ranks of the Klan was due to the development of two factions, one of which favored endorsing Kyle Ross for Mayor, the other against endorsements of any kind. Osborne denied this but strengthened the credulity of that idea considerably when he bluntly ordered the Akron Klan to avoid any political involvement except the school board issue. C. Norman Clarke, a national Klan lecturer with a desk in the Klan's offices, alleged that Rev. Anshansley had planned a return to ministerial work for months. Other rumors denied this. Capping the whole episode was Osborne's installation of Smith as Klavern 27's manager. He termed Smith's placement as an experiment aimed at efficiency, noting however¹⁶ that the new business manager had total authority.

Little more was heard of the activities of Klan No. 27 in 1925 aside from the school board fight. However, following the elections in November, the issue of whether or not the United States should join the World Court became a public issue. Local Klansmen let their Senators know how they felt about it and, on January 26, 1926, Senators Simeon D. Fess and Frank B. Willis of Ohio acknowledged the receipt of 10,000 "letters, telegrams and petitions" from Summit County, mostly from Akron, protesting American

16. Akron Beacon Journal, October 15, 1925 and October 17, 1925. Smith's initials were at first inaccurately reported as H. K. by the Beacon Journal and J. W. by the Times-Press, October 19, 1925.

entry into the World Court as a foreign alliance.¹⁷ Both Senators announced they would vote for it anyway, and did.

Though the Akron Klan could still be a potent political force, its failure to elect all its candidates to the School Board in the fall of 1925 showed that it could be stopped.¹⁸ Wracked by internal political dissension, and its leadership imposed from the outside, Klan No. 27's active membership shrank noticeably; the initiative and energy of the organization was also noticeably declining.

Even so, the Klan could still make itself newsworthy and the era of giant Konklaves was not yet over. On May 27, 1926, hundreds of people suddenly appeared on the shores of Lake Anna in Barberton at 10:00 o'clock in the evening. Three crosses, two of them thirty feet high, were erected and set on fire. Exploding aerial bombs punctuated hymns sung to music furnished by a drum and bugle corps. As the crosses burned to the ground the crowd vanished as suddenly as it had come, in several hundred automobiles which had been parked around the lake.

Not even Klansman Joseph Sieber's announcement that he would run again for the Republican nomination for Governor moved the Akron Klan to make any political endorsements for the 1926 elections. Clarke stated simply, "it isn't necessary".²⁰ A few Klansmen who decided to conduct a straw poll among fellow members reported results of no particular significance.

Meanwhile, over at 51 East Mill Street, where the Ladies of the Ku

17. Akron Beacon Journal, January 14, 1926 and January 27, 1926.

18. See Chapter IV.

19. Akron Beacon Journal, May 8, 1926. This was probably brought off by the Barberton "unit" of the Summit County Klan which had its own headquarters and frequently conducted its own meetings.

20. Ibid., July 26, 1926. Sieber carried two counties in the November election.

Klux Klan had their headquarters, an in-house political organization, known as the Women's Electoral League, prepared and sent out to members, ballots which were marked in bold-face type to indicate membership in the Klan. Those marked were virtually all Republicans, including D. C. Rybolt.²¹ It would seem the Republican Party in Akron still enjoyed the patronage of the Klan.

It would appear from the Akron Klan's 1926 Labor Day Konklave that the hooded order had never been stronger. Not unexpectedly, the feature of the Konklave was a huge parade, requiring fully 45 minutes to pass a given point. Except for a few out-of-towners, the entire parade was fully robed and masked. The Klaviliers, Akron's crack military drill team, were there, complete with rifles, as well as a special contingent known as the Imperial Guard who carried side-arms. At the mass meeting which followed at the Fairgrounds Akron Klansmen got a look at the state's new Grand Dragon, C. Gilbert Taylor.²² Taylor, for his part, took a good look at Akron and apparently decided to put his own man at the head of the Akron Klan.

On September 16, it was announced that Frank W. Cox of Youngstown would replace Dr. W. K. Smith as manager of Klan No. 27. It was rumored that divisiveness in the local Klan would soon be cured by dividing the

21. The ballot was sent to members of the Ladies of the Ku Klux Klan. The identity of two Klansmen came to light through their own individual heroism for the Klan. It seems that William McMiller, 346 Rose Avenue, a builder of houses, hired Harry A. Bee and Walter C. Bee, both carpenters, to roof a house which was for sale. The two Bee's contrived to lay out KKK in neat letters in the variegated roof shingles which were invisible to anyone within 75 feet of the house. However, beyond that distance they were plainly visible for one and a half miles. McMiller refused to pay the carpenters and they had to sue to collect. Interestingly, the case came before Judge Zesiger, who ruled that the Bee's be paid. However, he deducted a percentage of the bill, saying that he felt the shingles could not have been placed that way accidentally. Ibid., August 7, 1926.

