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Homemakers as Peacemakers: U.S. Women's International Organizing and the Practice of Consumer Diplomacy, 1919-1946

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Nicole Bernadette de Silva

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June 2023

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March 2023

Homemakers as Peacemakers: U.S. Women's International Organizing and the Practice of Consumer Diplomacy, 1919-1946

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by

Nicole Bernadette de Silva

Acknowledgements

This project first began in a graduate research seminar led by UCSB Professor Alice O'Connor during Winter 2017. When I cast about for an idea that could join together my seemingly disparate interests in U.S. women's political thought and fashion history, my colleague and friend Rana Razek graciously shared all she knew about Chinese American Alice Fong Yu's San Francisco Chinatown anti-silk stocking boycott. The topic was ideal. Yu's political and social writings offered insight into her understandings of what it meant to be a woman within a particular transpacific world. Yet, Yu also expressed these ideas through consumer action, organizing anti-silk fashion shows and diverting her purchasing power away from Japanese goods that she thought might "aid the aggressor." The research formed the basis of my first publication in the *Journal of Women's History,* parts of which are reprinted here as Chapter 5. A year later, funds granted by UCSB's Center for Work, Labor and Democracy enabled me to further investigate the anti-silk boycott movement in the papers of former Mt. Holyoke College President and U.S. diplomat Mary Emma Woolley. As I dug deeper, I found that this silk boycott was only the most visible example of what this dissertation calls "consumer diplomacy:" a term that I use to internationalize the notion of domestic U.S. "consumer citizenship."

My concept of "consumer diplomacy" soon grew to be much larger than just boycott participation. I am grateful to UCSB Professor Erika Rappaport for inviting me to write a chapter on the comparative history of shopping and the state in the U.S. and Britain for Bloomsbury Academic's *History of Shopping in the Age of Revolution and Empire.* Through this project, I first came in contact with the international consumer cooperative movement. Thanks to the Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation, I was able to travel to conduct initial research on the International Cooperative Women's Guild in Hull, UK. Work at the Cooperative League of the USA archives at the New York Public Library was supported by UCSB's Walter H. Capps

Center, while UCSB's Blum Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality funded my work at the Cooperative League's papers held at the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Finally, I am fortunate to have had productive conversations about Black women's consumer cooperative activities with Ronny Regev, who shared some of her own findings with me.

Home economists' international activities present a third strand of "consumer diplomacy." I am so grateful to the Society for Historians of Foreign Relations (SHAFR) for providing generous support that allowed me to conduct research on home economists at Cornell University's Special Collections. While at Cornell, I profited from conversations with archivist Eileen Keating, whose expansive knowledge of the home science collections was a great help. Beyond this research grant, my dissertation owes much to the intellectual support I've received at SHAFR meetings over the years, especially at its 2022 Women in the World Institute in New Orleans. There, I benefited from long days of conversation with scholars of women's internationalism, especially Brandy Thomas-Wells, as well as diplomatic historian Amy Staples. These chats proved formative influences for Chapters 6 and 7. Thanks is also due to Marc-William Palen, with whom I co-organized a generative panel on women's "political economies of peace" at the 2022 SHAFR meeting. Through that panel, I was fortunate enough to meet Megan Threlkeld, who graciously lent her insights as an outside reader of this dissertation.

The process of writing this dissertation was itself deeply transnational. I drafted much of it while abroad in Dublin, Ireland. I am very fortunate to have received fellowships from UCSB's Graduate Division, the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, the Walter H. Capps Center, and UCSB's History Department, all of which made my two years of writing abroad possible. While in Dublin, I benefited from the support of Daniel Geary at Trinity College Dublin, who graciously helped me to obtain readers' privileges at Trinity's library and lent a hand as I acclimated to a new country and academic culture. I am also grateful for the warm welcome I received from the

Irish Association of American Studies (IAAS), which became an intellectual home away from home. Finally, my friends at the Irish Writers' Center, especially Peter MacNamara, helped me to remember that historical writing is most successful when it strives to tell a good story.

No matter where I was in the world, I could always depend on UCSB Professor Lisa Jacobson's constant support and guidance. Through careful revisions of countless drafts and lengthy zoom conversations, she devoted incredible energy to ensuring that this dissertation became the strongest it could be. Throughout my career as a graduate student, I could also count on Professor Eileen Boris to ask the challenging and provocative questions that drove my work forward. Professor Salim Yaqub, meanwhile, generously spent countless hours in fascinating discussion of the literature on U.S. foreign relations. I've also benefited enormously from the Women, Gender, and Sexuality graduate student research cluster organized by UCSB's Jarrett Henderson. I am particularly grateful to friends Addison Jensen, Mattie Webb, Kaisha Arnold, Sasha Coles, Kristin Thomas-McGill, Fang He, Brian Griffith, Neil Johnson, Sarah Dunne, and Julie Johnson, all of whom have read drafts and been supportive of this project since its inception. Special thanks should be given to my friend Dana Hughes. She read multiple drafts of these chapters, was always willing to listen to me practice conference talks on zoom no matter the time difference, and perhaps most importantly, made sure that I never forgot my why I was so passionate about writing women's history in the first place.

My deepest thanks are reserved for my partner Constantine Evans, postdoctoral scholar at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, without whose love, patience, and encouragement this would likely have been a much less ambitious project. Not only did he read every word of this dissertation and provide excellent suggestions to clarify my prose, he also regularly served as a sounding board for the stream of ideas that developed as I researched, read, and wrote. My parents, Derek and Sharon, and my grandparents, Hilda and Gerald, never missed an opportunity to support me (especially if it meant that they could spend a weekend in beautiful Santa Barbara). As a dedicated homemaker, Hilda inspired many of the questions about domestic labor that motivated my thinking in this dissertation. It is to her that this work is dedicated.

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Abstract

Homemakers as Peacemakers: U.S. Women's International Organizing and the Practice of Consumer Diplomacy, 1919-1946

by

Nicole Bernadette de Silva

This dissertation shows how liberal U.S. women mobilized their economic identities and practices as *consumers* to build movements for international peace from 1919 to 1946. As a multi-racial, comparative history, it demonstrates how white, Black, and Asian American women invested their marketplace interactions with distinct meanings. Previous studies have uncovered lively post-World War I debates around the ideal scope and power of international institutions, illustrated how suffrage reshaped women's political participation in the U.S. and abroad after 1920, and cast the consumer as an increasingly central figure within liberal economic theory during the interwar years. My dissertation is the first work to closely examine the interplay between these historical processes. It is organized around three central questions. How can U.S. women's identities and practices as *consumers* give us insight into the ways they understood themselves as actors on a world stage during the turbulent interwar period and World War II? What underlying assumptions about international political economy, global geography, or U.S. foreign policy motivated their campaigns? What were they trying to achieve, and did their actions reach those stated goals?

This work makes three core arguments. First, and most centrally, it claims that these U.S. women used consumer campaigns to enact a sense of themselves as members of a broad, international polity, or as they sometimes termed themselves, "citizens of the world." Exerting a voice on a global scale was not a straightforward practice, however. It would demand innovative

ways of thinking about and participating in politics. Consumer activism offered one such avenue. In the early twentieth century, U.S. women's networks organized their purchasing power to push for local and national political change. They turned to this tool especially when they lacked access to formal political power. Women's understandings of themselves as *global* consumers encouraged them to extend this practice onto an international stage. They practiced "consumer diplomacy" when they used their organized buying power to enact or uphold boycotts, promote food aid efforts, or even build international institutions that they believed could keep the peace.

The second major finding of this dissertation is that consumer diplomats had a hand in building powerful non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They especially engaged in this activity when they believed that institutions designed to maintain international peace, like the League of Nations, faltered. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) emerges as the most critical example of such an NGO. The ICA promoted the development of cooperative economic structures, including farms, wholesalers, and retailers, all of which were owned and operated by their members. Proponents believed that these small-scale economic democracies could scale up into a commercial system could distribute commodities more equally and limit the competitions over resources that they feared could lead to conflict. In this way, cooperation offers an example of what I term a *political economy of peace*. The basic unit of this business infrastructure was the local shop, which relied on members' purchases and offered a site around which consumer diplomats could organize.

Third, I claim that peace negotiations during and immediately after World War II offered consumer diplomats the clearest opportunity to voice the ideas about peace and human need that they had generated throughout the interwar years. Consumer diplomats claimed that the United Nations had to take consumer needs seriously if it was to be a powerful peacekeeping body. In doing so, they buttressed emerging postwar institutions like the Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO), built new NGOs like the non-profit Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE), and even offered roads not taken in postwar planning. Though they did not always achieve their intended results, consumer diplomats participated in crucial conversations about the rights and obligations of purchasers in a globalizing marketplace.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

American Association of University Women	AAUW
American Boycott Against Aggressor Nations	ABAAN
Associated Countrywomen of the World	ACWW
American School Peace League	ASPL
American Home Economics Association	AHEA
Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe	CARE
Central Cooperative Wholesale (of Superior, WI)	CCW
Consumers' Cooperative Association (of North Kansas City, MO)	CCA
Committee on the Participation of Women in Post-War Planning	CPWPWP
Chinese War Relief Association	CWRA
Cooperative League (of the United States)	CL
(The English) Cooperative Wholesale Society	CWS
Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations	WDC
Irish Agricultural Organization Society	IAOS
International Cooperative Women's Guild	ICWG
International Cooperative Alliance	ICA
International Federation of Home Economics	IFHE
International Labor Office	ILO

Junior Red Cross	JCR
Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)	KMT
Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations	WLC
Cooperative Women's Guild (of the United States)	USCWG
National Association of Colored Women	NACW
National Cooperatives, Inc	NCI
National Children's Fund	NCF
National Council of Negro Women	NCNW
National Products Preservation Association (China)	NPPA
Women's International League of Peace and Freedom	WILPF
Square and Circle Club	SCC
United States Food Administration	USDA
Young Women's Christian Association	YWCA

Introduction

Practices of Consumer Diplomacy

In September 1937, a Montana journalist writing under the pseudonym Mary Mack visited a mid-tier department store to pick up some stockings.[1] This would have been a common enough errand in the late 1930s. Though hosiery sales dipped during the depression, the *Women's Home Companion* estimated than an average woman still purchased around fifteen pairs of stockings a year, spending approximately $12 on hosiery annually.[2] Rather than approaching the counter that sold the more luxurious hose made of silk, Mack went straight to the artificial silk department. She hardly even needed to say a word before the saleswoman led her to an aisle filled with hosiery woven from a fine, smooth cotton thread called lisle—just what Mack was after. Customer demand for silk substitutes had nearly doubled over the last month, the saleswoman explained, and ever since the store buyers had been ordering lisle stockings and rayon slips in a larger variation of styles and colors. Mack glanced over her shoulder at the once-bustling silk counter, now striking for its lack of customers. "Business is slow in that other hosiery department," the saleswoman shrugged. In fact, "they are going to take a girl from the real silk department and put her here with me."[3]

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[1] "Substitutes Used as Women Shun Japan Silk Goods," *Montana Labor News* (Butte, MN), November 18, 1937, 2.

[2] "What Can a Girl Live On?" *Women's Home Companion,* October 1936.

[3] "Substitutes Used," *Montana Labor News,* 2.

Introduction: Practices of Consumer Diplomacy

What could explain silk hosiery's sudden plunge in popularity? Frugality did not motivate Mack's choice, even if she did celebrate the silky sheen, greater durability, and lower cost of lisle hose and rayon slips. It was not that the basic materials on offer had suddenly changed. Chemists in DuPont's laboratories only began to develop nylon a year later in 1938, and it would take another few years before these synthetic stockings became commercially available.[4] Natural plant fibers like rayon and lisle still dominated the artificial silk department when Mack visited, as they had for decades. Mack was not necessarily seeking a U.S.-made textile. She never expressed explicit support for Buy-American economic nationalism during the 1937–38 economic downtown, though these concerns did get tangled up in her actions.[5] Instead, her stated intention was to participate in a popular consumer boycott of Japanese silk after Japan escalated its war with China in July 1937.

As the abandoned silk counter makes clear, Mack did not act alone. Across the U.S., the boycott engaged celebrities, left-leaning activists, New Deal liberals, college students, and housewives active in local women's clubs.[6] In the absence of formal economic sanctions, these consumers refused to purchase the Japanese imports that they believed would contribute to Tokyo's military budget. One boycott organization estimated the cost of keeping up the war in China at $5 million per day, and based on their assessment of Japan's existing cash reserves, it claimed that refusing to purchase the nation's exports could push the nation to a ceasefire in just thirty-three days.[7] For many U.S. boycotters, stopping the sale of silk seemed like the most accessible and promising way to withhold that cash.[8]

---

[4] "Chemurgical Peace" *The Post-Press* (Imperial Valley, CA), October 6, 1938.

[5] Dana Frank, *Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

[6] For example, "The Shape of Things," *The Nation* (December 18, 1937): 675. An extensive study is offered in Lawrence Glickman, "Make Lisle the Style: The Politics of Fashion in the Japanese Silk Boycott, 1937–1940," J*ournal of Social History* 38, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 573–608.

[7] The American Boycott Against Aggressor Nations (ABAAN), *Who Bought the Bomb?* (New York: Self-Published, 1938). Accessed via Hathitrust Digital Library.

[8] In 1937, U.S. consumers spent $100 million for raw Japanese silk, which constituted over seventy percent of the nation's total silk exports. Almost all of this silk went into women's hosiery, making this a particularly gendered

Introduction: Practices of Consumer Diplomacy

U.S. women had long used boycotts to make political claims or protest unethical economic practices. Yet, the women who boycotted silk in the late 1930s did something that boycotters in previous decades had not contemplated: they used their economic clout to advance the cause of international peace. They found inspiration in the success of domestic consumer campaigns during the New Deal era. For example, L. L. Duff, a white housewife in San Diego's Imperial Valley, concluded that "if a meat boycott could force the price down, then a boycott against the silk industry in Japan should accomplish something. It may sound like a small thing, but enough small things make something big."[9]

Duff, Mack, and other U.S. women who eschewed silk practiced something that I call *consumer diplomacy*. Women practiced "consumer diplomacy" when, like Mack, they used their organized buying power to enact or uphold boycotts. Others engaged in forms of "consumer diplomacy" when they used their purchasing power to promote food aid efforts or to build and support international institutions that they believed could keep the peace. Duff's confidence in the global reach of local consumer actions—a conviction shared by thousands of other consumer diplomats in the United States—frame the central questions of this dissertation. How can U.S. women's identities and practices as *consumers* give us insight into the ways they understood themselves as actors on a world stage during the turbulent interwar period? What underlying assumptions about international political economy, global geography, or U.S. foreign policy motivated their campaigns? What were they trying to achieve, and did their actions reach those stated goals?

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protest. As one editorialist put it, "the might of Japan actually has marched to war on the silken tread of American women." "Chemurgical Peace," *The Post-Press.*

[9] Duff most likely referred to the boycott against the ways in which the Agricultural Adjustment Act disposed of agricultural surplus to raise farm incomes, but also increased the price of meat to consumers. Led by housewife and labor union auxiliary activist Mary Zuk, these protests began in Detroit but soon gained national attention in 1935. See Emily E. L. B. Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry: Housewives, Food, and Consumer Protest in Twentieth Century America* (Oxford, 2017). "Valley Housewives Willing to Take Ban on Silk Hose," *The Post-Press,* November 7, 1937, 1.

These questions evade straightforward or singular answers, because women of diverse political leanings used consumer diplomacy as a tool to promote movements for international peace. Yet, even those women who expressed hope for a U.S.-led world order knew that they could not achieve their goals by working alone, and so they formed coalitions with other groups of women consumers in Europe and East Asia. In boycotting silk, Duff joined not just U.S. women, but thousands of others in Latin America, Britain and its empire, continental Europe and China.[10] Following U.S. women as they built these transnational collaborations contributes to our understanding of their internationalism in the first decades of the twentieth century.

None of the movements described in this dissertation achieved their stated aim of soothing international tensions or bringing war to a halt. However, they garnered other impressive results. Silk boycotts made meaningful dents in Japanese cash reserves. U.S. consumer cooperatives brought in almost $1 billion of revenue by the end of World War II, and they helped develop the infrastructure to deliver food aid to almost two million European families in 1946 alone.[11] Activists reached across racial and national divides to engage in a common struggle for peace—to varying degrees of success. As they worked towards their broadly-conceived goals, consumer diplomats engaged in important, transnational conversations about the rights and obligations of purchasers in a globalizing marketplace.

Consumer Citizens as World Citizens

I cast the silk boycott as merely one of the most visible examples of women's use of consumer diplomacy during the interwar years. I am not the first use the anti-silk campaign to tell a story about U.S. women's history or the history of consumer culture, however. In his history of the boycott in U.S. history, Lawrence Glickman used the silk boycott to show a critical shift in the practice of consumer politics at the start of the twentieth century.[12] Silk boycotters agreed with a long tradition of U.S. consumer activists that "consumption was a moral and political act that linked individuals to each other and to the producers of the goods they purchased."[13] They also affirmed that rejecting goods was not mere rhetoric, but an important action with real-world consequences. Unlike consumer activists who came before them however, silk boycotters rejected the idea that beauty and ethics were incompatible. When Hollywood actresses and D.C. debutantes protested Japan's war in China along with ordinary housewives, they made cotton hose glamorous and turned attention to their own bodies in the process. Historian Dana Frank, meanwhile, uses the movement to show the uneasy ways in which a movement ostensibly for international peace intersected with the concurrent move towards economic nationalism by rejecting "cheap" Japanese imports and celebrating U.S.-made alternatives.[14]

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[10] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb?* (New York: self-published, 1938).

[11] For example, "CARE Sends 25 Million Lbs of Food to Europe," Cooperative League News Service (New York, NY), December 13, 1946.

In contrast to these earlier uses, I employ the story of the silk boycott to illustrate the central claim of this dissertation. In the interwar period, U.S. women used their economic identities and practices as consumers to enact a sense of themselves as members of a broad international polity, or as they often termed themselves, "citizens of the world." When women internationalists invoked this moniker during the interwar years, they used it to express their demands to shape the contours of an emerging international community and its governing institutions.[15] Yet, exerting a voice on a global scale was not a straightforward practice—it would demand innovative ways of thinking about and participating in politics. Everyday shopping trips presented one useful terrain for thinking about international engagement. Historically, women have turned to consumer activism when they have limited or indirect access to formal political power. Indeed, scholars have often classed boycotts and buycotts as "weapons of the weak."[16] Precisely because consumer politics could be practiced without direct access to formal power, it was *particularly useful* as a method for acting in international politics, a space in which most ordinary people had very little ability to register their political claims through official processes.

---

[12] Lawrence Glickman, "Make Lisle the Style." In context of the broader history of U.S. boycotts, see Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[13] Glickman, "Make Lisle the Style," 577.

[14] Frank, *Buy American*.

[15] Megan Threlkeld, *Citizens of the World: U.S. Women and Global Government* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

When U.S. women practiced a sense of belonging to an international community through their buying habits, they responded to three intersecting historical processes. The first of these was a lively post-World War I conversation amongst civil society groups about how new global economic institutions might operate and what kinds of powers they should have to influence or shape the policies of sovereign nation-states. This uptick in public interest about how the world ought to be governed occurred just as U.S. women began to fashion a new political voice in the aftermath of the suffrage amendment passed in 1920. While these overlapping historical processes made way for a new era in women's internationalism, the idea of the "consumer" began to transform across Western democracies, creating a robust and often feminized conception of the "citizen consumer."

In the wake of World War I, civil society organizations became passionately involved in discussions about whether or how Inter-Allied economic councils should give way to an international economic organization that could maintain some power to regulate global trade in peacetime. For historian Jaime Martin, the core sticking point in these conversations remained Western democracies' concerns about maintaining national sovereignty.[17] For imperial nations like the United States and Britain, only colonized or otherwise subordinated nations would delegate their power over national economic policymaking to another body. However, there was one powerful way the emerging League of Nations *did* exert influence over the economic policies of its member states. The body's framers hoped that economic sanctions could act as a deterrent to violent conflict, and they used Article 16 of the League Covenant to give the League power to call all members to cut capital and supplies to nations deemed "aggressors." Following the language framers used themselves, historian Nicholas Mulder has termed League sanctions "the economic weapon."[18]

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[16] For an example of this kind of analysis of boycotts, see James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[17] Jaime Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard, 2022).

In the wake of the deadly effects of the wartime Allied blockade of Germany, a number of women peace activists decried the deadly possibilities of Article 16. Though they supported arms control or a blockade of weapons, they did not necessarily see economic sanctions as a tool of peace. If sanctions upended social life and prevented access to food and other basic goods, then they could be a method of enacting another kind of violence. They claimed instead that a healthy peace relied on global structures that could assure food security rather than simply threaten mass starvation through economic isolation. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I examine peace women's concerns about the morality of sanctions as well as their ideas about the kinds of international institutions and trade laws that could contribute to conditions of postwar peace.

This passionate discussion about the morality of League sanctions offers just one example of how women's groups engaged in conversations about international economic organizations during the interwar period. These conversations were fostered by a second key historical shift: U.S. women's formal enfranchisement in 1920. Historians of feminism have traditionally argued that suffrage splintered the U.S. women's movement, resulting in the end of a coherent "first wave" that would not be picked up again until the start of a "second wave" in 1964.[19] Yet over the last three decades, historians of labor and women's internationalism have dismantled this "wave theory." Instead, they have illustrated women's consistent participation in movements for gender justice.[20] As women worked to find their political voices in the aftermath of the suffrage amendment, they increasingly engaged in study groups that discussed wide-ranging domestic and diplomatic policy issues. Others redoubled their efforts in the classroom to educate young men and women in their duties as both U.S. citizens and citizens of the world.[21] Chapter 2 of this dissertation shows how women educators taught young Americans to understand themselves as global consumers who might imaginatively engage with or even "befriend" the distant others who produced the everyday things they used.

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[18] Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (Yale, 2022).

[19] For an overview of this earlier literature, see Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of American Feminism* (Yale, 1998).

During the interwar years, women's organizations and print spaces gave room for thinking about meanings and practices of internationalism. As Chapter 3 of this dissertation shows, the *Ladies Home Journal* ran a campaign in 1932 that encouraged U.S. women to write directly to Mary Emma Woolley, the only woman on the U.S. delegation at the 1932 Geneva Disarmament Conference. The *LHJ* campaign encouraged readers to petition the Disarmament Conference delegates to add a clause to the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact that would enable signatories to boycott "aggressor" nations engaged in an offensive war against another sovereign state. Signed in 1928, this pact outlawed war "as an instrument of national policy" and called upon signatories to use "peaceful means" to solve conflicts. Some women agreed with *LHJ* editor Loring Schuler that adding the threat of sanctions would give the peace pact much-needed teeth. Further, because the United States was among the Pact's signatories, this move would have brought the U.S. in line with Article 16 of the League of Nations' Covenant.

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[20] The first women's international historian to demonstrate this clearly was Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997). On the way labor historians have done this work, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, 2005). On the wave theory and its critics, see Nancy Hewitt, ed. *No More Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (Rutgers, 2010).

[21] On women's participation in peace education, see also Megan Threlkeld, "Education for Pax Americana: The Limits of Internationalism in Progressive Peace Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 57 no. 4 (2017): 515–541. Katie Day Good, *Bring the World to the Child: Technologies of Global Citizenship in American Education* (MIT Press, 2020); Susan Zeiger, "Teaching Peace: Lessons for a Peace Studies Curriculum of the Progressive Era," *Peace and Change* 25 no. 1 (January 2000): 52–70.

Introduction: Practices of Consumer Diplomacy

Women who supported the *LHJ* plan saw their work as especially urgent in the wake of Japan's 1931 invasion of the Chinese province of Manchuria. Their participation suggested that women began to re-evaluate the morality and political feasibility of sanctions, but did not necessarily indicate a wholesale shift. Some women in favor of amending the Pact to include the threat of sanctions still believed that the "economic weapon" had capacity for great violence—one woman explicitly described it as a weapon more powerful than physical armaments.[22] Yet, those who supported sanctions either explicitly or tacitly expressed the belief that the economic isolation of the Japanese people might be a reasonable price to pay to avoid sending their own sons to a future war.

These petitions complicate any easy characterization of consumer diplomacy as a left-liberal practice. Some such women even used the language common among isolationists when they signed off their letters as "100% Americans."[23] These women still thought and acted internationally, even if they did so from a narrow, self-interested perspective. On the other hand, some letter writers used the *LHJ* opportunity to communicate with Mary Woolley to inform her of the voluntary boycotts against Japanese silk that they led in their local communities, a practice Woolley engaged in herself. There was a meaningful distinction between protesting war through a voluntary consumer boycott and promoting the "economic weapon" of sanctions, and throughout the interwar years this would provoke moral and political debate amongst U.S. peace women.

Indeed, L. L. Duff's claim that consumers' power to win local victories could be scaled up was only imaginable because of a third historical shift: the heightened conception of the consumer as an economic and political actor in the United States. By thinking together about the ways women participated in far-reaching conversations about international relations *and* the way they practiced these ideas through consumer politics, my dissertation internationalizes the notion of the "consumer citizen." Over the last two decades, historians have shown how "consumer citizens" interacted with and sought to shape domestic U.S. policy. Others have illustrated the ways consumers have engaged in campaigns to build communities beyond borders, fostering long-distance solidarity through their buying habits.[24] While I am in conversation with both of these, my concept of the "consumer diplomat" does something distinct from both of these investigations. It demonstrates how consumers engaged in, sought to shape, or even looked to build *international* institutions. These women used their identities as consumers to think in expansive ways about the kinds of world governing structures, international laws, and non-governmental organizations they believed would be necessary to protect peace.

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[22] Margaret Taggert to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, 20 February 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, Mary Emma Woolley Papers 1857–1947, Mount Holyoke College Special Collections, South Hadley, MA (Henceforth MEW Papers, MHC).

[23] Bertha Ellis to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, 11 February 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, MEW Papers, MHC.

As multiple historians have shown, shifts in the structure of U.S. capitalism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped to produce a new kind of "consumer citizen" that was tied to a rethinking of economic liberalism.[25] Liberals had once argued that in a small-scale, competitive capitalist environment, consumers had some power to check market exploitation. Following Adam Smith, they conjectured that when prices soared too high for the quality of a good, consumers might withdraw purchases and take their money to a competitor offering better value. If enough people did this, acting out of their own economic self-interest, they would push the seller of the higher-priced good to bring his prices down in line with competitors. Yet, as trusts and monopolies became a common feature of the U.S. economic landscape in the second half of the nineteenth century, consumers lost any of the regulatory power they might arguably have had. Thus, by the 1890s, a group of "new liberals" like Walter Lippman and

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[24] For a recent example of this kind of analysis by a historical sociologist, see Tad Skotnicki, *The Sympathetic Consumer: Moral Critique in Capitalist Culture* (Stanford University Press, 2021).

[25] Kathleen Donohue, *Freedom from Want: American Liberalism and the Idea of the Consumer* (Johns Hopkins, 2006). See also Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship* (UNC Press, 2006).

Walter Weyl began arguing that if producers had conglomerated into trusts, then consumers needed to organize into a common interest group that was backed by the state in order to maintain their ability to check market exploitation.[26]

Through their consumer interest group, these new liberals began to push for the development of regulatory legislation such as the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. Yet, as this dissertation makes clear, there were very few concerns around which all consumers could exert some single or unified interest, especially given the way race and gender structured Americans' access to formal political power. In the absence of a vote, women on the ground took up the mantle of consumer politics to make their voices heard. Florence Kelley's National Consumer League, formed in 1899 to exert pressure on firms to implement fairer wages and labor standards, is a prominent example.[27] Even after the U.S. constitution was amended to give women the right to vote, Black women and other women of color were often denied this right in practice and they continued to withhold their buying power to fight against discriminatory firms and systemic racism in the U.S. marketplace.[28]

Participatory consumer citizenship reached a high point under the New Deal administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1945.[29] This package of social and economic reforms gave a "consumer interest" a formal place in government, and many of the women working for peace through the consumer cooperative movement found either a seat on one of Roosevelt's consumer advisory boards or a receptive audience. This was not a top-down movement, however. As historian Meg Jacobs has shown, the New Deal state invited citizens to see a relationship between their daily economic experience and economic policymaking, creating a "powerful dialectic" that she calls "state-building from the bottom up."[30] Historian Lizabeth Cohen notes that the language of the new regulatory state inspired ordinary people to think more carefully about the political implications of their buying habits. They increasingly saw themselves as "responsible for…prodding the government to protect the rights, safety, and fair treatment of individual consumers in the marketplace."[31] When they participated in buying movements designed to support bodies like the National Recovery Administration, consumers were motivated by a set of beliefs about how the U.S. government should intervene in the market to deepen economic democracy. If women organized as consumers to push for particular national policies, then this dissertation shows how they also used that economic identity to make international claims.

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[26] Donohue, *Freedom from Want.*

[27] Kathryn Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nations' Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (Yale, 2005). On a later era of the NCL see Landon R. Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers' League, Women's Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal Era* (UNC Press, 2003).

[28] Robert Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York University Press, 1998); Traci Parker, *Department Stores and the Black Freedom Movement: Workers, Consumers, and Civil Rights from the 1930s to the 1980s* (UNC Press, 2019).

[29] Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003). Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics,* Charles McGovern, *Sold American.*

If the "citizen consumer" was a feminized identity, the writers of New Deal and wartime literature usually made clear that the shopper they had in mind was a *white* woman. Women of color, however, also engaged in consumer diplomacy. Black women led boycotts against Italy during its 1935 campaign in Ethiopia and against Japan during its war in China. Chinese American women were particularly invested in the anti-silk stocking boycott, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5. They also engaged in thinking about international economic organizations. As Chapter 6 of this dissertation shows, Black home economists were among those petitioning and arguing for an activist, redistributive Food and Agriculture Organization that could satisfy consumer needs after World War II. Yet, these movements usually ran parallel to white women's movements rather than intersecting with them. The archives that I have used to reconstruct consumer diplomats' actions and ideas bear this out. There were very few instances in which Black women or women of color appeared in archives of organizations that billed themselves as all-inclusive women's clubs. So severe was their erasure that I have even uncovered documents that show white women forgetting to mention the presence of a woman of color in the room during a meeting.[32] Thus, this dissertation also tells an implicit story about the struggles and failures of an intersectional women's movement in the interwar years, failures reflected in the archives we often use to understand women's international thought and action.

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[30] Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics.*

[31] Cohen, *Consumers Republic,* 5.

Consumer Diplomats as Institution Builders

This dissertation's second major claim is that consumer diplomats used their buying power to help build alternative, non-governmental organizations that they believed could improve chances for peace. This task was especially urgent when they felt that institutions designed to maintain global harmony, like the League of Nations, had failed to do so. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) offers the most prominent example of such an organization. This dissertation is the first work of historical scholarship to closely examine the way U.S. women joined millions of others around the world in building up an international consumer cooperative movement through participating in the ICA.[33] By shopping at democratically-owned retailers, cooperative women believed that they could use their purchasing power to strengthen international wholesalers that linked cooperative producers to global consumers, building a more ethical model of international trade from the bottom-up. Following the arguments of the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), many women in the U.S. claimed that these practices could help uproot the exploitative trade practices that contributed to international conflict. In fact, some of its most fervent supporters in the U.S. and Europe even suggested that the ICA was akin to a “People’s League of Nations,” because it provided a meeting ground for workers and consumers to discuss their own conceptions of international collaboration.[34]

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[32] Other members of the U.S. delegation to the International Federation of Home Economics apparently forgot to include Black home economist Flemmie Kittrell on their public list of delegates in 1949, though later issued a correction. Mildred Horton, "American Home Economists Attending the Seventh International Congress in Stockholm, Sweden," 7 June 1949, collection no. 6578, box 21, folder "Outside Organizations, IFHE, 1949," American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences records 1899–2008, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, (Henceforth cited as AAFCS Records, Cornell).

[33] This phenomenon has been explored in a U.K. context, where the women's cooperative movement has a longer and more visible history. On the international dimensions of the U.K. movement, see Sarah Hellawell, "A Strong International Spirit: The Influence of Internationalism on the Women's Cooperative Guild," *Twentieth Century British History* 32 no. 1 (2021): 93–118.

”Consumer diplomats” could build or support institutions like the ICA through both direct action and advocacy. At the center of the ICA’s global vision was the local shop, which relied on the patronage of primarily female consumers to stay afloat. When women supported this broad, international vision by shopping at their local cooperative, they engaged in direct action. While some participated primarily through purchasing, others engaged in intellectual work by developing and disseminating theories about the intersections of peace and social justice.[35] Through the International Cooperative Women’s Guild, some of these women petitioned or spoke directly to the League of Nations and International Labor Organization (ILO), where they sought to advocate on behalf of the needs of consumers and housewives. These advocates claimed that a sustainable peace needed to keep consumers’ needs in mind, and that true global security could only come when international organizations worked to improve ordinary people’s access to essential goods.

Cooperative economics offers just one example of a *political economy of peace.* I use this term to shorthand various (re)distributive systems that women believed could improve access to the critical commodities, like food, needed to maintain human life and to deter conflicts motivated by resource scarcity. In conceiving these, consumer diplomats participated in a larger historical trend. As historian Alan Dawley has shown, many of the same "new liberals" who urged consumers to develop a political voice also engaged in international reform efforts.[36] Like the women in this dissertation, they tended to take a materialist or economically deterministic approach to the roots of social and international conflict. Thus, they saw solutions to war in systems that might improve economic justice within and between nations. This dissertation focuses on a subset of these political economies of peace that were particularly engaged with women's roles as consumers.

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[34] In the Cooperative League of the United States, the most vocal and direct supporter of the ICA as a people’s ”League of Nations” was Howard Cowden of the Consumers Cooperative Association, North Kansas City, MO, as well as leaders of the North Kansas City’s women’s guild. See for example Howard Cowden, Speech at the Twelfth Cooperative League Congress (1938). MS 63-014, box 2, folder 5, Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Papers 1914-1982, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI. (Henceforth CL Papers, WHSA).

[35] By taking seriously women’s stated motivations and intellectual work, I aim to contribute to an emerging scholarship on women’s international thought. In addition to Megan Threlkeld’s *Citizen of the World,* recent contributions to this field include Patricia Owens and Katarina Rietzler, *Women’s International Thought: A New History* (Cambridge, 2020). Studies that show how women’s cultural conceptions and theoretical work shaped their global institution-building practices include Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many* (Princeton, 2021), Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker* (Oxford, 2019), and Catia Confortini, *Intelligent Compassion: Feminist Critical Methodology in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* (Oxford, 2012).

In her *Bread and Peace in Times of War,* social reformer and Women's Peace Party President Jane Addams presented a critique of the League of Nations that offers a useful starting point for a broad political economy of peace. What if, she asked, instead of a focus on abstract law and machinery of international arbitration, new international institutions focused on spreading available food resources and providing for basic needs in situations of social and political insecurity? If this were possible, she imagined, perhaps the devastation of World War I could have opened up the possibility of a new kind of international relations based on the impulse to *care* rather than the urge to profit. Further, if care became an issue of international security, this might better animate popular interest in global affairs by stimulating what she saw as a human impulse to sustain life. Because women were often tasked with care, they might occupy a critical place in such a new international order.[37]

The "consumer citizen" was typically a feminized political subject, and political economies of peace tended to work *within* such cultural ideas of gender rather than seeking to subvert them. As Addams did, many consumer diplomats made connections between women's investments in caring for others and their investments in social and international peace. Her assumptions broadly follow contemporary economist Nancy Folbre's three-point argument that historically, "women share some common interests," that many of these "grow out of their specialization in reproductive activities" or care, and that this specialization has had both economic and psychological costs, structurally "limiting [carers'] bargaining power and giving them a particular stake in the development of more cooperative and sustainable economic systems."[38] This dissertation grapples with how to write about the historic mobilization of such "common interests" without reproducing gender essentialism. Most consumer diplomats did not criticize or even interrogate gendered allocations of labor; they only hoped to distribute the means of social reproduction more justly. Some even claimed that women had access to economic knowledge that most men did not possess, not out of natural sexual difference, but because of their historic specialization in care.[39] Although they built a robust women's movement that belies any sharp break between the alleged "first" and "second" waves of feminism, these women would not have identified as feminists. They tended to reject a position in which women's strict legal equality was positioned above attention to social and economic justice, which the term "feminist" often connoted in the earliest part of the twentieth century.

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[36] Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Peace* (Princeton, 2003). Though not always explicitly linked to consumption, Marc-William Palen also identifies women peace activists' interest free trade in "British Free Trade and the International Feminist Vision for Peace, 1846–1946," in *Imagining Britain's Economic Future, 1800–1975*, Thackeray, Thompson, and Toye, eds. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[37] Jane Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (Macmillan, 1922).

While women across the U.S. political spectrum developed their a wide range of political economies of peace, this dissertation maintains a focus on liberal and left-liberal activists and thinkers. Liberal internationalists tend to share two core convictions: first, they agree that international organizations should strive to achieve and uphold multi-lateral legal agreements; second, they believe that these organizations should have power to intervene in individual nation-states in an effort to protect and spread liberal democratic governments. In the context of the interwar years, liberal internationalism most often refers to Wilsonian internationalism, an ideological tradition named for U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.[40] Sometimes, women in this dissertation thought in ways that were similar to Wilson. For example, the vast majority of them, including Jane Addams, agreed with Wilson that freer international trade could reduce the competition over resources that led to conflict. This conviction underlay many of their political economies of peace. Even so, they did not believe that free trade between nations was incompatible with robust welfare states within. Some also believed fervently in the importance of international law for maintaining peace, even if, like Addams, they did not always regard it as sufficient. As Wilson did, the women in this dissertation promoted liberal democracy, believing it to be the form of government that could best support human freedom. They strongly opposed anti-democratic regimes on the right, and their attitude toward Communism ranged from skepticism to disdain.

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[38] Nancy Folbre, *Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Systems* (Verso, 2021), 4–6.

[39] For example, Emmy Freudlich of the International Cooperative Woman's Guild makes this argument in *Housewives Build a New World* (London: Cooperative Wholesale Society Publishing, 1936).

Despite these parallels, these women's ideas do not map neatly onto the Wilsonian ideological tradition. Instead, I find that consumer diplomats developed an alternative strand of liberal diplomacy in the interwar period, exemplified by Addams' critique of the League of Nations' primary focus on law and arbitration. The women surveyed in this dissertation tied concepts of social welfare to peacemaking far more explicitly than Wilson did. While the women that I examine opposed military intervention in all but the most urgent cases, they were not opposed to humanitarian interventions. In fact, they sometimes claimed that international organizations *should* have power to intervene in national governments in order to support their conceptions of social or economic justice. Motivated by a conviction that peace could not be made in a world in which men and women went hungry in the midst of plenty, consumer diplomats proposed and advocated for ideas for world government that moved toward achieving what President Franklin

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[40] A rich literature exists on this concept. For example, see Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, 1992).

Delano Roosevelt would come to hail as one of the four essential freedoms: "freedom from want."[41]

There was not a clean break between women who engaged in the intellectual work of developing political economies of peace and those who participated in direct action. Instead, women's consumer practices on the ground sometimes informed and reshaped their ideas about the kinds of international institutions that were possible or desirable. In other instances, it was more remarkable that action on the ground did *not* influence ideas—illustrating particular blind spots in consumer diplomats' supposedly global vision. U.S. women's participation in the international consumer cooperative movement offers one of the most compelling examples of the interactions between ideas of political economy of peace and grassroots action. Chapter 1 introduces the International Cooperative Women's Guild, showing how its leaders narrated the organization's purpose as an international "Congress of Mothers and Housewives" at their 1921 inaugural meeting. Though one U.S. woman was present at that gathering, she came as a representative of a nation with a very small consumer cooperative movement and no formal women's cooperative guilds.

Despite its leaders' large-scale plans, the consumer cooperative movement remained small in the United States throughout the 1920s. It would expand significantly during the New Deal decade, however. By the mid-1930s, Chapter 4 shows that a number of U.S. women understood their purchases at the co-op as contributing to a "political economy of peace." One 1939 study, for example, found that a sizable majority of cooperative shoppers patronized their store not necessarily because of the price or quality of the goods, but because of a more ideological "faith in consumer cooperation."[42] When those consumers shopped, they imagined what that economic system could do for their broader social goals, and they pictured themselves building towards them. Because consumer cooperation remained under-developed in the U.S. in relation to Britain and other European nations, it became a site for projecting sets of values and ideas about what might create conditions for peace, gender justice, or racial justice that could differ between cooperators. Different parts of the movement looked to various places across Europe and Asia for models for their own inchoate Cooperative League to follow. Sometimes, consumer cooperators' grassroots practice was deeply informed by the examples they observed out in the world. In other cases, they might ignore what those examples showed them about cooperation's limits.

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[41] Donohue, *Freedom from Want* details the way in which the very notion of "freedom from want" could be conceived as an Allied war aim. She shows how it reveals a meaningful shift of the place of the consumer within liberal economic theory, which Chapter 6 of this dissertation also suggests.

[42] Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative as a Distributive Agency* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939), 175.

From the Kitchen Table to Peace Table: Consumer Diplomats During World War II

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, consumer diplomats developed and advocated for both conceptions of "political economies of peace" and institutions that they believed could uphold them. Over the course of the Depression decade, important shifts both in the ways Western democratic governments understood their obligations to citizens and in liberal economic theory made it more possible to imagine an international body that could take seriously consumers' needs on an international scale.[43] Thus, the peace table during and after that conflict offered a critical moment for consumer diplomats to make their interventions. In Chapters 6 and 7, I show that some of the ideas consumer diplomats developed during the interwar years received a meaningful hearing at international peace and planning conferences during and immediately after World War II. In some cases, consumer diplomats demonstrated their willingness to back far-reaching and visionary roads not taken in postwar planning. In others, the ideas they presented at the peace table were far less radical than their earlier proposals.

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[43] Lizabeth Borgwardt has claimed that this fundamental shift is akin to an externalization of the New Deal, but I have found it more likely to be a result of a more multilateral social planning ethos. Borgwardt, *New Deal for the World" America's Vision for Human Rights* (Harvard, 2005). On the way the New Deal borrowed from contemporaneous social policies, see Kiran Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, 2016).

Chapter 6 illustrates how some relatively politically moderate consumer diplomats' ideas became increasingly radical over the course of the 1930s. Since World War I, U.S. home economists thought and acted internationally. They helped to build new home science departments abroad, fostered global student exchange programs, travelled internationally to teach consumer education courses, and collected statistics on human nutrition and costs of living across multiple national contexts. Yet, they did not necessarily see these piecemeal efforts as leading into any large-scale project for peacemaking until the mid-1930s. In 1936, as diplomatic historian Nick Cullather has argued, the League of Nations' Mixed Committee on Nutrition issued a report that "presented an entirely new agenda for consumer economics."[44] It suggested it might be scientifically possible to grow enough food to overcome the worst effects of hunger and malnutrition, but that free markets driven by supply and demand were not necessarily the most effective means of incentivizing agricultural production or distributing produce.[45] The finding encouraged even politically moderate groups of home economists to believe that a healthy peace relied on an international institution that could help get food to the consumers who needed it. Some even began to believe that this global agency might need to have some power over shaping prices and supply to stabilize farm incomes and spread produce more evenly.

By 1945, home economists affiliated with the USDA came out in favor of a far-reaching and interventionist plan of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which would have had capacity to stabilize international commodity prices in an effort to provide consumers access to a minimum number of calories each day. In so doing, they positioned consumer needs and consumer spending as central considerations for international planning. Chapter 6 especially follows the thinking of Black home economist Constance Daniel, a friend and travel companion of National Council of Negro Women President Mary MacLeod Bethune. Daniel's writing promoted a kind of FAO that not only delivered "freedom from want" but also respected the economic self-determination of people of color all over the world.

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[44] Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Harvard, 2013), 32. Such a shift mirrored broader shifts in liberal economics inspired by the economist John Maynard Keynes.

[45] *Ibid.*; Amy Staples, "To Win the Peace: To Win the Peace: The Food and Agriculture Organization, Sir John Boyd Orr, and the World Food Board Proposals," *Peace and Change 28* no. 4 (2003): 499.

Chapter 7's story of Cooperative League of the United States (CL) at the World War II peace table might be read more as a narrative of de-radicalization. During and after the conflict, CL leaders represented the ICA at major international conferences, including the San Francisco Conference that birthed the United Nations. The ICA's "Freedom Fund," a large portion of which was gathered in the United States, did important work to finance the reconstruction of European cooperatives destroyed by fascist occupation.[46] Some of the first commodities that newly-purchased "freedom trucks" transported from rebuilt cooperative warehouses were food parcels sent via the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE). Partly conceived by leaders of the CL, CARE was a cooperative for trans-Atlantic food aid distribution that was jointly owned by 22 U.S. philanthropic organizations. Now the largest non-governmental humanitarian organization in the United States, CARE presents a visible and enduring legacy of cooperative postwar planning. At San Francisco in 1945, the ICA's representatives also successfully argued for consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council—a position that that organization still holds today.

As the ICA and the CL became more mainstream, however, their leadership distanced themselves from interwar visions of a "Cooperative Commonwealth" that could radically transform capitalism from within. Instead, they promoted cooperative economics as just one sector within a healthy capitalist economy. However, Chapter 7 does not merely tell a story of forsaken visions. It shows the very meaningful and visible effects that cooperative institutions had in the immediate postwar years. It also demonstrates cooperative women leaders' indefatigable work to make these small scale-economic democracies live up to their potential for gender and racial justice. For example, Halena Wilson of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters engaged in her own small-scale form of postwar economic planning by starting a grocery cooperative. She consciously applied international ideas about co-ops to serve Black consumers' needs on the ground in Chicago. No matter how large or global cooperative leaders' ideas became, it would be up to local leaders like Wilson to ensure that they lived up to their democratic possibilities.

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[46] Wallace Campbell, *The History of CARE: A Personal Account* (Prager, 1990), 8–10; see also Murray D. Lincoln, *Vice President in Charge of Revolution* (McGraw Hill, 1960), 205.

Writing in early 1932, amid the depths of the Depression and shortly after Japan ruptured the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Henrietta K. Staub claimed that "the Women of America should know how to think their way through both this economic crisis and all the international problems—and they will!"[47] Throughout its seven chapters, this dissertation shows the multiple ways U.S. women's identities as consumers influenced their thinking about such large-scale issues. Consumption also offered a route to direct action. Many consumer diplomats had been primed to think about the way their purchasing power could make claims on their local or domestic government. Amid the blatant disruption of the post-World War I peace, they now looked outward to use their buying power to influence more distant institutions.

Staub came to her own understanding of women's economic power through her training as a professional home economist. As President of the New York State Home Economics Federation, she would have been well acquainted with the internationalist vision of the directors of the New York State College of Home Economics, situated on the Ithaca campus of Cornell University.

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[47] Henrietta K Staub to Loring Schuler, Feb 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 11, MEW Papers, MHC.

Introduction: Practices of Consumer Diplomacy

This dissertation first turns to those home economists' commitment to international thought and action, which had been deepened in the crisis of World War I.

Chapter 1

From the Great War to the "War Against Famine": Food, Femininity, and the Peace, 1918–1921

In mid-1921, American journalist, author, and adventurer Lewis E. Theiss regaled readers of *Good Housekeeping* with a story he claimed to have witnessed two years prior at the Paris Peace Conference. On April 31, 1919, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau reportedly stunned all present by declaring that he would be willing to cut German reparations owed to France in half if Germany agreed to supply "one quart of milk, one head of lettuce, and one pound of spinach" to each French person daily for the next decade.[1] His proposition of a universal basic diet for all French citizens prompted other statesmen to exchange "looks of amazement" until U.S. President Wilson asked "on what grounds" Clemenceau could "base such an offer?" Clemenceau allegedly replied, "on vitamines, which would guarantee the kind of vitality that would make sure the victory we have won!"[2] Then, in Theiss' telling, the whole conference took a recess to discuss the importance of nutrition for securing the peace. Having introduced the importance of consumer access to healthy food for national security, Theiss used the rest of the article to convince his female readers of their duties to study nutrition and serve their families the nourishing food upon which each nation's "vitality" depended. The Allies may have won the war, he implied, but they could not secure a healthy peace until their populations were well fed.

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[1] Lewis Edwin Theiss, "What Shall We Eat to be Well?" *Good Housekeeping* 71 (July-December 1920): 153.

[2] *Ibid.*, 153.

Theiss' story exists in no other available sources. Whether or not it has a basis in reality, the scene illustrates a number of commonly held assumptions in the early-Post-World War I period. Its rhetorical movement from international deliberations in Paris to the private U.S. home echoes the kind of appeals often made by the United States Food Administration (USFA) during the Great War. Much like USFA propaganda, Theiss suggests that the housewife's duty to purchase and prepare the right food for her family was a matter of national and international importance, and one that relied on the participation and expertise of individual women. How and whether nation-states or institutions of international governance should become a partner to the housewife in such provisioning would come up for debate in the immediate post World War I period.[3]

It is vital to recognize that Clemenceau, or at least Theiss' characterization of him, could only talk about food on such a large scale because of developments in dietary science, particularly the invention of the calorie and new knowledge about the vitamin. Such abstract measurements of food values enabled policymakers and domestic scientists to develop dietary standards for both individuals and for larger national populations.[4] As historian Nick Cullather has claimed, these concepts and measurements made it possible for dietary planning to become a matter of global concern during and after the war, as they introduced a calculable arithmetic of human need that allowed hunger and malnutrition to become knowable social problems.[5]

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[3] Sarah Louise Arnold, "Learning the Lesson of Food Conservation," *Journal of Home Economics* 10 no. 6 (June 1918): 259.

[4] Graham Lusk, "The Calorimeter as Interpreter of Life Processes," *Science* 42 no. 1093 (December 10, 1915): 816–819.

[5] Nick Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," *American Historical Review* (April 2007): 337–364. On the way the "calorie" made food and nutrition into a quantifiable social problem in domestic contexts, see James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Harvard, 2002).

Theiss' story also addresses concerns around food allocation and national security that were indeed present at the Paris Peace Conferences and after. Following the November 11, 1918, Armistice, U.S. Food Administrator Herbert Hoover insisted that continuing to export food to war-torn areas would secure the peace by restoring some semblance of "social order" amidst fallow fields, displaced populations, and disrupted national and international supply lines.[6] Self-proclaimed spokeswomen of "housewives" would continue to intervene in national and international debates that linked food access to a healthy peace, sometimes developing roads not taken in official, international postwar planning. These propositions could contain radical arguments to maintain some version of the Inter-Allied economic organizations that had facilitated international commodity trade and distribution during the war. Engaging in such thinking brought women into debates around the ideal scope and function international economic governance during the early 1920s that historian Jamie Martin has recently identified.[7]

To make their voices heard in these debates, women first needed to make space for themselves in conversations about the politics of food distribution and consumption. Some of the spokeswomen who did this most successfully were professional home economists who had leapt at the opportunity to partner with the wheat, meat, and dairy conservation initiatives of the USFA during World War I. While this historical trend has been well-documented, less attention has been given to the ways home economists embraced conceptual links between food and internationalism *after* the war.[8] Sensing the possibility of a continued partnership with the federal government, women in the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) worked to highlight the importance of nutrition and efficient housekeeping as meaningful factors in both national and international affairs. In this way, they attempted to position their professional knowledge as an invaluable asset to the federal government. In the years following World War I, U.S. home economists expressed a remarkably global outlook, fostering student exchange programs, traveling abroad to teach consumer education courses, and conducting comparative and international studies on nutritional access and standards of living.

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[6] Herbert Hoover, "Food Conservation for World Relief," Address before Conference of Federal Food Administrators, Washington, November 12, 1918. Accessed via Hathitrust Digital Library.

[7] Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard, 2022).

[8] In particular, see Helen Zoe Veit, *Moral Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century,* (UNC Press, 2013); Carolyn Goldstein, *Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth Century America* (UNC Press, 2014), 46–60.

Ironically, these hopes to empower the Bureau of Home Economics and build international professional networks in which professional women had a part came at a cost for regular homemakers. In order to promote their own knowledge about diet as indispensable, they could diminish or demean the value of other women's household practices. Much as Robyn Muncy finds in her study of the Child Bureau as a "female dominion of American reform," these female professionals naturalized gendered divisions of labor.[9] In their efforts make the politics of food, especially food for children, into a "female dominion" in both national and international politics, they strengthened the ties that bound non-professional women to the kitchen.[10]

In contrast to the often constraining ways home economists thought about domesticity, some women reformers imagined that food could offer ordinary housewives an opportunity to ask big questions about international politics. In her 1922 *Peace and Bread in Time of War,* U.S. Progressive Jane Addams suggested that emphasizing women's historic role as purchasers and preparers of food could present them with a strategic entry-point into international politics and provide a method of embedding global concerns into housewives' daily habits.[11] Addams argued that care work gave women a sense of the permeable boundaries between self-interest and common good, and a similar claim motivated a variety of leftist women's thinking about food politics in the immediate post World War I period. As historian Mona Siegel has shown, socialist and left-leaning women's organizations proposed robust and interventionist forms of international economic governance for the post-World War I years up until 1920.[12] These contrasted with home economists' far more moderate efforts to spread consumer education and engage in statistical survey work.

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[9] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform 1890–1935* (Oxford, 1991).

[10] That these women needed to present a narrative that disadvantaged others simply to access a profession, I concur with Muncy, is symptomatic of the troubled gender system in which they acted. Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion.*

[11] Jane Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (New York: MacMillan, 1922).

It quickly became clear that most Western democracies were unwilling to give up sovereignty over their own economic policymaking, meaning that it would be impossible for the new League of Nations to maintain economic controls over key food commodities.[13] Thus, women affiliated with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) sought to build their own international trade infrastructure. The International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), first conceived in 1921, united a group of left-leaning social reformers who claimed that profit-driven markets were not necessarily the best ways to get goods to the consumers who needed them. The nutritional and consumer education programs that home economists could offer were not enough: nothing less a new model of global trade that placed consumer need above private profit would do.

This chapter makes two interlocking interventions that help frame the dissertation that follows. The first half of the chapter charts the rise of an *ethical imagination* that conceptually linked U.S. housewives' consumption practices to the alleged good of the wider world.[14] This was not merely a discursive linkage. It was no accident that a rise in U.S. geopolitical power converged with a heightened humanitarian sensibility amongst some of the nation's consumers, who saw the extended reach of U.S. markets and financial power as a method of intervening in global affairs. USFA-affiliated home economists promoted saving food to redistribute through international relief programs as a "recipe" for helping needy families abroad.[15] The second half the chapter moves to show three distinct conceptions of the importance of the "woman consumer" as an international actor in the immediate post-World War I period. By moving to the peace table at Versailles, I demonstrate how the idea of the woman consumer became implicated in conversations about economic reconstruction as well as economic sanctions. Then, I return to the U.S. to explore home economists' internationalist conception of the "housewife." Finally, I follow the 1921 formation of the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), whose leaders claimed that women consumers could work for peace by building up what they saw as a fairer kind of trade. As a case study of international cooperative wholesaling during and after World War I shows, however, their "political economy of peace" was not the panacea they might have imagined. These three conversations about the "woman consumer" and her place in international relations set the terms for ideas and practices of consumer diplomacy throughout the interwar years.

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[12] Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights After the First World War* (Columbia, 2020). See also Martin, *The Meddlers,* 56.

[13] *Ibid.*, 56.

[14] This term in particular is inspired by anthropologist Clifford Geertz's notion of "moral imagination" and its use by historian Robert Westbrook. Geertz, "Found in Translation: On the Social History of the Moral Imagination" *Georgia Review* 31 no. 4 (Winter 1977): 788–810. Westbrook, "Fighting for the American Family: Private Interests and Political Obligations in World War II," in *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History,* T. J. Jackson Lears and Richard Fox, eds. (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

"Soldiers of the Common Good": The Housewife and Food Consumption During WWI

Mary Aldis, a self-identified "housekeeper," reported to the AHEA that she experienced a domestic crisis in the spring of 1917, just as President Wilson announced the development of a United States Food Administration to manage exports to the Allies.[16] She had been "keeping house for 23 years," and during that time, she allowed only her family's pocketbook and tastes to influence her grocery shopping trips.[17] She confessed that she had never given much thought to "calories" or "vitamins." Not until Hoover enlisted an army of volunteers in national food conservation efforts that Spring had she considered the wealth of grains that might substitute for wheat as sources of carbohydrates, or the numerous fats and oils she might use to conserve butter. She had never considered the relevance of "protein," "carbohydrates," or "fats" to her family's favorite recipes very much at all, she admitted.

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[15] My use of the idea of "recipes" or "recipe knowledge" draws on Haskell's invocation of the philosopher Douglas Gasking's theory on causal thinking. Gasking, "Causation and Recipes," *Mind* 64 (1955): 483.

[16] Mary Aldis, "Housekeeping in Wartime," *Journal of Home Economics* 10 no. 2 (February 2018): 73.

[17] Many women described themselves as "housekeepers" to designate that they performed full-time housework for their families and as an attempt to take this work on as an identity. It became something of a difficulty when a number of women who were *not* domestic servants declared their profession as "housekeeper" on the 1920 census. Aldis is a particularly strange case, as she takes on this identity while also employing a household staff—a practice which "scientific housekeeping" attempted to render obsolete. Veit, *Modern Food Moral Food,* 95.

A particularly transformative "dramatic moment" occurred for Aldis in 1917 when she "fished forth from [her] garbage can a half slice of bread."[18] Distraught, she called her household staff to inquire who could have wasted wheat products when exporting grain surplus had become such a central aim of the USFA. In response, Aldis not only hung signs reading "To waste a crust of bread is an act of treachery to the nation" in her own kitchen, but also joined local food saving teams. By early 1918, her fervor led to her become Chairman of the Committee on Food Conservation in her city. She encouraged local shops and other women to hang signs in their windows that read "Keep House Scientifically: You Will Save Money and Live Better."[19] In an address to the AHEA in Summer 1918, she recounted her town hall speeches in which she proclaimed that "housekeeping had become a grave national problem; to it must be given the most earnest thought and attention."[20]

Aldis might appear to have had a peculiar overreaction to the USFA's food conservation suggestions. For most readers, discarding a half-eaten slice of bread could hardly be considered "treacherous," though such claims did allow her to ascribe a certain sense of drama to the otherwise monotonous tasks of preparing food during wartime. Aldis' story suggests the way wartime needs hastened and popularized the application of scientific management to domestic work within the home, ushering in what historian Janice Rutherford has termed a "gendered modernity."[21] Using the language of "scientific housekeeping" and "efficiency," women like Aldis could claim professional knowledge and rise to leadership positions in their communities' conservation efforts, even if she did so in an overly zealous way.

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[18] Aldis, "Housekeeping in Wartime," 74.

[19] *Ibid.,* 74.

[20] *Ibid.,* 74.

