

LOBBYING AND THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Interview

with

Lavinia Engle

by

Phyllis Levine

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INTERVIEW WITH LAVINIA ENGLE

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- MS. ENGLE: ...and when we come back, we'll discuss that, because it has all the material for distribution of Social Security in the United States, and it is in 26 languages and dialects.
- MS. LEVINE: Let me announce this: It is February 6th today, isn't it?
- MS. ENGLE: Yes.
- MS. LEVINE: And we're safe at the home of Lavinia Engle. Okay. Well, I wondered, since we're already talking about the League, if we couldn't pick up on a few questions?
- MS. ENGLE: Yes.
- MS. LEVINE: Things from last night. I gathered you went to work for the League, as Executive Secretary, about 19—
- MS. ENGLE: It was about '20 or '21. It depends on the month.
- MS. LEVINE: Almost from the beginning.
- MS. ENGLE: It was immediately after our convention in Chicago, at which we organized the League of Women Voters, you see.
- MS. LEVINE: Yes. And then the office was on — was it Mt. Pleasant Street, or Pleasant Street?
- MS. ENGLE: At first, our very first office was on Franklin Street, and then Pleasant Street.
- MS. LEVINE: In Baltimore?
- MS. ENGLE: And I have somewhere a little folder with a picture of that. It was right next door to the Unitarian Church there. It was quite small, and we had just two rooms on the top floor. And not too long after that, a year or so, we went to Pleasant Street.
- MS. LEVINE: I see.
- MS. ENGLE: And Pleasant Street is a street that leads off of Charles.

MS. LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MS. ENGLE: And it was burned out. It was an old house, and we had the two quite large living rooms, and then we had the smaller two rooms at the back. And there was an architect who had the upper floor.

MS. LEVINE: Oh.

MS. ENGLE: So we had rooms where we could hold a fairly good-sized meeting.

We also had a nice big open fireplace, and in the winter, that was a joy.

MS. LEVINE: Oh, I bet!

MS. ENGLE: Because we had a tea tray, a coffee tray, and members would come in and have a cup of tea or coffee on a cold day, you know — and for community meetings and things of that sort.

MS. LEVINE: Were you living in Baltimore then?

MS. ENGLE: No. Of course, my mother was here in Montgomery County. Now I kept a room at first, and then sort of an apartment. It so happened that one of my friends there, who was, as a matter of fact, the mother-in-law of the girl who became Secretary after Virginia King — had the house down on Barton Street, and she had made the top floor into a — well, it was one big room, which was a big sitting room, and a bath, and then a little kitchenette, really, just a little place where you could make coffee.

So I took that, and was there during the week when I had to be, and then came home weekends. Then my mother went over and spent one winter with me, and she was lonely. And I realized that I really did have to be at home with here more continually. So then I bought a car and commuted.

MS. LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh!

MS. ENGLE: And it...

MS. LEVINE: How long, then, were you with them?

MS. ENGLE: I was with the League for 16 years.

MS. LEVINE: Sixteen years?

MS. ENGLE: Fifteen years. I left in 1946 -- '36.

MS. LEVINE: '36.

MS. ENGLE: ...when the Social Security Act was passed. And the Executive Director was Frank Bane, and the Chairman of the initial Board of Commissioners was Arthur Altmeyer, both of whom I knew.

MS. LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MS. ENGLE: And they wanted me to come with the program and to help organize the field service. Of course, I had done that with both the Suffrage Association and the League, and I was used to working in that sort of thing -- that setting.

MS. LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you actually organized the League while you were Executive Director. That was one of your duties?

MS. ENGLE: Oh yes. That was when we organized all of our County meets.

MS. LEVINE: And you organized one in Montgomery County, since then?

MS. ENGLE: Yes. And my mother was the chairman of that for some years.

MS. LEVINE: What year was that?

MS. ENGLE: Well, that would have been the following year or so. I couldn't give you exact... but we went immediately into an organizing job. So that by the end of a year or two, we had the majority of the counties and cities, and the larger towns.

We had a very good League in Hagerstown and Frederick, and Cumberland, Salisbury, and then countywide Leagues--most of these were countywide. But the bulk of the membership at first -- we had a very nice one-- and the County Seat was Federalsburg, and the woman who was the head of that was very able.

We had one in Dorchester and in Charles. It was a small one in -- oh, a good one -- in Calvert County, in Howard County.

The list was pretty well organized throughout the entire state.

MS. LEVINE: But show me -- just give me an idea of how you and your mother went about organizing Montgomery County.

MS. ENGLE: Well, our first step in Montgomery is where we had had a very strong Woman's Suffrage Association -- was [that] we called together all of the members of that organization and told them of the decision at the Chicago convention, and the organization of the League, the National League of Women Voters, and it would be an educational and also a legislative organization dealing with laws that the women felt should be revised that regard women and their status, also other social legislation we would endorse.

And there was very...a very easy free discussion in all of these early meetings.

