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A History of the Rochester City Club

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The City Club's more significant contributions were written in the minds and hearts of the countless thousands who heard or participated in its forums. No historian can fathom such sources, yet we may learn much from the records kept by conscientious officers and from the press notices preserved in bulging scrapbooks. A voluminous correspondence file and the recollections of old and long-faithful members* have helped to recreate the drama hidden behind the formal records, thus giving life to at least some of the more memorable sessions. From these varied sources emerges the story of a noteworthy venture in adult education, in democratic citizenship—a continuing institution still vibrantly alive in its 39th year.

We can of course detect some of the Club's influence in Rochester's sturdy tradition of free discussion, in the community's broad-minded approach to many public questions (particularly those of an international scope), and in the tolerant spirit so characteristic of the relations between many segments of the population. The City Club has not been the only builder of present-day Rochester, nor has its influence been equally significant over the years. There have been shifts in its emphasis, critical periods in its career. A study of the affairs of such a representative institution as the City Club, an appraisal of the issues raised and of the programs developed, will throw much light on the city's history during the last four decades.

*NOTE: I am especially indebted to Albert E. Copeland, Byron W. Palmer, John S. Wright, Edwin A. Rumball, all of them "founding fathers," and to James M. Spinning, Harold Sanford and Arthur J. May, leaders of more recent years.

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Origin and First Years

Despite its considerable influence on Rochester, the City Club was not strictly local in origin. Its establishment in 1909 was, to be sure, the outcome of a strongly felt community need, but the stimulus and the pattern came from outside. City clubs featuring weekly luncheon forums had previously appeared in a half-dozen cities, the first in New York nearly two decades before. The lunch club idea was gaining favor among American businessmen; in fact, it was introduced to Rochester in the early spring of 1909 when the first steps were taken by the founders of the Rochester Ad Club. Sharing many features of that club, the City Lunch Club, as it was originally known, was less restricted in membership, while its purposes, as conceived by its founders, were more forthright in character. It soon attracted many vital and some colorful personalities and has had a stormy career.

The City Club, which specializes today in the discussion of controversial questions, most of them far removed from Rochester, was in its origin the product of a dramatic local controversy. The surging reform movement, characterized nationally by the rise of the muckrakers, had been stirring Rochester for several years. The Board of Education had been reformed, a new city charter had been adopted, and a number of significant institutions had been established, among others the People's Sunday Evening—a program conducted in a down-town theater by a group of liberal ministers who wished to serve the religious needs of non-churchgoers. But the most important local manifestation of the reform movement was the Social Center programs launched at Rochester in 1907. Unfortunately the fourteen adult civic clubs which conducted forums in a half-dozen public schools under this program soon raised issues of an explosive character. Radical as well as conservative views were expressed, and criticisms of the local political machine. It was a pretty strong dose of democracy for a city boss to take and pay for!

By the early months of 1909, Edward J. Ward, the intrepid director of the Social Centers, found his program under attack from all sides. Seeking outside support, he made a hasty trip to Boston with the hope of persuading Lincoln Steffens, the high priest of urban reform, to visit Rochester and appraise the Social Centers. Steffens entertained Ward at the Boston City Club where they discussed the Rochester program at some length. Apparently impressed by what he heard, Steffens jokingly wagered that Rochester could not match the Boston City Club.

Ward somewhat exuberantly promised to show him, if he would come to Rochester, a more democratic civic club than Boston could boast.

As Steffens could not make the visit for several months, Ward persuaded George E. Hooker, secretary of the Chicago City Club, to come and make the sorely needed expert investigation of the Social Centers. When Hooker arrived in May, Ward invited a number of interested friends to lunch with him at the Powers Hotel. Thus was held what turned out to be the first preliminary meeting of the Rochester City Club.

Several of the gentlemen who attended that luncheon were greatly stimulated by Hooker's account of his own city club. Among those present were Professor George M. Forbes of the University, the courageous president of the Board of Education which was bucking the political machine on several fronts, Howard T. Mosher, soon to emerge as the reform candidate for mayor, Edward J. Ward, and several others. The Chicago City Club—founded in 1903 and already boasting 900 members, a paid secretary, frequent forums and a number of busy civic committees—was well designed to appeal to these Rochester men. The Chicago program, which followed the lead of the original city club in New York, contrasted with the more strictly social character of the Boston City Club and several others Hooker may have mentioned. All of these clubs, however, maintained a weekly luncheon forum, open to members and guests, where all shades of opinion were welcome. It was this feature which the Rochester men determined to adopt as their starting point.

Interest in the projected club mounted as the summer progressed. Among the first to respond were Isaac Adler, an able and public spirited attorney, Joseph T. Alling, leader of the recently successful drive to reform the school board, Dr. Algernon S. Crapsey, "the last of the heretics," Professor Herman LeRoy Fairchild, a geologist whose chief civic interest was in the promotion of commission government for Rochester, Professor Walter Rauschenbusch, pioneer in the development of the social gospel, Charles M. Robinson, authority on city planning, the Reverend Edwin A. Rumball, Unitarian minister and editor of the *Common Good*, Levy S. Richards, independent editor of the *Times*, and most important of all, Dr. Paul Moore Strayer, minister of the Third Presbyterian Church and founder of the People's Sunday Evening. Many others showed an interest, including Mayor Hiram H. Edgerton, who attended one of the preliminary luncheons on August

13 but for various reasons never attended another City Club meeting. By October, however, more than fifty names had been added to the list, a regular Saturday noon appointment had been arranged with the Powers Hotel, and the City Lunch Club was unofficially launched.

Its unofficial beginning reflected a desire to retain as much informality as possible. No constitution was adopted that year, and no formal election of officers was reported, although Dr. Paul Moore Strayer apparently served as "toastmaster" from the start and Ward was later remembered as the first secretary. There were no regular dues, but the secretary occasionally passed his hat to collect the names and quarters of those who wished to receive notices of the meetings. There was no full list of members—every man who attended and paid for his lunch was considered a member as of that day. All men were welcome.