22. Akron Times-Press, September 7, 1926. Also Akron Beacon Journal, September 7, 1926.

organization into five separate branches, two in Akron to separate the two opposing factions and one each in Barberton, Kenmore and Cuyahoga Falls.²³

In the eleven months he had managed affairs for Klavern 27, W. K. Smith had made himself quite popular with most of its active Klansmen. He had, of course, made some enemies along the way as well²⁴ but this was not his biggest problem. C. Gilbert Taylor simply wanted a man of his own choosing to head the Akron Klan.

In the Washington Konklave of 1926, as he was about to step off with the Akron contingent in the parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, a delegation from imperial Headquarters ordered Smith out of the ranks, charged him with misconduct and, stripping him of his robe, banished him from the Ku Klux Klan.²⁵

Angry men returned to Akron, intent on destroying the arbitrary power held over them by the hierarchy of the Ku Klux Klan. A meeting was called for September 18th at the Fairgrounds by A. O. Henry, George P. Jenks and C. Norman Clarke. All but eight of the 3,500 members who attended voted to return the charter, leave the Klan and create a new organization.²⁶

The following resolution was passed:

"that any and all assets of the Summit County Klan No. 27 be transferred, assigned, conveyed and turned over to the Protestant Service League to be held by them as trustees for a period of six months and that the income from said funds and property during that time be used by the Protestant Service League for charity purposes. Henry and Jenks to be appointed as

23. Akron Beacon Journal, September 16, 1926.

24. One thing he had done, for reasons the author could not discover, was to suspend J. B. Hanan and George E. McCord from the organization. Also see Ibid., September 29, 1926 and November 30, 1926.

25. Ibid., September 20, 1926 and September 23, 1926. This occurred on September 13, 1926. Local Klansmen said they felt it was a political move. See Ibid., September 21, 1926.

26. Paid-up membership at the time was 4,200. The remaining members boycotted the meeting at the Fairgrounds.

a committee to dispose of these funds as instructed by forty percent of those present at this meeting. Henry and Jenks to turn the property over at once....Motion carried by acclamation."²⁷

Henry and Jenks went to court the next day and obtained an injunction to prevent officers from the National Klan from interfering with the intended transfer of assets. Judge Scott D. Kenfield readily granted the injunction and the transfer was made. The charter was sent to Columbus where state officials immediately dispatched it back to Akron. Cox placed it in a safe deposit vault and announced he would have anyone trying to get at it arrested.²⁸

The insurgent, ex-Klansmen named their new organization the Buckeye Civic Association and set about planning their strategy to defeat the expected retaliation by Cox and his loyal Klansmen. Cox and his followers began holding strategy sessions of their own.

A barrage of charges and counter-charges ensued. On September 22, the new Grand Dragon told reporters that Smith had been ousted for the same kind of insubordination he had been dismissed for before in previous assignments at Des Moines, Iowa and Chicago, Illinois. He quoted the Imperial Wizard as saying, "Third time is out!" on reading the report on Smith.²⁹ He also said he was shocked to see Akron Klansmen carrying guns while on parade. The following day Smith said that the charges advanced by Taylor were not in conformity to those brought against him in Washington, and

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27. A. O. Henry et. al. vs. Frank W. Cox et. al. Case No. 1291 Ohio Court of Appeals George P. Jenks was the Klan's secret service officer. Assets that concerned them most were \$53,394 in the Auditorium fund, Ibid., September 21, 1926
28. Ibid., and Akron Beacon Journal, September 20, 1926, and September 21, 1926. Also see Akron Times-Press, September 21, 1926.
29. Akron Beacon Journal, September 22, 1926.

that both of them were trumped-up in order to get rid of him.³⁰ He briefly asserted that he had resigned his previous positions to reenter private life, then bore down on Taylor's alleged astonishment of gun carrying Klansmen, labeling it as false. Taylor, Smith alleged, had reviewed the same men in two previous parades at Newark and Berea and also knew they would be participating in competitive military drills later in the month at Dayton. Side-arms were carried by the Imperial Guard who had helped protect the Imperial Wizard at the Buckeye Lake Konklave. "At the Buckeye Lake Konklave the camp was protected by military discipline, plenty of guns were in evidence, and Hiram Wesley Evans' own cottage was behind a guard line".³¹

