THE KU KLUX KLAN IN OHIO AFTER WORLD WAR I

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Chapter I The Revival of the Ku Klux Klan, a Study in Nativism</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Chapter II The Klan Enters Ohio</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Chapter III The Invisible Empire Changes Hands</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Chapter IV The Business and Fraternal Life of the Klan</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Chapter V The Klan and Political Action</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Chapter VI The Klan and the School and Church</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter VII The Dissolution of the Klan in Ohio</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Although the United States has long borne with pride the title of the "melting-pot of nations", large groups of American citizens have at frequent intervals regarded this appellation with ill concealed distaste, and have sought to withdraw the hand of welcome extended hospitably toward foreign peoples. These segments of the population have, at the same time, demonstrated their hostility toward those racial, religious, and nationalistic elements within the country which they have considered to be alien to its culture and a danger to the nation. Unfortunately, the criteria used to decide what people have or have not been acceptable citizens have largely represented the spirit of the times and the inclination of the group's members.

Despite their firm convictions about the relative worth of the various "alien" elements within the United States, the argument advanced by these several nativist movements have not been predicated upon cultural variations. Instead, their principles have been clothed in the hallowed robes of patriotism and religious orthodoxy. The participants have either been unable or unwilling to recognize themselves as agents in the wholly natural process of culture conflict. These periodic movements, nevertheless, represent the more active phases of a process that is as old as man. In this country, fortunately, these struggles of
culture against culture have been but pale images of the patriotic and religious wars of Europe, and the passage of only a few years has served to heal many of the wounds in the body of American society. But underneath the surface, even as cultural amalgamation has continued its relentless pace, the old animosities have continued to smoulder needing only a favorable set of conditions in order to burst forth into full-blown cultural strife.

The revival of the Ku Klux Klan after World War I constituted such an outburst of nativism. The Klan fed by its temporal environment grew to gigantic proportions, and became a national movement, a threat to those it defined as "alien", and a potentially powerful political machine. Among the several states in which the Klan gained the largest number of adherents and greatest power was the state of Ohio. Ohio was at that time and is today a sort of the so-called "Bible belt" of fundamentalist Protestantism. This vast reservoir of Anglo-Saxon puritanical Christianity and its strong prohibition elements proved a fertile field for Klan organizers. In many rural areas, particularly, the residents almost to a man joined the white-robed circle grouped around the fiery cross.

Because of the fear and secrecy surrounding the Klan's activities, little probing has been done into the story of this relatively recent rip-tide in the current of American
social history. Even after the passage of thirty years voices were often lowered when the Klan was mentioned and a few of the aging Klansmen still refused to discuss their experiences. In many cases when interviews were granted, the writer was requested to conceal the identity of his informant to forestall any harmful effect upon the Klansmen's business relations.

Two further obstacles were encountered during the process of research. One was the unreliability of much of the material written at the time by both Klansmen and outsiders. In the first instance, the fault lay in the cloak of secrecy with which the work of the Klan was shrouded. Few men except the very highest officials knew the true story of the Klan's activities. In the latter instance disapproval of the Klan tended to color the writings of most commentators not within the fraternal circle. The second obstacle, however, proved to be a much more serious barrier to the production of any reasonably complete history of the Ohio Klan. Many important Klan officials had passed away carrying to their graves valuable information, and, of those who were still available for interviews, many were unable to relate the details of particular events because of the deleterious effect of the passage of time upon the accuracy of men's memory.
Despite these serious impediments it seemed important to assemble whatever information was available in this virgin field, and to present it despite the rather obvious lacunae that might appear in the completed manuscript. The importance of such a study at this time does not lie solely in the lack of previous information on the subject, nor even in the need of haste before the participants in the Ohio Klan movement have all passed away, but mainly it lies in the possibility that the immediate future may see attempts toward a new revival of nativism as a national movement in which the old Klan and its forms may play a large part. Since the end of World War II the Klan has been revived actively in the South and has pushed probing fingers toward similar groups in the North. Klan propaganda again filters through the mails, and old Klansmen predict that the organization may be rejuvenated at any moment.
CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, A STUDY IN NATIVISM

Religious intolerance, the forerunner of nativism in the United States, was clearly in evidence in the records of the original colonies. The Massachusetts theocracy, to mention only the most striking example, was noted for its punishment of any person who publicly varied from the teachings of the state religion. Later, following the Revolutionary War and the formation of the American Republic, the emotional theme of nationalism, or loyalty to the nation and its culture, was wedded to that of religious bigotry to form the defensive armor of the true American nativist. Before the eighteenth century had drawn to a close, the Federalists, alarmed by the French Revolution, had passed their famous Alien and Sedition Acts. Since that early display of American nativism, some form of racial or religious disturbance has occurred whenever the tide of immigration has swollen to unprecedented levels and, at the same time, the nation has faced economic depression.¹

¹ Emerson H. Loucks, The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania, 1-3, 16. Hereafter this work will be cited as Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania.
The tremendous migration of Irish and German peasants to the United States during the three decades following 1830 spawned several nativist movements. In 1834 Samuel F.B. Morse wrote his famous "Brutus" letters denouncing the Irish Catholics as a "clannish body of immigrants, avid of office and openly allying themselves as foreigners against the nation." The question of sectarian schools kept this movement alive, and in 1846 a national party, called the Native American Party, was formed which adopted the principles of the American Republican Party, a group that had been prominent in New York state politics for several years. At its first national convention in Philadelphia, delegates from fourteen states were present among whom were several from Ohio. The convention issued a statement declaring that the United States was becoming a dumping ground for monarchists and fanatics, and that no immigrant, however virtuous, could ever disassociate himself entirely from his European habits and attachments so as to become a reliable citizen of his adopted homeland. Despite the evident appeal of its program to large groups of American citizens the party declined rapidly and apparently ceased to exist after 1847, although incipient political nativism continued.

2. Stanley Frost, The Challenge of the Klan, 11. Hereafter this work will be cited as Frost, Klan.
3. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 3-5.
The roots of American nativism, however, did not long remain dormant, for the Irish famine and the unsuccessful revolution of 1848 in Germany increased the flow of immigration to the rate of hundreds of thousands each month. During the 1850's over two and one-half million immigrants came from Ireland alone, and, after 1862, the number of Germans arriving each year exceeded that of the Irish. In order to prevent these new arrivals from dominating local elections a secret society called the Order of the Star Spangled Banner was formed in 1850 to assure the election of American-born Protestants. This group, which was popularly called the Know-Nothing Party, had penetrated thirty-two states by 1855, and claimed a million and a half voters. Unfortunately for the continued success of the party, its leaders were persuaded to doff the veil of secrecy surrounding its membership. Once this was done, the movement became little more than a third party, and a temporary haven for dissident politicians from either the Whigs or the Democrats. The resultant internal struggles over party leadership and its nativist platform so weakened the organization that it disappeared during the slavery controversy preceding the Civil War.

The prosperous years immediately following the end of the war produced no widespread nativist agitation, but when

4. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 6-8.
the country was swept by depression in 1873 and again in 1883, new groups arose to defend so-called Pure Americanism from foreign contamination. The level of immigration provided an equally strong stimulus. In the ten years after 1880 over five million immigrants entered the country, many from the predominantly Catholic areas of southeastern Europe. Native-born and naturalized American workers made jobless by the depression of 1883 watched sullenly as Slavic and Italian workers flooded the mill towns and mining camps. Other groups of Americans, particularly in the middle West, became alarmed by the rapid growth of the Catholic Church in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Into this fertile field moved the American Protective Association, an organization founded by Henry F. Bowers at Clinton, Iowa in 1887. By 1893 it claimed a huge membership in twenty states although the exact number was never made public. The A.P.A. was fundamentally anti-Catholic, and its propaganda became notorious in the pages of history. The A.P.A., nevertheless, like its predecessor, the Know-Nothing Party, was unable to maintain its existence in the face of new and more pressing issues. Free silver and "Bryanism" captured the emotions of the nation undermining the anti-Catholic prejudices upon which A.P.A.-ism rested.

6. Ibid., 504-506.
Continued heavy immigration from Catholic countries during the early years of the twentieth century made the revival of nativism an imminent possibility. The emotional basis for such a movement was already being created by the columns of a violently anti-Catholic paper, The Menace, founded in Aurora, Missouri, in 1911 by Rev. Dr. Theodore Walker, a Congregationalist minister. During the same year Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles, U.S.A., retired, founded the Guardians of Liberty, the most prominent of the several patriotic, anti-Catholic organizations whose members later were absorbed into the Ku Klux Klan. Unlike the Klan, however, these pre-war groups were not able to attract members by the mystical symbolism of their names, nor did they enjoy the full benefit of the post-war wave of nationalism which swept the country.

It is extremely doubtful whether William Joseph Simmons had any idea on November 26, 1915, as he and a few friends gathered on Stone Mountain in Georgia, that this was the beginning of a movement that would sweep the nation and enlist the energies of millions of its citizens. For him it would have been sufficient to have simply revived the old Klan, for as a boy, he related, his most enjoyable activity had been to listen to Aunt Viney, his black mammy, tell stories about the Reconstruction era. Even at that tender age he

pledged himself to revive the Klan. 8

Although Simmons's real motives were not at all apparent, some clues may be discovered in a study of his life and personality. He was a tall man, over six feet, with a powerful voice and a technique of arousing the emotions of those who listened to him. 9 Contemporaries termed him a mystic, a dreamer, or an idealist, however warped. 10 After a brief period of army service during the Spanish-American War, he was employed as a circuit rider by the Methodist-Episcopalian Church, and later, as a salesman of fraternalism for several Protestant fraternal organizations. 11 It would be entirely within the bounds of reason for a person of his background and personal habits to have developed such an interest in the historic Klan of the Civil War days that he would have devoted his energies to its resurrection without any ulterior motives of personal gain or prestige. The later history of the Klan, however, after it had passed through several major transformations, has served to cast doubt upon the purity of its founder's intentions.

10. Frost, Klan, 23. See also John W. Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan, 6. Hereafter this work will be cited as Mecklin, Ku Klux Klan.
The revived Klan bore slight resemblance to its historic predecessor, although Simmons declared it to be the original Klan organized in 1865. Only the magic name, the nomenclature, and the regalia of the old Klan, along with the principle of intolerance, were retained. Because these historical symbols appealed to the emotions, they enabled it, even under the rather ineffectual leadership of W.J. Simmons, to gain wide currency in many parts of the South. Upon this slight framework, however, Simmons proceeded to erect what he called a "patriotic, military, benevolent, ritualistic, social and fraternal order or society" of national scope. The original theme of white supremacy was maintained inviolate, but to it were added the protection of America and Americanism, and the exclusion of all non-gentiles, foreign born, and those who owed allegiance to any foreign agent, ruler, government, sect, or people, i.e., Catholics.

Simmons, no doubt, was susceptible to the currents of nativist thought flowing about him, yet it would be hard to imagine him coldly scheming to make himself the high priest of a new nativist movement of the size which the Ku Klux Klan later became. Rather one must credit his rise to fame as the founder of the Klan to a set of wholly fortuitous cir-

12. Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Incorporated), Declaration. Hereafter this document will be cited as Constitution.
cumstances which bore him aloft on their crests. Some motivation for his antagonism toward the foreign born doubtless lay in the anti-German feeling which was heightened during the war years by the thoughtless actions of certain hyphenated Americans, and by threats of German sabotage. It should be remembered also that the early years of the twentieth century marked the high point in the stormy career of the International Workers of the World, many of whose members were guilty in American eyes not only of embracing radical ideas, but also of fomenting needlessly bloody strikes.

But Simmons, whatever his original reasons, failed miserably in the promotion of his non-profit, fraternal order. From the time of its incorporation on July 1, 1916, until June, 1920, he had succeeded in enlisting only five or six thousand followers.16 His friends could see little danger threatening American institutions, nor were they the determined foes of urban life as Simmons was. Some of his statements marked Simmons as an old fashioned southern conservative whose ideas could have had little appeal even in his native South enshrouded as it was with the advantages afforded by the rise of industry and ever larger cities. Speaking for all Klansmen, Simmons asserted that Americanization was most difficult in the city where American ideals

16. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 23.

12
and institutions had been contaminated if not destroyed. "We believe," he continued, "that one can never be wholly patriotic or thoroughly democratic until he obeys God's great first commandment and settles upon some spot of ground and subdues it." 16

Contrary to his expectations, however, the Klan movement soon demonstrated its greatest success in the Northern states in which the city had dominated the lives of the people for many years. Although substantially higher percentages of the residents in small towns and rural areas than in the cities joined the Klan, many of the largest and most active Kieverns were formed in the industrial areas of the Middle West, and in New Jersey. This surprising change in the original focus of the Klan is directly attributable to the organizing ability of Edward Young Clarke and Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor of the Southern Publicity Association which became the head of the Klan's propagation department.

Previous to the time of their being hired by the Klan, Clarke and Mrs. Taylor had joined forces in promoting various local schemes. At the time of their first meeting she was active in Y.W.C.A. work and in sponsoring better child hygiene, whereas Clarke was noted for his more ambitious work as a "doctor of sick towns". 17

17. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 18, 19.
In order to understand their immediate success, which was equally surprising to the two partners, a study must be made of the cultural milieu of the early 1920's. In the simplest terms the country was in a state of widespread unrest. The nation no longer needed to concentrate solely on the winning of its western lands, for it had entered a new phase of consolidation or of maturation somewhat analogous to the hectic years of adolescence so prominent in the development of most normal American youth. The center of the nation's attention was slowly shifting from introspection and introversion to that of healthy extroversion. Many people, however, failed to understand that these tremendous changes were entirely natural, and as inexorable as time. They rebelled; they became confused; they demanded retrenchment. But even as they lifted their voices the events of the World War were hastening the process of change. Furthermore, many American soldiers were being confronted for the first time with novel ideas and different moral standards. The effect was similar to that resulting from a sudden cold shower; a wild flurry of uncoordinated reaction resulted.