The early programs were likewise informal. Any prominent visitor might be called on, or, if no suitable out-of-towner appeared, one or more members would be asked to discuss a project of general interest. Thus on October 17, 1909, Dr. Crapsey outlined the work of his Vacant Lot Gardening Association. It was probably the first formal meeting of the City Lunch Club, and Bolton Hall, writer and lecturer, told of similar programs in other cities. The visit of Lincoln Steffens a month later was planned in advance. He was fulfilling his promise of the previous spring and spoke on "The Good Uses of Politicians." Brand Whitlock, reform mayor of Toledo, Ray Stannard Baker, editor of the *American Magazine*, favorite mouthpiece of the muckrakers, and Alexander Irving, a Socialist preacher from Gotham, were among the more prominent visitors. Most of the luncheons, which continued through June that year, were devoted to the discussion of local topics, such as the proper use of the Pinnacle Hills, the shortcomings of the street car transfer system, the need for a new building code or a new sewer outlet.

Very little attention was given these meetings by the public press for the leaders preferred to keep their discussions "off the record." They were endeavoring to study community problems and to compose differences through a friendly interchange of views. They hoped to avoid the mistakes of some of the Social Center forums where the expression of intemperate views occasionally attracted censure from the press. No doubt the continued attack on the Social Centers was frequently discussed at the Saturday lunches, and there could have been little approval here of the administration's decision in the spring of

1910 to cut the budget of that significant program. Nevertheless, the City Lunch Club avoided the adoption of any resolutions, even when the job of its secretary was threatened. When Ward accepted a call to the University of Wisconsin that June the Social Center program was virtually doomed. Assistant Superintendent Herbert S. Weet endeavored, with the aid of a limited budget, to maintain some of the adult civic clubs for still another year, but a number of radical speeches finally prompted the authorities to terminate the program. Fortunately, the firm establishment of the City Club had by this time assured Rochester a free platform independent of municipal support.

The City Lunch Club closed its first year with a significant feature—a banquet on the Fourth of July for newly naturalized citizens. The New Voters' Festivals in Boston suggested the pattern, but local inspiration had come from young Dr. John R. Slater of the University after a visit to an Italian Civic Club in one of the Social Centers. Slater's proposal of a banquet for Italian citizens was expanded to include all new citizens, with the City Lunch Club in the role of host. A special fund was raised, invitations were sent out, and on the appointed day 200 new citizens—Italians, Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews and Britons among others—sat down, each with his City Club sponsor, to a bounteous feast, followed by addresses of welcome and responses from various ethnic groups. The singing of "America" with clasped hands around the tables terminated the first New Citizens' Banquet, a unique civic program which was soon widely heralded throughout the nation by an article in *The Survey*.

The Club was formally organized in October, 1910. Paul Moore Strayer was elected toastmaster, Howard T. Mosher, Albert E. Copeland and Edwin A. Rumball were chosen to assist him, the last two as treasurer and secretary respectively. A membership fee of one dollar was announced as optional, for any male citizen was welcome to attend the luncheons, which automatically enrolled him as a member. By the close of the second year, 312 of those who attended had contributed a dollar to the Club's expenses. An average of 110 attended the 41 luncheon forums that season, listening to 28 out-of-town guest speakers and many more from among their fellow citizens. Mrs. R. Loew Whitney of the New York Legal Aid Society and Mrs. Caroline Bartlett Crane were the first women to address the City Club. The latter's report on her sanitary survey in Rochester was one of the high points of the season. Another notable session featured Arnold F.

Brunner's report on the first city plan drawn for Rochester. Thomas Mott Osborne made his first appearance before the Club, discussing the prison system, which provided the topic for two other sessions; housing conditions were discussed at four sessions, once by the vitriolic local health officer, Dr. George W. Goler.

Three among the local speakers of this year are still valued friends and occasional visitors at the City Club: Herbert S. Weet, then Superintendent of Schools, Edwin A. Fisher, Chief City Engineer, and George Van Schaick, who described the efforts of the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union to provide a Legal Aid program for Rochester. Thus the Club served as a clearing house for the discussion of local civic problems; fully three fourths of its sessions were devoted to that purpose. The second annual welcome feast for newly naturalized citizens, held again on July the Fourth, attracted 160 new citizens and stressed civic values.

Dr. Strayer was persuaded, against his wish, to serve as toastmaster for a third year, but only after an executive board of three men had been added, to which Isaac Adler, Rush Rhees and John S. Whalen were named. The City Club, as it was now officially named, increased its paid membership to 437 by the end of the third season. Only 34 meetings were held, but the average attendance had increased to 160, and 566 attended the banner meeting, at which Louis D. Brandeis was scheduled but failed, because of an ice storm, to appear. The Club made its first contribution to the expenses of a visiting speaker when \$23.65 was raised to buy a round-trip ticket from New York for the British suffragist, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst. The 322 who heard her address on "The Woman's Movement in England" comprised the second largest audience that year. Another innovation was the action of the Club in presenting a silver loving cup to Professor George M. Forbes when political pressure compelled him to resign from the school board. The New Citizens' Banquet this year was held in Number 9 School and was served by the Women's Lunch Club, a newly organized but short-lived society patterned after the men's City Club.

George M. Forbes was chosen president from among seven contestants by a preferential ballot in October, 1912. The long-awaited address by Louis D. Brandeis opened the season, attracting 308 for a dollar dinner served by Teall in Convention Hall. An unfortunate misunderstanding with the Ad Club, which had been instrumental in bringing Brandeis to Rochester, joined with the increased price to cut the

expected attendance, but this meeting was nevertheless the banner session of the year. Samuel Gompers, however, drew almost as large a crowd when he appeared on November 16. The discussion of labor problems—trade unionism, the woman worker, child labor—supplied the most frequent topic of the season. Many ladies crowded the balcony for the first time this year, braving the clouds of cigar smoke that rose from the main floor. They were attracted by such topics as women and children in industry, "Child Welfare" discussed by Dr. Anna Louise Strong, and a proposal for the wider display of the American flag. So many new citizens were naturalized this year that the club was forced to substitute a reception for its customary dinner, receiving 400 at its ceremonies on July the Fourth.