MS. LEVINE: Where did you find the women?

MS. ENGLE: Huh?

MS. LEVINE: Where did you find the women?

MS. ENGLE: Well, you see, we started without...we had a very good Suffrage organization throughout the whole state of Maryland. In addition to that, Maryland had a very strong Federation of Women's club.

MS. LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MS. ENGLE: And many of these women were interested in the sort of thing the League would be doing.

MS. LEVINE: I see. So you called the women in the Montgomery County area and got them all together?

MS. ENGLE: Notices were in the paper of the meeting, and everyone was invited. In Baltimore City, we have a ward organization, almost. It was not complete. But Baltimore fell into...we have a citywide organization, but then we work through the smaller groups, because the big citywide meetings did not always meet the needs of the local groups. They have other problems. I remember some of them very distinctly.

Down in what is known as South Baltimore, you had your very small foreign element, and you also have an industrial and a working element.

Down on the Bay, you see, you had your shipyards and you had your — at that time — that was before Bethlehem Steel was in — but you had several good size commercial organizations.

We also had a very interesting school. One of Baltimore's school systems had, like our whole Maryland system, been undergoing a great deal of improvement under Governor Ritchie's leadership, with the state study and the state program.

There were two women who were the principal and vice-principal of one of the schools in South Baltimore, Ms. Percie Miller and Ms. Hanna Daugherty, and the city had approved a big new school for that area. These two women, with a great deal of imagination, decided that that school should be a school fitted to the needs of that community, which meant that they would have a vocational — it would be a high — that they would have a strong vocational program.

They went to — well, I guess they studied and they wrote and they got material, and they started out, from the beginning, with a school that served the entire community.

It was a school at which you had not only your day school, but you had night school, and your night school was opened to adults as well as to the children who came.

They had a — one thing I remember — automobiles that were comparatively new. They had one of the first shops where there were mechanics who taught automobile repair, and how to operate on the machinery. This was for the older students. It was also for the men of the community.

We had a very strong home economics, because this group included, as I said, your small foreign group. There were curious little enclaves.

Patterson Park, which is a lovely park still, in South Baltimore, was entirely surrounded by a French group. These were the descendants of a group

of French Huguenot refugees. They spoke French. The entire community around there, the little shops were like the shops I had seen in France, where you had your shades, you know, your window shades had lace on the bottom, pretty lace, something like that. In your small shops, the patisserie shops, you could get things that I have seen in New Orleans and had seen overseas, you know, the type of pastry. They had all sorts of things that were — besides cooking — and people from all over the city came down there to buy. They also had French recipes for tea that were very good. There were people in that area who spoke very broken English, although they had been here for several generations.

You also had, in Baltimore, a very interesting — both German and Russian Jewish groups, who had come as refugees. And, although the Calvert — what would you say — as you probably know, Lord Baltimore, when the colony was founded, wrote to the First Council and his brother, the Governor, that this was to be a place of complete religious freedom, that no one was to be compelled or in any way interfered with, with worshipping God after his own way and belief, that this was to be a free — you see, this was during a persecution of the Catholics at that time — this was to be free to both Catholic and Protestant Christians. It was to be free to the Jewish people; it was to be free to the Quakers, who were persecuted by both the Catholics and Protestants; it was to be free to the Indians.

And as far as I know, this is the only — I've tried it one time, to run that down — it is the only colony in which that was a part of their statute.

Father White, who was the head of the — he was the priest who was the member of the initial party — Father White was not to be permitted to proselyte among the Indians who had a religious faith of their own. They were to wait until they were asked to come — that is, of the English. And only were the Indians to enter the Christian faith when it was their own desire or their own request.

MS. LEVINE: Well, you know, that's truly...

MS. ENGLE: As I say, I have never found another colony that had that broad a basic philosophy enforce the law. Consequently, there was a very early immigration of the Jewish people from both Russia and Germany, but they were being — I don't know that you'd say persecuted — but they were not permitted the great many civil rights. And some of those families are the families that we have still very prominent in Maryland,

And in North Carolina, where one family who were my very good personal friends, the Cone family, when I went down to North Carolina and organized, eventually, the State Suffrage Association, one of the women who served on the Committee and on the Board was Laura Cone (Mrs. Julius Cone) of Greensboro, and her husband was a member of the Baltimore Cone family; they had mercantile interests here. He went down there and founded cotton mills.

When I came to work at Baltimore, Laura, whom I had always been in close touch [with] — who died a few years ago — wrote to her sister-in-law, who was Mrs. Sidney Cone, [he was] the brother of one of the Cone grandsons who had stayed in Baltimore, and to her two sisters-in-law, who were delightful (Mrs. Etta Cone and Dr. ^{Claribel} Clarabell Cone) — so I recruited them all into the Suffrages — into the League of Women Voters.