The Buckeye Civic Association conducted its first formal meeting at the Fairgrounds on Saturday, September 25. Since the members were all former Klansmen and women it is understandable that they would pattern some aspects of their new organization after the old even while consciously rejecting others. Thus, this evening's meeting was illuminated by a blazing square; however, only plain organizational titles would be assumed by the new officers-elect.³² In a provocative move, Klansmen burned a huge cross on a hill in plain view of the Fairgrounds, while the meeting was in progress.

Strangely, little more is heard of the Buckeye Civic Association.

30. Ibid., September 23, 1926. Smith quoted the charges against him as "W. K. Smith, a member of this order, is guilty of violation of his oath of allegiance, in that he did willfully and knowingly violate the laws and principles of our order."

31. Ibid., The drill team was the Akron Klaviliers. Interestingly, the men of the Imperial Guard voted almost to a man to stick with the organization. During this exchange it was said that the Junior Order of the Summit County Klan had met and all but three had decided to pay outstanding bills and quit.

32. Adopted to indicate a square deal to all, on the square, etc. Ibid., September 29, 1926.

Instead, events seem to focus attention on the actions of individuals acting in the name of the two sides. On October 12, Ivan J. Chapman, acting as a representative of the Klan, filed a counter-suit, charging the ex-Klansmen with an attempt to convert the Klan's property to their own use. Taking the position that the ex-members were certainly free to leave the association but that they could not take Klan property with them, he asked for a receiver of the assets until the dispute could be settled.³³

Judge Scott Kenfield heard arguments from both sides on November 15. He refused Chapman's request for a receiver but did get both sides to agree to deposit the assets in a local bank until court proceedings could settle the case. Judge Kenfield then subpoenaed the Klan's records for 1926. The Protestant Service League was also ordered to bring in all records pertinent to the case.³⁴

On November 30, 1926 trial opened to determine just who was entitled to the assets formerly held by the Klan. Visiting Judge G. W. Whorley put C. Gilbert Taylor on the stand to answer why the Klan had not produced the records desired by the court. Taylor answered that former state treasurer for the Klan, Orin C. Stout, had carried the records off when he left office. Stout was immediately subpoenaed, but meanwhile, the two sides presented their case.

The ex-Klansmen contended the Klan was not actually operating in Ohio as a non-profit organization, as it had done little or nothing with \$180,000 subscribed for that purpose. Therefore Klan No. 27's assets should not go into the hands of national or state Klan officials but should stay with the group that had created them and which still existed, but under another

33. Akron Beacon Journal, October 21, 1926.

34. Ibid., November 24, 1926.

name. The other side reiterated their position that the loyal Klansmen who remained were entitled to all assets belonging to the organization.³⁵

Orin C. Stout took the stand on December 1st. He confirmed that he did indeed have the records but said he would not release them until he received receipts for money he had turned over to Taylor and others. He wanted a complete audit and release from his obligation. In support of the ex-Klansmen, he showed figures to the effect that between October 1, 1924 and June 1, 1926, the state Ku Klux Klan had spent \$185,122 of which \$2,894.35 could be considered charitable expenditures.³⁶

After further rhetoric and argument Judge Whorley announced that he could see that the two sides were hopelessly divided without any chance of reconciliation. Following the logic of the ex-Klansmen, he awarded \$36,000 to the insurgents and \$18,000 to the loyal Klansmen. Intended to satisfy both sides it satisfied neither; the case was appealed.³⁷

Unfortunately for the ex-Klansmen, the Court of Appeals overturned Judge Whorley's decision and awarded the entire assets to Klan No. 27. The Supreme Court of Ohio refused to review the unanimous decision of Judges J. Pardee, J. Funk and R.J. Washburn.³⁸ Thus ended the ex-Klansmen's last hope.³⁹

The court's decision seems to have destroyed the Buckeye Civic Association's will to go on. No more meetings appear to have been held, and two of its leaders, W. K. Smith and C. Norman Clarke, joined forces

35. Ibid., November 30, 1926.

36. Ibid., December 1, 1926.

37. Ibid., January 5, 1927 and April 12, 1927.

38. Ninth District Court of Appeals, Case No. 1291. The court's opinion was that Klan No. 27 was a going organization and that a mass withdrawal of most of the members did not constitute a dissolution of the organization nor change the ownership of its assets. Those who leave, leave behind all.