To the average American the war had been an ideallistic crusade for democracy, but the events transpiring in Europe immediately after its close seemed to make a mockery of his aspirations. The countries of Europe evidently did not want to be reformed along the lines of America's aspirations.
toward true democracy. Feeling that he had been unjustly rebuffed the American of the 1920's reacted by stoutly rejecting all things foreign. He indulged himself in a temporary reverie toward his previous state of introversion. Those unfortunate converts to European standards, the flappers, and the "lost generation" of F. Scott Fitzgerald, not to mention the sizable group of liberals, earned an even greater portion of his vitriol. His reforming zeal frustrated, the average American now sought success in policing those at home whom he considered to be immoral, or, at least non-conformist in the essential basic details of American life. Such a course of action obviously met with stern opposition on the part of certain elements in the population. For these groups he reserved a full measure of the hate which the war had aroused but had not successfully dissipated.

The Ku Klux Klan, characterized at first by a priceless opportunism, fed upon this hate, distrust, and reforming zeal. Real problems of a complex nature were reduced by a process of incredible oversimplification to ones which supposedly required only the personal attention of a few masked knights in order to be solved successfully. Yet even the existence of widespread unrest was only a partial explanation for the potency of the Klan craze, for specific events, such

15
as the severe recession which struck in the fall of 1920, proved to be an equally important factor in the Klan's growth. By August, 1921, Secretary of Labor James J. Davis estimated that 5,755,000 people were unemployed. At the same time three other subjects of current discussion were pyramiding fear upon fear in the hearts of Americans. The first was the great wave of strikes unprecedented in the history of American labor which followed on the heels of the restoration of peace. No less frightening, despite its substantially unreal foundation was the "Red Scare" which swept the country in 1919. Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer, an arch foe of the Bolsheviki, frustrated several attempts to bomb the homes of prominent American officials, and exercised his fullest powers, to the ardent admiration of much of the public, in deporting all suspected Reds. A third problem, although seemingly not as important, was a very real one to the public during the 1920's. The nation was beset by an unprecedented wave of murders, burglaries, government scandals, and petty law violations, particularly infractions of the Volstead Act. The Klan, as if to provide a solution for these very real problems, preached Americanism, respect for law and order, and the overthrow of predatory and un-American elements in society.

20. Mark Sullivan, Our Times; 1900-1922, IV, 560.
21. Ibid., 170-171.
order, and raised the old stereotypes of Catholic, Jew, foreigner, and "nigger." 23 Well-meaning and often sincere Americans embraced its activist preachments as the most logical method of combating evils which they felt were foreign in origin. Klansmen were kept informed of the rapid growth of the Catholic Church which numbered at that time some twenty million communicants divided into twenty-five thousand congregations. 24 In the northern industrial regions the presence of increasing numbers of Jewish and Catholic immigrants, and southern Negroes who had migrated north during the war was readily apparent to even the most disinterested. 25 All of these themes of discord and fear seemingly found an answer within the program of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. A sociologist writing at the time assayed the Klan program in these words: "The Klan, indeed, is the concretion, sublimates and gratification of the passions in play since the coming of the Great War." 26  

The use and even the cultivation of these fears occupied an important place in the Klan's propaganda. Simons in his

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 Highly emotional writings denounced the evils which he saw in American society: money madness, political corruption, and over-centralization of government, but the subject to which he returned most often was the theme of Americanism. "We do not," he said, "in the least seek to hide the great fact that the Ku Klux Klan is making a last stand for America as the home of Americans and Americanism." His greatest fear was that the seeds of democracy which he defined as a frail plant indigenous only among the people of northwest Europe or the Nordic race, would be trampled underfoot by the vast numbers of inherently inferior peoples flooding the country. His fears for the Nordic race were superbly expressed in the colorful statement which follows:

The "rising tide" of the colored peoples and the backward white peoples, their ultimate domination of the human process, today overtops in importance every other fact in the world. 28

What we require is action, and we Klansmen propose to have it without further dilly-dallying and compromise. 29

27. Simmons, The Klan Unmasked, 126.
28. Ibid., 160. The capitalization is Simmons'.
29. Ibid., 256.
CHAPTER II
THE KLAN ENTERS OHIO

The rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan dated from June, 1920, when Simmons hired the Southern Publicity Association to bring the Klan to the attention of the public. Under the terms of the contract Edward Y. Clarke was to assume the office of Imperial Kleagle (national organizer) and to direct the work of propagation. In return his department was to receive eighty per cent of each ten dollar Klecktoken or Imperial donation collected from "aliens" naturalized into the Klan. This liberal arrangement permitted Clarke to organize the propagation department along the lines of a modern sales department using the incentive method of liberal commission payments. The field organizer called a Kleagle received $4.00 from each Klecktoken, the state organizer (King Kleagle), $1.00, and the regional supervisor (Grand Goblin), $.50. Of the remaining $4.50, Clarke deposited $2.00 to the credit of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and retained $2.50 for himself.1

Outsiders who were cognizant of the Klan's commission system sharply criticized its liberality, and labeled the organization's leaders as corrupt mercenaries. The local

1. Neeklin, Ku Klux Klan, 8.
Kleagle received his share of criticism also, for he seemed to be none too scrupulous in discovering whether a prospective candidate, eager to pay his Kleastoken, was of good character, as the Klan's constitution required. A few organizers were even accused of encouraging night riding and mob justice. Hiram Wesley Evans admitted, after his accession to the position of Imperial Wizard, that Clarke's agents had begun "to sell hate at $10.00 a package." Despite this well deserved criticism of the mercenary character of a few Kleagles, the reader should be informed that all organizers were required to pay their own expenses, and although a few, such as the Lohr brothers who started the Klan in Akron, Ohio, returned to their homes substantially enriched, an equally large number suffered financial reverses as a result of their Klan activities.

The use of a wide variety of modern sales practices other than the commission system played an equally important part in the efficiency and speed with which the Klan blanketed the nation. A film entitled "The Face at Your Window" was widely used. Nor did the Klan overlook the value of newspaper advertising, pamphlets, and periodicals.

2. Constitution, Article IV, Section 1. See also Frost, Klan, 122.


4. From interviews with the Klan investigator for Ohio, (O-E officer) and a Klan lecturer.

The newspaper editors of the country, aware of the novelty of the Klan idea, gave the movement invaluable publicity by circulating a picture purporting to show a group of masked Klansmen. However the picture, taken by a young Atlanta photographer, was a fraud for underneath the robes were twenty Jewish models whose services had been engaged after Simmons and Clarke had refused to pose.  

The actual work of propagation was relatively simple one. Prospective members were usually invited to a meeting in some fraternal hall or church to listen to an address on the Klan's principles given either by the local Klagle, or by one of the many lecturers retained by the state or national propagation department. These speakers soon learned that a mere recital of the Klan's beliefs was not enough. Instead appeals were made to those elements in the Klan's progress which most closely paralleled the community's peculiar interests. In Springfield and Akron, Ohio, for example, the Negro problem provided the Klan with a convenient lever to recruit members. But the most universally successful theme always remained that of patriotism. Speaking in a northern Ohio town in 1922, a Klan lecturer carefully emphasized the evils pre-

7. From an interview with a Klan lecturer. See also Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 20, 31-32.

21
valent in the country and the weaknesses in the government. Subtly at the close of his talk he merged the twin emotional appeals of patriotism and religion by urging his audience as "men, Americans, and Christians to forget differences and selfish interest and to unite to make a better nation, safer homes."8

The address by Dr. A. H. Gilliridge to a group in Ada, Ohio in 1923 provides a typical example of Klan methods. From the Klan creed he extracted the following principles which he asserted constituted the Klan's program:

Christian teachings, white supremacy, protection of pure womanhood, just law and liberty, closer relationships of pure Americanism, upholding of the United States Constitution, sovereignty of state rights, separation of church and state, freedom of speech and press, closer relationships between capital and American labor, preventing the causes of mob violence and lynchings, preventing unwarranted strikes by foreign labor agitators, prevention of fires and property destruction by lawless elements, limitation of foreign immigration, and law and order.9

Few of those present could have denied that they fully endorsed many, if not all, of these principles. Blinded by the rousing idealism of the Klan's platitudes, most failed to sense the demagoguery of the speaker, or to recognize the glittering generalities of its credo.

In fairness to former Klansmen, it must be said that most of those apparently embraced the Klan platform with complete sincerity because it appealed strongly to their sense of morality and patriotism. Although a small segment was made up of hoodlums or zealots, the majority were solid, middle-class citizens. In the cities members were recruited most often from the less successful members of the white collar class, the clerks and the shop-keepers, or from those who moved on the fringes of the professions. The bigger cities with their large numbers of laborers and foreign born, however, usually gave the Klan a cold reception. In rural areas the men along Sinclair Lewis' "Main Street", fascinated by the Klan's mysticism, were irresistibly attracted, as were his "Babbits" and the American super-patriot.

The Klan, in general, represented a fairly complete cross-section of American life. Klansmen, nevertheless, took particular pride in emphasizing the large numbers of law enforcement officers and ministers that had joined their order. Over half the Klan lecturers in Ohio, they reported.

10. From an interview with Clyde Osborne, Grand Dragon of Ohio. See also Frost, Klan, 2.
were ministers, and in Middletown, Ohio, every Protestant minister was a member. Besides these groups the Klan numbered among its adherents doctors, lawyers and judges, not to mention state and national officers. In order that certain high officials might not be handicapped politically by public knowledge of their affiliation, they were issued certificates from either the state or national headquarters acknowledging their membership in a special group called "Klan 0". One such certificate, it is believed, was issued to no less an important person than a President of the United States.

The vast majority of Klansmen, nevertheless, were not members of professional groups, but were recruited from among the intellectually and socially mediocre. Hiram W. Evans, the Imperial Wizard, characterized them as plain people needing intellectual support and trained leaders. Other observers, approaching the problem from a different angle, chose to label the Klansmen as frustrated people seeking, through an idealization of their status as knights in an order dedicated to the conservation of American ideals, to

13. From an interview with a Klan lecturer.
14. From an interview with Clyde Osborn.
15. From an interview with the Klan director of first aid in Franklin County and verified by the Klan investigator for Ohio (O-Z officer).
quiet their feelings of mediocrity. Derogatory as these opinions may be, they took on added weight as Klansmen were asked to express themselves upon the Klan’s principles.

With hardly an exception their mental images of what the Klan stood centered around the Catholic, the Jew, the foreigner and the Negro, the traditional mental stereotypes of historical nativism.

The Klan leader (Exalted Cyclops) in Marion County, Ohio, a typical midwestern farming area, provides an excellent example. Occupationally he was a farmer of less than average success, but in other details of life he was a perfect model of the puritanically somber midwestern agriculturist. Unsmilingly, and in subdued tones which mirrored his sincerity, he confided to a reporter his fears for the country’s safety. He was certain that the Catholics controlled eighty per cent of the nation’s newspapers, and were plotting against the public schools; that the Jews, thinking only of gain, were rapidly undermining public morals. Even the Negroes, though few in number, needed, in his opinion, to be closely watched. “We want the country ruled by the sort of people who originally settled it”, he pointed out. “This is our country and we alone are responsible for its future”.

17. Wecklin, Ku Klux Klan, 108.
Such definite opinions would seem to indicate the presence of large numbers of Negroes, Catholics, Jews, and foreign born in the vicinity, but such was not the case. Out of a total population of 27,691 in Marion, the county seat, there were only 239 Negroes and only 946 residents who were foreign born. The number of Catholics also, was in no way exceptional, for at the time the only strongly Catholic counties were Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, and to a lesser extent Mercer, Van Wert, and several others in northwestern Ohio.

Obviously this Klansmen's fears were only emotional creations which had taken shape in his mind under the impact of the Klan's propaganda. Clyde W. Osborne, former Grand Dragon of the Ohio Klan, was acutely conscious of the fact that most Klan organizers had deliberately cultivated these fears and had adopted the technique of casting the obviously dominant Protestant group in the role of a weak minority at the mercy of Catholics, foreigner, and Negroes. Under the influence of this wholly inaccurate impression, the average Klansman was transformed into an enthusiastic defender of Americanism, who believed that he belonged to one of the embattled remnants of the so-called Nordic race.

20. From an interview with Clyde W. Osborne. See also Losaka, 
Klan in Pennsylvania, 36.
Samplings of the Klan's printed literature quickly verify this conclusion. Throughout the Middle West, wide use was made by many Klansmen of a booklet written by A. H. Beach entitled *Making American Catholic*. In it a group of quotations from Catholic works were cleverly arranged to show Catholic antagonism toward American institutions.21 Another anti-Catholic pamphlet called the **KKK Ketechism and Song Book**, was published in Columbus, Ohio, by the *Patriot Publishing Company*. Interspersed among its patriotic and religious songs were groups of questions and answers so arranged as to convey to the reader the information that Lincoln's death was part of a Catholic plot, and that the oath of the Knights of Columbus bound them to murder Protestants. But even more fantastic were the whispering campaigns, current among Klansmen, to the effect that a certain issue of dollar bills that had appeared in 1917 was covered with Catholic symbols, or that the Pope was transferring his headquarters to Washington, D.C., where a palace was being prepared for him.22

It would have been strange indeed if some overt act had not resulted from this poison which had been infused into the minds of Klansmen by Edward Y. Clarke's organizers. Early in 1921 newspapers throughout the country began to

print reports of lawless acts committed in widely scattered places in the South, although Texas and Louisiana seemed to be the states in which the most shootings, tearings, and even murders took place. Because the crimes were always committed by robed men, the religious and secular press refused to believe Simmons when he insisted he had investigated the crimes and had found that Klansmen were not the perpetrators.

Following a sensational exposé by the New York World in which sixty-five separate outrages were attributed to Klan members, the House of Representatives launched an investigation into Klan activities. Although the investigating committee succeeded in drawing from witnesses testimony to the effect that Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor had frankly acknowledged her purely mercenary interest in the Klan, and that the Klan's financial records were somewhat laxly kept, the results were anything but unfavorable for the Klan, for Simmons proved to be a dramatic witness. He stoutly denied all the charges leveled at the Klan, and appeared to be bewildered that they could have been given any credence.