Mrs. ^{d?} Signey Cone was active on our Board. Dr. Clara¹ and Ms. Etta were really choice, and Dr. Clarabell¹ was a scholarly person. She went to Germany and studied medicine and got a medical degree. She was in Germany when World War I was declared, and didn't know, because she was working in a research foundation, that her country and Germany were at war, until it was broken in on her by the German police, and it took all of the international and diplomatic force to get her out.

Another person caught like that was Henry ^{Mencken} Mencken.

So that Clarabell was really a character. And she and Ms. Etta went from Germany then to France, where they -- see, they were quite wealthy women -- where they set up a Maison down in the French Quarter that was the international home. And this was the time of our early impressionists, and all of the new school of art in which the French led.

Well, Dr. Clarabell and Ms. Etta found that a good many of these artists were very short-funded, so they bought not only pictures but they bought sketches and all sorts of things, really, in order to give these young men and women money.

And when they came home, of course, they brought their treasures with them. After that, they went back almost every year for a vacation over there, and would come home with a collection.

Well, they had an apartment that -- one of Baltimore's earliest apartments (The Marboro), and there were great big rooms, and beautiful, and very soon, they were completely filled with their collection, so they just rented another apartment.

Well, Dr. Clarabell and Ms. Ella made rather pets, I suspect, of Catherine Scarboro and Virginia King and myself. We were the young women, you see, who were -- Virginia was Secretary and Catherine was a reporter on the side, and Sue Owens, who was then Sue Owens, later Sue Watson, on the Sun.

So whenever they came back from one of their European trips, they would invite us up to see the loot, all windowed pictures, and would explain to us why they selected this, what was the thing about this.

They were really scholarly. They had a lot of other, I would say, idiosyncracies. And, of, they were very sweet to us.

I know when we had -- we did that in the Metropolitan King of Baltimore, and we had wonderful concerts. And very frequently, we would have a call saying, "I've got tickets!" -- we'd all go.

Well, when the — when Dr. Clarabell died, it was at a period when the French impressionists were not being as favorably received, and some Baltimoreans had been a little critical, but they had built the Baltimore Museum of Art. And Dr. Clarabell left a will saying that Ms. Etta, who was to be the administrator of her estate, when Baltimore evidenced sufficient appreciation, was to give Dr. Clarabell's collection to the City, plus the sum of \$100,000 to build a wing to house it. So Ms. Etta waited, and at the appropriate time, she gave her collection, too. And Baltimore has what is said to be the finest collection of the early French models in the United States. It's a magnificent collection.

But always, I'll remember those two delightful women.

MS. LEVINE: And they were involved in the Suffrage with you too?

MS. ENGLE: Oh, yes, yes. They were into every — this was not only art.

MS. LEVINE: Well, come back and tell me more about your mother in Montgomery County, and the organization that's in Montgomery County that you...

MS. ENGLE: Oh, yes. Well, you see, Montgomery County was one of the leaders in the State Federation of Women's Clubs, and all of these women had been active in that.

In addition to that, we have the fact that the friends at Sandy Springs, of course, were always very liberal as to women, and had been among the early backers of Women's Suffrage. And, of course, my mother's family had — they were both Quakers — and her father had been quite active in, as I believe I told you, in a good many of the liberal movements.

It was a very interesting County. We had old families that had been liberal — the Blairs, the Lees, the Montgomerys, and a number of early inhabitants. And the people who came out here in the early days were people who wanted to get out of the city, or people who came from elsewhere, and did not want to live in the city.

We also had the two little communities. We still have a group from the —

I forget which department — that founded Garrett Park, and set up a very unique little town.

We had orchards and groves, which was a camp meeting, and they had tent services there in the summer. Eventually the people who came out there built houses out there. The early houses were built to look like tents.

And then as the community grew a little more stable, they also organized a town, and then it was two small towns.

Then we had a group from the Department of Agriculture who came to Takoma. And Mrs. Frederick Pratt is the widow of the Dr. Pratt — and this was quite early in the development of the azalea. And the azalea plants that we now have were largely developed at the National Arboretum, which was the research group for our Department of Agriculture, of the flowers.

So they bought a home out here and planted Takoma with azaleas, where they still flourish.

You have that type of a rabid liberal and rather energetic group. We had some very interesting pre-Women's Suffrage success.

I'll never forget one tale that's always entertained my father greatly. There was a story that ran round the neighborhood, that some women, young women, had been before the Court, suspected with prostitution, and that there had been some very ^{"ribald"} riddled remarks and things said, which these women thought were not appropriate. The next time the Court convened to hear any cases against a group of several young women, some of them colored, a group of the ladies from the community were sitting in the front row with their knitting, and when the judge said that due to the type of testimony that would be received, they would clear the courtroom, the leader of this group said, "Judge" — I think it was Judge Peters — "it is our understanding that young women who are being questioned before this Court — it is not seemly that young women should be questioned

without older women being present. We will remain." And they did remain.

(Laughter)

Well, the Judge said to my father — my father came out on the train from his office — and he said, "Jim, every time anyone of those men opened his mouth and he thought he was going to say something, all those women put down their knitting and looked."