Aldis' use of slogans urging her neighbors and household staff to consider the global implications of their food and housekeeping practices can also tell us something about the "ethical imagination" of some internationally minded Americans, or at least of food conservationists, during the Great War. Jane Addams would later claim that during the war, a remarkable collective effort had "come to be developed in regard to feeding the world" such that "it became unnatural for an individual to stand outside of the wide-spread effort to avert starvation."[22] As part of this effort, women like Aldis followed certain socially-agreed upon "recipes," or popular understandings of what combinations of actions might lead to intended results or avoid unintended ones.[23] Historian Thomas Haskell made use of this notion to suggest how certain "recipes" can produce new moral conventions.[24] When an easy-to-follow recipe becomes embedded in popular consciousness, it might spark feelings of obligation, as Addams claimed food conservation did for the 12 to 14 million U.S. women who had signed USFA pledges by November 1918.[25]

Once Aldis understood her food habits as aiding or hindering the efforts of the Allies, or helping to feed starving children in Belgium through her conservation efforts, she might have felt particularly obligated to consider her food choices closely. Fables commonly printed on propaganda or within housekeeping manuals made these "recipes" visible. Yet, it was the actual power of the U.S. Food Administration to marshal and coordinate food resources within and outside of the nation's borders that made these "recipes" believable. The emergence of an ethical imagination that connected the individual work of the housewife to international politics, then, relied upon the expansion of U.S. state capacity.

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[21] Janice William Rutherford, *Selling Mrs Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 3.

[22] Addams, *Peace and Bread,* 204.

[23] David Gasking, "Causation and Recipes," *Mind* 64 (1955): 483.

[24] Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1" *American Historical Review* 90 no. 2 (1985), 339–361.

[25] According to Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food,* 19.

When President Woodrow Wilson signed the Lever Act in the Spring of 1917, he created a United States Food Administration. Addams, among others, expressed a genuine "sense of relief" when Congress finally established the USFA, and when its administrators made their first appeal not in the name of winning the war but "in the name of the food shortage" as "a problem of common humanity."[26] The new administration would be endowed with powers to both control the quantities in which particular foods could be consumed and fix commodity prices. It could also organize and encourage crop cultivation for export, and arrange for the distribution of U.S. surplus, which would be sold abroad on credit.[27] Herbert Hoover, its chair, did not utilize these powers in full, but rather attempted to stabilize the cost of staples so as to control the cost of living during the war. The Wilson administration also secured legislation to encourage the cultivation of surplus wheat, diary, and meat so that these staples could be exported in greater quantities to Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium while still supplying them at home.[28]

To meet the demand of the Allies, the U.S. needed to both increase agricultural production and reduce consumption. As Hoover saw it, this end could be achieved in one of three ways. First, he could continue to work through market mechanisms, allowing prices to rise such that less food could be consumed by either Americans or the Allies. Second, he could engage in more explicit economic planning by employing a mix of rationing and price control. The third option presented a kind of middle way through an attempt to systematically encourage "a voluntary reduction in individual consumption" in the commodities needed for export.[29] Hoover rejected total, unmitigated laissez-faire liberalism: he knew from his experiences of bread riots in Belgium as well as in the United States that access to affordable staples was vital for social stability.[30] He also rejected the notion of price fixing or compulsory food rationing, with the exception of a "50/50" rule that mandated that all consumers of wheat must purchase at least the equivalent quantity in some wheat-alternative, such as corn.[31] Instead, he favored a voluntary program that invited American consumers to forgo or limit wheat, meat, sugar, and butter in cooking in favor of substitutes so that these desirable commodities could be exported to the Allies. Prices were influenced, but not set, by large state-controlled purchasing agencies like the United States Grain Corporation. Because such agencies would buy staples in bulk to sell to the Allies on credit, they could cause sharp price upswings on the domestic market unless private households limited their consumption.

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[26] Addams, *Peace and Bread,* 74.

[27] "Legislation Needed to Meet Real Food Needs," *The New York Times,* June 2, 1917, 69.

[28] Herbert Hoover, "Food Control," *Journal of Home Economics* 10 no. 6 (June 1918): 245–25.

According to Hoover's public speeches, the woman in the home would be fundamental to the success or failure of the USFA. The USFA estimated, in fact, that if "every US housewife saved a slice of bread every day for a year, they would collectively save seven million bushels of wheat."[32] He invited women to sign unofficial "pledges" to "join" the USFA to encourage them to comply with federal suggestions. This worked remarkably well, as an estimated 70 percent of U.S. "housewives" signed the pledge by war's end.[33] Yet, despite some enthusiastic compliance, voluntarism was ultimately not as effective at managing wartime prices as price control and mandatory rationing likely would have been.[34]

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[29] Hoover, "Food Control," 247.

[30] Nick Cullather, "Foreign Policy of the Calorie."

[31] Wheat was particularly important because it was easily transportable, and because Americans, Hoover found, were more willing to eat wheat substitutes than European counterparts. Butter and dairy, too, were to be exported, as exporting the feed required to sustain milk cows and dairy production in war-torn Europe would be greater than the cost of exporting the finished product.

[32] Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food,* 21.

[33] *Ibid.,* 19.

[34] A number of studies have suggested this, including Veit *Modern Food, Moral Food.*

Perhaps because it was voluntary, appearing to conserve food became fashionable. For example, in September 1918, the *Chicago Tribune* satirized of a group of sorority girls who planned to "Out-Hoover even Mr. Hoover" when they decreed that all parties at Northwestern University during the academic year of 1918–1919 must serve only a "conservation menu" including "salad, punch, bouillon, crackers and NO FROSTED CAKE." It was expected that the girls would meet any "deviation… with more than the vengeance of a Hoover."[35] When it was effective, voluntarism worked because of social surveillance networks and, for some Americans, because of an interest in appearing austere and self-disciplined. The sorority girls may also have been motivated by the thinner physique that forgoing sugar and white bread could potentially achieve. Through the period that this dissertation tracks, ethical imaginations often became embedded in popular trends and fashions—whether of food or clothing. This could commodify expressions of care for distant others, so long as these consumer choices became socially recognized recipes for intervening in international affairs.

Home Economists in the USFA

As a social science, home economics was not formed in response to wartime necessity, but food conservation efforts certainly placed the discipline in the national "limelight," in the words of food administrator Sarah Louise Arnold.[36] The AHEA formed in 1908 after nearly ten years of meetings of home management teachers and professionals in annual conferences at Lake Placid. Just before the outbreak of the European conflict, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 set aside a great deal of new funding for the establishment of home economics departments at land-grant colleges.[37] Before U.S. entry into the Great War, AHEA President Martha Van

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[35] "Sorority Girls to Out-Hoover Even Mr. Hoover," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* September 20, 1918, 5.

[36] Arnold, "Learning the Lesson of Food Conservation," 258.

[37] On the national development of home economics, see Carolyn Goldstein, *Creating Consumers* and Megan Elias *Stir it Up: Home Economics in American Culture* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Rensselaer proclaimed that home economics offered a path to international understanding when she declared in her 1915 annual address that "there is no more fitting subject to encircle the world" because of the discipline's alleged ability to render all human dietary needs legible through the "calorie" and "vitamin."[38] After U.S entry in 1917, the USFA urged experts in home management to author pamphlets on preparation of nutritious meals to free up essential wheat and dairy commodities for export, and to suggest tips to make household work more efficient so as to invite middle-class women to dismiss domestic servants, freeing these women for war work[39]

Van Rensselaer's 1915 pronouncement would take on deeper meaning after she began her service as director of the Home Economics Division of the USFA. During the war, home economists were declared an "extremely valuable ally" to the government and the Division of Home Economics was elevated to a Bureau within the Department of Agriculture.[40]

Many home economics texts published during the war provide further evidence of an *ethical imagination*. Housekeeping books were laden with arguments about individuals' relationships and obligations to the broader national and international community. Through these books, it is possible to witness the way, in USFA home economist Sarah Arnold's words, food moved from a "personal matter—intimate, individual…" to "become the nation's concern."[41] The language of obligation forged in these texts reveal what historian Robert Westbrook has termed a "popular political theory," a documentation of peoples' reflective lives that might be found "not only among political theorists and politicians, but in some unusual places"—like housekeeping manuals.[42] While World War I was certainly not the first time some U.S. women came to think of their consumption in global terms, it did significantly increase state-sanctioned and public discourses that targeted individual, voluntary consumption as relevant for the good of a larger community.[43]

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[38] Martha Van Rensselaer, "Presidential AHEA Address," *Journal of Home Economics* 7 no. 9 (1915): 461.

[39] Domestic servants did decline during the war. While 12% of families employed help before American entry, only 6% did by the Spring of 1918—a rapid decline. Whether this was for patriotic causes is less clear—after all, Mrs. Hoover continued to employ a staff during the war. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1918), 30.

[40] Cited in Horrocks, *Goodwill Ambassador,* 126.

[41] Arnold, "Learning the Lesson of Food Conservation," 255.

[42] Westbrook, "Fighting for the American Family," 196.

Mabel Dulon Purdy, a graduate of the Columbia Teacher's College and Philadelphia Cooking School and then-editor of "household books" at McClure Publishing, published *Food and Freedom* in May 1918. Her household manual, which was endorsed by the USFA, continually reminded its readers that their dinner plates had global consequences. "Food," claimed Purdy, "is the future of freedom and peace!"[44] The housewife found herself in a particularly vital relationship to food. Her seemingly intimate, personal choices of what to feed her family, Purdy continually reminded her reader, were in fact not so personal or private after all. Instead, the "work done in our kitchens" was "one of the forces now operating, the sum of which is to set the world free."[45] Upon what basis did she rest this argument?

Like Hoover, Purdy felt that "cooperation is better than law," and that indeed, Americans would voluntarily achieve more through choice than compulsion. As Purdy put it, it is better that the housekeeper herself who had an understanding of the home and those within it to use her knowledge to "wisely control and rightly direct these food needs and wants" rather than allow the state to make certain food choices compulsory. Further, this illustration of democratic impulse and self-control on the part of the housewife would provide moral education for her children. Paraphrasing John Locke's famous passage in his *Second Treatise of Government*, she claimed that the family was the first "unit of the state" in which children received implicit but formative moral and political education. The home was, for her, "fittingly called the index of civilization." Thus, the morality of the housewife's food choices, both in terms of their nutritive content and their usefulness for food conservation, could be educational for her children[46]

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[43] U.S. women imagined themselves as among global networks of consumers at least as early as the mid-nineteenth century, and even then, rising popularity of imports was tinged with American exceptionalism. Kristen Hoganson, *Consumer's Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity* (UNC Press, 2009).

[44] Mabel Dulon Purdy, *Food and Freedom: A Household Book* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1918), 2. Accessed via Hathitrust Online Library.

[45] *Ibid.*, 125.

For Purdy, the alleged "invisible hand" supposedly directing the laissez-faire liberal market should be replaced with the "guiding hand of the woman [consumer]," who would be informed in her purchases by state-endorsed, public educators.[47] Hoover would sum up this kind of relationship through the slogan "centralize ideas but decentralize execution."[48] By the time Purdy wrote, the Bureau of Home Economics had peaked in wartime influence, and she expressed hope that U.S. housewives could cooperate through this burgeoning state bureaucracy.

Purdy worked out a theory of obligation through the pages of *Food and Freedom.* Paralleling what some scholars have identified as a "republican" American political tradition, this theory highlighted individual responsibility for the good of the community.[49] Purdy, like Hoover and other proponents of republicanism, overdramatized individual choice for effect, and in so doing, imagined the housewife-consumer and the home economics instructor as vital partners with the "managerial state." Purdy, other authors of wartime household manuals, and some home economists developed a moral language that worked to domesticate, or bring into the home, this way of thinking about political obligation. Purdy's version was heavily flavored with American exceptionalism. For example, when writing about an obligation to care for "those who are dependent upon [U.S. housewives]," she included not only children but also the Allies, who were implicitly infantalized as "dependents" in this discursive stroke.

Purdy's text appeared race blind, but she did implicitly subscribe to the racialist foundations of dietary science when she claimed that (white) Americans' capacity for democracy and global power came from the *kinds* of food they ate.[50] For example, following the common assumption that plant-based diets of "Asiatic" peoples impaired cultural and intellectual development, she claimed that "without the continued use of milk, not only for the feeding of our children, but in liberal amounts in cookery and as an adjuvant to our diet, we cannot as a nation maintain the position as a world power to which we have arisen."[51] Her insistence that the "welfare of the world" rested on the choices of U.S. consumers expressed her understanding that U.S. global power in the new century would rely in part on its ability to coordinate and export food, as well as extend credit for its purchase.[52]

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[46] *Ibid.*, 21.
[47] *Ibid.*, 7.
[48] Cited in Cullather, "Foreign Policy of the Calorie," 349.
[49] For other examples of "republican" consumer groups or this political ideology in the context of consumption, see Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship 1890–1945* (UNC Press, 2006).

In the majority of the text, Purdy makes no overtly political statements at all, but rather identifies recipes that would aid in conserving necessary foods. Readers learn of making sandwiches with corn bread, how to employ marmalade rather than butter, ways to conserve all edible parts of a food, and tricks for making fruit-based desserts to conserve sugar. In another chapter, she illustrates the "caloric method of housekeeping" by outlining the number of calories each adult should intake, and the fat, carbohydrate, and protein contents of each meal for each adult. In so doing, Purdy contributed to a growing cultural common sense: that the body could be thought of and engineered like a machine. Such thinking allowed home economists to claim that a "scientific" and abstracted form of housekeeping should overtake local knowledge and taste.

Imagining housework as a science might have offered some professional or middle class women access to policy making networks or cooperative relationships with the U.S. state.

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[50] For example, E.V. McCollum, "Milk: Its Relation to Race Characteristics," in the *Newer Knowledge of Nutrition,* reprinted in the *Journal of Home Economics* 11 no. 3 (March 1919): 131. For an analysis of the racialist foundations of dietary science see Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America.*

[51] Purdy, *Food and Freedom,* 47.

[52] This ethical imagination, proposed within and by a warring state, did not include enemy nations. While Purdy and others talked about "starving Europe" or "the world," U.S. food was not sold to Germany or Austria, which also suffered severely during the war. On the Allied blockade of Germany and the role of the German "housewife" in saving her family from starvation and making demands of the state, see Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (UNC Press, 2000).

However, it served to dispossess other women of authority over their homes, bodies, and diets. Home economics offered a response to the culture of planning popular at the turn of the century, applying new and abstract scientific knowledge about nutrition to practical experience. "Needs," as opposed to "tastes" and "desires," became calculable, quantifiable entities. As a result, however, social scientists and overly-zealous community activists, like Aldis, often blatantly ignored personal taste and custom in favor of the supremacy of calories, vitamin, and other markers of nutrition. By entrenching white middle-class diets as standard, home economists also produced a cultural logic by which working class women, women of color, and indigenous women could be blamed for their perceived failure to keep house "scientifically." Alternatively, when wartime requirements pushed white Northerners to eat a food that was new to them like corn, the USDA might hire Black spokeswomen to show how it should be cooked.[53] While this kind of messaging may have supported the employment of Black women as home economists, it could also reproduce troubling images and narratives.

Images of Black women in World War I food propaganda usually entrenched racialized conceptions of diet and reenforced an "Aunt Jemima" stereotype that cast Black women's understanding of nutrition as a kind of folk wisdom rather than as the outcome of sustained, professional study.[54] Yet, Black women did find employment through professional home economics, and some used the field to engage with internationalist ideas. One of the most remarkable women who came to this kind of thinking during World War I was Flemmie P. Kittrell. While a student at the Hampton Institute, Kittrell had originally wanted to study "economics, or political science, or some field like that" and saw home economics as "just so ordinary."[55] Yet, she was urged by one of her teachers to read the biography of AHEA founder

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[53] Veit, *Modern Food Moral Food,* 101–122.

[54] For example, see Erica Fretwell, "Black Power in the Kitchen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food,* J. Michelle Coghlan, ed. (Cambridge, 2020), 183.

[55] "Flemmie P. Kittrell Interview by Merze Tate," August 29, 1977, *Black Women Oral History Project Interviews, 1974–1976,* transcript, 4.

Ellen Swallow Richards, which showed Kittrell that home economics could offer a means to think about and make wide ranging social change. She became keenly interested in the field's diplomatic implications while earning her PhD at Cornell, where Martha Van Rensselaer ran a particularly internationalist department.[56] Even though the language home economists used could demean or dismiss Black women's household practices, a career in home economics could also offer some African American women access to social mobility and respectability.[57]

While around 12 to 14 million women signed pledge cards either voluntarily or due to surrounding social pressures, this is not to say that all Americans took kindly the so-called "food dictator's" suggestions, or embraced the notion of scientific housekeeping or dieting.[58] Hoover's critics ranged. While some agricultural interests urged Hoover to leave food prices up to the market to regulate, or to take into account farmers' needs before those of urban consumers, others felt that he did not go far enough.[59] Some women activists claimed that compulsory rationing would be more equitable. One woman wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* to complain that fashionable wealthy women gorged themselves at publicized dinners on food that *looked* compliant but in fact contained an un-patriotic amount of dairy, such as "cornbread made with eggs and milk, and fruit with great pitchers of cream."[60] While USFA home economists may have helped to create a perception that forgoing particular kinds of commodities could aid the Allies abroad and keep prices low for fellow consumers at home, it was still possible to project an image of caring for others without actually following these pronouncements. Food conservation propaganda may have attempted to obscure identity categories of "class" in favor of that of a general American "citizenship," but without formal rationing in place, there remained significant differences in the kinds and quantities of foods Americans could afford to eat during wartime.

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[56] Alison Beth Horrocks, *Good Will Ambassador with a Cookbook: Flemmie Kittrell and the International Politics of Home Economics* (Unpublished Dissertation: University of Connecticut, 2016). It would not be until World War II that Kittrell and a group of her colleagues developed and voiced their own critique of international food systems, internationalist ideas about the home and nutrition developed during World War I had formative influence on this later generation.

[57] Erika Fretwell, "Black Power in the Kitchen." The politics of respectability are complicated, however, and are examined more closely in Chapter 6.

[58] According to Purdy, *Food and Freedom,* 40. According to Veit, some 70 percent of households or 14 million women signed by the conclusion of the campaign. Veit, *Modern Food Moral Food,* 19.

[59] On the sugar lobby's opposition to the USDA for example see "Hoover's Story on Sugar Fight is Suppressed: Reed Delays Efforts to Make Replies to Charges," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* December 23, 1917, 2.

[60] Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food,* 22.

In February 1919, months after the Armistice, Lillian Peek, professor of Home Economics at the College of Industrial Arts in Texas, reported that "the silver lining of this conservation cloud" was that it had turned public gaze to personal food habits as a matter of national, or even international, concern.[61] This chapter now turns to three distinct ways in which women employed the *idea* of the "consumer" or "housewife" in international conversations during the first years after World War I. It was in the heat of these postwar conversations, I argue, that interwar consumer diplomacy took its unique and historically contingent shape.

International Economic Governance and the Formation of the League of Nations, 1919

After the war, U.S. Progressive reformer Jane Addams expressed her belief that a new international diplomacy—one that highlighted the importance of food and consumer access for national security—might be possible. This new diplomacy could bring ordinary Americans, especially women united through peace organizations, into discussions about what forms postwar international economic governance might take. Through the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Addams brought U.S. women into such conversations with colleagues across Europe.[62] A form of international economic organization was only imaginable, however, because of an unprecedented expansion of governmental powers over international trade during wartime.

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[61] Lillian Peek, "The Silver Lining of our Conservation Cloud," *Journal of Home Economics* 11 no. 2 (February 1919), 24.

[62] Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms.*

On the one hand, the First World War marked the end to an era of global economic integration. It did result in a slump in the overall volume of global trade, lead to the suspension of the gold standard, and rupture ties between bankers and merchants worldwide. Yet the war was also, for historian Jamie Martin, a “profoundly global event” that led to the development of “a system of government purchasing, price-fixing, distribution and transport” that made it more possible keep the Allies fed, clothed, and equipped. Martin characterizes this system as an “institutionalized framework for managing what was, until that point, the single greatest concentration of economic power in human history,” at least after the U.S. joined the war effort in 1918.[63] After the war, some European statesmen imagined that a peacetime league of nations would be built on this established economic foundation. Indeed, in 1918, British War Cabinet Member Maurice Hankey expressed his belief that the basic structure of a future league of nations was already in place: Allied controls over “all trans-oceanic supplies and their transportation.”[64]

This kind of international economic planning did not merely provide resources for the Allies. Some planning offices employed unprecedented bureaucracies to *prevent* food and supplies from reaching the Central Powers.[65] Whether their organizations were designed to provide or deny resources, the Allies came away from the conflict with a sense of how centralized organization could solve complex international economic problems. Inspired by the impressive capacity exhibited by Inter-Allied trade bodies, some men and women in Europe hoped for an organization that could continue to influence the distribution of food and other essential raw materials, at least temporarily, into the peace.

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[63] Martin, *The Meddlers,* 29.

[64] Cited in Martin, 49. See also Peter Yearwood, “Real Securities against New Wars: Official British Thinking and the Origins of the League of Nations, 1914–1919,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9 no. 3 (1998): 83–100.

[65] Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Economic Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (Yale, 2022).

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After the armistice, the Independent Radical French economic minister Étienne Clementel presented the most radical vision of a postwar international organization. During the war, he had consistently called for a system of Allied economic controls that could pool essential raw materials at favorable prices and then distribute them according to need. In 1919, he proposed an "Atlantic Economic Union" of Western European and American democracies that would maintain some of these controls rather than immediately move back to a market system purely governed by supply and demand.[66] Yet, his plan did not merely express a vision of a world of peace and plenty shorn of national self-interest. He believed that these controls offered the best hope for reconstructing France and punishing Germany, which would be excluded from these favorable terms of trade.

Clementel's ideas diverged from those of U.S. women peace activists in important ways. Jane Addams and her colleagues in the women's peace movement approved of the idea granting the League of Nations some capacity to provide food and economic aid. Yet, Addams was strongly opposed to the idea that the postwar world might be divided up into rival trade blocs, which she feared would lead to international resentment and future conflict.[67] Like many women in the U.S peace movement, she adhered to a conception of free trade developed in the mid-nineteenth century by British liberal Richard Cobden. These "Cobdenite" free traders strongly opposed economic nationalism, imperial trade blocs, monopolies, and cartels as enemies of both democracy and peace.[68] Though Cobdenites believed that protectionist trade regimes could increase international animosities that led to armed conflict, they were not opposed to the development of welfare states within nations or the distribution of food and economic aid according to need. The complicated relationship of the U.S. women's peace movement to free trade politics are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

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[66] Martin, *The Meddlers,* 45.

[67] Marc William Palen, "Competing Free Trade Traditions in U.S. Foreign Policy from the American Revolution to the "American Century," in *Ideology of U.S. Foreign Relations: New Histories,* Christopher McNight Nichols and David Milne, eds. (Columbia, 2022).

[68] U.S. activist Fanny Garrison Villard summed up the U.S. Cobdenite position when she asserted "the right of every human to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, and regard the constant infringement of this right as a chief cause of friction between nations." Cited in Palen, "Competing Free Trade Traditions," 125.

Despite hopes of French and Italian delegates to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, powerful liberal states like the U.S. and Britain were reluctant to allow Inter-Allied economic controls to continue into peacetime. Any suggestion that commodities might be distributed through an international organization rather than via liberal market mechanisms of supply and demand incited the ire of private corporations, which had bristled enough at obeying the controls set by their national governments. Further, the language of imperial struggle through which Clementel expressed his hopes made them profoundly opposed to Wilson's hope for postwar free trade—a hope shared by the Cobdenites in the women's peace movement. When Herbert Hoover submitted the United States' formal opposition to this proposal, he explained that "after peace over one-half of the whole export of food supplies of the world will come from the United States and for the buyers of these supplies to sit in majority in dictation to us as to prices and distribution is wholly inconceivable."[69] The U.S. withdrew support from inter-Allied economic councils as soon as possible, engaging instead in a series of its own powerful international food relief efforts described in the following section.

The Covenant of the League of Nations drawn up in 1919 ultimately presented a far less radical vision of international economic controls than some delegates might have hoped for. In February 1919, it transferred existing inter-Allied economic bodies into a single Supreme Economic Council (SEC), which had temporary and limited control over food relief and management of the blockade, which not only continued to block off Germany and Hungary but extended to the USSR.[70] Even so, some of the most radical U.S. and British women affiliated with socialist and labor organizations held out hope that the League's SEC might continue to set prices for key commodities, influence domestic states' import and export rules, or influence global commodity transport.[71] For example, in 1919 women in the British Industrial Women's Organizations urged the SEC to maintain some international controls of core food commodities like wheat in the name of reconstructing Europe and building a healthy peace.[72] The proceedings of the first meeting of the International Women's Trade Union League in 1919 pushed for an international body that could manage a more equitable distribution of basic goods and the maintenance of internationally regulated shipping.[73] U.S. socialist and internationalist Jessie Hughan went as far as to claim that without an international organization with power to look after the interests of workers and consumers, "our complex economic structure is in danger of complete wreckage."[74]

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[69] Cited in Martin, *The Meddlers,* 53.

[70] Martin, 54.

The Peace drawn up at Versailles did, however, acknowledge Clementel's call for economically weakening Germany. In addition to maintaining the blockade even after the conflict, the postwar peace saddled the nation with punishing reparations. In part, these reparations intended to finance the repayment of Allied nations' war debts, making this proposition attractive to French delegates after the defeat of their earlier proposal. Yet U.S. peace women across ideological divides worried that such economic penalties would imperil the economic health of Europe and could not provide the foundation for a sustainable peace. As Jessie Hughan put it, "the war left Eastern Europe confronted with famine and Western Europe with bankruptcy," but the "herculean task" of restoring "the shattered economic system of Europe" didn't seem to interest the peace planners so much as punishing Germany.[75] In making this claim, she cited the work of a then relatively-unknown British liberal economist John Maynard Keynes, whose *Economic Consequences of the Peace* delivered an unapologetic critique of the peace planners' seeming ignorance of "the fundamental economic problem of a Europe starving and disintegrating before their eyes."[76] Hughan made it clear that the peacemakers' tendency to prioritize economic punishment above reconstruction was against the interest of working-class consumers, to whom "prices mean more than frontiers" and more than abstract international laws.[77]

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[71] Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms,* 142–144.

[72] Labour Party, *Memoranda on International Labour Legislation: The Economic Structure of the League of Nations* (London: Labour Party, 1919), 31. Cited in Martin, *The Meddlers,* 56.

[73] "Resolutions of the First International Congress of Working Women, Washington DC, 1919," Mary Van Kleek Papers, box 72, folder 2, Sophia Smith Collection, Women's History Archive. Cited in Martin, *The Meddlers,* 56.

[74] Jessie Wallace Hughan, *A Study of International Government* (New York: T.Y. Crowell and Co, 1923), 275.

[75] *Ibid.,* 204.

The League's Economic and Financial Section, created after the dissolution of the SEC, brought together an unprecedented international bureaucracy with capabilities to conduct broad statistical studies and make recommendations, but it had very limited power to intervene in states' domestic economic policies. Yet, the League of Nations' Covenant did not completely disregard the possibility of international economic intervention. Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations codified modern economic sanctions. For the first time in modern history, according to diplomatic historian Nicholas Mulder, withholding trade became a peacekeeping strategy, not just a measure enacted when war was already raging.[78] In Mulder's reading, the League Covenant placed sanctions in a central position in interwar international security: "should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants," it declared, that member-state: "shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations."[79] There were some critical limits to League sanctions, however. First, Article 16 did not prohibit all instances of force—only what the League's arbitrationists agreed was an "act of war" or explicit violation of international law. Second, because only League member states were obligated to follow this procedure, it left out two economically powerful nations: the United States and the USSR.

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[76] John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1920). Cited in Hughan, *A Study of International Government,* 204.

[77] Hughan, *A Study of International Government,* 204.

[78] Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon*.

[79] Cited in Mulder, 86.

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Those who drafted the League covenant had very high hopes that the very threat of the "economic weapon," their term for sanctions, could offer a powerful method of collective security. Sanctions should not be understood as a purely nonviolent alternative to war. Instead, economic pressure simply enacted another kind of violence. In fact, during the interwar period, more civilians died through organized blockades than by aerial bombings or poison gas.[80] Those in favor of basing the League's security apparatus on this "economic weapon" of coercive economic sanctions were well aware of its deadly potential. In the words of President Woodrow Wilson, "thoughtful men have thought, and thought truly, that war is barbarous," but "the boycott is an infinitely more terrible instrument of war."[81] For League official Elliot Felkin, that was the point. "It is the starvation of the general population and in particular of the poorest people which is likely to cause such trouble in the aggressor country that it must give way," he callously argued in 1919.[82]

U.S. women's peace organizations were under no illusions about the violence of economic sanctions. The Allied blockade of Germany during World War I left a deep and lasting impression on the women who became consumer diplomats. The deaths of some 300,000 to 400,000 civilians in Central Europe and half a million civilians in the Middle East haunted the memories of even American interwar internationalists, some of whom saw the effects of blockade first hand.[83] When the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) met in Zurich in 1919, they were the first organization to reunite Allies with former enemies in the Central Powers. Women's political disenfranchisement allowed them to place the blame for war squarely on the shoulders of male leaders. This enabled them to see themselves as facing the common burden of men's political failures regardless of what side of the conflict they were on.[84] When Allied women met with Austrian and German colleagues for the first time in over five years, they could not help noticing the way famine had marked their bodies, leaving one Austrian peace activist "hollow-eyed" with "mottled skin drawn over protruding bones, hands like birds claws." Moved, the WILPF condemned the famine in Central Europe as a "disgrace to civilization," and urged the League's Supreme Economic Council to lift the blockade on Germany and instead supply famished nations with food aid.[85]

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[80] Mulder, *Economic Weapon.*

[81] *Ibid.*, 4.

[82] *Ibid.*, 138.

[83] *Ibid.*, 5.

[84] Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms.*

Some U.S. women argued from a maternalist position that the blockade, and any potential future sanctions that cut civilian access to food, resulted in long-term reproductive harm. The bodies of mothers starved under "economic pressure" might bear stunted or stillborn children; in this way, the physical and psychic trauma of food blockades could linger for generations.[86] Many peace activists disagreed with the very notion of inflicting suffering on the bodies of the weakest members of national communities in the name of international security, seeing this practice as not only immoral but as ineffectual. In a 1924 letter to the League Secretariat, U.S. internationalist Emily Green Balch urged them to recognize that "it is not the hunger of women, children and the poorest and weakest that troubles the war-making elements. The well-to-do, the powerful and the army will always have food enough even under a blockade famine."[87] Others were less concerned. Jesse Hughan, disappointed that the League and the SEC could not do more to coordinate economic resources to aid postwar reconstruction, doubted that the League would be able to convince nation-states to make the sacrifices necessary to boycott "the aggressor."[88]

Though war made them aware of the violence of sanctions, U.S. feminist internationalists like Emily Balch and Jane Addams were not opposed to individual women consumers "bringing social, moral and economic pressure to bear upon any country which resorts to arms instead of referring its case to arbitration and conciliation" through an informal boycott. They saw such a practice as distinct from the potential violence of official diplomatic sanctions.[89] The war demonstrated that both providing and denying food could have powerful diplomatic consequences, and debates forged in the heated first years of reconstruction about the morality of economic sanctions and boycotts would continue to shape practices and ideas about consumer diplomacy throughout the interwar period.[90]

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[85] *Ibid.*, 144.

[86] Mulder, *Economic Weapon,*138.

[87] *Ibid.*, 138.

[88] Hughan, *A Study of International Government,* 246.

"Famine is the Mother of Anarchy": Food, Housekeeping, and Counter-Revolution in 1919

Although Hoover had flatly rejected the extension of international economic controls, he certainly recognized that food distribution continued to present an issue of urgent international concern and a form of strategic U.S. diplomacy. Over the course of the war, it became increasingly clear that control over food supply gave the U.S. a geopolitical advantage—a realization that continued into the peace. At a November 1918 speech directly following the Armistice, Hoover addressed a Conference of Federal Food Administrators on his postwar vision for the USFA. Though he had declared only six months before to women in the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) that the organization was "purely a war institution," some of its functions might remain necessary, he now realized.[91] After disbanding the USFA, these functions would continue through the newly-established American Relief Administration (ARA), which would provide U.S. aid to a total of forty-five countries over the next several years. Even before the Allied blockade of Germany was lifted, Hoover's ARA sold Germany a surplus of American grain products, shipping them to German ports in exchange for gold reserves that some of the French delegation at the Paris Peace Conference would have preferred were saved for reparation payments.[92] If a nation could not pay, the U.S. treasury would advance loans to purchase high-priced American food from the ARA, mobilizing U.S. capacity for credit in a way that other food sellers could not compete with.[93]

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[89] Cited in Mulder, *The Economic Weapon,* 99.

[90] This realization and the ideal of "peace through social justice" was also an impetus for setting up the International Labor Organization (ILO), a League of Nations organization in Geneva founded in 1919. On the formation of the ILO and its institutional history, see for example Daniel Maul, *The International Labour Organization: 100 Years of Global Social Policy, (*Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019).

[91] Herbert Hoover, "Food Control," *Journal of Home Economics* 10 no. 6 (June 1918): 245. This article was compiled for the AHEA of extracts from Hoover's address before the Pittsburgh Press Club on April 18, 1918.

Food provision was a response to an immediate, dire need. In Hoover's hands it was also clearly a political act, and it was recognized as such by contemporaries including Jane Addams.[94] For the U.S. food administrator, international security relied on looking past divisions between former Allies and enemies, as "ultimately, resources and distribution would make the difference between war and peace, order, and revolution." Mass starvation in postwar Vienna, for example, meant that nearly half of its population contracted tuberculosis by 1920.[95] It was not uncommon to worry that such deprivation could cause further conflict or food riots, given a cultural perception that hunger had been one motivating factor for war in 1914 (Figure 1a). ARA programs, most notably in Russia, sought to rebuild the world along U.S.-friendly principles and halt the march of "Bolshevism" through Europe while conveniently disposing the grain and meat products that threatened to overwhelm the domestic U.S. market if not exported. Hoover also used the ARA to attempt to crush rumblings of a German left, and to feed Poland in its war against Russia. Denial of food aid to Hungary weakened Bela Kun's Communist party, particularly in its conflict with Romania.[96]

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[92] Frank Castigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (Cornell, 1988), 43.

[93] *Ibid.*, 41.

[94] Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War.*

[95] Rose Wilder Lane, "The Insidious Enemy," *Good Housekeeping* 71 (December 1920): 129–130.

[96] One ARA official said of the Administration that "in this [postwar] crisis, we dominated southern and eastern Europe." Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," 350.

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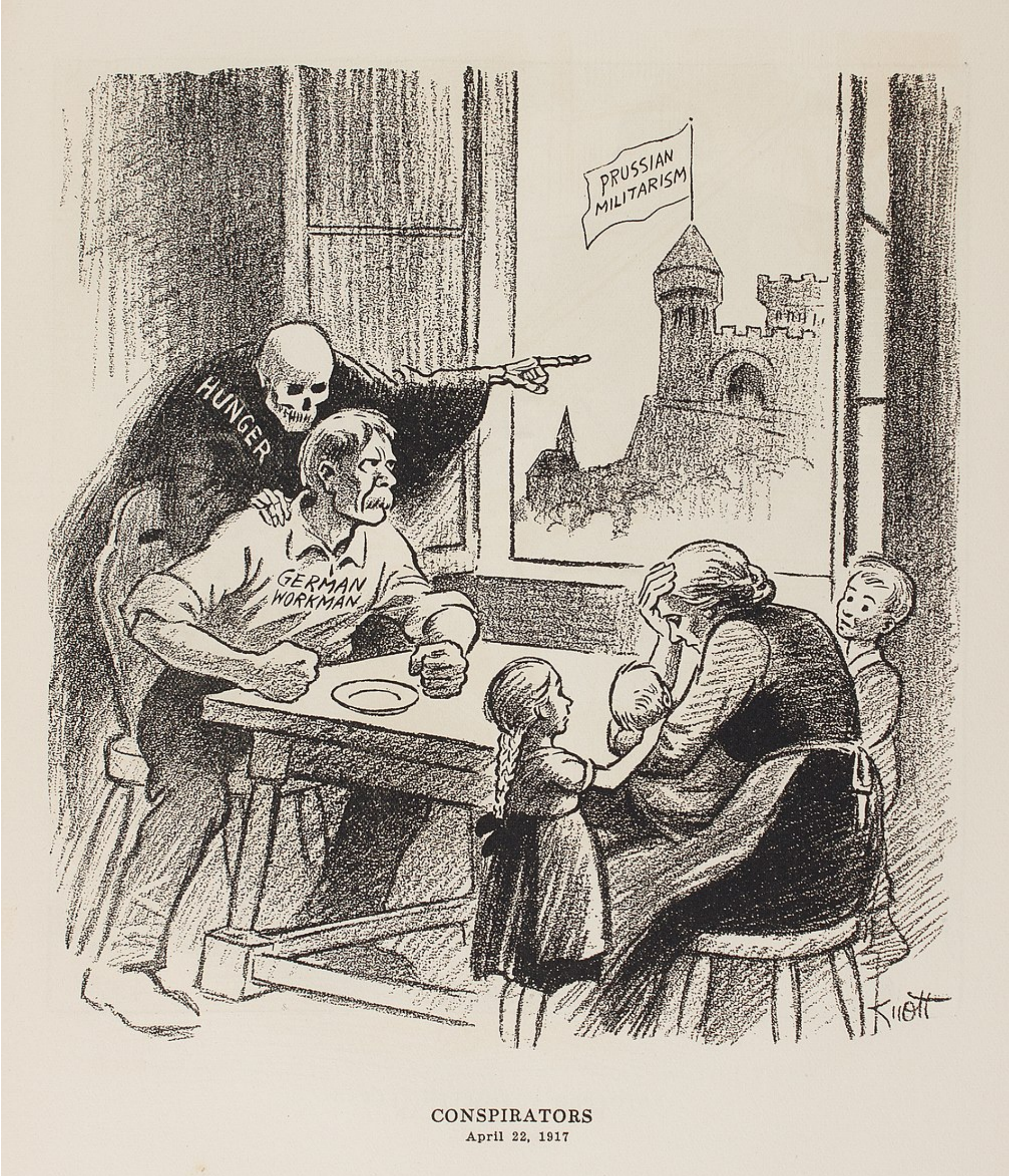
PRUSSIAN MILITARISM
HUNGER
GERMAN WORKMAN
Knott

CONSPIRATORS
April 22, 1917

Figure 1a: *Conspirators*.
The Dallas Morning News, April 22, 1917, 1.
Image Scan by DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University

Even though his use of food aid had clear political motivations, Hoover ultimately agreed with the basic premise of left-leaning women's peace organizations. Political stability relied on housewives' access to safe, affordable food. It was, after all, a demonstration of working-class women against the high cost of bread on International Women's Day, combined with a lockout of workers at the Pulov plant in Petrograd, that built the momentum that would topple the czar's regime in 1917. In fact, historian Nick Cullather casts Hoover as "among the earliest and most forceful [U.S.] proponents of a novel strategic concept that linked security to social welfare."[97] While the statesman worried "that famine could be the mother of anarchy," the well-trained housekeeper could "mother" social and international peace, if only she were equipped with the food and the knowledge to do it.[98]

Instructing women in proper household management was one way to help families make the best of available resources. Hoover became interested in funding experts to collect comparative international knowledge about food in order to guide relief work and health education, and in these efforts he found enthusiastic support from the AHEA and Bureau of Home Economics. While Home Economics departments might not have maintained the same tight relationship with the U.S. federal government that they gained during the food conservation efforts of World War I, and while the Bureau shrank from around 40 to 29 employees after the armistice, many women remained influenced by a new internationalist understanding of their discipline.

Some home economists were active on the ground in Hoover's projects to collect nutritional data. In 1922, he sponsored Cornell professor Flora Rose's extensive study on childhood nutrition and consumption habits in postwar Belgium. Rose's writings never indicated any belief that the League of Nations should exert more control over commodity distribution. However, she believed that coordinating *knowledge* about consumption on a global scale could form the basis of policy recommendations that individual states could choose to accept or reject. Rose claimed that "such procedures as surveys of the nutritional status of children are distinctly products of this modern age. They indicate the oncoming sweep of a new social order which will center its interest upon the welfare of human beings."[99] She also correctly supposed that international surveys of food, consumption, and nutrition offered ways that women professionals could make important contributions to this "new social order."

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[97] *Ibid.*, 350.

[98] Herbert Hoover, "Food Conservation for World Relief," 9.

Despite this language of internationalism, the letters that Rose and her domestic partner, Martha Van Rensselaer, sent to their colleagues at Cornell included a strong flavoring of American exceptionalism.[100] They reported that the Belgian population not only suffered from high levels of malnutrition, they were also "ravenous for information... hungry in a way that we cannot understand with our rich, rich nutrition literature."[101] Rose even proclaimed that the U.S. was "in a big way the sunshine or vitamine D of the world," but also that Belgian homemakers were good students of U.S. methods because they exuded "the real spirit of freedom."

Conducting comparative studies of nutrition was one method for participating in what Rose supposed was a "new social order." Engaging in international educational efforts presented another. After World War I, the United States became increasingly active in sending delegates to the International Federation of Home Economics, a body that met every three years to discuss new developments in consumer and household education. The meetings were predicated on the assumption that, because calories and vitamins were the same everywhere, it was possible to develop a common method of teaching about food consumption. Writing after the war, U.S. International Federation of Home Economics delegate Emma Winslow declared that "*fundamentally,* home economics is international. Everywhere it is the man, the woman, and the children who form the family group," and thus everywhere, "there is the need for solving the many detailed problems of providing shelter, food, and clothing and creating a happy family life."[102]

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[99] Flora Rose, "The Study of the Nutritional Status of Five Thousand Belgian School Children as Basic Material for a Program in Health Education," (Unpublished Manuscript, 1923), 1. Collection no. 23–2-749, box 34, folder 42, New York State College of Home Economics Records 1875–1979, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY. (Henceforth NYSCHE Records, Cornell).

[100] On the romantic and professional partnership of Rose and Van Rensselaer and its relationship to their public promotion of heterosexual family models, see Megan Elias, "Model Mamas: The Domestic Partnership of Home Economics Pioneers Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15 no. 1 (January 2006): 65–88

[101] Van Rensselaer and Rose, "Better Homes," 6 September 1923, box 47, folder "Letters from Belgium," NYSCHE Records, Cornell.

In addition to participating in this federation, U.S. home economics instructors went abroad to train local experts to who could take their knowledge back to their communities. For example, the AHEA established a Home Economics Department at the American College of Constantinople that could train teachers from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans who would then return to teach classes in their home countries. In 1922, the AHEA raised funds to establish an endowed professorship for a U.S. home economist in Constantinople, and their fundraising materials demonstrate a clear example of home economists' idea of a universal housewife.[103] Whether she hailed from the "East or West," she worked all the same towards "attaining that fine flower of civilization, the ideal home."[104] When women in local home economics clubs and departments donated to build the department in Turkey, they supposedly engaged in "an opportunity for the Homemakers of America to help the Homemakers of the World."[105]

In the postwar period, U.S. home economists continued to insist that their discipline could and should "encircle the globe." In fact, in the 1920s, Martha Van Rensselaer went even further in articulating the global importance of educated consumer demand. "The family's selection of goods determines the supply in the world's markets," she claimed. "Guided by intelligence or ignorance, demand for the right thing is quickened or retarded by the choice made by the buyer. It is the province of home economics to train the consumer to control production through demands based on wise selection."[106] While home economists like Van Rensselaer and her partner Flora Rose had unmistakably internationalist outlooks, they did not yet explicitly tie their conception of the woman consumer to peacemaking. Even so, they set up an important *idea* of the consumer as an actor with relevance on an international stage. This kind of thinking opened up the possibility of linking together food consumption and international peace, a connection that home economists would begin to make later in the 1930s.

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[102] Emma. A Winslow, "Home Economics and International Relations," *Journal of Home Economics* (August 1922), 389.

[103] Mrs. Benjamin D. Demarest, "Homemaking Across the Seas," n.d., (1920s?), box 235, folder "International Activities: Constantinople Project." Records of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

[104] *Ibid.*, 4.

[105] *Ibid.*

The International Co-Operative Alliance: Social Democratic Visions of Food and Peace

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) sat at the helm of a tremendous economic and social movement that only grew over the course of the conflict. At war's end in 1919, it represented an estimated fifty-million consumers across 44 countries.[107] Applications to join local societies had swelled during wartime, particularly in Britain and Germany, because cooperatives' own sources of supply and warehouses enabled them to keep their shelves stocked after private competitors' provisions ran low.[108] By war's end, four million British residents were members of cooperative societies—nearly ten percent of the total population.[109] In the UK, consumer cooperatives also acted as "auxiliaries of the Governments in their efforts to assure the provisioning of the people," and they used that political clout to form a national Cooperative

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[106] Martha Van Rensselaer, "Home Economics Extension," 4. Collection no. 23–2-749, box 34, folder 12, NYSCHE records.

[107] Estimated by James Warbasse, *Cooperative Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923), 67.

[108] Albert Sonnischen, *Consumers' Cooperation* (New York: MacMillan, 1919), 123.

[109] *Ibid.*

Party in Parliament.[110] Given the strength that cooperative economic systems gained in national contexts like Britain, some members of the ICA felt that cooperatives offered a workable form of economic planning and food distribution that could fight scarcity and its political dangers *without* requiring formal economic planning at a state level.

Women were particularly passionate about the idea that cooperative economics could help housewives fight inflation, access safe and healthy food, and care for their families in the aftermath of war. In 1921, an International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) formed to share best practices about cooperative economics, encourage the formation of new cooperatives, and gather data about the needs and concerns of cooperative women in as many nations as possible. They also hoped to encourage more women to get involved with cooperatives at the highest levels and push for more women's leadership in the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). This section demonstrates how they introduced a third model of the woman consumer as an international actor in the aftermath of World War I.

In many ways, the ICWG picked up a critique of liberal political economy that the ICA had long championed. In February 1919, ICA members from nine countries, including France, Belgium, and the UK, met in Paris to develop a memorandum to the peacemakers at Versailles.[111] In this memo, the ICA delegates established a firm link between the organization of international trade on a cooperative basis and the creation of a sustainable peace.[112] The men and women in the ICA expressed the same Cobdenite beliefs as U.S peace women—they believed that war and economic nationalism were cut of the same cloth. Charles Gide, a French social economist who held the ICA-endowed chair in Cooperative Economics at the *College de France*, laid out the cooperative position in the Memo, claiming that "international private trading has never given peace to the world… because it is a form of struggle—the struggle for profit."[113] In contrast, cooperatively organized wholesaling and retail offered "a means of fortifying the permanent organization of peace" that might temper conflicts over resources because it represented "the economic co-operation of peoples."[114] Exactly how this would work and what counted as a cooperative trade policy would be debated in future conferences.

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[110] Printed in "Co-Operation: The Next Conference of the International Co-Operative Alliance," *International Labour Review,* (Geneva: ILO, 1920) 131. Retrieved from *Labour Doc*s.

[111] Katarina Friberg, "A Co-Operative Take on Free Trade: International Ambitions and Regional Initiatives in International Co-Operative Trade," in Mary Hilson, Silke Neunsinger, and Greg Patmore eds. *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 212.

[112] This link had not been invented in 1919, but rather had its origins at the 1913 Glasgow meeting of the ICA.

As the Paris Peace Conference concluded in June of 1919, the Inter-Allied and Neutral cooperative societies met in Paris to start planning the practical and ideological contours of a cooperative peace. They imagined that the ICA could grow into an economic "association of all peoples, exactly the object which [the League of Nations] hoped to realize in the political sphere."[115] As a form of business that was democratically owned by its consumer-members, delegates claimed that consumer cooperatives would be the natural leaders of such an Economic League of Peoples. In June 1919, cooperators from Britain, Belgium, the United States, and France developed resolutions on peace and commerce, methods of cooperation, and international institution-building that would set the stage for debates and projects that shaped the ICA for the next decade.

At this June 1919 meeting, these mostly male cooperators highlighted the crucial relationship between nutrition and peace. They were among the groups that petitioned the League's Supreme Economic Council to re-establish Inter-Allied and International Food Committees, which could distribute food supplies to war-torn nations according to their needs. In order to ensure they were able to afford food supplies, particularly in nations with inflated currency, they even urged the creation of common European, or even Euro-American, currency and the "liquidation of war debts" to reduce the inflation that devalued so many currencies on the world market.

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[113] "Co-Operation," *International Labour Review,* 136.

[114] *Ibid.,* 134.

[115] *Ibid.,* 133.

It quickly became clear that these ideas would not be workable. Given that the SEC showed no signs of exerting such robust international economic control, the ICA suggested that cooperative structures offered the best hope to fight inflation and provide for consumers' needs. They urged governments work with their domestic cooperative unions "in order to assure the fair distribution at a fair price of imported food stuffs in common with all other merchandise."[116] The ICA's leaders realized that their visions of a future were only possible if they themselves built the infrastructure. In 1919, they set up an International Bureau of Statistics and Commercial Information, which would form the skeleton of an International Cooperative Wholesale Society founded in 1924.[117] To enhance local autonomy over food supply in newly-independent or war-torn nations, they also drafted plans to establish an international cooperative bank that might feasibly lend at reasonable rates.[118]

Though these plans were discussed in global terms, the local cooperative shop rested at their center. These shops were owned by their consumers and did not make a profit—they returned capital in excess of what they needed to operate to member-owners. Those local shops often joined a national cooperative wholesaler, which bought in bulk from suppliers to stretch retailers' money. Wholesalers were owned by their member-retailers, and they also did not make a profit—just like a local shop would, they returned any excess capital to their members at the end of the year. Wholesalers might preferentially buy goods from agricultural cooperatives that were owned by the farmers who worked them. This could create an integrated cooperative economy that theoretically did away with profit and increased purchasing power for everyone involved.

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[116] *Ibid.*

[117] Friberg, "Co-Operative Take on Free Trade," 212.

[118] *Ibid.,* 135.

Yet, some cooperative wholesalers preferred to own factories and farms outright, which they claimed gave their final consumers greater control over the products that they manufactured and sold. As the ICA saw it, these collectively-owned structures presented a "political economy of peace" because they did away with profit and market competition. They were motivated not by economic gain, but by a desire to serve their members.

The cooperative structures at the core of the ICA's plans were built and sustained by the buying power of women consumers—giving those consumers an important place. At the first meeting of the International Cooperative Women's Committee in Basle, Switzerland in 1921, British cooperator Elizabeth Barton read a speech on "The International Organisation of Co-Operative Women," penned by the absent UK reformer Margaret Llewellyn Davies. It made the importance of the woman consumer extremely clear. Davies' paper proclaimed that "under co-operation, women's function as the buyer is of such supreme importance, that she may be said to form the cornerstone of the co-operative commonwealth."[119] In every country where cooperation existed, the housewife could bring about "the emancipation of the workers and the peace of the world" through her basket, because "every pair of boots, every piece of soap bought in a co-operative store is helping to break down Capitalism and build up co-operation," a system theoretically controlled not by the most powerful shareholders but by the people themselves, each of whom had equal shares and equal votes.[120] They claimed that organizing business around supplying human need, not maximizing profit, could build a peaceful basis of trade.

Organizing internationally, according to Davies' paper, was important for three reasons. First, it might help to train women for leadership positions within their local cooperative societies. Second, it could help develop women's organizations in countries with cooperative unions but no gender-specific guilds. Finally, and most importantly, she sought to create an institution that could represent housewives' needs in both national and international policy. Almost like the home economists at the IFHE, Davies believed that global discussions would allow women to recognize that their "interest as housewives and mothers are the same throughout the world," as they shared interest in "maternity, housing, education, and above all, in peace."[121] The most crucial goal of the ICWG, then, would be to create the "cooperative housewife" as an international identity with a place in international governing structures. Through this solidarity, the ICWG might create a bottom-up social movement capable of pushing international organizations, like the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization, to recognize that international security relied on a more just economy.

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[119] Margaret Llewellyn Davies, "International Organisation of Co-Operative Women," 1921, U-DCX, box 2, folder 1, Records of the International Women's Co-operative Guild 1921–1961, Hull University Archives, Hull, UK. Henceforth ICWG Records, Hull.

[120] *Ibid.,* 2.

Though the majority of the ICA's and ICWG's members came from Europe, cooperation was not a purely European phenomenon. The organization also gained proponents in the United States. Despite low national numbers of only around 200,000 consumer co-operators in 1919, women were relatively powerful within U.S. cooperative movements.[122] When U.S. delegate Agnes Warbasse reported on American women's efforts at the ICWG's 1921 meeting in Basle, Switzerland, she noted that women "actually organized, capitalized, and ran societies themselves, in which most of the directors as well as the members were women," which she claimed surprised her European colleagues.[123] As Chapter 4 explores in detail, U.S. women were slow to form a Women's Guild that could officially federate with the ICWG. Most U.S. women interested in consumer cooperation preferred to work on educational or business efforts with men in the mixed-gender Cooperative League, which had been formed at the Warbasses' home in 1916 and which joined the ICA that year.

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[121] *Ibid.*, 4.

[122] Florence E. Parker, "Consumers' Cooperatives Societies in the United States in 1920," *Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 313* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), 9.

[123] Agnes D. Warbasse, "Woman Co-Operators of All Lands Unite," *Cooperation,* 1921, U-DCX, box 2, folder 1, ICWG Papers, Hull.

Though ICWG delegates expressed a belief that all women could be united through a set of shared concerns, they failed to keep race, colonialism, and other forms of difference in their field of vision. For a number of reasons, the forum offered by the ICWG did not and could not represent *all* people who practiced cooperation. For example, they failed to give representation to women in the agricultural cooperative movements that formed within Britain's colonies. In Ireland and Egypt, networks of agricultural cooperatives formed to help fund community agriculture. In Ireland, these networks of cooperatives helped republicans build a self-sufficient economy that could sustain a future free state even while still under British control.[124] The ICWG, however, was dominated by British women focused on a form of consumer cooperation inspired by the English Cooperative Wholesale Society (CWS) model. Their "political economy of peace" faced meaningful blindspots that were not endemic to the cooperative model, but that nevertheless limited its practical potential.

Political Economy of Peace for Whom? Limits of Cooperative Wholesaling

Did the ICWG's conception of a consumer-focused business model really have the capacity to be somehow more ethical than existing alternatives? Could this alternative method of ownership actually improve chances for international collaboration and even peace? If so, then how and for whom? Despite what the ICWG hoped, "the consumer" was not a universal identity that was shared across borders and that naturally oriented communities towards peaceful collaboration. Though these limitations were not fundamental to the cooperative economic system, this section illustrates how implementing cooperative structures was not a panacea that could even out existing structures of political or economic inequality. To demonstrate powerful cooperative wholesalers in action, the section moves outside of the United States, where cooperative trade was still very much in its infancy. Instead, it looks to the international example that the leading couple of the U.S. Cooperative League, James and Agnes Warbasse, most admired: the English Cooperative Wholesale Society (CWS).

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[124] Patrick Doyle, *Civilising Rural Ireland: The co-operative movement, development, and the nation-state* (Manchester University Press, 2019).

The CWS's handling of dairy in the immediate post World War I period offers a useful case study of the kind of consumer-centric supply chains that women in the ICWG thought would increase possibilities for peace. Dairy products were at the center of ICWG visions of international safety regimes, as they claimed that the housewives they represented were deeply concerned with the quality and availability of milk and butter. At the same time, the politics of supplying it may have moved some women to question just how much the cooperative business form as the CWS practiced it was really capable of ushering in an age of peaceful and ethical resource sharing that genuinely democratized economic control. In the hands of the English CWS, this section demonstrates, cooperative economics could be a tool of managing and organizing imperial commerce.[125]

Access to safe milk was critical, as this food deemed essential for the health of young children could be easily contaminated. Food adulteration was a serious concern for the European and American working class in the nineteenth-century during the formation of the consumer cooperative movement, but it continued into the 1920s even after thirty-one nations worldwide passed food safety laws.[126] Women in the international cooperative movement worried that these laws were too often circumvented by private retailers, who were more concerned about profit than serving consumers.[127] This was not so for non-profit cooperatives, they claimed. While consumers could act as watchdogs to ensure compliance with food safety legislation, private retailers generally did not have formal structures through which purchasers could voice complaints in the way CWS affiliated retailers did. Thus, the ICWG claimed that the most immediate way for housewives to protect their families from dangerous foodstuffs was to join their local consumer cooperative society. The CWS developed infrastructure that they held up as a global example, as it set up domestic laboratories for testing the purity and caloric content of both imported and domestically-sourced foods. If these goods did not meet the approval of inspectors or consumers, commodity chains could be re-routed.

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[125] The way the U.K. used the CWS to manage trade within its empire is discussed (though uncritically) in Rita Rhodes, *Empire and Cooperation: How the British Empire Used Cooperatives in its Development Strategies* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2012).

[126] ICWG leaders decided to dedicate its 1927 conference to this concern. This resulted in a report, "Good Food and Where to Get It: An International Report on Food Purity, Food Values and the Co-Operative Movement," U DCX, box 2, folder 3, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[127] Honora Enfield, "Power of the Market Basket," U DCX, box 5, folder 42, ICWG Papers, Hull.

Many of the milk products available for English co-operative women to purchase were supplied internally through a growing network of domestic plants, but dairy goods including cream, butter, and cheese could be sourced from Irish or Danish trading partners. CWS importation of Irish dairy goods presented layers of ethical complexity, particularly during and after the Irish War of Independence from 1919 to 1921.[128] Rather than moving closer to a "Cooperative Commonwealth" that brought ethically-produced goods to consumers, cooperative wholesaling could become another means of delivering cheap goods produced by colonized workers to metropolitan consumers without meaningfully redistributing economic or political power.

The CWS had a long tradition of purchasing from independent Irish dairies, setting up trading depots in Counties Tralee, Limerick, Waterford and Cork between 1868 and 1877. At an 1891 meeting, however, the CWS made the fateful decision to erect twelve of its own creameries in County Kerry and Limerick.[129] The wholesale society and its retailer members would own these creameries outright and distribute their product to consumers in England. In the next few years, it constructed 80 additional sites in Ireland. By offering easy credit that had to be repaid through milk supplies rather than cash, the CWS made strategic use of its extensive capital resources to tie local dairy farmers to its creameries.[130] While this arrangement may have helped urban English consumers, Irish cooperator Robert Anderson felt "no vestige of co-operation in [the CWS's] Irish creamery policy." Instead, "it was on all fours with that of all other creamery proprietors."[131] In other words, Irish farmers and their families did not experience the CWS as a part of a fair trade scheme; to them, it operated just like any capitalist middleman.

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[128] James Warbasse, *Cooperative Democracy*.

[129] Robert A. Anderson, *With Horace Plunkett in Ireland* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1935), 79.