39. Akron Beacon Journal, November 23, 1927.

with local Democrats in the fall election.⁴⁰

Soon after the breakdown of September 18, the remaining members of Klan No. 27 reorganized themselves and elected new officers. Although regular meetings were held, attendance was, of course, only a fraction of what it had been.⁴¹ To continue the auditorium project without the support of the ex-Klansmen was clearly impossible, and, at the October 10, 1927 meeting of the Board of Education, the Klan majority forced through a commitment to purchase the site for \$31,000. However, the officers of the struggling Summit County Auditorium Company rejected the offer on grounds of insufficiency. In view of the original purchase price (\$70,000) one can hardly be critical of their judgement.⁴²

On December 7, 1927 T. Ralph Ridley, architect for the proposed auditorium, sued for recovery of liquidated damages since the building had not started on time. It was destined never to be started, and Ridley could perceive this as he broke his connection with the venture as profitably as he could.⁴³

For most of the following year the Auditorium Company's officers held the company's creditors at bay with devices such as having a member of the Klan, T. H. Cahill, named receiver in a bankruptcy action in Common Pleas Court.⁴⁴ However, in March an involuntary bankruptcy petition forced the matter before federal bankruptcy referee, Judge Harry Snyder. Snyder disqualified Cahill as federal receiver because of conflict

40. Akron Beacon Journal, October 12, 1927.

41. Ibid., December 2, 1926. Attendance ran between 150 and 400 per meeting.

42. Ibid., October 11, 1927 and October 17, 1927. On the latter date Frank W. Cox announced his resignation from the headship of Klan No. 27, saying his work in Akron was about complete and that he expected to be relieved of his duties momentarily by the national KKK.

43. Ibid., December 8, 1927.

44. Case No. 12950, Summit County Courthouse, Akron, Ohio.

of interest and appointed Dwite H. Shaffner in his place.⁴⁵

It was about four months later when the Beacon Journal received a telephone call from the offices of Burch, Bacon and Denlinger, a law firm specializing in the prosecution of bankruptcies.⁴⁶ Frank Burch himself had placed the call and felt he had the capstone of the destruction of the local Klan for C. L. Knight, the Beacon Journal's Klan-hating, owner-publisher. Knight was not there but Edward Harter, the Beacon Journal's chief editorial writer, could imitate "C. L.'s" style and took the call. Afterward he called in reporter Ray C. Sutliff and sent him down to Burch's offices for the "scoop". Once there, Burch and Stanley Denlinger laid out the pending bankruptcy case against the Summit County Auditorium Company. Sutliff took "miles of notes", developed his story and then endured the agony of having to sit on it for a week until the case was properly filed.⁴⁷

It was the sort of thing that secret organizations dread. The lead paragraph of the headline story began, "The skeleton of the Akron Ku Klux Klan was dragged from its closet today and made to dance to a tune of amazing disclosures."⁴⁸ Not only was the Summit County Auditorium Company bankrupt but its officers and representatives had seriously violated the law on at least two occasions. Walter S. MacArthur of

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45. The federal bankruptcy action took precedence over the Common Pleas case and put an end to stalling tactics. Judge Snyder was appointed referee by the Federal District Court in Cleveland, Bankruptcy case 14911, Federal Records Center, 7201 S. Leamington Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.
46. Burch, Bacon and Denlinger was one of Akron's leading law firms, occupying several offices in the Second National Building. It was the recognized leader in the handling of bankruptcies and collection in Akron. From an interview with Ray C. Sutliff.
47. Based on an interview with Ray C. Sutliff. The wait was worth it; it was the "scoop" of his life. The Times-Press frankly acknowledged Sutliff's "scoop".
48. Akron Beacon Journal, October 24, 1927.