(Laughter)

He said they really revolutionized the Court. This was followed by a great deal of interest in juveniles at their court — and we had one of the early Juvenile Courts in the state.

It was that type of a group. And, consequently, they were active in civic affairs. They were very active in the school. Later, when we organized our Public Health Program, this came, in a way, as an off-shoot of our League activity, because Mr. Zellican, as I think I told you, had organized an advisory committee of men and women, and our advisory committee included Dr. William Welsch, head of the School of Public Health and Hygiene at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Al Freeden, who was also on that faculty, and one of our women members, Mrs. Emmett Holt's husband, Dr. Holt, was on the Hopkins faculty. So we had rather a large medical group. Mr. Ellicott's son, Dr. Ellicott, was in school then.

So I had observed and heard a lot from them about public health. And then we had a — I think at first it was an epidemic up in Cumberland, which had not been current — was quickly handled. The League got interested in that, and our League up in Allegany County [had a member], Mrs. Litchenstein, whose husband was a druggist, and she knew a good deal about what should have been done. So that thing — that County League, we got through a local Act that established in Allegany County a full-time physician for a public health officer. And Dr. Bob Riley was appointed.

Well, then naturally, we wanted to do something in Montgomery County. And I had talked with men leaders here, with Lacey Shaw and Brooke Lee and a few, and said that all we had in Montgomery County was a Dr. Pratt, who went around, or sent men around to look if there were swamps or drains that were smelling, and put up scholarly theme signs, and that sort of thing.

And when the flue had hit, we had been utterly unprepared for handling an epidemic. So I said I thought Allan Freeman would come over and talk about modern public health if we had a meeting.

So we agreed -- this was both women, and Lacey and Brooke and some of the men who were actively interested. And we called a meeting of representative people from all of the election districts in the County -- Fran Brooks and everybody, and Dr. Freeman came--talked about health and staying well, and the public health function in epidemiology and areas of that sort, and then said that he would be willing to have some of his graduate students make a study of Montgomery County and devise the trend as to how we might set about to establish a modern public health program.

We had Dr. Pratt, who was in on all of this. So Dr. Freeman made what is still regarded or called, I understand, as the Freeman Study, in which they set up the successive -- we should first get a properly trained, adequately trained, professionally trained, public health officer. We should set up public health nurses, and we should start with a few , and so forth, and that started -- at one time, won three successive times, the prize as the best county public health system in the United States.

Val Ellicott, who was Ms. Ellicott's son, was our first professional public health officer, and a very, very excellent one.

Then the National League, as well as our State League, was very conscious of the fact, and the Children's Bureau was very active in the League at first, and kept putting this out.

The United States, at that time, had the highest infant maternal death rate of any civilized country, any of the big — well, say, progressive so-called countries. So it was introduced at the instance of the League of Women Voters, the Children's Bureau and the Federation of Women's Clubs, and other groups, the so-called Shepard-Towner Act (Senator Shepard and Congressman Towner).

This Act established in the Children's Bureau a division of maternal and infant health, and it provided a fund for grants-in-aid to the states to establish state departments of that sort, which would be established by the legislature and would be funded from state and federal funds; [these] were very interesting, because the opposition to Women's Suffrage, the so-called Anti-Suffrage move — it was always an interesting phenomenon to me. And it was even more, when you realize what they did after the suffrage was granted. They bitterly opposed this bill enforced in Congress, and stirred up opposition in the states.

Here in Maryland, we had, as well as a strong suffrage association, a fairly active anti-suffrage association. And they played upon the opposition of your ultra-conservative people in the legislature. And you had a group of men who had successfully defeated the ratification of the Suffrage Amendment in Maryland.

And so, when this bill was introduced, the leader of this group was a Senator Frick, who was in the Senate. He was violently opposed, and made many speeches — this was going to bring the Federal Government in to home; it was going to wreck us; and it was turning over the most precious things to the public; and so — you know, and all that sort of stuff.

So anyway, Tilly Malloy was our legislative secretary, Mrs. Matilda — Mrs. William Malloy — Mrs. Matilda Malloy — I should have realized that one was — and we were all down there lobbying for this thing, and we got it through the House.

Senator Frick and a group held it in committee in the Senate. Interestingly enough, we had — Millard Tydings was in the Senate, and Brooke Lee had said to Millard, who was an old friend of his from the Army days, that when I went down

there that I was a childhood friend of his, and anything he could do for me, all the things I was backing, he would appreciate.

Well, Brooke was the comptroller at the time, and so days went by and we couldn't get our bill out of committee and on the floor. And finally, we came to the time when it would take a two-thirds majority to get it out — and we were...

So, anyway, we decided to push it and have a try. We knew we were within this, whether we would win or lose. But Millard Tydings, who was fighting the Volstead Act, had said to us, "Now, I'm not voting for any federal grants, because we are fighting the federal control of certain things. Girls, I'll back you on every legislative point. And if you need my vote to actually do it, you can count on me."