When the CWS undertook this commercial operation, it realized it would be competing with a network of cooperative farms and creameries that already existed in Ireland. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), formed by Horace Plunkett, allowed farmers to pool their capital to purchase machinery for members' collective use or to bulk buy supplies like fertilizer.[132] Working with the CWS seemed attractive because the British wholesaler offered to bring its own capital to creamery construction. Yet, when dairy farmers learned that the CWS creameries were paying less for their produce than Irish networks of creameries were paying their suppliers, local meeting halls filled with furious dairy farmers. Having sullied its goodwill, the English wholesaler decided to sell its creameries to either local IAOS societies or to independent buyers at a considerable loss.[133]

As the ICA and ICWG met to discuss peace in Europe, Ireland erupted in anti-imperial conflict. Far from sites of apolitical, peaceful resource sharing, cooperative creameries became sites of strategic destruction in the Irish war of independence from 1920 to 1922. Given long-term resentment over the CWS' brief intervention in the Irish dairy market, revolutionary conflict literally erupted in or around CWS commercial spaces. For example, CWS historian Percy Redfern recorded arson near the Tralee depot in 1920 that resulted in the destruction of a CWS warehouse and a week's worth of egg shipments.[134] More typically, Crown forces purposefully destroyed IAOS co-operative creameries. Forty-two IAOS-affiliated co-operative businesses reported damage to their premises in January 1921, and these attacks were most pronounced in the dairy country of the Southwest.[135] These were not accidental incidents. As historian Patrick Doyle has shown, these incidents of state violence politicized rural Irish cooperators, who increasingly saw themselves as forging a national, self-sufficient economy that would allow a break from both British political and commercial control.[136]

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[130] *Ibid.*, 79.

[131] *Ibid.*, 85.

[132] In the rural Irish context, this process is described in Ruth Russell, *What's the Matter with Ireland?* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1920).

[133] Anderson, *With Plunkett,* 79 and Percy Redfern, *New History of the CWS* (London and Manchester: JM Dent, 1938), 52–3.

How did literal eruptions of anti-colonial war impact the ICWG's vision of ethical or peaceful commerce? Certainly, cooperative trade between Great Britain and Ireland did not foster peaceful collaboration and partnership. Rather, CWS activity illustrated and even exacerbated the economic and political inequalities that moved Irish Republicans to go to war. It is clear that women affiliated with the ICWG were aware of and on some level commented on of events in Ireland, although their meetings reveal a striking silence about these issues and a continued insistence that consumer cooperation was the firmest example of a peaceful economy that it was possible to create. At the November 1921 ICWG meeting, women in the affiliated English Women's Co-Operative Guild passed a resolution condemning British destruction of Irish creameries. At its next meeting in Ghent in 1924, its President Emmy Freundlich positioned the guild as both feminist and anti-imperialist, as it stood for both "self-determination of the nations" and "self-determination of the sexes."[137] Yet the ICWG's first leaders, all of whom with the exception of Emmy Freundlich hailed from the UK, seemed to gloss over some of the significant problems raised by the Irish butter experiment or about what this incident and its violent fallout said about their business model's capacity to peacefully unite all women as consumers.

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[134] Redfern, *New History of the CWS*, 234

[135] Patrick Doyle, *Civilising Rural Ireland*, 144.

[136] *Ibid*.

[137] "Minutes of the Central Committee," Fall 1921, U DCX, box 1, folder 8, ICWG Papers, Hull; Emmy Freundlich, "President's Address, 1924," U DCX, box 2, folder 2, ICWG Papers, Hull.

Conclusion

World War I and its aftermath inspired three critical conversations about the power and place of women consumers in international politics. During World War I, U.S. home economists claimed that women purchasers had a duty *both* to keep their families healthy through preparing nutritious menus *and* to support the U.S. state in its food control efforts. Though economic controls lifted in the U.S. soon after the armistice, home economists retained the internationalist outlook they had developed during the war. They sought to aid the new League of Nations by conducing comparative statistical surveys on nutrition and food prices, and they were committed to spreading their ideas about consumer education around the globe. They did not necessarily connect these ideas to peacemaking at this stage, but over the course of the interwar years, they would increasingly make links between food and peace. Other women were more explicit when they connected food access to peace. In 1919, women in the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) joined some socialist internationalists in criticizing the League of Nations for its emphasis on economic punishment above economic rehabilitation. They condemned both the blockade's effects on ordinary consumers and the violence of economic sanctions enabled under the League Covenant. They set in motion a debate about the morality of boycotts and sanctions that would animate consumer diplomats throughout the interwar years. Finally, the International Cooperative Women's Guild was most explicit about the relationship between the woman consumer and peacemaking. They urged women consumers everywhere to use their buying power to build up a conception of more ethical trade through the international cooperative movement. This idea was most powerful in Europe during World War I, but it would make important in-roads in the United States in the 1930s. When it arrived on U.S. shores, however, the idea of consumer cooperation would still have its share of problems work through. The troubles illustrated here by the example of the CWS would not evaporate without careful thinking and concerted efforts.

Chapter 2

Educating the Ethical Imagination: Junior Consumer Diplomacy in the 1920s

In 1920, while agents of Herbert Hoover's American Relief Association (ARA) traveled war-torn Europe distributing food supplies, Mrs. Pearl Yocum's geography class at Gavin H. Cochran Junior High School in Louisville, KY decided to make their own attempt at relief planning. The class president divided their peers into four "famine commissions," each of which developed an outline of how they believed U.S. supplies of bread, butter, meat, and sugar should best be distributed. Each also made a moral case for why their "powerful nation" should share its resources. According to Yocum, the children spent a week of class "eagerly searching newspapers and magazines" to learn of famine conditions in Europe, collecting U.S. agricultural data, making charts, and even designing slogans and propaganda to present a visually interesting case for their chosen commodity.[1] When the students presented their report entitled "Famines" to others in the Cochran student body, Yocum noted the genuine interest students seemed to take in stories of crops' circulation from farms to dinner tables around the world.[2] Though apparently motivated by the children's empathy for distant others, the Famine report contained the implicit thesis that as a strong, wealthy nation, the U.S. had a duty to help its supposedly weaker neighbors. Through their report, these children located themselves in a postwar world and contemplated what opportunities and duties their global position as white Americans implied.[3]

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[1] Pearl Yocum, "Program on Famines," in *The Twentieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education Part I: Second Report of the Society's Committee on New Materials of Instruction* (Chicago: The National Society for the Study of Education, 1921), 147.

[2] *Ibid.*, 148.

Yocum clearly supported the Famine report and considered it a good use of instructional time. She even presented it at the 1921 Annual Meetings of the National Society for the Study of Education as a model of the way student-directed projects could help pupils gain a more concrete understanding of otherwise abstract people, places, and ideas. Her support places her among a wide array of educators and reformers who sought to use public schools to shape the sensory and imaginative lives of the youngest Americans, molding them into patriotic but globally-minded *world citizens* who might both extend U.S. power abroad and improve prospects for peace.

Yocum claimed that the Cochran students developed and directed their own project. That a group of Junior High School students would even think to do so reminds us that wartime conservation impacted children's sensory lives, just as it did the lives of their parents.[4] Cochran students, like many others around the US, spent the war years eating less wheat, sugar, and butter at mealtimes. In 1918, their school joined the Junior Red Cross (JRC), linking the Cochran children to a network of eleven million others who cultivated victory gardens, constructed relief supplies, and raised money for child-focused relief work in Europe and the Middle East.[5] Educational programs designed to train children as young humanitarians lingered into the peace. Cochran home economics students, sponsored by the JRC's National Children's Fund, made dolls to bring "sparkle into the lives of starving children" in Eastern Europe who the girls worried would have few other sources of cheer during the Christmas of 1921.[6] Their efforts contributed to 100,000 crates of toys shipped abroad and helped establish an annual tradition.[7]

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[3] We can assume that the Cochran student body was White given that Louisville schools were racially segregated. Black children in the city would have primarily attended elementary school at the Twenty-Ninth Street Colored School. "12,173 Pupils Enrolled in Junior Red Cross," *Louisville Courier Journal,* February 21, 1918, 10.

[4] For a detailed examination of this point see Robert N. Gross, " "Lick a Stamp, Lick the Kaiser": Sensing the Federal Government in Children's Lives during World War I" *Journal of Social History* 46 no. 4 (Summer 2013): 971–988.

[5] "12,173 Pupils Enrolled in Junior Red Cross," *Louisville Courier Journal,* February 21, 1918, 10.

Educators like Yocum sought legitimacy for their programs through activating a web of cultural myths about childhood innocence. On the one hand, assumptions of innocence constrained possibilities of peace education. In the midst of the Red Scare that followed World War I, teachers risked blacklisting or dismissal if accused of exposing innocent children to socialistic pacifism or un-American internationalism.[8] On the other, peace educators benefited from a cultural assumption that children perceived each other and the world *directly,* unmediated by the "adult" worlds of politics. In this way, assumptions of elementary school students' innocence could make "friendly" interactions of sharing toys and relief supplies appear apolitical, garnering public support even in the midst of rising isolationism and economic nationalism. Yet, these exchanges *were* political: when children donated their allowance money to the NCF or their time to building toys and supplies, they contributed resources towards efforts to spread U.S. goodwill and, sometimes, tame alternatives to liberal economics and governance.

By attending to the political uses of innocence, this chapter shows not only how these educational and diplomatic efforts sought legitimacy but also how they employed childlike language and imagery to mask or naturalize inequalities among peoples and nations.[9] Carefully mediated expressions of goodwill between children threatened neither U.S. unilateral action nor the racialist bases for its empire and power. As historians Megan Threlkeld, Katie Day Good, and Susan Zeiger have demonstrated, the versions of "tolerance" and "diversity" taught in early twentieth-century peace education courses were often imbued with Eurocentric assumptions.[10]

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[6] "Preparing Christmas Cheer for European Children," *Louisville Courier Journal,* October 21, 1921, 2.

[7] "Christmas Boxes," *Junior Red Cross News* 4 no. 1 (September 1922): 10; on the tradition this created see "Christmas Candles,"*American Junior Red Cross News* 5 no. 8 (April 1924): 120–121.

[8] This is parallel to a similar notion of children's vulnerability that constrained Girl Scout's internationalism during the Second Red Scare. See Jennifer Helgren, *American Girls and Global Responsibility: A New Relation to the World During the Early Cold War* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017).

[9] My use of the analytic of innocence in this chapter is inspired by Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York University Press, 2011).

In contrast to these previous studies, this chapter focuses particularly on the way children were taught to relate to the broader world through engagement with political economy, both as young humanitarian investors in a safer world and consumers of global products. These economic functions were linked. Children's increasing access to consumer goods in the 1920s activated a series of other anxieties about protecting the innocent from the perils of the mass market. To mitigate these concerns, the JRC's National Children's Fund encouraged students to contribute their own allowances towards humanitarian aid rather than spending them on consumer pleasures.[11] When instructors took children's own funds seriously as a resource that might be diverted towards a conception of the global good, they mirrored the tendency of advertisers to begin considering children as potential consumers. As historian Lisa Jacobson has shown, adults in the 1920s projected their anxieties about an emerging culture of consumption onto the social imaginary of the child.[12] So too did adults use childhood education as a space to work out both their own unease about the US's changing geopolitical status and their ambivalence about the extent to which its emerging consumer culture relied on foreign trade.

In addition to encouraging a shift in allowance usage, coursework in the decade following World War I increasingly invited children to use everyday commodities to forge connections with distant others or understand global material interdependence. Three models of teaching through goods emerged. The first kind, exemplified by the famine relief class project and JRC, attempted to show children how basic resources might be shared and how they might contribute to this aid work themselves. International exchanges of objects offered a second kind of commodity-based education. By 1928, the JRC mobilized its relief networks to connect around ten million children in 48 nations through a cross-cultural communication program.[13] Instructors encouraged their students to correspond about the kinds of industries, labors, and goods produced nearby, or discuss the way their own household practices relied upon the work of distant others.[14]

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[10] Megan Threlkeld, "Education for Pax Americana: The Limits of Internationalism in Progressive Peace Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 57 no. 4 (2017): 515–541. Katie Day Good, *Bring the World to the Child: Technologies of Global Citizenship in American Education* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020); Susan Zeiger, "Teaching Peace: Lessons for a Peace Studies Curriculum of the Progressive Era," *Peace and Change* 25 no. 1 (January 2000): 52–70.

[11] For example, The Service Fund," *American Junior Red Cross News* 5 no. 8 (April 1924): 128.

[12] Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (Columbia, 2004).

Courses in commercial geography presented a third, and also relatively common, way of representing the world through commodities. Often taught in Junior High School during eighth grade, these courses encouraged children to map out the nations of the world in terms of their imports to the US. Some reformers hoped to fold this into the curriculum for children of all ages.[15] Instructors who developed these curricula believed that if the next generation of Americans came to understand how essential imported raw materials were to domestic manufacturing, or how crucial export markets were to the U.S. GDP, then they would see anything that caused disruption to these supply lines, especially war, as a terrible business proposition.

This chapter begins by showing the way World War I shifted curricula away from earlier strands of peace education and toward the organizing framework of "world friendship" or even "world citizenship." Public educators' attempts to define U.S. citizenship in such global terms appears out of step with the rising nationalism of other state institutions, but the innocent language of "friendship" legitimated these efforts by positioning children's exchanges outside of politics. Next, an analysis of the JRC shows how enrolled students moved from postwar relief to more abstract tasks of world friendship building. Instructors and students both claimed that international trade offered to connect distant "friends" through consumer experiences. Such an understanding was also fostered through commercial geography courses, the focus of the final section. In these programs, educators attempted to encourage children to divert their own potential purchasing power into funds for global relief and to efforts to train them to see consumption of internationally-produced goods as an activity that connected them to "friends" living around the world.

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[13] For example, "Children's League of Nations Unafraid," *Los Angeles Times,* October 31, 1920, xx2.

[14] For example, Elizabeth Fisher "The Teacher's Page," *American Junior Red Cross News* 5 no. 6 (February 1924): 83.

[15] Linna Estelle Clark, "The Promotion of International Goodwill Through Education," (Unpublished M. Ed. Dissertation: Boston Teachers College, 1929), 37. Accessed via Hathitrust Digital Library.

From Peace Education to Education for "World Citizenship"

Far from a fringe movement that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, peace education had deep roots in the United States. Educating students for moral citizenship and social peace was central to some of the earliest U.S. reformers' conceptions of what a system of state-funded common schooling should accomplish.[16] Consistent with broader antebellum Protestant perfectionist efforts, early nineteenth-century peace and moral education primers cast the child as an almost messianic figure whose innocent touch could save the world around her from sin and conflict.[17] This was, however, a racialized conception of innocence. If Black children appeared in antebellum narratives, they did so as the objects of white children' overflowing benevolence, never as restorative peacemakers themselves.[18]

A significant cultural shift in an understanding of the nature of childhood undergirded such faith the child peacemaker. No longer were children imagined as inheritors of original sin whose naturally depraved appetites demanded repression. Instead, the image of the child that emanated out from the treatises of French republican Jean-Jacques Rousseau was fundamentally good and uncorrupted by the assumptions imbedded in human language and institutions. Children thus offered to bring a directness of observation, an intuitiveness that remained uncorrupted by adult language or structures of thought.[19] Educators for world citizenship in the twentieth century drew upon such a conception of child-nature to position children's transcultural "friendship" as outside of politics. For British liberal John Locke, children's minds offered a "tabula rasa," or blank slate, which allowed for *im*pression rather than repression.[20] As U.S. Protestantism grew to accommodate the ideals of the European Enlightenment, this conception of childhood purity and trainability came to dispel earlier Calvinist images of the depraved child, and some version of a child peacemaker became plausible as a sentimental cultural figure.[21]

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[16] Aline M. Stomfay-Sitz, *Peace Education in America: Sourcebook for Education and Research* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1993).

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*.

Inspired by the possibilities of cultivating a citizenry whose moral judgment could help them to rise above conflict, antebellum reformers saw childhood education as crucial in their quest to rid the nation of the sin of war.[22] These antebellum peace educators were well aware that they worked against an uneasy backdrop. In her 1852 *History of the United States,* the first U.S. peace education textbook, Mary Murray expressed anxieties that national crises predicated on enslavement and pressed on by transcontinental expansion might erupt into war.[23] The war that erupted only eight years later resulted not only in emancipation of the enslaved, but also in continued colonial expansion and a burgeoning workforce of nonwhite immigrants. These demographic shifts forced moral citizenship educators to reconsider their curricula.

Public schools played a significant role in dealing with one of core contradictions that emerged as the U.S. accumulated its internal and external empires in the postbellum era: how could the U.S. expand its territory and workforce *without* expanding full citizenship to those deemed racially unfit for self-governance? Historian Clif Stratton claims that schools naturalized social hierarchies by training children to remain in their racially-determined place. While late nineteenth-century U.S. geography and civics textbook authors used the language of cosmopolitanism, their version was "not based on the concept of a global community of equals, but instead on global hierarchies of race and nationality" that curriculums would help to sustain.[24] By the 1920s, racialized intelligence tests deepened this contradiction, allowing schools to steer students of color towards manual training, limiting their access to economic mobility. Tight historical links between the classroom and racist physiology must be understood even for making sense of education for world citizenship or world friendship, because such assumptions could also penetrate the images of international harmony in their teaching materials and texts.

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[19] Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Penn, 1993), 46.

[20] Such conceptions of the trainability of the child featured in 1920s educational texts. For example, see Frederick Elmer Bolton, *Everyday Psychology for Teachers* (New York: Scribner, 1923), 126.

[21] In referring to this as an accommodation, I gesture to David Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, 2013).

[22] Such a vision was also central to the work of prominent educational reformer Horace Mann. Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010).

[23] Murray referred to American slavery as a "brand which may yet kindle a flame that will burst forth with destructive fury on our beloved country." Mary Murray, *History of the United States of America. Written in Accordance with the Principles of Peace* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey Co., 1852), 439.

Between the meeting of the Hague in 1898 until the start of the Great War in 1914, Progressive educators began to claim that U.S. citizen's moral training should include lessons no only in social peace but also in international relations and global cooperation. Some of the most prominent peace educators in this period, including Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler, claimed that international law informed by European and American liberalism demonstrated a "civilized" departure from "tribal" warfare.[25] Settling disputes through war was barbaric, this Darwinistic reasoning went, but working out differences through arbitration befitted the "forward-moving" West at the turn of this century certain to be marked by "progress and civilization."[26] Butler was not only a respected educator; he was also a well-connected peace advocate who in 1909 acted as presiding officer of the Lake Mohonk Conference. This gathering, held consecutively each year from 1895 to 1916, brought together anywhere from fifty to three hundred U.S. statesmen in support of international arbitration and a world court. Its 1909 proceedings suggest that many of the educators, philanthropists, and clergy in attendance shared Butler's faith that education was critical to shore up popular support for a system of international law, and that they too imagined their goals as indicative of the social "evolution" of a people.[27] A range of college educators at the conference formed a committee to work on promoting courses on U.S. diplomacy and international arbitration at a university level.

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[24] Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 53.

[25] Nicholas Murray Butler, *The International Mind* (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1914), 67–93.

[26] Amongst those who held this view along with Butler were Harry Vrooman and Thomas E. Will, who agreed that schools were the best place to teach of the dignity of Western arbitration, which they characterized as "civilization," and the destructiveness of war. These phrases are taken from Thomas E. Will, "The Abolition of War," *The Arena* (February 1895): 127.

Meanwhile, at the Second National Peace Congress held 1909 in New York City, Boston school teacher Fannie Fern Andrews gathered a network of educators through her burgeoning American School Peace League (ASPL). The ASPL brought together not only primary school educators but also school superintendents, federal officials, and college presidents. It included President Willam Howard Taft, who served as an honorary president and gave the ASPL an air of state-sanctioned legitimacy when he appointed Andrews as a "Special Collaborator" of the U.S. Department of Education in 1911.[28] The Program Committee gathered together some of the strongest voices for peace in social reform and higher education, including Women's Peace Party leader Jane Addams and Mt. Holyoke's Mary Emma Woolley. Free to join, the ASPL aimed to develop curriculums and guides to help instructors teach issues of international relations to young pupils.[29] At the 1910 Stockholm Peace Conference, Andrews invited European educators to join as well.[30]

Her influential peace education curriculum, *A Course in Citizenship,* was one of Andrews' most enduring interventions. Its basic model, which taught children about the peaceful settlement of disputes in the home, school, community, nation, and then the world, was widely adopted by peace educators into the 1920s. Andrews shared Butler's legalism, and her course built its foundations by teaching even the youngest children to arbitrate minor classroom quarrels through common rules rather than a descent into physical scuffles. However, as historian Megan Threlkeld has claimed, this kind of teaching ultimately encouraged U.S. students, who were assumed to be white and middle class, to use U.S. standards of "civilization" and "progress" as benchmarks for measuring both themselves and others around the world.[31] Though it proposed respect for cultural difference, this curriculum made clear that the Anglo-American rule of law laid the sanest basis for peaceful international conduct. In this way, it did not venture far from the variant of "cosmopolitanism" that Stratton observes in U.S. public school texts.[32]

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[27] Stomfay-Sitz, *Peace Education in America,* 30–31.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.,* 5.

The coming of World War I brought a rapid end to these Progressive attempts at peace education. Yet, the crisis also offered new possibilities for international instruction and civic voluntarism. On the one hand, the war severely curtailed possibilities for openly declaring oneself a "peace educator," as any hint of pacifism in the midst of war could subject a teacher to blacklisting or dismissal for "un-American" activity. The Daughters of the Revolution (D.A.R.) and the American Legion, among other self-proclaimed watchdogs of Americanness, kept an eye on curriculums, monitored history and civics books, and ensured that no un-patriotic activity could infiltrate the United States' primary and secondary schoolrooms.[33] Teachers in a number of U.S. states were forced to take "loyalty oaths" to local governments, curtailing freedoms in the classroom.[34] On the other hand, the urgency of the war and associated relief needs *increased* possibilities of thinking internationally in classrooms, so long as this global thinking could be claimed to be in the favor of U.S. national interests.

Under wartime pressure, those who once called themselves peace educators came to refer to themselves as educators for "world citizenship" or "world friendship." When Andrews' ASPL came under fire as a potentially left-leaning, pacifistic, un-American organization in 1917, it changed its name to the American School *Citizenship* League. Its name gestured towards a new opportunity in peace education: the possibility of training students in a U.S.-centered "world citizenship." Andrews and her network began to claim that in the post-war world, U.S. geopolitical power hinged on cooperation. Thus, *real* patriots thought not only of domestic concerns, but also of the United States' emerging place on the world stage.

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[31] Megan Threlkeld, "Education for Pax Americana."

[32] Stratton, *Education for Empire*.

[33] Julia F. Irwin, " "Teaching Americanism with a World Perspective:" The Junior Red Cross in the U.S. Schools from 1917 to the 1920s," *Journal of Education Quarterly* 53 no. 3 (August 2013): 255–279.

[34] *Ibid.*, 265.

Debates over performances of wartime patriotism played out onto the bodies of the United States' youngest citizens. How should young patriots' bodies best be trained to assist the war effort, what should their sensory experiences of the home front *feel* like, and how should their emotional relationships to the Allies and enemies be managed? When the 1917 National Preparedness Act increased military training in schools, Progressive educators felt that in-school drilling exercises offered poor preparation for the bodies of future citizens. The practice had a long history of dissent from Progressive educators. John Dewey called the practice "undemocratic, barbaric, and scholastically wholly unwise."[35] Rote actions in drills and marching, others claimed, could even stifle creative thought.[36] Others who considered themselves experts on children's minds thought differently, however. Prominent child psychologist G. Stanley Hall believed that military training in schools "abolishes rank and social station and brings a spirit of comradeship," providing moral and physical training at once.[37] Such a position followed Hall's more general idea that nurturing rather than repressing the "fighting instinct" fostered children's healthy psychological development.[38]

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[35] "Do We Want Rifle Practice in the Public Schools? Answers by President Eliot, Professor John Dewey, Andrew Carnegie, Jane Addams, Edward Everett Hale, and others," (Philadelphia: The Biddle Press, n.d.), 5.

[36] *Ibid.,* 6.

[37] G. Stanley Hall, *Educational Problems* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1911), 642- 643.

[38] On Hall's belief in nurturing the "fighting instinct," see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 77–120.

Whatever its boosters felt, U.S. Bureau of Education reports suggest that children were simply not that interested in drill and that it was not necessarily widely available, at least in high schools. Only 17 percent of high school aged children engaged in military training in 1918, and less than one in ten schools offered a course in military drill.[39] According to U.S. journalist Rheta Childe Dorr, children were simply more interested in "playing peace" than in playing war.[40]

By "playing peace," Dorr meant participating in the global exchanges fostered by the Junior Red Cross, which offered a way to orient children's minds and bodies towards a global network of "friends" and allies. The organization, which came to engage half of U.S. school-aged children by war's end, showed just how much the state intervened to shape the imaginative and sensory lives of its youngest citizens, mobilizing their bodies for relief work and their minds for a future when the United States' strategic combination of agricultural surplus and lending power might come to count among the nation's strongest geopolitical assets.

"Playing Peace": The Strategic Humanitarianism of the Junior Red Cross

Members of the Canadian Red Cross formed the first JRC in 1914 to help with war relief efforts in the British Commonwealth. After U.S. entry into the Great War in 1917, the American Red Cross (ARC) formed an American JRC chapter under the direction of Henry Noble MacCracken, former President of Vassar College.[41] During wartime, it remained the only U.S. children's organization that had been chartered by Congress to aid U.S. military forces abroad. Once a school joined and formed a JRC chapter, all of its students would become JRC members and would do relief work for no more than one hour of instructional time per day.[42] The local ARC chapter and school authorities would work together to design activities that would both suit the needs of the Red Cross and align with the existing curriculum. Any public or private school could join so long as it raised membership fees of 25 cents per child. All from Kindergarten through Senior High were welcome to make their own age-appropriate contributions.

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[39] United States Bureau of Education, *Bulletin* 91 (1919): 127, 128.

[40] Rheta Childe Dorr, "The Children's Crusade for Peace," *Ladies Home Journal* 41 no. 3 (March 1924): 168.

[41] Good, *Bring the World to the Child,* 171.

For the duration of the war, the JRC curriculum had two missions: to give U.S. school children both "training in the permanent duties of good citizenship" and "a chance to do actual war work," which would be integrated into the courses in home economics, health science, or woodworking that already took place.[43] The latter goal had measurable success: the American JRC produced an estimated 14 million relief articles by war's end. In addition to fashioning bandages for the front and furnishing for Red Cross offices, many also joined the "Children's Food Army" and cultivated Victory Gardens to stretch food supplies.[44] Others staged shows, bringing in over three million dollars for the National Children's Fund (NCF), primarily allocated towards rebuilding children's hospitals and schools in Europe and the Middle East.

By 1918, the organization garnered support from one-half of U.S. schools which enrolled eleven million children, but its role in the peacetime public schoolroom looked less certain. While dissent to the JRC in schools had been mostly passive during the war, some superintendents and teachers pulled their students out of the organization after the armistice, openly questioning the educational value of retaining it into the peace.[45] U.S. rejection of membership in the League of Nations in 1919 ensured that the internationalist conception of citizenship encouraged by organizations like the JRC would remain fraught. Even so, JRC directors in the U.S. took pains to claim that world friendship amongst children offered an innocent form of diplomacy that sidestepped popular concerns around Article 10 of the League charter, which would have committed the U.S. to a collective security pact and, potentially, another European war.[46]

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[42] "Little Soldiers of Mercy: How the Red Cross Banner is to be Flown Over our Public Schools and What it Means," *Ladies Home Journal* 34 no. 12 (December 1917): 89.

[43] "Little Soldiers of Mercy," 89.

[44] For in-depth analysis on children's cultivation of World War I victory gardens, see Rose Hayden Smith, *Sowing the Seeds of Victory: American Gardening Programs of World War I* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014): 72–97.

[45] Irwin, "Teaching Americanism," 267.

To skeptics of the League, the JRC hoped to offer an apparently innocent means of spreading goodwill without sacrificing the United States' ability to act unilaterally in an international sphere. Director of Junior Membership for the League of Red Cross Societies, Lyman Byron, called the JRC "an active campaign to swing all the children of the world into this league of their own kind. There is no covenant, no Article X, and no imposing Secretariat," he explained.[47] And so, "while the grown-ups, as is the nature of the grown-ups, have been quarreling about the how and the where" of their League, "the children have gone after the 'understanding' itself," bringing all their childlike powers of apolitical, direct observation to bear on a problem that adults necessarily saw through layers of political disputes.

By preserving a conceptual distance between the "nature of grown-ups" and the more innocent nature of children, the rapidly internationalizing JRC offered a less controversial method of extending U.S. international influence and a safe way to promote global cooperation in a fraught national political context. Teaching "Americanism with a world perspective," as the JRC termed it, attempted to strike a compromise that liberal internationalists and those who insisted on putting America first might both accept.[48] Perhaps to emphasize this innocent character, the JRC focused on representing the activities of its elementary and junior high school members in its publications and press releases. An institutional focus on younger children may also have had a practical purpose, as many educators feared that children's views on the world were set once they entered high school and that younger children were easier to shape.

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[46] My interpretation differs slightly from that of Irwin, who claims that the JRC offered an internationalism that was in contrast to the national culture of "isolationism" in the period. Instead, I claim, the language of childhood innocence allowed the JRC to craft a softer internationalism that attempted to avoid many of the concerns that isolationists expressed about U.S. involvement in the League of Nations.

[47] Cited in E. Bruer, "Children's League of Nations Unafraid" *New York Times,* October 31, 1920, xx2.

[48] Julia F. Irwin, "Teaching Americanism."

From 1919 to 1921, the 8 million U.S. children who remained in the JRC continued to construct articles and raise funds for work conducted by the ARC and other relief agencies. These funds continued to bolster the NCF, which spent around $420,000 in 1921.[49] The Central JRC body in Washington DC budgeted the funds and distributed them across Europe and the United States' own empire in the Pacific and Latin America. The funds contributed to the work that the ARC was already conducting to alleviate famine conditions in Russia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and other national contexts, though JRC-funded projects were to focus on children's needs. The funds would establish lunch programs for children, instruct them in U.S. standards of hygiene, nutrition, and physical fitness, or reconstruct institutions that were meaningful and helpful for children's lives.[50] The fund often helped to rebuild schools that had been destroyed during the war or established new vocational schools and agricultural training sites to prepare European children for what ARC directors hoped would be a more food secure future.[51] One exceptional effort was the Albanian Vocational School formed in 1920 in Tirana, which offered to turn "tribesmen" into modern, English-speaking world-citizens.[52] JRC organizers also used NCF funds for the exportation of US-designed playgrounds to France, Italy, and Belgium, claiming them outlets for healthy play.[53] Starting in 1919, students in the United

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[49] Reported in "The Need at Home and Abroad," *JRC News* 5 no. 8 (April 1924), 113.

[50] For example, when U.S. JRC leadership learned that some 2,000 children in Latvia were so undernourished that they risked being too ill to attend school in the 1925–1926 year, they ran a lunch program over the summer to feed a few hundred of them. J. Skujas, "Fitness for Service in Latvia," *AJRC News* 6 no. 7 (March 1925): 101.

[51] The NCF funded schools across Europe, including vocational schools in Montenegro and agricultural training programs in rural France and rural Italy. on Montenegro see "The Helping Hand," *Los Angeles Times,* January 16, 1921; on the fifteen schools in France, "Helping Hand," *Los Angeles Times,* October 23, 1921, 43; on Italy see "Teaching Boys to Farm," *Los Angeles Times,* January 27, 1921.

[52] Alfred Dunn, "Reflected Rays," *JRC News* 5 no. 8 (April 1924), 116*;* also reported in "The Helping Hand," *Los Angeles Times,* December 26, 1920.

[53] "Playgrounds a New Thing in Europe," *Los Angeles Times,* September 23, 1923, 19.

States could learn about those children in “submerged Europe” whose lives were touched by their “rays of light” by reading the monthly *Junior Red Cross News (JRC News)*.[54]

Not all U.S. children had equal access to world citizenship or networks of global “friends” through participation in the JRC, however. Its federal structure meant that its funds in the U.S. South were generally controlled by segregated school districts. If Black schools managed to raise the funds to join the JRC, their districts still may have denied them funds for materials needed to participate in relief projects. One Southern representative wrote to the national branch to explain that the school district in his region had refused to provide fabric to Black school children interested in helping with the national effort to sew garments for refugees. He requested material from the national branch instead, hoping that they might see the importance of allowing these children access to this expression of world friendship and civic voluntarism.[55] Through racist allocations of funds, Black children could be denied “world citizenship” in a way that mirrored their denial of full U.S. citizenship and national belonging. On the other hand, some children might have been forced to do more difficult labor in the name of world friendship because of their race or class positions. The JRC organized boys in manual training schools, overwhelmingly the children of working-class white ethnics, Blacks, or Chicanos, into the “Manual Training Department,” where they would fill JRC orders for tens of thousands of furniture pieces marked for export.[56]

Ability to donate to the NCF may also have excluded some children whose families could not provide them with funds to bring to school. However, the JRC was clear that the money given to the NCF must be the children’s own, earned through some kind of service or labor or saved up from a given allowance. "If a Junior asks his parents for a few cents to give the Junior Red Cross, it is the parent who gives and not the junior," the *News* explained.[57] In line with the school thrift programs that proliferated within U.S. schools in the 1920s, the *JRC News* urged America's youth to spend their pocket money not on discretionary consumer pleasures like movie tickets and sweets, but rather to contribute it to the greater global good.[58] Alternatively, children might do some kind of work to earn the money. The *News* offered examples of children selling tickets for school plays or selling produce from their own vegetable gardens in a collaborative commercial effort. When the organization asked children to continue making the same kinds of consumer sacrifices that they had made during the war in order to connect themselves to a meaningful charitable cause, it implicitly recognized their power as holders of discretionary spending income themselves (Figure 2a). JRC materials drew the potential child consumer away from the intoxicating pleasures of spending and towards charitable giving. A special Thrift Month issue of the *JRC News* even asked children to think of their "investments through the National Children's Fund" as a way of investing in a future "world safe for children."[59]

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[54] Dunn, “Reflected Rays,” 117.

[55] C. Dickinson Jr, “The Making of Refugee Garments in Negro Schools,” n.d. Cited in Irwin, “Teaching Americanism with a World Perspective,” 263.

[56] One particularly publicized example of the Manual Training Department’s work included the production of 10,000 tables and 30,000 chairs for refugees in Northern France, completed in 1919. “Make Furniture for Refugees of France,” *Los Angeles Times,* March 20, 1919, 13; “Boys Aid French Refugees,” *New York Times* April 6, 1919, 17.

American organizers used their NCF to help get European JRC chapters off the ground. In 1924, after five years of these efforts, twenty-one other nations had JRCs and nineteen of these had their own *Junior Red Cross News* pamphlet to share stories about their work. In many cases these chapters or their magazines were partially or wholly funded by the U.S. NCF and staffed or aided by U.S. experts and reformers.[60] To acknowledge this proliferation of children's literature, the U.S. magazine changed its name in 1924 to the *American Junior Red Cross News* (*AJRC News*).

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[57] "The Service Fund," *AJRC News* 5 no. 8 (April 1924), 128.

[58] In honor of Benjamin Franklin's birthday, the February 1925 issue of the *AJRC News* was entirely about how children could practice thrift and, in saving, have more to share with the charity. For an overview of thrift education, see Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers,* 56–93.

[59] Ruth Henderson, "Ideas for a Thrift Program," *AJRC News* 6 no. 5 (January 1925), 66.

[60] Reported in *AJRC News* 6 no. 1 (September 1924), 10.

Chapter 2. Educating the Ethical Imagination: Junior Consumer Diplomacy in the 1920s

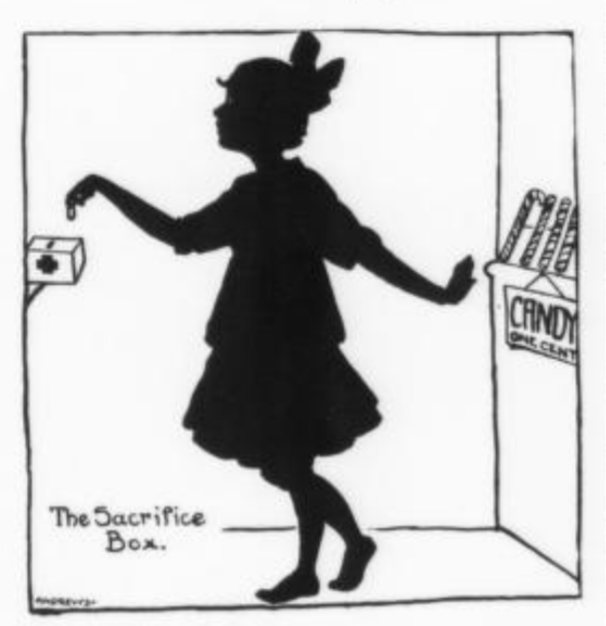

Figure 2a: The Junior Red Cross “Sacrifice Box”: This young, fictional consumer elects to spend her allowance money on supporting other children abroad rather than on candy for herself.
Source: *Junior Red Cross News* 1 no. 4 (January 1920): 7.

American aides who went abroad to help form JRC chapters with the intention of protecting children in Europe from the radical political alternatives that they feared might come with sustained material deprivation and industrial or agricultural disruption. Many of the U.S. women who went abroad with the JRC, then, had an explicit ideological purpose, and they too animated conceptions of innocence to legitimize this work. One of them, the journalist Rheta Childe Dorr, who had traveled with the JRC in England, France, Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Romania, claimed that the JRC was "doing more [than any international reform organization] to democratize the schools of Europe, to educate the children of Europe in an internationalism of which Moscow knows nothing at all".[61] It was so effective, she claimed, because its subjects were so trusting, so innocent, and so free from political attachment: "it works with the children themselves, rather than with teachers and parents, and parliaments, and because the children believe in it and trust it more than anything else that touches their lives."[62] Perhaps following longer Rousseauean cultural currents, Dorr saw children as offering a directness of observation that lifted JRC diplomacy outside of "politics," which remained the purview of "parliaments," and into a softer realm of emotional connection and childlike "trust."

Yet children's lives were not lived outside of political relationships. Dorr's casting of this U.S-.led network of child diplomats as opposed to "Moscow" clearly demonstrated that the JRC had a political purpose in Europe. The JRC spread also to the United States' empire, where it offered one medium through which expert adult consumers forged intimate links to children living in the insular colonies. In the Philippines, around 100,000 children joined by 1920.[63] In Puerto Rico, Elsie Mae Willsey helped to establish a "Home Economics Club" in every

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[61] Dorr, "The Children's Crusade for Peace," 168. Dorr had once been a member of the Socialist Party, though she began a turn rightward with the outbreak of World War I. After her experiences in revolutionary Russia and Czechoslovakia, she made a more committed turn to the right and joined the American Republican Party. Mari Jo Buhle, "Rheta Childe Dorr," in *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890–1920*, eds. John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), 119.

[62] Dorr, "Children's Crusade," 168.

[63] *Ibid*.

municipality, which would employ girls' leisure time according to standards that U.S. educators considered appropriate. Home Economics Club members were universally enrolled in the JRC.[64] Each year these women would take on a common project, jointly sponsored by the NCF and the Department of Home Economics. In 1920–1921, it was "Simplified Dressing among School Girls," which insisted that the most appropriate way to dress was with low heeled shoes, "substantial dresses" that were plain in color, and bobbed hair.[65] In 1921–1922 young colonial women's bodies were once again the focus through a segment on "Health through Exercise," and planned for 1922–1923 was a unit on child welfare. Using NCF funds and the JRC's organizing structure, aides attempted to rationalize Puerto Rican girlhood, shaping young women's bodies, leisure, consumption, and reproductive practices to comply with U.S. standards.[66]

Commodity Stories and Letter Exchanges

At the start of the 1921–1922 school year, JRC director Arthur Dunn introduced an international school correspondence activity that would come to define the organizations' work for the rest of the decade. It also provided a model for future programs of its kind in the Girl Scouts International Post Box or the Federal Council of Churches "Committee on World Friendship Among Children." Yet it would remain the largest program of its kind throughout the decade. This program allowed entire classes to send a portfolio to "friends" in one of ten European nations or Canada, though the list of correspondents grew through the decade.[67] Each class enrolled in the correspondence program would produce one portfolio each year, which might include handmade crafts, stories about popular hobbies, descriptions of beloved games, descriptions or images of landmarks features, and discussions of local industry or agriculture. Dunn and those who endorsed his program hoped that these would make geography more exciting and tangible for children while spreading goodwill and understanding. Despite the drop in enrollment in the immediate postwar period, by 1928 this program of international exchange grew to attract six million school-aged Americans and over four million foreign correspondents.[68]

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[64] Elsie Mae Willsey, "Home Economics in Porto Rico," *Journal of Home Economics* 14, no. 11 (November 1922): 530.

[65] *Ibid.*, 530.

[66] Willsey, "Home Economics in Porto Rico," 530.

[67] These nations included England, France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Spain, Belgium, and Albania. See Dorothea Campbell, "Corresponding with Many Lands," *JRC News* 3 no. 2 (October 1921): 19.

These exchanges would be highly mediated. First, the portfolio—weighing no more than four pounds and no longer than 16.5 inches in any dimension—would find its way to the JRC central offices in Washington DC, where its postage abroad would be paid by the NCF.[69] Unless they were writing to one of two English-speaking nations on the list or the English-speaking pupils at the Albanian Vocational School, the completed portfolios would travel from DC to an office in the destination country where they would be translated by JRC-sanctioned workers. When the European children responded, their remarks would *again* be translated and returned to the US. Buried beneath layers of adult surveillance, it is difficult to reconstruct how children themselves really experienced these communications or what these “friendships” might have meant to those involved. The exchanges *can* offer insight into the way adult reformers sought to employ their faith in the global innocence, purity, and innate ‘friendliness’ of children to both educate children’s moral imaginations and build an intimate kind of U.S. soft power. They also reveal how the ethical imagination developed in wartime found a place in postwar childhood education. In this process, relating to others through *goods* took center stage.

Even though these letter exchanges took place outside of the marketplace, a closer look at the school program shows that it consciously sought to shape children as thoughtful global consumers who were aware, even if in a very simple way, of international trade. Instructors encouraged students to write about local industry, talk about the work that their families and other community members did, and ask children abroad to share the kinds of industries or work that their communities engaged in.[70] Through scrapbook and object exchanges, children came to think about others around the world as producers of the basic goods that they encountered daily.

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[68] Irwin, “Teaching Americanism with a World Perspective.”

[69] Campbell “Corresponding with Many Lands,” 19.

Materials taught children that using goods made by other nations was a way of "knowing" or even entering into "friendships" with the people of those nations. A group of girls in a New York City public school demonstrated such an idea with particular clarity through a play, which the *AJRC News* published as an example of an activity others around the nation might enjoy. The pageant cast students in the role of a Dutch, Irish, Belgian, Chinese, or "South American" child. Each would offer a product to clothe the play's protagonist, an American girl. Alternatively, they might note the provenance of an item she already wore. The Irish girl, for example, was instructed to touch the American's dress and say, "the material of this linen dress came from Ireland," after which the Belgian would add that the "lace on your collar came from Brussels, where I live." In the conclusion, the American girl finds that she "knew" these "old friends" all along simply through the garments that she wore.[71] If these connections were properly illustrated, instructors believed, children could recognize "friendship" and mutuality with others through mapping out the goods that traveled to U.S. ports from their home countries.

Since exchanges only reached a single classroom, the *AJRC News* published correspondences that they thought would be particularly helpful for students around the nation. These included a wealth of information about global industry. A group of children in Lithuania, writing in the guise of their doll Birute, described processes of making the amber jewelry the doll wore.[72] In some cases, children's descriptions served to obscure conditions of goods' production: a group of Afrikaans children told of the mineral riches of South African diamond and gold mines, but unsurprisingly left out any discussion of the exploited Black laborers who worked them.[73] Children from Sidon, Syria described local raw silk production, some of which was to be exported to Paris to be milled into the luxury fabrics that resided in the wardrobes of the world's fashionistas.[74] In other cases, children might identify important local or domestic industries, as did the Black students at the Booker T. Washington School in Indianapolis when they told their Romanian correspondents about a local milk processing plant and the dietary value of milk.[75] The *News* encouraged students to use the contents of the portfolios they received to set up their own museum of world images and goods. Those who lived in New York City or Washington DC might also enjoy larger exhibits of handcraft and images of industry in national JRC exhibits.[76]

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[70] These encouragements were given, for example, by Elizabeth Fisher, "A Geography Project," *AJRC News* 5 no. 6 (February 1924): 81.

[71] "Old Friends," reprinted in *AJRC News* 5 no. 6 (February 1924): 95.

[72] "A Letter, Courtesy of Birute the Doll," *AJRC News* 6 no. 5 (January 1925): 74.

Stories usually talked about goods not as abstractions, but in intimate, bodily ways. They might describe both their local use and, given the mediation of the exchange, perhaps include information on the hygienic or dietary importance of consuming particular kinds of foods or clothing. Through the JRC's international "Fit for Service" program, children traded institutionally-sanctioned tips in nutrition and cleanliness. In a published letter to their U.S. "friends" London-based Juniors asked: "do you like baked potatoes, potatoes, and dried lima beans and tomatoes and spinach and graham bread and apricots? We didn't, until we knew how they helped us. We are learning all this in our Fit for Service Club—its [sic] our hygiene book."[77]

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[73] Alice Ingersoll Thornton ed., "The Junior Mail Bag," *AJRC News* 6 no. 6 (February 1925): 94.

[74] "The Junior Red Cross in Syria," *AJRC News* 6 no.6 (February 1925): 91

[75] *AJRC News* 5 no. 3 (March 1924): 103.

[76] One such exhibit was held at the headquarters of the National Education Association in Washington DC in 1924. *AJRC News* 6 no. 1 (September 1924): 15. Such exhibits were also held in other nations, for example, a Parisian exhibition is described in "Understanding Comes from World Correspondence," *AJRC News* 5 no. 7 (March 1924): 99.

[77] "A Junior Letter from Waterloo," *AJRC News* 6 no. 5 (January 1925): 71.

The Fit for Service Club programming developed in the United States clearly caught on with these British child readers. The U.S. chapter generated a variety of other materials to encourage children to eat foods they might not prefer or even put pressure on their mothers to change household food consumption habits. These "Fit for Service" activity suggestions even included classroom pageants in which children might dress up as various garden vegetables and announce their nutritional benefits. One such pageant concluded with a warning: children who didn't eat these foods would "grow pale and puny."[78] Other issues of the *AJRC News* encouraged teaching children about five food groups—those that gave vitamins, proteins, starch, sugar, and fat—and encouraged them to help their mothers plan meals that incorporated all of them. Fit for Service activities might even give rise to ideas for correspondence: why not have students write to others about what people in their town have for supper or breakfast, and then talk amongst themselves about the nations and workers upon whom such a meal depended?[79] In this way, JRC instructors encouraged children to share what they learned about nutrition through their letters abroad while simultaneously thinking about their intimate reliance on food imports. Leaders also hoped that such exchanges could push children in U.S. colonies and indigenous communities to adopt USDA-sanctioned food consumption habits.

Because it provided a set of teaching methods and ready-built penpal networks that could be easily integrated into the classroom, the JRC allowed internationally-minded educators to fill gaps in curriculums. These gaps could be significant. In their study of Muncie, Indiana, sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd found that elementary schools offered a much wider range of courses in the late 1920s than they had in 1890, including history, geography, and civics. However, the course guides that the Lynds encountered unashamedly promoted U.S. exceptionalism and endorsed U.S. expansionism.[80] This was not uncommon, and children received little instruction in international affairs to counterbalance it. Even though NEA researcher William Carr noted a proliferation of world citizenship courses from 1923 to 1928, he admitted that these were used at only a minority of U.S. schools.[81] When University of Chicago researcher James Glass examined curriculums of grades five and six in 14 cities, he found that instruction in international relations took up only around four percent of instructional time.[82] In 1928, the World Peace Foundation sent a questionnaire to educational authorities in each U.S. state to assess the extent to which coursework engaged foreign relations, and of the junior high schools that replied, 53% claimed that there was an institutional effort to teach these topics while 46% claimed that it was up to the individual instructor.[83] By providing funding and curricular guidance to interested teachers who were not given institutional support, the JRC encouraged a more liberal alternative to the chauvinist nationalism that dominated many school texts.

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[78] "Midnight in the Vegetable Garden," *AJRC News* 6 no. 6 (February 1925): 85–86.

[79] Suggested by Ruth Henderson, "The September News in the School," *AJRC News* 6 no. 1 (September 1924): 2.

Yet, it is important to emphasize the extent to which the JRC *did* put America first. As the *News* put it, the JRC put America first "not in splendid isolation, but in Christlike co-operation."[84] The moral imagination that this organization offered to instill was mired in US-centric assumptions and maintained a belief in cultural, if not always racial, hierarchies. JRC leaders' conduct was unashamedly imperialist in U.S. colonies, which the *News* even presented to children as "Uncle Sam's Outposts."[85] The organization's leaders expressed more obliquely imperialist views through buying in to G. Stanley Hall's version of the then-popular "recapitulation theory." Inspired by Ernst Haeckel's physiological theory that embryonic development recapitulated the development of the entire species, Hall held that children's mental development mirrored the mental development of the human race. Child readers were *naturally* closer to the fairytales of Europe's cultural "infancy" and the cultures of "primitive" peoples.[86]

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[80] Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, 1929), 189.

[81] William Carr, *Education for World Citizenship* (Stanford, 1928), 7.

[82] James M. Glass, *Curriculum Practices in the Junior High School and Grades 5 and 6*. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No 25 (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Education, 1924), 152.

[83] World Peace Foundation, Unpublished Study. Cited in Clark, *The Promotion of International Goodwill,* 19.

[84] This line comes from a poem that JRC children were invited to memorize for World Goodwill Day. *AJRC News 6* no. 9 (May 1925): 130.

[85] For example, Oliver Travis Ray, "Uncle Sam's Outposts," *JRC News* 2 no. 6 (February 1921): 83–85.

Assumptions about primitiveness or stereotyped cultural difference were sticky, and such notions could attach themselves to the crafts and commodities that JRC children assembled into classroom museums. Such associations also attached themselves to goods through a series of elementary and junior high school courses known as "commercial geography." These courses taught children to map out the origins of the objects that surrounded them in daily life.

Commercial Geography's Object Lessons

Did classroom attempts to train world-conscious consumers work? Evaline Harrington, an English instructor at West High School in Columbus Ohio, shared an experience she claimed to have had in the dining car of a Pullman train in 1931 that suggests they may have. An eight-year-old child seated at Harrington's table eagerly looked around at the settings as the food was served, unable to contain his curious desire to flip over every plate and utensil to peer at their marks of provenance. The china was made in England, he found, the linen tablecloth was woven of Irish flax, and from memory he excitedly announced to his travel companions that the coffee being served was most likely from Brazil, the pepper from Africa, and the pineapple from Hawai'i. Before his mother could stop him, "another flood of geographical names deluged us" as the child attempted to identify the origin of the clothing worn by the women around him—the fur was from Russia, he claimed, silk dresses were from China. His embarrassed mother announced that ever since "the teacher told all the children to bring from home articles made outside of America," her son had been on a quest to place every good he encountered on his mental map.[87]

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[86] For more on Ernst Haeckel's theory of recapitulation and its uses in redefining social imaginaries of childhood, see Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority* (Harvard, 2005).

Harrington was clearly charmed by the young man, who she claimed "realized in a childish way that foreign trade was a magic carpet bringing treasures to his front door." Through touch, taste, and the excitement of "turning over everything he sees," the eight-year-old boy was "beginning to sense that he is a citizen of the world," a sensation that Harrington claimed would bring out and protect the child's natural inclination towards peacemaking.[88] Her story was republished by the League of Nations Association's Educational Department, which circulated it as an example of the noticeable cultural effect that commercial geography courses might have. While the JRC might have been one major educational program through which children were taught to imaginatively encounter "friends" around the world, it was not the only option.

Stories about goods in classrooms attempted to excite children's boundless imaginations, using the tangible world of goods to bring the lives and labors of distant others closer. To help children understand just how much their material and sensory lives relied on the "gifts" of workers abroad, world friendship educators assigned children to "chart the breakfast table" by identifying the provenance of each item on their morning spread[89] One reader from the mid-1930s even proposed that the "boot is a league of nations" because it was built from a collection of raw materials and labor from so many different nations that its very existence relied on international collaboration.[90] When using these texts, teachers typically posted a world map in the classroom and assigned children to locate the way basic commodities moved through it. Rather than uncovering the tracks of the commodities in a way that demystified their social histories of extraction, production, and exchange, many of these stories fetishized the objects, forming fantasies around distant producers.

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[87] Evaline Harrington, "Books as Passports to Peace," *Ohio Schools* (June 1931). CDG-A, box 2, League of Nations Association Papers 1922–1925, Swarthmore Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA. (Henceforth LNA Papers, Swarthmore).

[88] *Ibid.,* 2.

[89] William Carr notes the popularity of the "charting the breakfast table." *Education for World Citizenship,* 141.

[90] A few versions of this exist. Katie Day Good notes Anna Pettit Broomell, "A Boot Is A League of Nations," in *The Children's Story Caravan* (Philadelphia: JB Lippincott and Co, 1935), 220–224. Another version "A Shoe, a League of Nations," is described in Patricia Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (UNC Press, 2009), 173–174.

As Harrington's story suggests, these courses relied upon faith in children's dual innocence and curiosity. As with the JRC, the childlike language of friendship allowed a discussion of liberal commercial internationalism within public schools that appeared to move against the economic nationalism that dominated other federal institutions. However, the social conception of childhood innocence may have done another kind of political work here. Commercial geography classes worked through the purity of children's culture to gloss over the violence of making international markets, casting free trade as a series of wholly consensual, peaceful exchanges. Just as the innocent or pure "nature" of children often appeared as a given, so too did raw materials often simply appear in these children's stories as free gifts of nature disconnected from any social histories of arrival. Most commercial geography texts proposed a world of friendly and free exchange in ways that belied histories of imperial commerce, labor coercion, and even contemporary trade restrictions.

Instructors usually taught commercial geography courses in in eighth grade. The Committee on World Friendship in the Los Angeles School District, however, designed a K-12 curriculum in which children might interact with a world of goods throughout school. Carr called this work "an outstanding example" of comprehensively teaching world citizenship.[91] In the 1926–1927 and 1927–1928 school years, nearly two-hundred teachers in the district implemented courses designed to increase world-mindedness. In June 1928, they published a handbook on teaching "world friendship" which they dedicated "to the youth of all lands upon whom will soon be placed the responsibility of affairs with justice and mutual understanding."[92] The first experiment of its kind, the committee hoped to offer a guide for others around the nation.

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[91] Carr, *Education for World Citizenship,* 33.

Commodities played an important role in this guide. Acting out a market was one common exercise that was popular across elementary school grades. Milly Theal, a second grade instructor at Micheltorena Street School, worked with her students in May 1927 to enact and design a "city" in which a diverse cast of people lived, worked, and cooperated. The center of this city was "the market," with "foreign as well as home products," which was subject to fictional fluctuations that the teacher of students could imaginatively design. For example, one day a student posted a bulletin reading "no pineapples in the market today. The boat did not get back from Honolulu," or "Buy your flowers today. Flower stand closed tomorrow. Japanese holiday."[93] The unit was accompanied by assigned reading about routes that these goods travelled from their sites of origin to Los Angeles to help students construct their fictional market based on a simplified version of real-world data. Dorothy R. Wheelis' recommendations for fifth grade included a Pan American Market, where the children arrange in attractive booths the various commodities raised and sold by each country" while dressed in the "national costume."[94]

Labor was critical to the way the "gifts" of others were framed in these exercises. For example, Theal's second grade class concluded with discussions on the "importance of workers in other lands who contribute to our needs."[95] These conversations would continue in third grade, included a year-long set of activities that would introduce students to the concept of labor as a universal. Everyone did some kind of work, instructors Mary E. FitzGerald and Grace W. Tingely aimed to show, and this labor could allow a single object to tell an international story.

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[92] Evaline Downing, ed. *World Friendship: A Series of Articles Written by Some Teachers in the Los Angeles Schools and by a Few Others Who are Likewise Interested in the Education of Youth* (Los Angeles: Committee on World Friendship, 1928).

[93] *Ibid.*, 84.

[94] Downing, ed. *World Friendship,* 90.

[95] *Ibid.,* 90.

Drawing from the immigrant gifts movement popular in the United States in the mid-1920s, the course taught children that they might encounter people from around the world in their own neighborhood. One assignment, for example, charged them to think about the kinds of tasks conducted by their parents as well as the work of butchers, milkmen, and grocers, who might be of different ethnicities but who all did work that sustained the child in their daily life.

These attempts ultimately tended to exceptionalize difference and associate certain peoples as naturally tending towards particular kinds of work. Georgia B. Parson's Fourth Grade course included a unit on "gratitude," which encouraged Los Angeles students to recognize "the contribution each nation has made to the advancement of civilization" and, of course, to U.S. GDP.[96] Germans and Swedes were cast as laborers in agriculture and manufacturing in the Midwest, Russians as laborers in mines and steel plants, Italians as gardeners, musicians, and fruit dealers, and Mexicans as "laborers in the hot parts of the Imperial Valley from which we get cantaloupes, dates, and cotton."[97] The moral of these stories was that even the most common object in a child's home or in the classroom might be the outcome of multiple people's and nations' cooperation, and that this was always a free and willing exchange.

The conversations about racialized labor in Georgia Parson's fourth grade classroom took on increased importance in the context of immigration restrictions passed in 1921 and 1924. As this legislation severely curtailed entry into the United States from Europe and maintained the "Asiatic Barred Zone" from which immigration was restricted, Progressive reformers shifted from a prior focus on assimilating immigrants towards an acceptance and even celebration of the unique and racialized "gifts" that immigrants provided to U.S. culture. This "immigrant gifts" movement, then, embraced a more multiculturalist view that social harmony could arise out of cultural difference. Though this movement launched a critique of racist nationalism, historian Diana Selig has shown that it often produced unhelpfully romantic images of ethnic groups that failed to challenge the roots of racial inequality.[98] Peace educators mirrored these wider cultural movements, inviting children to embrace difference at home to as a step along the way to understanding difference abroad. Yet, a failure to move beyond flat images or romantic anti-modernism showed the limits of this cosmopolitanism.

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[96] *Ibid.*, 89.

[97] *Ibid.*, 89.

Evaline Estelle Downing, the director of the Committee on World Friendship, head of the English Department at Los Angeles' Jefferson High School, and a nationally renown world citizenship educator, hoped that children's expansive imaginations would be stimulated through the commodity stories in elementary school. These imaginative and emotional foundations could be built upon to offer a foundation for a more nuanced understanding of the economic basis for war and peace in high school history, politics, geography, and civics coursework. She listed as a recommended outcome of high school geography an understanding of "the relationship that exists between the maintenance of world peace on the one hand and the adequate supply or lack of a natural resources within a certain country."[99] The course guide does not detail what Downing and her colleagues believed that relationship to be. LA high school instructor Kingsley E. Pease gave a hint when he professed faith that freer trade offered to increase material inter-reliance and cooperation in a way that would lead to a more sustainable peace.[100]

While some U.S. educational reformers hoped to bring global consumer education into the school through these courses or through the JRC, others sought to fill gaps by designing activities that could engage children enrolled in extracurriculars. Pageants written by peace organizations in the mid-1920s offered another kind method of inviting children to think about the "gifts" of immigrants and foreign peoples, and they drew on a longer tradition of pageants in the Progressive United States. They might look something like the one designed by the League of Nations Association's Education Department in 1926. Entitled "Serving the World," this activity invited elementary-school age children to form a line around a campfire with firewood in hand.[101] It was debuted at the International Conference of Girl Guides in New York City in May 1926, where Evaline Downing endorsed it as "simple but effective."[102]

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[98] Diana Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement* (Harvard, 2004). Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity* (UNC Press, 2009).