Chicago had been hired to sell capital stock to finance the project. He successfully acquired 3,000 pledges totaling \$1,000,000, was paid his commission and returned to Chicago. Unfortunately, he had accepted \$21,417 more in payment for his services than Ohio law permitted. In addition, life insurance in the amount of twice the value of each subscription was given with each \$25 share sold. As an inducement to buy capital stock, such insurance was a part of the sale price of each share and was thus "sold", something which the Auditorium Company was not licensed to do.⁴⁹ Moreover, an audit of the Auditorium Company's books disclosed a discrepancy between receipts and expenditures of \$53,000, a fact which reporters pounced upon with alacrity.⁵⁰

There could be but one outcome; the Summit County Auditorium Company was ruled bankrupt by federal Referee Snyder. The 3,000 subscribers to its capital stock were held liable for the debt owed by the company to the amount of their subscription. Kyle Ross was disclosed as the heaviest subscriber, at \$3,075; most subscriptions, however, were between \$50 and \$200.⁵¹

Walter MacArthur settled with the federal receiver for "in excess" of 25% of the charged amount of overpayment in November, 1928.⁵² Litigation to recover "at least 60%" of the money owed by subscribers was begun in October, 1928 and ended in March, 1930. Ultimately, only about 30% of the whole debt was ever collected.⁵³

Klan headquarters at 77 Fir Street was sold in October 1928 to a

49. Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 24, 1928.

50. Akron Times-Press, October 27, 1928.

51. Of the debt, \$28,000 was owed First Trust & Savings for a loan maneuvered by the Klan to get the Auditorium Company started.

52. Akron Times-Press, November 13, 1928.

53. Akron Beacon Journal, March 21, 1930.

neighbor, Mrs. Blanche E. Hower for \$27,000. On the night of October 25th a fiery cross was burned in the front yard as a farewell gesture. The new owner angrily told reporters that any future trespassing would be prosecuted.⁵⁴ It was a fitting epitaph for the passing of the Klan in Akron.⁵⁵

54. Akron Times-Press, October 26, 1928. There was still a lien of \$26,675 owed to Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, the original owner.

55. February 25, 1928 may serve as a good date to mark the passing of the Ku Klux Klan in Akron as it was known in the 1920's. In actuality, Klan No. 27 never did officially dissolve but a number of circumstantial events combined to pretty well do it in. In February, 1928 Imperial Wizard Hiram W. Evans, in an effort to improve the Klan's public image nationally, decreed that Klansmen and women would no longer use hoods or masks. In October, the disclosures of the bankruptcy trial were barely out of the news when the U. S. Supreme Court upheld the New York and Kansas anti-Klan laws which required organizations to furnish constitutions, by-laws, oath and membership lists if required by the state. With its secrecy gone and the scandal and debt brought by the court actions, membership melted away until only a few diehard blue-collar workers remained to carry on the name.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

At one time during the middle 1920's Akron, Ohio possessed the world's largest chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, claiming an enrolled membership exceeding 52,000.¹ A huge and powerful organization, it never once resorted to violence to achieve its goals. The Klan in Akron seems always to have been under the control of respectable Protestant social and political leaders and was an effective means of local political control for several years. If having members in office can be termed "control", the Klan at one time controlled the office of Mayor, Superintendent of Schools, County Sheriff, County Prosecutor, Clerk of Courts, two of the three County Commissioners and four of the seven seats of the Akron Board of Education including the Presidency. In addition, several judges were members (one was Exalted Cyclops), and the Klan's influence permeated the Akron Police Department and the local National Guard unit. For a while, the Klan was the agency through which anyone of political ambition "got somewhere" in Akron. The amazing thing is that so little issue was raised over it.

Because the Klan was a secret society and kept little in the way of records, much of the information collected for this paper was derived from contemporary publications and oral interviews. Whenever possible each piece of evidence was substantiated by cross-checking with other sources. Unfortunately, very little could be developed about the internal history of the local Klan. However, the external picture is now complete enough to compare the Akron chapter of the Ku Klux Klan with those

1. It should be noted that the Akron chapter followed the usual Klan practice of counting their total enrolled membership whether they were active or not.

found elsewhere. The model for this comparison is taken from Kenneth T. Jackson's book, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930.

Jackson arbitrarily assigns the definition of "city" to municipalities of over 75,000 in population. Akron, of course, easily meets this criterion as well as two that follow: heavy urban migration of old-stock Americans and containing a "myriad of racial, ethnic and religious cultures, not all of them congenial."² Most of the white workers streaming into Akron 1910-1920 were from the South, one of the first-settled parts of the nation. With regard to the racial, religious and ethnic mix in Akron, blacks arrived in conspicuous numbers during the decade 1910-1920, along with a moderately heavy influx of people of European origin. Nothing, however, compares with the huge migration of over 100,000 southern whites into the city. Nonetheless there were enough immigrants of European origin to support at least a half-dozen ethnic varieties of the Catholic faith. On the Protestant side, Akron could boast more diversity, especially in the fundamentalist persuasion, than any other city in the country due to the large number of southern whites settling in the city. Thus, when the famous evangelist, Bob Jones, came to Akron in 1924, he did not pitch a tent but rather built a semi-permanent wooden structure seating 5,000 and stayed for weeks. Jackson found an additional correlation between Klan success and a high rate of population growth. Akron, of course, fits this pattern to perfection.