Isaac Adler was chosen president for the City Club's fifth season, 1913-14. The membership now reached 600, all of them paying one dollar for the notices, while many now contributed up to three dollars more to help defray the expenses of out-of-town speakers. The high point this year was the suffrage debate between Carrie Chapman Catt and Grace Duffield Goodwin. Luncheon tables served 452, and an unnumbered crowd packed and broke the gallery! President Adler, who displayed a marked preference for debates, arranged three others that year, as well as four panels in which three or four speakers presented various aspects of such questions as sex hygiene, street car fares, prohibition, and united charities. The most significant innovation of the year was the political debate on the eve of the election—the first of a long and popular series.

The City Club was enjoying a new surge of growth. Its season had been cut to thirty weeks, ending in May rather than June, but an average of 232 attended the lunches, not counting the visitors in the balcony. President Adler, an able chairman, improved the Club's administration by scheduling an extra lunch each Tuesday for the officers and trustees at which the programs were carefully planned. The fifth and last New Citizens' Banquet entertained 199 newly naturalized guests.

The City Club and World War I

The program and development of the City Club were considerably influenced during the next four years by the First World War. In the first burst of excitement over what was still but a European war, the attendance at the Club's luncheons mounted rapidly. An average of 287 attended the 24 luncheons in 1914-15, while the number of dollar

members reached 710. These figures did not include the gallery crowds which were especially large that year. Although the Club did not maintain this pitch of enthusiasm during the years immediately following, it retained a size that discouraged the more intimate discussions of the earlier period. Furthermore, its programs had now definitely broken into the headlines, and those who had the task of planning future meetings felt a strong compulsion to maintain the standard of news value previously achieved. Prominent speakers on national or international subjects began to crowd out the discussion of Rochester's civic problems.

The switch from local to international topics involved certain hazards that served a valuable educational function. It proved difficult to arrange programs that did not offend some staunch friends of the Club; furthermore, as the years advanced, some of the international issues developed explosive characteristics which could only be handled with safety by intelligent and informed citizens. Fortunately the City Club was helping to train such men in Rochester.

Joseph T. Alling, the 1914-15 president, was the first to encounter the new hazards. Responding to the keen interest at the outbreak of war, he invited the consuls of the several countries involved to name suitable speakers to present their views before the Club. The Germans, the first to respond, sent Dr. Karl Bertling to Rochester to explain "Why Germany Went to War." As the first session on the war, it naturally attracted a huge crowd, 477 for lunch and over 200 in the gallery. Many of Rochester's strong contingent of German-Americans were present, most of them doubtless inclined to be sympathetic; those with opposing views were likewise strongly represented. The speaker, with a degree of suavity unusual at the City Club, assured his audience that the German people welcomed the war in order to win the respect of their enemies. He did not, he said, expect all Americans to approve the German action, but he was glad to see that they were open-minded and wished to understand the German case. It was a disarming speech and passed off without serious incident. The Club was, in fact, less ruffled by this speech than by the later spokesmen for Belgium, Italy, France, and Britain. Emotions were, to be sure, more deeply stirred as the months progressed, and, although favor was mounting for the Allies, the Reverend Stanton Coit of London managed to rile some of his Rochester hearers by chiding America for lacking a foreign policy and failing accordingly to back Britain!

President Alling may have congratulated himself over the peaceful termination of the Bertling meeting, but he had not heard the last of it. More than a year later, when Americans were becoming suspicious of the statements and activities of foreign agents, Bertling's papers were examined and the order he had received to "go to Rochester and report to Joseph T. Alling" was uncovered. The latter awoke one morning in March, 1916, to discover himself identified in the New York papers as Germany's secret agent in Rochester. The situation was quickly explained and may have had the positive value of supplying a bit of humor to ease the tense nerves of distraught leaders, but it was not the last time a City Club official would find himself in hot water because of a belief in free speech.

Although the war provided the major topic for City Club lectures, national subjects were likewise gaining favor. The address by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, "Is War Cureless?" delivered shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, was declared by Isaac Adler to be the best he had heard in 25 years, yet the largest crowd of the year assembled to hear Ida M. Tarbell discuss industrial techniques. Other notable sessions on national questions were addressed by Newton D. Baker, mayor of Cleveland, H. M. Wait, city manager of Dayton, Henry L. Stimson, and two nationally prominent leaders who had spent much of their youth in Rochester, Katherine B. Davis and Samuel Hopkins Adams. Frank W. Lovejoy, the succeeding president, could not match that exceptional program, although again the search was for competent and striking lecturers or personalities, such as William B. Willson, secretary of labor, and State Senator Ogden L. Mills. Norman Hapgood's prognostications on the national election attracted the largest crowd, nearly 400 for lunch, yet the average for the year was down to 214.

George S. Van Schaick, as president of the Club during the next two seasons, endeavored to restore some of the earlier atmosphere of a discussion forum, but it soon became evident that the lecture program had triumphed. Indeed, an incident occurred early in 1917 which hastened the trend. Among the speakers that season was Scott Nearing who, in spite of the country's drift toward war, attacked the armament program, provoking much resentment among the members. Two weeks later a strong attack by Stephen S. Wise on city bosses prompted an indignant member to rise and urge that such intemperate and radical speakers as Nearing and Wise be excluded from the Club's program. It was a critical moment. Rabbi Wise passed it over by defending Scott Nearing's

right to speak freely although he did not agree with his views. But the real issue remained: was the City Club to be converted into a lecture series, and if so, how were the lecturers to be chosen; and would an opportunity for discussion from the floor be granted. President Van Schaick announced the decision of the trustees at the next meeting: henceforth only questions would be entertained from the floor. Members were invited to make their questions as sharp and pointed as possible, but neither discussion by the members nor discourteous remarks would be in order. An apology from the obstreperous member of the previous week was read, thus closing the incident.