[99] Downing, ed. *World Friendship*, 105.

[100] *Ibid.*, 105.

To perform the pageant, each child would choose or be assigned to play a nation. They would select a commodity or idea from that nation to "offer" the "world" while garbed in some approximation of "national dress." After giving a speech, they would cast their stick, now invested with the meaning of their "gift," into the fire. The lesson plan suggested that the children signifying Brazil might say, "I bring you sugar and coffee from the tropical land of Brazil where our laborers toil on plantations that you may have sweet things to eat and good things to quaff." The world, garbed in neo-classical, flowing robes, accepted these "worthy gifts," affirming at the end of the pageant that "truly mankind is one brotherhood." "Let all men therefore learn to live together in harmony, fighting only their common enemies of selfishness and ignorance, but serving in one another in the varied interest of peace." This pageant, like most contemporaries, showed a global family of very unequal siblings.

The unnamed authors selected gifts that would resonate with the experiences of American children, yet in so doing they cast "world interest" as indistinguishable from U.S. national interest. Though the U.S. gave a gift to the world—managerial science—pageant script seemed to locate the U.S. consumer population as chief benefactor of the labor of global producers. Canada's gift of "neighborliness" is one strong indication that this "global" pageant was written from a U.S. standpoint. Though many nations gave gifts of raw materials or commodities, ideas may also be given as gifts to the world. The pageant positioned liberal political ideologies as teleological end-points, and located those Western European nations that developed them as the bearers of global progress. Conceiving Britain's "equality under the law" as its major export or seeing France's gift as the "spirit of liberty" embodied by the Statue of Liberty both demonstrate this conception of Western modernity.[103] The pageant also positioned women's enfranchisement as both a clear marker of progress and a markedly Western development. In its script, Norway appears as the bearer of women suffrage for the world.

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[101] League of Nations Association, "Training in Summer Camps for World Co-Operation," *Educational Publication No. 3* (New York: League of Nations Associations Non-Partisan Association, 1927). On the longer history of Progressive era pageants, see David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry* (UNC Press, 1990).

[102] Evaline Estelle Downing, "For International Goodwill Day," *The Virginia Teacher* 8 no. 3 (May 1927): 76.

In this allegedly free marketplace of global ideas, Western liberal nations claimed a right to imagine and develop the global future, while racialized others were relegated to the ruins of past or pre-colonial greatness. Those nations consigned to a romanticized, eternal past were given less claim over the global future, the road to which would presumably be paved by Western liberal democracies. For example, China gives "Confucianism," and it is cast as "the most ancient of countries," while Egypt's "ancient people were builders of wonderful skill" who gave the world the "mysterious Sphinx and great Pyramids."[104] Others give religious beliefs, like India's "mysticism… based upon the aloofness and peace of centuries of meditation." Only if a nation did have a competitive advantage in a commodity, as Japan had with its raw silk, might it be credited as contributing this to the "globe," thus following an abstract Smithian logic.

What might have happened if this pageant were enacted in a Girl Scout troop? One clue comes from Bruno Lasker's 1929 collection of teachers' reflections on classroom pageants. Lasker, a German-born sociologist and advocate for U.S. immigrants and racial minorities, conducted these interviews as part of a larger survey of race relations amongst children in U.S. schools. He found that when such pageants were performed, the part of "the World" would often be taken up by the "oldest or prettiest or most popular pupil," not only reproducing the social hierarchies of the classroom, but also almost invariably resulting in a white child playing the role if there were non-white students present. In an integrated context, "the Negro boy who always thought of himself as American, suddenly is forced to appear half-naked as an African," if his instructor suggests that this is the most appropriate national dress. By framing their gifts as remnants of an ancient past, "a Chinese group, children of respectable parents, are made conscious of the failings of their nation in the matter of … indulgence and superstition." This was not a method of engendering international friendship and positive feeling, Lasker claimed. When enacted on the ground, such pageants could simply be exercises in "unmitigated snobbery."[105] When students actually filled these roles, children of color might have been forced to step out of their identity as an American into a performance as a racialized stereotype.

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[103] League of Nations Association, "Serving the World," 1926. CDG-A, box 2, LNA Papers, Swarthmore.

[104] *Ibid.*

Even if it had been performed in an all-white troop, the pageant glossed over the violence of imperialism and coercion that sullied these apparently friendly exchanges. Not only did these "national" caricatures obscure the labor involved in making these goods, but they also obscured the violent work of making international trade relations themselves. No state occupied by U.S. troops, for example, the Central American states of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, were included. Ironically, the U.S. already *did* engage in a free exchange goods and capital with the Philippines since the 1909 passage of the Payne Bill, which allowed for free trade between the U.S. and the Philippines with the exception of sugar and tobacco, and even more so since the 1913 removal of sugar and tobacco duties.[106] When the bill passed, however, it did so over the objections of Filipino nationalists that freer trade would more closely bound the island to the US, making independence increasingly difficult to obtain. These objections made sense: by 1926 over 70 percent of the Philippine's total exports and 60 percent of its export came from the

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[105] Bruno Lasker, *Race Attitudes in Children* (New York City: Holt, 1929), 223–225.

[106] H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (Oxford, 1992), 97–98.

United States.[107] Perhaps these economic entanglements made war or revolution difficult, but such commercial imperialism would be an uneasy case for these multiculturalists to celebrate.

Conclusion

Did the peace education or world friendship programs of the 1920s influence children's attitudes? In the early 1930s, the Indiana Bureau of Cooperative Research collected some anecdotal evidence that suggested it had some potential. A particularly encouraging report came from Charlene Rector, an instructor of Social Science in McKinley Junior High School in Muncie, Indiana. Her intention was "to bring about an attitude of good will thru a better understanding of the Chinese and Japanese people," but before beginning her lessons, she asked her class of twelve-year-olds to describe the Japanese people.[108] They did so by explaining that "the Japanese like to fight," "they're sneaking," "their homes are tumbled-down shacks," and, particularly offensive for children who believed in the moral superiority of democratic governance, "they think their emperor is God." The children claimed to get these ideas from "motion pictures and stories, and the few Japanese that they had seen" in Muncie.[109]

Rector guided her students through readings and discussions of the geography, industry, and culture of Japan and China. When they were ready, they undertook a correspondence with Japanese children sponsored by the JRC. Children were fascinated by the portfolio that came to them in return, full of beautifully preserved insect and plant life that had been meticulously painted along with letters and photographs. They changed their descriptors, now seeing Japanese people as "artistic," "calm," "self-controlled," "painstaking," and not emperor-worshippers but simply "patriotic." One student remarked that based on the quality of the work sent to them, "it's no wonder why they are getting so much trade from the other countries."[110]

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[107] *Ibid.*, 98.

[108] Charlene Rector, " 'Chink' and 'Jap,' " in *Practical Efforts to Teach Good Will*, ed. Henry Lester Smith and Peyton Henry Canary (Indiana University: Bureau of Cooperative Research, 1935): 76. This example also appears in Good, *Bringing the World to the Child,* 176–177.

[109] *Ibid.,* 76.

On some individual level, these correspondences might have done something to adjust children's negative views of international others and see them as contributing in some tangible way to their own lives. Claiming that U.S. children had "friends" in other nations simply because they wore clothes or ate food that came from their homelands might have gone some way to work against nativist impulses of the decade. Ridding the U.S. of racist and imperialist impulses would take more than friendliness, however, or such commercial expressions of it. These programs showed no intention of doing anything so radical. Instead, they clearly acted in what they saw as the national interest. The JRC made conscious attempts to dissuade revolutionary political alternatives in Central and Eastern Europe and organized efforts to shape the lives, diets, and dress of children in U.S. colonies. On a symbolic level, pageants meant to teach U.S. children about the contributions of others could resort to hurtful stereotypes, and ultimately did very little other than judge others' "progress" by a Eurocentric measuring stick. Putting America first did not always mean being "isolationist." It might mean training future citizens to interact with the world to benefit some conception of the U.S.'s own diplomatic, commercial, or imperial interests.

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[110] *Ibid.*, 77.

Chapter 3

Disarmament is "Up to the Women": Mary Emma Woolley and the 1932 Campaign Against Japanese Silk

On February 2, 1932, diplomats from thirty-one nations took their places at the Hall of the Reformation in Geneva for what would be a six-month long session of a Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments. The stakes for negotiating global arms control, it seemed, could not be higher. The international system of the 1920s had frayed at the seams. Only months earlier, Japanese troops' entry into Manchuria appeared to unravel the collective promise the nation had made to "renounce war as an instrument of national policy," as a signatory of the 1928 Kellogg Briand Pact. Further, Japanese occupation of this Northeastern region of China upended the longstanding Open Door policy written into the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty.[1] This so-called "Manchurian Incident" would only be the beginning of what U.S. and Western European diplomats experienced as the "violation of all the principles of international conduct theretofore regarded with a respect almost sacred."[2] Delegates were well aware that global economic depression bolstered fascist and communist alternatives. They needed only to glace at the performance of Germany's National Socialist Party in the Reichstag's by-election polls.[3]

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[1] According to Mary Emma Woolley the conference's opening was delayed one hour to allow for an emergency session of the Council of the League of Nation regarding the situation in Manchuria. Jeanette Marks, *The Life and Letters of Mary Emma Woolley* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1956), 136.

[2] According to Arthur Steiner, "The Geneva Disarmament Conference of 1932," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 168 (June 1933), 212–219.

[3] As recalled by Dorothy Detzer, *Appointment on the Hill* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948).

Against this crumbling world order, an urgent popular energy pulsed through the halls. As part of a Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations (or Women's Disarmament Committee, WDC), the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) joined eleven other women's organizations in "pushing back the doors" of the Hall of the Reformation "so that the voices of the people may be heard."[4] Women came not only as petitioners, but also as official delegates. Amongst the official U.S. delegation sat Mary Emma Woolley, whose work for peace education over the previous decade had made her a household name.[5] Woolley's experience as an educational missionary in China and two-time delegate to the Institute of Pacific Relations afforded her a familiarity with questions of East Asian diplomacy. Her position as the head of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and President of Mount Holyoke College gave her wide sets of political and scholarly connections. Despite these qualifications, President Herbert Hoover had appointed Woolley to the official U.S. delegation only after months of pressure from women's peace organizations.

Most of those around Woolley did not consider her a token woman chosen only to quiet down dissent, but a professional peacemaker and established diplomat who was perhaps even more qualified for the task than others on the official U.S. delegation. Certainly, some editorialists claimed that her idealistic, feminine "humanitarianism" would be useless in the absence of "any technical knowledge of armaments" or "methods of international diplomacy."[6] However, such a view remained a minority amongst those committed to peace. Thousands of U.S. peace advocates seemed to assign Woolley the impossible task of knitting the shreds of a disordered world back together again. To make matters even more difficult, these peace advocates disagreed on how best to achieve such a feat. While *The World Tomorrow,* unofficial mouthpiece of the Christian socialist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), declared that "no one could have been chosen who symbolizes the peace aspirations of the American people more adequately than does Miss Woolley," these more radical pacifists also held her up as an example of why moderate approaches to peacemaking were insufficient.[7] FoR member Dorothy Detzer, watching from the gallery, expressed frustration that Woolley's "timid" voice could not sound out strongly enough in support of stringent arms control.[8]

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[4] Emmy Freundlich "President's Speech at Geneva Gathering," reprinted in Horona Enfield, "Women and the Disarmament Conference, February 15, 1932, U DCX, box 8, folder 1, Records of the International Women's Co-operative Guild 1921–1961, Hull University Archives, Hull, East Riding, Yorkshire, UK. Henceforth ICWG Records, Hull.

[5] For example, when a committee got together in Westport, CN to determine who would be on *Good Housekeeping*'s list of "America's twelve foremost women" in 1930, they decided that Woolley "would unquestionably be on their roll." Marks, *Life and Letters of Mary Emma Woolley*, 139.

[6] Such views were expressed, for example, in the *Manchester Herald* (Connecticut) as cited in "Editorials on Whole Show Approval of Miss Woolley," *Mount Holyoke News* (South Hadley, MA), December 12, 1931.

Yet, it was Woolley's very moderateness that enabled her a voice in diplomatic conversations at the highest levels, even if it limited her power once there. It also allowed her to build bridges between housewives on the ground and figures at the center of diplomatic and Christian reform circles. Many such housewives throughout the U.S. took seriously the idea that Woolley had been selected to serve as the representative of a "women's perspective," and they filled her mailbox with their ideas for building a more peaceful world. Despite the conferences' failures to amend the broken world order, Woolley left Geneva with a firm sense that women—at least the white Protestant women with whom she was in contact—possessed a deep, collective commitment to working for peace in whatever way they could, using the materials available to them in daily life.[9] Such an awareness inspired her to focus increasingly on relaying women's desires for peace to those in power, a kind of organizing that she would come to prioritize in the late 1930s.

Some of the women who wrote to Woolley engaged in a campaign to add a clause to the 1928 Kellogg Briand Peace Pact that would enable signatories to enact economic sanctions against any nation that engaged in aggressive war. They followed the thinking of a coterie of U.S. foreign policy elite who believed that updating the pact to allow for formal economic sanctions might give the document some teeth and provide nations with the sense of security necessary for disarmament.[10] Yet, many of the housewives and mothers who petitioned or wrote to Woolley demonstrated a certain unease with such sanctions. They preferred to organize a voluntary consumer boycott against nations that engaged in “aggressive” war, but they did not push for official sanctions enforced by the League of Nations or any other international body.

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[7] "Editorials: The Disarmament Conference," *The World Tomorrow* 15 no. 2 (February 1932).

[8] Detzer, *Appointment on the Hill,* 112. Detzer was an Episcopalian pacifist and a member of the FoR as well as an important lobbyist with the WIL.

[9] Marks, *Life and Letters,* 156.

The women who wrote to Woolley in favor of a boycott were *consumer diplomats.* They used, or demonstrated a readiness to use, their buying power to uphold international law when they believed that the international organizations designed to do so had failed. These women letter writers could readily imagine such a voluntary, consumer movement because of the way their consumption and non-consumption had been consistently tied to distant others’ wellbeing. Print spaces like the *Ladies Home Journal (LHJ)* fostered readers’ faith in the power of the collective purse—a purse whose strings, journalists claimed, were held by housewives. Just as the Geneva conference convened in February 1932, the LHJ ran its “Up to the Women” campaign, which sought to encourage housewives to dig the U.S. out of the depression by spending, thus stimulating demand and making “business for everyone all along the line, and in so doing make jobs for her husband, too.”[11] During World War I, many women believed that withholding food purchases played a role in provisioning the world. Now, they learned that their consumption could send the nation back to work. Perhaps, then, their purse also held the power to prevent war. As President of the NY State Home Economics Federation put in it a letter to the

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[10] This view was promoted by Evans Clark, ed. *Boycotts and Peace: A Report by the Committee on Economic Sanctions* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1932).

[11] “It’s Up to the Women,” *Ladies Home Journal* 49 no. 4 (April 1932): 12. This was a running feature which began with “Pocketbook Patriotism: An Editorial,” *Ladies Home Journal* 49 no. 2 (February 1932): 3.

LHJ editor, women's "power of choice" in the marketplace gave them the ability to "think their way through this economic crisis and all the international problems" alike.[12]

Voluntary boycotts against Japan also built upon the structure of women's community organizations and represented an extension of an "ethical imagination" that connected U.S. consumers to peoples around the globe. This was "pocketbook patriotism" for world citizens, and women's groups across the nation spread the word. Protestant Churchwomen signed boycott pledges at a World Day of Prayer celebration in Oberlin, KN, while a Parent Teachers Association in Murfreesboro, TN collected signatures on a "Resolution on World Peace" to the backing of a mothers' chorus.[13]

The first half of this chapter uses an intellectual biography of Mary Woolley to explore the development of her theories of gender, femininity, and international politics before she claimed her seat as the first female diplomat to represent the U.S. at a major international conference. It then explores petitions of women who wrote to her while she served as an official U.S. delegate in Geneva. These women's petitions open up important nuances in the interwar practice of consumer diplomacy. Mary Woolley supported individual women's efforts to register their own moral protests against war by refusing to purchase goods from "aggressor" nations. Yet, some women who wrote Woolley explicitly favored *not* the voluntary boycott, but the "economic weapon" of sanctions. That they were drawn to this tool suggests an interesting shift in some peace advocates' thinking about the morality of economic boycotts and sanctions in the heated 1930s, as unsettling events began to tear away at the post-World War I peace. In reading these women's petitions closely, this chapter illustrates some of the political and intellectual complexity of consumer diplomacy at the start of the 1930s.

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[12] Henrietta K Staub to Loring Schuler, Feb 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 11, Mary Emma Woolley Papers 1857–1947, Mount Holyoke College Special Collections, South Hadley, MA (Henceforth cited as MEW Papers, MHC). This letter was also forwarded along to Woolley in Geneva as part of the LHJ "Women's Peace Plan." Letters written to Schuler with the intention of forwarding to Woolley will henceforth be noted as to "Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley."

[13] Mary Ranta and Margaret Little to Miss Mary Woolley, 12 February 1932; "Peace Resolutions are Passed by PTA," Newspaper Clipping, n.d., MS 0842, Folder 1, Box 56, MEW Papers, MHC.

The Life and Loves of Mary Woolley

Throughout her public-facing career spanning from 1901 to 1943, Woolley worked fervently to cultivate an imagination that attached the local to the global. She believed that such an imagination could best take root if it were spearheaded by professional women, activated through daily habits, and shared by families through kitchen table talk. Yet, at first glance, Woolley seems a strange candidate for the representation of a "woman's perspective" or a spokesperson for homemakers as peacemakers. On the one hand, as historian Lillian Faderman shows, Woolley herself rejected traditional marks of femininity in her private life with her partner, Prof. Jeannette Marks. She refused to institute courses in domestic science at Mount Holyoke, and she increased fundraising so as to hire housekeepers and eliminate a previous requirement that female students do unpaid domestic work around campus. At the Chicago Club in 1908, she even tacitly encouraged college women to seek out one another's companionship rather than entering a confining conventional marriage.[14] She was decidedly *not* an enthusiastic promoter of the conventional housewife or of heterosexual domesticity, which she saw as limiting women's potential by sapping "the best" of her physical, mental, and spiritual energy.[15]

On the other hand, Woolley's commitment to organizing public opinion for peace—a commitment that intensified after her experiences at Geneva—encouraged her to meet women wherever they were, whether as industrial workers, housewives, or other professionals. In hopes of making space for as many women as possible in foreign affairs, her public addresses attempted to logically extend the scope of women's reproductive activities beyond the home. She publicly claimed that women's historic specialization in care allowed them to see deep connections between individual and collective wellbeing, meaning that women's leadership could conjure up a more peaceful and considerate world. Her public addresses called on mothers as children's first educators who should use their influence to shape children's minds and moral imaginations in fundamental, lasting ways. It remains an open question to what extent Woolley believed her own claims about women's difference, which she may have made only for political expediency. Perhaps she, as Faderman suggests, joined many of her colleagues in same-sex relationships in putting on the "drag" of conventional femininity, even if the gender role she played in public did not carry into her private life.[16]

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[14] Lillian Faderman, "Chapter 12: The Struggle to Retain Women's Leadership—Mary Emma Woolley," *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America,* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Faderman claims that Woolley promoted Wellesley marriages in a 1908 speech "The College Woman and the World" when she spoke of the "cheery homes" that professional women built together.

[15] *Ibid.*

The inspirations that found expression in Woolley's public life began in her earliest childhood. She was born in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1863 to Joseph J. Woolley, a Congregational minister, and his second wife, Mary Augusta, a former missionary. Joseph Woolley's support for women's education not only allowed his daughter to attend college, but also inspired her lifelong fight for gender equality.[17] Stories of his service as Civil War chaplain inspired Mary Emma's abhorrence for war. Through him, she met former Civil War generals whose stories of ordinary men "turn[ing] into demons" on the battlefield haunted her such that she evoked them in speeches into middle age.[18] Throughout her life, Mary Emma would acknowledge that she had inherited her basic moral framework from her father, claiming that his "belief in the social mission of the church was far in advance of his day."[19]

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[16] Faderman, *To Believe in Women,* 10.

[17] *Ibid.,* 74.

[18] Woolley, "Peace in the Imagination," May 12, 1908. MS 0842, box 18, folder 4. MEW Papers, MHC.

[19] Woolley often made public acknowledgments that she had inherited her basic moral framework from her father. For example, in her article "The Outlook for Disarmament," Feb 6, 1932, she claims that her tendency to look for a moral to every story comes from her being the "daughter of a clergyman." She also makes the announcement during a speech to the "Student Anti-War Conference" at Smith College, February 24, 1934. MS 0842, box 35, folder 36, MEW Papers, MHC. Her statement on his moral framework is cited in Marks *Life and Letters, 32.*

Woolley described her "early scholastic adventures" as "ecclesiastical in character," which she believed shaped her sense of Christian moral duty beyond the bounds of Congregationalism.[20] When she was five years old, her father arranged for her to attend lessons of a local tutor, Fannie Augur, with somewhere between four or eight other children in the basement of his church in Meriden, Connecticut.[21] She credited these early lessons for sparking an enduring intellectual curiosity. When the family moved to Pawtucket, Rhode Island, she attended a private school opposite St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Just as her father had important influence on young Mary Emma's intellectual development, so too did her mother. While in Pawtucket, Mary Emma also particularly enjoyed accompanying her mother to Women's Board of Foreign Missions meetings. She joined the Board as a Life Member at just twelve, later recalling that she knew even then that she was "ready to join the great army of American women in carrying life and light to women in heathen lands."[22] Woolley's early experiences with Missionary Board women brought her into close contact with images and stories of "the Orient" and sparked her lifelong interest in transpacific relations. She would never fully acknowledge the patronizing language with which Protestant missionaries described Asian peoples and cultures, and, as we will see, she could reproduce the visual or textual languages of U.S. Orientalism in her work. Yet, she would find herself increasingly interested in understanding cultural difference on her 1921–22 voyage to China.

These early conversations shaped Woolley's lifelong understanding of peace. Woolley would later come to agree with pacifist Baptist minister Rev. Harry Fosdick that the "inward transfiguration of man's thinking," ultimately the "task of religion," would be the only way to create a lasting moral foundation for peace.[23] In Woolley's public writings and speeches, mothers were offered the first opportunity to "transfigure" the inner lives of the world's next generation, to instill in them a love of peace that could bring the world out of the snares of war.[24] Woolley's own missionary experience would come to convince her that such an inward shift did not need to include explicit theological belief so long as it subscribed to what she saw as Christian-inspired moral values. "If civilization was to endure," she claimed in a 1924 speech, the world did not need to convert to Christianity, but it would need to adopt a system of value that placed the sustenance of human life above profit-seeking and brotherhood above racial conflict.[25]

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[20] Marks, *Life and Letters,* 29.

[21] *Ibid.,* 28.

[22] Cited in Meeropol, *A Practical Visionary: Mary Emma Woolley and the Education of Women,* Unpublished Dissertation (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1992), 62. According to Board director Sarah Blodgett, Woolley had been "a faithful attendant and a responsive listener." "Women's Share in World Missions," Jubilee, the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, November 14, 1917. MS 0842, box 25, folder 28, MEW Papers, MHC.

Woolley attended Wheaton seminary from 1882 to 1884 and remained there as faculty of Biblical Literature for the next five years. She left her teaching position to enter Brown University as a member of its first co-ed cohort in 1891, where she would earn a Master's in Theology. In her four years at Brown, Woolley joined her first reform organization: the Rhode Island Consumer's League. This was a local division of the National Consumer's League, then at its most active under Florence Kelley. Woolley would remain at least nominally involved with the NCL for the rest of her public life and would continue to promote consumer organization as a method of building community and pushing towards social change. In a 1910 speech, she extolled the work of the NCL, promoting their "protest against the making of clothing under unsanitary conditions, dangerous alike to producer and consumer, yielding to the worker starvation prices and worst of all, stunting and dwarfing the lives of little children… forced to work as soon as their tiny hands can pull out bastings."[26] Woolley would later conceptually connect this disdain for the discomfort and physical deformity that industrial capitalism inflicted on innocent bodies to her horror of war. Just as she imagined an alternative world order that might be free of the fundamental conflicts that lead to war, she would always believe in the possibility of a reformed capitalism that could eradicate human suffering.

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[23] Mary Woolley, "Preparedness in the Home," October 3, 1917. MS 0842, box 25, folder 4, MEW Papers, MHC. Citation of Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Challenge of the Present Crisis* (New York: Association Press, 1917).

[24] Woolley, "Preparedness in the Home."

[25] She made this claim in "Our Sister Republic Across the Pacific," February 10, 1924; March 14, 1924; April 11, 1924. MS 0842, box 30, folder 22, MEW Papers, MHC.

[26] Mary Emma Woolley, "College Woman's Place in the World," December 9, 1910. MS 0842, box 19, folder 16. MEW Papers, MHC.

After completing her A.M. at Brown, Woolley took on an associate professorship in Biblical Literature at Wellesley College from 1895 to 1899. Woolley arrived in a department in which female dyads were the norm. Of the 53 female faculty at Wellesley in the late nineteenth century, only one—Professor of Psychology Ethel Huffer Howes—was in a heterosexual marriage.[27] Unable to juggle her husband's expectations with her profession, Howes ultimately resigned from Wellesley.[28] Woolley herself entered into a lifelong "Wellesley marriage," or female dyad, when she met and became captivated with the sharp wit, golden hair, and reportedly "ethereal" charm of twenty-one year old undergraduate Jeannette Marks.[29]

Woolley's exchanges of knowledge and affection with Marks likely influenced the ways she imagined the potential for political and economic reform. Even at the start of their relationship, Marks was less concerned with compromise and respectability than was Woolley. After engaging in work at a settlement house under the direction of Wellesley professor Vida Scudder, Marks became a militant supporter of women's suffrage, and by the 1920s, a member of the Socialist Party. [30] Marks' politics may have encouraged Woolley to at least consider left-feminist thought, and Woolley's speeches did engage with the writings of socialist feminists from August Bebel to

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[27] This statistic is taken from Faderman, *To Believe in Women,* 192.

[28] Perhaps these experiences inspired Howes to push for cooperative housekeeping, a method that would allow domestic work to be shared across households. She expressed this interest in a series of articles in *Women's Home Companion*. See also Dolores Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Grand Socialist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (MIT Press, 1981).

[29] Faderman, *To Believe in Women,* 189.

[30] Though some sources claim that "it is unclear" that Marks identified as a socialist, she did attend the Socialist Party National Convention in 1928 and correspond with the Party in the 1920s. "Socialists to Open Convention Today: Delegates from 39 States Will Gather Here," *New York Times,* April 13, 1928, 15. It may also be possible that, as Lillian Faderman claims, Marks and Woolley were "identical" in their basic political ideology, but Marks was simply less concerned with respectability and took more open action. Faderman, *To Believe in Women,* 232.

Olive Schreiner.[31] Even so, Woolley was never a convert, and she would become outspokenly anti-Communist toward the end of her life.

Woolley always drew from a rich ideological patchwork rather than committing to a single line of thought, and she would select quotes from a wide variety of writers while avoiding any wholesale endorsement of their social visions. Even if Woolley cherry picked from socialist feminists' writings, she discounted their vision as a whole, claiming that it was too focused on working-class agency at the expense of women's. Woolley's personal vision of Christian moral teachings brought her much closer to a version of liberal Republicanism. She placed community wellbeing above individual wealth accumulation, but refused to denounce individual property and believed that social justice could come from a reformed but not fundamentally altered form of capitalism.[32]

Woolley's diplomatic skill, along with her strong brand of liberal Protestantism and keen optimism for the future of women's education, made her an attractive candidate for President of the small, Western Massachusetts women's college, Mount Holyoke. Given Mount Holyoke's founding in 1848 as a seminary for missionaries by the pioneering women's educator Mary Lyon, Woolley was a good cultural fit. Though she was elected to the position in 1899, she postponed her acceptance by one academic year to allow Marks to complete her degree at Wellesley. After ascending to the presidency in 1901, Woolley took her task of creating a "record of noble womanhood" to a national scale.[33] To ensure she could remain near her partner, Woolley created a position for Marks as professor of Literature in the college—an appointment that often aroused quiet suspicion among the professoriate, whispered rumors within the student body, and curiosity among residents in surrounding Pioneer Valley in Springfield, MA.

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[31] Mary Woolley, "Feminism," January 12, 1919. MS 0842, box 26, folder 34, MEW Paper, MHC.

[32] Later, in the 1930s, she would define her politics this way: "I am a registered Republican, but the type of Republican which is qualified as independent and on that account not always appreciated by party leaders!" Marks, *Life and Letters*, 156.

[33] This was delayed a year, most likely because Woolley wanted to wait for Marks to finish at Wellesley so that the could make the move to Springfield together.

In the interim year between resigning at Wellesley and taking her position at Mount Holyoke, Woolley journeyed with her cousin to England. There, she became friends with the English anthropologist and suffragist Jane Harrison, whose *Homo Sum (I am Human)* would inspire Woolley's own thinking on gender.[34] For Harrison, political participation was neither "manly" nor "womanly," but an expression of human agency that should not be connected to gender. Because of the way human bodies interacted during sex, she claimed, "male" qualities were often associated with agency and "female" qualities with submission. While Harrison claimed that sex itself would always remain outside of the state's regulatory capacity, she believed that political rights and access to education could be detached from the male body and made into *human* rights.[35] Only once this was done could women become agentive members of society, not men's property or playthings. Harrison's reliance on sexual difference may have sat awkwardly with Woolley, who openly encouraged women to build homes with one another so as to avoid gendered expectations that might have confined their intellectual development. Yet taking Harrison's cue, Woolley defined her dream as the "development of women as human beings," and thus equally able to access rights and political agency.[36]

From her inauguration, Woolley attempted to use her position at Mount Holyoke to train young professional women for careers as reformers and humanitarians, seeking to bolster what historian Robyn Muncy has called a "female dominion in American reform," both by educating the young women who would make up such a female policy network and through her own involvement in social reform circles.[37] In addition to her brand of liberal Christianity, Woolley asserted herself as a Progressive Republican, and before World War I, she aligned herself with a constellation of movements and reform circles.[38] Among her circle of close contacts and friends she counted a number of prominent female reformers and their female partners, including Carrie Chapman Catt, Jane Addams, and Bryn Mawr President M. Carey Thomas, with whom she would later help found the International Federation of University Women. Beyond this tight network, she counted peace educator Lucia Ames Mead as a friend, among a number of other liberal Protestants, peace advocates, and educators.[39] Some women who became influential in policy circles of the 1930s studied at Woolley's Mt Holyoke, most notably Francis Perkins, Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor and the first female cabinet member.

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[34] Marks, *Life and Letters,* 54.

[35] Jane Harrison, *Homo Sum: Being a Letter to an Anti-Suffragist from an Anthropologist* (Birmingham: Templar Printing Works, 1910), 6, 18.

[36] Marks, *Life and Letters,* 75.

[37] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (Oxford, 1991).

"From Neighborhood Nursing to World Organization": Woolley's Ethical Imagination

Five years after Woolley assumed the Presidency at Mount Holyoke, Marks claims, her noted success in revamping the curriculum and raising funds gave her a more stable position from which to vocally develop her brand of feminist politics. She would also throw her weight behind Progressive era movements for peace education, working with Fannie Fern Andrews' School Peace League in 1909, supporting missionary women's goodwill projects, and after the war, writing for the League of Nations' Association Educational Department.

The connection she drew between the social work of organized clubwomen and world peace became clear in a speech at Carnegie Hall for the First National Arbitration and Peace Congress in April 1907. Woolley organized her speech around the question: "Why should the peace movement make a special appeal to women?"[40] To the excitement of the audience, she responded that the "new woman" was here to stay—a woman whose increased education and emotional intelligence would allow her to organize "for some larger social end than the world has ever known before. Her opportunity extends from neighborhood nursing to world organization in the cause of peace."[41] For some women, nursing children could be a peaceful act on the smallest scale. Every woman was a teacher, Woolley professed in her public speeches, even if some taught only in their own households. Thus, for Woolley, every woman had the opportunity to fight for the peace movement when she fought for "the rights of the weak, whether they be little children in the factory and women in the sweat shop, or a defenseless people across the seas; for the recognition of the oneness of the great human family, as real as among the classes of New York as among the nations of the world."[42]

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[38] These included the National Consumers' League, Carrie Chapman Catt's National Women's Suffrage Association, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (FCCC). Marks, *Life and Letters,* 47*;* Meeropol, *Practical Visionary* (Appendix).

[39] Marks, *Life and Letters.*

In this schema, peace work moved in concentric circles of responsibility, from the home to the community to the nation and then to the world. Thus, women moved from homemakers to peacemakers when they recognized that the struggle for international peace started with working for justice at the most intimate scale of the family. The American School Peace League mirrored such thinking in its *Course in Citizenship*.[43] This course for elementary school students, too, imagined peacemaking as a process that began interpersonally and then moved up a ladder of distance and abstraction. Mothers could create home environments that could foster peace through modeling cooperation between family members, then, but they could also encourage them to discuss international topics at the dinner table.[44] Discussing the fruits of global cooperation in toys or household goods might connect U.S. citizens directly to the wider world, skipping the circles of the community, state, and nation.

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[40] Mary Woolley, "Relation of Educated Women to the Peace Movement," April 16, 1907. MS 0842, box 18, folder 1, MEW Papers, MHC.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] On the curriculum see Megan Threlkeld, "Education for Pax Americana;" On Woolley's involvement, Aline Stomfay-Stitz, *Peace Education in America*, 43.

[44] Woolley, "Relation of Educated Women to the Peace Movement."

However Americans learned to picture themselves as part of a wider world, Woolley claimed that those invested in peace needed to do more to engage the "image making power of the mind."[45] She believed that the imagination's appeal to both emotions and reason made it particularly powerful. Women were ideal peacemakers in large part because they had such strong capacities to imagine. Woolley would later claim that because women were historically not allowed to take on combat roles, their "imaginations were not cramped… by traditions—that war has always been and therefore must always be."[46] Throughout her career, she emphasized the importance of a spiritual, imaginative foundation of peace that could be spread through education, from kitchen table conversations about neighborliness to university lectures on international law.[47]

Woolley was far from the only liberal Christian woman working to make peace into an engaging concept. Many of her colleagues in the missionary movement actively worked to stimulate household conversations by generating children's literature, media, and other consumer goods and experiences. In 1908, the same year that Woolley toured giving her address on *Peace and the Imagination,* chair of the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, Lucy Peabody, began publication of *Everyland: A Magazine of World Friendship*. This children's monthly taught girl readers to value the material and spiritual outcomes of global cooperation and trade, and to imagine the world as a compilation of other families and homes with universally shared experiences of imaginative play, love, and labor. In 1911, Peabody even went so far as to imagine that U.S. children could play "Santa Claus," spreading American consumer goods to children in East Asia where there was otherwise no Christmas—a vision she would help realize later in the decade with the Federal Council of Churches’ help and Woolley’s public approval.[48]

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[45] Woolley "Peace and the Imagination," May 12, 1908. MS 0842, box 18, folder 4, MEW Papers, MHC.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] For example, Woolley "Mobilizing the Soul of America," May 26, 1918. MS 0842, box 26, folder 16. MEW Papers, MHC.

Women in the World Crisis, 1917–1919

When the United States entered World War I, Woolley joined her friend Carrie Chapman Catt putting her pacifism aside and supporting the effort. For Catt and those suffragists who followed her lead, the conflict was an opportunity to show that women had both the desire and the capacity to serve their country at war. Woolley, along with colleagues like M. Carey Thomas, also saw the crisis as an opportunity to demonstrate that professional women had something in particular to contribute.

At Mount Holyoke, faculty and students formed committees for Belgian Relief in 1914, and in 1918 organized a local chapter of the American Red Cross which collected thousands of dollars and made “hundreds of thousands of sweaters, helmets, socks, pajamas, bandages, surgical dressings” and other supplies for the front.[49] Faculty and peers pressured college women not to spend money on treats for themselves but to donate it to a Mount Holyoke “Student Friendship Fund,” formed for the war effort.[50] The war made sacrifice the style; indeed, Woolley claimed that girls who came to campus with new coats in the Winter of 1918 were “embarrassed to wear them.” To aid the food saving effort, they cultivated campus vegetable gardens and endured “meatless and wheatless days.” As both Woolley and Thomas claimed, it was “disloyal to leave college now” not only because war work could be organized on campus just as well as off, but also because the services of trained professionals would be increasingly necessary to help plan and build a sustainable peace.[51]

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[48] Lucy Peabody, “With Santa Claus in Japan: A Might-Be Story,” *Everyland: A Magazine of World Friendship for Girls 3* no. 1 (December 1911): 5–10.

[49] Mary Woolley, “Women and the World Crisis,” January 27, 1917; December 13, 1917. MS 0842, box 25, folder 4, MEW Papers, MHC.

[50] Mary Woolley, “Woman and her Gift of Service,” 1918.

Woolley's speeches during World War I claimed that participating in conservation efforts also offered to expand women's fields of vision, whether these women lived on campus or off. In making household sacrifices, she claimed, women modeled a kind of ethical imagination that recognized the extent to which "world interests were common interests; no happening is so remote that it may not touch directly our individual life."[52] Woolley laid out these arguments in a series of speeches with variations of the title "Women in the World Crisis," delivered from 1917 to 1918. While the war continued to rage, she claimed that women's efforts to save food, contribute funds, or to do relief and war work allowed them to "see through world eyes." Women's work was not only "remedial" in that it rebuilt the same world the war destroyed, but also "preventive, in the kind of preparedness which has been called 'preparedness against the rebarbarization of the world.' "[53]

In these speeches, given to audiences as diverse as the Women's Missionary Board and the Holyoke Parent Teacher's Association, she claimed that national security was not only a material task but also a spiritual one. It required that educated women take an active part in building a firm foundation for peace in distributing food and other basic needs with "clear-headed, uncompromising wisdom." Mothers, meanwhile, could affect a spiritual transformation, to "train the boys and girls in lives of purity and honor and truth, courage without cruelty, conviction without bitterness…."[54] Again, women's social positions as carers seemed to give them a special ability to imagine otherwise, to blur the lines between individualism and altruism. They could sometimes appear in Woolley's wartime writing as not merely equal with men but as humans of a purer sort—uncorrupted by war and left valiantly to pick up the pieces of a world shattered by clashing male egos.

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[51] Woolley, "Women and the World Crisis."
[52] Woolley, "Preparedness in the Home."
[53] Woolley, "Women and the World Crisis."
[54] Woolley, "Preparedness in the Home."

Woolley Looks East

World War I also shook Woolley's faith in the leadership of "the West" in global affairs. From 1921 to 1922, Woolley served as a missionary to China, which Marks described as the "happiest year" of her partner's life. She engaged in a wide array of missionary travel around East Asia, moving from China to Japan to Korea. One night after dinner in China, she found a few moments of quiet to sit near the fire in her room, still clad in kimono, and write home to Marks. She reported on her busy schedule and slipped in a reference to Benjamin Kidd's *Science of Power,* a text that inspired her thinking and writing.[55] Though Kidd had once been a firm Social Darwinist, the World War challenged his belief in the civilizing power of the West. Now, he claimed that Western men were groups of "pagans" who worshipped only themselves and ruled others by force.[56] Taken to its logical extreme, he claimed, the reigning ethos of competition in the West would unravel "civilization," not foster it. Only women could save Kidd's "civilization." Because their specialization in care blurred lines between self and other, and because caring for and birthing dependents forced women to think about the *future* rather than dwell on the present, woman's mentality offered a "prototype" of morality "upon which integrating civilization rests."[57] Yet, in framing women's stakes in the future as inherently tied to their role in heterosexual reproduction, Kidd implicitly positioned only *some* women as capable of shaping the world to come—a group that, ironically, did not include Woolley.

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[55] Mary Woolley to Jeanette Marks, cited in *Life and Letters.*

[56] Benjamin Kidd, *Science of Power* (New York: G.B. Putnam's Sons, 1918), 51.

[57] *Ibid.,* 199.

While Kidd shifted the "psychic center of power" from European men to European women, Woolley increasingly flirted with the idea that the "woman of the East" might provide an even more vital source of spiritual renewal. According to one speech, this woman was "intelligent, earnest, idealistic…. She believes in sympathy, understanding, and goodwill, international and inter-racial."[58] By working together with "the women of the Occident," surely she could bring the world closer to peace. The "woman of the East" also allowed Americans to see their nation through external eyes. This could bring clarity, Woolley argued, by helping Americans to recognize the hypocrisy of exporting Christian values elsewhere despite the ways the violence of unregulated capitalism and Jim Crow segregation made a mockery of any such values in their own nation.[59] In another speech, Woolley rhapsodized that she "never before appreciated how truly China is the centre of the world and how bound up with her destiny is the destiny of the world."[60]

Though she would never return to China, Woolley stuck close to liberal Christian missionary groups through the 1920s. Through her membership in the Christian Women's Board of Missions and Federal Council of Churches, she came in contact with a wide array of peace education work. These efforts included building material and media cultures that might render peace-making into a visually exciting adventure, much as military pageantry managed to do for war. On their trip to the local department store, for example, Christian educators Elizabeth and John Lobingier reported that "no section of toyland has been planned more carefully than that which is devoted to the toys of war. Nor is any other section likely to be so large. There are soldiers of every kind, swords and guns of every description…."[61] The Lobingiers joined Peabody and a national network of Christian missionary women in attempting to create vibrant, attractive material and visual cultures that might make playing peace as thrilling as playing war.[62]

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[58] Woolley, "College Woman: East and West," April 8, 1922; November 1922; June 17, 1922. MS 0842, box 29, folder 8, MEW Papers, MHC.

[59] Woolley, "Education as an Adventure," June 28, 1922; January 31, 1923; February 14, 1923; June 13, 15, 1923; May 2, 6, 1926; April 28, 1926, March 31, 1927. MS 0842, box 29, folder 16, MEW Papers, MHC.

[60] Woolley, "Educational Missions and the Future of China," March 12, 1922. MS 0842, box 28, folder 31, MEW Papers, MHC.

[61] Elizabeth Lobingier and John Leslie Lobingier, *Educating for Peace* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1930).

The most visible of missionary women's attempts to build peace in the imagination came through a "goodwill" doll exchange with Japan in 1927. The scheme was developed by Peabody, fellow Women's Missionary Board member Jeannette Emrich, and one of the FCC's Japan experts, Dr. Sidney Gulick. As a former U.S. missionary in Japan, Gulick had been hired by the FCC in 1913 to work on its campaign to encourage East Asian immigration. However, faced with the "Asiatic Barred Zone" enshrined into the 1917 Immigration Act and the Johnson Reed Act in 1924, he and his fellow lobbyists found little success working through official channels. Instead, he began to work for improved U.S.-East Asian relations through other means. In 1925, along with a wider group of Californian missionaries, he helped to found the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), an organization through which Woolley also worked.[63] In 1926, however, he and the FCC decided to work for goodwill by engaging a different kind of diplomatic actor—the child. With the support of a broad network of missionary women, the FCC formed the Committee on World Friendship Among Children (CWFC).

In the name of world friendship, groups of children set aside some portion of their allowance money to collectively purchase a state-of-the art talking doll to send to Japan.[64] They might be Sunday school students, vacation Bible school groups, or even public school classes. Rather than engaging in the sacrificial language of the Junior Red Cross developed in the previous chapter, the CWFC marketed participation in world friendship exchanges as a fun activity that would engage children's senses and excite their imaginations. Gulick and his colleagues collected nearly 13,000 dolls from U.S. children's groups, and in return, received a cargo of dolls prepared by some 2 million Japanese children. The dolls entered the U.S. even when living Japanese children could not. With passports in their porcelain hands, these silent envoys made their way overland by train on a goodwill tour of 47 U.S. states, inviting spectacular civic celebration wherever they went.[65]

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[62] For a view beyond just the interwar period, see Rachel Waltner Goosen, "Disarming the Toy Store and Reloading the Shopping Cart: Resistance to Violent Consumer Culture," *Peace and Change* 38 no. 3 (July 2013): 330–354.

[63] David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton UP, 2017), 142–143.

[64] Sidney Gulick *et al.*, *Dolls of Goodwill* (New York: Friendship Press, 1929).

When possible, the CWFC used the promotional resources of contemporary consumer culture to market goodwill between children. For the first weeks of 1928, for example, president of Lord and Taylor R. W. Reyburn proudly presented the Japanese dolls in the front window of his flagship store on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.[66] After launching the display, Reyburn claimed that the silent dolls had a way of speaking "directly to our hearts" that living children did not, perhaps suggesting that he preferred these mute representations to speaking Asian subjects.[67]

This exchange was not only something that engaged the imaginations of thousands of U.S. children, Woolley claimed, it was "one of the greatest agencies for international goodwill" that some Japanese women had reportedly "ever known."[68] Yet, its reliance on cute, innocent representation of Japanese girls to assuage the alleged "Yellow Peril" may have ultimately done little to rectify U.S. Orientalist stereotypes or the logic of excluding Asian peoples. Rather, they seemed to echo the visual language of Orientalism, playing into cultural connections between Japanese girlhood and dollhood. Indeed, as historian Erica Kalnay argues, this kistchy representation of Japanese girls may have fed a cultural rationalization of "the exclusion of

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[65] *Ibid.,* 103. It is interesting to speculate why passports were included in this activity. Most likely, these were used as symbols of international travel and exchange. Yet, given Gulick's opposition to the 1924 Immigration Act, it is tempting to wonder whether this was intended as an implicit critique of that legislation.

[66] "Hails Japanese Dolls as Good-Will Envoys: Ambassador Matsudaira Is Honor Guest at Luncheon Given by S.W. Reyburn to Greet Them," *New York Times,* January 7, 1928.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] "Dr. Woolley Urges Peace By Education: Woman Delegate to Geneva Would Impress Goodwill on Children," *New York Times,* December 27, 1931.

Asian immigrants who inevitably exceeded their desired function as cute objects" as do all living beings.[69]

Woolley and the Geneva Committee of Petitions

In the morning of December 22, 1931, Woolley received a phone call from fellow peace activist Dorothy Detzer letting her know to expect a call from the U.S. Department of State. Detzer asked Woolley, on behalf of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), to accept her appointment to the U.S. delegation of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, colloquially known as the Geneva Disarmament Convention. If Woolley accepted, this offer would make her the first woman to ever represent the United States on an official delegation at a major diplomatic conference. Getting Woolley on the delegation did not come as an easy victory to the women's peace movement, however. Over the last several months, hundreds of "Peace Caravans" filled with women activists had visited some 130 communities in 25 states.[70] They circled the country on two urgent missions: first, to collect signatures on a petition demanding nothing less than total disarmament at the upcoming conference in Geneva; second, to insist to the U.S. government that a woman should be elected to the U.S. delegation.[71] When Detzer called Woolley, it seems that they had achieved at least one of these aims.

Woolley and Marks waited attentively, but they received no call from the U.S. State Department on the afternoon of December 22. Instead, through personal contacts in Washington, Detzer learned that Woolley had ultimately *not* been chosen for the delegation. Undeterred, Detzer proceeded to walk straight to the State Department Offices and demand that the Assistant

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[69] Erica Kalnay, "Yellow Peril, Oriental Plaything: Asian Exclusion and the 1927 US Japan-Doll Exchange," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 23 no. 1 (January 2020), 118.

[70] Detzer, *Appointment on the Hill,* 101.

[71] *Ibid.*, 102.

Secretary on duty remind Hoover that the 1932 election approached in mere months, and that "women and elephants never forget."[72] On December 24, Woolley received her call from the White House.

Woolley's election to the conference was a hard-won victory worth celebrating. From the desks of hundreds of women ranging from Progressive reformer Jane Addams to prominent Mount Holyoke undergraduates, Woolley received thoughtful congratulatory letters.[73] During her departure on a steamer across the Atlantic, thousands of peace advocates, including representatives of fifteen women's organizations, gathered to display colorful signage bearing gilded letters that spelled such dramatic phrases as "Civilization—Destruction—Which? The World Faces That Question at Geneva 1932."[74] American nurse and humanitarian Lillian Wald handed Woolley the other fruit of the Peace Caravaners' work, a petition for total disarmament signed by 6 million Americans. Those present made sure to provide a spectacle worthy of the occasion. Aviator and Mount Holyoke alumna Ruth Nichols soared around the departing ship in a silver-winged amphibious plane, dropping anchor and tying up to a tug attached to the liner. Upon boarding, Nichols presented Woolley with two bouquets. The first was from Eleanor Roosevelt, then wife of New York's governor. The other, from the WILPF, bore the dramatic words: "You have been chosen for a great mission at a critical time.... When you come home victorious, you will have inaugurated a new era upon a stricken earth."[75]

Just what this "new era" should look like, or how best to achieve it, would be up for debate over the next six months. Woolley joined only a handful of other women as official delegates sent on behalf of their nations, yet theirs' were not the only women's voices heard in Geneva's Hall of the Reformation.[76] Even if they could not be present, millions of peace advocates signed petitions from home and listened in to conference broadcasts. From all angles, Woolley wrote home to Marks, delegates were confronted with "blinding lights from the movie picture cameras" along with "newspaper correspondents from all over the world, with camera men innumerable," demanding constant recognition of the event's gravity and reminding of the urgent attention of an international public.[77]

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[72] *Ibid.* This story is also told in Marks, *Life and Letters*.

[73] Correspondences, 1931. MS 0842, box 2, folder 11, MEW Papers, MHC.

[74] Those in attendance included The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, The Committee for the Cause and Cure of War, The League of Nations Association, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Council for the Prevention of War, and the World Peace Association, along with a number of student anti-war groups. Most of these had lobbied Hoover to have a female representative.

[75] "Women Honor Dr. Woolley as She Sails: Ship Bears Peace Pleas Signed by 1,000,000," *New York Times,* January 21, 1932

Organized clubwomen ensured that they remained a visible, audible part of the conversation at Geneva. In September 1931, just as the peace caravans rolled across the U.S. collecting signatures, 12 women's organizations formed the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations (also referred to as the Women's Disarmament Committee, WDC) to centralize women's work for disarmament and claim a voice at the upcoming Conference. The WDC had representatives from nearly every major international women's peace organization in the U.S. and Europe, including the WILPF, the National Committee for the Cause and Cure of War, the World Young Women's Christian Association, and the International Cooperative Women's Guild.[78]

In 1932, the League of Nations sent a circular letter to the organizations that made up the WDC asking how they would like to participate in the Geneva Disarmament Conference.[79] In return the women made five major requests, which the League more or less granted. Most requests related to the circulation of knowledge. WDC members wanted a way to send the President of the Conference materials related to the question of arms reduction and to receive the resolutions from the conference at the same time as did the international press. They requested a way to "keep in touch" with the delegates and asked for seats in the gallery to watch the conference. Yet they also hoped for a way to intervene. They requested that the President of the Conference set aside an entire day for the reception of petitions and declarations in favor of disarmament. The League also agreed to this request, setting up a Petition Day near the start of the conference on February 6, 1932.

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[76] Women sent as official delegates included Margaret Corbett-Ashby (Great Britain), Winnifred Kydd (Canada), Anne Paradowska-Szelagowska (Poland), Paulina Luisi (Uruguay), and Mary Woolley (U.S.). Marks, *Life and Letters of Mary Woolley,* 138.

[77] According to Marks' republication of the correspondence in *The Life and Letters of Mary Emma Woolley,* 136.

[78] League of Nations, *Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace,* February, 14, 1932. Circular No. Conf. D. 75. Geneva: League of Nations. U DCX, box 8, folder 1, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[79] *Ibid.*

The central action of the conference would prove frustrating for those who hoped for bold, decisive resolutions. Diplomats and popular representatives had gathered at the League of Nations' call to better enforce Article VIII of the League Covenant's stated commitment to arms reductions "to the lowest point consistent with national safety."[80] How, these delegates would debate, should the League strike the right balance between ensuring national security and encouraging international disarmament? To grapple with this question, nation-states presented arms limitation plans and put them to a vote. Much of the time, delegates focused on clarifying disarmament requirements by organizing offensive and defensive weaponry into technical categories that could be better regulated. Given players' starting positions, any outcome other than a stalemate seemed unlikely. France and its allies were concerned primarily with the maintenance of defensive arms, particularly given ongoing disputes with Germany around Alsace-Lorraine. The U.S. and U.K., both naval powers that felt some protection on the seas, were more willing to consider arms limitations. Former Central Powers Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria pushed for arms parity.[81] If they were to disarm under the Versailles Treaty, then they expected the same of the former Allies.

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[80] "The Convenant of the League of Nations," The Avalon Project At the Yale Law School: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Accessed at `https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp`

[81] This sketch of positions is drawn from Sherwood Eddy, *The World's Danger Zone* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932).

While these entrenched positions meant that official deliberations could be long and fruitless, an urgent popular energy pulsed through the conference halls on Petition Day. The WDC had made this day possible, but it would not just include women's groups. Trade unionists, socialists, League of Nations Associations, church organizations, and student groups all received invitations to attend.[82] The day's session began with a "solemn procession" headed by Mary Dingman, World YWCA member and WDC President. The WDC had labored for six months to ensure that the ceremony would be "very impressive and commensurate with the immense effort the petitions represent."[83] The committee claimed to represented some forty million women across fifty-six countries, and it had collected eight million signatures on a petition demanding total disarmament. Four women from each represented country followed Dingman, each carrying papers full of signatures from their nation for dramatic effect.[84] While the procession also included representatives of labor, socialist, and church groups, the men's presence was minor in comparison to the hundreds of women who "filed in close procession" through the hall.[85]

Once the march was complete, Dingman read the names of the twelve women's organizations on the Committee, then exclaimed matter-of-factly that "this Conference should not be allowed to fail."[86] If it did, she urged, then the housewives and mothers of the world would take disarmament and international law into their own hands. After this display, she passed a catalogue of all petitions to British Labour leader Arthur Henderson, President of the Disarmament Conference. Henderson thanked the women for their efforts both in collecting the petitions and in their longstanding work for peace. According to her partner Jeanette Marks, Woolley was deeply moved by these "four hundred marching women," who seemed to symbolize "her dream of peace coming ever closer to fulfillment."[87]

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[82] Honora Enfield, "Women and the Disarmament Conference*,"* ICWG Circular, February 15, 1932. U DCX, box 8, folder 1, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[83] "Draft Minutes of the Board Meeting of the Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations," November 28, 1931, box 4, folder "Minutes of Meetings 1931." International Council of Women Records, Sophia Smith Collection Women's History Archive, Smith College, Northampton, MA. Accessed via Women and Social Movements International.

[84] Horona Enfield, "Women and the Disarmament Conference," February 15, 1932. U DCX box 8, folder 1, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] *Ibid.*

In addition to Petition Day, the International Cooperative Women's Guild had visualized a "People's Disarmament Conference" that might meet in parallel with the official conference to keep it abreast of public opinion. This was never realized. Yet, in the afternoon following petition day, the ICWG's Austrian president Emmy Freundlich and British secretary Honora Enfield had an opportunity to host a series of speeches and further discussion.[88] At these sessions, Freundlich found an opportunity during the afternoon session in Geneva to explain what cooperative consumers could do for peace. She explained that while housewives and mothers were called upon to salvage the shreds of a broken world, they could not possibly do so when economic depression and the threat of fascism upended the security in their own homes. In a claim very characteristic of the ICWG, she explained to her colleagues that women could use their "daily purchasing power to lay the foundations of a new economic order" by building up structures of the international consumer cooperative movement.[89] While the ICWG clearly held onto their distinct ideology, other women would send petitions to Woolley at Geneva to explain how they were using their own "daily purchasing power" in service of peace.

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[87] Marks, *Life and Letters of Mary Woolley,* 138.

[88] Emmy Freundlich "President's Speech at Geneva Gathering," reprinted in "Women and the Disarmament Conference."

[89] For Freundlich, "it is the women who have to see to it that the needs of daily life are satisfied," which gave them an opportunity to use their "daily purchasing power to lay the foundations of a new economic order and help to set up a new system of planned economy in place of the present chaotic methods which through crises and speculation destroy what we in our families are trying to build up." Freundlich, "President's Speech at Geneva Gathering."

Housewives and the Morality of Economic Sanctions

When Mary Dingman claimed that housewives and mothers would take international law into their own hands, she may have known that thousands were already preparing to do just that. Petitions continued to trickle in throughout the month of February, some of which expressed ways that U.S. women were actively developing their own movements to uphold and defend international law. While some petitions came as a single document with some number of signatories, others would send their own notes and letters. Woolley reported to Marks that she received 1,261 petitions, "some representing hundreds, even thousands" of peace-minded Americans.[90] For Woolley, these petitions offered a "marvelous collection of human documents," and she forwarded a number of them to President Hoover.

Some women found an opportunity to write to Woolley through reading their ordinary, weekly magazines. Loring A. Schuler, editor of the *Ladies Home Journal,* offered his readers a chance to write to him in support of the magazine's "Five Point Women's Peace Plan." Schuler would then forward women's letters along to Woolley in Geneva, enabling women a method of communicating with her directly.[91] This "Five Point Women's Peace Plan" included budgetary limitations on arms, abolition of chemical warfare, battleships, submarines, and warplanes, and a permanent international committee on disarmament. It also included a suggestion to amend the Kellogg-Briand Pact to require all signatories to employ economic sanctions against any nation that used force to settle an international dispute. This last point attempted to organize women in support of a broader campaign, organized by a Committee on Economic Sanctions (CES) that had been sponsored by Edward Filene's Twentieth Century Fund.

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[90] Reprinted in Marks, *Life and Letters*, 143.

[91] Loring Schuler, "The Women's Program for Peace: An Editorial Letter to Miss Mary Woolley at the Geneva Disarmament Conference" *Ladies Home Journal* 49, no. 3 (March 1932): 24.

Importantly, the Kellogg-Briand Pact offered a method of employing of economic sanctions outside of Article 16 of the League of Nations' Covenant. This was attractive to U.S. internationalists for two reasons. First because the U.S. was a signatory of the Kellogg Briand Pact but not a member of the League, working through the Pact offered an expedient way to bring U.S. economic clout into the bargain.[92] Second, Japan left the League of Nations shortly after the Manchurian invasion. Amending the Kellogg Briand Pact would allow nations to sanction Japan even after this departure because it still remained a signatory on the Pact.