At the time of the investigation there were approximately


one hundred thousand Klansmen in the United States. These were scattered rather lightly over forty-five states, forty-one of which had active state organizations led by a King Kleegele. To the annoyance of the Klan's critics, these twin investigations, one by the World and the other by Congress, merely served to publicize the Klan and to spur the rate of enlistment 20% above the previous normal. Prospective members even mailed in their applications on the very facsimile of the Klan's application form printed in the World's expose.

More than a year before the Congressional investigation, the first Klan organizers known to have operated north of the Ohio River are believed to have established themselves in Southern Indiana in the vicinity of Evansville. From this base of operations Kleegeles moved into northern Indiana and into Ohio, one of the first being Worley W. Cortner of Muncie.

27. House of Representatives, Committee on Rules. The Ku Klux Klan. Hearings on H. Res. 188, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 55, 87 (1921). Clarke said that there were 126,000 members but Simmons insisted there were only 90,000 to 95,000.

28. Winfield Jones, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 111-112.

29. Papers Read at the Meeting of the Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Paper Read by the editor of the Imperial White Hawk, 95.

30. From an interview with Ohio's G-2 officer.
Indians, who organized the Klan in Springfield. The exact date when he began his activities is unknown, but it was early in the fall of 1920 previous to the time of the presidential election. Desiring a change of party because of supposed corruption in the Wilson government, not to mention the fact that the Republican candidate was an Ohioan, the newly founded Springfield Klan worked for the election of Harding to the Presidency. At approximately the same time Dr. Charles L. Harrod, a Columbus dentist who was to become the state's first King Kleagle, was inducted into the Order. Working with Wyron Thomas, the brother of the warden of the Ohio State Penitentiary and another dentist, named Dr. Jenner who moved to Columbus from Cincinnati, Dr. Harrod organized the Franklin County (Columbus) Klan. In recognition of their success, the offices of the two doctors on State Street became the main recruiting center for the Ohio Klan.

Within a short time Kleagles were busy in most parts of the state, their work being coordinated during the first few months by Charles W. Love, the Grand Goblin of the Great Lakes region, who established his offices in Indianapolis. As the Ohio Klan grew, signs of its activities appeared more

31. From an interview with a Columbus Masonic officer.
32. From an interview with an Ohio G-2 officer and Jacob A. Heckstruth, editor emeritus of the Ohio State Journal.
and more frequently. Early in the morning of June 16, 1921, the citizens of a community twenty miles from Cincinnati were startled to see a blazing cross surrounded by two thousand and robed Klansmen. The occasion for the ceremony was a visit by Imperial Klaggio Clarke who watched as Klansmen from twenty-two cities in Ohio, Kentucky, and other states initiated three hundred aliens into the Klan. And in Reading, Ohio, the first Klan funeral service performed in the North stirred the curiosity of the townsmen.

Although recruitment proceeded slowly in Cleveland and Cincinnati because of their large Catholic and foreign born populations, no area of the state presented an insurmountable obstacle. By 1923 the Klan was strongly entrenched in the Dayton-Springfield area, and in the counties surrounding Columbus. The Franklin County Klan was estimated to have numbered over fifty thousand at its peak membership, although this figure seems questionable, since the Summit County Klan (Akron), admittedly the largest in the state, numbered only 52,960 at its highest point. Other strong-

36. From an interview with Ohio's G-2 officer.
37. The testimony of the Klan lecturer living in Akron regarding the size of the Klan there seemed more reliable than the figures given by the Ohio G-2 officer.
holds of the Klan were in Pickaway, Washington (Varetta), Mahoning (Youngstown), and Butler counties. Wherever large foreign born or Catholic elements existed, however, Klansmen admitted that their organizations were numerically weakened. Such was the case in Portsmouth, Steubenville, and to a lesser extent in Toledo, Van Wert, and in Mercer County. But in the predominately rural areas which were untouched by recent immigration, the Klan so dominated many communities that hoods were never lowered during parades. 36

Much of the Klan’s mushroom-like growth in Ohio came as a result of the publicity given it by the Congressional investigation. So rapid was the increase in membership that no efficient state organization developed until September, 1924, when Ohio was admitted as a Klan Realm. The local, county Klans, some still bearing the name of Buckeyes Club, or one of the other titles commonly used to conceal the Klan’s activities, represented, in essence, a conglomeration of local groups concerned about local affairs.39 The same conditions must have prevailed in other states for, in 1921 and 1922, the rate of growth was uniformly high all over the nation. By 1923 it is estimated there were at least two and a half million Klansmen in the nation; the Ohio contingent numbering approximately 300,000.40 Some conception of the

36. From an interview with Ohio’s 0-2 officer.
39. From interviews with Clyde N. Osborne and a Klan lecturer.
40. Everett R. Clinchy, All in the Name of God, 97. See also the Ohio Piery Cross, February 26, 1924.
importance of the Midwest in the Klan's scheme of power is conveyed by the report of the Imperial Kligrasp (national secretary) at the second national Klonvokation in 1924 in which he revealed that the members of the 2,692 chartered Kluans in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin constituted 40.2% of the total Klan membership.  

A few government and law enforcement officials backed by outstanding American liberals opposed the Klan during its early period of phenomenal growth, but their best efforts, like the World's exposition, produced, as often as not, the exactly opposite effect from that intended. In Oklahoma Governor J.C. Walton aroused such public opposition by his unconstitutional methods of driving the Klan from the state that he was impeached by the Legislature and removed from office. Several cities in Ohio were no less guilty of making the same mistake. In Cleveland for example, the city council forbade Klan meetings in a resolution passed on August 29, 1921, and launched an investigation which turned into a fiasco. Almost a year later another Ohio city, Akron, provided the Klan with an equally ideal opportunity to add to its prestige. The Klan, as a part of a recruiting drive launched in May, 1922, had reserved the Akron Armory

41. Edgar J. Fuller, The Visible of the Invisible Empire, 125-126. Hereafter this work will be cited as Fuller, The Invisible Empire.

42. Frost, Klan, 5-6.
43. Akron Beacon Journal, September 30, 1921. See also New York Times, August 30, 1921.
for a big meeting scheduled on May 24, at which Dr. Harrod, the King Kleege and other dignitaries were to speak. Akron's Jewish, Catholic, and Negro organizations, however, objected to the Klen's using public property, and they persuaded Governor Harry L. Davis to ban the use of the armory. Nothing daunted, the Klen assembled peacefully at the Calvary Baptist Church, only to have its meeting disbanded by an injunction issued to George W. Thompson, the secretary of the colored Y.M.C.A. Realizing the propaganda value of the situation, the Klen leader asked the men to leave quietly in order to demonstrate that Klansmen believed in complying with the law.44

Because the Klen represented the elements of the nation that favored the status quo, opposition, such as that described above, automatically worked to its benefit. Cast in the role of the defender of Americanism, the Klen denied that it was ever the aggressor, for it made no pretense of wanting to change the existing order. American liberals, moreover, found themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma whenever they attempted to scorch the Klen for violating the spirit of Americanism by making a virtue of hatred and prejudice. To this the Klen replied that its fears of alien power were real, but that few Americans knew the inside truth.45

45. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 36.
Every public event, every move by its opponents seemed to present the Klan with new material for its propaganda and with thousands of recruits. The White Giant waxed strong over the land, ready for whatever use its masters might desire.
CHAPTER III
THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE CHANGES HANDS

In the fall of 1868 a second revolution occurred within the ranks of the Klan's Imperial Klondiculum (Board of National Officers) which was fully as dramatic in its after effects, as that which had elevated Edward Y. Clarke to the position of Imperial Klengle. The scene of this action was the first meeting of the Klan's legislative body, the Imperial Alonvocation, which convened in Atlanta, Georgia, in November. For several months previous to this meeting rumors had been flying that Simons felt his twin duties as Emperor and Imperial Wizard were too strenuous, and he was prepared to nominate a successor to the important post of Imperial Wizard. These reports were received with joy in certain Klan circles, for the feeling had developed that Simons' impractical nature was preventing the fullest development of the Klan's financial and political possibilities.

The leader of these dissident elements was Hiram Wesley Evans, the Imperial Kligrapp (Secretary), who had been a

1. The position of Emperor was held for life, but was largely honorary since the only duty assigned to the office was the development and regulation of the Klan's ritual. The office of Imperial Wizard, however, was the supreme executive post of the Ku Klux Klan, and the fountainehead of all power. See the Constitution, Articles V, IX, and XI.

2. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 46.

36
struggling dentist in Dallas, Texas, before joining the Klan. Evans, a rather unimposing middle-aged gentleman, took delight in referring to himself as "the most average man in America". This characterization, however, was not entirely valid, for besides being a natural orator, he was noted for his unerring political instinct, his practical common sense, and for his exceptional organizing ability. Nevertheless, contemporaries have observed that his manner of thinking and expression revealed a lack of education and cultural polish.  

Associated with Evans in this incipient rebellion were other prominent members of the Klan in the South, and David Curtis Stephenson, the attractive, powerfully built leader of the Klan in Indiana. The ambitious Stephenson had become the most influential Klan leader in the North, and a power to be dealt with in any contemplated change in the Klan's leadership. He had, moreover, been highly critical of Simmons' inept rule.  

The inside story of the plot to seize control of the Klan resembles a description of the secret maneuverings proverbially associated with a political party convention, although certain aspects are melodramatic enough to have been lifted from the plot of a class B movie. To begin with, Evans delegated Stephenson and Fred L. Savage of the Georgia

3. Frost, Klan, 81-83.

4. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 46.

37
Office to visit Simmons at three o'clock in the morning on the eve of the convention to persuade him to name Evans as his successor. At first the startled Klan leader was hesitant, but he promised to comply after his visitors informed him that attacks were expected to be made against his character if he renominated himself. Savage, pretending complete loyalty to Simmons, informed him that these attacks would be answered with bullets, even though the inevitable result would be the destruction of the Klan.

Without being aware of the full significance of his surprise morning visit, Simmons allowed Evans to be appointed his temporary successor. The removal of Simmons as an active leader in the Klan hierarchy, and the trend of events leading to his eventual retirement dated from that moment, for the office of Imperial Wizard carried with it such dictatorial powers that Evans could only have been ousted by a well planned coup d'État such as that which had placed him in office.

For a few months Simmons endured in silence his virtual exclusion from the executive body of the Klan, but the sweeping changes in the Klan's program which he accused Evans of making spurred him to engage the Imperial Wizard in a legal

5. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 46. Marion Monteaval (pseudonym) reported that Simmons was shown a compromising picture which would have been used to undermine his authority if he had refused. See The Klan Inside Out, 30.
battle for the control of the Klan. Evans, Simons argued, was interested in the Klan for purely mercenary reasons. "It is Klan in name only" for "I am the only real Klansman. I alone... am the possessor... of the ineffable words and the magic key of Klankraft."\(^6\) In a sense Simons' claims of ownership were entirely correct for he possessed the copyrights on the Klan's name, constitution, and ritual, and was listed as its president in the original Georgia charter.

Although Evans was able to persuade the court of the legality of his election as Imperial Wizard, the embarrassing schism within the ranks of the Klan's national leadership remained, threatening to undermine the morale of the Klan's membership. In order to obviate this situation Evans forced Simons to retire from the office of Emperor on February 9, 1924, and to sell his copyrights for the sum of $146,500.\(^7\)

The autocratic power which Evans wielded in his fight against Simons stemmed, ironically, from the very constitution which Simons himself had written, and which had been

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adopted on November 29, 1922, with only a few minor changes
being made by the Imperial Klonvokation. In the first place
this document declared that "the government of this Order shall
ever be military in character.... and no legislative enact-
ment or constitutional amendment hereafter shall encroach
upon, affect or change this fundamental principle of the In-
visible Empire." The commander-in-chief placed at the apex
of power in this military government was the Imperial Wizard.
Although, like the American Constitution, the Klan Constitu-
tion also provided a supreme legislative body or Imperial
Klonvokation, and a supreme judicial authority, or Imperial
Kloncilium, to share in the administration of the Klan's
affairs, overly generous grants of power to the chief execu-
tive enabled him to dominate these bodies completely. Critics
of the Klan were quick to point out the incongruity of such
an autocratic body or a dictatorship passing itself off as
the most dependable defender of American democracy.

The most important single power granted to the Imperial
Wizard was the right to appoint all Imperial Officers, Grand
Dragons, and Kléagles, and to remove them, or any other Klan
officer or employee, on grounds of "incompetency, disloyalty,
neglect of duty, or for unbecoming conduct." The exercise

10. Constitution, Article X, Sections 9 and 10 and Article
    XII, Sections 1 and 2.
40
of this authority enabled him to maintain absolute control over the imperial Klontium. This body, composed of the fifteen Imperial officers or Genii who headed the several executive departments, not only had supreme appellate jurisdiction over disputes arising within the Klan, but also acted as the Imperial Wizard's cabinet, and as the supreme legislative body of the Klan during the interim between meetings of the Imperial Klontimation. However, since this last named group met only once every two years, this function of the Klontium delivered into the hands of the chief executive almost absolute legislative power.

The Imperial Klontimation itself was only a slightly less helpless tool in the hands of the Imperial Wizard, for it was composed largely of officials appointed either directly or indirectly by him. All Imperial Officers, Grand Dragons, and Great Titans were delegates, and two Imperial Officers, the Kialiff and the Kitgrapp were its President and

11. Constitution, Article VII. The officers and their duties were: Kialiff, first vice president and President of the Imperial Klontimation; Klazak, second vice president and executive head of the Department of Realms; Klaakard, lecturer; Klund, Chaplain; Kligrap, secretary; Klabee, treasurer; Klonsile, lawyer; Night Hawk, head of the Department of Investigation; Imperial Klokan, four officers called Kloken individually who composed the Board of Auditors; and three others who held positions important only in the ritual ceremony.