Both a world court and a league to enforce peace were proposed before the City Club in the winter of 1916-17, but the largest crowd of the season turned out to hear Clinton Howard on prohibition. It was a spirited meeting as Rochester's fiery crusader for temperance told more than 700 City Clubbers that he would give Barleycorn only ten more years to live. George W. Wickersham, Lincoln Steffens and Charles A. Beard were welcome visitors of this period. Lawrence B. Packard and Dexter Perkins, both at the University, Leroy E. Snyder of the newly established Bureau of Municipal Research, Meyer Jacobstein, labor relations counselor for a clothing firm, first mounted the rostrum during the war years. A unique response, not uncharacteristic of Rochester, followed Sherwood Eddy's report of the work of the YMCA in France — several checks for \$1000 were sent forward during the lecture by men eager to support such a program.

Critical Years: 1918-1927

The early post-war years brought debate over the City Club's future. Leroy Snyder, who now emerged as one of the Club's most vigorous leaders, advocated the development of new civic functions and the provision of adequate quarters similar to those of city clubs in other cities. It was an ambitious proposal, never thoroughly considered on its merits, for a variety of circumstances which threatened the Club's solvency prompted many to dismiss Snyder's project as hopelessly unrealistic. Thus the formation of new lunch clubs, the advancing costs both for speakers and for lunches, and finally the stigma of radicalism (which was inevitably attached to any free platform in those post-war years) kept the City Club on the defensive for a full decade.

The expense of maintaining a lecture program was no longer negligible. Most of the earlier speakers had welcomed an opportunity to address

the City Club; many had been glad to pay their own expenses. The situation began to change during the war, and an extra drive for a speaker's fund was inaugurated at that time, principally to meet traveling expenses. But the great popularity of forum clubs during the war had given rise to a new calling, that of the professional speaker who made his livelihood from lecture fees. The City Club could no longer dodge the necessity of paying fees ranging from \$50 to \$100 for most out-of-town lecturers. Accordingly, in 1922-23, the Club dues were increased to \$5.00, which cut the membership in half but provided, at least for a time, an adequate speaker's fund.

Two old favorites continued to dominate the annual programs: Norman Hapgood, whose political prognostications were in demand every other year, and Rabbi Wise, who never failed to pack the house whether he was pleading for European relief or warning against corruption at home or abroad. Occasional rare programs, featuring a special personality, such as Felix Frankfurter, Jane Addams, Ida Tarbell and Franklin D. Roosevelt when assistant secretary of the Navy, provided an unusual treat and without cost, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to persuade such individuals to lay aside their tasks for a Rochester appointment.

One of the Club's old favorites, now listed with a speakers' bureau, was John Spargo, an old socialist. It was somewhat surprising to hear him after the war divert his fire from the capitalists to the Bolsheviks. Indeed, the Bolsheviks were frequently attacked before the City Club in these years, yet a storm of protest broke loose on the one occasion when a spokesman in their defense was announced. The circumstances, to be sure, were unusual. Albert Rhys Williams, just returned from a sojourn of many years in Russia, was engaged after a favorable vote of the Club, to deliver an address in February, 1919. But a week before he was to arrive, Senator Charles S. Thomas announced in Washington the receipt of evidence that Williams was a paid propagandist of the Bolsheviks, and Chief of Police Quigley threatened to arrest the visitor if he should utter any seditious views in Rochester. The atmosphere was tense, for President Snyder and his advisors refused to cancel the engagement. Rochester was saved at the last moment when Williams himself cancelled the appointment in order to address a larger meeting in the West. Later that season Arthur Gleason lamented the Red Scare and congratulated the Club on the refusal of its officers to succumb to the hysteria. (Nevertheless many years rolled by before Williams was

finally introduced to the Club in January, 1932, for an address on "The Religious Significance of Communism.")

New men were taking the place of some of the earlier leaders. Howard T. Mosher, one of the Club's most valuable supporters, died in 1919; the Reverend Mr. Rumball had left the city a few years before; Dr. Strayer and other faithful leaders of the early years were increasingly absorbed by other interests. In their stead appeared Leroy Snyder, Justin Wroe Nixon, Dexter Perkins, Frank Gannett, Rabbi Horace Wolf and Ernest R. Clark, each of whom served as president during this period besides contributing in other ways to the Club's programs. Only Isaac Adler among the earlier leaders continued to play a prominent role. Adler was elected president a second time in 1919-20, and would serve again in 1927-28; his able argument in favor of the League of Nations, in a debate with Walter Hubbell before the Club in the spring of 1919, was as memorable as that of Thomas Mott Osborne, who debated the same subject with Fiorello LaGuardia a year later.

The uncertainties which plagued the City Club in these years were directly related to strong movements in the community. Most of the leaders of the Club were actively interested in a campaign developing at this time to secure a city manager government for Rochester. Leaders of the Women's City Club founded in 1919, had transformed that organization into an agency for local civic reform. A club house, acquired by the ladies, provided a convenient base for operations in support of the city manager movement and other reforms. It was frequently suggested that the men's City Club might appropriately follow these leads. Frank E. Gannett, as president of the Club in 1921-22, endorsed the program, urging that a club house be erected and the name be changed to The Commonwealth Club in order to escape the stigma of international radicalism which some of the forum speakers had given the City Club.

The change was blocked on theoretical as well as practical grounds. In several cities where city clubs had developed militant programs an effort to curtail their activities had already commenced. Most of the clubs which had acquired expensive quarters had been compelled to raise their dues to such a point that large numbers were excluded. George Van Schaick and several others opposed such a move and strongly urged the Club to return to the simple program of its early years — the intimate discussions of local community questions. Leroy Snyder, chief advocate of expansion, accepted the presidency of the club on three separate occasions during these years, but each time, when he

polled the membership on a larger fee, the response was discouraging. Even in 1926-27, when the City Club joined the Council of Civic Clubs in a plan to remodel the Sagamore Hotel for more convenient club use, a well organized drive for 1000 men, at five dollars each, rounded up only 268 members. The luncheon attendance averaged 270 that year, proving that the forums maintained the club, not the reverse.