If they expressed any preference at all, the women who wrote to Woolley in support of these five points tended towards a clear favorite. As one self-described "100% American" woman, Bertha Ellis from Norwalk, CN put the issue: "We have always been disarmed and unprepared. Did that keep us out of the European scrap??? … No. 5 [economic sanctions] is the only thing that will be any good. We do not have to use force to enforce it! We are money grubbers but so are the Europeans (very much so)."[93] A Mrs. Edington of Los Angeles wrote, "Thank God for an organized Anti-War movement based on a constructive economic structure. Economic boycot [sic] is the only answer. Wars will never be stopped in the name of sentiment, decency, or Christianity. Twenty-nine million mothers are with you."[94]

As written by Schuler, the *LHJ* plan promoted *official* state sanctions, not a popular consumer boycott. Many women followed his cue and promoted official sanctions in their letters. Nettie A. Henry of Paradise, CA was "hoping that the nations of the world will without much further delay put into force an economic boycott and end in that way this ever widening conflict."[95] Other letters echoed those League diplomats who saw the threat of sanctions as an effective strategy for deterrence and collective security.[96] Erda Metcalf of Williamsburg, VA "wholeheartedly" supported the amendment and argued that "if that one point [no. 5] had been in force" when the Pact was developed, "we would not have had the present trouble in China."[97]

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[92] Clark, ed. *Boycotts and Peace.*

[93] Bertha Ellis to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 11, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, MEW Papers, MHC.

[94] Mrs. Edington to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 17,1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, MEW Papers.

[95] Nettie Henry to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 16, 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 7, MEW Papers.

Why did some women peace advocates throw support behind the "economic weapon" of sanctions when many peace feminists had opposed them so vehemently in the wake of World War I, not some fifteen years earlier? This attitude appears somewhat of a shift. It is difficult to deduce the intentions of each of these letter writers, but it is clear that many expressed a palpable desperation to avoid sending their sons to war. They also likely knew that they needed to re-establish some kind of collective security in order to push for the disarmament they thought would bring peace. Yet, because they supported a reduction in armaments, this sense of collective security would need to come from some other method—like the threat of economic isolation. Faced with the very real possibility of the crumbling of the post-World War I order, some of these women saw placing economic sanctions on Japan as a necessary price to pay. At least some writers suggested that they understood that they were proposing a move that could endanger the bodies of distant mothers and children to sustain the lives of U.S. men and boys. Indeed, some writers indicated that they were well aware that what they were demanding was not exactly non-violence, but another kind of weapon. As Margaret Taggert phrased it in her letter to the *LHJ,* "the economic boycott you advocate is much greater as a weapon than any number of men, warships, and submarines."[98]

There was, however, one major problem with the CES' plan to add a sanction clause to the Kellogg Briand Pact. Even if it was possible to retroactively change the pact and force all signatories to adhere to its new terms, it was not totally clear that Japan had broken the terms of the Pact in the first place. At least, Japan itself would not admit to having done so. While the Pact had committed all signatories to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, it did not clearly forbid civil or colonial wars, and sovereignty over Manchuria was ambiguous. While China claimed that the province was under its jurisdiction, the Japanese government acted as though it was an independent province in its own sphere of influence. Tokyo had even attempted to convince Japanese settler-colonists to relocate to the region. Though 90 percent of Manchuria's population remained ethnically Chinese, Japan purchased three-fourths of the region's agricultural exports and invested significant capital building all 700 miles of the South Manchurian Railway to transport these goods to harbor. When Japanese troops invaded Manchuria without official leave of the national government on September 18,1931, they justified their move as a *defensive* one to protect against an alleged Chinese attack on these Japanese-owned rail lines.

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[96] Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon.*

[97] Erda Metcalf to Lorin Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 12, 1932, MS 0842, box 56, folder 1, MEW Papers.

[98] Margaret Taggert to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 20, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, MEW Papers, MHC.

Christian Socialist Sherwood Eddy, who was present at the time of Japanese troops' arrival on Manchurian soil, claimed that there was little evidence of such an attack.[99] Instead, the invasion was more likely motivated by a desire to bring Manchurian grain and soy crops under tighter Japanese control. This was widely believed to be a move to assuage the civil unrest triggered by the 1929 depression. Regardless of the actual causes of the invasion, the language of protecting Japanese property from Chinese "bandits" caught on even amongst some of the U.S. housewives who pushed for peace. For example, a group of women in South Bend Indiana wrote to Woolley that "an economic boycott of any nation that engages in war—even a "repression of banditry" war—would make war impossible."[100]

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[99] Sherwood Eddy's commentary on the conflict cast Manchuria as the "Danger Zone of the Far East"-- a place where China, Japan, and Russia "meet and cross destinies" in a struggle for access to trade and economic control. See Eddy, *The World's Danger Zone* (1932).

[100] Evelyn E. Thomas, Pearl E Thomas, Stella Dixon, and Clarrena Koontz to Schuler/ Woolley. February 15, 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, MEW Papers, MHC.

If Eddy was correct that Japan had invaded Manchuria in order to access the material resources it needed to mollify civil unrest in the midst of the industrial depression, then he raised an important concern. Even if they were possible, sanctions might not bring peace after all. When Western nations cut Japan off from capital and resources, they would run the risk of actually encouraging that nation to move forward with its plans to gain greater economic control of East Asia in order to secure what it needed elsewhere. Even if no food blockade was introduced and nations simply refused to purchase Japanese exports, this alone could wreak havoc. Sociologist and investigative journalist Robert Bruere reported that because the U.S. was Japan's best silk customer, when its consumption of the fiber declined in the 1929 market crash, the loss of revenue hit the Japanese countryside "with the force of a major earthquake."[101] When U.S. demand plummeted, prices fell by half and "bales of silk yarn choked the warehouses at Yokohama" causing a state policy of economic retrenchment that motivated a groundswell of unrest to an "almost riot intensity over wide areas of agricultural Japan."[102] If export sanctions did go into effect, cutting off funds to the nearly fifty percent of Japan's agricultural workers and twenty-five percent of its industrial workers employed in the silk industry could fuel civil unrest that could spill over national borders.

Some U.S. critics of the sanction idea expressed concerns that they might not create economic conditions conducive to peace. Others suggested that if a "repression of banditry war" became illegal, then what of Western nations' own imperial exploits? As U.S. Socialist Norman Thomas claimed in a 1932 Madison Square Garden speech, Japan's invasion of Manchuria was not too dissimilar to U.S. intervention in Latin America.[103] This was particularly true in instances in which the U.S. justified its military presence by claiming that it was necessary to protect state or private property abroad. If the U.S. called out Japanese imperialism, it would first need to clean up its own hemispheric intervention.

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[101] Robert Walter Bruere, "Japan's Economic Predicament," *Harper's Magazine* no. 981 (February 1932).

[102] *Ibid*.

[103] Thomas referred to the events in Manchuria as a "sore spot" for imperialist nations including the US, because Japan's actions there were comparable to "similar activities in which this country has participated, such as "American marine imperialism for the sake of profit." "Caution in Far East is Urged by Thomas," *New York Times,* February 7, 1932, 26.

It is possible that some delegations might indeed have been wary about condemning imperial actions that rhymed with their own, though they never made this pronouncement official. Yet, several nations' delegations did express concern that diplomatic sanctions would not necessarily be effective tools for peacemaking in this particular case. For example, the British delegation urgently opposed the idea of sanctioning Japan. Though some smaller states like the Irish Free State, Romania, Greece, and Czechoslovakia supported amending the Pact of Paris, Britain was "determined not to allow a lot of small nations who have no stake whatever in the commerce of China… stampeding the great powers into hostilities or into imposing sanctions which might cause hostilities."[104] Thus, ultimately, even though the Women's Peace Plan to amend the Pact of Paris won over some nations, it failed to win approval from the most powerful delegations.

The defeat of the sanctions plan would certainly have disappointed many women letter writers, many of whom hoped that if collective security could be fostered through the threat of sanctions then nations would feel more comfortable disarming. However, the greatest letdown for more radical pacifists watching from the gallery came when the Soviet delegation's disarmament plan was deftly defeated soon after on February 25. Detzer had described the plan as a "comprehensive blueprint for peace" that "outlined in the most careful and minute detail the process by which disarmament might be accomplished." As such, she claimed, it captured the spirit of the WILPF petition. The next months would be filled with what Detzer experienced as "technical bickering," over the classification of weapons into offensive and defensive categories so that they might be better regulated.

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[104] Charles A Selden, "Britain Will Oppose Boycott By League," *New York Times,* February 24, 1932, 1.

Tension picked up once again in April when Hitler's National Socialists took a disturbing number of seats in the Reichstag by-election. In response, Germany's liberal delegates urged the great powers to move towards greater arms parity so as to negate some of the perceived inequalities of the Versailles treaty. If they did so, the German public might be assuaged and avoid electing Hitler to the Chancellorship in the upcoming election. France refused to consider this offer. The session's saw its final defeat with the rejection of the "Hoover Proposal," a plan proposed on July 22, 1932 by the U.S. president. It called for a one-third cut in all land, sea, and air arms and the abolition of chemical warfare. According to Detzer, the plan might have offered a turning point in negotiations had the U.S. delegation "contained one outstanding personality… fired with conviction," "infused with deep moral responsibility," and willing to put up a fight for Hoover's proposed reduction of armaments.[105] Instead, Woolley's "timidity" made her incapable of exerting the necessary pressure. While Detzer and others affiliated with the WDC "attempted to stir and sway" the U.S. delegation, they achieved little in response. "How," she asked uncharitably, "does one sway the soul of a cabbage?"[106] To conclude the first session in the summer of 1932, the delegates passed the only resolution on which all could agree. It was a vaguely-worded document that held the delegates' nations to little more than the League Covenant had: to reduce arms as much as they felt national security would allow.[107]

Into their Own Hands: The Voluntary Consumer Boycott Movement

While most watching from the gallery experienced the first session as a disappointment, Woolley was relatively undeterred. Despite Detzer's unkind remarks, Woolley's experience with the WDC's fervent work did indeed "stir and sway" her into a firm conviction that women could serve as a force for peace. Further, her assignments on the Committee of Petitions and the Committee on Moral Disarmament had allowed her to work towards seeding a new generation of peace-minded citizens rather than on achieving quick results. This suited her own goals, as she recognized disarmament as a longer cultural process that could not be achieved in one sitting. In her first speech in Geneva, echoing Fosdick's "inner transfiguration," she declared that "we must recognize that changes in human nature come from within as a result of a long-continued intellectual process, not from without by legislation."[108]

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[105] Detzer, *Appointment on the Hill.*

[106] *Ibid,* 100.

[107] *Ibid.*

From Woolley's vantage point on the Committee of Petitions, the session revealed that there was already an urgent will to peace amongst the global public, from the exciting presentation of petitions in February through the appeals from individual women that continued to trickle in through the spring. She knew that thousands of women were desperate to know whether they might do "something, so if our boys do have to go to war we can feel that at least we tried to prevent it."[109] Even though the CES's plan to amend the Kellogg Briand Pact did not find adoption, several women communicated with Woolley that they did not intend to wait for official sanctions to start upholding the Kellogg-Briand Pact themselves. As Julia Larson put it, "doesn't it seem that this boycotting business should be busy right now?"[110]

In the absence of formal sanctions, a number of women used their own purchasing power to oppose Japanese military intervention in China. As Alice B. Lantham explained in her letter through the *LHJ*, the boycott grew through the work of neighborhood organizers. "In Boston," she reported, "the women were signing pledges, already, to carry out [the] fifth suggestion personally, and to promise not to buy any article of Japanese manufacture while that nation continues to refuse to listen to offers of a peaceful settlement of their demands."[111] Lantham suggested that even if it would not be possible to engage in official sanctions, organization for a voluntarist movement was already underway. Though a boycott had not begun in Julia Larson's community, she reported that "the message" of the LHJ Peace Plan "is spreading—and spreading fast" because it spoke to what she believed was women's desire to prevent another war in whatever way they could.[112] For Woolley, too, a consumer boycott offered an opportunity for a united global front of women to show themselves as a crucial instrument of peace by upholding the outlawry of war promised through the Kellogg Briand Pact.

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[108] Cited in Marks, *Life and Letters.*

[109] C. Baker to Schuler/Woolley, February 17, 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 4, MEW Papers, MHC.

[110] Julia Larson to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 7, MEW Papers, MHC.

[111] Alice B. Lantham to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 14, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 2, MEW Papers, MHC.

Not only women in Boston signed pledges. So too did hundreds of students and faculty members in U.S. colleges.[113] Alma Metcalfe, one of few writers who identified her occupation not as a housewife or mother but instead as an instructor at Scarritt College in Nashville, TN, explained the urgency of youth opposition to war. "I have been intimately associated with a number of college campuses during the past eight years," she explained, "and I have observed a constantly growing sentiment in favor of peace and disarmament. The youth of this generations simply will not tolerate another war."[114]

Even if the *LHJ* Women's Peace Plan did not include a popular boycott per se, the idea that women could enact their commitment to a more peaceful world through everyday consumer choices was in line with the way that magazine called upon the woman purchaser. Its popular "Up to the Woman" campaign, for example, claimed that women could collectively dig the nation out of the Depression if they used consumer spending to stimulate production and investment. In a similar vein, Schuler's original prompt pushed women to identify as housewives, mothers, and consumers whose opposition to war arose from the dangers it presented to their sons and their family pocketbooks. The preamble of the *LHJ* Peace Plan claimed that the twenty-nine million mothers of America were "tired of a system that threatens their sons with death in battle from the day of their birth" and "weary of taxes that grow higher year by year to pay for the wars of the past and the wars of the future."[115] On the one hand, Schuler seemed to suggest that the kind of work that mothers did—provisioning and nurturing children—gave rise to an anti-war consciousness. On the other, this seemed to suggest that women's internationalism drew from no deeper basis than their own self-interest.

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[112] Jessica Larson to Schuler/ Woolley.

[113] "Not in the Headlines: Boycott Advocated," *The World Tomorrow* 15 no. 4 (April 1932): 116.

[114] Alma Metcalfe to Editor of the Ladies Home Journal, February 15, 1932, MS 0842, box 56, folder 1, MEW Papers, MHC.

Most letter-writers followed this cue, casting themselves as concerned mothers who "refuse to raise them [their sons] to be gun fodder" or who were moved to oppose war through doing nurturing work, "trying to train and educate our young people to be useful, patriotic citizens and not to wreck their fine, promising manhood in the trenches of warfare."[116] Texas mother Pearl Cummings' suggestion that mothers should collectively "refuse to bear children till war is abolished" was only the most radical of these voices.[117] For Cummings, women should boycott not Japanese imports but motherhood itself until "they are reasonably sure that the children they bring into the world can have a fighting chance for economic security and for improvement and development."[118]

Yet, some women seemed to break the mold, or at least, take this kind of maternal thinking to a level of greater abstraction. For May Cummings of Pasadena CA, participating in a voluntary boycott offered to extend the goodwill cultivated locally to a world scale. It was a way to show that we are "big enough to put the same faith, confidence and brotherhood we practice in community and national life into international relationships."[119] Helen Alexander, then living in Beltsville, MD with her husband who was employed as a USDA soil scientist, wrote that she approved “heartily of your five point plan, but my strongest reasons are not those stressed by your magazine.” Although she identified herself as a mother, Alexander wrote, “I think our main objection to war should be because of the effects it entails on the individual and national life of all contending parties: the lowered moral standards; the hate engendered by the hideous inhuman stories diffused about enemies and the emphasis wrongly placed on what is glorious. We decorate destroyers of human life.”[120]

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[115] Loring Schuler, "The Women's Program for Peace," *Ladies Home Journal*, 24.

[116] A.E. Schifferman to Schuler/ Woolley, February 16, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 4; Grace Smith to Schuler/ Woolley, Februrary 17, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 7, MEW Papers, MHC.

[117] Mrs. Pearl (J.E.) Cummings to Schuler/ Woolley, February 18, 1932, box 56, folder 1. MEW Papers, MHC.

[118] *Ibid*.

[119] May Cummings to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 17, 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 4, MEW Papers, MHC.

In making these pronouncements, Alexander moved beyond her particular identity as a mother to her own son, towards a desire to nurture and educate the spiritual and moral sensibilities of others. In doing so, she also allied herself with the movement for moral disarmament that Woolley sought to build in Geneva and upon her return in the United States. She would likely agree with Woolley when she claimed that “the heart of the crisis is embodied in the question: what is [war] doing to human personality?” Woolley might not have been comfortable with calling for formal economic sanctions against Japan, but she did believe that an international public should do *something* to communicate their moral opposition to the rupture of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. If it was so easy to break international law without facing any moral commendation, Woolley worried, then the “written word” would be reduced to “scraps of paper” and there could be “no foundation stone on which to base human relationships.”

Keeping international pacts like Kellogg-Briand accountable to some public, then, was about something more than preventing armed conflict. It was about preserving the veracity of the spoken and written word between states and between people. It was about seeing some sense of fairness as a more crucial virtue than war profits, greed, and selfishness. As Woolley put it: “too often, it [civilization] has seen supreme value in dollars and cents. But seeing supreme value in human beings is what must be, if civilization is to endure.”[121] A popular consumer boycott might, as another woman letter writer put it, show that "business should not have consideration above our boys," or indeed, all human life.[122] Protesting war through a voluntary consumer boycott offered a way to demonstrate moral condemnation without itself enacting a form of violence.

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[120] Mrs. Lyle T. Alexander to Schuler/ Woolley, February 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 8, MEW Papers, MHC.
[121] Woolley, “Disarmament and the Public,” 1934.

If there was so much popular energy, why did a popular boycott against Japanese imports fail to spread in the United States in 1932? For one thing, giving up Japan's most vital import, raw silk fashioned into hosiery, would have been a major sacrifice even in the early 1930s. Certainly, some women had already forgone silk in hard economic times. As the LHJ itself claimed in 1932, the price of silk hosiery remained 41 percent less than it had been in 1929 due to a lack of demand.[123] Yet, if a woman could still afford silk hose even in the darkest years of depression, then they would not necessarily have wanted to forgo such a purchase unless they knew a large number of other boycotters would be joining them. In the 1920s, silk stockings had blurred the line between luxury and necessity. In his ethnographies of family life in Muncie, IN, for example, sociologist Robert Lynd found that access to this fibre was a social essential for high school girls in the late 1920s. If working-class families sent their daughters to school in more economical lisle or cotton hosiery, the social humiliation that resulted could be enough to drive even studious girls to drop out. Housewives reported taking on piecework, part time jobs, or engaging in other money-raising schemes to keep their daughters in silk—and more importantly, in school.[124] Given the lingering cultural importance of silk garments, there would need to be a critical mass of boycotters in order for some women to dare participate. Of course, if there *were* a critical mass that could allow women to claim these choices as ethically motivated, perhaps they might be able to find pride and purpose in their less expensive cotton hose. Yet, this simply did not materialize in the early 1930s.

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[122] Netty Henry to Schuler/ Woolley, February 16, 1932. MS 0842, box 55, folder 7, MEW papers, MHC.

[123] "Pocketbook Patriotism: An Editorial," *Ladies Home Journal* 49 no. 2 (February 1932), 3.

[124] Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study In Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1929), 162–163.

By 1932, many stopped purchasing luxury silk goods out of necessity, but if they could continue to purchase, it was not clear that avoiding these goods was a peaceful act. If Japan's economy really did "hang by a thread of silk" that the American consumer had power to cut, was it ethical to do so?[125] Some on the Christian left opposed official diplomatic sanctions. Yet, was even a voluntary boycott amenable to a political economy of peace? Or did it still wage economic war on those at the bottom in an attempt to punish the sins of militarists at the top? After all, if a boycott was at all effective in starving a nation of cash, then it could be deeply disruptive to the economic lives of ordinary people and still raise the concerns voiced earlier by Eddy and Bruere.

Many consumers were also put off by the continuance of arms sales. If a woman did have the extra spending money to take advantage of rock-bottom depression prices, what good would it do to pass by discounted silk dresses, neckties and stockings after it became common knowledge that the U.S. still secretly sold explosives to Japan? In March 1932, Representative Hamilton Fish found that the U.S. snuck 14,000 tons of nitrates into Japan between January 17 and February 2, routing them through France and transporting them in Japanese, Italian, and British ships. Fish claimed that these sales made the consumer boycott movement a "gigantic farce, if not tragedy." If Japan could still source capital and weapons under the table, sanctions or a popular boycott would be an outward show that would achieve very little.[126]

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[125] Robert Walter Bruere, "Japan's Economic Predicament."

[126] "Sale of Nitrates to Japan Assailed" *New York Times,* March 13, 1932.

Epilogue: Petitioning for Peace Beyond Geneva

Though a popular boycott failed to catch on, the political energy expressed through the petitions to Geneva did not simply evaporate. It left Woolley with an eager desire to capture the fervency of public opinion for peace. As her partner Jeanette Marks recalls, it seemed as if Woolley "started working heart and soul for peace in her leadership of the People's Mandate to End War" as soon as she returned home from Geneva.[127] The People's Mandate campaign would take up much of her remaining time and energy. As stated in its own circular letters, the group's aim was to "obtain 50 million signatures of the people in every nation of the world, thereby informing the governments of the various nations of the determination of the people that war shall not be resorted to."[128] In 1935, Woolley took up a position as the chair of the "Committee for Western Hemisphere and Far East" with Hannah Clothier Hull of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom as vice-chair. In this new work, Woolley retained her hope that "women of the East" might hold the key to a more peaceful future.

In 1937, two years after taking the position, Woolley made plans to to travel to Lima, Peru, to help publicize the People's Mandate campaign and forge political relationships with peace activists in Latin America. Yet, her health took an irrevocable blow in 1937 when she learned that the Board of Trustees had selected a man to replace her as president of the college. Woolley never recovered from the shock of learning that a possibility for women's leadership would be swallowed up in a campaign to replace "spinster" women with "happily married men" in an attempt to make the college fit for the daughters of the respectable middle class.[129]

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[127] Marks, *Life and Letters*.

[128] Mabel Vernon, "Report of Mandate Campaign," September 27, 1935, SCPC DG-109, box 1, folder 1, Peoples' Mandate Committee Records, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA.

[129] A similar trend took place at Wellesley, for example, Patricia Ann Palmieri, *In Adamless Eden: The Community of Women at Wellesley* (Yale, 1997). On the accusation that the Trustees were primarily interested in attracting "bankers daughters," see Marks *Life and Letters.*

Chapter 3. Disarmament is "Up to the Women"

Much of Woolley's seemingly indefatigable energy had been directed towards allowing women's voices to ring out in diplomatic halls of power, and as future chapters show, she continued that work until her death in the late 1940s. Though she faced the late 1930s with poor health and reduced finances, Woolley nevertheless retained her positions on the People's Mandate, as chair of the Committee on International Relations of the American Association of University Women, and as chair of the Cooperating Commission of Women of the Federal Council of Churches.[130] Throughout the 1930s and until the outbreak of World War II, she continued to support the idea that individual women could voice their moral outrage at war through participating in voluntary economic boycotts. She became the chair of an organization that called itself American Boycott Against Aggressor Nations, and she wrote impassioned appeals in the U.S. press to urge women to eschew the imports of those nations she understood as war-makers.

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[130] Marks, *Life and Letters,* 208.

Chapter 4

Building a Global "Cooperative Sorority," 1924–1938

On October 18, 1934, delegates representing over a million U.S. consumers gathered in Chicago for the Ninth Biennial Congress of the Cooperative League of the USA (CL). Though they met in troubled times, a wave of optimism washed over the delegation. The mood was so palpable that one attendee recalled "an almost militant belief of many in attendance that consumers' cooperation was on the march and nothing could stop its future."[1] Two developments inspired these fervent hopes.[2] First, support from President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal government and the stark material realities of the 1930s drew unprecedented numbers of U.S. consumers into cooperative retail societies. The Depression had hardened this generation of consumers, and CL leaders believed that shoppers had become better able to resist the Madison Avenue parables that had too easily seduced them into installment purchases a decade earlier. Second, CL treasurer Mary E. Arnold announced that the group became capable of financing itself for the first time since its 1916 formation. No longer reliant on private donations from its independently wealthy president James Warbasse, the CL now supported itself purely through dues paid by member cooperative societies.[3] Combining this encouraging trade data with their brand of idealism, speakers who took the stage in Chicago felt ready to make bold claims about the movement's possible futures. The gathering that resulted, according to one attendee, had "the character of a gigantic revivalism meeting—engendering excitement and conversion."[4]

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[1] That attendee was Joseph Grant Knapp, chief economist of the Farm Credit Administration, who recorded this recollection over thirty years later in *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise 1920–1945* (Danville: Interstate Publishers, 1973), 383.

[2] "Two Significant Signs," *Consumers Cooperation* 20 no. 11 and 12 (Nov-Dec 1934): 173.

[3] "The Cooperative League Comes of Age: Treasurers Report," *Consumers Cooperation* 20 no. 11 and 12 (Nov-Dec 1934): 166.

YWCA missionary Helen Faville Topping's address aroused particular enthusiasm. She used her time on the Congress stage to explain what she believed U.S. consumer cooperators could do to support chances for international peace.[5] Like those women who wrote to Mary Woolley through the *Ladies Home Journal* only two years earlier, she set her sights on a solution that might manage tensions rising across the Pacific. "America is the youngest, biggest, and richest of the great world powers," her address began without reservation, while "Japan the oldest, smallest, and poorest of them. Such extremes of difference tend to misunderstanding, especially just now when cheap Japanese goods, sold in American markets, are creating a feeling of economic competition."[6] For Topping, the most peaceful solution to trade competition lay in "the development of the Cooperative Movement in both countries, and in all countries of the world."[7] A movement organized not around disciplining "aggressor" states but rather around liberalizing trade seemed to Topping the most promising force for peace, even in the tumultuous mid-1930s.[8]

Much as Mrs. Edington implored Mary Woolley to push for "an organized anti-war movement based on a constructive economic structure," Topping asserted that peace could only come through a practice of "economic pacifism."[9] Both women viewed war and peace through a materialist lens that historian Alan Dawley has identified among Progressive Americans in the aftermath of World War I.[10] Yet, Topping and Edington held contrasting views on the way marketplace interactions could best promote peace. As Topping's missionary colleague Sherwood Eddy had argued in *The World's Danger Zone*, Japan's occupation of Manchuria may have been motivated by the nation's interests in the region's soybean production. If Japan had acted out of a desire to gain access to this valuable crop in order to mollify hunger and attendant civil unrest in the midst of its own depression, then might depriving Japanese people of access to trade through sanctions have actually driven the nation to engage in *further* conflict to secure resources? Sanctions, some Christian socialists like Eddy believed, might push Japan to build and exploit an economic sphere of interest in Asia. This would provoke violence rather than peace. In contrast, Topping claimed that fostering cooperative trade promoted economic collaboration and could even alleviate some of the racial tensions between white Americans and ethnic Japanese people exacerbated by the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act. Using one's buying power to promote the growth of cooperative economic institutions, then, offered a mode of *positive* consumer diplomacy.

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[4] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise,* 384.

[5] Topping was both a U.S. citizen and a Japanese missionary who had just returned to America from across the Pacific on a steamer in April 1934. For the remaining two years, she embarked on a speaking tour preparing Americans to receive Kagawa in which this address to the CL was only one stop. See Helen Topping, *Introducing Kagawa* (Chicago: Willett Clark and Co., 1935), 22.

[6] Helen Topping, "Kagawa and Cooperation in Japan: From An Address to the Cooperative League Congress," *Consumers Cooperation* 21 no. 1 (January 1935), 18.

[7] *Ibid.,* 18.

[8] Sherwood Eddy, *The World's Danger Zone* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932). Both Eddy and Topping were left-liberal U.S. missionaries; Topping shared his skepticism of the boycott and sanctions movement in Japan as expressed in her pamphlet *Introducing Kagawa.*

Topping's propositions would likely have shocked anyone in the audience familiar with contemporary Japanese politics. Starting with a high-profile assassination of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuysokhi in 1930, right-wing militants murdered or otherwise silenced liberal political voices who openly proposed integrating Japan into a world economy through peaceful trade.[11] Yet, when Topping described the cooperative movement in Imperial Japan as a force for social peace, she spoke from her experience as a former YWCA missionary and current secretary to the leader of Japan's cooperative movement, Toyohiko Kagawa. She claimed that Kagawa had managed to bring an estimated thirty percent of Japan's population into membership in one of these collectively-owned and managed business organizations, though the reality was likely closer to ten percent.[12] Still, this was a feat. Despite a dominant political ideology that condemned proponents of Western liberalism as self-seeking individualists, state officials allowed Kagawa to continue to work in part because his consumer cooperatives in urban slums alleviated social unrest that might otherwise bolster the Communist movement, in part because agricultural cooperation in rural villages helped foster state aims to organize and increase agricultural production.[13] Given this improbable achievement, Topping's talk appealed to listeners hopeful that trends towards Japanese militarism could somehow be reversed.

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[9] Mrs. Edington to Loring Schuler/ Mary Woolley, February 17, 1932, MS 0842, box 55, folder 6, Mary Emma Woolley Papers 1857–1947, Mount Holyoke College Special Collections, South Hadley, MA (Henceforth cited as MEW Papers, MHC).

[10] Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Peace* (Princeton, 2003).

[11] Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011), 76.

Her speech offered two calls to action. First, she suggested that each time a U.S. consumer purchased "Co-Op" brand goods, visited their local shop, or invested in a cooperative bank, they helped generate the capital the movement needed to expand its geographic reach, political influence, and range of services. Second, she prepared those gathered at the Congress to receive Kagawa during his upcoming six-month lecture tour of the United States in early 1936. His appearances drew some 750,000 spectators, from New Deal policymakers to Midwestern farmers, eager to learn what this envoy from across the Pacific could share about building economic democracy, improving chances for peace, or tearing down "the great wall of misunderstanding between the East and the West."[14] This turnout was impressive given that the CL may have had as few as 677,750 members in 1936.[15] Kagawa's lectures presented a simple thesis: peace, even in the 1930s, relied not so much on disarmament conventions or economic sanctions as it did on the development of structures that could facilitate economic democracy.[16] In D.C., he directly critiqued the Geneva Disarmament Convention of 1932 "for failing to tackle the problem of world economics as a factor in war-making," assuring that international economic questions were more pressing than its discussions assessing "the caliber of guns."[17]

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[12] Robert Shaffer, "A Missionary from the East to the Western Pagans: Kagawa Toyohiko's 1936 U.S. Tour," *Journal of World History* 24 no. 3 (September 2013): 589.

[13] For a brief treatment of the Japanese state's use of agricultural cooperatives, see Collingham, *Taste of War,* 78.

[14] "Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa," *The Sunday Star* (Washington D.C.), January 19, 1936.

[15] There was significant debate over the membership numbers of the CL throughout the 1920s and 1930s, as societies opened and closed frequently. Some figures counted societies that were not true Rochdale cooperatives to bolster numbers, and those estimates suggest that by 1936 as many as two million Americans were members of

In these speeches, Kagawa remarkably cast the figure of the *consumer* as a universal interest that could foster peaceful ways of thinking. Conceiving distant others as consumers with common needs offered to develop a "universal consciousness" that could supplant the particularity and potential animosity fostered by "class and national consciousness."[18] As this chapter illustrates, this notion had purchase within the U.S. consumer cooperative movement.

After Kagawa returned to Japan in June 1936, national curiosity about the movement continued to surge after the publication of U.S. journalist Marquis W. Child's *Sweden: The Middle Way*.[19] This unlikely bestseller argued that an integrated cooperative economy, which linked shopper-owned retailers to worker-owned factories and farms and provided democratically-owned social services, had helped Sweden weather the depression. It sold twenty-five thousand copies in 1936 alone and inspired a wave of cultural and political debate.[20] In 1936 and 1937, a swath of youth, women, and business groups held discussions about consumer cooperation,

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cooperatives. The figure of 677,750 that I use here comes from a conservative estimate by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Operations of Retail Cooperatives, 1936," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Serial No. R. 718, pp. 1, 2. For more about the debate on numbers, see Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative as a Distributive Agency* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939).

[16] These lectures were later published in *Brotherhood Economics* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1936).

[17] "Trade Safeguard, Says Dr. Kagawa," *The Sunday Star* (Washington D.C.) January 19, 1936.

[18] Cited in C. Maurice Wieting, *How to Teach Consumers Cooperation* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1942), 9.

[19] While national newspapers published only eight articles on the subject in 1934, 85 articles appeared in 1935. The movement piqued even more interest in the next year. In just the first eight months of 1936, national news outlets published 235 articles on consumer coops. Kiran Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History*, 223.

[20] *Ibid,* 222.

its possibilities for deepening local democracies, its relation to social and global peace, and its compatibility with what they perceived as U.S. economic values.[21]

This chapter is not the first to identify a period of cooperative fervor in U.S. history or to highlight its international entanglements. Historian Kiran Patel’s *The New Deal: A Global History* has demonstrated that consumer cooperative movement offered a road not taken in New Deal planning that drew deep inspiration from international examples.[22] His account highlights a rich transatlantic exchange of ideas among policymakers, business leaders, and popularizers. Nonetheless, this focus on actors at the top occludes a closer look at the way women consumers used the local and international cooperative movement to work for their own goals. Though works have begun to appear on British women’s relationship to the International Cooperative Women’s Guild (ICWG), no existing histories have followed the efforts of a vibrant group of U.S. women to join what CL secretary Jeanette Perkins called a global cooperative “sorority.”[23]

Picking up in the mid-1920s and moving into the period of consumer cooperative fervor during the New Deal, this chapter shows how U.S. women made a place for themselves in this international consumer movement. Several groups of U.S. women expressed hope that the consumer cooperative movement in America could grow to support their vision of a more peaceful and just economy. Yet, they were not all in agreement about what such an economy should look like, or what roles they as women ought to play in creating it. Some U.S. women, primarily in the Midwestern United States, embraced identities as housewives and consumers.

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[21] Among the discussion outlines most relevant to this chapter include the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ outline, “How Much Can Consumers Help Themselves By Cooperation?”

[22] Patel, *The New Deal*, 222–233. Earlier works on the International Cooperative Alliance have emphasized the global vision of the organization but primarily attended to European participation. See for example, Mary Hilson, “Introduction: A Transnational Approach to Co-Operative History,” in *The International Co-Operative Alliance and the Consumer Co-Operative Movement in Northern Europe, c. 1860–1939*, (Manchester, 2018), 1–21; Johnston Birchall, *The International Cooperative Movement* (Manchester, 1997).

[23] Perkins uses the term “Women’s Guild sorority” to refer to the ICWG in her review of Emmy Freundlich’s history of the guild, *Housewives Build a New World*. Perkins, *Consumers Cooperation* 22 no. 9 (September 1936): 144.

They formed Women's Cooperative Guilds and sought to federate formally with the ICWG. Others rejected the idea of gendered guilds. Those women, concentrated on the East Coast, argued that cooperators should build an economy that integrated women as full players rather than emphasizing their limited participation as consumers. They worked to articulate their vision for a "political economy of peace" by taking on leadership roles in the New Deal state, educational organizations, and the church. It was very possible for all of these groups of women to look at their national consumer cooperative movement and envision it moving along different trajectories. This way of doing business still remained relatively underdeveloped throughout the interwar years in the U.S., and its nebulousness enabled its co-op members to project their own hopes for a just economy onto a still-unfolding form of enterprise.

The Transnational Formation of the Cooperative League of the United States

The Cooperative League (CL) did not introduce the idea of consumer cooperation to the United States, but its leadership did make a series of foundational choices about how to standardize both the business practice and the ideology of the movement. Those choices established a lasting faith in the "consumer" as having a set of universal interests capable of establishing social and international peace. This conviction had meaningful political and organizational implications. CL leaders often pointed to a cooperative store formed in 1845 in Boston as the first of its kind in the nation, yet Indigenous peoples had long engaged in forms of profit sharing and mutual aid.[24] The labor movement held its own consumer cooperative tradition. Since their group's formation in 1879, leaders of the Knights of Labor imagined a "Cooperative Commonwealth" that could foster workers' greater control over both the shop floor and point of sale through democratically owned cooperative stores.[25] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrant communities, from Nordic dairy workers in the Upper Midwest to Mexican agricultural laborers in Florida and California, practiced forms of cooperative buying and selling.[26] None of earlier efforts had been explicitly organized around the Rochdale model. This standardized form of consumer cooperation quickly came to dominate the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), a federation of national cooperative societies that first gathered in Brussels in 1895 with the aim of scaling these local economic democracies up. The model took a bit longer to reach U.S. shores.[27]

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[24] For example, it is characterized this way by E.R. Bowen, "A Brief Story About Consumer Cooperation in America," *American Journal of Economics* (1938). MS63–14, box 3, folder 1, Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Papers 1914–1982, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI. (Henceforth CL Papers, WHSA). For a broader history, see John Curl, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperatives, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America* (Binghamton: PM Press, 2009).

To organize a shop along the Rochdale model, a cooperator needed to follow eight defined principles. The first two, allowing only one vote per member regardless of shares held and offering membership to anyone able to pay the share price, ensured that cooperatives remained under "democratic control." Principles three and four, practicing a system of profit-sharing that distributed surplus as dividends and offering limited interest on capital, arguably shifted the motivation for economic activity from *profit* to *service*. These two practices prevented cooperatives from accumulating capital in the way privately-owned businesses did and eliminated opportunities for speculative finance.[28] They also fed into a cooperative fantasy of pre-capitalist exchange, in which the co-op allegedly offered a service by "distributing" only the goods shoppers needed rather than engaging in high-pressure sales tactics to "market" items to consumers in excess of what they really wanted to feed store profits.[29] In addition to offering a working-class survival strategy, returning dividends to members made good business sense. This rebate in proportion to purchases given at the end of the year gave consumers the capital on hand to purchase more goods or cooperative shares.

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[25] Curl, *For all the People.*

[26] Reports on these can be found in the appendix of Emerson Harris, Edgar Swan Wiers, and Florence Harris, *Co-operation: The Hope of the Consumer* (New York: MacMillan, 1918).

[27] Not even the shops of N.O. Nelson, the U.S. representative at the Second ICA Congress in Glasgow, had followed this standard. Nelson developed a string of cooperative stores in Louisiana in the 1880s and 1890s. His ventures failed around the turn of the century. He did not follow the Rochdale model because he sold products at cost rather than issuing dividends. See Horace Kallen, *Decline and Rise of the Consumer: A Philosophy of Consumer Cooperation* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936).

[28] James Warbasse, "Co-Operation: The People's Business," *The Nation* 111 no. 2889 (November 17, 1920): 555–556.

The fifth principle, which required trading with cash rather than credit, ensured liquid cash on hand. The final two principles helped define the movement's culture. Rochdale coops needed to promote education and remain politically and religiously neutral, at least until this was effectively abandoned against the fascist threat in the 1930s.[30] This faith in a "neutral" and "apolitical" consumer was critical, as it proposed an economic and social model in which divisions of class, nation, and party could be managed peacefully and without conflict.

As many new forms of social and economic planning did, Rochdale ideas came to the U.S. through the transatlantic journeys of American Progressives.[31] Journalist and occasional military adventurer Albert Sonnischen first learned about the Rochdale movement when he stopped in London on his way home to New York City after a brief engagement fighting in the Balkan Wars from 1905 to 1906. Transfixed, he extended his layover to "learn all he could" from British cooperators.[32] After returning to New York in 1907, he took his newfound passion to the Upper East Side, where he found that a community of radical Jewish immigrants had already begun to form their own cooperative societies along similar European models.

With his own $100, Sonnischen opened a cooperative grocery inspired by those he visited in England, gathered a dozen young men of mixed race and religion, and developed the first

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[29] For more on the cooperative preference for the word "distribution" (which implied producing goods that consumers actually needed to use) rather than "marketing" (which implied high-pressure sales tactics to push goods onto buyers), see Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperation as a Distributive Agency.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Belknap Press, 1998).

[32] This history of the movement is drawn from Horace Kallen, *Decline and Rise of the Consumer*. Though other stories are available, I have chosen to rely on Kallen's history because it was reviewed by Hyman Cohn, the last living member of the team who formed the first Cooperative League in the US. On the other hand, Cohn had a stake in this story and thus Kallen's account may overstate Cohn's engagement.

Cooperative League in the country. Members met each Saturday night to discuss primarily British cooperative texts and envision a future. After the grocery shop’s failure, Jewish Cooperative League member Hyman Cohn opened a fairly successful cooperative hat shop. Cohn and Sonnischen attempted to increase consumers’ influence over the hats’ production by acquiring a factory. Yet, their business failed when they could not distribute all they produced.[33]

Even so, Sonnischen and Cohn had aroused considerable interest. They had received enough attention to warrant a visit by Scottish Cooperative Wholesale Society (SCWS) director William Maxwell in 1910. To commemorate the visit, Sonnischen organized a dinner in Maxwell’s honor at Greenwich House where he introduced the businessman to a set of New York Progressive reformers. Among the men Maxwell met and charmed that evening was James Warbasse, a surgeon and political idealist who would find those conversations transformative.[34]

Over the next five years, James Warbasse and his wife Agnes became increasingly devoted to the idea of building a central organization that could unify consumer cooperative thought and practice in the United States. Inspired by the British movement’s “dual” organization, they formed one organization that would handle the social, legal, and educational side of the movement and a separate wholesale organization that would conduct and manage the business of cooperation. With his independent wealth and connections to a coterie of high-profile Progressive reformers, James established the Cooperative League as the nation’s central educational organization. His support placed the League on firm financial footing and inserted its ideas into a more mainstream left-liberal conversation. After its 1916 formation at the Warbasses’ Brooklyn home, the CL enjoyed the support of some of the most influential U.S. Progressives, including John Dewey, Emily Green Balch, Frederic Howe, and Florence Kelley.[35]

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[33] Kallen, *Decline and Rise of the Consumer.*

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Clarke Chambers, “The Cooperative League of the United States of America, 1916–1961: A Study of Social Theory and Social Action,” *Agricultural History* 36, no. 2 (1962): 59–60.

Warbasse decided that the most critical task at hand was standardizing the form of cooperation in the United States, and he began to lay out processes to do so at the CL's 1918 Congress. Most importantly, to join the League, a retail society needed to show that it followed the Rochdale Principles. By 1920, the CL adopted a federal structure that required individual retail societies to join a District League that managed educational and legal questions in its region.[36] The CL also set to work on creating a common system of accounting, enabling its financial section to perform audits that would assure consumers of sound business practices. This would be critical for legitimizing this new form of doing business in the United States.[37] After standardizing a business practice, it would be possible to begin making cultural and legal space for Rochdale cooperatives in the U.S. A legal committee of the CL would meet to discuss and draft national laws that could best support cooperative business, while others would lobby for that legislation. To grow the movement, its educational wing would create pamphlets, develop curriculums for both young people and future managers, and publish the periodical *Cooperation*, which gained a circulation of around 12,000 by 1920.[38]

Warbasse chose to focus the bulk of the CL's energy on education. As he put it in dozens of letters to cooperative leaders in Europe, he believed that it was "necessary for us to build a very substantial foundation of understanding of Cooperation before we can proceed to erect its economic structure" because, "the conditions of capitalistic business here and the circumstances of social life make cooperative development much more difficult than in Europe."[39] According to cooperative economist Joseph Knapp, the movement struggled to attract shoppers in its first decades because with the exception of an agricultural depression, "this was a time of euphoric general prosperity, and people generally were smugly satisfied with things as they were."[40] As a broad range of scholars have shown, the consumer culture that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century valorized "the new," held up standardized national brands and chain stores as symbols of modernity, and celebrated cheap consumer credit. Yet, the promise of plenty did not trickle down to all working-class Americans.[41] Consumer cooperation presented a counter to this mainstream consumer culture. The CL's most passionate supporters hoped that their business movement could attract those who did not feel their needs represented at chain retailers and department stores.

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[36] The national decision to organize cooperative work through regional units created three initial District Leagues. The first, formed in March 1922, was the Northern States League, which federated all retail societies in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The second was the Central States Cooperative League, formed in 1925, followed by the Eastern States Cooperative League in 1927. For details on the functioning of these Leagues see Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative,* 205.

[37] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise.*

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] One example of this line comes in a letter to the Belgian cooperative leader William Serwy. J Warbasse to W Serwy, April 1, 1925. MssCol 665, box 3, folder "Belgium," Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Papers, 1919–1926, New York Public Library, New York, NY, (Henceforth CL Papers, NYPL).

Just as he hoped to standardize the business form, Warbasse's core educational goal was to foster unity of thought and purpose in the national movement. Honing a single cooperative philosophy would be a difficult and potentially divisive task, as multiple and sometimes contradictory ways of thinking about cooperative economics floated around the U.S. intellectual landscape at the turn of the century. One of the most significant of these was a vibrant Black nationalist tradition, articulated most famously by W.E.B. Du Bois, which focused primarily on building the foundations of Black economic self-sufficiency.[42] This developed in parallel with the CL, but the two very rarely came into conversation. Another prominent conception, favored by the Farm Bureau, proposed that U.S. farmers could cooperatively take on the costs of transporting their products to market in order to increase final profits.[43] Because these agricultural marketing cooperatives aimed at increasing farmers' income rather than reorganizing social and economic life, Warbasse did not see them as true cooperatives. He instead favored farmers' efforts to collectively purchase productive equipment, another form of consumers' cooperation.

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[40] Knapp, *Cooperative Enterprise.*

[41] For examples of the uneven adoption of the consumer culture of 1920s among the urban working class, Lizabeth Cohen, "Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots: The Experience of Chicago Workers in the 1920s," *American Quarterly* 41 no. 1 (March 1989): 6–33. On the emergence of this mainstream consumer culture see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (Vintage Books, 1994)*;* Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of an American Mass Market* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1989).

[42] See especially Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (Penn, 2014).

Amid these streams of cooperative thought in the U.S., the Warbasses' particular patchwork of ideas would become the ideology that the CL actively promoted during its first two decades. James disseminated these ideas in his 1923 *Cooperative Democracy,* which one contemporary regarded as the bible of American cooperative philosophy during the decade.[44] Like Sonnischen and Cohn, Warbasse found British ideas most exciting. His reading of British cooperative thinkers, including Percy Redfern and Leonard Woolf, convinced him that consumers' collective ownership of production through a cooperative wholesale society offered to make the most radical social and economic interventions. This is because, for him, "the consumer interest" represented the universal economic interest. Because all people consumed, regardless of how they made the money they spent, he believed that placing control over the production and marketing of goods into consumer hands would necessarily democratize economic power.[45] In contrast, he believed that farmers' marketing cooperatives aimed to increase the interests of one particular class of producers, which Warbasse saw as a narrow and possibly divisive class interest. While he was generally favorable to African American cooperatives, he failed to engage seriously with the anti-racist, sometimes Black nationalist intellectual underpinnings of those efforts.

The universal "consumer" interest that Warbasse imagined was not confined by national borders. In a globalizing market, this consumer's interest was a fundamentally international one that he believed tended towards peaceful collaboration. From its inception, his CL positioned consumer cooperation as a political economy of peace. His peace politics were organized around the faith that the universalism of the consumer interest could displace particular interests of nation, race, or class that often led to conflict. Warbasse joined a coterie of thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic, including women like Emmy Freundlich, who believed that cooperative societies could actively change the dispositions of those who interacted with them. Democratic ownership could inspire members to work together rather than to compete for resources. Finally, given their belief in people's fundamental goodness, James and Agnes had more faith in collectives of consumers as agents of change than they had in national governments, which they feared acted not for the public good but in favor of corporate interests.[46]

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[43] See especially Knapp, *Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise.*
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] James Warbasse, *Cooperative Democracy,* (New York: MacMillan, 1923).

The CL joined the International Cooperative Alliance in 1916. Yet, as its early formation shows, the group had always existed within a vibrant transatlantic circle of reform. The Warbasses' European contacts only strengthened these ties. The couple also used their connections to share cooperative ideas at a wide range of international congresses. For example, Agnes promoted consumer cooperation as a political economy of peace at the 1924 Congress of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom. During a session on economic ideology, the U.S. social reformer Fanny Garrison Villard claimed free trade as the "all-important question of the day." In typical Cobdenite fashion, she characterized "the tariff" as "a principle cause of war" while "free trade is a question of human liberty."[47] Agnes Warbasse agreed that governments should intervene minimally in international commerce. Yet, she assured that not just *any* free trade could help move toward "a League of Nations based on brotherhood" as Villard claimed. Total free trade could enable the formation of profit-seeking cartels and monopolies that deepened global inequalities and harmed consumers. Yet, because it prioritized "service" to consumers, not "private profit or special privilege—two main causes of international hostility," Agnes believed that international cooperative trade could pave the way to a more peaceful future.[48]

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[46] In this belief, they favored a more anarchistic conception of cooperation, inspired by the French thinker Charles Gide. Gide suggested that cooperatives could remain outside of and even become an alternative the state by more efficiently providing goods like healthcare and utilities. This view is in contrast to British Fabians like Beatrice Webb who believed that cooperatives should work to integrate themselves into state infrastructure and act as a partner in providing public goods. These views are expressed in Charles Gide, *Selections from the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: MacMillan, 1937), 290 and Beatrice Webb, *The Discovery of the Consumer,* 1928 (Reprint, New York: The Cooperative League of the USA, 1934), 31–32.

[47] *Fourth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.* (District of Columbia: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1924), 84. Accessed via Women and Social Movements International (WASI).

Debating Women's "Place" in the Global Consumer Cooperative Movement, 1924

In the summer of 1924, the Warbasses toured Europe to extend their contacts and learn more about cooperative movements across the Continent. While James explored the function of consumer cooperative societies in the Soviet Union and ultimately found them lacking, Agnes conducted a comparative study of collectively-owned living arrangements in Europe which she would later publish as the *ABCs of Cooperative Housing*.[49] In August, they made a stop in Belgium for the biannual congress of the ICA. This would be the first meeting of the ICA to openly question how best to place women within this global consumer movement. Were gendered concerns simply another special interest that could disrupt the capacious possibilities of the "universal" consumer interest that remained a persistent object of cooperative fantasy? This section shows the way CL leaders engaged in this question, and how they developed their gender ideologies in conversation with—and debates against—leaders of the ICWG. In doing so, it seeks to understand why the women's cooperative movement developed so differently in the U.S. than it did in nations with strong women's guilds like Britain.

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[48] *Ibid.*, 85.

[49] James Warbasse, *Cooperation* (February/ March 1925); Agnes Warbasse, *The ABCs of Cooperative Housing,* (New York: Cooperative League, 1924).

The seed for the ICWG's first official meeting had been germinated in 1921, when a group of eight women, including Agnes Warbasse, committed themselves to work towards an international women's organization that could help shape and advise the policy of the broader ICA. The ICWG was determined to represent the "mothers and housewives" whose consumer dollars fired the engines of global production. They also hoped that the international cooperative women's movement could also serve as a mouthpiece at the League of Nations for the distinct concerns of "housewives," or women whose lives were structured by unpaid domestic work, whether or not they also worked outside the home.[50]

Austrian Social Democrat Emmy Freundlich assumed leadership of the first official meeting of the International Cooperative Women's Committee in Ghent. According to Freundlich, "the remarkable progress which has been made in the last three years indicates that it was inaugurated at *the* psychological moment."[51] Since their first meeting in 1921, cooperative women had already begun to collaborate across borders to raise funds for food aid in Russia and Germany and to draw up petitions for peaceful League of Nations management of the Franco-German debt crisis that had erupted in the Ruhr Valley. The ICWG gained such organizational capacities so quickly because it federated prominent Women's Cooperative Guilds in individual nations across Europe, especially Britain.[52] Since its formation in 1883, the English Women's Cooperative Guild offered what historian Gillian Scott has called "the organizational expression of a wide-ranging working-class feminist agenda."[53] The guild focused on the conditions of working-class women's domestic lives and labors in ways that trade unions did not, bringing political attention to divorce law reform, domestic abuse, and access to maternity care.

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[50] International Cooperative Women's Guild, "Report of the International Cooperative Women's Committee, September 1921-June 1924," (1924). U DCX, box 2, folder 2, Records of the International Women's Co-Operative Guild, 1921–1961. Hull University Archives. Hull, UK. (Henceforth ICWG Papers, Hull).

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Despite its Austrian president, British women were by far the best represented in the ICWG. The English WCG sent 64 delegates to the ICWG's 1924 Congress, while all other countries combined sent 37. U DCX, box 2 folder 2, ICWG Papers, Hull.

In contrast to Britain, no central U.S. Women's Cooperative Guild existed in 1924. Few in the U.S. regarded the relatively new and marginal consumer cooperative movement as a steppingstone to women's civic participation.[54] As a result, U.S. women could participate in the ICWG as visitors but could not cast a vote on Guild resolutions. Brooklyn-born Mabel Cheel, who represented the women of the United States at this meeting, almost single-handedly sought to change this. She actively worked on developing a National Women's Guild that might bring its members into full affiliation with the ICWG. Earlier in 1924, Cheel had toured the U.S. to locate existing women's guilds attached to consumer cooperatives.[55] She had counted twenty active guilds across the country, heavily concentrated in the Midwest, and developed a mailing list to maintain contact with leaders.[56] The guilds that Cheel encountered widely ranged in membership, but most were small. The largest at Franklin, Minnesota had 120 members while the smallest (and more typical) guild in Lewiston, Idaho had only twelve.[57]

As the chair of the CL's "Special Committee" to promote the development of women's guilds, Cheel worked to enlarge this small nucleus by sending out hundreds of letters to cooperative societies urging them to form gendered guilds. She reported to the ICWG that women in the U.S. cooperative movement had already begun to develop international ties by participating in penpal exchanges with colleagues in the United Kingdom. Working with the ICWG, Cheel planned to facilitate programs that could connect U.S. letter writers to those nearby in Canada and as far afield as Australia and South Africa. Other guilds were inherently transnational, as many of the Scandinavian immigrants to the Upper Midwest imported the guild idea to their new homes in the United States.[58] The strength of the women's guild in Franklin, Minnesota came as the result of the organization's Finnish influence, for example. In fact, Finnish immigrants started half of the consumer societies federated to the CL during the 1920s.[59]

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[53] Gillian Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women The Women's Cooperative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War,* (London: University College London Press, 1998), 4.

[54] One exception might have been Albert Sonnischen, who noted that before women could access suffrage, they participated in building a pattern of more democratic ownership through the cooperative movement. Sonnischen, *Consumers' Cooperation,* 1919.

[55] The trip is described in Mabel Cheel to Honora Enfield, June 20, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[56] Of the twenty guilds, ten were located in Illinois, two in Pennsylvania and in New York state, and one in Minnesota, Ohio, Idaho, Washington state, New Jersey, and Maryland. By far the largest was in MN. Cheel to Enfield, October 20, 1926, MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[57] *Ibid*.

Despite Cheel's best efforts to develop the women's guild idea in the United States, the idea never enticed the Warbasses. The couple remained committed to "neutrality in all fields," including religion, party politics, *and* gender.[60] When Freundlich rose to give an address on "The Place of Women in the Cooperative Movement" at the ICA Congress's main session, she failed to sell the idea to the two Americans. Her talk, which accurately reflected the ideological spirit of the ICWG's European membership, constructed an economic model that placed the housewife at its very center. She posited this figure not as a *passive* economic actor but as the household's manager and "the principal agent on whom everything depends" in economic life more broadly.[61] The housewife's labors gave her crucial, gendered knowledge about price, safety and value. Even as productive work moved outside of the home, the family remained "as a small consumers' society" in which the woman purchased the raw materials necessary for maintaining life and converted them into meals that could sustain herself, her husband, and their children.

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[58] See for example Steven Keillor, *Cooperative Commonwealth: Coops in Rural MN 1859–1939*. (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), which makes the argument that by the end of the 1930s, Minnesota was the most "cooperative- minded," or at least cooperatively developed, state in the union.

[59] According to H. Haines Turner, *Case Studies of Consumer Cooperatives: Successful Cooperatives Started by Finnish Groups in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 27.

[60] James Warbasse and Cedric Long to Henry May, May 26, 1925. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "International Cooperative Alliance," CL Papers, NYPL.

[61] Emmy Freundlich, "The Place of Women in the Cooperative Movement," 1924, U DCX, box 2, folder 2, ICWG Papers, Hull.

Freundlich's talk had clear implications for the organization of cooperative movements around the world. If women's work in the home gave them access to gendered economic knowledge that men simply did not have, then this practical reason born from distinct experience made them the most effective teachers of other women.[62] Through their guilds, women could work to turn their neighbors and friends from mere "purchasers," who might be out for the best bargain, to "cooperators," who understood how the structure of the movement could transform their family's relationship to capital and ownership over the longer term.

ICWG efforts to bring women's unpaid household work to international attention offered a radical economic vision, even if it did not question this gendered allocation of labor. While prices on some goods might appear lower at a chain store, ICWG leaders consistently argued that cooperative organization offered a more democratic model of ownership and theoretically offered women greater autonomy over their economic lives in at least two ways. The first was promised through the notion of "production for use." Rather than pressuring consumers to make a purchase they may not need, cooperative stores intended to sell what shoppers needed in an honest and forthright way. Further, cooperative retail societies offered opportunities for consumers to voice concerns about the quality of products at regular meetings in ways that might actually influence business operations. In Great Britain, from which over half of the ICWG's most committed members came, the English and Scottish CWS owned around 70 factories.[63] This theoretically gave the 52,000 women in the English women's co-operative guild a direct say in production. If a good was unsatisfactory, or if they wanted more or different kinds of products, they could make a request at co-operative society meetings.[64] These complaints could travel up information chains to central offices, which could pass requests along to the CWS. Managers could then consult with the factories that were directly under their control. Second, women could organize cooperatives that helped them share housework, like collectively-owned laundries and cafeterias. By entering into guilds to promote these as *women's interests,* Freundlich believed that cooperatives could be held to their promise to wrest control of the means of reproduction.

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[62] Peter Gurney has argued that those in the British working class who shopped at cooperatives demonstrated through their consistent choice to do so that this way of organizing economic life suited their needs. Even if it was not a conscious opposition to for-profit capitalism, shopping at the cooperative implied that this alternative business structure more successfully served its shoppers. Peter Gurney, *Co-Operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930,*(Manchester University Press, 1996).

[63] Anthony Webster, Cooperation and Globalisation: The British Co-operative Wholesales, The Co-Operative Group and the World since 1863 (London: Routledge, 2019).

The ICA affirmed Freundlich's thinking and included a resolution that encouraged national cooperative leagues to form women's guilds, promoting the participation of the "manager of the household" in the movement. For James Warbasse, however, Freundlich's model and all of its implications came off as more insulting to women than empowering. In a letter to the ICA co-signed with CL General Secretary Cedric Long, he declared that the American movement did "not approve of sex distinctions or discrimination. We do not agree with the resolution in the statement that woman is the 'manager of the household.' "[65] Rather than building the movement in a way that might reify a separate economic sphere or posit a distinct women's interest, both James and Agnes Warbasse urged that the cooperative movement should work to *remove* the gender divisions that structured economic life. They asserted that men and women could act equally as managers, financiers, educators, and consumers. The Warbasses' decision set in motion a fundamental structural choice that would position many U.S. women's cooperative organizing as separate from that of Europeans in the ICWG, especially on the east coast of the U.S. where the couple's ideas had the most purchase.

As Agnes Warbasse had explained to her international colleagues in 1921, individual American women took on a variety of leadership roles in the U.S. movement. As an independent social reformer who wrote extensively on cooperative social movements in Europe, Agnes herself presented a case in point. As another example, the most visible American economist who became interested in consumer cooperative enterprise in the decade was Florence Parker. From 1920 to 1950, she developed reports of the consumer cooperative movement for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.[66] In contrast to some overly enthusiastic promoters of the movement, Parker kept a level-headed view of consumer cooperation's rough start. She carefully recorded its multiple failures in her 1920 and 1925 reports, speculating that 249 retail cooperatives failed during that period because they had not saved up the reserve capital necessary to see them through the postwar depression.[67] Her data offered an invaluable resource for those business leaders who worked to establish a list of best practices during the decade.