12. Constitution, Article VI, Section I.
Secretary, respectively. 13 In addition to these members, one delegate called a Klepeer was elected from each organized Realm and Province, and from each unorganized Realm. Neverthe-less, every Exalted Cyclops who wished to attend could represent his local Klevern and could cast a single vote apart from the group vote of the Realm. The method of balloting, however, was cleverly arranged to give the appointed officials a decided advantage. Each Realm was awarded one vote for every one hundred Klansmen, or majority fraction thereof, in good standing, and these were divided equally among the representatives of the Realm after the votes of the Exalted Cyclops present had been subtracted. Since each Klevern had hundreds if not thousands of members, the Exalted Cyclops with one vote could hardly have fairly represented their wishes. 14 With such a system of voting and with a majority of the delegates being officials appointed by him, the Exalted Cyclops could prevent any legislation from passing which ran counter to his wishes. Nor need he fear the

13. Constitution, Article VI, Sections 2 and 3. When a sufficient number of Klans had been established in any state it was incorporated into the Invisible Empire as a Realm, and the King Kleagle replaced by an executive officer called the Grand Dragon. The executive head of the state could further divide the Realm into groups of counties called Provinces, appointing as the head of each a Great Titan with the Imperial Kleziks approval. Both of these officers had a cabinet which was originally selected by their superiors, but was later to be ratified by a legislative body, the Klorero having authority to ratify those selected to be Realm officers or Hydres and the Klonverse, those chosen Province officers or Furies. See Constitution, Articles XVI and XVII.

danger of any law being passed over his veto.

As if this were not enough, the power of granting and revoking the charters of local Klaverns was added to the prerogatives of the Imperial Wizard. 16 He exercised, moreover, residual authority and could decide important questions, and issue instructions covering "any matter not specifically set forth in this Constitution..." 16 Among his many minor powers were those requiring him to have the Klan regalia manufactured, and to contract with members for the task of membership recruitment or for business interests, at any compensation which he desired to fix. 17 The powers vested in the office of the Imperial Wizard not only affected the welfare of the National Office, but also reached down to the lowest level of the Klan organization. He could, for instance, benish any Klansman who displeased him, or could refuse to ratify the by-laws of the local Klan when submitted for his approval. 18 An even closer rein was kept on the local organizations by his appointee, the Grand Dragon, who was required to approve the slate of officers elected in each Klavern. 19 Some measure of the permanency of the tenure in office of the Imperial Wizard may be gained by a re-

17. Constitution, Article X, Sections 1, 6, and 13.
18. Constitution, Article X, Sections 7 and 12.
19. Constitution, Article X, Section 9; Article XVIII, Section 10.
cital of the method of his election. The Constitution pro-
vided that the Grand Dragons should meet every four years and
constitute themselves an elective body to choose the new
Imperial Wizard. 20 Obviously the old incumbent in office
could hardly fail to win re-election. Nor was it feasible
to accomplish his removal from office because his dismissal
required a three-fourths vote of the Consilium, together
with the concurrence of the Grand Dragons. 21

Hidden behind the bulwark of this inordinate supply of
power, Hiram W. Evans not only defended himself against the
legal action of William J. Simmons, but also successfully in-
stituted the changes which he, as the leader of the dissident
elements, had advocated. The revolution that took place
transformed the Klan from a fraternal lodge into a mass move-
ment. This new version of the Ku Klux Klan was aptly des-
cribed by a Klan pamphlet in the following words:

Our Organization is not what is commonly termed a lodge,
nor a speculative institution; but an intensely operated
mass movement nation-wide in its scope. It is the
national force for good—a crusade, the purpose of
which is to underwrite for Protestant America, present
and future, the success of American, Anglo-Saxon ideals
and institutions. 22

Behind this deliberate overhauling of the somewhat loose-
ly organized Invisible Empire, lay the fixed purpose of mold-
ing the Ku Klux Klan into an effective political machine.

20. Constitution, Article IX, Section 1.
22. Klan Building, a pamphlet.
Realizing the harmful effects, especially on recruitment in the North, of the night-riding tactics of southern Klans, Evans began a bitter fight against lawless elements within the membership. He not only warned them in a barrage of pamphlets that the law was to be enforced by the regularly constituted authorities, but he also re-enforced this edict by placing men of impeccable character, such as General Nathan Bedford Forrest, in the post of Grand Dragon in several disorderly states. Moreover, he issued orders for the retention of all Klan regalia in the hands of the Klavern or doorkeeper of each Klavern when it was not in use for official purposes. Later Evans proudly informed a reporter that "the Klan, as a whole, has heartily supported all corrective measures...", thus obliquely admitting its previous guilt.

In the public mind, however, the looseness of the Klan's financial administration appeared to be an equally serious stigma, and frequent public criticism was leveled at the organization on this score. In order to quiet the Klan's detractors Evans cancelled Edward Y. Clarke's contract early in 1923, and soon forced him to withdraw from the Klan. Quickly following up this partial reform the Imperial Wizard adopted the policy of paying most of the Klan's field workers a fixed salary. The effectiveness of these actions was

23. Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan, a pamphlet. See also Frost, Klan, 31-32.
measured by the rapid growth of the Klan's assets from
$100,000 in November, 1925, to $1,085,566 on July 31, 1926.26
Another indication of the new efficiency which the adminis-
tration of Imperial Wizard Evans brought to the Ku Klux Klan
was the creation of a National Lecture Bureau to maintain a
constant supply of talented speakers for use in local Kleaverns.
In the first five months of its existence the speakers pro-
vided by this bureau gave a total of 221,019 addresses.27
The effect of these reforms upon recruitment in the North,
while no doubt favorable, were overshadowed in importance by
changes in the personnel of the leaders which Evans' ascen-
dency to the office of Imperial Wizard introduced. D.C. Ste-
phenson, in recognition of his valuable services in Evans'
behalf, was awarded the title of Imperial Representative and
placed in charge of propaganda in twenty-one states located
mostly in the North. When he assumed office early in 1925,
he established the central headquarters for this vast region
in Columbus, Ohio.28 The personable Stephenson, who charac-
terized the Klan's basic motive as "commercialized patriotism",
proved to be a capable organizer.29 Under a code designation
system copied from the army, he became know as 3-1 or chief
22. Frost, Klan, 27.
27. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 130.
28. Robert A. Butler, So They Framed Stephenson, 13-14. Other
authors give varying numbers of states under Stephenson's
control but the source quoted above seemed authoritative.
See also Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 46. The position
of Imperial Representative was an anomaly under the Klan's
Constitution, but was clearly analogous to the post of
Grand Goblin under the Simms-Conkle regime.
29. From an interview with Jacob A. Meckstroth.
46.
of personnel or recruitment. His assistant, Hunter Baldwin, was referred to as G-2, or chief investigator, and a third person, whose name is unknown to the author, was designated G-3 or program officer. 30

The same table of organization was copied in the states under Stephenson's control. In Ohio Andrew J. Biggerstaff from Indiana, a clean-featured, handsome man, became the new King Kleagle replacing Dr. C. L. Herrod. Biggerstaff, who impressed his subordinates with his honesty and efficiency, selected, with Stephenson's approval, a former city policeman as his G-2 and Howard E. Myers, a former minister in the Methodist Church, as his G-3. Under this triumvirate the Klan's fortunes in Ohio prospered. Biggerstaff, himself, was responsible for recruitment while Myers was given the difficult task of providing a program of action and entertainment for the organized Klas. On those occasions when trouble arose, either in a local Klavern or within the state office, the G-2 officer of the state was called upon to investigate. Conversations with him produced several admissions of minor frauds perpetrated in Ohio, but no admission of any serious trouble. He was, however, kept busy

30. From an interview with Ohio's G-2 officer. All important Klan employees including the Kleagles were given a code designation. Altogether, there were about two hundred such persons in Ohio in 1923.
weeding out disruptive influences and investigating organiza-
tions opposed to the Klan. 31

On the surface, at least, D.C. Stephenson's reign over
Ohio was marked by harmonious cooperation toward a steady
growth in Klan membership. From March 17 to July 15, 1923,
for instance, Stephenson sent to the Atlanta Office $641,475,
composed largely of the proceeds from Kistokes paid in
during that period. 32 Some Ohio Klansmen even assert that
the Klan in Ohio reached its largest size, or approximately
300,000, in 1923, a statement that may well be true since the
Grand Dragon of Ohio, Clyde W. Osborne reported in 1926 that
on January first of that year there were only 206,763 members
in Ohio of whom 60,463 were women. 33

But the relations of Stephenson with the Imperial office
grew steadily worse. Stephenson was a stern disciplinarian
who demanded strict obedience, nor did he easily take dicta-
tion from anyone. 34 His success in Indiana, particularly in
infiltrating the ranks of the Republican party and in gaining
a strong political hold over that state, undoubtedly aroused

31. From an interview with Ohio's 3-2 officer.
32. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 32.
34. From an interview with Ohio's 3-2 officer.
the jealousy of certain elements both in Indiana and at the
Imperial Palace in Atlanta who feared that he might assume
authority in his own right. Stephenson, on his part, assert-
ed that Evans was spying on him, and had attempted to black-
en his character by well laid plots seeking to involve him
in a violation of the Mann Act. 35 Unable to work harmon-
iously with Evans any longer, Stephenson telegraphed his re-
signation to Atlanta on September 27, 1923. 36

The immediate effect of Stephenson's resignation on the
Ohio Klan was a feeling of being "turned down". There had
been from the beginning considerable antipathy toward control
from the South by a group of men who were largely Southerners,
and many Ohio Klansmen were more eager to listen to Stephen-
son than to Evans. 37 But although the Ohio Klan was vaguely
disturbed by Stephenson's resignation, there were few resig-
nations. Some, in fact, believing him guilty of indulging
in drunken orgies and illicit sex relations, either in Columbus
or at his Buckeye Lake cottage, appeared to have wished his
retirement. 38

35. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 86-90, 90-91. See also New

36. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 86-90. Stephenson was later
convicted of the murder of Raige Oberholtzer and sent to
prison.

37. From an interview with Ohio's O-2 officer.

38. From an interview with a Klan lecturer.
Walter Bossert, an Indiana Klansman, was appointed the new Imperial Representative, and the Ohio officials who had worked under Stephenson were transferred, almost in a body, to Iowa. The new Aing Klaagle appointed by Evans to replace Andrew Biggerstaff was probably a Southerner named Brown Barwood who was assigned the task of finishing the work of propagation and of issuing charters to the organized Kians. By September 14, 1924, this job was completed and the Ku Klux Klan of Ohio was formally constituted a Realm under the leadership of Clyde W. Osborne, a Youngstown lawyer.  

39. From an interview with Clyde W. Osborne.  
40. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 129.
CHAPTER IV
THE BUSINESS AND FRATERNAL LIFE OF THE KLAN

The vital element in the Ku Klux Klan, as in any fraternal order, was the work of the local Klavern toward the fulfillment of the objects and purposes of the organization. These purposes, listed in the Constitution, were:

To cultivate and promote patriotism toward our Civil Government; to practice an honorable Klännishness toward each other; to exemplify a practical benevolence; to shield the sanctity of the home and the chastity of womanhood; to maintain forever white supremacy; to teach and faithfully inculcate a high spiritual philosophy through an exalted ritualism; and by practical devotion to conserve, protect and maintain the distinctive institutions, rights, privileges, principles, traditions and ideals of a pure Americanism.¹

The possibility of any local Klavern being able to carry out such an ambitious program was exceedingly remote, for many of these Klan ideals were largely meaningless platitudes. The Klan's leaders, however, attempted to develop, in every way possible, a strong political, religious, social, and fraternal program of action among the local units based upon these generalities. A small pamphlet entitled Klan Building was circulated widely as a manual demonstrating the proper method of organizing the Klan's activities to enlist the interest and the support of its members. The Constitution, moreover, closely circumscribed the organization and the form

¹ Article II, Section 1.
of the local Klavern. But above all, the centralized authority vested in the person of the Imperial Wizard was the most important force for molding a unified program of action, and giving the Klan movement strength.

The standard by which the success or failure of the national Klan leaders to achieve their ambitious program may be measured was the vitality of the average Klavern. Hence a survey of its organization and activities seems in order. In Ohio the exercise of an active fraternal life and the promulgation of an effective plan of action faced one almost insurmountable obstacle. Because the Ohio Klan adopted the practice of chartering only one Klavern in each county, unless internal disputes or local conditions demanded that there be more, the membership of most of Ohio's 108 Klans numbered in the thousands, and the meetings resembled unruly mobs.2 Under such conditions the more spiritual aspects of fraternalism and Klan life were aborted from the beginning, and in their place appeared the harsher symbols of direct action against law violators, the practice of commercialism, and mass demonstrations or Klanlaves.