So we thought we were safe, but we couldn't be sure. So, anyway, we got it — we got the motion before the House to suspend the rules, put it on third readings for final passage, and Senator Frick and a group took the floor for us, and they talked, and talked, and talked, and talked, and the time got later and later. This was the ^{last} night of the session, and the session, supposedly, was to have adjourned at 9 o'clock.

Well, the House adjourned and came over to see what was going on, and Senator Frick, at 11 o'clock, took over from the man who was — well, filibustering, and said that the House had adjourned, and the Senate was, therefore, not legally in session, and that he and his associates were leaving because the Senate legally was no longer in session.

Well, you can imagine, we were out in the hall, and I was going like this — and here were — Governor Ritchie had come down to see what was going on. And Governor Ritchie and Brooke and a half a dozen of our friends were saying, "Now, keep still; don't get excited; don't panic, don't panic; the only thing they can take into court would be the journal of the House and Senate, and they'll

both show they adjourned at 9 o'clock," because they'd been turning back the clock, you see.

So we toed our ground, and got in — our friends coming out — we had — Van Drum was his name — who was from Calvert County, who was our floor leader for the bill, and so Frick and his friends stopped that — all six of them.

Immediately, we moved to put the bill on final passage, and Millard Tydings, to everybody's surprise, you see, got up and seconded it, and carried his vote with it, and we put the bill through.

Well, there was one last thought that Senatore Frick had, because the Clerk of the House had to receipt for the bill, and unless he did, you see, the bill was lost. And the Clerk of the House was Uncle Albert Almony, from Rockville, And Uncle Albert had two — he was a fine clerk — and he had two idols in his life, and one was poker and the other was bourbon. And of course, Uncle Albert was not in sight, so they decided he had gone home, and said —well, at this moment, Brooke, who had had Uncle Albert upstairs on the top floor, playing him poker, and locked up — and he had said, "Well, Albert, you're going to stay here until we get this finished bill through. And then, I've got a quart of the best bourbon you ever drank in your life."

(Laughter)

At that moment, he produced Uncle Albert, who received the bill. (Laughter) You simply cannot imagine. It was our first real battle, you see, and Ms. Elliott and Tilly and the rest of us were just practically limp. Well, we had won!

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: And Governor Ritchie said, "Well, now, you ladies must remember that your being able to win that battle has given you a prestige that you can travel on." And it was true.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: They knew that we were — that we'd stay with it to the end, and they knew we could pull out some cards they didn't expect.

But that bill established these maternal and infant clinics all over the United States, and they were clinics to which anyone could take an infant.

They also set up a program by which mid-wives who, at that time, did the bulk of the delivery for children — babies — and I know were in this county and in this state, the — we had Dr. J. H. Masonox, Jr., who was a very distinguished medical officer and who had been in Europe and studied there the very advanced work in some countries, with infant and maternal care. So he was our state head.

And the clinics, in addition to having a properly trained pediatrician, had obstetricians who taught these mid-wives. They gave them schools, where the ones who could not learn and who were not able to really be taught what to do and how to do it, were not licensed or issued their licenses.

And every mid-wife was given equipment. She had the sterile instruments, and she was taught how to sterilize them, and she was given the core that she should use in cutting the umbilical cord, and taught a great deal, because we did not have the doctors to take over immediately — and we still do not — we still have mid-wives, you know, even if we don't recognize the fact. But that was a nationwide program.

MS. LEVINE: And did this have an effect in Montgomery County, too?

MS. ENGLE: Oh, here it was tremendously effective, because, you see, we had the doctors who backed it, and we had the money to finance it, and we had an excellent program here.

And then when Val Ellicott became our public health officer, as he did a year or two later, what we had was an extensive training program for your para-medical group, and many things that were done in the schools as well as in the baby clinics.

Well, that program was still in operation. Unfortunately, one of the things that has happened in the last two years has been that the Children's Bureau has been dismembered, as you probably know, and that the functions of the medical service were transferred to a still not organized medical unit.

The appropriations to the Children's Bureau were made direct to the Children's Bureau and not to the Department. So when they attempted to transfer this money, they found they could not.

There is a small group — most of the Children's Bureau professional staff were either fired, terminated, or gotten rid of somehow. And the group who now are called the Children's Bureau are a small new group. The medical officer, Dr. Lesser and Grace Engle, who is a resident of this county up in the building up in Rockville, where a good many federal offices are...

But it is really a tragedy, because infant mortality in this country is on the rise.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: And it is a shame that we have had what was the most — one of the most effective medical research — all operating groups in all America — that is — but, there it is.

That whole medical program, in many ways, was one of the things that the League boasts, in this state and throughout the national — and many states — was one of their most actively supported programs, because our death rate of babies and of mothers was shocking. Then we also had the fact that having once started in your medical program, they went on with a great many other programs, both for children and for adults.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: The League's support of sound medicine and aggressive medicine was very strong throughout those early years. We had a good committee on it.