It is interesting to note in this connection that few of the "militant" city clubs of the mid-twenties continue active, while luncheon forums have multiplied throughout the land. The Women's City Club of Rochester, after succeeding (with the aid of George Eastman) in its campaign for a city manager and after initiating other reforms, suspended operations in 1930. In New York City the Men's City Club continued its militant operations in behalf of civic and legislative reforms for many decades, but as time passed many of its measures gained adoption, its members grew old or passed away, and the club persists today only in a moribund condition. The Women's City Club of New York has had a somewhat similar career. On the other hand, those New York ladies, who in 1894 organized what later became known as Town Hall, established an institution which, refusing to assume a militant program, has continued to adapt itself to changing community needs and today maintains its many functions by serving a nation-wide radio audience. Clearly, if longevity is the object, the non-militant club with an animated public forum is the answer. The men's City Club of Rochester had made this decision by the summer of 1927.

The City Club and the Depression

City Club programs have mirrored popular interests over the years. The national and international topics of the twenties shared the platform with government and business during the thirties. The stock market crisis in the fall of 1929 received prompt attention before the Club, and, late in the season, Will Durant attacked the subject philosophically under the title, "Is Progress Real?" The Club's officers hastily explained a drop in memberships that year by tracing a correlation with stock market movements. Fortunately the correlation was not exact, and the Club enjoyed a rapid recovery the next year as interest in the economic issues of the day quickened its sessions. Thus Rabbi Wise's discussion of unemployment the next spring attracted the largest crowd to date. The Club did not begin to feel the economic pinch of the de-

pression until 1933-34, when frequent complaints were voiced against ninety-cent lunches. The rostrum was shared fairly equally during these years by proponents and critics of the New Deal.

Isaac Adler, who served his third term as president in 1927-28, was the last of the founders to hold that office. Younger men were to follow him, several of them relatively new to the City Club and the community. Marion B. Folsom, Swayne P. Goodenough, Robert C. Tait and Milton K. Robinson were progressive business men; Justin Nixon and Philip Bernstein liberal minded clerics; and James M. Spinning, Arthur J. May, and Conrad Moehlman public spirited educators. They were ably supported by a changing board on which Donald Gilchrist faithfully served, while Paul MacFarland appeared frequently as secretary.

The roster of speakers was likewise changing. Stephen S. Wise, still the most dependable favorite, visited the Club eight times during this period, 1927-37, and generally drew the largest crowd of the year. Norman Hapgood and John Spargo came less frequently, and Lincoln Steffens but once more; their places were taken by Will Durant, Norman Thomas, and Norman Angell. Maurice Hindus made his first visits during these years, as did Kirby Page and Paul Blanchard, a former resident with many friends in the Club. These men were establishing reputations for later years. They could not rival the drawing power of Clarence Darrow, who attracted a crowd of 640 in 1930, or Emma Goldman, the former Rochester girl who, disillusioned alike by America and Russia, had become a world-famous anarchist and was permitted only a brief return to the United States in 1934. The outstanding sessions of the period featured Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt early in 1932, and, three years later, Frances Perkins, reporting on the first two years of the New Deal. The ballroom and balcony of the Powers were crowded to capacity on both occasions as crowds estimated at over 750 established the Club's high water mark.

There were many warm personal details associated with some of these meetings. Emma Goldman's return to Rochester was full of dramatic interest. Mrs. Mary T. Gannett, staunch friend of the oppressed, accompanied Miss Goldman to the speakers' table at which several members of her family were likewise honored. Her message was not very constructive. Nor was it encouraging to hear of the growing strength of Fascism in Europe, even in Russia, or agreeable to be reminded that it was Rochester and America that had first made her an anarchist. Nevertheless it was a great privilege, as William Pidgeon, Jr., put it, to belong

to a club that could provide a platform to a former resident with whose views so few agreed.

The visits of Frances Perkins and Harold Ickes, one in the spring and one in the late fall of 1935, provided convenient occasions for much local fanfare in support of the New Deal. Miss Perkins praised Rochester for its support of Roosevelt, stressing especially the excellent contribution of Marion Folsom as a member of the President's Economic Security Advisory Council. The Eastman Company, she declared, had pioneered in the development of employee security programs, pointing the way for New Deal action. Harold Ickes was not so solicitous of the feelings of his hearers, but his free and easy report, "It Happens in Washington," kept a large crowd amused and especially delighted those who agreed with his views. But the Secretary of the Interior, in brushing off the Supreme Court's disapproval of the NRA, alluded to three Hoover laws held unconstitutional, thus starting a nation-wide controversy that placed the Rochester City Club in many headlines and ultimately compelled Ickes to apologize.

There were plenty of occasions on which the New Deal was severely indicted. Harold Ickes was followed a week later by Harper Sibley, the Rochester President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, who demanded that Washington limit its regulation of industry. Norman Thomas attacked from a different angle, and Clarence Darrow from still another, but Edward A. Filene, a Boston businessman, rose to Franklin D. Roosevelt's defense.