The presence of such large numbers at meetings also had

2. The Columbus Dispatch, August 30, 1928, listed the number of Ohio Klaverns at 108. Grand Dragon Clyde W. Osborne confirmed this as being approximately accurate. Hamilton County, having fourteen Klaverns, was the only important exception to this rule.
a disorganizing effect upon the organizational life of the Klavern, robbing it of its supposedly democratic character. As one Columbus Klansman remarked, "everything was done in a mass". Such a situation was extremely providential for a skillful orator who wished to perpetuate himself in office as the Exalted Cyclops (President of a Klavern) or one of his twelve officers (Terrors). Although the centralised control and direction maintained by the Imperial Office served to allay somewhat the paralyzing effects induced by such large numbers, it further curtailed the exercise of democratic prerogatives. Indicative of this was the fact that until the Klavern received its charter it could not even elect its own officials, or, in most cases, pass on the qualifications of members recruited by the Klagig. Although the Constitution provided that every prospective member be investigated to determine if he were of sound mind, good character, of commendable reputation and responsible vocation, "a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion, and one whose allegiance, loyalty and devotion to the government of the United States of America in all things is unquestionable", the Klagig could ignore this stipulation by merely endorsing the application.3 Stephenson's administration introduced even more laxity in the North in regard to this matter than had existed before under Clarke. The oath was ordered to be

3. Article IV, Sections 1 and 2.
administered anywhere, and meetings were transformed from secret gatherings to open-air, mass initiations.4

The chartering of a Klavern marked the beginning of its formal operation and introduced a new measure of democratic control by the members. As the first step thirteen officers were elected whose titles and duties corresponded, with a few minor changes, to those of the Imperial Klonecium.5 Next, the members adopted a code of by-laws and voted upon their own qualifications for membership. This balloting was done either en masse, or, if requested, individually. After the Klavern received its charter, prospective new members were initiated into the Order, only after they had been voted on by the members.6 One further advantage resulted from the chartering of a Klavern. Whereas formerly a large share of the Kleetoken paid by a new member had gone into the pocket of the Klasele, this source of income was now diverted into the Klern's treasury. At first the Klavern was required to send $5.00 to the National treasury, but by 1924 this had fallen to $2.50.7

5. There was no Klaak or Klonel, and only three Klockawm. See above, page 41, fn. 11. The President of the local Klavern was called the Exalted Cyclone.
6. Constitution, Article XVIII, Sections 3a, 3b, and 9.
7. A.O. Henry, et al. vs. Frank Cox, et al. Case No. 20641, Supreme Court of Ohio. Hereafter this case will be referred to as Henry vs. Cox. 54
There was no part of the Klavern's organization in which the officials from Atlanta took greater interest than in its finances. The Constitution levied an annual Imperial Tax of $1.80 on each member, payable in advance in quarterly installments. Failure to meet these payments on time was a serious offense and might result in the suspension of a defaulting member, or in the dismissal of the officers if the Klavern were discovered to be at fault. Besides the income from Kleetokens and the Imperial Tax, the National Office collected a profit from the sale of robes variously estimated to be from $1.00 to $2.50 each, depending whether the current selling price was $6.00 or $6.50. A part of this income, it must be pointed out, was returned to the Realm office in the form of a rebate. By 1924 the Realm was receiving $2.25 from each Kleetoken paid within the state, and a small share of the Imperial Tax and the profits from robe sales. The Realm, in addition, levied its own tax as provided in the Constitution. In Ohio this was fixed at $1.00 yearly paid

8. Article XV, Section 1; Article XVIII, Sections 14 and 18.
10. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 60.
in quarterly installments. 11

The local klavern, however, had to depend upon the generosity of its members for sufficient income to cover its heavy expenses for rent, supplies, and equipment. The by-laws adopted by most groups assessed yearly dues ranging from $4.00 to $10.00 with $5.00 being the usual amount. 12

The Akron Klavern provided a typical example in this respect. Of the $5.00 yearly assessment paid by each member, $2.00 was sent to the state and national offices and the balance, $3.00, remained to defray local expenses. This amount, however, was wholly inadequate to pay the expenses incurred in hiring a secretary, in mailing out thousands of letters, and in purchasing a site for building an auditorium. As a result, the expedient of a free will offering was adopted, and wash-tubs for this purpose were prominently displayed at the entrance of the meeting ground. 13

Evidence points to the fact that "passing the hat" was a much used device everywhere in Ohio for raising needed funds.

11. Henry v. Cox, Case No. 20641, Supreme Court of Ohio. This tax was first called a Province tax and was to be levied by the Alonverse, the legislative body of the Province. A later edition of the Constitution, however, changed the wording of this section and labeled it a Realm or Provin-
celial tax. See Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Incorporated, (c 1920), Article XV, Section 3.

12. Delivery of Charter, Form K 100, a pamphlet.

13. From an interview with a Klavern lecturer. See also Henry v. Cox, Case No. 20641, Supreme Court of Ohio.

56
Although the method of financing its local projects was left largely to the discretion of the Klavern, it was not so with the punishment of offenses against the Klan's rules. The Constitution of the Order laid down rigid rules in this respect governing the seriousness of the offenses, the methods of trial and appeal, and the punishments to be meted out. In addition, the Klan and its members, moreover, were subject to disciplinary action from the national office outside of this standard procedure. The Imperial Wizard, it must be remembered, exercised the right to banish any Klansman regardless of his rank. In addition, he was empowered to revoke the charter of any Klavern, and, through the Grand Dragon, to remove its elected officials.

The national leaders were not able to exercise the same rigid control over programs and activities as they did over methods of operation and business life. Whereas in the first instance the Imperial Palace often sent business advisors to Klans having financial trouble, its only recourse in the second was to offer advice. Only in the field of politics, in which united action was mandatory, was the influence of the Imperial and Realm offices at all decisive on the local level. Benevolent activities, direct action against law

14. Article XX.
15. Article XX, Section 34.
16. Article X, Section 3; Article XIX, Section 13.

57
violators, the practice of commercial "klannishness", and even huge Kl游戏中es were locally sponsored and represented to the average Klansman the fraternal life of the Order.

The Klokard or lecturer was the head of the Program Committee that directed the educational life of the Klavern. Usually this process of education took the form of rousing addresses on religious, ritualistic, and civic matters of interest to the Klansman. The more important aspects of the Klan's program of action, however, were delegated to other permanent committees whose names are suggestive of the work they performed. Especially prominent were the Civic, the Welfare, the Public School, the Governmental, and the Law Support Committees although often American Legion and Chamber of Commerce Committees were formed.17

The work of the Law Support Committee was especially appealing to Klansmen for it gave them an opportunity to strike at evils which, in their opinion, were threatening the country. Unfortunately most Klansmen were not so intellectually constituted as to be able to understand abstract theories of government and to weigh the merits of suggested reforms. Instead they were interested in combating the more personal aspects of evil, such as the bootlegger and the teady house.16

17. Klan Building, a pamphlet. See also Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 78-79.

18. The Ohio Courier, March 14, 1924, provides some excellent examples of this type of Klan activity.
The success of the Klan in uncovering law violations that had previously gone unnoticed may be attributed not only to the reforming zeal of the Klansmen, but also to an efficient system called the military line of communication which each klievern was required by the Imperial Office to establish. Primarily this military chain of command or block system was used as a convenient tool to disseminate orders rapidly through the lower ranks of the Klan, but in those communities in which it was best established the Exalted Cyclops was informed almost immediately of any untoward event occurring within his domain. In Akron this communication system was so complete that every block within the city was reportedly under the constant watchful eye of at least one Klansman.¹⁰

One of the duties of the block sergeant or corporal, as such a leader of the Klan was called, was to report any Klansmen or his family who was in need of financial assistance. In the early days of the Klan movement the high idealism of the members found a ready expression in charitable activities toward one another, and, in some cases, toward outsiders. The literature of the Klan movement, moreover, emphasized benevolent Klanshipness as part of the service which a Klansman was to render to the Order. In the Kloran, or ritual, item number seven in the order of business proposed this question: "Does any Klansman know of a Klansman or a Klansman's

¹⁰ From an interview with a Klan lecturer.
family who is in need of financial or fraternal assistance (20)
If such a need for assistance was expressed, a spontaneous
offering was collected, the proceeds of which were entrusted
to a special committee appointed for the occasion. (21) Later,
however, as the Klan movement became more rigid in form, Wel-
fare Committees were created to administer the benevolent
activities of most Klaverns. (22)

Reports of charitable or religious donations were given
a prominent place in the Klan's newspaper, the Ohio Courier.
Some of the items give evidence of an efficiently organized
program of benevolence being practiced in a few localities.
In Dayton, for example, the Knights and the Women of the Ku
Klux Klan reported a gift of $6000.00 to the Montgomery
County Council of Religious Education. (23) Nevertheless many
Klansmen, when questioned, failed to mention any organized
charity program other than the custom of giving away baskets
at Thanksgiving and Christmas. They did, however, take spe-
cial pains to emphasize the fact that the Klan rendered
assistance to Negroes and Catholics as well as to Protestants.
On one occasion a Negro family in Columbus was given medical
care by the Klan's doctors and supplied with coal and food

(20) Kloman, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan: First Degree Character,
3. See also William J. Simmons, Imperial Instructions,
Document No. 1.

(21) From an interview with a Columbus Klansman.

(22) Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 9c.

(23) May 9, 1924.
for several weeks. But on the whole, Klan charities, as far as this writer was able to determine, presented no fixed pattern by which the program could be summarized. Much of the giving was spontaneous and haphazard, representing periodic gifts to individuals rather than donations to organized charity.

The practice of fraternal assistance was by no means limited to charitable activities alone, for the Klan's founder, William J. Simmons, had urged Klansmen to patronize the business establishments of their brothers. Abundant evidence indicated that this form of commercial Klanishness was widely practiced in Ohio. A printed handbook listing "approved" business establishments was distributed in Columbus with the obvious inference that those excluded by boycotted. Catholics or Jews, and in a few instances, Negroes who operated shops in towns that became strongholds of the Klan faced ruin and bankruptcy. In Marion, Ohio, mutual boycotts flared up between the Klan and Catholic businessmen who were members of the Knights of Columbus.

24. From interviews with the Klan's first-aid director and a Klan lecturer.
25. Imperial Instructions, Document No. 1.
but the practice of Klanshish fraternalism also had
its lighter and more benign aspects. Like the members of
other fraternal orders, Klenmen heartily enjoyed the fellow-
ship of outings, picnics, and boat trips. These social
activities afforded, in addition, a convenient method to
combine the fun or recreation with the less agreeable task
of raising funds. Holidays, especially patriotic ones, were
perennial favorites. For days ahead of time these Klonkieses,
as they were called, were advertised in local newspapers,
and the public was urged to attend. The following is a
typical program copied from an advertisement of a Fourth of
July picnic held by the Harding County Klan at the Kenton
Fairgrounds. 28

Afternoon: 12:30 - Basket Picnic
1:30 - Games
2:30 - Band Concert, Glee Clubs, Speeches

Evening: 5:00 - Barbecue for the Public
8:00 - Parade
10:00 - Naturalization Ceremonies and Public
Speaking

Some of these Klonkieses were huge events attracting
Klenmen from several states and involving the expenditure
of thousands of dollars for food, entertainment, and fireworks.
Two such huge gatherings were held at Buckeye Lake, the first
on July 4th, 1923 and the second on August 29, 1926. Both
boasted an attendance of approximately 75,000 although some
Klan members asserted there were over 200,000. In any event the milling crowds of Klansmen produced an almost kaleidoscopic effect, mirroring the multiple forms of the Klan organization. Most Klansmen wore the simple robe of first degree citizenship, for only a few had been initiated into a second degree rank called Knights Kamelia or K-duo. Two still higher degrees were provided in the Constitution, but these were so little used as to have been almost non-existent. In addition to the degree ranks there were special groups for the wives and children of Klansmen called, respectively, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan and the Junior Order. Moreover a military order called the Alavellers, recruited primarily from among police officers and World War I veterans, was created to guard Klan meetings. In a few places, the members of this Order, as an additional activity, formed crack drill teams.

In the mind of the ordinary Klansman the success of a Klondrarna was measured solely by the personal enjoyment which it brought to him. Unfortunately the same could not be said for the Klan's leaders. Their criteria were more

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29. *Columbus Citizen*, July 13, 1923; *Columbus Dispatch*, August 30, 1926.
31. Marion Monteval, (pseudonym), *The Klan Inside Out*, 61. From interviews with the Klan's first-aid director and a Klan lecturer.
often the advertising value or the political effect produced by massed thousands of Klansmen. Even the dangerous expedient of intimidation may be safely assigned as a partial motive of Ohio's Klan leaders. Doubtless they must have been aware of the possibly dangerous results inherent in such a program of fear and intimidation, but, as one writer has suggested, the provocation of a retaliatory demonstration by Catholics or the foreign born, or even a riot would only served to underline the Klan's statements that Americanism was in danger.32

The Ohio Klan leaders were no less guilty of using these tactics than were the leaders of other states. It seems significant that both the Steubenville and Mikes riots resulted from Klöcklöves held near communities with proportionally large Catholic and foreign elements and that they occurred either shortly before or after election campaigns in which the Ku Klux Klan had a vital interest. The effect of a powerful demonstration and possible retaliation might, after all, prove to be the deciding factor in a close election.

32. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 60.
CHAPTER V
THE KLAN AND POLITICAL ACTION

The Klan's persistent denial that, as an organized body, it was involved in politics were largely discounted by the public and by the politicians with whom it worked, for it was only too obvious that the Klan's leaders were well aware of the voting power of the bloc which they controlled. Clyde Osborne, the Grand Dragon of Ohio, was reported to have said that the Klan, if it wished to use its votes, could hold the balance of power in his state. Although this was partially wishful thinking on his part, as the results of election after election proved, the Klan fully intended to make itself an American bloc, as such it aspired to be the champion of the so-called Nordic race and of "pure" Americanism, as it contended:

That native-born citizens, trained in the national schools, sons and heirs of the men who built up the nation, are on the whole better interpreters of national thought and purposes, and hence better fitted to rule the country than are people of alien blood, tradition and training, whom these natives have admitted to a share in their advantages.

The Imperial leaders of the Klan, Hiram W. Evans and William J. Simmons, proposed an extensive program of legislation adopting these nativist tenets. Both were certain that


2. Frost, Klan, 10.
the sacred privilege of the franchise was being awarded too generously to alien elements. The Klan's creed moreover was liberally sprinkled with attractive generalities such as "law enforcement" and "separation of church and state" which clearly belonged to the realm of political action. Intent as it was upon reshaping the law of the land in the interests of native Americans, the Klan could not avoid undertaking political action.

Nevertheless the Klan always attempted to work through the established parties in order to elect candidates favorable to the Order. More often than not, however, at least one of the candidates for a local office was a Klansman and there was little difficulty in choosing whom to support. But when two or more Klansmen were candidates for the same office, a ticklish problem was presented that almost defied a peaceful settlement. The most practical solution in such an instance was that adopted in Mahoning County. In order to determine which candidate would receive the unanimous vote of the Klan, a prior election was held within the Klavern. In a few cases, however, local candidates receiving Klan votes were not Klansmen but were chosen either for their willingness to cooperate or for their innate qualifications. The Klan's national

3. Simmons, The Klan Unmasked, 363-364. See also Frost, Klan, 86.
5. From an interview with Clyde W. Osborne.
officers liked to emphasize the educational program conducted to acquaint Klansmen with the qualifications of the various candidates. It is true, information about the candidates was given out, but it consisted of such superficial items as his religious affiliation. Even the Klan’s national publication, the Kourier Magazine, was guilty of this type of shallow reasoning, for it published occasional lists of the religious affiliations of federal officials.