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[64] This number in reference to women in the WCG around 1920 comes from Margaret Bondfield, "The Meaning of Trade," in *Self and Society* Percy Redfern, ed. (London: Co-Operative Union, 1929), 25.

[65] James Warbasse and Cedric Long to Henry May. May 26, 1925. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "International Cooperative Alliance," CL Papers, NYPL.

Women also started businesses themselves. In 1919, Mary Arnold, Mabel Reed, Dorothy Kenyon, and a few of their colleagues began a cooperative cafeteria in New York City. It developed into one of the nation's most prominent chains of cooperative grocery stores and restaurants, Consumer Cooperative Services.[68] Such efforts were not confined to the East Coast. After moving to San Bernardino, Cheel herself came in contact with women working to develop cooperative businesses in California. A Mrs. W.B. Tipton of Pasadena, for example, worked with "a group of men from one of our papers" to form a cooperative cafe that would offer affordable lunches near their office. Women the church were active cooperative philosophers, too. Tipton's letter alerted Cheel of a talk coming up in Pasadena, sponsored by the local branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, that would discuss "Cooperation and its Relationship to

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[66] Highlights of this data is compiled in Florence Parker, *The First 125 Years: A History of Distributive and Service Cooperation in the United States, 1829–1954* (Chicago: Cooperative League, 1956).

[67] Florence Parker, *Consumers' Cooperation in the United States, 1920* (BLS No. 313).

[68] Parker, *The First 125 Years*, 1956.

World Peace."[69] Though she embraced these ideas as her own, Tipton got her inspiration from a British immigrant who was acquainted with the cooperatives in his former hometown.

While Tipton came into contact with consumer cooperation by interacting with international residents in her own neighborhood, other women encountered it during their travels abroad. In February 1925, Alice M. Clark of the American Church Missions wrote James Warbasse from her post at Hankow, China, to tell him how inspired she had been after reading his *Cooperative Democracy.* After passing Warbasse's text along to "a young Chinese business man," she decided to take up the task of building a cooperative store in Hankow. Bringing this system to China would be "real missionary work" she claimed, because the nation "is in a most distracted and deplorable condition at present." Yet, Clark "could not help but feel that if cooperation could become widespread in this country, it would do more towards promoting peace."[70] This was not a model of cooperative equality. Clark hoped to import what she saw as a peaceful business practice from West to lift Chinese women from a "deplorable" condition.

In 1925, while Alice Clark dreamed of sowing the seeds of cooperative democracy in China, YWCA missionary Helen Faville Topping worked towards building consumer cooperatives in Japan. Topping had worked with Japanese American girls in the West Coast of the United States before she was stationed to help form the first YWCA in Kobe, Japan in 1918.[71] Somewhat unlike Clark, Topping expressed a desire not to "impose" Western structures of belief and social life onto East Asian women, whom she did not see as in desperate need of her help. Rather, she claimed that she "tried to use and encourage native leadership. I insisted that we were working together."[72] By applying Christian virtue ethics to existing social problems, Topping hoped that she could "help [Japanese women] see the Jesus of their own hearts."[73] Her passion for the social gospel brought her to Kobe's most impoverished neighborhoods, where the Japanese Christian socialist Toyohiko Kagawa spoke on his vision of a cooperative commonwealth. Topping was enthralled with his vision of a non-profit social economy that could foster what she called "redemptive love that transcends race." [74] Topping played into the fantasy of a consumer interest as "transcendent," or as an expression of a set of basic material needs that all people shared and that could help foster what Kagawa called a "universal consciousness." She joined Kagawa's team as secretary in 1925, beginning a two-decades-long partnership through which she was tasked at translating the cooperative thought of this so-called "Japanese Gandhi" to American audiences.

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[69] Mrs. T.B. Tipton to Mabel Cheel c/o The Cooperative League US, November 12 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[70] Alice Clark to James Peter Warbasse, February 13, 1925. MssCol 665, box 3, folder "China," CL Papers, NYPL.

[71] Lauren Austin, "Kagawa's English Voice: Helen Faville Topping Bridges the Cultural Gap Between East and West in Spiritual and Economic Affairs," *Legacy* 15 no. 1 (Article 2), 2.

[72] *Ibid.,* 4.

In Search of an American Cooperative Women's Guild, 1924–1927

In the 1920s, individual American women like Parker, Tipton, and Clark built societies, collected data, and spread the ideas of consumer cooperation globally. For the Warbasses, this apparent gender parity was ideal. Yet Cheel continued to believe that the women's guild idea promised to bring ordinary women, rather than a handful of exceptional individuals, into a broad-based social movement, and she failed to see how attending to gendered interests could divide or weaken the fantasy of a universal consumer interest. Driven by this conviction, Cheel continued to do her best to develop a national Cooperative Women's Guild in the United States that could formally join the ICWG. In 1926, she motored from California to New York to promote women's inclusion in the decision-making bodies of consumer cooperative societies.[75] This section explores the difficulties Cheel encountered as she attempted to organize U.S. women into cooperative guild structures modeled after the ones she learned about through her work with the ICWG. While some of the roadblocks she faced were uniquely American, others were local reflections of international debates within the cooperative movement.

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[73] *Ibid.,* 4.

[74] *Ibid.,* 3.

[75] Mabel Cheel, "A Journey of Four Weeks to Some Cooperative Centers in the U.S.A.," *Northern States Cooperative Guild Yearbook* (1926), 44–46.

U.S. guilds did not carry direct correspondence with the ICWG, and so most of the ICWG's knowledge about what happened in the U.S. came from letter exchanges between Cheel and Alice Honora Enfield, the British woman who served as ICWG general secretary. On May 28, 1926, Cheel circulated a letter to the leaders of women's guilds in an effort to foster more direct connection between individual guilds and the ICWG. "If world wide cooperation and peace are to become a reality," Cheel urged in language that echoed Freundlich's, "it is essential that the mothers and housewives who play so important a part as cooperators and citizens, should be brought together in common work for a common ideal."[76] She encouraged U.S. guildswomen to see themselves as part of something greater and to feel "a pride in membership affiliation with our sisters of every country engaged in promoting the cooperative movement, the real harmonizer of nationalities and the greatest force for Peace among all nations." In the name of this cooperative sisterhood, she asked for a report of activities and a donation of any amount as a symbol of transatlantic solidarity.[77] Enfield felt sure that "it would be very much appreciated by members of the old world to receive such encouragement from the new."[78]

Many of the reports that Cheel forwarded on to Enfield in 1926 told stories not of encouragement but of decline. From 1924 to 1926, Cheel reported that no new women's guilds had formed despite her efforts, and many of those that she had visited before had lapsed or diminished. For example, the Utica, NY Guild dwindled down from 20 to 8 active members. Its Secretary, Clara Henschke, apologized for attaching the "very small amount" of $1 as a donation to the international guild, and expressed a wish that the guild's finances could support a larger contribution to the cause, which she nevertheless felt passionate about.[79] Despite their small donation, Women's Guild members did engage in conversations about peace and foreign affairs along with the rest of the Utica Cooperative Society. In 1926, for example, they resolved to "join in the protest of the International Cooperative Alliance" against Mussolini's destruction of cooperatives in Italy, and "extend [their] sympathies to the persecuted Italian cooperators."[80] They forwarded their anti-fascist resolution to the CL, and urged its secretary Cedric Long to pass it along to the ICA itself. The U.S. movement lacked the capital and organizational capacity to send significant financial aid abroad in the interwar years, but its opposition to fascism did demonstrate a selective breakdown of the Rochdale commitment to political neutrality. Henschke's inability to send more than $1 in donations did not indicate a lack of interest in cooperative activity abroad, but rather expressed the guild's lack of disposable income.

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[76] Mabel Cheel to A Honora Enfield, May 28, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[77] A Honora Enfield to Mabel Cheel, August 17 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[78] *Ibid.*

Financial difficulties were common. Some societies had developed at unionized factories or mines, but as some of these unions declined in the anti-labor climate of the 1920s, they dissolved their cooperatives.[81] Poor finances and personal tragedy could combine to cripple guilds, and shallow membership pools meant that it could be difficult to keep a guild running after its leader fell ill. Mrs. C.A. Donovan of Bartlesville, OK confessed to Cheel that while the women "are all still loyal to the cooperative store," the "guild dose [sic] not meet any more. I had a Stroke of Paralisis [sic] and have not been able to keep it up," or find a replacement.[82]

There were other reasons why, by the mid-1920s, small women's groups in the ideologically volatile U.S. cooperative movement struggled to hold themselves together. International crises could have local effects that broke cooperative societies apart. At the Stockholm meeting of the ICA in 1927, the consumer cooperative movement of the USSR threatened to use the financial weight of their membership contributions to push the ICA away from adherence to the apolitical Rochdale model towards an explicitly class-driven, socialist conception.[83] When a number of U.S. cooperators became drawn to Soviet-style cooperation, especially those built by first- and second-generation Finns, this global issue became a local problem. Some of the CL's most progressive members pushed to obliterate the Rochdale insistence on political neutrality and instead claimed that cooperatives needed to function as "agents of the working-class revolt" lest they become a "tool of bourgeois hegemony."[84]

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[79] Clara Henschke to Mabel Cheel, October 2, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[80] Kalle Aronen to Mr. Cedric Long, March 4, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Utica Guild," CL Papers, NYPL.

[81] Mabel Cheel to Honora Enfield, July 20, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[82] Mrs. C.A. Donovan to Mabel Cheel, July 20, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

Predictably, Warbasse expressed his personal opposition to the way such openly articulated "class interests" threatened to upend social peace and reveal the fiction of a universal consumer. Yet, CL leaders realized that they needed to proceed with caution. On the one hand, this vocal minority might diminish any credibility the consumers' movement had gained in the conservative 1920s. On the other, these Finnish immigrants had been integral in building the largest retail society in the CL, the United Cooperative Society (UCS) in Maynard, MA and the strongest regional federation of stores in the country, the Central Cooperative Wholesale based in Superior, WI. The ideological schism threatened to tear the movement apart when it escalated into a showdown between Rochdale proponents and the Communist faction at the League's 1926 Congress. When Warbasse and his supporters successfully pushed communists out of the CL, the action ruptured some local groups. For example, some of the former members of the Kavela Cooperative, a member of the UCS in Massachusetts, grew openly hostile and preferred to shop at rivals in a calculated attempt to hurt the UCS stores.[85] In these tense environments, women struggled to establish and sustain their guilds as ideologically coherent social movements.

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[83] The most complete treatment of the ICA remains Johnston Birchall, *The International Cooperative Movement* (Manchester, 1997).

[84] Haines Turner, *Case Studies of Consumers' Cooperatives,* 79.

Those women who did develop the guilds in the 1920s could find it "very hard to get women interested enough to become members," as one Utica organizer confessed to Cheel. In return, Cheel suggested that leaders should identify "anything that is a REAL problem" for families in the community so as to draw women in, and only then—after attracting interest around civic issues—move on to discussions of the store and cooperative theory or practice. Yet, in contrast to women in the English Women's Cooperative Guilds, which developed a robust national network that offered working-class women a space to develop campaigns around their domestic interests, white U.S. women did not tend to turn to coops for civic organizing in the 1920s.[86] Instead, U.S. working-class women were more likely to work through more established channels, like labor union auxiliaries or farm women's movements, while middle-class women took their places in club movements organized around particular causes. It was not that British women did not also work through trade unions or rural women's movements, but the WCG gave representation to a very particular and very powerful conception of women's domestic lives and interests. In the United States, the cooperative movement's philosophy was neither so clearly worked out nor so politically powerful, and it struggled to gather the critical mass of members it would need to start building greater clout.

Women's guilds also failed to generate support from male cooperative leaders, who struggled to understand their utility. These business leaders tended to see the guilds as time wasters at best or liabilities at worst. Male business leaders flooded Cheel with letters bemoaning what they saw as the flippant attitude of guildswomen. In Kincaid, IL, women were reportedly "sitting around all day playing cards," while women in Bloomingdale, IL apparently spent the winter of 1925 "gossiping."[87] Even worse, Otto Endres in Utica complained that members of the Women's Guild were responsible for circulating rumors that "cut-rate" chain stores carried the same goods for less than the coop. In contrast to Freundlich's speech in 1924, this guild did not turn women into "cooperators." Instead, Endres claimed, it merely encouraged them to act as "bargain hunters" whose loyalty to their pocketbook came before the movement's ideals.[88]

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[85] In an even more antisocial move, local Communist Party members used UCS caterers for their events, wracking up hundreds of dollars of debt. They then allegedly refused to pay, instead claiming that "their defrauding of the society was justified by its failure to assist Communist endeavors." *Ibid.*, 80.

[86] See especially Gillian Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Barbara Blaszak, *The Matriarchs of England's Cooperative Movement: A Study in Gender Politics and Female Leadership, 1883–1921* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2000). An excellent primary source on British women's work through cooperatives is found in Margaret Llewellyn Davies, *Life as We Have Known it* (London: Hogarth, 1931).

In the mid-1920s, as Cheel's efforts show, Women's Cooperative Guilds failed to coalesce in the United States in the way that they did in Europe. Cheel's efforts faced severe limits as a result of a lack of funds, global ideological disputes that fractured local societies, and the limited popularity of women's cooperative guilds amongst native-born Americans in the 1920s. After months of work, Cheel was only able to raise $28 for the international, including a $5 donation from her own pocket. She sent the sum to Enfield in late October with a note expressing both apology and hope: "this small amount … will not go very far towards meeting the year's expenses, but it [is] an indication of the beginning of an interest and understanding, which I hope will grow steadily and increase over time."[89] For this to happen, however, the CL would need to extend a warmer and more conscious welcome to the most numerically significant group of women engaged in cooperative consumption: farm wives in the rural Midwest. It would be these women who ultimately offered the critical mass necessary to start building a sizable and coherent women's cooperative movement.

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[87] A. W. Warriner to Mabel Cheel. August 28, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[88] Otto Endres to Cedric Long. March 30, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder, "Utica Cooperative Society," CL Papers, NYPL.

[89] Mabel Cheel to A. Honora Enfield, October 17, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

Chapter 4. Building a Global "Cooperative Sorority," 1924–1938

Though urban consumers' cooperation remained a fringe movement that struggled to attract women shoppers or guilds in the 1920s, agricultural purchasing cooperatives came to national prominence that decade to raise farm incomes. Farmers were squeezed from multiple angles after the First World War. Agricultural depression meant a slash in commodity prices. Meanwhile, keeping their machinery up to date did not come cheaply, and many farmers went into debt to finance their operations. Farm purchasing cooperatives helped to reduce that debt by helping farm families buy farm equipment in bulk to enjoy greater economies of scale. Though Cheel explained to Enfield that the *urban* consumer cooperative guilds diminished in the 1920s, she pointed out that "the Farmers Cooperative Unions" were on the rise. "In the state of Iowa alone," she reported, "16 new women's auxiliaries have been organized to study Consumers' Cooperation."[90] Some women who lived and worked on farms in the U.S. Midwest figured themselves at the nexus of production and consumption, and they were beginning to push their husbands' farm supply purchasing cooperatives to start catering to household needs for groceries and homewares.[91]

Why, then, didn't Cheel make more of an effort to come in contact with *these* women? Tension between the CL's primarily urban cooperatives and agricultural purchasing cooperatives presented one critical reason. In theory, Warbasse believed that farmers who used cooperatives to purchase productive goods belonged beneath the broad umbrella of cooperative enterprise, so long as they followed Rochdale ideas. Yet, his 1923 *Cooperative Democracy* alienated these groups by pushing for the "primacy" of consumers' interest. Following the British thinkers he read most closely and the model of the English CWS, Warbasse argued that putting all forms of production under "consumer control" ensured the fairest economy for all.

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[90] Mabel Cheel, "Report on Women's Guilds in the U.S.A.," October 20, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL.

[91] Bertram Fowler, *Consumer Cooperation in America: Democracy's Way Out,* (New York: Vanguard, 1936).

For many involved in organizing rural cooperatives through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Warbasse's idea of a universal consumer interest could be somewhat baffling. In the 1920s, many farmers had to sell nutritious food for such low prices that they could barely afford to feed themselves and their families a healthy diet. Organizing through a marketing or purchasing cooperative helped farmers increase their income, and thus helped them bolster their own purchasing power as consumers. Further, just as Warbasse believed that many consumers longed to regain greater control over their economic lives, farmers also wanted commercial autonomy. Unsurprisingly, as USDA economist Joseph Knapp made clear, the idea of working on a farm owned by one of the CL's cooperative wholesalers did not excite farmers in the U.S any more than it did in Ireland, as Chapter 1's case study shows.[92] Farmers failed to see how working under a consumer-owned wholesaler would be any different from working for any other business. If it wanted to include farmers who used cooperatives to purchase goods from gasoline to animal feed, the CL would need some conscious repositioning.

New Deal Liberals and the Remaking of the Cooperative League, 1932–1937

The 1932 Congress of the CL was, in the words of one of its chroniclers, "a sombre affair."[93] Warbasse continued to financially support the CL as a central educational body, but contributions from member societies withered as depression deepened. As Florence Parker put it in her report, the depression hit these retailers with such force because, cooperatives primarily served the working class, meaning that their customer base was "peculiarly sensitive" to changes in price and income. Cooperatives had not saved up enough capital resources to weather these economic hard times, and so "a substantial number of associations were wiped out by the results of unemployment, bank failures, failures of employing firms."[94]

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[92] Knapp, *Advance of Cooperative Enterprise.*

[93] *Ibid.*

National Women's Guild organizing also appeared to come to a standstill. In the late 1920s, Mabel Cheel suffered health complications from appendicitis, preventing her from traveling across Europe and the United States.[95] She continued to support the cooperative movement from her California home, but she put her almost single-handed attempt to bring U.S. women into full communion with the ICWG on hold. This did not mean that local women's guilds did not continue to organize, however. For example, when *Cooperation* editor Oscar Cooley travelled to Chicago in late 1932, he attended a joint meeting of two African American cooperative retail societies, the Liberty Cooperative Co. and the Young Negro Cooperative League. These societies formed a women's guild to encourage Black housewives to purchase groceries through their cooperative buying club rather than local chain stores.[96] Clearly, U.S. women continued to participate as active cooperators. Without a National Women's Guild, local guilds like these lacked a formal means of communication with one another or with the ICWG.

Even as the CL's future looked bleak, events elsewhere in the nation would change both the economic and ideological course of the U.S. consumer cooperative movement. These new developments helped make the CL the strongest it had been in its almost twenty-year history and also created the conditions for a more socially relevant women's guild movement. This section details those shifts, because they were critical for the ways the CL emerged as a powerful organization in favor of a model of ethical international trade. The transformations in CL leadership in the mid-1930s made it possible for the organization to gain both the political and economic clout it needed to loudly voice its conception of a "political economy of peace" during the Depression decade and at the peace conferences during and after World War II.

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[94] United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Consumer Cooperation in the United States, 1936," Prepared by Florence Parker. U.S. Department of Labor Bulletin No. 659 (August 1938): 11.

[95] Mabel Cheel to Roy Shanks. September 21, 1926. MssCol 665, box 2, folder "Women's Guilds," CL Papers, NYPL. The cooperative movement could also ostensibly offer missionaries opportunities to work with local communities rather than dictate ideas in an attempt to rescue them.

[96] Oscar Cooley, "On the Road," *Cooperation* 19 no. 1 (January 1933): 5.

The first of these developments occurred in November 1932, when a committee of farm purchasing cooperative leaders met to establish America's first nation-wide cooperative wholesale organization.[97] It emerged as a solution to a practical problem. Sometimes, two cooperative wholesalers might make a joint order of petroleum or feed in order to enjoy greater economies of scale. Upon learning about this arrangement, other wholesalers might want to join in on future purchases. Eventually, coordinating these orders could become onerous labor for the wholesale society that ultimately took on the task of communicating them to suppliers. Rather than saddling an individual wholesaler with this responsibility, the idea was to create a center for coordinated purchasing that could establish its own office and staff.[98] Though the organization began by facilitating purchases of farm supply products like gasoline, tubes, and tires, a core group of delegates hoped that it would eventually grow to deal in groceries and home goods.

In February 1933, these farm supply purchasing co-op leaders formally incorporated National Cooperatives Inc (NCI). Its founders set out two goals. First, NCI sought to purchase and distribute *any* goods demanded by regional wholesalers. If NCI buyers faced difficulty acquiring reliable supplies at reasonable prices, then the body also planned to set up or acquire manufacturing plants to produce the wares itself. Second, it sought to assist regional wholesalers in organizing and financing new consumer cooperatives in their districts.[99] These ambitious goals set something to strive for, but for the first three years after its incorporation, NCI primarily served as a coordinating center for its original seven member units. By 1936, employees at NCI's Chicago office developed buying committees that negotiated master contracts with suppliers, for which regional wholesalers paid a small brokerage fee. It also joined the International Cooperative Wholesale Society, which by 1938 helped its 21 member countries place international purchases of cooperatively-grown and produced goods.[100] (Figure 4a)

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[97] "Farm Cooperative Leaders Meet to Draft Plan for Central Wholesaling," *Consumers Cooperation* 19 no. 1 (January 1933): 1.

[98] Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative as a Distributive Agency.*

[99] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise,* 375.

Many in the CL recognized that they would need to work with the infrastructure built by the farm supply purchasing cooperatives in order to develop a retail movement of national importance. Cooley, who reported on the 1932 Chicago meeting for *Cooperation,* admitted that "the consumers' movement in the towns has been slow to grow. It will be helped by strong cooperative wholesales," which could achieve economies of scale that could bring the price of goods down to levels competitive with chain stores. While "farm consumers" built the beginnings of these wholesales, if they could "broaden their scope to reach the town consumer, [then] they may be the means of giving the general consumers' movement a great boost."[101]

To encourage NCI-affiliated wholesalers to begin handling a wider variety of consumer goods, CL leadership needed to rework the philosophy of Warbasse's *Cooperative Democracy* and heal rifts between agricultural and urban consumer cooperatives. Shortly after the sudden passing of CL General Secretary Cedric Long, a new and enthusiastic board member fell into the organization's orbit. Eugene R. Bowen, a former agribusiness marketer at Avery Co. in Illinois, found himself disillusioned with profit-driven selling and quit his job in search of another way of doing business.[102] In 1932, he began to informally study cooperative economics with Paul Douglas at the University of Chicago. As a businessman more interested in practice than abstract social theories, Bowen found himself drawn to a more technical corpus of cooperative texts than Warbasse had been. He was particularly interested in the Swedish movement, which was primarily designed to serve an agrarian population and did not separate the purchasing of

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[100] Howard Cowden, Speech at the Twelfth Cooperative League Congress, 1938. MS 63–014, box 2, folder 5. CL Papers, WHSA.

[101] Oscar Cooley, "On the Road," *Consumers Cooperation* 19 no. 1 (January 1933): 6.

[102] This is how James Warbasse characterized him in "Our New Secretary," *Cooperation* 20 no. 5 (May 1934): 66.

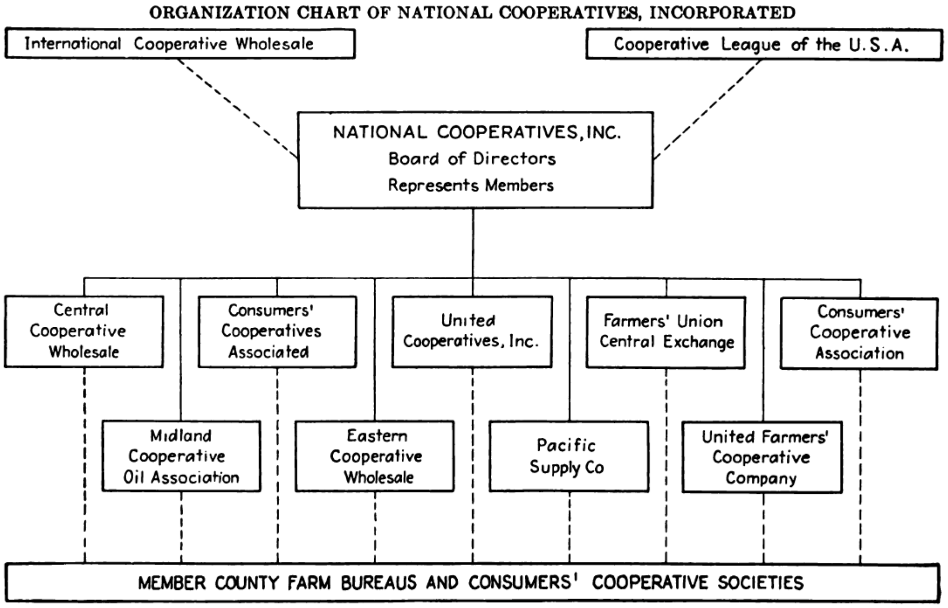
ORGANIZATION CHART OF NATIONAL COOPERATIVES, INCORPORATED
International Cooperative Wholesale
Cooperative League of the U.S.A.
NATIONAL COOPERATIVES, INC.
Board of Directors
Represents Members
Central Cooperative Wholesale
Consumers' Cooperatives Associated
United Cooperatives, Inc.
Farmers' Union Central Exchange
Consumers' Cooperative Association
Midland Cooperative Oil Association
Eastern Cooperative Wholesale
Pacific Supply Co
United Farmers' Cooperative Company
MEMBER COUNTY FARM BUREAUS AND CONSUMERS' COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Figure 4a: The Structure of National Cooperatives, Inc. by 1939.
Source: Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative as a Distributive Agency,* (1939), 214.

farm equipment from home goods, both of which were facilitated through a single national wholesaler.[103] While Warbasse was on a speaking tour of the campus, Douglas introduced him to Bowen. Impressed with Bowen's knowledge and enthusiasm, Warbasse gave him a position as Director of Education at the CL's national office. After meeting him, the League's Board of Directors promoted the agribusinessman to General Secretary.

Just as the NCI was formed in February 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, entered the White House. His New Deal government urged the CL to revise its earlier opposition to working within the state by offering a supportive atmosphere for the development of a national consumers cooperative movement. By 1934, any suggestion of political neutrality was abandoned. CL leaders urged consumers to use their voting power to serve their own interests and those of the movement. Their efforts included pushing for freer trade laws to deepen U.S. cooperative trade abroad, including one 1938 memorandum that asked the State Department to reduce tariffs on goods produced at UK cooperative factories. Its text noted that the English Cooperative Wholesale Society was the largest individual purchaser of U.S. farm goods, and should thus be rewarded with lower duties on its own products.[104]

Roosevelt quickly gave CL representatives a place at the table in his New Deal administration. He appointed one of the League's supporters, Mary Rumsey, to the newly-formed Consumer Advisory Board (CAB).[105] The CAB attempted to voice and protect consumer interests, ensuring that purchasers' needs would be considered in the drafting of National Recovery Administration (NRA) codes. The CL's legal advisory board, directed by Dorothy Kenyon, ensured that New Deal legislation did not unduly tax or burden cooperative sales revenue to ensure that maximum patronage dividends could be returned to shoppers. Even if Cheel's experiment stood at a standstill, then, women like Rumsey and Kenyon were some of consumer cooperations’ most visible spokespeople in the early 1930s.

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[103] Orin Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative as a Distributive Agency.*

[104] Consumers' Council Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Cooperation," February 14, 1938, p. 10.

[105] Knapp, *The Advance of Cooperative Enterprise in America,* 377.

To take advantage of these new developments, Bowen sought to win approval from three groups: leaders of farm equipment purchasing cooperatives, New Deal policy intellectuals, and broader left-liberal voters eager for a solution that could re-establish a robust democracy against the looming global threat of fascism. In all of these groups, Bowen would encounter people who were drawn not just to the way co-ops could stretch spending power in the midst of the Depression, but also to the idea that building up international cooperative trade could enhance possibilities for peace. Bowen himself would articulate a very clear and highly influential idea of cooperation as an anti-fascist “political economy of peace” in the mid-1930s. His way of thinking about cooperation reinvigorated and broadened a movement that had stagnated in the 1920s. Further, the organizational reforms that he put in place in 1934 would, in the words of one observer, widen the consumer cooperation in America from a small “cult” of enthusiastic devotees to a nation-wide social movement.[106]

To win over the leaders of the farm equipment purchasing movement, Bowen gave a speaking tour of the Midwest to makeover the CL’s image in the region. He assured that the organization no longer sought to acquire the land upon which farmers worked. Instead, he offered an outline of his new plan to build out the NCI to serve all kinds of consumer needs. His own experience as an agribusiness marketer ensured he cut an admirable figure to NCI’s leaders, many of whom soon joined the organization and became capable CL organizers.[107]

The integration of farm purchasing cooperatives into the CL did not weaken its commitment to peace politics. Through ties to the NCI, the CL gained one of its most enthusiastic proponents of consumer cooperation as a political economy of peace: Howard Cowden of the Consumer

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[106] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise,* 401.

[107] *Ibid.,* 381.

Cooperative Association, a gasoline wholesaler based in North Kansas City, MO. Cowden would eventually help the CCA grow to include a grocery trade, but he was most passionate about providing gasoline and oil to both urban and rural consumers. By 1934, the CCA began shipping its petroleum goods internationally, beginning with a shipment to Estonia. It soon filled orders with cooperative wholesales in France, Belgium, Scotland, Holland, Bulgaria, Canada and had inquiries as far afield as Australia.[108] These exchanges were explicitly motivated by Cowden's belief that cooperation could bring peace. In a speech to the CL, he declared that global oil monopolies were “without doubt, the most prolific source of international irritation that now and then threatens the peace of the world.”[109] Cooperatives might break this hold, he insisted, “yet not a single cooperative anywhere owns a single oil well, or a complete refinery, or a tanker, or pipelines. We have left all these vast resources to the peace disturbing cartels, and out of the profit they control not only the lives and fortunes of millions of individuals but of governments as well.”[110] Starting in 1934, Cowden served as a CL delegate at the International Cooperative Alliance, a body he regarded as the real “League of Nations” because it represented “not bankers, not politicians, but common people: consumers and producers.”[111] There, he presented plans for an International Cooperative Petroleum Association that he hoped could improves chances of peace by enabling the “common people” to gain more control over the sources of their fuel, though these plans would take a bit longer to come to fruition.

By late 1934, so many new consumer organizations had been brought into the CL's orbit that the League could finally pay its operating costs through membership dues and literature sales. Given this newfound financial independence from its founder, Bowen could now afford to diverge from Warbasse's somewhat inflexible ideological framework. In May 1934, he announced his own conception of the Cooperative League in a special issue of *Cooperation* entitled "Cooperation: America's Answer."[112]

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[108] Cowden, Speech at the Twelfth Cooperative League Congress, 1938.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Ibid.*

In his widely-circulated essay, Bowen cast consumer cooperation as the most promising of any existing political economic system that Americans could employ to address systematic wealth disparities. Fascism and state communism were clearly incompatible with Americans' stated commitment to "economic democracy." Thus, the U.S. government turned to yet another option: regulated capitalism. Yet for Bowen, the regulated capitalism of Roosevelt's New Deal was not enough to secure "economic democracy" because its policies did not necessarily place ownership and control of economic processes into collective hands. Working store by store, cooperation had the power to restore individual ownership over local economic life, it cut down costs of distribution by building wholesalers motivated by service rather than private profit, and it helped restore workers' control over the terms of their labor. By democratizing ownership and preventing the accumulation of excess profit in the hands of individuals, cooperation also eliminated some of the disparities that Bowen believed led people to place their faith in fascism. By preventing a turn to "economic dictatorship" and the wars over land and resources waged by fascist states, cooperation offered a "peaceful planned road of plenty." Further, by casting cooperation as outside of these established systems, Bowen gave readers the opportunity to fill in cooperation's still-murky contours with their conception of fair economic practices that other systems lacked.

According to one of Bowen's supporters in the CL, the publication "expressed the new spirit of the League" which "captured the public's imagination, and liberals of all types began to show interest in consumers' cooperation."[113] A series of left-liberal women professionals played an important role in spreading the gospel of cooperation both inside and outside of the New Deal state. In the mid-1930s, those invested in the consumer cooperative movement understood themselves as building a social and economic democracy. Education was central to that work. Just as they were critical in developing peace education curriculums in the 1920s, women educators offered what Bowen called a "powerful aid" to the CL in the mid-1930s.[114] Joy Elmer Morgan, editor of the *Journal of the National Education Association,* played a visible role. In 1936, she sent Bowen a letter declaring that her faith that "the cooperative movement offers a peaceful pathway toward a better civilization" in "a world disheartened by unemployment and torn by war."[115] Her vocal support drew attention of others in the teaching profession.

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[112] E. R. Bowen, "America's Answer— Consumer Cooperation. A Challenge and a Call to Action," *Cooperation* 20 no. 5 (May 1934): 67–82.

[113] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise,* 381.

In the second half of 1936, Morgan used her position at the *Journal* to write editorials encouraging secondary school educators to integrate Marquis Child's bestseller *Sweden The Middle Way* into their curricula.[116] Later that year, she commissioned CL organizer Ben Y. Landis to write a seventeen-page piece on the development of the consumer cooperative movement in North America aimed at high school students. When she ran the article in January 1937, it circulated to the magazine's 214,000 subscribers and sold several thousand more copies as a standalone CL pamphlet. "Since our American schools cannot be saved if the social-economic order collapses," she wrote, "it behooves school folk to give their communities as much help as possible toward an understanding of economic problems and their solutions."[117]

Morgan offered the CL a visible ally, but she was not leading a one-woman campaign. As of September 1, 1935, the state of Wisconsin made it compulsory to include basic elements of consumer cooperation in high school and vocational school curriculums.[118] Though they did not pass laws making this education compulsory, educators in Minnesota and North Dakota also innovated in cooperative curriculum design and offered state subsidies to develop these curricula.[119] With encouragement from Morgan, the National Education Association (NEA) formed a Committee on Cooperatives in 1938. In addition to explaining the basic functionality of consumer cooperatives, NEA reports included sections that encouraged educators to see themselves as practicing a peace pedagogy. "If cooperative groups working in the interest of consumers in all countries, could be formed they would do much to discourage the adoption of war as a solution of economic and prestige problems," the NEA's second annual report claimed.[120] While the authors admitted that Germany's cooperative movement did not stop a global war in 1914, they clarified that "basic thinking on cooperating with other people had not become fundamental." The business forms were not enough; cooperation needed to inspire an ethical imagination that informed everyday practice. The most difficult challenge of education, then, was to "further the development of such an attitude," which the authors insisted could ease the fundamental tensions that caused wars.[121]

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[114] *Ibid.,* 386.

[115] Joy Elmer Morgan, Letter to the Editor, *Consumers Cooperation* 22 no. 5 (May 1936).

[116] Joy Elmer Morgan, "From Editor to Reader," *Journal of the National Education Association* 25 no. 4 (April 15, 1936).

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] Maurice Wieting, *How to Teach Consumers' Cooperation,* 99.

In addition to public school teachers, women in church and missionary organizations played critical roles in spreading and teaching cooperative ideas. Helen Topping's work to organize Kagawa's tour in the first six months of 1936 yielded dividends, as the CL received anecdotal evidence that the trip inspired the formation of new cooperative societies.[122] She also became a lecturer in her own right, giving a speech on Japan to the ICWG in 1938.[123] Yet, the impression that Kagawa left in the U.S. became increasingly distant from reality as the 1930s progressed. As Imperial Japan deepened its Rural Revitalization efforts, agricultural cooperatives ceased to be voluntary, democratic organizations.[124] They became tools that helped the state better manage food distribution. Lingering American interest in Kagawa suggests how many of cooperation's adherents projected their own hopes onto the movement. Their texts might be read as an expression of such hopes, including a fervent desire to mitigate transpacific tensions.

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[119] *Ibid.,* 108.

[120] National Education Association of the United States, *Consumer Cooperatives: Report of the Committee on Cooperatives, 1939 and 1940 for Presentation to the Representative Assembly at Milwaukee* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1940).

[121] *Ibid.,* 20.

[122] For example, one discussant reported that "following the visit of Kagawa a group of people who had not known anything about the Cooperative Movement became interested" in their town of Dillonvale. OH. "Discussion on Cooperative Publicity and Education," Minutes of the Eleventh CL Congress, 1936, p. 36. MS88–358, box 16, folder "Cooperative League of the U.S. Minutes of the 1936 Congress," CL Records, WHSA. Further examples cited in Shaffer, "A Missionary from the East to the Western Pagans."

Women far less visible than Topping lead church education programs and discussion groups, spreading what the United Methodist Council called a "Christian social order in action."[125] In both church schools and public schools, instructors often led hands-on experiments in consumer cooperation. One church curriculum instructed students to begin the experiment by producing handicrafts to sell to parishioners. This business would earn money to begin their retail venture. They would then save the money in a mock cooperative bank or credit union, facilitated by the teacher. When the time came, students could use the pooled money to begin a cooperative buying club that would stock whatever they needed, from candies to school supplies. Though not necessarily an obvious form of peace education, the curriculum reminded students at each step that this collaborative economic behavior had the power to upend economic causes of war. Like other examples of peace education, these intended to show students how the way they related to the market as consumers could indicate an orientation towards peace.[126]

The consumer cooperative movement became the subject of far more than just sermons and high school or college courses. As historian Kiran Patel has shown, Americans showed an unprecedented engagement in cooperative ideas in 1936 and 1937.[127] Discussions about the movement even made their way to the widely-broadcast *America's Town Meeting of the Air*.[128] Support came not only from Roosevelt himself, who sent a delegation of Americans to Europe to study how states fostered the development of consumer cooperatives abroad, but also some of the nation's most prominent business leaders. Department store mogul Edward Filene, for example, found much to admire in the movement. This is not necessarily surprising, as his Twentieth Century Fund was as driven by a quest for a solution to international conflict as it was by a desire to smoothly market commodities to consumers. In early 1937, he promised Warbasse and Bowen one million dollars to establish a chain of cooperative department stores. His death later that year stymied the venture, but one such store was opened in the town of Greenbelt, MD, an experimental cooperative community sponsored by New Deal state subsidies.[129]

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[123] Carl Hutchinson, *Seeking a New World Through Cooperatives: A Discussion Unit for Young People in the United Movement "Christian Youth Building a New World"* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1935).

[124] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 78.

[125] *Ibid.*

[126] Well-known instances of these experiments included Leone Davidson's work in Centerville, MN and Josephine Kremer's "Green and White" school supply coop. Wieting, *How to Teach Consumer Cooperation,* 114.

As cooperatives gained more serious attention amongst political and business leaders, they also drew criticism and serious analysis. For example, *Dunn and Bradsheet Monthly Review* ran an article in October 1936 that assessed the movement's future growth. While consumer cooperatives would likely remain part of the U.S. retail landscape that would not decline in the short run, it argued, they were unlikely to see the kinds of extraordinary advances that some of their most fervent supporters hoped.[130] The authors recognized, however, that some of its readers felt threatened by this relatively new way of doing business and wanted tips on how to "preserve private enterprise." Dunn and Bradstreet simply reminded those readers that "cooperation is no wild, fanciful scheme" and that the best "defense against consumers' cooperatives is an efficient distribution system." Thus, the writers suggested that cooperatives might be a boon, pushing "private industry to put its own house in order" and eliminating some of the "worst abuses introduced by competitive private enterprise." Overall, *Dunn and Bradstreet* recognized the incredible power of the movement in the mid-1930s. It was an effective organizing tool that pushed businesses to attend more closely to shoppers' needs, lest consumers "rise in their wrath and provide their own defense" by taking their paychecks to the co-op instead. [131]

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[127] Patel, *Global New Deal.*

[128] These include "Which Way Capitalism: Competition or Cooperation?,*" America's Town Meeting of the Air*, January 9, 1936 and "Consumers' Cooperation and Private Business," *America's Town Meeting of the Air,* January 21, 1937.

[129] Knapp, *The Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise,* 395.

[130] *Ibid.*, 393.

By the mid-1930s, there were also tensions within the consumer cooperative movement itself. Those more interested in cooperation as a business form could dismiss those who waxed poetic about cooperatives' potential to make social change as a "lunatic fringe." Business-oriented thinkers were focused on building stores that could help workers and consumers get the best value for their money during a depression, and they saw declarations to work for peace and economic transformation as distracting at best, alienating to the general public at worst. Yet, data suggests that interest in cooperative social ideals was more fundamental than fringe. When he interviewed 193 members of a representative cooperative retail society in Columbus, OH in 1938, Orin Burley found that 99 of them joined because of "belief in consumer cooperation," 21 joined for other ideological reasons, and only 27 joined to save money.[132] Those motivated by their belief in consumer cooperation were also the most committed customers, making up three-fourths of the shoppers who spent over $200 annually.[133] If this data is as representative as Burley claimed, then the social movement's ideals were critical to the business model.

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[131] *Ibid*.

[132] Burley, *The Consumer Cooperative,* 167. Other ideological reasons on his survey included "opposed to capitalistic system" and "Christianity applied to business."

[133] Twelve customers spent over $200 annually. Eight stated their reason for joining as belief in consumer cooperation, while one stated their reason as opposition to "capitalistic system." The other three did not record why they joined.

Women Debate "their Place and their Work" in the Reformed Movement

Throughout the 1930s, a number of prominent liberal women took up the cause of consumer cooperation in the United States. Yet, the CL still needed to increase engagement amongst women consumers, whose demand for food and other household goods would be critical for pushing NCI to establish a national grocery department. In the early 1930s, wives of farm supply cooperative members brought new energy into the movement. These women's organized consumer demand had the purchasing power to urge firms that once dealt only in oil and tires to develop grocery departments. Yet as housewives in the Midwest began to organize local women's guilds, their presence at CL congresses would breathe new life into an old debate: What should be the place of women in the American cooperative movement? With so many visible women leaders, should the CL buy into the ICWG's language of "housewives and mothers" that had discomfited the Warbasses in the 1920s? Or should it continue to promote an image of an economic democracy in which men and women had equal roles to play?

Only about three years after Mabel Cheel laid down her efforts to build a National Cooperative Women's Guild in America, the gauntlet would be picked up elsewhere. Some of the setbacks that threatened guilds in the 1920s, like the departure of communist members from the CL, arguably created the ideological unity that made tighter social organizing possible. This was especially true in the Upper Midwest. Maiju Nurmi, a Finnish-American cooperator, claimed that she and a group of other women from the Northern States Cooperative League had only decided to form a women's guild two years after the schism in 1929.[134] This guild, which united women who belonged to any of the 75 retail societies federated to the Central Cooperative

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[134] Maiju Nurmi, ed., "10th Anniversary Album: A History of the Northern States Women's Cooperative Guild," 1939, 2, Papers of the Northern States Cooperative Guild, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Cited in Andrea Elise Lund, "Lady Cooperative Vigilantes and the Cooperative Youth: Women's Roles in Teaching Cooperative Ideology Through Cooperative Summer Youth Camps in the Early 1950's," (St. Paul, MN: St. Catherine's University, 2011). Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis.

Wholesale across Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, was the first regional guild of its kind. It was structured much like the district league was. Members elected representatives to serve on a central board, the core governing structure of the guild.[135]

For the next decade, Nurmi and her colleagues would become the nation's primary contacts with the ICWG and lead the national effort to develop a women's guild. Unlike the primarily urban working class guilds that Cheel tried to organize in the 1920s, however, ninety percent of these women identified as rural housewives who learned about cooperative buying through their husband's membership in a farm supply purchasing cooperative. They were critical to transforming the consumer cooperative movement in the midwest from a farm supply movement to a broader home goods movement that served a variety of household needs.[136]

Women's Cooperative Guild members in the Northern States proved eager to use their buying power to build an American consumer cooperative movement that could serve the housewife as successfully as it did in Europe. At the CL's 1934 Congress in Chicago, the League recommended its primary method for doing so.[137] A.W. Warriner, one of NCI's founding members, promoted the idea of cooperative "buying clubs" as a core strategy to increase the range of products and services offered by regional wholesalers and NCI. Though Warriner did not invent the idea, he did play a role in the CL's decision to recommend it as a best practice. These clubs would gather a circle of members who would study cooperative ideas and practice. They would then combine to obtain certain lines of merchandise and sell the goods amongst themselves, distributing profits that were not reinvested into the business as dividends.

These clubs worked best when they attached themselves to an existing consumer wholesaler that was within shipping range and already supplied home goods, like the exemplary Central

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[135] Lund, "Lady Cooperative Vigilantes," 8.

[136] Bertram Fowler, *Consumer Cooperation in America: Democracy's Way Out,* 199.

[137] Knapp, *Advance of American Cooperative Enterprise*, 394–5. See also E. R. Bowen, "Organize a Consumers' Cooperative," *Consumers Cooperation* 20 no. 5 (May 1934), 76.

Cooperative Wholesale (Figure 4b). Buying clubs would lead the way to fully fledged retail societies that could become members of these wholesalers, and they could also increase known consumer demand for home goods that could grow the capacity of the national movement. Since NCI's stated purpose was to source any goods that its member units desired, it would be bound to develop a household good department as these became a larger element of regional wholesalers' trade. This would be the most practical way, Warriner and Bowen believed, of taking advantage of existing infrastructure to grow the home goods movement.

As Figure 4b shows, buying clubs needed to be within range of an existing major wholesale society to receive shipments of cooperative goods. Those stores and clubs that were within range purchased somewhere between 35 to 75 percent of groceries from a cooperative source, while others relied entirely on private suppliers.[138] By 1938, twenty regional wholesalers were members of the CL, but the vast size of the U.S. still limited cooperative growth. Orin Burley found that of the 42 cooperative stores he came in contact with in 1938, twelve were out of range of one of these existing wholesalers and needed to seek its entire supply from private sources.[139] This meant that its members could not enjoy the economies of scale that made coops competitive with chain stores, and they could not access the CO-OP branded goods that were trademarked by the NCI. It also suggested that cooperatives were not necessarily a fairer form of trade, as not all of the privately purchased goods needed to come from unionized workforces or farms with particularly high labor standards. The NCI did not have its own factories, so goods that bore the CO-OP label came from the same assembly lines that produced for chain stores and were not necessarily any more ethical.[140] Yet, cooperatives had the *capacity* to purchase only

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[138] Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative,* 145.

[139] *Ibid*.

[140] *Ibid*.

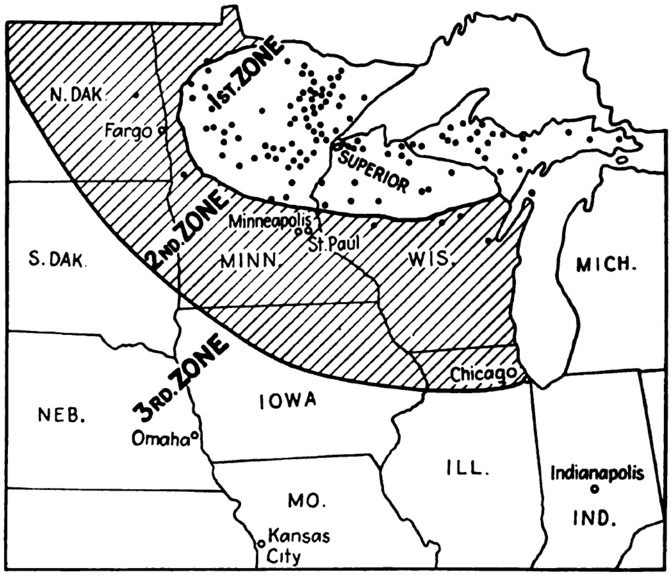
Operating Area of the Central Cooperative Wholesale•

Headquarters: Superior, Wisconsin.

1st Zone: Central Cooperative Wholesale's full service area.

2nd Zone: Intermediate service area; drop shipments and minimum quantity orders.

3rd Zone: Outside the normal trading area. Carlot deliveries and shipment of special items possible.


1ST. ZONE
2ND. ZONE
3RD. ZONE
N. DAK.
Fargo
SUPERIOR
Minneapolis
St. Paul
MINN.
WIS.
MICH.
S. DAK.
NEB.
IOWA
Omaha
Chicago
ILL.
Indianapolis
IND.
MO.
Kansas City

• From map supplied by the Central Cooperative Wholesale.

Figure 4b: Operating Area of the Central Cooperative Wholesale.
Source: Burley, *The Consumer Cooperative as a Distributive Agency,* 94.

goods produced in fair conditions if their members so chose, and stores did become ways of marketing handcrafts produced through relief programs or food grown on cooperative farms.[141]

Women were critical to establishing grocery buying clubs throughout the country by selling the idea of cooperative economics to their neighbors and friends, yet not all of them saw gendered guilds as the most productive way to contribute. A discussion on cooperative education and publicity at the 1936 CL Congress moderated by Elsie Olsen, who served on the board of one of the Midwest’s most rapidly growing consumer cooperative wholesales based in North Kansas City, demonstrated this point clearly. Olsen invited all those present to share “how you are organizing and working out the technique of doing this type of educational work and carrying on publicity in your various committees.”[142] Olsen also proposed that they discuss “women’s roles in the cooperative movement,” as this question was so intertwined with educational work.

A Mrs. Sedgwick from the Eastern States Cooperative League rose to spoke about her experiences in the small town of Ridgewood, New Jersey. She and a group of “three or four” other women desired to start a cooperative buying club in the town of 15,000 which she described as “quite a well satisfied, white collar type of place.”[143] Residents of Ridgewood looked askance at the cooperative retail idea, which they saw primarily as a means for working-class consumers to save money. Sedgwick and her friends, in contrast, were focused more keenly on cooperation’s capacity to foster local democracy and believed that the “movement is basically sound, economically as well as ethically.” They were determined to develop a cooperative buying club that could source groceries and home goods from the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale, but they knew that developing a formal women’s guild and inviting others to their discussions would not be the way to do it. "I have friends who would come to my home in the afternoon for coffee and cake who would not come to a church discussion group or a discussion of any kind," she confessed, and "each one of our key members has an equal number of friends who will come to her home on an afternoon." The key, according to Mrs. Sedgwick, was to avoid formal organization but to "sneak up on them." Telling them that it was a discussion group, or mentioning that it would be about cooperation, would only "frighten them." [144]

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[141] For example, clothing made by the New Deal-sponsored Workers’ Aim Cooperative Association near Hightstown, NJ distributed it through Tripod Coat and Suit Inc, a wholesale distributer. A system of profit sharing existed between the two organizations, which sold on a consignment basis to cooperative wholesales around the country. Burley, *The Consumers’ Cooperative,* 89.

[142] “Discussion on Cooperative Publicity and Education,” Minutes of the Eleventh CL Congress, 1936, p. 33. MS88–358, box 16, folder “Cooperative League of the U.S. Minutes of the 1936 Congress,” CL Records, WSHA.

[143] *Ibid.*

Sedgwick and her closest friends developed a nucleus of interested women through these informal coffee chats. Sedgwick would talk to her friends about how cooperative economics might help with a variety of domestic problems, but she would never "start out in the clouds" with theoretical conversations. Rather, she tried to "meet them at their point of interest" or address the concerns that came up over the course of conversation, no matter "how practical a problem."[145] Along with the core group of women she had gathered, Sedgwick was a founding member of Ridgwood's cooperative buying club. Those women and their husbands enabled the club to do enough business to raise the capital it needed to invest in a storefront in just four months. Before the Educational Committee, Sedgwick cast her experiment as a resounding success that overcame a small town culture generally unfavorable to the cooperative idea.

Sedgwick's idea of starting with "practical" problems and moving to show how cooperative structures could mitigate them had some parallels to Freundlich's propositions in her 1936 history of the ICWG's first fifteen years, *Housewives Imagine a New World.* Freundlich made case that women's historic specialization in care gave them a heightened awareness of the permeable boundaries between self-interest and common good. Women's unpaid domestic work, Freundlich claimed, gave them a set of common interests as consumers and caregivers whether or not they also worked for wages. These included a desire for "a higher social order and an economic system which will abolish want and misery" in order to help them better care for their children.[146] Yet housework was difficult to organize, and the limits of housewives' bargaining power could make them particularly invested in the development of more cooperative economic systems. The ICWG sought to close what Freundlich described as a "gap" in the traditional labor movement by offering an institutional space to voice women's domestic concerns. Through the women's cooperative movement, Freundlich claimed, "the housewives have become a force in national and international life, and they now have the same opportunities of expressing their point of view as other groups of workers who live by the toil of their hands or their brains."[147] The group had developed an increased correspondence with the ILO at the time of Freundlich's writing, sending it a "Housewives' Programme" in 1936.

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[144] *Ibid.*

[145] *Ibid.*

Sedgwick's discussion groups arguably engaged in a similar practice, as she sought to bring women into the cooperative movement by drawing attention to the way this democratic form of ownership could serve the issues they faced as consumers, mothers, and homemakers. Yet, Sedgwick would not have found use in Freundlich's vision of housewives as vanguards of "an economic system based on new principles, which will bring about fundamental changes in our social and moral order."[148] Her task was to sell the cooperative idea to middle-class white women who suspected it to be the purview of "a bunch of "Reds" and down and outers."[149] By cloaking cooperation in the small-town language of "neighborliness" and disseminating it through familiar forms of door-to-door calling and coffee klatches, she believed that her educational efforts could be most effective. Despite this, she wanted to see the movement spread as much as her colleagues that were organized through a women's guild. "Without education this will never be a successful consumer cooperative country," she concluded, "and I am for a cooperative method of solving the problems we have here, and we have plenty."[150]

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[146] Emmy Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World* (London: Cooperative Wholesale Society, 1936), 11.
[147] *Ibid.*
[148] Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World,* 3.
[149] "Discussion on Cooperative Publicity and Education," in Minutes of the Eleventh CL Congress, 1936. MS88–358, box 16, folder "Cooperative League of the U.S. Minutes of the 1936 Congress," CL Records, WHSA.

Sedgwick was not an isolated example, but rather an illustration of a trend that dominated the East Coast. Women did not merely serve as auxiliaries to the movement; they also could be exemplary leaders. For example, in 1937, women in a Better Buyers Club in the cooperative town of Greenbelt, MD took a short northward journey to learn from the work of the African American cooperative leader Nannie Helen Burroughs in the Black D.C. suburb of Deanewood.[151] Burroughs started a producer cooperative in 1933 to organize women into a sewing relief project, and in 1934 a grant from the New Deal's Public Work Administration's cooperative self-help division allowed her to open a storefront to sell these women's work and other goods that the community needed. By 1937, her "Cooperative Industries Inc." served 145 Black families. These ranged from women who had not had the opportunity to engage in formal schooling but found a chance to take important courses through the society's educational program, to "University professors who see in the study group the nucleus of a new and more democratic economic society."[152] The co-op rested at the foot of Burrough's National Training School for Women and Girls and was another element of her broad commitment to teaching Black women the skills that she believed would lead to greater economic self-sufficiency, dignified work, and racial uplift.[153]

In contrast to an East Coast preference for integrating women into the movement as a whole, others preferred the women's guild idea. In 1936, women in the Upper Midwest who worked with the farm supply cooperatives affiliated with the Central Cooperative Wholesale (CCW) formed a National Cooperative Women's Guild, headquartered in Superior, WI. At the CL's Eleventh Congress in 1938, its President Maiju Nurmi gave an address in which made the case for women's guilds by laying out how fundamental they had been to the very profitable growth of retail cooperatives in the Midwest.[154] In that region, where purchasing cooperatives had tended to deal primarily in farm supply goods, a women's guild was essential for paving the way into the grocery and home goods trade. These ventures had been successful for the Central Cooperative Wholesale, which began by "dealing in commodities that men usually buy—tires, nails, gasoline, and such things. Well, we don't need those for breakfast or dinner, we have to have bread and beans."[155] Nurmi was likely aware of one 1937 study, often publicized by midwestern cooperatives, that showed that the average U.S. farm family spent around 60% of its money on consumer goods and 40% on farm supplies. The finding would have been borne out by CCW sales data. Though the 85% of the retailers affiliated with the wholesale were farmers, CCW affiliates sold $639,000 of farm supplies and $1,546,251 of household goods in 1938.[156]

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[150] *Ibid.*

[151] Sylvia Weinberg, "Cooperation Theory Tested in Colonies: Greenbelt and Deanewood Ave. Watched for Results of Social Value," (Washington DC), *The Sunday Star,* December 28, 1937.

[152] *Ibid.*

[153] For example, see Veronica Popp and Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, "Justice for All: The Womanist Labor Rhetoric of Nannie Helen Burroughs," *Peitho 23* no. 1 (Winter/ Spring 2021).

The nearby Midland Cooperative Wholesale set its eyes on opening a grocery line by 1939, but in order to make a new product line successful, farm cooperative leaders needed to learn to appeal to a new customer base. As Burley found, the "farm housewife" remained the most important purchaser of food whether or not the family shopped at a cooperative, and there was a sense that the woman consumer made her choices based on "subjective" evaluations of merchandise that required a specialized purchasing department.[157] As a result, in the midwest, Nurmi reported that men "feel that they are entirely incapable of going ahead" with a grocery venture "if they haven't first got a women's guild, or if they don't, they organize their women's guild at the same time. It is about the rule now that when a cooperative store is started a women's guild is started." Gathering and promoting the store among household purchasers assured the success of the grocery store, Nurmi explained, and if "your wives are not cooperative minded and are not in sympathy with the cooperative movement, they'll walk by the co-op grocery store with their basket and bring that economic power to support the profit system."[158]

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[154] Maiju Nurmi, "Report on Women's Guilds," Meeting Minutes of the Business Meeting, Eleventh CL Congress, 1936, pg 38. MS 63–14, box 2, folder 13, CL Records, WHSA.

[155] *Ibid.*

[156] Burley, *The Consumers' Cooperative,* 189.

[157] *Ibid,* 175 and 197.

Nurmi agreed with Freundlich's 1936 claim that women's everyday work in the home informed their interest in consumer cooperation. It was a movement, in Freundlich's words, that women could "serve with enthusiasm because besides concerning itself with everyday needs it is also striving to organize the life and activities of mankind on an entirely new basis."[159] Women's guilds gave an opportunity to theorize and politically organize around women's gendered stake in cooperative economies. Nurmi noticed "a great interest in our women in the cooperative movement," and insisted that "we need special women's organization within the cooperative movement to educate the women... to help them find their place and their work."[160]

In contrast to Sedgwick, Nurmi found utility in the ICWG's language*,* declaring herself "an ordinary housewife" several times in her talk despite her prominent position as a writer, speaker, and political organizer that had gotten her a place on the CL's main stage. She emphasized the way women's work in the home positioned them as particular assets to cooperation. "Women," Nurmi claimed, "are the spenders, but they are not only the spenders; when women embrace an idea they bring it into the home. The women bring the cooperative movement into the heart of the family, they bring it into the fertile soil of the home fireside, they bring it to their children, they bring it into the social activities of the movement." [161] In addition to acting as consumers, Northern States Women's Cooperative Guild women held summer camps that sought to facilitate a miniature cooperative commonwealth in which children governed themselves, collectively shared camp chores, engaged in folk dances that drew upon the region's Scandinavian heritage, put on pageants, and participated in hikes and outdoor sports.[162] Much as it did for the NEA, cooperative education offered a form of peace pedagogy, demonstrating on a small scale the conditions that they felt made a broader peace possible.