A number of local speakers shared the Club's platform in these years. Professor Perkins of the University and Dr. Kenneth Mees, head of the Kodak research laboratory, were always reliable; Dr. Nixon, Professor Moehlman and Rabbi Bernstein were frequently called upon. Harland Bartholomew explained his Rochester city plans; Stephen B. Story, the first City Manager, analyzed the provisions of the new charter. Carl Carmer came back to Rochester to amplify a few of his tantalizing sketches of Upstate characters. A wide range of local viewpoints was presented in 1936 when President A. J. May arranged a symposium on America's needs. Rabbi Bernstein urged a rededication to democracy; Ex-Congressman Jacobstein stressed the need of education for citizenship; Herbert Eisenhart called for the improvement of the individual; Dr. Mees urged better technical training; Howard Hanson favored greater appreciation for beauty; Gustav Strebel, speaking for organized labor, asked for a new political party; while Charles S. Wilcox urged

the need for skepticism. The discussion proved a great success and encouraged Dr. Moehlman, the succeeding president, to arrange two symposiums, one on war and one on religion. A priest, a minister, and a rabbi — from neighboring cities — presented interesting views on the latter subject, deploring intolerance. The five local speakers on the proper cure for war have perhaps modified their viewpoints in the intervening years, but it is at least interesting to recall that in 1937 the Reverend David Rhys Williams urged adequate national defense, while Rabbi Bernstein advocated pacifism; Major William H. Emerson put his faith in strict isolation; Colonel Carey H. Brown urged that the profits be taken out of war; and Professor Frederick Zwierlein favored a prompt revision of the Versailles Treaty to deprive Hitler of his grievances.

One of the delightful "weaknesses" of many City Club speakers has been their penchant for predictions. Norman Hapgood was, of all City Club speakers, most adept at political predictions — prognostications he called them; his happiest was that of 1928 when he picked Roosevelt for president in 1932. H. V. Kaltenborn was less fortunate in his prediction of November, 1933, that Germany and Japan would soon be back in the League and that war would be avoided. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, a few months later, foretold a great airborne travel to Europe, but based it on the development of giant seadromes in the Atlantic. Maurice Hindus predicted war between Russia and Japan before the end of 1934. Glenn Frank predicted the emergence of new political issues as the battle over the New Deal subsided — incidentally a fairly safe way to phrase a prediction!

The City Club surmounted the most critical test of its democratic principles in 1930. Shortly after his election as president that spring, Swayne P. Goodenough received a letter from a former member promising to renew provided he could be assured that Negroes would not again be encountered at the tables as occasionally that spring. From other correspondence it appears that Mrs. Mary T. Gannett had invited two Negro gentlemen to sit with her in the balcony to hear Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the second Negro to address the Club (Booker T. Washington had appeared in 1910). They had apparently accepted the regular public invitation to attend later meetings of the club. Their presence at the luncheon tables was, judging from the letter noted above, a subject of concern to at least one member, but no official action was taken in the matter, and soon the issue disappeared from the records. It might be

interesting to know when the first Negro applied for membership, but personal characteristics are not listed so that the fact does not appear. Certainly he was admitted without question when he applied, and he and several of his fellows have long been active and respected members of the City Club. It was no longer a matter of comment when in February, 1936, W. E. B. DuBois addressed the Club on "The Southern Negro Under the New Deal," but Mrs. Gannett was again honored by an invitation to the speakers' table on this occasion.

Mrs. Gannett, the beloved champion of all liberal causes in Rochester, enjoyed an additional triumph the next year, when she arose from one of the luncheon tables on the main floor, waving a membership ticket, a privilege at last extended to women. The Women's City Club had finally terminated its affairs in 1934, the occasional joint sessions were over, as well as the unwritten requirement that women guests must sit in the balcony. In one respect at least women had long been making a large contribution to the Club's program. Although, over the years, no more than one woman has addressed the Club in every two years, six of them have drawn the largest crowd of the season: Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt in 1914, Ida Tarbell the next year, Emma Goldman, Frances Perkins and Margaret Sanger in the mid-thirties; Vera Dean in 1944. From 1937 on, the City Club has truly been open to all citizens.

Better still, all can participate, and many do — in the question period, the Club's most cherished feature. The opportunity for free discussion has long since been lost, as the lecturer has come to dominate the program. Nevertheless for thirty minutes following the address, each speaker must truly face his audience. If, as has been generally the case, the speaker has really had something to say and has made that fact clear, the questions have prodded him to amplify some phase of the topic. But the queries have not always been sober pleas for more facts. Many members, over the years, have developed a keen ability to expose a slipshod argument or a meaningless generalization by a neatly phrased question. Some speakers have been spurred in the question period to redeem a dull performance beforehand. And when, as has occasionally happened, the speaker was only a stuffed shirt, a few appropriate questions, even if completely misunderstood behind the rostrum, have helped discerning members to depart contented.

For many years the first question at every session was posed by one of the Club's most colorful personalities, S. Douglas Anderson, tall, white-haired accountant from Fairport. The list of his questions would fill a

book, and the answers an encyclopedia no doubt, but unfortunately they have not been recorded. Not all were so pithy as the query put to Alan Valentine, newly appointed president of the University of Rochester, after a lecture on educational trends. "What is Truth?" Anderson asked, provoking Alan Valentine to wave his arms in despair.

Speakers who have had the courage to say sincerely, "I don't know," have won more respect than those who have attempted to sidestep or misconstrue a pertinent question. Yet a cryptic answer has frequently brought a burst of applause, even when generally disbelieved. Thus Norman Thomas, after speaking for an hour on the fatal defects of capitalism, when asked by Meyer Jacobstein to discuss the prospect for an intelligent reform of the system, replied, "Too late." The question period has taken the measure and proved the mettle of many lecturers and club members as well.

The City Club began during these years to experiment in another field — the use of the radio. Its first broadcasts occurred in 1931-32, Spinning's year as president. Despite some fears, the membership and attendance were maintained at the high peak achieved the previous season, though perhaps a battery of unusual speakers, including Governor Roosevelt, helped to account for this success. Statistical records are not available for the next year, but by 1933-34, a decline in attendance was evident. Some blamed it on the radio, others on the depression. The club continued the radio program as a public service the next year but then omitted the feature for several seasons until its renewal in the fall of 1939.

The membership fluctuated between three and four hundred throughout these years, with the average attendance trailing fifty or more below these figures. In good years the Club built up a surplus, which the lean years never quite exhausted. Even the discouragements that beset President Moehlman in 1936-37 were successfully met and soon forgotten. Difficulty with the Powers Hotel over the price of luncheon tickets the year before had prompted the Club to move to the Seneca Hotel in the fall of 1936. Scarcely had the season opened when a strike of the waiters' union raised a serious question of policy for the Club. Before the officers could make up their minds, the next two scheduled speakers, Stephen Rauschenbusch and Sidney Hillman—both well known in Rochester where their addresses would have attracted enthusiastic crowds—wired cancellations as they would not cross picket lines. The dispute was settled before the third Saturday arrived, but it was a serious break in

the program and cut the average attendance for the 17 meetings that year to 245.