Although the Klan always denied it, the advice given Klansmen as to which candidate was most acceptable bore a dictatorial ring. Orders were sent to the Klansmen from both the Reala and the Imperial Offices directing them to give their support to gubernatorial and presidential candidates selected by the higher officials. In the summer of 1928 a green ticket listing Joseph B. Sieber as the accepted Republican candidate for Governor was sent to all Ohio Klans. Although the slate of candidates had been chosen by Grand Dragon Clyde W. Osborne and Ralph Weygandt, among others, it was stamped with the name of the Ohio Good Government League, Clyde Osborne, Secretary.

The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio was bound closely to the Republican Party with ties that ran all the way to the Republican National Committee and the President’s cabinet. D.C.

U. Henry vs. Cox, Case No. 20641, Supreme Court of Ohio.
Stephenson, the deposed Klan leader, was reliably reported to have been engaged in business enterprises with no less an important person than Andrew J. Wellon, the Secretary of the Treasury. But the story of the elevation of Clyde W. Osborne to the post of Grand Dragon of Ohio has even more strange political overtones. Osborne, a prominent Youngstown Republican, had joined forces with the Klan in working for the election of Charles Scheible as Mayor of Youngstown in 1923. As a token of his appreciation for the help Osborne had rendered, Scheible, the successful candidate, insisted that Osborne become his Law Director.

Working closely as he was with a prominent Klan-elected official, Osborne was irresistibly drawn into the web of Klan politics and became closely associated with Col. E.A. Watkins, the Welsh preacher and rabble-rouser who was attempting to perpetuate himself as a power in the Klan. It was the

7. Fuller, The Invisible Empire, 60.

8. One strange method used by Col. Watkins to make himself a power in the Klan was the creation of a group of so-called Ohio State Police from among Klansmen, using, as his authority, an old Freemasonry Society Charter issued under an ancient Ohio statute. These Klan police first appeared at the Kilby riot, arousing considerable excitement among state law enforcement officials. The testimony of one of its members, L.C. Cleaw, revealed that $17.55 was paid for the right of membership but that no receipt was given. This group was immediately suppressed not only by Osborne, the Klan leader, but also by state and county officials. Transcript of Evidence taken by Military Investigation Board, (Adjutant General), 391 and from an interview with Clyde W. Osborne.

68
officious Watkins who brought about the first meeting between Osborne and Hiram W. Evans, the Klan's Imperial Wizard. Almost immediately a friendship sprang up and Osborne became Evans' unofficial advisor on Ohio elections.

The strategy of the Ohio Klan in the 1924 state and national elections, as outlined by Osborne, was exceedingly complicated. Because the Democratic Governor, Vic Donahue, was popular with the public and at the same time, not offensive to the Klan, he, rather than the Republican candidate, Harry L. Davis, was slated to receive the Klan's vote. Donahue, moreover, had refused to publicly endorse the plank in the state's Democratic platform that denounced the Klan by name. In contrast the presidential candidate most acceptable to the Klan was the Republican, Calvin Coolidge. This presented the Klan leaders with the problem of requiring their members to split their tickets. Recognizing this difficulty Evans asked Osborne to become Grand Dragon of Ohio, feeling confident that he was the only man who could tactfully enforce the Klan's selections upon the Klansmen. Osborne refused this first suggestion, but a few days later he was forced to reconsider the matter when he was summoned to Chicago to meet with the Republican National Committee. One of its members, William Zumbrunn, a prominent Klan lawyer, repeatedly urged him to take the job, pointing out that he was the only man who could persuade the Klansmen to split their tickets.
and thus carry the state for Coolidge. Finally Osborne accepted.9

Osborne frankly admitted to confidants that he had little interest in the Klan's program, especially its anti-Catholic and anti-Negro principles. The office to him represented a political opportunity to advance the cause of the Republican presidential candidate, and, incidentally, a chance to make money.10 He was not alone among the several Grand Dragons of Ohio in being interested primarily in the political power which the position afforded him. C. Gilbert Taylor of Cleveland who replaced Osborne as Grand Dragon in June, 1926, had served two terms in the Ohio legislature (1919,1921) as a representative from Huron County. His chief legislative interest had been utilities and their regulations, for during the seven years preceding his appointment as Grand Dragon he had been the federal receiver in Cleveland of railroad, light, heat, and power plants.11

Succeeding Taylor in the post of Grand Dragon in 1927 was James Colescott, from Terre Haute, Indiana, who had formerly been a Klan leader in Kentucky and Tennessee. Although Colescott was by profession a veterinary surgeon, he was inter-

9. From an interview with Clyde E. Osborne.
10. From an interview with a Scripps-Howard reporter.
interested in politics, and was well-remembered as a lobby-
ist during his nine years as Ohio's Grand Dragon.\(^2\)

The personal political interests of Ohio's Klan leaders
necessarily meant that a major portion of the Klan's program
was political in nature. It is also true that nowhere could
they have found a more convenient tool to further their
political aspirations. Although the secrecy shrouding the
Klan's membership and its activities proved to be a valuable
asset, the most important key to the Klan's political suc-
cess was the power of its leaders to cast a solid bloc of
votes. The Klan, moreover, booked reform candidates with
strong popular appeal. The year 1923 witnessed the first
concerted program of political action undertaken in Ohio.\(^3\)
Cities that before had ignored the Klan now found themselves
with Klan mayors. On the whole the Klan's score of success-
es and failures was remarkably high for it was defeated in
only two important campaigns, namely those in Steubenville
and Ironston.\(^4\) Klan candidates were elected in Wewton,
Elyria, and Toledo in the northwest part of Ohio and in
Middletown, Hamilton, and Portsmouth in the South.\(^5\) But

\(^{12}\) From an interview with a Columbus newspaper columnist.

\(^{13}\) *New York Times*, November 7, 1923.

\(^{14}\) *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 7, 1923.

\(^{15}\) *New York Times*, November 8, 1923. See also *Ohio Fiery
Cross*, February 29, 1924 and *Akron Beacon Journal*, Novem-
ber 7, 1923.

71
even more startling was the Klan's clear sweep of mayorships in the five major cities of the Mahoning Valley; Niles, Warren, Youngstown, Struthers, and Girard.

Elated with their success, the Klan's leaders planned even greater triumphs in future elections. But by 1926 the Klan movement in Ohio had already begun to recede and it was never again able, except in Klan strongholds such as Newark, to elect its candidates. Observers noted that during the summer of 1925 Klan activities rapidly faded from public view, gatherings ceased, and Klan candidates who still attempted to win political office were generally defeated.\textsuperscript{17}

It was a mere shadow of the old organization which James Colescott, the Grand Dragon after 1927, attempted to wield as a political club in an effort to elect Martin L. Devey in 1928.\textsuperscript{18}

The virility of the Ku Klux Klan as a political movement was sapped largely by the heterogeneity of its members. While it had no difficulty presenting a common front against those it considered to be its enemies, the Klan was never able to unite upon a constructive program of action. What its members considered in their politically uneducated minds

\textsuperscript{15} Akron Beacon Journal, November 7, 1923.

\textsuperscript{17} New York Times, February 5, 1928.

\textsuperscript{18} From an interview with a Columbus newspaper columnist.

\textsuperscript{7b}
to be perfectly clear and concise statements of policy, were in reality meaningless aphorisms. Obviously no positive, mutually consistent, political program could be erected upon such vague principles as "law and order" or "freedom of speech". Instead the Klan was forced to be satisfied with a negative program. Articles in The Courier Magazine discussing the World Court, the League of Nations, or the candidacy of Al Smith all carried their burden of negativism. The Klan was seemingly unaware of this for it pointed with pride to what it claimed were its positive achievements:

Our Order has given us the immigration law and defeated the proposed World Court; and now offers us a Foreign Criminal Exclusion Law, a National Department of Education, a new Naturalization Law, and a Passport Law. It is the only organization offering any constructive program which will save the United States and make it better. 19

Much of the Klan's opposition was directed at the Catholic Church which was felt to be "fundamentally and irredeemably, in its leadership, in politics, in thought, and largely in membership, actually and actively alien, un-American and usually anti-American." 20 The Klansmen as Protestants and Americans resented the traditional precepts of the Roman Church which taught that it alone embodied the only real truth, and that to it was given the guardianship

of the whole life of the individual. So strong was the Klan's prejudice that it was unable to realize that these ancient precepts of the Roman Catholic Church had, in the United States, been diluted by democratic tolerance.

The Klan, however, was blind to all subtle reasonings and it struck out savagely at the Catholic Church. Open war was waged against the candidacy of Al Smith in 1924 and again in 1928. In Ohio, attempts were made to introduce into the General Assembly legislation which would strengthen the forces of Protestantism and Americanism. Klan representation in Ohio's General Assembly was never large, perhaps not over a score, but the preponderance of rural votes over city votes in the House, and the strength gained by allying with the Prohibition and Public Utilities lobbies enabled the Klan to pass one of the four important measures which it sponsored.21

Two of these bills were aimed directly at the Catholic Church, and, if passed, would have seriously curtailed its operations as we know them today. The first, submitted to the 85th General Assembly by Representative Charles Brenner, was designed to destroy the Catholic parochial system by forcing all children to attend public schools. The other

21. From an interview with a Scripps-Howard reporter. In the Columbus Citizen, February 26, 1925, Clyde W. Osborne claimed forty-five members of the Ohio House of Representatives were Klansmen.
was introduced by Senator Arthur M. Sweeney two years later and would have prevented Catholics from teaching in public schools. Neither of these measures succeeded in winning substantial support among the majority of the law makers for these men did not share the Klan's fear of Catholicism.

The same fate awaited a bill introduced into the House in 1925 by Representative George H. Roberts. The measure was an expression of the Klan's racial theories and made it a penal offense for a minister to join a white Caucasian in wedlock with a member of another race.

Nevertheless the Klan was able to score a victory, however temporary, on the most important of the battery of four bills which it sponsored. This measure, written by Representative Ross Buchanan, attracted wide newspaper attention and was named by them the Buchanan-Clark Bible Bill. As revised by the Assembly the measure required each school pupil to hear ten verses read from the Bible each day. In addition, pupils above the eighth grade were required to memorize the Ten Commandments.

After a bitter fight in which parliamentary tricks were used by both sides, the Bible Bill was passed by both houses of the Legislature. The Klan's rejoicing, however, was

22. From an interview with a Scripps-Howard reporter. See the Columbus Citizen, February 18, 20, and 26, 1926.
short-lived, for Governor Donahoe promptly vetoed the bill, using as his reason the plea that the measure violated the separation of church and state. The Ohio Klan was obviously caught in a trap which it had set for itself when, in its enthusiasm for the advancement of the Protestant cause, it had turned its back upon a principle which occupied such a hallowed position in its own Creed. But this defeat did not dampen the Klan's fiery determination to do all in its power to promote Christian education within the public schools and at the same time advance the cause of Protestantism.

CHAPTER VI
THE KLAN AND THE SCHOOL AND CHURCH

The intense interest of the Klan in the welfare of
the public school system and the Protestant Church was
demonstrated in its literature and in its activities.
Here, as in the field of politics, the movement's energies
were in considerable part directed toward combating
supposed Catholic influence or power, for Klansmen seemed
unable to champion the American system of free public
schools and the Protestant Church without leveling fierce
attacks at the Catholic Church and its system of parochial
schools. Although these two phases of the Klan's program
are almost hopelessly entwined it will be necessary for
reasons of clarity to deal with the Klan's school program
first.

Some hint of the extent of the Klan's interest in the
public school has already been given in the previous
chapter describing the Klan's activity in the Ohio
legislature. Any discussion of the Klan's attitude
toward education based solely on this meager foundation,
however, would be misleading. Rather an appeal must be
made to many scattered pieces of evidence.

1. Cf. pages 74-76.

77
It should first be restated that among the Klan's major principles was the doctrine of the separation of church and state. This was hailed by Klanmen as a traditional precept of Americanism rather than the gradually developed, practical compromise that it was. Nevertheless, despite strong verbal adherence, the Klan was entirely willing on numerous occasions to avenge this principle when the result would prove favorable for Protestantism. This inconsistency stemmed both from the Klan's super-patriotism and its extreme dislike of the Catholic Church. It should not be forgotten that the Catholic Church represented to the Klan a powerful force for alien traditions seemingly antithetical to American life. The Klan never retreated from this position in its activities on behalf of the public school as opposed to the parochial school.

The Catholic Church, as Dr. Hiram B. Evans characterized it, was a monarchical body using its stoutly defended prerogative of education as a tool to achieve the union of church and state. Moreover he consistently denounced it as a foreign organization bent upon "obstructing adequate public education in America". He charged that,

2. Cf. page 22.
With the first opportunity, having recruited the necessary prestige and power, the Catholic hierarchy of this country would dethrone democratic education entirely.

Each and every bit of ground gained by and for parochialism in our schools will dilute truth, diminish democracy, and feed the flames of destructive controversy.\(^3\)

Acting upon these assumptions, the Klan engaged the Catholic Church in a running battle over the question of parochialism.

But whenever the axiom of the separation of church and state would not suffice to win the upper hand over Catholicism and the parochial system, it was turned aside for the equally sharp-edged sword of majority rule. In many states, attempts were made to force the passage of laws making the attendance of all children at public schools compulsory.\(^4\) Moreover, some phases of the Klan's education program even exposed them to charges of subverting the very principle which they were pledged to support. Indeed, it was widely felt by all but Klansmen that Ohio's Buchanan-Clark Bible Reading Bill repudiated the principle of the separation of church and state in favor of the Protestant Church. However, in the Klan's code of ethics this was wholly acceptable for Protestantism was American, Nordic, and democratic.


4. Rep. Charles Ranner of Cuyahoga introduced such a measure in the 35th General Assembly of Ohio in 1923, but it failed passage. In Oregon, however, such a bill became law for a few months. See Loucks, *Klan in Pennsylvania*, 136-137.
Despite these adverse comments it must be admitted that part of the Klan's interest in education found expression in worthwhile projects. Both Evans and Simmons were certain that "there is but one defense against every kind of alienism in America: it lies in adequate, democratic, public school education." As if to implement this concern, the Klan strongly backed the Townsend-Sterling Bill in Congress which would have created a Federal Department of Education with wide supervisory powers over the nation's schools.