MS. LEVINE: Do you think there would be any records on the Montgomery County League itself, in the early days?

MS. LENGLE: You know, the thing that is distressing is how little any of our local Leagues really realized they should keep their records. Now, actually, one of the things I wish you'd help me do — or get a group together — I found that over at the University of Maryland, there were great many League records.

MS. LEVINE: I've seen them.

MS. ENGLE: Some of them would be County records, because they would be the letters and the reports from the Counties, you see, to the State League.

When we are not having this type of weather, I wish that we could get a group who would be willing to do some work, to go over there and, first of all, to sort and file and classify the material that's there, and then to go through and then record it, so that we would have a better knowledge of exactly what we have.

MS. LEVINE: That's a good idea. Well, to help us out when we do that, could you, for example, tell us what the pattern of meetings were in the Counties, or where your mother was president.

MS. ENGLE: Well, it was a regular monthly meeting.

MS. LEVINE: A regular monthly meeting?

MS. ENGLE: Yes. Almost everywhere, that followed the general women's organizations. Then, in addition to that, you see, you would have committees, as we do now, that would carry on special meetings.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: On some of these meetings were carried on, in each county — some were meetings in Baltimore, attended by as many of your county women as possible. Montgomery County, being near Baltimore and Baltimore County and a few of the adjacent counties quite generally,

had a good many women who went over. For instance, Dr. Katherine Gallagher was one of our — she was a professor of history at Goucher, and she gave a series of lectures for our international committee, on the history of the United States in the international field. You see, we were just coming out of World War I. The League was interested in the Locarno Pact, which was the one that dealt with the financial mess that we left the war with, when World War I was through.

We also had a regular monthly luncheon, to which women all over the state were invited, and those were always discussion meetings that ran into a whole afternoon. But there were regular meetings here, and the various committee chairmen here both worked with the state chairman and the other county chairmen, and also carried on activities here locally. They were — we had a committee on Education that was quite active in school standards and in working for better schools. We had the Legal Status of Women Committee, Ms. Musgrove, who was in Prince George's, and chairman. We also had quite a good deal of cooperation from some of the university professors here, at Johns Hopkins, at Goucher, down on the Eastern Shore, and everywhere.

And our Junior Leagues in the colleges carried on some studies that were in the fields that we were interested in. Some of them were much more active than others.

MS. LEVINE: Did they sort of select their own field, or did you assign the fields?

MS. ENGLE: At the Annual Meeting, you had from the National — of course, the usual type of papers, and what the National Program was — and at the National Conference, they adopted what they could specifically work on nationally. Then, in the State, we decided what we would work on in state legislature.

MS. LEVINE: The Executive Committee decide...

MS. ENGLE: No, it was decided at our Convention.

MS. LEVINE: At the Convention"

MS. ENGLE: Our Annual Convention. Then your county group went back home and discussed that at your countywide meetings. We started interviewing candidates for the Legislature, and we also started -- I think our Montgomery County "Know Your Own County" was the first one finished. I know, I worked with my mother on that, and we have several other women who worked on that right hard. Dr. Long wrote our "Government of Maryland" book, and Frank Kent, see...

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: A great game of politics. All of these in papers, you see, were distributed and used at meetings.

MS. LEVINE: Well, now, this "Know Your Own County," that your mother worked on, when would that have been published?

MS. ENGLE: That was started almost immediately, and it would have been in the first few months after the League that the first ones got out. And, of course, at that time, they were typed and mimeographed, you see.

MS. LEVINE: Sure.

MS. ENGLE: And then, finally, I have, I think in my box, the things of fairly old ones, but not going back that far. And I must get out and put that down in the basement. One of the girls was going to come and look at that again, and never did. I think it was -- oh, what is her name?

MS. LEVINE: Juanita Black, I'll bet.

MS. ENGLE: No, it was the other one, who has the nice home or had a home not long ago, that was...

MS. LEVINE: Was that Evelyn Asrael?

MS. ENGLE: Yes. I do not have too much, you see, because my mother passed the papers on to the next president. I think the next president of the

Olive

League was Ms. Eugene Stevens. And then, of course, Alice Clapper, later on was president. And — I'm trying to think of the little woman up in the upper end of the County who was president for a while.

Now, but you know, of course, Ms. Stevens did not have any daughters, and has been dead some years. I'd strongly suspect those records were not kept.

You know, it's too bad — I wish we had a better sense of history. One thing I'm getting into the files in there, I'm trying to keep all of the earlier things I have, both related to the Suffrage and the League, and also the Social Security Administration.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: Because you do come back and find people going over the same territory, you know, and not knowing what was done, what the problems were or why it might have been dropped.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: And these organizations of women, throughout the United States have been a very, very interesting part of our history.

MS. LEVINE: Yes. Yes, and have evidently made quite a contribution just right here?