Recent Years

It is not yet clear just how the City Club's recent years should be characterized. This has been a period of increased concern over international questions. The Second World War has come and gone and we still find many 1937-38 topics appropriate ten years later. Prominent on the schedule of that year were such subjects as Russia, both pro and con, Zionism, government and business, labor's place in democracy, and, most surprising of all, "Why Smash the Atom," by Dr. Lee A. DuBridge. At first glance these lectures of Byron A. Johnson's term may sound like a program for today, but when we read the press reports of what was said and leaf through the other City Club records of that and succeeding years, we begin to realize how long this last decade has been.

It has, in a very real sense, been our decade. We have heard and pondered over most of its programs. The dilemmas discussed have been our dilemmas, certainly not all that we face, but many of them. And if there are gaps in the City Club's coverage today, perhaps that is an aspect of its history for which we and not the founders are responsible.

Byron Johnson's term started with a debate on the impending municipal election between H. N. S. MacFarlin, Arthur J. May and Meyer Jacobstein. Other leading speakers of that year included Alexander Troyanovsky, the Russian ambassador; Eugene Lyons, a bitter critic of the Soviets; Homer Martin, president of the United Automobile Workers; Clare Hoffman, bitter foe of the New Deal; and Robert H. Jackson, its able defender. Norman Thomas and John Haynes Holmes gave characteristic addresses; Rabbi Bernstein reported on his visits to Germany and Palestine. Professor Perkins, surveying the international situation in December, 1937, considered war unlikely, but predicted that, if war did come, America would have difficulty staying out.

The situation changed drastically the next year. Hitler's evil genius was the subject of addresses in Dr. William A. Sawyer's term by Maury Maverick, Lothrop Stoddard and Maurice Hindus. Stoddard in January, 1939, still doubted a general war in Europe; but Hindus, speaking a month later to the second largest crowd of the season, predicted the outbreak within the year of a more disastrous war than the world has ever seen. Two other speakers likewise foretold war and warned of America's involvement. Other topics received attention, though none

of the speakers could dispel the terrible suspense of impending disaster. Donald Richberg called for industrial peace as the only guarantee of prosperity; Joseph B. Eastman pled for a unification of the railroads, and Marion B. Folsom urged industrial leaders to offer better incentives to the individual laborer. Dr. Mordecai Johnson returned to report on the Negro's contribution to American civilization.

It was a soberly serious season, relieved only by the political debate between Democratic Congressman George B. Kelly and Republican candidate Joseph O'Brien. The debate came of course in November, 1938, before the war crisis was apparent. A crowded hall applauded as O'Brien, reading a prepared speech, thundered at the New Deal's debt which threatened to bankrupt the country, and applauded again as Kelly listed Rooseveltian achievements. The fireworks really started in the question period, as all who were present will recall!

The death in August, 1939, of President Donald P. Gilchrist, long a faithful member and secretary of the Club, left the responsibility for the program to the Reverend Frederick E. Reissig who carried the burden for two years. Attention was centered on the crisis in Europe. Maurice Hindus, his prediction of 1939 tragically realized, returned to foretell an ultimate split between Germany and Russia with an involvement of the United States on the Russian side, he hoped; England, he feared, would be crushed in the interim. Clarence Streit, advocate of a federal union of the democracies before it was too late, declared that America could not permit a defeat of the Allies. Professor J. Anton de Haas of Harvard endorsed that view, but Stuart Chase and Norman Thomas saw hope only in isolation. Several speakers analyzed Hitler's hold over the German people, the causes for the collapse of France, the disturbing course of events in the Far East. Three sessions in two years were devoted to Russia, one, a report on his recent visit to that country by former City Club president Arthur J. May, another by William H. Chamberlain, scholarly critic of the Soviets, and the third by B. S. Bercovici who in February, 1941, predicted that Hitler would shortly attack Russia and then the United States.

Domestic issues were not wholly neglected in these years. Thurman Arnold exposed the numerous ingenious restraints of trade developed by corporations and unions alike; Dr. William Leiserson, recalling his earlier days as an arbitrator in Rochester, described the work of the National Labor Relations Board; Congressman T. V. Smith reaffirmed his faith in democracy; Josephine Roche made a strong plea for

union-management cooperation; Max Lerner described labor's advance in war-torn Britain. A number of sessions were devoted to educational problems: former City Club president Spinning urged that students be encouraged to participate in a free discussion of all issues; Dr. Harry Overstreet, lamenting man's mistakes in attempting to run a democracy with adolescent minds, urged schools for adults. A symposium on the community's needs brought pleas for planning from Mrs. Alan Valentine, for new revenue sources from Colonel William H. Emerson, for better understanding between management and unions from Charles S. Wilcox, for vocational training and guidance from James M. Spinning, and for a continued war effort from Mayor Charles S. Stanton. Congressman J. W. Wadsworth debated candidate J. F. Colson at a regular political meeting in November, 1940. But none of the sessions during Reissig's two years struck so much fire as the attack on Zionism by the Arab-born Dr. G. I. Kheirallah and Rabbi Bernstein's impassioned defense.