Unfortunately, the Klan's support of this legislation may also be interpreted in a more narrow sense. Owing to the fact that the majority of the people of the nation were Non-Catholics, it could not help but be a potential defeat for the Catholic parochial system if the control of education was snatched from the hands of local authorities and placed safely in the bosom of the federal government.

In Ohio this same sincere concern with the welfare of the public schools was echoed in a petition addressed to Governor Dorsey in 1928 by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan of Alliance, Ohio. This group, 3500 strong, appealed to the Governor to do all in his power to prevent the threatened closure of the schools in Alliance necessitated

4. Ibid.
by a shortage of funds. The men of the Alliance Unit of the Stark County Klan No. 87 on their part placed the guilt for the shortage upon local school officials and leveled charges of extravagance at their heads.7

On the whole, this posture of fighting some alleged enemy of the school be it a Catholic, an alien, or a supposedly corrupt official, was more nearly the standard of the Klan's activity in Ohio. No organization composed of such naive people and nourished by wholesale fear could have hoped to have accomplished anything more constructive. The Klanmen, in fact, seemed to enjoy cultivating their fears and prejudices. In the Ohio Kourier of March 7, 1928, appeared an account of an address given at Dover, Ohio, by Mrs. Margaret V. Osborn, a police woman from a large city. This lady was quoted as having said that only five percent of the juvenile delinquents were graduates of the public schools as compared to sixty-five per cent from parochial schools. In addition she no doubt strengthened the prejudices of her listeners by asserting that only two percent of the five million illiterate children over ten were American-born whites.

Aroused by such startling assertions the Klanmen attempted to gain control of local school boards by way

7. Ohio Kourier, March 21, 1928
of the ballot, or by forcing these bodies to submit to the combined pressure of public opinion and noisy delegations of parents. These local campaigns were most often directed toward three objectives: 1) the prominent display of the American flag and the Protestant Bible, 2) the elimination from the schools of all supposed Catholic and alien influences and, 3) the censoring of textbooks.

Probably the boldest attempt to seize control of the school system of a large town in Ohio occurred in Akron. During the November elections of 1923 a group called the South High Civic Association, a front organization for the Klan, successfully elected Joseph J. Hanan, George A. Beck and James A. Cunningham to the board of education.\(^3\) When Carroll Reed resigned as superintendent in July, 1925, these three men and Charles Sweeney, another Klan-supported candidate, demonstrated their power by appointing George Beck the new superintendent of schools without consulting the other three members of the board. Outraged by this action, the three members of the minority resigned their positions trusting to the electorate to right the wrong which they felt had been done. The general public, however, was either sympathetic towards the Klan or hopelessly apathetic for the new board elected in November was again dominated by a majority of four Klan-supported candidates.\(^4\)

Nevertheless the plans of those four men to revise the Akron school system along lines which the Klan felt was advisable never materialized. The Klan was openly charged by the minority on the school board with attempting to introduce new textbooks containing inferences against Catholics, Jews, and Negroes. But the most bitter public issue of all was the much talked about scheme to introduce the Junior High School system into Akron South, replacing the established "eight-year-four-year" schedule. This was coupled with a proposal to revise the school districts in such a way as to segregate more Negroes into one school. The Klan's critics were able to frustrate these proposed changes by pointing out the tremendous cost in new buildings inherent in the plan.10

Other Ohio communities were by no means free of Klan attempts to influence their schools. In Genea, Ohio, Superintendent Shaline was visited by the Klan and was given a flag and a Bible to be used in the High School.11 The interest of the Klan in the school at Rose Farm took a more spectacular turn. The residents were awakened one night in the spring of 1924 by aerial bombs and a burning.

10. ibid, 21
11. Ohio Fiery Cross, February 29, 1924
cross to discover that a new flag pole had been erected secretly during the night. Occasionally the pressure of the Klan for the display of the outward symbols of patriotism assumed a more bellicose nature. Chief of Police Powell of Youngstown is reported in the *Ohio Star* to have issued an order to his men that he wanted the flag ordinance for public and parochial schools strictly enforced at all times.

The Klan's attempt to eliminate all alien influence from the schools was obviously a program of coercion aimed at liberal or Catholic teachers or at offending textbooks. Usually this public disapproval was made known to the school board by a large delegation of citizens representing themselves as parents, not Klansmen. In Findlay, Ohio, one such delegation of three hundred opposed the rehiring of two Catholic teachers at the Lincoln School. At Ashtabula, however, the Klan itself approached the superintendent for the purpose of having the *Literary Digest* banned from the school library. Moreover, the state officers of the Klan were active in the fight against textbooks considered to be tainted with

15. Ibid., April 4, 1924.
un-American ideas. As late as the 1920's textbooks used in Ohio schools had to be approved by an Ohio State Textbook Commission composed of the Governor, the Secretary of State, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. On at least one occasion a committee of Klansmen called upon this group to protest without success the use of certain books in the state's schools.16

There is, however, a record of one Ohio Klan departing from this policy of negativism to propose a constructive method of introducing religious education into the school. On December 5, 1922, the Klan of Youngstown requested that the Board of Education call a conference of the Klan, the Knights of Columbus, and the B'nai Brith to discuss the possibility of religious training in the city's schools, but there is no record that the Board took any action on the proposal.17

Although the Klan's repeated insistence on the inclusion of Christian teachings within the school's program was no doubt its best organized attempt to advance the Protestant cause, the movement, as a whole, assumed many of the aspects of a truly religious crusade. The Klan's or book of ritual was little more than a distillation

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16. From an Interview with J. A. Neckstroth.
of fundamental religion centered primarily on the plea for service, brotherhood and tolerance contained in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Romans. Nor were other parts of its literature and program devoid of religious influence for each tavern included among its responsible officers, a Kludd or Chaplain who was a prominent minister in the community. Then, too, the Klan's symbol was a blazing cross and its songs of fellowship familiar hymns, the words of which had been altered. The Old Rugged Cross, for example, became the Bright Fiery Cross in Klan hymnology and Onward Christian Soldiers was changed to Onward Valiant Klansmen.

Being at one and the same time an association of Protestant Christians and an organization of patriotic Americans, it is hardly surprising that the Klan and Klansmen hopelessly confused the tenants of religion and patriotism. Was not America, they said, the great-

18. Ecklin, Ku Klux Klan, 17.
19. Leuchs, Klan in Pennsylvania, 121.
20. One of the qualifications for admittance to the Klan was that the candidate must be a believer in the tenants of the Christian religion. See the Constitution, Article IV, Section 1.
ost Protestant nation on earth? And was it not God's will that it should be so? Believing this to be historical truth, the Klansmen converted Protestantism into a narrowly nationalistic religion with strong racialistic overtones. One of their writers boldly declared:

We magnify the Bible - as the basis of our Constitution, the foundations of our Government, the source of our laws, the sheet-anchor of our liberties, the most practical guide of right living, and the source of all true wisdom.

Thus the Klan became at one stroke an organization opposed not only to Catholicism and alien influences, but also to any American who refused to conform to the accepted standards of Protestant morality. It became a crusade against anyone who would subvert God's will or Christ's teachings. Mentally conditioned as its members were by these heady reflections, it is not surprising that they claimed for the Klan the title of "Protestantism Militant". Nor was this claim lessened any by the predilection of Klansmen for direct action against transgressors.

To some degree the Klan was fully justified in taking upon itself this new appellation, for it enlisted the support of thousands of ministers and millions of Protestant

22. The Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan, a pamphlet.
23. Frost, Klan, 178.
laymen, particularly among the most fundamental church sects. In Ohio all the churches were to some extent involved except the very liberal Congregational and Unitarian bodies. However, if one were to choose any denomination into which the Klan was received with the greatest warmth, the Methodist Church with its strong prohibition sentiment must be mentioned. 22

Speaking upon this subject of the relation of the Klan to the Protestant Church, Clyde W. Osborne said on August 22, 1925, that the Klan would fight for fundamentalism in religion because "false leaders are betraying the submerged majority" of Protestants.

We want to restore the Church to Christ. We propose to work within the Church if possible rather than set up an independent organization. We will insist, however, on the dethronement from power in the church of those whose attitude of tolerance constitutes heresy of the most abhorrent type.

The Klan insists on acceptance of belief in the Immaculate Conception, the Sacrificial Death, and the Resurrection. It does not deny the possibility of organic evolution. 23

No doubt this feeling of kinship with the Protestant churches expressed by the Klan's leaders was productive of good results for the church. Indeed, members of the

22. From an interview with J. A. Meckstroth.

23. The Columbus Citizen, August 22, 1925. It is possible that he confused the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ, held by orthodox Christians generally.
Klan were often urged by their leaders to join the church. In Lebring, Ohio, the Klan attempted to organize a Ku Klux Klan Bible Class in the United Presbyterian Church, while at Akron they conducted a huge revival service. Evidently it was outwardly successful for the meeting boasted a choir of four hundred voices and resulted in eighty people joining the church.26

The usual type of Klan activity within the church, however, took the form of surprise visits in which Bibles, flags, or money were presented to a startled minister and congregation. In most instances a robed group entered while the service was in progress and, at an appropriate time, presented its gift. Occasionally, the Klanmen sang a hymn or gave the Klan prayer before retiring as silently as they had come. At the Porter Methodist Church in Gallapolis, Ohio, the spokesman for the group explained its visit in those words:

We understand you are preaching the gospel without fear or favor and we want you and your people to know we are standing by your side to the last man.27

27. Ohio Fiery Cross, February 27, 1924.
One rather amusing incident occurred in this respect when a group of fifty-one Klansmen entered a Negro church near Cincinnati to present its pastor with a gift. The worshippers were so terrified that many fled from the building and hurried home to barricade themselves behind locked doors.

Despite this evidence of Klan interest in the Protestant cause, many historians and contemporary observers have remained skeptical with regard to the real motive behind it. Many have surmised, as did Fred J. Yoes of Akron, that the Klan deliberately sought to borrow the prestige of the church in order to cloak itself in an aura of respectability. Nor was this tendency limited only to the church, but applied as well to the linking of the Klan's name with the activities of the American Legion, the Masons, and the Knights of Malta.

In certain communities the effect upon Protestant churches of the Klan's visits was anything but salutary. At Gallion Rev. John J. Allwardt of the Peace Lutheran Church, who had served his congregation faithfully for seventeen years, was asked to leave because he refused to

30. For verification of this statement the reader should consult the February 29, 1924 issue of the Ohio Fiery Cross.
alter his stand against secret societies. However, the extent to which the Klan influenced the growth or decline of individual Protestant churches is an imponderable factor. Of a similar intangible nature is the degree of hostility which the movement generated between Protestant and Catholic members of the same community. That intense hatred was occasionally aroused may be accepted as axiomatic. In Youngstown this mutual distrust resulted in the burglarizing of the local Klan headquarters in the Terminal Building by men identified only as being of the Catholic faith. The story has a humorous twist for the local Klan leader, Col. B. A. Sander, being warned in advance of the raid, had inserted the names of prominent Catholics among the card file of Klan members.

Other events, however, partook of a more serious nature, especially the formation of a militantly anti-Klan group called the Red Knights of the Flaming Circle. This organization founded in August of 1923 at Kane, Pennsylvania, was strongly Catholic in its membership and soon spread to industrial cities in Ohio and West Virginia. It is believed to have played some part in the Steubenville

31. Ohio Kourier, March 14, 1924
32. From an interview with Ohio’s G-2 officer.
and Niles riots, although evidence is not conclusive on this point. Nevertheless, the most powerful enemy of the Klan was not this weak child which its hatred for Catholicism had fostered, but the inner tensions within its own circle of fellowship. Truly the Klan had been born with the seeds of its destruction lying dormant within its body.

CHAPTER VII
THE DILUTION OF THE KLAN IN OHIO

In order to explain the rapid disappearance of the Klan from the American scene after 1925, an appeal must be made to certain psychological factors namely those of attraction and repulsion. Unlike most organizations the Klan was not composed of men voluntarily banded together to satisfy clearly defined, common interests. Rather it was a heterogeneous group driven together by mutual fears. Obviously, if those fears were in any measure abated, the ties of unity within the movement would be weakened to that same extent. Only as long as the force of their mutual fears proved to be stronger than the force of their diverse interests, only that long could the Klan maintain its active existence.

After 1921 the post war problems that had seemed so frightening and insurmountable began to resolve themselves and to sink from public consciousness. The depression which had swept the nation in 1921 vanished before a wave of prosperity and reckless expansion that has caused the years thereafter until 1929 to be called the "roaring twenties". In like manner the wave of post war strikes and the "Red Scare" proved to be merely transient phenomena.

Nevertheless, the average American was still frightened by the complicated problems which our entry into a European
war had created. Until some easy solution acceptable to him could be found, his mind could not remain at ease.

In the end such a solution, which was really no solution at all, presented itself. Like the proverbial ostrich the United States turned its back on the world, denied that it owed any allegiance to the theory of collective security, and elected to repudiate the League of Nations. A few years later in 1924 this posture of isolationism was enhanced by the passage of a strict immigration law.

Now that the main causes of the nation's feeling of unrest had been removed, the few minor problems that remained were speedily dispatched or ignored. Their disappearance augured no good for the future of the Klan, for they had not only nourished it but had also been its raison d'être. To be sure the old stereotypes of Jew, Catholic, and Negro remained, but they did not prove strong enough to maintain the emotional appeal of the Klan.¹

Therefore the future of the Klan rested upon the degree to which it could satisfy certain interests common among Klansmen. Hence the only universal standards by which all Klansmen had been measured had been their nationality, religion, and race, and their acceptance of certain vague principles such as the preservation of law

¹. Loucks, Klan in Pennsylvania, 103.
and order, the upholding of the Constitution of the United States and a belief in the teachings of the Christian religion. These requirements for membership obviously provided a weak foundation upon which to build an integrated, self-sufficient movement. Thus, when the fear holding the organization together was removed it began to come apart at the seams.