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[158] Nurmi, Report on Women's Guilds, MS 63–14, box 2, folder 13, CL Papers, WHSA.
[159] Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World,* 11.
[160] Nurmi, Report on Women's Guilds, MS 63–14, box 2, folder 13, CL Papers, WHSA.
[161] *Ibid*.

Even after the formation of a National Cooperative Women's Guild, ongoing tensions between women who favored the guild model and those who preferred integration into non-gendered work stymied its growth. Speaking at the CL's Thirteenth Congress in 1942, Jacqueline Smith of the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale laid the problem out with clarity. "We Easterners never know quite what to say when we're asked about the development and activity of women's guilds," she confessed, because "we don't have them, and we're not doing anything about it."[163]

Smith's offered more concrete critiques than Sedgwick had six years earlier. She claimed that there were two core reasons for the absence of gender specific guilds on the East Coast. First, she saw them as a waste of organizational resources. When she began "to think about the women who would belong to women's guilds if we did have them… we realize that they are the women who are now serving on boards of directors and carrying on most of the activities of our education committees."[164] Women also continued to undertake the work that Sedgwick described in 1936, visiting their friends and chatting about cooperation over coffee or holding informal "tasting parties" of CO-OP brand goods in their own homes. They also engaged in training themselves, learning about household budgeting or studying nutrition to help the CL develop nutritional labels for its products, which was necessary for wholesales like the ECW that did not have an in-house testing lab. She admitted that she "wonder[ed] what more our women could be doing if they belonged to a women's guild."[165] At worst, the administrative labor needed to organize a guild could waste time by cutting into existing schedules of productive activities.[166]

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[162] Lund, "Lady Cooperative Vigilantes."

[163] Jacqueline Smith, "What, No Women's Guilds?" Reports from the Thirteenth CL Congress, 1942. MS 63–14, box 2, folder 33, CL Records, WSHA.

[164] *Ibid.*

[165] *Ibid.*

Smith’s second—and even more impassioned—argument was that separating people by “personal attributes” like gender or age was both insulting and “backwards looking.” She professed that “women of this generation don’t like the idea of being set off by themselves to tend to women’s work while presumably, the men carry on the work of the world.”[167] For her, a women’s guild was akin to demanding that women enter the cooperative movement “through a separate ladies entrance” rather than through “the front door.” Thus, she saw the women’s guild idea as fundamentally opposed to the cooperative spirit, which she believed should try to harness a “common consumer interest, which cuts across all other lines which divide people” including gender.[168] For Smith, these dividing lines were “unnatural.” In an attempt to flip any cultural script that naturalized the place of woman as homemaker, she employed similar language of “naturalness” or “artificiality” nearly a dozen times throughout her ten-minute talk.

Different conceptions of gender justice lay at the heart of the disagreement between women like Smith and women like Nurmi or Frundlich and even Burroughs.[169] For Smith, gender was but an external difference that cooperation had a duty to neutralize. To be a woman was an identity, a “personal characteristic,” or even something that lay on the surface of a person and that should not affect their place in a community. She claimed that “women have been unnaturally set apart by our economic development over the past centuries,” but believed that the cooperative movement in the U.S. should work to reverse this “artificial” distinction and instead to give women equal economic citizenship.[170] Freundlich and Nurmi, in contrast, often described women’s unpaid household work as a collective *material* concern. They preferred to talk about housewives “as a class” whose labors “have always been relegated to the background both in the history of the world.”[171] To be a woman and relegated to particular gendered tasks was not merely a “personal characteristic,” but an economic fact that women in the Northern States and ICWG believed deserved as much discussion and attention as the needs of any class of workers. While Smith saw adherence to bifurcated gender roles as “backward looking,” Nurmi and Freundlich expressed a belief that women’s attention to childrearing oriented them towards the *future,* inspiring them to imagine a just social economy for their children to inherit. Nannie Helen Burrough’s ideas, meanwhile, were drawn from her particular experience of living as a Black woman in the United States. Her work recognized intersecting challenges of race and gender, and hardly spoke to a “common consumer interest” that cut across all dividing lines. Rather, she used cooperative techniques to help Black women gain more control over their economic lives in a context that often sought to deny them such a right.

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[166] *Ibid.*

[167] *Ibid.*

[168] *Ibid.*

[169] These debates paralleled broader conversations about whether women would be best served through legal equality or through protective legislation. In her most recent work, Dorothy Sue Cobble draws a distinction between *equal rights* feminists and *full rights* feminists. Equal rights feminists pushed for Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. and an Equal Rights Treaty abroad. They were motivated by a belief that securing equality under the law would help women to achieve social and economic goals. In contrast, *full rights* feminists believed that women’s historic specialization in care demanded special attention to a set of particular, gendered needs. These needs could not be met, they argued, through blanket legal equality. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton, 2001).

Consumer cooperation was not negligible as a business movement in the interwar period, but I suggest that it more importantly served as a repository for its members’ hopes for a more just economy. When the economist Orin Burley found that over half of people joined a retail society because of a “belief in consumer cooperation,” this belief likely took distinct form for each of his respondents.[172] Each of the cooperative speakers and thinkers in this chapter projected her own ideal of what a more peaceful and fair political economy might look like onto the consumer cooperative movement. Seen in this way, movement literature can be read as a collection of such hopes, which ranged from the fantasy of a "common consumer interest" that transcended social and national division to the vision of a large-scale economic democracy that would radically democratize ownership. When cast as an *alternative* to capitalism, corporatism and communism, consumer cooperation served as the "other" to all of these existing systems and offered to fill in wherever an individual cooperator believed those systems lacked. Cooperation's alterity allowed it take the shape closest to one's own hopes, resulting in debates amongst the CL's leaders and members about what their movement was really about. Though desires for racial integration, gender equality, and international peace remained far from realization during the interwar period, it was in part the novelty of the movement in the U.S. that gave proponents hope that cooperation's greatest potential for fostering economic democracy was yet unrealized.

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[170] *Ibid.*

[171] Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*.

[172] Burley, *The Consumer Cooperative,* 167.

Chapter 5

Fashioning Transpacific Solidarities: Alice Fong Yu and the Boycott of Japanese Silk Stockings, 1931–1941[1]

A silk boycott had failed to catch on in 1932, but Japan's full-scale military invasion of China in mid-1937 moved consumers to action. In the last years of the decade, boycotting silk became a fashionable practice that inspired waves of parties and spectacles across the United States. One of those took place on the evening of on June 16, 1938, when the lantern-lit streets of San Francisco's Chinatown pulsed with the movement of dancers, jugglers, fire-breathing dragons, and over three-hundred thousand guests.[2] This "Rice Bowl Party" was just one installment of a nation-wide string of events launched in over two-thousand U.S. cities by the United Council for Civilian Relief in China.[3] San Francisco's mayor Angelo Rossi led the opening parade alongside Chinese consul C.C. Huang to show municipal support, but Chinatown's community represented itself on its own terms.[4] As attendees made their way through the festival, they might have been drawn to the Chinese Playground, where members of the Square and Circle Club (SCC) displayed a visual timeline of Chinese dress from the Tang Dynasty to contemporary Shanghai. Wearing garments explicitly fashioned from Chinese-made fabrics, the clubwomen beckoned their audience to join their boycott of silk textiles sourced from China's Japanese adversaries in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945).[5]

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[1] Parts of this chapter originally appeared as "Fashioning Chinese America: Alice Fong Yu and the Transpacific Boycott of Japanese Silk Stockings, 1931–1941," *Journal of Women's History* 31 no. 4 (Winter 2019): 37–62.

[2] "300,000 Throng Chinatown for Rice Bowl Fete," *San Francisco Chronicle,* June 18, 1938, 1.

[3] "1,000,000 to Attend Chinese Aid Fetes," *New York Times,* June 14, 1938, 14.

[4] "Civic Leaders Pledge Aid to Rice Bowl Fete," *San Francisco Chronicle,* June 15, 1938, 1.

Chinese Americans made up only one part of a larger boycotting public.[6] The Popular Front-affiliated League of Women Shoppers (LWS) strutted their cotton-clad—or bare—legs down the runways of the nation's capital, demanding an end to Japanese militarism with each step. Celebrities affiliated with the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, such as Dorothy Lamour, Gail Patrick, and Franciska Gaal, ensured that their designers used no Japanese textiles in their costumes.[7] Members of the left-leaning Associated Student Union (ASU) tossed silk stockings into bonfires at Vassar college.[8] By sporting lisle or cotton substitutes, or perhaps no substitutes at all, boycotters of these intimate garments could feel their international cause on their bodies. While their public displays called attention to the millions of Chinese nationals suffering from Japan's invasion, they were not meant to be purely symbolic. By denying the Japanese economy income from U.S. silk imports—worth nearly one-hundred million dollars in 1937—protesters hoped to shut down its "war-machine" and often even posed the overt question: "Did your stockings kill Babies?"[9]

The intimacy of hose helped these women draw media attention to their cause. Stripping stockings to cast in bonfires and baring legs on runaways presented a sensual approach to war-relief organizing. Lawrence Glickman has shown how the boycott movement gave its white, left-feminist participants and their audiences an opportunity to meld politics with pleasure.[10]

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[5] SCC Meeting Minutes, June 22, 1938, SPH 13, box 2, folder 21, Square and Circle Club Records, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA. (Hereafter SCC Records, SFPL).

[6] The Square and Circle Club's boycott movement is also mentioned in Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (University of California Press, 1995).

[7] "Cotton Favorite Fabric in New Pictures," *Hollywood Now,* February 26, 1938, 2.

[8] "Students Demand Boycott on Japan," *New York Times,* December 31, 1937, 3.

[9] The Boycott Japanese Goods Committee of Greater Boston*, Did Your Stockings Kill Babies* (Boston: printed by the author, 1938).

[10] Lawrence Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 221–225.

While white U.S. women have outfitted themselves as political symbols since the idealized "age of homespun," this movement did not task female participants with austerity.[11] It rejected earlier assumptions that ethical consumption was necessarily antithetical to enjoyment; instead, it emphasized the pleasures of feeling and seeing dresses drape along bare legs or the subversive fun of turning up to high-society events in cotton gowns. Such insights about politically meaningful play are crucial in understanding white women's experiences of the boycott. However, Chinese American and white groups invested the boycott movement with distinct meanings.

For Chinese American participants, this chapter argues, the boycott became both a call for economic disinvestment from Japan and a *citizenship movement* used to articulate national identities and contest racialized representations codified by the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882–1943). In a moment when U.S. law and society constructed "Chinese" (or "Oriental") and "American" as oppositional categories, the SCC hoped to use this matter of broad public interest to participate in U.S. political coalitions and challenge racial stereotypes. Yu used her shows to outfit Chinese-American women as not only a worthy U.S. citizen but also an emblem of a "modernity" marked by intercultural exchange. As children of Chinese immigrants, SCC members could claim legal status as U.S. citizens. Yet, because these women still faced social segregation and limited economic opportunity, they remained excluded from full membership in the national community.

Yu's execution of the boycott illustrates how boundaries of national belonging are not only drawn through law but also negotiated through lived experience. A growing cultural studies literature explores the ways Asian American women have used bodily performance to negotiate national membership, rights, and belonging.[12] Shirley Jennifer Lim, for example, has shown how Asian American women's participation in U.S. consumer cultures worked towards "cultural citizenship."[13] Coined by Renato Rosaldo, this concept refers both to the rights and duties attached to citizenship as legal status *and* to a sense of belonging that can coexist with difference.[14] Seen through the lens of cultural citizenship, the boycott becomes a site through which participating women considered what it could mean to become "Chinese American" through cultural translations, bodily performance, and interaction with national and transnational coalitions. Because this task relied on eliminating negative American stereotypes about China and its people, it also illustrates how conversations beyond U.S. borders can influence ideas about who belongs within them.

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[11] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).

[12] See especially Shirley Jennifer Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian Americans Women's Public Culture, 1930–1960* (NYU Press, 2006); Gloria He-Yung Chun, *Of Orphans and Warriors: Inventing Chinese American*

This chapter aims to show that the anti-Japanese boycott movement was truly international, rooted in more than just a U.S. political tradition of consumer boycotting. It drew participants from fifty-four countries, half of whom presented their concerns at a World Boycott Conference in 1938. Yu's own participation offers a lens onto how these market ties might unite activists working between two of those distant boycotting publics. Chinese American boycotters engaged in established techniques of U.S. fashion politics and consumer-based activism, but they also drew from their knowledge of Chinese political cultures and traditions.[15] Yu, in particular, used transpacific markets as a means of contributing to Chinese political projects, worked with the popularity of war relief to translate Chinese Nationalist and New Life Movement ideas for use in U.S. discussions, and participated in a political and cultural community of letters that extended beyond borders.[16]

Culture and Identity (Rutgers University Press, 1999); Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Duke University Press, 1996).

[13] Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging,* 7.

[14] Renato Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism," in *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, ed. William Flores and Rina Benmayor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

[15] For an overview of U.S. fashion politics, see Michael Zakim, "Sartorial Ideologies: From Homespun to Ready Made*," The American Historical Review* 106, no.5 (December 2001): 1553–1586.

[16] On the transpacific social context of San Francisco's Chinatown, see Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850 1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, 2000).

Chapter 5. Fashioning Transpacific Solidarities

Intervening in transpacific markets gave this local movement global reach. At the same time, silk garments' transnational production made other, sometimes conflicting, meanings possible. Because silk stockings were manufactured in the U.S., boycotting this particular commodity might be seen as a threat to American hosiery workers. Alternatively, some claimed that Japan imperiled U.S. workers by dumping cheap commodities and that a boycott would improve U.S. economic conditions. Many who had denounced Asian immigrants as threats to white jobs or capital accumulation also rejected their labor in the form of imported goods. As a result, some economic nationalists used the popularity of an anti-Japanese boycott to voice or sustain an image of "Oriental" workers as different and degraded. Such contradictory meanings lay deep within the movement, constraining both its widespread appeal and its ability to eradicate anti-Asian social politics.

Though this chapter gives attention to silk hose as a site of multiple and contradictory meanings, it primarily considers how Yu used the popularity of Chinese war relief in the U.S. to design a space for Chinese-American participation in national and transnational politics. For her, the boycott offered an opportunity to demonstrate Chinese-Americans' aptitude for full citizenship at a moment when the U.S. government placed severe limits on their economic, social, and political rights. Yu did not simply follow a movement designed by women like Mary Emma Woolley or those local community organizers who wrote to her through the *Ladies Home Journal.* The first part of this chapter highlights the ways in which Yu gathered inspiration from across the Pacific to conceive of boycott practices, compose literature, and dress her models. Using her boycott-related writing and performance, she worked to communicate a vision of modernity defined by intercultural exchange and women's political participation. Next, the chapter situates Yu's boycott within other boycott coalitions, including those affiliated to Woolley's organization, the American Boycott of Aggressor Nations (ABAAN). It examines how U.S. labor, African-American groups, and white women's clubs endowed silk hose, and Chinese war relief more broadly, with alternative political meanings. The chapter concludes with the World Boycott held in London in 1938, where non-Western delegates expressed their own stakes in this global movement. Despite Yu's successes in her local community, I claim, domestic racial politics limited her potential to refashion how even some well-intentioned white boycott participants understood contemporary Chinese American subjectivity.

Alice Fong Yu's Transpacific Inspirations

Yu was well-positioned to develop a movement rooted in both American and Chinese Nationalist values. She was born Alice Fong in 1905 in the town of Washington, CA to a Chinese father, Fong Chow. Eager to raise successful American children, Fong named his first children after presidents (Theodore and Taft) or the daughters of presidents (Alice [Roosevelt]). The family had long claimed national belonging through symbolic gestures: the Chinese name of Alice's sister Helen translates as "Also a Citizen."[17] Alice's family encouraged her to pursue teaching, a position revered in Chinese society. This work took her to San Francisco, where she sought to help Chinatown's youth harmonize their American nationality with their Chinese heritage.[18] As her brother Taft travelled to study in Hong Kong, and as she herself took transpacific voyages, she would come to learn about Chinese culture and politics and would eventually use the boycott as one way to connect herself to them.

Much of Yu's leadership took shape outside of the classroom. On June 15, 1924, Yu formed the SCC with a group of women from her Congregational Church. Pursuant to its 1926 Constitution, the club aimed to "develop a spirit of cooperation and service by promoting and fostering philanthropic and community projects and to encourage the fulfillment of the club ideal:

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[17] Theresa A. Sparks, *China Gold* (Fresno: Academy Library Guild, 1954), 119–123.

[18] *Ibid.*, 167.

'In deeds be square, in knowledge be all-around.' "[19] Since its inception, the SCC's concept of community stretched beyond national bounds. In 1924, for example, the club established a fund to benefit widows and war orphans in China.

To deepen her club's connection to Chinese social and political issues, Yu joined the American branch of the Kuomintang (KMT/ Chinese Nationalist Party) in 1928.[20] Two years later, she served the U.S. KMT as a 'Reporter of Publicity' or Publicity Officer.[21] She was not alone in giving the KMT her "vote of confidence." In 1929, one year after Commander-in-Chief Chiang Kai-Shek overthrew the Beijing government and claimed China for the Nationalists, Chinatown's officials openly supported the Nationalist Party. They hoped that a stronger and more unified China would bolster international respect and thus improve Chinese American treatment in the U.S.[22]

In 1932, when some women readers of the *LHJ* embarked on a silk boycott to support the magazine's "Women's Peace Plan," Yu also participated. Yet, she understood the movement differently. For her, it was not primarily a movement to uphold the sanctity of international law or the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Instead, for Yu the silk boycott was only the most recent episode in a longer struggle for China's political and economic self-determination. In the early twentieth-century, Chinese political organizations often used commodity politics to respond to foreign offense or resist imperial control or racist insults. From 1905–1919, Chinese and Chinese American merchants collaborated in a boycott of U.S. products to protest Exclusion legislation.[23] After the 1911 collapse of the Qing Dynasty and formation of the Republic of China, Nationalists promoted the purchase of China-made products as means of resisting economic imperialism.[24] It is not surprising that the Nationalists and the Communists responded to Japan's acquisition of Shandong through the Treaty of Paris in 1919 and its concurrent attempt to gain greater control over Chinese markets with joint resistance and another boycott. [25] These moves were particularly charged in a period when many Chinese politicians understood commercial autonomy as a marker of national self-determination.

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[19] *Ibid.*, 175.

[20] Membership Booklet of Yu-Ping, 1928, trans. Yuxuan Zhang, SC 872, box 8, folder 7, Alice Fong Yu Papers, Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. Hereafter designated AFY Papers, Stanford.

[21] Letter from Kuomintang, 1930, trans. Jing Yu, SC 872, box 8, folder 7, AFY Papers, Stanford.

[22] "Chinese in America Back Chiang Kai-Shek Policy," *San Francisco Chronicle,* July 7, 1929, 2.

[23] Peter G. Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895–1949* (Routledge, 2005), 7.

The 1931 invasion of Manchuria also came at a critical time for the formation of a Chinese American identity. According to historian Gloria Heyung Chung, American-born Chinese women who came of age in the 1930s were the first to collectively consider ways of melding their Chinese heritage with the political and social rights supposedly offered by U.S. citizenship.[26] In 1930, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Chinese-American women began turning up to the polls, becoming among "the first of [their] race in politics."[27] Even so, electoral politics were not the only or primary way to voice the community's needs. Chinese and Chinese American merchants had already joined forces to boycott Japanese goods in the early part of the twentieth century, and market ties could be mobilized again.

Alice Fong knew personally that boycotts had reached as far as Hong Kong in the immediate aftermath of the Manchurian occupation in September 1931. On October 9, 1931, her brother Taft Fong, then an international student in Kowloon City, wrote a letter to her in San Francisco. "Conditions here unsettled and at times quite serious as evidenced by the anti-Japanese rioting in various parts of Hong Kong and the Mainland," he reported. Though he did not face the more dangerous conditions in the Manchurian province itself, Taft still experienced impacts of the invasion even in Hong Kong. He claimed to have foregone holiday celebrations; instead, he was expected to donate funds to Manchurian troops. Taft called attention to China's "group consciousness" by pointing out that "the boycott of Japanese goods" was "China-wide." But, he asked, Alice "how about S.F."?[28] Were members of the Chinese diaspora in America taking part in a rejection of Japanese goods as well?

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[24] For example, For example, when Japan forced China to accept a list of demands that placed Japanese advisors in all branches of government on May 9, 1915, both Chinese and Chinese Americans responded with a boycott. Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Harvard, 2003), 69.

[25] *Ibid.*, 146.

[26] Chun, *Of Orphans and Warriors.*

[27] "Chinese Women Register in S.F. As Voters," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 4, 1930, 2.

Chinatown's community organizations did not miss a moment's opportunity to support such efforts. In fact, they conceived of a boycott before the Committee on Economic Sanctions developed its plan to add a sanction clause to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Immediately after the "Manchurian Incident," the Chinese Six Companies, a social organization serving Chinese immigrants in San Francisco, called a meeting to determine how to support China from California.[29] On September 24, the Six Companies founded the Anti-Japanese Chinese Salvation Society, which promoted three goals: a boycott of Japanese goods, a propaganda campaign to raise awareness of what they saw as Japanese war crimes, and a campaign to send funds to Chinese troops.[30]

The Six Companies' earliest boycotts in 1931 effectively barred merchants from selling Japanese-made imports in Chinatown. On February 20, 1932, the *San Francisco News* reported that 20,000 residents of Chinatown united in a boycott against local Japanese American merchants and others vending Japanese-made products. They kicked off the boycott by marching through the Chinatown streets sporting banners distributed by the KMT. The primarily white "Friends of the Republic" also joined the effort to forbid Japanese-made goods in local stores, creating such an effective ban that Japanese American stores were threatened with ruin.[31] From its earliest organizing, then, the boycott endangered livelihoods of local Japanese-American merchants. Diplomatic historian Michael Hunt has argued that American public opinion teeter-tottered between Chinese and Japanese peoples; whenever the Japanese were declared the more desirable "Asiatic" people, the image of the Chinese suffered.[32] The reverse was also true, and as popular opinion of Japan waned, some Chinese-Americans worked to cast themselves as the valiant peace-makers of the Pacific.

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[28] Taft Fong to Alice Fong Yu, October 9, 1931, SC 872, box 17, folder 2, AFY Papers, Stanford.

[29] Chen, *Chinese San Francisco,* 50.

[30] Yung, *Unbound Feet,* 227.

[31] "Boycott by City Chinese Hurts Rivals," *The San Francisco News,* February 20, 1932.

As the Six Companies organized their local communities into a boycott, KMT in China used an umbrella of interlocking semi-governmental organizations to promote party aims, including a promotion of Chinese-made goods.[33] The National Product Movement in China, led by the NPPA (National Products Preservation Association), was the most prominent consumer organization. The NPPA presented the *nation* as the locus of economic loyalty, not the region or town.[34] It created what historian Karl Gerth calls a "nationalist visuality" through which patriots could display allegiance using domestic products. Much as the Six Companies in San Francisco did, the NPPA organized commodity-based public events, including the "Women's National Product Year" in 1934. Its festivals featured fashion shows which displayed a timeline of Chinese dress and slung such slogans as "Women! Sacrifice a Bit of Beauty! Thereby save the country and save the people! This is an even greater way to act!"[35] While these shows claimed that the patriotic consumer advanced national interests, the vain woman who prized beauty over patriotism threatened to drive the nation to ruin if not brought in line.[36]

The boycott that Taft Fong described to his sister was the work of the NPPA's "National Product Standards" commission, which identified products that were nationally "pure" enough for Chinese merchants to sell. The ministry's consumer watchdogs even removed unsuitable goods from the shelves.[37] If any woman somehow attained and attempted to wear foreign clothing or cosmetics, she would face social ostracism. Mao Dun's 1932 story "The Lin Family Shop" provided a fictionalized illustration of this pressure: when the teenaged subject arrived to school clad in Japanese imports, peers and teachers shunned her. She ordered a wardrobe of Chinese-made clothes immediately.[38] By the 1930s, national commodities emerged as a means of imagining a modern nation through a distinctly "Chinese" visual and material culture.

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[32] Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Yale, 1987), 77.

[33] Federica Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934–1938," *Modern Asian Studies* 44 no. 5 (2010): 986.

[34] Gerth, *China Made,* 192.

[35] *Ibid.*, 296.

[36] Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* Columbia, 2008), 286.

[37] *Ibid.,* 197.

Yu gives insights into an important set of discourses about gender, consumption, and nation in China even as she designed what she saw as an important political space for Chinese-American women. Even so, her Nationalist conception of Chinese-Americanness was certainly not the only possible one. Her writings show a tension between her attraction to the KMT's use of state force through organizations like the NPPA to achieve what appeared to be coordinated social efforts and her admiration for democratic voluntarism. She hoped to mediate between these political attitudes by encouraging the development of what she often called "group consciousness," then urging women to act *voluntarily* for the good of their community. To divvy up political labor, she recruited gender ideologies translated from the KMT's New Life Movement.

Yu would come to see the boycott as an opportunity to translate what she believed to be Chinese needs to an American public. In the early 1930s, Yu was keenly aware that her commitment to do cultural translation work came out of a sense of cultural in-betweenness. She clearly articulated her position in a July 27, 1933 correspondence with K.H. Kiang, a Chinese educator and social worker. After meeting Yu on a transpacific cruise, Kiang invited her to join a three-year social project to survey conditions in China. She politely declined, concerned that her limited Chinese language skills and finances would be insufficient for the task. However, she assured him that it was her life ambition "to be of service to both China and America—lands of my ancestors and my birth." She expressed her desire to act as a cultural translator, to "prepare myself to interpret intelligently the two countries which I represent to the two people of which I am a part, thereby helping to cement the bonds of friendship and understanding between the Orient and the Occident." She declared that she would work to "echo, however slight, that which you have started" by bringing Chinese efforts and ideas to the San Francisco community that she served. [39]

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[38] *Ibid.,* 1–3.

Setting a Precedent: Boycotts and Sanctions in Italy, 1935–1937

Diplomatic tensions escalated further on July 7, 1937 when Konoe Fumimaro led Japanese troops into battle on the Marco Polo Bridge in Peking, creating the conditions for a more active and involved anti-war boycott movement. Yet, in a public opinion poll orchestrated by George Gallup in 1937, only 37 percent of Americans supported a boycott of Japanese-made goods, even though 59 percent of those polled sympathized with China. Many of the 63 percent of Americans who did not support the boycott felt that the method was ineffective. In explaining their position, some of those consumers cited what they saw as the fruitlessness of popular boycotts of Italian goods during the 1935 Ethiopian war.[40] This argument draws attention to one critical difference between the smaller anti-silk boycott in 1932 and the nation-wide movement that emerged later in the decade. By 1937, consumers had become more familiar with the power—and limits—of official League sanctions through this Italian example.

Even though Mussolini never officially declared war on Ethiopia, his October 1935 invasion did provoke the League of Nations to invoke Article 16 and implement official, diplomatic sanctions for the first time in its history. Out of the 58 nations that remained affiliated with the League—which by 1935 excluded Germany and Japan—52 joined in an embargo of Italian imports in an effort to drain Italy's cash reserves, which had been hit hard by depression. One

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[39] Alice Fong Yu to K. H. Kiang, July 27, 1933, SC 872, box 17, fold. 2, AFY Papers, Stanford.

[40] Gallup, "Public Unwilling to Boycott Japan," *Los Angeles Times,* October 24, 1937, C7.

Irish commentator called this implementation of sanctions “the greatest experiment in modern history.”[41]

In order to give the sanctions greater clout, women internationalists including Vera Micheles Dean and Dorothy Detzer urged Roosevelt to seek passage of a revised U.S. Neutrality Act.[42] Though they did not necessarily promote total economic isolation of Italy, they did envision revisions to the act that would give Congress discriminatory embargo powers. This would enable the U.S. to enact an arms embargo against the “aggressor” nation of Italy but continue to sell arms to the Ethiopian “victim” engaging in defensive war. However, the 1935 American Neutrality Act would put in place a U.S. arms embargo against both “aggressor” and “victim,” and it prohibited Roosevelt from officially restricting Italian exports. Under the terms of the act, he could do nothing more than request that U.S. businessmen enact a voluntary “moral embargo” of Mussolini’s Italy.[43] Despite this, U.S. oil imports to Italy continued to rise over the course of the conflict, and Italian exports continued to flow in. Stopping them would be up to a U.S. consumer public.

Some African American consumers linked themselves to a broader, Black diaspora through participating in the international “Hands Off Ethiopia Movement,” which connected networks of Pan-Africanists from the U.S., Eastern and South Africa, the Caribbean, to European Metropolises like London and Paris.[44] Amy Ashwood Garvey typified such a diaspora. Born in the Caribbean, Ashwood Garvey lived for a time in Harlem with her then-husband, the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association Marcus Garvey. In 1935, while resident in London, she joined the “International African Friends of Abyssinia” with Trinidadian socialist C.L.R. James and served on its board of directors.[45] The movement organized in support of a boycott and raised money for supplies to send to troops—attempting to fill another gap left by the League's invocation of Article 16.

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[41] Cited in Mulder, *The Economic Weapon,* 202.

[42] *Ibid.,* 185.

[43] *Ibid.,* 216.

[44] David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (Zed Books, 2012), 101–104.

League sanctions failed to stop Italy's invasion and eventual conquest of Ethiopia. Despite the great hopes that some diplomats had expressed at the outset, the League assessed their ultimate impact as "negligible."[46] Those members of the U.S. public who felt that a boycott of Japan would have no effect likely looked to this example as a case study of the real limits of economic isolation. They lost whatever faith they might have had that sanctions, as either threat or reality, could bring peace. Yet, those Americans who remained in favor of boycotts and sanctions also had good reasons to believe what they did. Some of them considered this failure a result of U.S. noncompliance and League ambivalence. Vera Dean believed that if the League had been willing to cut oil exports and had provided aid and assistance to Ethiopia, then things might have gone differently.[47] Those in Dean's camp did not lose faith, seeing trade and international political economy as central as ever to bringing peace, and imagining the League as still capable of enforcing collective security through its manipulation of commodity flows.

The anti-Italian boycott also opened up a new Black internationalist argument for organized consumer action. For C.L.R. James as for Ashwood Garvey, organizing workers and consumers to disrupt the movement of Italian goods had power to democratically reroute trade, working in *spite* of the Western powers that primarily directed the League of Nations, not through them. Through his labor movement contacts, James organized international unions of dockworkers to refuse to offload Italian goods or ship military supplies and oil. He encouraged global Black consumers to disrupt demand enough to encourage retailers to stop making these orders in the first place. The organizers of this movement believed that the powers at the center of the League were too invested in maintaining their imperial holdings. Because those territories were their primary commitment, they would not commit themselves to work for Ethiopian freedom in any way that might endanger them. Further, while Article 16 allowed for aid to the "victim," the League did not provide it, despite Emperor Haile Selassie's urgent calls—thus, civil society organizations like his stepped in to fill the gap.[48] In contrast, according to the Antiguan pan-Africanist Tim Hector, C.L.R. James' "workers' sanctions" had the potential to be even more effective because they were "imposed by workers around the world, and not by States!" enacting a democratic basis of global community.[49]

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] Mulder, *Economic Weapon,* 222.

[47] *Ibid.*, 223.

As she stepped up in 1937 to become not just a boycott participant but a movement organizer, Alice Fong Yu charted an intellectual trajectory that was slightly different both from James' anti-colonial argument and from Dean's faith in the peacemaking power of the League of Nations. On the one hand, she worked tirelessly to cast Chinese American women as every bit as capable of organized political action as any other U.S. woman. On the other hand, somewhat like the Black Nationalist boycotters, she used the movement to build transpacific solidarities with family and contacts in China. This task interested her more than did discussions about the League of Nation's infrastructure or inner workings. In line with the way she presented herself to K.H. Kiang, she saw herself as *both* working for the needs of Chinese people *and* as a capable U.S. citizen who could astutely work within mainstream American political movements.

Yu's Boycott Leadership, 1937–1938

In the Ethiopian case, the 1935 Neutrality Acts did not lend much support to U.S. consumers who hoped to meaningfully impact Italy's bottom line. Yet how would the Neutrality Acts work in the context of the Sino-Japanese conflict? In 1937, Congress updated the Neutrality Act to allow the purchase of arms to combatants only on a cash-and-carry basis. This would have been convenient for Japan, but it would have seriously hindered cash-poor China's access to essential war materiel. Chinese-American journalist Tsu Pan claimed that this legislation would not make sense if applied to the Pacific, as they could essentially help Japan gain imperial control over China, running contrary to America's long-standing "open door" policy.[50] Because the Sino-Japanese war was undeclared, Roosevelt avoided invoking the acts. Nevertheless, U.S. policy-makers once again resisted a formal, state-sanctioned embargo of Japan. Roosevelt declared that Americans should voluntarily reject imports from nations they deemed militarily "aggressive."[51] Given the failures of the Italian boycotts, it would require work to convince U.S. consumers that this was a task they should consider taking on.

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[48] *Ibid.*, 222.

[49] Cited in Mulder, *Economic Weapon,* 201.

In September 1937, the Chinatown-based Federation of Chinese Clubs (FCC) suggested that the SCC help an upcoming fundraiser by organizing a fashion show which would encourage a voluntary "minimizing of the use of silk, especially silk stockings, wherever practical and possible," while "urging other Chinese [American] women to do so."[52] Hose could have critical importance: Japan sent nearly eighty-five percent of its raw silk to the U.S.[53] Yu agreed that this would be an excellent way to "develop a spirit of cooperation and service by promoting and fostering philanthropic and community projects," as the club's imagined community extended across the Pacific.[54] To promote the boycott, Yu employed three tools: the local Chinese American press, public performances intended to bring in wider audiences, and local social pressure. In each of these efforts, she relied on her contacts and translations across the Pacific.

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[50] Tsu Pan, "Sino-Japanese Crisis and American Neutrality Act," *Chinese Digest,* September 1937, 4.

[51] LeFeber*, The Clash,* 181.

[52] SCC Meeting Minutes, September 17, 1937, SPH 13, box 2, fold. 21, SCC Records, SFPL.

[53] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb,* 16.

[54] Quoted in Sparks, *China Gold,* 175.

To build the boycott's rhetoric, Yu used her women's column in the monthly magazine, *The Chinese Digest.* The English-language publication kept readers in the U.S. and China abreast of events in both nations that might affect their broader community. It worked against the cultural Orientalism inculcated by the Exclusion Act by demonstrating the humanity and cultural literacy of Chinese people, or, as one writer put it, to "kill the Celestial bogey and substitute a normal being who drives automobiles… and speaks good English."[55] Penned under the name "P'ing Yu," Yu's monthly "Jade Box" column kneaded together Chinese and American ideas about fashion, gender, consumption, and patriotism.

A 1937 article in "The Jade Box" asserted that women innately possessed the "power of giving and enriching life," and thus had a unique ability to promote peace. While her husband sought "prestige and face" on the battlefield, the woman could function as the "yin" to his aggressive "yang" through her embodiment of "peace and love—the ideal of Chinese life."[56] As a non-violent way to harm the enemy, the boycott presented an opportunity for the supposedly naturally peace-loving woman to "register her moral protest" on her body. Not only could she "withdraw her economic support of Japan's atrocities," but she could also contribute the money saved on silk, cosmetics, and hairdressing to Chinese war relief. Yu claimed that women in China were already voluntarily making such personal sacrifices.[57] When she asserted that that women's political voices were naturally more empathetic, nurturing, and cooperative, her writing took inspiration from the U.S. women's peace movement.[58] Though she reaffirmed existing gender roles, she did so because she believed they gave Chinese-American women a distinct political space.

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[55] Editorial, *The Chinese Digest,* November 1938, 8.

[56] P'ing Yu, "The Jade Box," *Chinese Digest,* June 1937, 8.

[57] P'ing Yu, "War Sets New Styles in Chinese Women's Fashion," *Chinese Digest,* November 1938, 6.

[58] For example, see Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace* (Syracuse University Press, 1993).

Yu's "Jade Box" could sometimes draw inspiration from the ideas of China's New Life Movement, or NLM. The NLM took some shape from the Wellesley education of Chiang's wife, Soong Mei-Ling and from leadership of American Christian missionaries to China. Since its inception in February 1934, this movement claimed to revitalize China by reforming the hygiene, discipline, and morality of its people. It sought to construct a "new citizen," "healthy and rigorous in body and spirit, socially and politically conscious and committed, forward-looking yet rooted in the past." [59] These revitalized bodies, in turn, might uplift the nation. Somewhat like Confucianism, argues historian Arif Dirlik, it linked individual morality to politics. However, Confucianism held that the state derived power from the people's assessment of the ruler's morality, and thus that morality existed *outside* of the state. In contrast, the NLM's quasi-Legalist framework held that obedience to state authority *itself* was a kind of morality, and thus that law presented a vital way to promote virtuous behavior.[60] Despite the NLM's occasionally authoritarian tone, the YMCA and networks of Christian missionaries admired and supported its central tenets of regulated attitude (*li*), right conduct (*I*), moral judgment (*lien*), and self-consciousness (*ch'ih*).[61] Given Yu's own membership within the U.S. YWCA, she saw the NLM as a productive site for transcultural communication.

In "The Jade Box," Yu idolized Soong Mei-Ling, "the first lady of China," and claimed that she "bolstered the morale of China's womanhood in this darkest hour of China's rebirth." [62] Yu relied on some of Soong's cultural and political translations for the U.S. press. Much as Soong did, Yu argued that if citizens, whether of the U.S. or China, were motivated by "national spirit," they could voluntarily submit individual interests to the collective good without state coercion. [63] Yu believed that China's ability to "enlist the will and the determination of her 430 million people to fight as a unit," which had the "rest of the world look[ing] on…breathlessly," was due in no small part to Soong's "brains" and "electricity."[64] Yu's discussions of aggressive "yang" and peaceful "yin," her critiques of selfish individualism, and her concept of a modernity grounded upon collective action harmonized with what she saw as core NLM principles.

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[59] Arif Dirlik, "The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (1975): 957.

[60] *Ibid.*, 971.

[61] Ferlanti, "The New Life Movement."

[62] P'ing Yu, "Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek—First Lady of China," *Chinese Digest,* November 1937, 8.

Yet, in her exaltations of Soong, Yu either misread or purposefully whitewashed Chinese politics. For example, she did not mention a set of 1935 laws in a number of provinces, including Hangzhou and Guangdong, which effectively outlawed permanent waves, high-heeled shoes, and certain western-styled garments by permitting only prostitutes to wear them.[65] Instead, Yu argued that valiant patriots with "faces… clean from powder and rouge," and "hair unwaved but neatly combed," chose to do so to out of national spirit to "save money for carrying for their destitute friends, relatives and fellow countrymen."[66] This may be a cultural translation made to sustain American readers' belief in China's democratic nature, but it may also come from Yu's recitation of Soong's carefully tailored self-presentation to U.S. audiences.

Yu believed that U.S. women could join Chinese women abroad by making their own sacrifices. Rejecting silk garments, for Yu, had the direct political potential to support China by divesting from Japan. Yu also cast the silk boycott in the context of a broad spirit of democratic, voluntary sacrifice that she believed Chinese women embodied. In this way, she believed that the silk boycott had the symbolic ability to renegotiate ideas about political "modernity" and place Chinese women within them. This second meaning unfolded through her Chinese fashion shows. By presenting reproductions of antique Chinese garments alongside sleek, modern Shanghai fashions, the SCC demonstrated that China was not a static, antiquated kingdom, but a modern nation undeserving of the atrocities it suffered. The Chinese American press reported that Yu's shows displayed "Chinese women's apparel as dignified, modest, and beautiful" by presenting these as qualities inherited from "the dynastic down to the smart, fetching creations of today."[67] This kind of elegance, grace, and civility made up China's cultural inheritance. Now, Yu implied, this culture was in dire need of protection.

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[63] Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek, "Who Are China's Friends?" *This World,* June 19, 1938, 13.

[64] P'ing Yu, "Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek," 8.

[65] Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (Columbia, 2008), 173.

[66] P'ing Yu, "Women in War," *Chinese Digest,* September 1938, 8.

At first glance, Yu's Chinese fashion shows appear to do little more than reproduce a troubling "self-Orientalizing" aesthetic. They might be seen as analogous to a market exchange: trading commodified racial performance for relief funds. Recent studies, however, offer an opportunity to more deeply analyze how Asian subjects have engaged Orientalism.[68] As Arif Dirlik has shown, Orientalism was not simply a set of ideas designed by the "West" and imposed on the "East." Rather, it was co-produced through *contact zones*.[69] As developed by Mary Louise Pratt, these are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."[70] Yu's engagement with Orientalism can elucidate some of the ways Asian peoples negotiated, contested, and re-produced images of "the Orient."

Though U.S. Orientalism differed from its European counterpart, both moved from the basic proposition that there was some "East" that was ontologically distinct from "the West." Edward Said has argued that Orientalists mapped *temporal* differences onto these spatial differences. While the West resided in "modernity" and moved through linear history towards a future, the "East" either trailed behind Europe or was bound to the past.[71] Eastern societies, then, could have no real sense of contemporaneity. Yu's fashion timelines challenged Orientalist temporalities by placing China within history, and in so doing presented Chinese women as "modern." But rather than re-producing the visual style or expectations of European modernity, she promoted an intercultural contemporary aesthetic. Her selections included "western formals… topped with satin Chinese wraps" and "modern [Chinese] gowns" designed with "short sleeves and high side slits [to] permit greater ease in keep up with the modern tempo."[72] By pairing these ensembles of "east-west sophistication" not only with fashionable perms, but also with Chinese double-buns and "airplane waves," she intended to display a hybridized alternative to the "West's" expectation of modern appearances. Hybridity and exchange, in Yu's vision, illustrated the epitome of the modern age, in which national borders were constantly crossed in both material and symbolic life.

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[67] Clara Chan, "Vive La Belle Chinoise," *Chinese Digest,* November 15, 1935, 11.

[68] On Asian-American engagement in "Oriental" knowledge-production through academic institutions, see Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (Oxford, 2002). On well-known "Orientalized" subjects' engagement in pop-cultural Orientalism, see Karen Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (University of California Press, 2005).

[69] Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory* 35, no. 4 (December 1996): 96–118.

[70] Mary Louise Pratt, "Art of the Contact Zones," *Profession* (1991): 34.

[71] Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference, 1976–84,* ed. Francis Barker et al. (London: Methuen, 1986).

Yu's finesse in framing her conception of Chinese political ideas and cultural forms as deeply "modern" contributed to the media attraction and political success of the fashion shows. Ninon, fashion editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, reported that "the designers of Shanghai" had successfully "given modernity to their wearers."[73] Even if many white viewers flattened Chinese models into Oriental stereotypes, showcasing Shanghai's haute couture presented a new edge to the ways American viewers understood China's capacity for aesthetic *and* political modernity. This display of aesthetic contemporaneity was not enough to refute Orientalist assumptions about China, however. Yu also relied on her editorial work to clarify just how modern Chinese and Chinese-American women's outlooks could be.

Yu's correspondences with the Hong Kong publication, the *Far Eastern Mirror*, reveal the material for her shows also developed out of transpacific conversations. The magazine's editor applauded her efforts, and he offered to allow Yu write about them for his Chinese magazine and even sent garments from China to dress her models.[74] Yu may have also been inspired by the way the Chinese Nationalist Party's promotional materials linked modernity to patriotism when its propaganda argued that an article of clothing could only be "modern" if it was fashioned of nationally-produced materials.[75]

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[72] This particular show occurred during World War II but was still organized for Chinese war relief. Fashion Show Transcript, July 6, 1944, SC 872, box 7, folder 1, AFY Papers, Stanford.

[73] Ninon, "Chinese Girls Glamorous in Fashion Display," *San Francisco Chronicle,* June 18, 1938, A1.

Even so, Yu knew that cotton stockings, the alternative to silk, seemed "terribly old fashioned" to many American women. In a sarcastic editorial piece, she wrote that "a great many know what can be done to help stop this mad aggression, but most of us are just not willing to help in the one way that is open for us women. We *moderns* simply can't take it!"[76] By chastising this individualistic "modernity" and replacing it instead with the group consciousness and social action that she termed "spunky 'oldenity'," Yu called for a reexamination the way American culture assessed social progress. Women with oldenity "know what they want and, best of all, are willing to fight for it!" If this kind of determination was outdated, she wrote, then "surely we can stand losing some of our namby-pamby modernity!"[77] For Yu, women in war-torn China embodied such "spunk." The "Jade Box" described how they forewent cosmetics and expensive hairstyles to save money for war relief, labored as volunteer nurses, or worked long hours producing not fashionable garments for themselves but medical gauze for the nation's wounded.[78] Though promoters of U.S. consumerism argued that modern fashions heightened the individual woman's access to the public sphere, Yu held that collectively working towards a self-defined humanitarian end represented a more powerful marker of women's social progress.

In theory, Yu's movement was open to all women who rejected silk in favor of a vision of a more peaceful world. In practice, however, her strategies either failed to account for class or were limited by the conditions of the stockings' production. First, when calling out to all women, Yu's writing implicitly included only those who could still even consider buying silk amidst a major economic downturn. When she claimed that women "have the power to stop stupid and suicidal wars… money is that power and you have it," she made assumptions about the average woman's autonomy over household purchasing power that were not accurate for all Depression-era families.[79] Her argument that replacing expensive silk stockings with lisle hose and forgoing expensive cosmetics and hairstyles would allow women to save money and contribute to the Chinese war fund would not have resonated in quite the same way with those who had already lessened such expenditures in the harsh economic climate.

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[74] *Far Eastern Mirror* to P'ing Yu, December 21, 1938, SC 872, box 17, folder 2, AFY Papers, Stanford.
[75] Gerth, *China Made,* 305.
[76] P'ing Yu, "Lady Precious Stream," *Chinese Digest,* February 1938, 9.
[77] *Ibid*.
[78] P'ing Yu, "Women in Wartorn China," *Chinese Digest,* September 1938, 8.

On the other hand, Yu may have underestimated the so-called "lipstick effect," or the way small expenditures on treats like silk stockings or cosmetics can increase during economic downturns. Doubtless, some young working-class women did keep silk in their budgets as a small means of accessing aesthetic modernity and its associated public participation. Kathy Peiss shows, for example, that during the early twentieth century, working-class women often invested wages in attractive clothing in hopes of being "treated," or exchanging feminine charms and sexual favors for a male-funded evening on the town.[80] While Yu understood her boycott as a means by which peace-loving women could gain admission to the public sphere, it would be incorrect to ignore ways that modern women's garments also granted access, if in partial and complicated ways.

Second, in the way that Yu framed the problem, the transnational production of silk stockings forced consumers to make a choice *either* to promote Chinese war relief efforts *or* support hosiery workers. By 1938, ninety-five percent of silk in the U.S. came from Japan, and over half was used to fashion stockings. Classing these goods as “American” rather than “Japanese,” the AFL-affiliated American Federation of Hosiery Workers (AFHW) fought against a boycott that they believed privileged Chinese war relief over their jobs. In theory, the AFHW could have protested or issued a strike demanding U.S. companies source silk from elsewhere, but such a labor action would have been risky and likely unfulfilled.

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[79] Alice P. Fong, "An Open Letter to the Women of America," in *Analyses of the Sino-Japanese Conflict,* ed. Churchill Chiu, (San Fransisco: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1938), 22.

[80] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

A scene narrated by the reporter Boake Carter in 1938 provides a glimpse at the way some hosiery workers may have understood the boycott. According to his story, “a group of Washington debs strutted around a capital hotel ballroom showing their legs clad in cotton and rayon stockings,” in opposition to the Sino-Japanese war.[81] On the streets outside, “a long line of non-blue blooded American girls—silk hosiery workers” performed their own protest, wearing their American-made silk stockings. While “the blue-bloods” inside were putting on their show for publicity, “the red bloods were parading to save their jobs.” Carter wondered why these “society women… make such spectacles of themselves in their craze for publicity?” Rather than hailing the women who cast off soft silks and donned inelegant rayon as heroes, Carter chastised the “debs” as frivolous and selfish. For him, the needs of the “red-blooded” American girl and her family came first in a domestic economic crisis, not the welfare of the distant Chinese.

In San Francisco’s Chinatown, social pressure overcame any temptation to counter-boycott. The SCC forbade silk and expected members to report violators at meetings. The club chastised one member for appearing at a meeting in silk stockings and memorialized this embarrassment in its records.[82] In November 1938, Yu happily announced that “Chinatown merchants as a group have submitted to the coercion of group consciousness and have openly stopped their trade with the Japanese."[83] Her praise of "the coercion of group consciousness" illustrated her attraction to tight social unity. Backed by the Six Companies and FCC, Yu's cause held firm sway among local merchants.

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[81] Boake Carter, “A Run in the Silk Stocking,” *The Post-Crescent,* Feb 8, 1938, 6.

[82] SCC Meeting Minutes, November 19, 1937, SPH 13, box 2, folder 21, SCC Records, Stanford.

The most coercive of local organizations was the Chinese War Relief Association (CWRA), established by the Six Companies. As part of its official boycott statement issued on October 1, 1937, the CWRA set quotas for donations during fundraisers ($30 for each working adult) and denounced non-cooperators. One report suggested that they might even be paraded through the streets of Chinatown for public humiliation. Boycott committees blacklisted non-participating merchants. The CWRA could fine any seller of Japanese-made goods five-hundred dollars. While it was difficult to enforce, individuals who consumed Japanese-made goods could be fined five dollars or more per purchase if reported. These community-enforced regulations effectively forced Japanese-American bazaars in Chinatown to shut down.[84] If these restrictions were not enough, then on October 10, 1937, young Chinese men with signs marked "Boycott Japan!" strung around their necks picketed the storefronts of any remaining merchants of Japanese-made goods.[85] While explicitly driven by political motivations, the elimination of local competitors was economically beneficial to Chinese merchants. Such coercion shows that while the movement allowed Chinese-Americans to claim a place in U.S. culture, it sometimes fed into a disdain for Japanese-Americans, whether or not it intended to.

Even as Yu promoted the Chinese Nationalist Party in her writings, she preferred the greater potential for individual influence under American liberal democracy and hoped individuals would unite behind a common goal without external pressure. Even so, CWRA ordinances suggest that a boycott would likely have been observed, at least in Chinatown, even without the SCC's efforts to popularize it. Even so, Yu's activity was not in vain. Her publications and performances revised Orientalist constructions of ethnically Chinese women, positioned China as modern in its own right, increased the social prominence of her public service organization, and situated local Chinese American women in a national coalition in support of peace in the Pacific.

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[83] P'ing Yu, "Each Individual Must Show His Stuff," *Chinese Digest,* November 1938, 6.

[84] "Community Votes Boycott of Japanese Goods," *Chinese Digest,* November 1937, 15.

[85] "Chinatownia," *Chinese Digest,* November 1937, 11.

Boycotting Silk Beyond Chinatown

Yu's Chinatown movement encouraged local women to adorn their bodies with symbols of self-sacrifice for a larger community. She regarded this patriotic act as an element of "modern" women's political subjectivity. Because the movement focused on a good produced both in Japan and the U.S., however, the silk stocking boycott could be used to promote contradictory kinds of commodity patriotism. This was especially true for Americans who had no personal ties to China. A Japanese boycott might have been aided by impulses to Buy American or to screen out "cheap" Asian goods. However, as Boake Carter argued, boycotting American-made stockings of Japanese silk could be more harmful to the U.S. than helpful to China. Silk stockings thus generated dialogues around the cultural meanings of international trade and the boundaries of ethical responsibility and political community.

Yu's movement was just one part of a nation-wide boycott. As early as 1932, the International Longshoreman's and Warehouseman's Union, a CIO-affiliate, supported an anti-Japanese boycott by allowing Chinese-American picketers onto San Francisco docks and refusing to ship scrap iron to Japan. In 1937, West Coast organizer Harry Bridges proclaimed that it was "the sentiment of our membership that an economic boycott be imposed on all Japanese goods even though it means loss of work for our members."[86] A year later, the CIO unanimously voted to adopt a boycott resolution declaring its concern "with the maintenance of peace and the continued protection of the people's rights since the free trade union movement can survive and flourish only when peace and democratic institutions prevail."[87]

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[86] "U.S. Labor Favors Japan Boycott," *Chinese Boycott,* November 1937, 7.

Because it provided an opportunity to combat what they saw as profit-driven Japanese imperialism, the boycott found support from a number of left-liberal Popular Front affiliates in the U.S., including the American League for Peace and Democracy, *The Nation* magazine, the LWS, the ASU, and the National Negro Congress (NNC). For the NNC, working through a logic not unlike C.L.R. James' own, boycott participation offered an opportunity to link China's war effort to a global rise in anti-imperial struggles. Their boycott statements expressed a strong sense of Afro-Asian solidarity. Because the "heroic Chinese people" were "carrying forward the battle for world democracy," they were "in principle fighting the battle of the people of Ethiopia and all of Africa" against fascism, imperialism, and their capitalistic drives.[88]

At an October 1937 convention, the American Federation of Labor issued a boycott statement that highlighted the danger posed by Japanese militarists' economic exploitation to workers everywhere. Claiming that the Japanese "fanatics are able to finance their atrocious activities only through dumping into the U.S. and other markets the products of exploited workers who are paid the equivalent of less than 5 cents per hour," it suggested that at least part of the movement's appeal was ridding the nation of cheap Japanese imports.[89] In some ways, the resolution mirrored the AFL's argument for Chinese Exclusion just a few decades before: goods produced by low-waged Asian workers degraded the value of white labor. Their supposed racialized capacity to live on less drove down all workers' wages.[90] However, this resolution revised this older conception. It emphasized the dangers posed by Japan's *military government,* not by the racial characteristics of its workers. That AFL representatives sat alongside the Chinese War Relief Association (CWRA) on the "United Committee for Boycott Against Japan" illustrated the union's willingness to collaborate with Chinese Americans towards common goals.

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[87] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb?,* 14.

[88] "Greeting from the NNC to the Struggling Heroic Chinese People," October 1937, box 15, Papers of the National Negro Congress, pt.1 Records and Correspondence, 1933–1942, [microfiche]. Hereafter designated NNC Records, microfilm.

[89] Lim P. Lee, "Economic Boycott as an Instrument of the People's Policy," *Chinese Digest,* March 1938, 10.

[90] On labor's relationship to Chinese Exclusion see Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (UC Press, 1971).

If the CWRA itself participated in anti-Japanese rhetoric, then it always differentiated between oppressed people and militaristic rulers. In a 1938 pamphlet, Churchill Chiu argued that Japan's military government purposefully exploited its workers and "dumped" cheap goods on U.S. shores in an attempt to overtake global markets. According to Chiu, Japan should be boycotted both because it oppressed the Chinese and because it would otherwise continue enslaving its own people in a quest to "cut the throats of occidental nations."[91] This kind of messaging was not uncommon. Another pamphlet claimed that boycotters should not worry that their efforts would starve the Japanese working class because "Japan, with its colonies, is self-sufficient in foodstuffs." While its workers would undoubtedly suffer from loss of work and economic contraction, they were already exploited by a radically unequal economic order. After all, the pamphlet reported, 75 percent of the Japanese economy was controlled by the 15 wealthiest companies, making it one of the most "unequal economies on earth." Thus, they claimed that economic disruption might not be such a bad thing—at any rate, they claimed, "a sudden breakdown in Japanese economy is preferable to the gradual attrition resulting from continued war."[92] Yu herself participated in this kind of argument when she characterized the population of Japan as "half-starved peasants and industrial slaves." Boycotting Japan's militarism, she argued, would help free its people, especially its women, from "untold oppression."[93] Her portrayal of China as a modern democratic nation with a unified and engaged citizenry stood in stark contrast to her almost objectifying image of tyrannical Japanese leaders and subjugated people.

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[91] Churchill Chiu, "Japan's Economic War Against the White Race," in *Analyses of the Sino-Japanese Conflict,* 26–27.

[92] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb?,* 15.

Some economic nationalists, however, would more explicitly racialize the cause. Three years before the AFL approved its official boycott statement, president William Green received a letter from an A.W. Mitchell of Houston, TX. Borrowing language from the likes of Lothrop Stoddard, Mitchell urged Green to consider how "an economic boycott of Japan by the white races of the world would create havoc among the yellow races" giving whites the edge in "the struggle between the white races and the yellow races for world supremacy." Rejecting Japanese imports would, according to Mitchell, "heal much of the unemployment in the United States."[94] A popular Japanese boycott offered some an opportunity to pronounce Asian labor as innately degraded.

In stark contrast, Walter White of the NAACP saw war relief as an opportunity not just to support China in particular, but also to direct Americans' attention to "the global nature of the question of skin color and 'white supremacy.' "[95] For some in the NAACP, as for Yu, Chinese war relief presented an opportunity to engage in popular discussions that could dispel racial stereotypes. U.S. concern with China suggested that Americans had begun to take seriously the political concerns of people of color, moving into a modernity that embraced multiracialism as a constitutive, core element.

As contradictory as their arguments were, the NNC, Mitchell, Yu, and White each interwove domestic and international concerns about race. The NNC cast China as "fighting for the freedom of all liberty-loving people throughout the world." Just as Yu's writing did, this statement proclaimed Chinese people's capacity for self-government and intended to shift dominant American presumptions about the political subjectivities of people of color.[96] The war in the Pacific presented what Mitchell saw as an opportunity to revitalize home industry. For Yu and White, increasing respect for China and supporting people of color abroad could prompt a reconsideration of racial stereotypes at home.

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[93] P'ing Yu, "The Real Japan," *Chinese Digest,* January 1938, 9.

[94] Quoted in Dana Frank, *Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism* (Beacon Press, 1999).

[95] Leong, *China Mystique,* 138.

Some who rejected Japan's militarism continued purchasing silk stockings. In solidarity with the AFHW, the AFL classed silk stockings as "American" rather than "Japanese" and did not boycott them. If the transnational production of silk hose made the boycott more difficult, why focus on them? First, the U.S. was the primary purchaser of Japanese silk, and hose were almost certainly made of Japanese textiles. However, men's ties, socks, and shirts could also be fashioned from silk. Though they received less publicity, LWS members' husbands sported woolen ties.[97] In part, the materiality of women's hose earned them their place at the boycott's symbolic center. Fashionable female bodies were often objectified to sell goods. In a conscious reversal, white female boycotters used sexuality to attract media attention to Chinese war relief and promote *non*-consumption. Further, some boycott organizations claimed that they were not really taking work from U.S. hosiery factories. One group claimed that a "competent investigation" revealed that current machinery worked equally well with silk substitutes.[98] They did not "ask women to go bare legged" or halt stocking consumption, only to cease import of raw silk by choosing alternatives.

The movement may have offered fertile terrain for cross-racial cooperation on the basis of gender, but white and Chinese groups often invested the boycott with alternative meanings. Yu's rhetoric of self-sacrifice was generally absent in white women's movements. Many white women's club activities suggest they were more interested in creating a fashionable movement than in rethinking racial politics. For example, New York and San Francisco socialites purchased clunky, Chinese costume jewelry— often replete with dangling jade Buddhas—to support Soong Mei-Ling's war fund. Fashion editor Ninon described the trend as bestowing "all the splendor of the Orient, all the elegance of an empress" in a way that exoticized the Chinese women it allegedly supported.[99] In proclaiming that kitschy war-relief chic was "insured by those infallible women who make fashions in America," newspapers touted celebrity supporters as true tastemakers, not women like Yu.