Frank J. Little's term, 1941-42, began auspiciously enough, but within a few months the club's president and many of its members were off to war. Thomas Wearing, former vice-president, carried on in face of constant revisions in the speaker's schedule and the more serious distractions of war. Perhaps the speech of "Singapore Joe" on December 20, 1941, was characteristic of the troubled year. Joe Fisher, a last-minute substitute for a speaker called away by a war assignment, had just come from the South Pacific and assured the Club that the Japs would never be able to penetrate the jungles guarding the approach to Singapore, which nevertheless fell to them within two months. Joe's prediction certainly sounded much more plausible than the later pronouncement of Dr. Karl T. Scholz on the cost of the war. Dr. Scholz, in the process of exploding some popular economic illusions, denied that future generations pay for wars. We ourselves pay for those we stage, he declared, by shortages, privations, and the redoubling of our efforts. It seemed a bit academic at the time, for we had not yet pulled in our belts very far, nor did we realize the extent of the acceleration of our productive effort. It was easier to understand Professor Lee DuBridge's guarded and generalized report a few weeks later on the contributions of research scientists to the war — incidentally DuBridge did not at this time repeat his earlier mention of the atom!

The City Club's program was maintained throughout World War II by the untiring efforts of conscientious officers. No doubt several of the

speakers who finally appeared, some of them after cancellations by earlier choices, did not really know where we were heading, yet it was a great comfort to come together once a week and hear discussions of the crucial topics of the day, no matter who the speaker. And the very fact that the program was so frequently upset permitted alert officers to make use of several able young veterans fresh from battle scenes, such as Colin Mackenzie and Corporal John Stradley, both in John A. Lowe's term.

Memorable addresses by war correspondents, notably Cecil Brown, George Fielding Eliot and Walter Duranty, provided the star sessions of the war years. Other first-hand reports were brought by talented refugees, such as Dr. Hans Simons, and occasionally by former club members back in Rochester after service at the front. Rabbi Bernstein's account of "GI Joe and Religion" was a noteworthy meeting.

The Club did more than maintain itself during these fateful years — it enjoyed a new surge of growth. By the close of Dean Wearing's term the members, including 42 radio members, numbered 702, climbing to 720 and to 990 in the next two years. Much of the credit for this increase goes to Jonas Knopf, whose enthusiasm brought new zest to the membership drives. Moreover, the gains in membership were made despite increased dues, which were advanced in John Lowe's term to eight dollars a year, while the price for the luncheon leveled off at one dollar. Spirited membership campaigns may have helped to surmount these obstacles, but it was the strongly felt desire to assemble and hear competent speakers on the crucial issues of the day that maintained the high attendance throughout the war. Headline names, especially in Jonas Knopf's term, helped to push the average attendance up above 550 for 1944-45, the highest in the Club's history. An unprecedented surplus of \$1414 was realized that year despite increased costs on all sides.

A number of changes and new features have appeared within the past decade. The removal from the Powers Hotel to the Chamber of Commerce building in the fall of 1943 was perhaps the most striking change. Its more commodious facilities have encouraged the Club's growth, for larger crowds can be accommodated in greater comfort than before. Fortunately the old prejudice felt by labor members and their friends against meetings at the Chamber has given place to more cordial relations born of cooperation during the war. This new spirit of tolerance has frequently brought representatives of disparate factions together at the speaker's table.

Indeed, the speaker's table, under the management of astute officers, has become a significant institution in its own right. To the Club's old practice of rising at the entrance of the speaker's party has been added, during one of President Reissig's terms, the practice of introducing all privileged to sit with the speaker. Thus the Club has acquired the opportunity, by a judicious distribution of speaker's-table invitations, to bring together members of divergent creeds, loyalties and characteristics, and by proffering them the accolade of their fellows has nurtured the growth of tolerance and understanding.

The Club at the instigation of James M. Spinning has long provided student memberships at reduced rates. Several high schools have taken advantage of the possibility of purchasing such tickets, distributing them to different students each week. A large contribution has thus been made toward the development of mature outlooks among the abler scholars in our advanced schools.

Not all shifts in the City Club's traditions have been equally progressive. Perhaps the most regrettable loss of recent years has been the political debate at the beginning of the year. The last was that of 1940 when Wadsworth and Colson engaged in forensic bout. Two years later Congressman O'Brien refused the Club's invitation to debate his opponent, candidate Walden Moore, and after some hesitation the session was canceled. It was not the first time a candidate refused to appear, but in 1931, when one party declined at first to send a speaker, President Spinning, by declaring that he would announce the fact when introducing the unopposed opponent, compelled that party to produce a speaker. It was an excellent tradition, popular with the Club's members and useful to the city. It was revived after lapses in 1932-33 and 1936-37 (of all years!) and it might well be revived again.

One of the Club's earliest activities, the New Citizens' Banquets, discontinued in 1916, has since been revived, though not by the City Club. More than sixty such banquets have been held since their resumption by the Chamber of Commerce in 1921, and the practice has been widely copied throughout the country.

The luncheon forum has been adopted by numerous clubs in Rochester, though few pretend to grant a free hearing of all viewpoints — the old City Club ideal. Many of these luncheon programs have followed the trend of the times, shifting from local civic topics to national and international subjects. Some have specialized in this latter field, but none has contributed more to a comprehension of international problems than

the City Club. Indeed the Club may well regard this as its largest achievement, as significant and worthy as could be found during the past three decades.

A number of new trends are already apparent in the programs of the last two years. International topics remain predominant, but several other subjects are gaining the platform. Thus Beardsley Ruml's discussion of "Pay As You Go," during Dr. Harold E. Nicely's term was almost as popular as Durant's report on Russia, best attended program of that season. The four most popular sessions in Herbert P. Lansdale's term featured topnotch authorities on critical foreign questions: Vera Dean, Leland Stowe, Erika Mann and of course Maurice Hindus. Other speakers in the international field have been heard; various phases of the national economy have received attention. A new interest is apparent in philosophy, judging from the popularity of lectures by Will Durant and Reinhold Niebuhr. William L. Lawrence on the atomic bomb proved intensely interesting. Public health and education are back on the program, but we have not in some time had a good debate on a home-front topic.

It is too early to see the trends of this post-war era, which may yet become the great era of peace and human progress—provided sufficient intelligence and good will are applied to the problems before us. No club in Rochester has a better tradition for adult, open-minded consideration of all problems — local, national and international — and the City Club has thus a clear mandate to carry on.