The dissolution of the Klan began to gather momentum in the nation and in Ohio in 1926, but certain evidence points to the fact that in Ohio the Klan had already declined from a peak of approximately 300,000, reached sometime in late 1923, or early 1924. By February 21, 1926, Ohio's Grand Dragon, Clyde Osborne could claim only 206, 83 members of which 60, 463 were women. Following this report, which was given during the last few months of his direction of the Ohio Klan, its fortunes declined rapidly. No important meetings were held in the state from July, 1926, until February, 1928, when the energetic James A. Colecott replaced the rather inept C. Gilbert Taylor. If the figures in the Washington Post's special

2. See New York Times, February 21, 1926 and the Ohio Fiery Cross, February 29, 1924

3. New York Times, February 5, 1928. The writer after his talk with Mr. Osborne feels that this figure given in 1926 is reasonably accurate.
report on Klan membership may be relied upon, and many Klan officials expressed amazement at their accuracy, the Klan's membership in Ohio plummeted to 33,666 in late 1926 and then to 3,993 a year later. Nevertheless the candidacy of Alfred Smith for President in 1928 and the flood of propaganda issued by the Klan's headquarters in Washington enabled its Ohio contingent to expand to 10,114. After this flurry of excitement, however, the Klan in Ohio was never again able to stem the forces of decay. It quietly faded away despite the best efforts of Grand Dragon Golemscott.

One factor important in the Klan's inability to maintain itself as a self-sufficient organization was found in the quality of its officials. During the whole period under consideration the South maintained a firm hold upon all the important national offices despite the fact that the majority of Klansmen lived in the North. At times these officers showed their resentment of northern success by labeling the thriving northern Klan a mob. This name-calling was resented by Ohio Klansmen who returned the South's contempt with interest. In time a feeling of mutual distrust developed, northern Klansmen being certain
that their national officers were merely milking them of all the money they could get. The South in return showed its distrust of the North by exercising autocratic control over all Klan affairs. Ohio Klansmen visiting in Atlanta were well aware that they were under the surveillance of armed men and were certain that any untoward act on their part would have resulted in instant death.

The motives of Ohio's Klan leaders came to be suspected also. Since all three of Ohio's Grand Dragons had strong political interests, they were believed to have accepted office only to gain control of a powerful political bloc. This was freely admitted by Clyde Osborne although he insisted that his only motive had been to secure the election of Calvin Coolidge to the presidency in 1924. The others, however, were accused of having sold Klan support to the highest bidder in order to gain official support at a time when the Klan's fortunes were declining rapidly.

5. From interviews with Ohio's G-Z officer and a Klan lecturer.

6. From an interview with Clyde W. Osborne. C. Gilbert Taylor was selected by Osborne because he was well liked by the federal judges at Cleveland under whom he had worked as a bankruptcy receiver.
The membership of the Klan, moreover, grew dissatisfied with the way in which the financial affairs had been managed. It was estimated that the organization had collected seventy-five million dollars between 1923 and 1925 without issuing any record of expenditures to its members. In Ohio the total amount that reached the Klan's treasury was set at ten million dollars by J. R. Ramsey, a former Klansman prominent in the organization. Here, too, no balance sheet of receipts and expenditures was ever rendered. The Klansmen, left with little choice, began to suspect their leaders of gross extravagance and even embezzlement. Evidence points to the fact that both of these charges were substantially correct. Salaries paid by the Klan appear extravagant when measured by the standards of the 1920's. During the time that he served as the Klan's chief investigator, the 0-2 officer for Ohio was paid a salary of one hundred dollars a week plus his expenses. Moreover, whenever he needed to make a quick trip or to get away for an enjoyable weekend at Atlanta an airplane was placed at his disposal. Later, in 1926, Osborne purchased six automobiles with Klan funds and presented them to his six service men or investigators.

3. From an interview with Clyde Osborne and Ohio's 0-2 officer.
Far more objectionable were the outright frauds which certain Klan organizers perpetrated upon the organization. Floods at Lima and Ironton absconded with several thousand dollars while others sought to collect commissions for new members who had been enrolled by other Klansmen. Usually these men were banished, but in minor cases they were simply rebuked and transferred to another state.\textsuperscript{10}

Another prime factor in the discrediting of the Klan’s name in the public mind was the frequent charge of outrages and atrocities committed by hooded Klansmen. No doubt many of these stories were purely fictional but as Osborne freely admitted, the tendency of organizers to preach hatred rather than ritual exposed the Klan to accusations of this nature. Osborne insisted that each report was carefully investigated by the Klan’s service men with the result that no Klansman was ever proved to be involved in any activity of this nature. There were, however, as reported, groups of Catholics who simulated Klan robes for the purpose of discrediting the Klan.

One of the strangest stories of all those emerging from the Klan’s reign in Ohio was the mystery of the

\textsuperscript{10} From an interview with Ohio’s U-2 officer.
Black-robed Klansmen. These armed men were seen by impartial observers at the huge klondike at Buckeye Lake in August of 1925. Some light was thrown on the mystery in 1928 by the testimony of D. C. Stephenson and James R. Hassay at trials involving the Klan in Pennsylvania and Indiana. This group of men was identified as being an elite group of Klansmen, known variously as the "Battalion of Death" or the "Knight Riders", who were either black or purple robes. These men were the Klan's shock-troops, its disciples of direct action, and were delegated the task of whipping and terrorizing law violators or outspoken enemies of the Klan.

Grand Dragon Usborne denied that they were an official part of the Ohio Klan organization. When they appeared at the klondike they aroused such envy among the other Klansmen that he ordered an immediate investigation, the results of which disclosed that the origin of the group was shrouded in the dusty pages of history. Along the Ohio River, particularly in West Virginia, and perhaps in states to the south, there was a tradition of a band of armed horsemen called the Night Riders of the Cumberland which extended back through time to Marion, the Swamp Fox.

11. Columbus Dispatch, August 30, 1925

100
The leadership of this nebulous group was supposedly hereditary, being a prerogative of the Hatfield family. According to the information given to Osborne this group of black-clad, rifle-carrying horsemen was organized among Klansmen in Southern Ohio by a doctor in Bellaire who was a Hatfield. He was assisted in the venture by the Klan organizer of Tuscarawas County and a Dayton resident, probably J. H. Ramsey. Upon receipt of the information Osborne ordered the group disbanded and its members banished.\textsuperscript{13}

Although this was the situation at the time of his resignation, other evidence given by a Klan lecturer makes it apparent that the organization remained active. Late in 1926 or early in 1927 this lecturer was invited to make a speech in an Ohio town many miles south of Akron. When he presented himself at the appointed time and hour, he was met by a car filled with silent, black-robed men and driven blindfolded to a school auditorium. His audience proved to be two thousand similarly dressed men who heard his address in utter silence. When he had finished, he was returned in silence to the first meeting place and allowed to return home. He later learned that this organization, four thousand strong was planning to leave the Klan and establish a separate group.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} From an Interview with Clyde W. Osborne.

\textsuperscript{14} From an Interview with a Klan lecturer.
James R. Ramsey of Dayton, however, maintained that the Knight Riders of Ohio were a group within the Klan organized "to put over programs that would be detrimental to the Klan if they were caught." Furthermore he identified Evans in a photograph of a group of Knight Riders and testified that the group received orders from officers of the Klan to conduct illegal liquor raids, to burn barns, and on one occasion, to kill a certain man. This Ramsey refused to do. One of its other duties was to keep interest in the Klan alive by fostering hatred toward Catholics. In Dayton, he reported, a brick was thrown through the window of the Klan's meeting hall with a note signed Catholic Youth tied to it that read: "We have warned you not to meet here. Don't do it again." Ramsey's testimony whether true or false, served to convince many people that what they had already suspected was most certainly true, that the Klan's leaders were in many cases not only mercenary but dangerous as well.

These internal tensions and suspicions materially weakened the Klan movement by driving from it its most responsible members. As for those who still remained

15. New York Times, April 11, 1934. J. R. Ramsey also revealed that he served as adjutant of the Grand Dragon's personal guard at the huge Klondike at Buckeye Lake in 1925. The guard was composed of an armed, uniformed, national guard company from Akron whose members wore Klanmen. This was denied by Ohio's adjutant General but was confirmed by Clyde E. Osborne himself. New York Times, March 27, 1930.
faithful, the little jealousies and petty differences found within any social group soon reduced their numbers to the vanishing point. Since Klansmen were drawn mainly from the lower middle class and from those whose emotions were easily aroused, this form of dissension was all too prevalent. Furthermore, no positive plan of action or well defined common purpose was ever formulated to replace the meaningless appeals which had first enlisted the allegiance of those rather naive Americans. As a result factional splits within local Klaverns were occasioned by the slightest of quarrels. In some Klaverns irreparable breaches were produced by disputes over who should be elected to a Klan office, or receive the Klan's united support in a municipal election.  

More serious conflicts arose in those Klaverns which were beset with financial problems or had elected leaders so ill trained for their tasks that they failed to comprehend the importance of well planned meetings. Numerous instances were recited by Clyde W. Osborne in which Klans contracted financial obligations far beyond their means to pay. Pieces of property owned by the Klan were lost because enough money could not be raised to pay off the mortgages. Instead, the money was squandered in hush Klonklaves, many of which were rained out with the loss of hundreds of dollars. The Klan at Marion was only one of those that lost their property in this manner.  

16. From an interview with Clyde W. Osborne.
Probably the best illustration of the manner in which Ohio's Kian organization fell apart after 1924 was the ex-
perience of the Akron Kian. In the summer of 1925 a dispute
over financial matters resulted in the resignation of several
officials and the appointment of Rev. A. C. Henry to the post
of Provisional Exalted Cyclops by Clyde W. Osborne. At the
same time a Kian lecturer with wide experience was sent to
Akron to direct its financial affairs. 17  

Akron Kian #7 had at one time been the most prosperous group in Ohio with a
membership of fifty-two thousand and a financial reserve of
ninety-six thousand dollars. Factional strife and inept
leadership, however, resulted in the money being squandered
on an expensive lot upon which to erect an auditorium and on
rifles for a drill team. 18

Shortly after C. Gilbert Taylor replaced Clyde W. Os-
borne as Grand Dragon, the situation reached an explosive
pitch. Not only were rival factions of the Kian struggling
against one another but a feeling of resentment had developed
over the squandering of Kian money by Realm and National
Officers. The origin of this dispute may in all probability
be explained by the following circumstances. Orin C. Stout,
who had been the Realm's treasurer under Grand Dragon Osborne,
had not been permitted to undergo a final audit of his records

18. From an interview with a Kian lecturer.
before he retired. Fearing that he might be falsely pro-
secuted later, Stout carried off his records with him.

Whether these records were immediately placed in the hands
of the officers of Akron Klan 27 and whether their contents
may thus be held responsible for initiating the dispute,
this writer does not know, but they were no doubt made avail-
able to the Klan at sometime during the course of the argument.

The banishment of the Klan lecturer who had been made
financial advisor was the final blow which released the pent
up emotions of the Klansmen.\textsuperscript{19} Unable to restrain themselves
any longer they called a special meeting on September 16,
1928, and voted to surrender their charter. Of the four
thousand three hundred members active at the time, fully
three thousand five hundred were present at the meeting and
voted almost to a man to adopt the resolution. The total
assets of the Klan amounting to \$64,364.06 were to be tem-
porarily placed in the custody of an organization called the
Protestant Service League.\textsuperscript{20} The Realm Office, however, re-
fused to recognize the dissolution of the Klan and contested
the right of its members to seize its assets. Grand Dragon
Taylor pointed out that eight hundred members were still
loyal to the Klan and that under the Constitution of the or-
ganization they were still in full possession of all the Klan's
money.

\textsuperscript{19} From an interview with a Klan lecturer.

\textsuperscript{20} Henry vs. Cox, Case No. 60641, Supreme Court of Ohio.
The protracted litigation which followed (A.O. Henry et. al. vs. Frank Cox, et. al.) laid bare the causes of the dispute. The Klan charged that it had received nothing in return for the $831,863 it had sent to the Realm and National Offices, nor had any substantial part of the $185,122.61 received by the Realm Office between October, 1924 and July, 1926 been used for charitable purposes. Rather it had been spent for salaries, traveling expenses and cars. In addition, the members of Akron Klan 27 had resented the attempts of C. Gilbert Taylor to dictate to them whom they should support in state election. They had been outraged even more, however, by his threats of banishment because some of his friends had been ousted. In retaliation, Taylor planned to organize a rival businessmen's Klan in Akron and had sent Frank Cox as his personal representative to begin its organization. 21

Although much of the testimony given at the trial was valuable for a historical study of the Akron Klan, the bulk of it proved superfluous for the judges called upon to decide the case. The original decision in the Court of Common Pleas called for a division of the assets between the two contesting groups. This opinion was upheld by the Court of Appeals but the Supreme Court of Ohio reversed it after pointing out that the Klan's Constitution declared that all Klan equipment and all money collected was to remain the property.

of the Klan. 22 Upon the strength of this provision the final judgment was rendered in favor of Taylor and the Ohio Realm of the Ku Klux Klan. 23

Nevertheless the Akron Klan which emerged victorious from the legal fray was a mere shadow of its former self. It could do little more than advertise itself as a convenient and, perhaps, congenial social club, established for the mutual benefit of its members. Elsewhere throughout Ohio the same debilitating diseases had ravaged formerly sturdy Klans, causing many to disappear entirely and the remainder to sink into a state of relative inactivity. After 1930 the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio was no more than a social organization, a vestige left behind to mark its former era of strength.

Once again American nativism had run its full course from oblivion to power and back to oblivion again, leaving only bitter memories and a scarcely noticeable vestige behind to remind the nation that it had once passed by. The roots of this perennial plant, however, do not die easily. They remain dormant within our society needing only a favorable set of circumstances to rejuvenate them into new life. Whenever the proper set of circumstances again combine to provide a favorable climate for its existence, a nativist movement, under some new name perhaps, will rise up again.

22. Constitution, Article XIII and Article XVIII, Section 23. 23. Henry Ya. Cox. Case No. 20641, Supreme Court of Ohio; Case No. 1291 Ninth District Court of Appeals; Case No. 11063, Court of Common Pleas, Summit County, Ohio. 107
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112
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