Jackson makes the point that some chapters in some states were clearly dominant in their state, e.g., Indianapolis, Indiana; Dallas, Texas; Birmingham, Alabama. Akron dominated nothing but Summit County, the limits of its charter. In fact there was no dominant chapter in Ohio. Another

2. Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 234.

deviant point: as the Klan grew in power in most cities the local chapters attempted the publication of a newspaper. The Akron Klan never even considered the idea so far as the writer could determine.

The model Klan leadership was of officials that "had lived their productive lives in a large city"³ This was certainly true of the Akron Klan's four chief leaders: E. E. Zesinger, J. B. Hanan, A. O. Henry and E. M. Annessansley. Jackson goes on to construct the membership: few men of wealth, education or professional status affiliated with the "Invisible Empire"; the exception usually served in high Klan office. White collar workers formed a substantial minority. The greatest source of Klan support came from rank-and-file, non-union, blue-collar employees of large businesses and factories; miserably paid, poorly educated, conservative, non-ritualistic Protestants and fundamentalists. Also the Klan attracted large numbers of Protestant ministry. In comparison, the leadership of the Akron Klan fits Jackson's model but there is some disagreement concerning the membership. With over 50,000 members, the Akron Klan most probably included a substantial white-collar contingent as Jackson stipulates and indeed derived the bulk of its membership from blue-collar workers. However, these were the best-paid workers in the country however educated, conservative, or fundamentalist they may have been. The misery of their economic position could not have been a factor; the misery of their former economic position might well have been. The Klan in Ohio was not the means to rise from one's low station but another step up. In a perfect parallel, the Protestant ministry in Akron joined the Klan in large numbers, forming an important part of its leadership. Also, in agreement with

3. Ibid., p. 236.

Jackson, some of the Klan's toughest opponents were Protestant ministers.

For Jackson, the city's newcomers were the cause rather than the strength of the Klan, with the previous residents welling up behind the good start made by the recent arrivals. This suggestion is based on a rather small set of data (399 members), in one city (Knoxville). There were so many recently-arrived people in Akron that this aspect would probably fail of confirmation even if the membership were known.

The typical city Klan was preoccupied with politics. Moreover, success came most often when the Klan acted as the balance of power within the two-party system. Reference has been made to the tremendous political success of the Akron Klan, acting through the local Republican Party. This concentration of political strength is not surprising as the local Democratic Party leadership was Catholic. The political success enjoyed by the local Klan was of relative short duration, which is in agreement with Jackson.

Many of the Akron Klan's activities fit Jackson's model almost perfectly: barbecues, picnics and weekly meetings in rented fraternal halls; large, outdoor initiations, characterized by a short drive to nearby naturalization grounds; much assistance to individual needy, mostly haphazard and mostly at Christmastime; church visitations under conspicuous circumstances; parades, of course, were indispensable part of the Klan's image everywhere.

There is ample evidence that Akron's Klansmen were sincere individuals who believed in what they were doing. Again, the Jackson thesis is well satisfied: "The typical Klansman was decent, hard-working and patriotic."⁴ It is true that in their zeal they attempted to inflict their

4. Ibid., p. 238.

sincerety on others, particularly with regard to the schools, reflecting, as a model requires, strong anti-foreign, anti-Catholic sentiments.

In conclusion then, the Akron Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1928, was a sturdy offspring of its parent, following the pattern of the national Ku Klux Klan almost precisely, though over a shorter span of time. Beginning in 1921, enjoying a few years of fantastic growth and success, it peaked in 1925 and was all but gone by 1928.⁵

5. Probably the single most important element in the Klan's decline everywhere was disenchantment. One disenchanted Klansman was the Rev. Ernest D. Snyder, Pastor of the South Akron Church of Christ. In his Sunday night sermon on August 2, 1925 he said, he was a good Klansmen but that the KKK "Is headed for Hell". He went on to say that the Klan had orginally been a power for good, composed of Christians. But now, he said, the organization is controlled by politicians, not doing its duty and he foresawdissolution for it. Many members he averred, were disgusted over conditions in the organization and refused to pay dues. See the Akron Beacon Journal, August 3, 1925.

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