MS. ENGLE: Oh, yes, yes, this County really did.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: It would be — I don't know how much the State Federation has. I do know that there's a lot more from what I saw very briefly in Annapolis. I think there is a lot more in the State League records than we saw at first. I think they would produce — I've found, for instance, letters dealing with our — to and from, to the National — about the 1922 Convention.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: Now, if you've got that and some of that stuff, there's other stuff there.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: And if we could just once get that just properly -- you know, what I'm doing here now, what I'd call -- my next -- for the past week, in our -- both for our League of Women Voters and also for the Committee on Health and Medical Services (Montgomery County Commission on Aging), for the agent -- I have accumulated, already a lot of material. And one of my neighbors, Norma Esch, who is one of our League members, has been helping me.

I'm having some trouble with my eyes, and my typing is two-finger, anyway, and Norma has done a lot to help me.

So I have, solely, the two-drawer files. I have one big old one down the basement, and I bought from Hecht's a couple of four-drawer ones. Thinking then that we could get everything, I was just having to put in boxes away.

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: Well, I got them three weeks ago, and they told me they'd be delivered a certain day, and will I have someone here. I wasn't here, but my maid was. They didn't come.

MS. LEVINE: Oh, yes.

MS. ENGLE: The next day, they didn't come. Finally, after three weeks, they came last -- let's see, what is today? -- they came, yes, last Thursday. I got it open, and one of them didn't have the things, you know, you have to put on so your drawer goes, and everything. So we are delayed, but one of my problems: this is too shady, this house, and yet I bought it because it had trees, largely. This is nice and bright in the morning, and the second bedroom on this floor, I have turned it into a little, sort of study and work room. So I have the files back there, and I have more than I have room for, and I'm wondering how could I -- and Norma and I work out here in the morning a lot...

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: ...how could I find room in this to put one of those old files?

MS. LEVINE: Yes.

MS. ENGLE: But as fast as I get all of that filed, I think we could do an outline for what we'd like to find. We could take some committee headings...

MS. LEVINE: That's right.

MS. ENGLE: ...with that.

MS. LEVINE: I know there was an immigration study, too.

MS. ENGLE: Oh, yes.

MS. LEVINE: I remember seeing some papers on that.

MS. ENGLE: Yes. We studied a lot of things, because the -- well, the things you got into because you were a women's organization interested in women. I'll never forget one battle we had on child labor, because we found that it was an awful lot of illegal child labor. And we put a bill in and got it through. It was provided that an employer could not take out insurance or collect insurance on a child's illegal employment.

And, oh, did they storm! And Governor Ritchie stuck right on. He said, "This is a policy." He said, "This will stand up in the court, it's a paddle."

So we got that through. Well, we had a lot of problems with migrant labor, labor that came up from Florida -- to pick strawberries here, and other things, and children with the group. So we started out making studies of various things. I was by no means a professionally trained researcher. But Mary Woods, who was in the County Bureau of Labor Statistics, and she was in charge of issuing work permits to children for special work, and after they were of age to work. So we decided we would make a study of the migrant camps, and we did. And one thing we started out doing, we took a health officer or a doctor and a photographer wherever we went.

And we got those Eastern Shore camps, and, oh, they were filthy and the whole thing was...wrong. So we made this report to Dr. Insley, and, of course, the papers got it. And Dr. Insley, who was Commissioner of Labor Statistics, called — he was a nice chap, and sort of a neat little man — and he said, "A whole bunch of these tanners and grovers are down to have a conference, and so is the Governor — and you made that study. You come on down."

So Mary and I went down, and we went in. The Governor said, "What are you doing here?" "Well," I said, "we're not Continental Can Boys."

(Laughter)

MS. ENGLE: "Well," he said, "This is interesting." And I said, "Governor, here is the unabridged material, without photographs." And I gave — and the report from the doctors and et cetera, et cetera. So he sat down and looked it through — got through; he said to these men, "Well, gentlemen, by all the data presented here, you run a disgusting business!" "Now," he said, "I'll introduce in the next session of the Legislature a measure which will put the control of your camps under the State Department of Health, and they will issue regulations. In the meantime, they will issue temporary regulations, and these will also carry punitive action!"

So we really were one of the first states to really get some clean-up on that migrant camp business. Still, they still came, and still had children who were much too young to be hauled up and down the Seaboard like that.

We made other studies. We made one of the almshouses. Deb Booker said to me, "I've been out and looked in all the almshouses, and was shocked." She said, "You're never really going to get anything done until you hit them between the eye!"

So we talked it over, and introduced in the Legislature a resolution authorizing the Governor to appoint a Commissioner to study the almshouses of the state, and make recommendations.

This was a time in the late '20's when we were just beginning to get the impact of the mechanization of farms and the extent of poverty that was beginning to be a problem. I guess it wasn't too late for that. So there again, we went to every almshouse in the state, taking a doctor, who made a brief examination and a record of the physical condition of every person in the almshouse, and a photographer, who got pictures.

We had some that were clean and, apparently, well fed, and some that were not. And we had, here in Prince George's County, just that many miles from the national Capitol, an out-house — it must have been a chicken house — where one elderly colored man was living, and fed on a tin plate, because they said what he had, we'll catch it. I think they thought it was tuberculosis, or they didn't know what tuberculosis was — very ignorant people were running it.

Well, the man had cancer in the throat. And when our doctor saw that, we got an ambulance and got him into a hospital.

We had a place down in southern Maryland where there was a child who'd been badly burned, and she was down in the almshouse for care, and no doctor had ever seen her or treated her.

One of the funniest, up at Hagerstown they had a final home that had been turned into — that was frequently done — into the almshouse, and they had a large enough place so they had some of their numerous inmates there segregated. They had one they said was their psychopathic ward. They said, their insane ward. And it had others. They had — I remember that place, they had two cancer cases there. They were under treatment, but they had no business in that sort of an institution.

So I got back to Baltimore, I called George Preston, the Commissioner of Mental Health, and said, "I've been visiting your attic up in Hagerstown." He said, "What?" And I told him what I had seen up there. He sent a van up, and they sent him to the wrong wing. They didn't even know what he wanted.

MS. LEVINE: Oh, my goodness!

(Laughter)

MS. ENGLE: It was a -- well, Frank Baines, who became the Director of Social Security, had made a study in Virginia; and Frank and I had been at the National Conference of Social Security, reporting on these studies.

Now, he had recommended regional almshouses, large ones, well run, and all that. We recommended a financial aid to the poor, and too, chronic disease hospitals. It took us several years to get chronic disease hospitals, but we eventually did. And we did that -- and aid to the aged, before the Social Security...

MS. LEVINE: In the state?

MS. ENGLE: In the state. It was sort of an expansion in the old County Commissioner's Aid to the Poor type of thing, you see, that you gave people enough so they could get by. It wasn't anything very generous, but it was at least a beginning.

We made a number of those studies. The wildest one we did -- women down Anne Arundel said there was a place out in the outskirts, down below Annapolis, where there was a camp that said that they wanted these sort of off-beat religious groups, and that they were disturbed because there were many children in it, and most of them were young girls.

So Mary and I could make a study, and to find out what was going on, well, we took one of the local women, of course, and we went after the place. And sure enough, there was just a bunch of girls who would have been between -- we thought 12 or 14 or 15, and they were predominant in the place.

So we asked a lot of questions, and they were very cagey about what they told us, and told us a lot about their religious background and all that, which we didn't believe a word of.

So we went on back into town and reported to the local police, and said we thought these girls were being disposed of -- and we had a lot of white slave problems at that time. So they got in touch with the -- we didn't have the State Police in on that then, but Baltimore City Police. And when we got back in the office the next day -- Ms. Ellicott was Chairman of the Board of Police Matrons for Baltimore City -- this is another one of the things, the care of women in institutions. And our Pleasant Street office backed up to the precinct, police precinct, back there, and the police officers used to bring these reports over to her, coming in at the back door.

Well, the next morning, here came the sergeant from that station, just puffing and blowing, "Young ladies, young ladies!" he said. "Don't do anything like that again -- don't do anything like it again. You come tell Papa, and I'll have a nice, big, fat policeman with a nice, big, fat gun in his pocket."

(Laughter)

"Why," he said, "men like that are dangerous." Well, it never occurred to us. But anyway, we gave him all our information, and sure enough, they picked up two of those men down on a street corner in Baltimore, turning over a 13-year old girl, well known to the police, head of a house of prostitution. So the police descended on the place and cleaned it out and took all the girls up to Baltimore, where they were either returned to their families, or put in institutions for care.

You know, it's hard to realize how very naive and how very primitive some of the things that we were having, seem to us now, you see.

MS. LEVINE: Yes -- and courageous kind of thing -- I would add to that.

MS. ENGLE: Well, we weren't afraid of anything.

MS. LEVINE: I know you weren't.

(Laughter)

MS. ENGLE: But we built up a reputation. I will say that even the good old Sun Papers came to the point that they spoke of us with respect and high regard — and they'd been bitter opponents of Women's Suffrage. But it was a period in which we brought an organized and comparatively large group of women in touch with the fabric of society that was susceptible to political action — you see what I mean?

And as we learned, step by step, what there was we needed to do and how to approach it, it was a broad education, just as we go back to that school I was telling you about down in South Baltimore, we reached a point there where many of the men who worked down in that area were illiterate, and comparatively unprepared to look after themselves, and non-unionized, and we did such things as getting a full program to our Secretary of State.

And a law student, his was an interesting case. Governor Ritchie taught at the University of Maryland Law School at night, and one of his students, who he thought exceedingly bright and able, was a young chap, Phillip Pope, and when Ritchie became Governor...

(END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE.)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO IS BLANK.)