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[96] "Greeting," October 1937, box 15, NNC Records, microfilm.

[97] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb?,* 7.

[98] *Ibid.,* 15.

Even former Chinese missionaries like Mary Woolley and her colleague Margaret I. Lamont, who sat on the board of the American Boycott Against Aggressor Nations (ABAAN), could unconsciously replicate orientalist images and language. ABAAN sought to act as an umbrella organization that united all the individual U.S. groups engaged in an anti-silk boycott. It sought to generate common political messaging by issuing pamphlets with a series of facts, images, and talking points in favor of the boycott. In its most comprehensive leaflet, *Who Bought the Bomb,* it presented the valiant boycotters tasked with "saving" China entirely as white, middle class housewives—glossing over significant groups of Chinese Americans who also participated.[100] Over two-dozen pages, it presented Japanese people either as sly statesmen who sought to crush the boycott, aviators flying "winged messengers of death," or as innocent young women and girls terrified by the militarism surrounding them (Figure 5a). The visual grammar of innocent Japanese girlhood echoed that of the FCC's 1927 doll exchange. Yet now, in 1939, ABAAN juxtaposed images of Japanese girls with those of fighter pilots and war-making diplomats to suggest an infantalized, feminized Japanese citizenry itself ensnared by the very "war machine" that white U.S. housewives were called upon to destroy through their buying power.

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[99] Ninon, "Chinese Costume Jewelry Sales Aid Mme. Chiang's War Fund," *San Francisco Chronicle,* December 11, 1939, 6.

[100] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb,* 15.

On the final page of the pamphlet, a frightened Chinese boy looked into the eyes of the reader, surrounded by the text: "In saving me, you save yourself." As Erica Kalnay writes of the doll exchange, the attachment of a kind of feminized innocence to the bodies of young Asian women may have depoliticized them in a way that "preserves racial power differentials while soothing racial stress."[101] In any case, these were notably *not* the strong images of Chinese women as tireless war-workers that Yu favored.

Racial condescension was not only symbolic,. It could also make cross-racial conversation impossible. While working to create gender-based coalitions, Yu found an opportunity to voice what she saw as American modernity's deepest contradiction. In Yu's words, "just as the world… was getting nauseated" with "the shameful spread of race hatred among the less democratic nations," some white clubwomen proved resistant to this social progress. Upon receiving the SCC's application to join in 1937, the bay area Federation of Women's Clubs quickly altered their constitution to "bar non-Caucasian clubs from membership," saying that "though they would be willing to work *for* colored women," they would not work *with* them.[102] Participation in the boycott did not necessarily signal genuine engagement with the Chinese-American community. For such groups, Chinese women could be objects of missionary uplift but could not work as equal parts of a coalition.

The rejection from the Federation revealed the way racist ideologies and Chinese Exclusion played out on the ground. White women did not always seek to work with Chinese-American organizations that shared their goals. Even if the Japanese boycotts attracted attention and

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[101] Kalnay, "Yellow Peril, Oriental Plaything," 118.

[102] P'ing Yu, "Color—Chafing to Clubwomen," *Chinese Digest,* March 1937, 10.

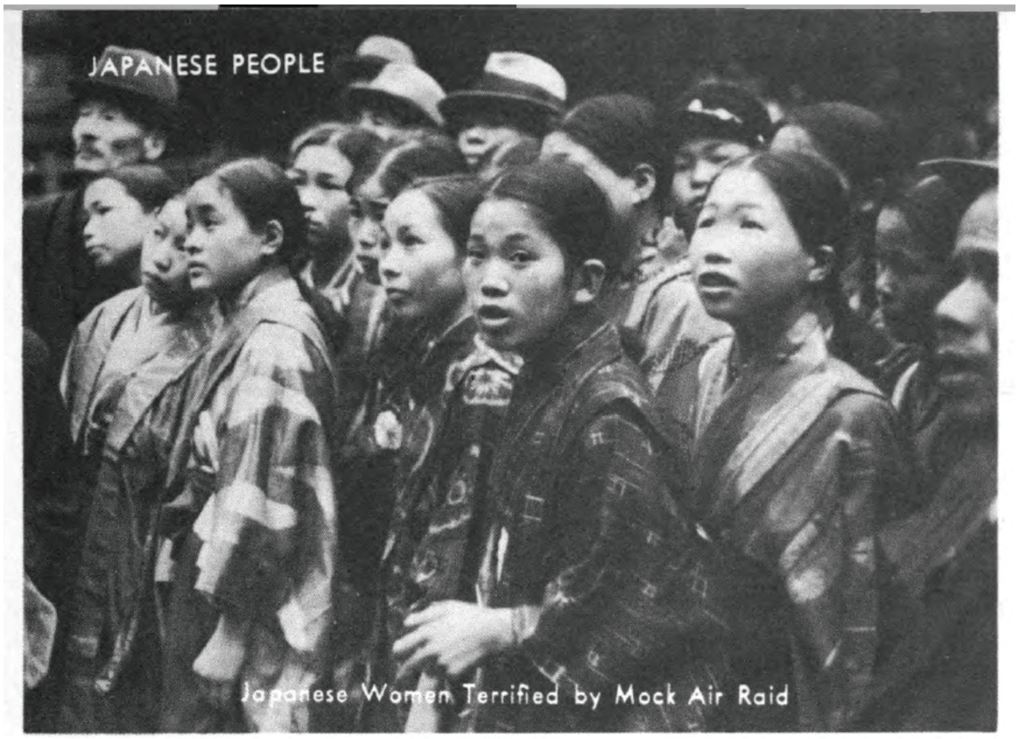
JAPANESE PEOPLE
Japanese Women Terrified by Mock Air Raid

Figure 5a: "Japanese Women Terrified by Mock Air Raid."
Source: American Boycott of Aggressor Nations, *Who Bought the Bomb?* (New York, 1938)

sympathy from white middle-class women, popular Orientalism made the club feel unable to fully claim membership in the national community.

World Boycott Conference, London 1938

A boycott against Japan was not a uniquely American phenomenon. Rather, it was practiced by women throughout the globe. The World Boycott Conference, which convened in London on February 12 and 13, 1938 at the behest of the British International Peace Council, demonstrated the movement's wide scope (Figure 5b). Eight hundred delegates came from twenty-one countries. On the first day of the conference, attendees heard speeches and addresses from Chinese Nationalist leaders including Chiang Kai Shek and Soong Ching-Ling, the widow of former party leader Sun Yat-sen. Perhaps in an attempt to gain support from Western delegates, their arguments could sometimes frame the boycott in a way that played into 'Yellow Peril' anxieties. While Chiang Kai Shek suggested that if Japan was not stopped, then "humanity would be plunged into the worst conflict ever known in which all western influence would be swept from Asia," Soong even more blatantly claimed that "if Japan is enabled to use the man-power and raw materials of China for military purposes it will mean the downfall of the white race and the end of all modern civilization."[103]

Yet, the audience was not entirely made up of European and American people invested in exerting "western influence" over Asia. Nor were boycotters. In his address, Indian delegate Krishna Menon's claimed that the "peasants and workers of India have already organised a boycott of Japanese goods," and that the Indian congress was in favor of participating in what it saw as an anti-imperial movement.[104] In fact, when Japanese diplomats appealed to

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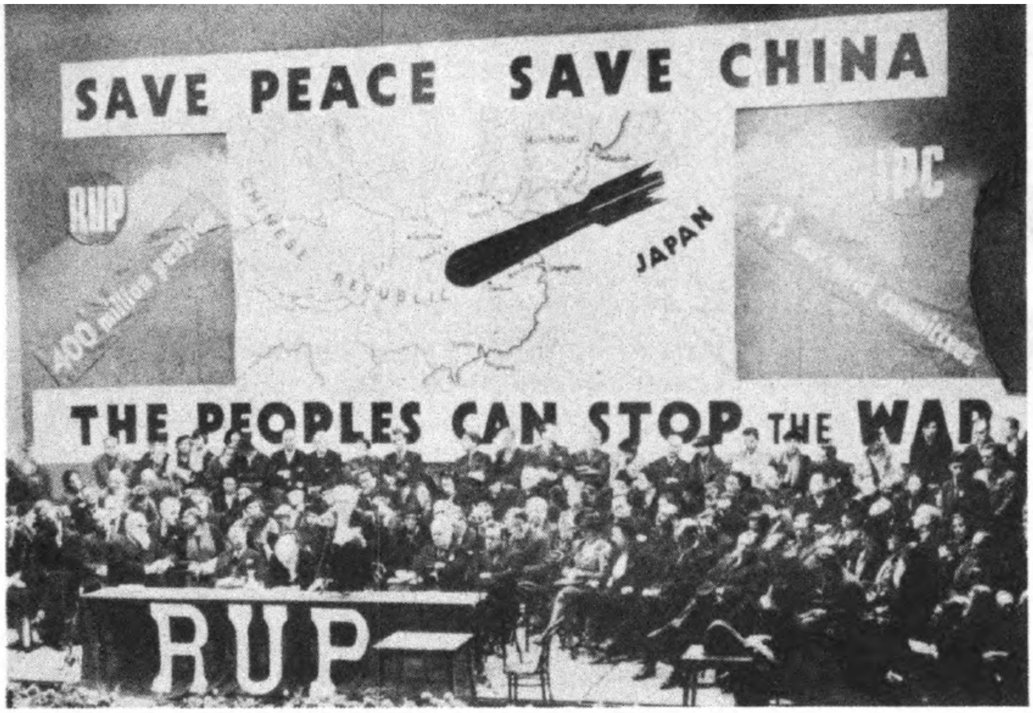
[103] "Transcript of World Boycott Conference, London," transcribed by Theo Naftel, 1938, U DCX, box 4, folder 1. Records of the International Women's Co-Operative Guild, 1921–1961. Hull University Archives. Hull, UK. (Henceforth ICWG Papers, Hull), 2.

[104] *Ibid,* 3.


SAVE PEACE SAVE CHINA
RUP
400 million people
CHINESE REPUBLIC
JAPAN
IPC
THE PEOPLES CAN STOP THE WAR
RUP

WORLD BOYCOTT CONFERENCE, London, February 1938. Sponsored by International Peace Campaign, representing 400 million organized people in 43 countries. Viscount Cecil, Conservative Member of British House of Lords and one of the authors of the League of Nations Covenant presides.

Figure 5b: World Boycott Conference (1938).
Source: American Boycott of Aggressor Nations, *Who Bought the Bomb?* (New York, 1938)

Rabindranath Tagore to stop the boycott "in the name of Eastern culture," he replied that he had no interest in stopping the movement and would be unable to do so even if he tried. In just the first six months of 1938, Japan lost 27% of its former Indian trade in the total amount of 33,500,000 yen.[105]

On the second day of the conference, commissions gave their reports. While countries sent an uneven number of delegates, most had enough to distribute amongst the conference's seven commissions. These commissions represented the interests of consumers, trade unions, religious groups, national Parliaments, and Cooperators in the International Cooperative Alliance. Two others, the technical commission and the propaganda commission, dealt with strategy. The consumers' group's resolution echoed what some of the women writing Woolley had suggested in 1932 when they claimed that "a consumers' boycott would show Governments that the masses supported collective action in defense of international law."[106] They recommended that consumers' groups in every nation draw up lists to make both retailers and shoppers aware that their dollars aided the "aggressor."

Trade unionists committed themselves to the resolution of the International Federation of Trade Unions, which had recommended a "complete embargo and boycott including a refusal by workers to manufacture, handle, or transport goods coming from or going to Japan." They urged workers around the world to participate, as a "committee of legal experts" advised them that no legal action could be taken against workers who refused to handle Japanese cargo. The IFTU policy was carried out in the U.S., where both the CIO and AFL backed the boycott.[107]

Parliamentary representatives, meanwhile, present welcomed the voluntary action on the part of workers and consumers as a way to demonstrate public opinion, but believed that official action was essential. British Labour MP Philip Noel-Baker, among others, hoped to advocate in their home countries laws that would require manufacturers and retailers to label goods with their country of origin. Even so, this would not be so simple in an international marketplace, in which raw goods might be extracted in a nation far from the site of final manufacture.[108]

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[105] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb,* 17.

[106] "The Cooperative Commission and the Recommendations of Other Commissions," Minutes by Theo Naftel, U DCX, box 4, folder 1, ICWG Papers. Hull.

[107] *Who Bought the Bomb,* 14. Even so, the AFL encouraged members to purchase silk stockings, as they saw them as U.S. products

Business interests did not have their own commission. The only group at the conference that had control of production or commodity sourcing were members of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). As French ICA representative Ernst Poisson pointed out in his February 12 speech, global cooperatives had the power to immediately cut off trade relationships with Japanese and German wholesalers, if this was what consumers desired. Yet, even if the cooperative commission had significant autonomy over its own commercial sphere, it was also the most ambivalent about the use of an anti-Japanese boycott movement.[109]

When the ICWG surveyed its members months before the conference in order to determine their interest in a boycott, only around sixty percent felt positively about it.[110] This "difference of opinion" amongst the membership came from the same ethical concerns expressed by other socialists—sanctions might only cause starvation or "great privation," and they wanted "no revival of the blockade idea which caused such terrible suffering during the last war." This would not promote peace but only "cause them [the Japanese people] to despair and riot."[111] Cooperators were not as keen on a consumer boycott except as a means to demonstrate public opinion, though they did promote an embargo on arms. ICWG women Freundlich and Theo Naftel made clear in the Cooperative commission's resolution that rejecting consumer goods was not the most lasting way women consumers could build a peaceful world. "We shall never abolish war and aggression until there is complete economic justice for all nations," they claimed.[112] As was typical for them, they proposed that economic justice would only come as a result of “breaking down the barriers that impede trade and cause some States to be short of raw materials.” They argued that the only lasting way to put women’s pocketbooks to work for peace would be to build up the global cooperative movement by spending at local societies.

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[108] *Ibid*., 5.

[109] "International Peace Campaign: World Boycott London," 2.

[110] "Circular Letter Embargo on Japanese Trade," February 7, 1939, U DCX, box 4, folder 1, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[111] *Ibid.*

Freundlich’s comments were not an attempt to remove her organization from political engagement in this issue, however. Women in the international cooperative movement *were* actively building a meaningful alternative to the boycott through their work to build cooperative structures in war-torn China. Some of these women hailed from the growing co-op movement in the United States. For example, U.S. cooperator and Christian missionary Ida Pruitt found herself working in the hospital in Peiping in the midst of war. When long-simmering conflict between Japan and China erupted into militarized conflict in 1937, Pruitt and her international colleagues watched as the war destroyed some 70 percent of Chinese industry and pushed urban refugees from Shanghai into agricultural regions where there was no work for them. Unable to easily import goods or rely on Japanese sources, displaced workers and farmers alike “needed cloth and tools. The hospitals needed gauze and absorbent cotton, and other supplies. The women wanted soap and towels and everybody wanted printing presses for newspapers.”[113]

As they watched both a “flood” of industrial workers and a dire need of goods, Pruitt and her colleagues conceived of their “dream”: forming thousands of cooperatively organized workshops across China, employing industrially skilled refugees and producing goods local people needed that could eventually be sold by cooperative retailers. The first of these workshops materialized in September 1940 as the founding unit of the “Chinese Industrial Cooperatives,” or CIC. The ICWG encouraged its national members to donate funds to the CIC and attempted to correspond directly with women leaders engaged in building the movement. Their commitment to this work suggests that cooperators were serious about their belief that economic aid, not boycotts or economic sanctions, had the strongest peacemaking potential.

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[112] *Ibid,* 3.

[113] Ida Pruitt, “Reports from Conference in Religion and Consumer Cooperation,” October 15, 1942, MS 63–14, box 2, folder 11, Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Papers 1914–1982, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

Overall, the IPC congress resolved to "do everything in their power to aid China and to withhold aid from Japan," leaving its individual delegates space to determine exactly what "withholding aid" meant for them. Clearly, for a number of participating nations, this meant a consumer boycott. In the following year Mary Woolley, chair of American Boycott Against Aggressor Nations, proudly announced that Japan's global exports had dropped by 150 million dollars in just the first six months of 1938 thanks to the 54 nations who had declared themselves as part of the movement.[114] Because there was a sharper decline in common goods than luxury goods, economists believed that the boycott caused these losses, not the depression. In the U.S. itself, Japanese imports fell by 33% from 1938 to 1939. Further, "large chain stores" stopped stocking both Japanese and German goods "because of adverse consumer reaction," aided by local housewives' boycott organizations.

Boycott Legacies

What impact did the silk boycott ultimately have? A 1938 "Fortune" poll showed that now 65 percent of Americans had grown to support it. Total Japanese sales to the U.S. dropped forty-two percent ($74,423,638) in that year; silk sales dropped thirty-six percent.[115] But economist Nathan M. Becker reported that fervor dropped after 1938, giving the movement a negligible long-term impact.[116] The people's boycott was rendered moot after the official end of trade relations in 1941. However, the ensuing embargo of oil, copper, and scrap iron did have a major impact, as 80 percent of Japan's oil was sourced from the U.S. and around 55 percent of its war materiel was constructed from U.S. scrap iron.[117]

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[114] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb*, 14.

[115] *Ibid*., 12.

[116] Nathan Becker, "The Anti-Japanese Boycott in the United States," *Far Eastern Survey* 8, no. 5 (1939): 53.

The cultural and social impacts of the movement had been far greater than economic ones. Even Yu struggled to articulate all that the boycott and war relief had meant for Chinatown's residents. One 1939 protest at the San Francisco docks against the exportation of scrap iron to Japan left her wonder-struck. There, she witnessed the combined efforts of the community, from "men and women bowed with age" to "college rah-rah boys and…lisle-hosieried society matrons." As a picket line gathered on a February morning in 1939, Yu learned that she could not "describe spirit," at least, not of this sort. Yu knew that this inexplicable "spirit" could win the war in China. It seemed something like "national spirit," yet it was experienced by a diasporic community that transcended borders. At the protest, she saw and felt the courage "that makes you want to wear lisle [cotton] hosiery, give generously to war relief, and sing Cheelai [a Chinese song praising the volunteer armies that fought the Japanese invasion of 1931]."[118]

From 1931–1941, Chinese-Americans' war relief efforts helped construct a lasting sense of transpacific solidarity. But it also engaged Chinese American women in local, national politics. For women like those in the SCC, the boycott afforded an opportunity to become relevant participants in a national conversation and to contribute their own ideas about collective action, gender, and national identity to typically male-lead discussions of trade and diplomacy. Though racialized ideas codified through anti-Chinese legislation had long shaped their community's portrayal, the silk boycott allowed Chinese-American women like Yu to fashion their own, complex image for U.S. public consumption.

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[117] ABAAN, *Who Bought the Bomb?,* 4.

[118] P'ing Yu, "Spirit, You Can't Explain It," *Chinese Digest,* February 1939, 8.

Chapter 6

"No Real Peace in a Half-Starved World": The National Council of Negro Women's Vision of Postwar Food Justice, 1939–1946

In mid-October 1941, as war raged across Europe and Asia, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) met for their Seventh Annual Conference. Its President Mary McLeod Bethune had founded the Council in 1935 to unite Black women's professional clubs, sororities, and auxiliaries into a nation-wide effort to fight against the interlocking harms of racism and sexism that activist Mary Terrell termed a "double handicap."[1] They did not treat these injustices merely as limitations. Instead, they used their awareness of the ways racism and sexism intersected in Black women's lives to develop incisive social thought and criticism that they believed could make the U.S. more just for all its citizens.[2] To create central topics for discussion, NCNW annual conferences brought together club leaders and helped frame major issues that influenced its affiliates' organizational priorities. Given that war had disrupted millions of lives abroad and incited constant debate at home, NCNW leaders fittingly dedicated their 1941 convention to thinking about "the responsibility of Negro women in these times of world chaos and national emergency."[3] Their proceedings went event even further, declaring that "we must prepare for peace now, for we realize that at the end of the last war, largely through our own shortsightedness and lack of interest, we found ourselves without representatives at the peace conferences where we could seek a part in the plans for peace. We are determined that this shall not happen again."[4]

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[1] Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2005), 29.

[2] In making this statement, I am drawing on the arguments of Brittney Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (University of Illinois Press, 2017).

[3] National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), "Committee Report," October 16, 1941, series 1, reel 15, Mary McLeod Bethune papers [microform]: the Bethune Foundation Collection. Accessed at New York Public Library, NY. (Henceforth MMB Papers, microfilm).

Two months before U.S. entry into the conflict, attendees already resolved to make space for Black women leaders at the eventual peace table. They also encouraged local women's clubs to create and share knowledge about the social challenges they faced as broader "world chaos" manifested at home in the forms of higher costs of living, a military draft, and defense industry mobilization. As an umbrella organization that spoke on the behalf of several member clubs, the NCNW worked to insert Black women's concerns into national political debate.[5] Yet, leaders did not stop developing their understanding of those concerns at the U.S. border. To engage in broad conversations about the ways global forces shaped the experiences of women of color, they encouraged local women's clubs to "grow more international-minded" by undertaking programs of study in other languages and cultures, especially those of Latin America and the Caribbean.[6]

The NCNW formed one part of U.S. women internationalists' nation-wide effort to begin sketching out the contours of the settlement they would like to see after the conflict.[7] Such broad-based organizing took an important step forward on September 15, 1942, when Mary Emma Woolley gathered six other leaders of women's peace organizations at the New York Cosmopolitan Club to discuss what they believed to be one of the most critical questions of their moment: as war and fascism ruptured the rhythms of daily life at home, in European nations, and across global empires, what could U.S. women do to help imagine and work towards a more sustainable peace?[8]

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[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Rebecca Tuuri, *Strategic Sisterhood: The National Council of Negro Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (UNC Press, 2018).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Megan Threlkeld, "Chapter 6: Mary McLeod Bethune's Plans for a Just Postwar Peace," *Citizens of the World: U.S. Women and Global Government* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 124–144.

It was a timely question, as U.S. diplomats had already begun to draw up blueprints for a postwar world. Thinking about peace as the war raged might seem like a counter-intuitive use of state resources. Yet as historian Elizabeth Borgwardt has convincingly argued, the Roosevelt administration learned from "the instructive failure of Wilson diplomacy" that "negotiating positions tended to harden quickly after an armistice," and that postwar institutions were most likely to materialize if they were designed while the war was still being fought.[9] In January 1942, twenty-nine Allied nations already signaled their support for the Atlantic Charter, a set of eight abstract rights and freedoms that their collective victory allegedly aimed to secure for the globe.[10] The document included the right to self-governance and well-known promises of "freedom from fear and want." These sounded like well-meaning goals, but fleshing out the declaration's abstract points would take fastidious, detail-oriented work. How, asked the seven peace activists gathered at the Cosmo Club, could women's ideas gain representation in diplomatic discussions to plot out the contours of an Allied peace? They were not alone in asking this question. As Prussian-born Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) activist Gertrude Baer pointed out, women in Allied Europe and Australia were already working to develop and share their own priorities for the peace.[11] To place U.S. women's voices into these conversations, Mary Dingman of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) suggested that these seven women should work to establish a long-standing committee. Woolley and her colleagues quickly set to work sending out invitations to the nations' most prominent women's club leaders.

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[8] Mary E Woolley's six companions were Emily Green Balch, Gertrude Baer, Mary Dingman, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Alice TL Parsons, and Margaret Burton. Women invited but unable to attend include Emily Hickman, Vera Micheles Dean, and Laura Puffer Morgan. "Minutes of Conference," September 15, 1942, MS 0842, box 16, folder 4 (1942 A-W). Mary Emma Woolley Papers, 1845- 1947. Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA. (Henceforth MEW Papers, MHC).

[9] Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Harvard, 2005), 14.

[10] *Ibid.*, 4–5.

[11] "Roundtable of Representatives of Women's Organizations in re: Women's Opportunity to make full contribution of planning and establishment of world cooperation," October 28, 1942. MS 0842, series 1, box 16 folder 4 (1942 A-Z), MEW Papers, MHC.

Mary McLeod Bethune, the President of the NCNW, was among the 30 representatives of women's organizations who received an invitation to an October 1942 meeting at the New York City YWCA headquarters. This meeting intended to formalize a "Committee on the Participation of Women in Post-War Planning" (CPWPWP).[12] Illness prevented Bethune from representing the NCNW at this inaugural meeting, but those present had a sense that whatever a "woman's peace" was, it could not ignore race relations. Their desire to talk with Black women—at least, exceptional Black women—marks a meaningful shift.[13] Yet, some of their logic could take on a self-interested, hegemonic tone. For missionary Ruth Stafford Peale "we [as Americans] should come to grips with the race problem so that we as leaders can go to our neighbors and tell them how to live." In this logic, racial violence at home prevented the United States from claiming the moral authority necessary to lead the world to any kind of peaceful future.

Some leading members of the NCNW agreed with the troubling assumption that U.S.-led internationalism could best foster postwar peace. Some of Bethune's speeches reveal her hope that if Black organizations could work together with white women's groups, with agricultural interests, and with organized labor, they could form a powerful coalition that could push the U.S. to realize its stated commitments to liberty, equality, and democracy.[14] Yet, by working to extend the vision of human rights laid out in the Atlantic Charter to include women of color around the globe, NCNW thinkers pushed these rights beyond a narrow Anglo-American liberal framework and used them to build international solidarities and an argument against empire. Bethune exemplified this thinking in a 1943 letter to the President of Liberia. "We must be one in the great struggle to uphold and obtain those democratic ideals" of the Atlantic Charter, she urged, "which have been flagrantly denied to more than half the population of the world."[15] If policymakers recognized the full humanity of women of color around the world, then radical shifts in global organization would have to follow.

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[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Susan Lynn has argued that the World War II period marked the start of a shift in the U.S. women's movement in women's conceptions of social justice from a "prewar emphasis on economic justice suffered by working class women and children … to a concern with the U.S. system of racial subordination." This chapter shows that issues of race and economic justice could never be fully separated in the way this statement implies, but Lynn does indicate a slow willingness of white women to work with women of color groups. Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1992), 4–5.

[14] In this conviction, Bethune and her close colleagues epitomized a moderate strain of African American activism. This contrasts with a Black nationalist intellectual tradition that was more cynical about America's ability to live up to its promise to a genuine, interracial democracy. There is an enduring debate amongst historians about whether

In May 1943, Bethune tasked Inabell Burns Lindsay with chairing a NCNW Postwar Planning Committee, which would liaise between Black women's organizations and the CPWPWP, which grew by that year to enfold twelve organizations with a cumulative membership of 4,000,000 women.[16] Bethune argued that African American women's "interest naturally points toward the peace table," and she herself represented that interest as the sole African American woman at the San Francisco Conference that birthed the United Nations.[17] While there were some commonalities between the ways these groups thought about international relations, the NCNW brought distinct insights. This chapter does not attempt to offer a complete overview of the NCNW's postwar planning activities.[18] Instead, it focuses on one set of discussions: those

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this strain of moderate Black activism can be considered "Black Internationalism," or whether that moniker should be reserved for radical women in an explicitly Pan-Africanist tradition. On this tradition, see especially Keisha Blain, *To Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). In thinking of Bethune and the NCNW as part of a more moderate tradition of Black internationalism, I am taking a cue from historian Brandy Thomas Wells. For example, see "I think of myself as an International Citizen: Flemmie P. Kittrell's Internationalist ideology," in *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy: New Histories,* Christopher McKnight Nichols, David Milne eds. (Columbia, 2022).

[15] "President of Liberia Receives Council's Message of Co-Fraternity," *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 3 no.2 (Summer 1943), 5.

[16] David C. Smith and Judy Barrett Litoff, eds. *What Kind of World Do We Want?* (Rowan and Littlefield, 2000), 7

[17] Bethune, "Free World," October 30, 1943, series 1, reel 1, folder 18, MMB Papers, microfilm.

[18] The most complete analysis of Bethune's ideas about world government and her work at the San Francisco conference to form the United Nations can be found in Megan Threlkeld, "Chapter 6," *Citizens of the World*, 124–144. See also Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many* (Princeton, 2021), 261–266.

that developed the Atlantic Charter’s “freedom from want.” Many in white women’s groups had long claimed that economic injustice harmed chances for international peace. Yet, NCNW women’s analyses explicitly claimed that the source of that economic dispossession was a world order built on racialized colonialism. If “repression and exploitation” in colonies were at the roots of war, then “freedom from want” could not be separated from political and economic self-determination.[19]

This chapter specifically focuses on the way NCNW women contributed to conversations about consumer access to food. I follow the thinking of Black women home economists from the kitchen tables of the domestic U.S. to the peace table at war’s end, where they promoted a two-pronged conception of food justice. On an international level, the NCNW came out in favor of a plan for a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that could stabilize international commodity prices, temporarily put U.S. surplus to work feeding hungry “neighbors” around the world, and help fund indigenous agricultural development in famine-stricken nations. Spreading U.S. abundance might increase food prices for needy consumers at home, so these international ideas were coupled with demands to maintain the Office of Price Administration into the peace, improve the reach of school lunch programs, and bring back the New Deal’s Food Stamp system to subsidize needy families’ access to nutritious meals. With the exception of school lunches, many of these specific policy aims were ultimately defeated as early as 1946. Yet, these women opened a conversation about the centrality of health, the family, and the body to foreign policy that had a much longer life.

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[19] Bethune, “Free World.”

Breaking the “Jemima Code”: Black Home Economists and Respectability Politics

Both the white and Black women’s groups organized through the CPWPW used the image of the “home” as a site of political possibility. Yet, there were critical differences in the way these two groups engaged in the language of domesticity.[20] When white women’s groups utilized an image of women as homemakers to claim a place in diplomatic politics, they engaged in an extended version of a Progressive era “municipal housekeeping” argument. They claimed that their experience and knowledge caring for others in the home suited them to the kind of moral reasoning that could extend outward to the neighborhood, the nation, and even the world. Former U.S. minister to Denmark Ruth Bryan Rohde, for example, strategically equated domestic work to women’s work when she announced at a 1944 White House conference on Women and Postwar Planning that “all the problems to be solved are those related to woman’s work; namely, getting folks back into the home, clothing the naked abroad, and feeding the starving.”[21] President of the National Education Association Charl Ormond Williams quoted this line to thousands of listeners during a 1944 *National Farm and Home Hour* interview. The woman as housewife, mother, and consumer would have a special role to play in “setting the world house to right” after the smoke of war cleared, Williams insisted, just as professional women needed to sit on “all councils working toward international peace” in order to imagine a peace that would take household needs into consideration.[22] These thinkers certainly did not promote a postwar world in which women would be narrowly *confined* to the home, but like many others in this dissertation, they strategically claimed that women's historic specialization in care granted them access to gendered economic knowledge and suited them to act as moral custodians.

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[20] On these uses in their relation to the making of the U.S. welfare state, see also Eileen Boris “The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the Political” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States,* Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds. (Routledge, 1993), 213- 245.

[21] Ruth Bryan Rodhe, “How Women May Share in Post-War Policy Making,” box 7, folder “White House Conference, Charl Ormond Williams Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. (Henceforth COW Papers, LOC), Reprinted in Smith and Litoff, *What Kind of World,* 130.

[22] Radio Interview with Charl Ormond Williams, *National Farm and Home Hour,* November 20, 1944. box 8, folder “White House Conference, “How Women May Share in Post-War Policy Making,” COW Papers, LOC. Republished in Smith and Litoff, *What Kind of World,*158–9.

The image of the homemaker took on a different valence in Black feminist philosophy during the early twentieth century.[23] Because the violence of enslavement took them out of the home, many African American women believed that being able to care for their own families was central to an experience of freedom.[24] Even more fundamentally, U.S. slavery made it imperative for post-Emancipation thinkers to reimagine what it even *was* to be a Black man or woman. This is because enslavement, for feminist scholar Brittney Cooper, was predicated on a racialized gender system that "frequently rendered the Black body a space of indeterminate gender terrain." Through enslavement, in other words, Black women's bodies had been "de-gendered," or denied access to the protections of womanhood that white women experienced.[25] To counteract that legacy, Black women thinkers needed to adopt a new framework for thinking about femininity. For Cooper, they turned to respectability politics, which she casts as "one of the earliest theorizations of gender within newly emancipated Black communities."[26]

Even if it formed the basis of a post-Emancipation gender system, respectability discourse could also be a way of instantiating class hierarchies and restricting the ways Black women could move their bodies through the world. Scholars have done careful work to reconstruct how these strict dictates of sexual morality and domestic virtue could be burdensome—or even deadly—for

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[23] For example, this argument is made in Kristin Waters, "Some Core Themes in Nineteenth-Century Black Feminism," in *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking their Minds*, Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway, eds. (University of Vermont Press, 2008): 365–392.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 20–21.

[26] *Ibid.,* 19.

Black women.[27] Yet, this framework also offered race women intellectuals an important way of thinking about how they might safely move through public space and make political claims. For Cooper, Black women invested in respectability politics "were less interested in evacuating all modes of sexual expression from the terrain of the Black female body and more interested in making sure that ideas of sexuality did not overdetermine and limit the scope of Black women's social possibilities."[28] The language of respectability and uplift was central to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the largest single Black women's club federated into the NCNW. Organized around the motto of "lifting as we climb," the NACW also gave a space for women to make and disseminate knowledge about the social conditions they faced and shape "race public opinion."[29]

Cooper does not include issues around food in her story about how NACW women used respectability discourse to make space for their bodies in public. Yet given their intimate relation to bodily health and family life, issues around eating did become wrapped up in these politics. After emancipation, Black women needed to unravel what food historian Tony Tipton-Martin has called the "Jemima Code"--a set of cultural images that cast Black women as incapable of either culinary artistry or scientific understanding, but as being "born with good kitchen instincts."[30]

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[27] See especially Darlene Clark Hine's notion of the "culture of dissemblance," or a method by which Black women hid internal emotions or sexuality in order to present a nonsexual image in order to protect themselves. Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 no. 4 (Summer 1989): 915 When I suggest that respectability politics could be "deadly," I am in part referring to Diane Kiesel's argument that the Black physician Dorothy Ferebee, who became president of the NCNW in 1949 after Bethune stepped down, may have lost a daughter to an illegal abortion. It is possible that the young woman undertook the abortion for fear that a pregnancy outside of wedlock would have brought unfavorable attention to her mother, who did foundational work to develop a notion of reproductive justice but still clung to a set of ideas about sexual propriety and the family. Diane Kiesel, *She Can Bring Us Home, Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, Civil Rights Pioneer* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2015), 167–172.

[28] Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 41.

[29] *Ibid.,* Chapter 1.

[30] Toni-Tipton Martin, *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks* (University of Texas Press, 2015); Erica Fretwell, "Black Power in the Kitchen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Food,* J. Michelle Coghlan, ed. (Cambridge, 2020), 183.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, some Black women found it useful to "turn this restrictive trope into a loophole for advancing their freedom and promoting their knowledge" around food.[31] By the first decades of the twentieth century, training in home economics or nutritional science at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offered a critical means of class mobility. Taking courses in home economics worked within a set of discourses that naturalized Black women's place in the kitchen, but at the same time, offered an important strategy to upend conceptions of their culinary or scientific ignorance.[32] Though training in home economics did respond to a restrictive set of ideas about respectability and uplift, it *also* offered Black women a way to participate in New Deal agencies, enact social policy, and develop critiques of U.S. political economy inspired by their own embodied realities.

In a 1940 speech to the NACW, Bethune recommended that Black club women write directly to leaders in home economics to aid with concerns around wartime inflation and costs of living.[33] Given connections between dietary science and the politics of respectability, it is not too surprising that the head of the NACW, Jeannie Moton, had been employed as a home economist with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration from 1937 until her untimely death in 1942. Bethune also encouraged women to reach out to her close friend Constance Daniel, a Black home economist who worked the Farm Security Administration where she "did her part" for the "welfare of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers and migrants."[34] Though Moton passed before she was able to contribute to postwar conversations, Daniel's commentary around food and purchasing power politics contained a set of redistributive demands inspired by her time ministering to farm families in the U.S. South. To ensure that Black women’s freedom could truly be enjoyed, state and social institutions should enable the economic conditions of possibility for them to provide for their families. Together with others in the NCNW, Daniel helped to develop a vision of international politics and security that placed the home, the family, and the body at the center.

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[31] Fretwell, *Black Power in the Kitchen.*

[32] *Ibid.*, 186. On broader history of the ways Black women have defied conventional representations of Blackness and exerted agency and influence through food politics and preparation, see Psyche A. Williams-Forson, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women Food and Power* (UNC Press: 2006).

[33] Bethune, "Negro Women Facing Tomorrow," July 27, 1941, series 1, reel 1, folder 18 "Speeches 1937–1945," MMB Papers, microfilm.

[34] As later described Bethune, "Recent Achievements of Black Women," October 26, 1947, series 1, reel 2, folder 19, "Speeches 1946–1947," MMB Papers, microfilm.

The Fight for Food and Racial Justice on the Home Front, 1940–1942

For the NCNW, local economic concerns reflected broader global processes. As Bethune would put this in 1945, “we all know how jobs, food, shelter… all of the matters of common peoples are tied up with the economic and social structure of the world.”[35] Yet, there was another way in which she tied the local to the international. When Bethune narrativized her life in speeches during the 1940s, she claimed that her activities had always been motivated by a belief in what she called “world brotherhood.” “When I was a young girl,” she claimed in the 1940s, “I wanted to be a missionary … to work for the cause of world brotherhood. I never reached Africa, but I found work for world brotherhood in a little East Coast town in Florida, where my people were in need of education and couldn’t get it, where they needed the franchise in order to get the kind of housing, and health, and wages they needed.”[36] This narrative suggests how Bethune thought about cultivating a sense of world citizenship as a *local* problem. This idea was founded on a feeling of belonging that had to start at home. The first, and hardest, task was “building in those young people faith in the brotherhood of man throughout the world in the face of harsh facts that denied that brotherhood in the face of daily experience in their own little town… in their own country.”[37]

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[35] Bethune, “San Francisco Conference,” n.d. (1945?), series 1, reel 2, folder 26, MMB Papers, microfilm.

[36] Bethune, “Can We Attain World Brotherhood,” n.d. (1940’s), series 1, reel 2, folder 25, MMB Papers, microfilm.

[37] *Ibid*.

While this chapter ultimately moves to consider the way Black home economists engaged in discussions about international food planning, I follow Bethune’s logic and start by thinking about the ways New Deal policy impacted homemakers’ economic citizenship on the home front. It would be difficult to describe international conversations without foregrounding these domestic ones, because many Black women’s ideas about what was possible and desirable for the postwar world drew from these on-the-ground experiences.

As the U.S. mobilized for war, a broad coalition of women’s consumer organizations continued to claim that there was a firm connection between national defense and civilian consumption—they simply changed the terms of that relationship. Consumers could no longer hope to support “international law and morality” by refusing to purchase imports from “aggressor” nations as they had hoped to do in the late 1930s. Yet, planning from the consumers’ perspective would be crucial to ensure the individual material security and health that some women described as “total defense.”[38] Indeed, as historian Meg Jacobs has shown, the war years became the high-water mark of an activist, democratic consumer citizenship. The Roosevelt administration would come to endow consumers with greater power over prices than they had ever enjoyed before, using price controls to hold costs of goods level even as defense jobs increased wages for a meaningful number of Americans.[39] As the nation edged towards war and food prices inflated in 1941, consumer groups urged the state to take on vigilant planning to ensure that necessary wartime cuts to housewives’ market baskets would “fall on those best able to bear that burden, not upon those already struggling to maintain a level of living for their families that is consistent with our national resources, our democratic purpose, and our democratic faith.”[40]

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[38] “Consumers’ Role in Defense Sifted,” *New York Times,* August 2, 1940.

[39] Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, 2007).

[40] *Proceedings of the National Nutrition Conference for Defense, May 26, 27, and 28, 1941,* called by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Federal Security Agency, Office of the Director of Defense Health and Welfare Services, (Washington, D.C.), 57.

Chapter 6. "No Real Peace in a Half-Starved World"

As the nation mobilized for war in 1940 and 1941, U.S. defense expenditures resulted in price fluctuations on some consumer goods. To ensure that "Mrs. Average Consumer didn't have to pay out of line prices for food, clothing, and rent as Uncle Sam shops for canons and airplanes," Roosevelt appointed Harriet Elliot as a consumers' representative on the National Defense Advisory Committee in May 1940.[41] The 56-year-old Quaker came to Washington from her post as dean of the Women's College at the University of North Carolina. There, from her plainly furnished, grey office, she offered some of the state-level coordination that Hall and other consumer leaders had pushed for. By meeting with defense contractors, manufacturers, farmers organizations, wholesalers, and women's consumer organizations, she developed plans to minimize the impact of military spending on civilian needs.

Beyond this coordinating work, however, Elliot claimed that civilian consumption *itself* was a national security issue. At a formal dinner with representatives of one hundred civic organizations and Eleanor Roosevelt in August 1940, Elliot rose to deliver an address on the issue of "human interests." She began, "we must remember that national defense is more than planes and guns- it is 'total defense.' Hungry people, undernourished people, ill people, are a national liability." Though the needs of the military would need to take priority, she urged her audience to consider that "we have a position of responsibility for strengthening the human defenses of this country." By this, she meant safeguarding the access to safe and healthy food and reasonable housing not just for conscripted men, but for "every man, woman, and child" in the U.S.[42]

The fundamental linkages between food and national security became very clear after the passage of the Selective Service Act in 1940. Two out of every five men called in for the draft were deemed unfit for service because of disabilities owing to poor nutrition. Moved to action, Roosevelt called a "National Nutrition Conference for Defense" under Paul McNutt in May 1941, bringing together over 900 delegates at the Mayflower Hotel in the nation's capital. It not only established a firm link between consumer access to food and national defense, but it also demonstrated belief in the alleged special knowledge of housewife-consumers that made them ideal food planners. "Women have long known, even better than scientists, the importance of food" to national health, claimed Vice President Henry Wallace.[43] This was a job, urged medical doctor Russell M. Wilder, for "an army of women" to take on through federal agencies like the Bureau of Home Economics. "The job of feeding the family is not woman's [private] work alone, as men so often have supposed," but must be considered a public responsibility in which state agents played a part.[44]

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[41] "Aunt Hit Keeping Tabs on Housewives' Interests: National Defense Advisory Commission, Guards Against Out of Line Prices," *New York Times,* September 15, 1940, C6.

[42] "Consumers' Role in Defense Sifted," *New York Times,* August 2, 1940, 3. Elliot likely did not invent this argument but was tapping into a longer discussion on hunger and defense, see Charlotte Biltekoff, Chapter 3, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health* (Duke, 2013).

In 1940, the National Research Council had established two bodies that could continue this conversation: the Food and Nutrition Board, tasked with determining scientific standards for eating, and the Committee on Food Habits, designed to study the culture and sociology of consumer behavior.[45] These were bodies through which women reformers made important contributions in the conception and practice of consumption during the war years. The home economists working at the FNB developed the first set of Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs), setting an ambitious dietary goal for every American that would keep them not just in health, but in what Vice President Wallace called "health plus."[46] This was not necessarily an empty turn of phrase. The nutritionists made conservative estimates of how much food a healthy person needed. They set their RDAs about 30 percent higher than usual requirements, resulting in particularly generous American rations.[47]

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[43] *Ibid.*, 35.

[44] *Ibid.,* 15.

[45] Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America*.

[46] *Ibid.,* 52.

[47] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 420.

In 1941, Roosevelt formed an Office of Price Administration to ensure that all Americans could theoretically access enough vitamin-rich "protective foods" to meet the dietary requirements set by the FNB. New Deal administrators worked hard to cast OPA as antithetical to the "planned economies" of the Axis powers. Rather, they claimed that OPA fostered "an opportunity to take the kind of responsibility for public action which is part and parcel of the democratic tradition."[48] OPA directly empowered consumers to hold down prices, giving them a direct place in holding up the wartime state as no New Deal agency had done before. Yet, the U.S. managed to balance price control with a freer market than any of the other Allies. The U.S. could bear the inefficiencies of greater consumer choice because it was the only nation to run an agricultural surplus both during and immediately after the war. After 1942, U.S. farms produced about 50 percent more than they did during the Depression. In fact, thanks to a combination of surplus food, low unemployment, and price controls, the average U.S. consumers' calorie count actually *increased* by 8 percent over the course of the war. [49]

Even as the nutritional gap between the rich and the poor started to close, race continued to have a profound impact on fair market access. In 1941, just as these conversations happened at a federal level, the NCNW sponsored a panel discussion on "Consumer Issues" as they affected Black women's households.[50] Appearing to work within the language of racial uplift, the report of one such discussion first suggested that Black women's "consumer education may help people to discover new techniques for the improvement of health, housing and recreational need" and stretch purchasing power.[51] Black women home economists, the report showed, look the lead in this effort when they trained at HBCUs like Bennett College to develop and disseminate community knowledge about food, health, and the body.[52]

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[48] Cited in Biltekoff, *Eating Right,* 56.

[49] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 420.

[50] Elaine Smith, *Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women* (London: Forgotten Books, 2018).

[51] Annabel Sawyer, "The Negro Woman in National Defense- Summary of Conference Held at Howard University, June 28–30, 1941" *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 2 nos. 1 and 2 (Summer and Fall 1941): 2–5.

Yet, the NCNW did not think that consumer education was enough: they urged active participation in OPA and other agencies of the New Deal state to ensure those bodies lived up to their promise to extend protections against wartime inflation to *every* household. The report assessed that "the negro … inherits every health problem known to the nation as a whole," not accidentally, but rather as the outcome of a series of political economic choices. They were "intensified... by lack of facilities, social condition, low economic status" and lack of access to maternal care.[53] These issues could not be solved through education alone. The report issued a call not merely for self-help, but for an economy organized around racial justice and the recognition of Black women's full humanity and "economic citizenship."

Those Americans who enjoyed greater or more regular access to food in 1940 and 1941 cited the higher wages that defense work brought in. Yet, when the U.S. began mobilizing for war, the government continued to allow firms to segregate work at defense plants, meaning that African Americans could not benefit from this increase in purchasing power. When defense mobilization began, Black workers made up only 3 percent of all of those employed in this kind of work.[54] If FDR failed to desegregate defense jobs, Bethune supported her friend A. Philip Randolph's threat to march on Washington on July 1, 1941. To prepare, she outlined a speech and called a meeting of the NCNW on June 30 to organize thousands of Black women within the ranks of the 10,000 protesters that Randolph had already secured for the occasion.[55] Recognizing the political danger of such a demonstration, and given his own and Eleanor's personal ties to Bethune, FDR desegregated defense jobs with Executive Order 8802 before the march materialized. This order did not instantly create complete job equality, but it did establish a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), an agency that was tasked with upholding its terms.

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 425.

[55] Tuuri, *Strategic Sisterhood*, 18.

In one speech, Bethune urged the NCNW to "form a unity with organizations and statesmen who foresee the possibility of a new economic order—an economic order that means full production, full consumption, and full employment for all people everywhere."[56] Because they provided the purchasing power upon which "full consumption" depended, the NCNW placed employment rights at the center of their conception of "economic citizenship." Indeed, at their 1943 National Convention, they urged that if the U.S. wanted to take "its rightful place in the postwar world," it needed to solve what they deemed its "most important problem… employment of all our citizens."[57] It was painfully apparent that "all our citizens" were not seen equally in the eyes of employers, or even employees. Even after the formation of the FEPC, many Black war workers found themselves in the most dirty and dangerous jobs on offer. Racial harmony at the plant did not always follow their hire. In 1943 alone, one historian counted 242 racially-motivated confrontations across forty-seven cities, concentrated in war production centers like Detroit, Mobile, and Philadelphia.[58] The FEPC ultimately revealed itself to be a weak agency that left many workplace issues unresolved. Yet, the NCNW celebrated the very significant extent to which it did allow many Black women to access higher-paying work at war plants just as they celebrated African American women's work in ladies' auxiliary units of the armed forces. These women not only worked towards equal economic citizenship but also demonstrated what Bethune called the "unified patriotism" of Black Americans.

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[56] Bethune, Untitled Speech, n.d. (1945?), series 1, reel 2, folder 25, MMB Papers, Microfilm.

[57] NCNW, "Committee Report," 1944, series 1, reel 15, MMB Papers, Microfilm.

[58] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 425.

Even if FEPC worked to enable Black consumers to access higher wartime wages, gaps in enforcement of the OPA might still deal a blow to their purchasing power. Despite price controls that theoretically evened out market access, one NAACP study conducted in 1942 found that consumers in Black neighborhoods paid 6 percent more for food in New York City than those in white neighborhoods did.[59] Fewer price checkers meant that stores continued to get away with overcharging African American consumers, often for goods of inferior quality. It took a riot in August of 1943, in which Black shoppers looted the white-owned stores that illegally overcharged them, for OPA to set up an office in Harlem. Such a move suggests the severe limits of wartime consumer citizenship, and Roosevelt's reactive rather than proactive attention to Black consumers' needs.[60]

Finally, despite OPA, Roosevelt actually dismantled many of the New Deal programs that had been formed to democratize consumption during the Depression. The Food Stamp program, which subsidized the cost of food to low income consumers, was arguably more intended to move produce through the domestic market and secure a minimum income for farmers. Given the upswing in demand for food amongst the Allies and newly-employed customers at home, such a subsidy program was no longer necessary to prevent agricultural goods from over-accumulating or plummeting in price.[61] The free school lunch program was saved only through a concerted effort by the Bureau of Home Economics. Even if some Americans found themselves eating better and more nutritious food during the war than they had over the decade before, the wartime state did not take an uncomplicated step towards "freedom from want" for all domestic consumers.[62]

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[59] *Ibid.*, 425.
[60] *Ibid.*, 426.
[61] *Ibid.,* 426.
[62] *Ibid.*, 426.

Though the New Deal state had significant gaps, Bethune and the NCNW showed their “united patriotism” by doing their best to hold it to its promises. Some Black women volunteered as OPA price wardens. Others, including farm housewives, led community efforts to grow victory gardens, make and mend clothing, and otherwise stretch Black families’ purchasing power.[63] Yet, NCNW women also recognized the importance of mutual aid to fill in where the state faltered. In one wartime speech, Bethune advised that “in a world grown increasingly materialistic,” it was critical that “all Negroes plan now for economic security” with or without state support.[64]

The war saw a boom in the development of Black woman-led consumer cooperatives and other community-owned stores that could ensure just pricing and fair quality, shown in more detail in Chapter 7. Bethune herself supported the consumer cooperative movement, appearing as a speaker at the League of World Brotherhood, a consumer cooperative discussion group led by James Warbasse’s colleague Constance Hook.[65] She had been called to help think about how “interracial and international harmony and peace” might come as the result of democratizing ownership through the cooperative movement. For the League of World Brotherhood, the “critical problem in the world of tomorrow is a problem of distribution, not of production.”[66] There was enough food to go around, they insisted, but liberal capitalist markets prevented it from flowing to the consumers who needed it most. The idea that it might be scientifically possible to feed the world did not necessarily come from the cooperative movement, but a widespread consideration of such an argument proved transformative for wartime discussions about political economies of food at what would become the Food and Agriculture Organization.

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[63] See for example Frances Fox, “FSA Farm Wife and Mother, a Real Community Leader,” *Aframerican Woman’s Journal* 6 no. 1 (March 1946): 6.

[64] Bethune, Untitled Speech, n.d. (1940s?) series 1, reel 2, folder 25, MMB Papers, Microfilm.

[65] League for World Brotherhood, “Lincoln’s Day Celebration: For Tolerance- For Freedom,” February 12, 1945, series 1, reel 2, folder 18, MMB Papers, Microfilm

[66] The conference proceedings were eventually published in League of World Brotherhood, *People’s Ownership: Key to World Brotherhood* (New York: Self-published, 1945).

From the Kitchen Table to the Peace Table: Hot Springs and its Aftermath, 1943–1945

Some outward signs of ordinariness persisted even after U.S. entry into war. One home economist, Flora Rose, claimed that there remained a relative "abundance" of many kinds of food in the United States. Yet despite any sense of continuity, she wrote to her former colleagues at Cornell University in the spring of 1942 that she felt herself a "witness to the occasion when the world—the whole world—as we know about it or heard about it is actually in the process of the most profound, far-reaching change it has ever undergone."[67] This sensation left her with a desire to "be actively engaged in something related directly to this moment in history." She met that need by teaching home nutrition courses through a local branch of the Red Cross, and she expressed delight both at how quickly her students grasped the material and "how deeply the 'newer knowledge of nutrition' has rooted itself in minds made ready by being highly sensitized by potential disaster."[68] Rose, who had spent the summer of 1923 conducting a comprehensive study of childhood nutrition in postwar Belgium, never gave up on her faith that nutritional science could have a transformational, global impact. Now that minds had been opened and "sensitized" by conflict, she joined a number of colleagues in hoping that food—and experts like herself—would have a big part to play in reshaping the world at this moment of profound rupture.

As Rose's letter suggested, food politics oriented housewives and onsumers towards the war effort and pushed some of them to think internationally.[69] Even more than they had in the previous world war, tight links between food access and national security enabled home economists to develop a close partnership with the state. Women at the Bureau of Home Economics might have agreed with Rose's sense that the war made minds ready to receive the "newer knowledge of nutrition"—they churned out an astounding array of food saving guides, rationing cook books, and nutritional studies all aimed at educating the consumer desire of the U.S. public. Rationing and price controls during World War II were more heavy-handed—and effective—than they had been under Hoover's U.S. Food Administration during World War I. Yet, in her comparative study of wartime food controls across multiple national contexts, historian Lizzie Collingham has claimed that the United States' rationing program managed to maintain a greater degree of consumer choice throughout the conflict than any of the other Allies.[70] This does not mean, however, that U.S. consumers did not undergo meaningful sacrifice in service of the wartime state. Red meat was the food most affected by rationing, and given its importance as a class signifier in U.S. diets during the period, it would have been a very noticeable omission in housewives' menus.[71]

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[67] Flora Rose to Staff of the New York College of Home Economics, Received April 22, 1942. Col. No. 23–2-749, box 102, folder 6, New York State College of Home Economics records, 1875–1979, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY. (Henceforth NYSCHE Records, Cornell).

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] One of the most complete illustrations of this story is found in Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: United States Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity During World War II* (University of Illinois Press, 1992).

Just as home economists labored to shape consumer behavior and policy on the home front, they saw a "door of hope for mankind" crack open when delegates of forty-four Allied countries were called to a 1943 meeting in Hot Springs, AZ to draw up blueprints for a new world food organization. That such an international organization could be discussed as a serious possibility in 1943 marked an important shift. Coordinated inter-allied food purchasing during World War I offered a glimpse at how transformative such an organization might be.[72] Yet in 1919, the AHEA had not come out formally in favor of extending any kind of international economic planning into the peace. As Chapter 1 of this dissertation has shown, only women joined through more radical organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or the International Cooperative Women's Guild would have made such an argument. This section asks what changed between the two world wars to make a Food and Agriculture Organization imaginable in the 1940s, then pays close attention to Black home economists' contributions to conversations about what would be necessary to make such an organization work.

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[70] Collingham, *Taste of War*, 420.

[71] Meg Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941–1946," *Journal of American History* 84 no. 3 (December 1997): 920–941; Bentley "Chapter 4: Meat and Sugar: Consumption, Rationing, and Wartime Food Deprivation," in *Eating for Victory*.

[72] Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard, 2022).

One critical shift that opened up the possibility for a post-World War II world food organization came several years before the outbreak of war. In 1936, the League of Nations called together a Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition. It issued a report that tightened the conceptual linkages between food and peace in Western democracies.[73] The report did not necessarily appear revolutionary at first glance, but its core intervention was placing three sets of statistics alongside one another: first, a minimum caloric requirement for mothers and children; second, per capita food consumption in various countries; and third, total volumes of food produced.[74] When these numbers were taken together, they made it clear that overproduction in some countries could be absorbed by those running a deficit, which would both stabilize prices and diminish the problem of malnourishment. By casting the food crisis of the 1930s as not necessarily an issue of *production* but rather one of distribution and *consumption*, the 1936 report opened up what historian Nick Cullather has called an "entirely new agenda for consumer economics" on an international scale.[75]

Indeed, those who drafted the League of Nations nutrition report located food consumers at the center of a redistributive food economy. It decreed a universal entitlement of 2,500 calories a day and suggested not shifts in production to achieve this, but rather "new markets and channels of trade." This would not be an easy solution, as these new "channels of trade" could not necessarily work within established market mechanisms governed by supply and demand. States would need to play a larger role. They might, for example, buy up surplus to manage domestic prices and then, rather than dumping the excess on the world market to deplete prices elsewhere, offer it as aid to a famine-stricken country. This subsidy program would be costly, but it would present an improvement over simply destroying crops to manage farm prices as the Agricultural Adjustment Act did, and it might even be written off as part of the cost of peace.[76]

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[73] Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Harvard, 2013), 32.
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] *Ibid.*, 33.

As news of these findings matriculated into popular print media, it became increasingly common for journalists to mark a clear connection between food consumption and peace. The *New York Times* claimed that the League report had finally revealed "the challenge underlying the disorders of this epoch, the pretext for modern wars."[77]

Women's organizations became increasingly interested in the reports of the League's findings. One editorial in the *Countrywoman,* the central magazine of the Associated Countrywomen of the World (ACWW), gushed that the League committee had found what looked like a "new idea in world harmony."[78] "This matter of nutrition is bigger than you think!" another woman wrote for *The Countrywoman*. "If you are afraid it is just woman's talk, you may like to know that a year ago the League of Nations appointed a committee on this very subject, with the idea that proper diet and adequate foods in all lands may be a more successful key to harmony that the treaties, balances of trade, tariffs, armament agreements, and all the other devices that have been tried."[79] As farm wives at the nexus of production and consumption, ACWW women believed that the League findings had formalized the centrality of food to peace that they had long suspected. Yet it is also critical to note that the ACWW, which joined together women from the Women's Institutes (WI) in Britain and such groups as the Women's National Farm and Garden Association in the U.S., was far from a radical or socialist organization. Even these politically moderate women began to take seriously the idea of a redistributive food economy that would have been considered radical some fifteen years prior.

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[76] *Ibid*.
[77] Cited in Cullather, *The Hungry World,* 32.
[78] "A New Idea in World Harmony," *The Countrywoman* 4 no. 35 (January 1937): 12.
[79] *Ibid.*

While nutrition was certainly not “just woman’s talk,” it did offer a space for women professionals to form relationships with the League and think internationally about consumer needs. One of the U.S. delegates at the 1936 League of Nations committee, for example, was Bureau of Labor Statistics home economist Dr. Faith Williams.[80] With the BLS, Williams worked on the Consumer Price Index, and in 1935 she conducted a comparative study on the costs of living around the world.[81] Williams was among the U.S. women who used their understanding of calories and vitamins as abstract, exchangeable entities to think about consumer needs on a global scale. Williams’ colleague Hazel Stiebeling, for example, developed an internationally-renown set of dietary allowances and also worked closely with the League of Nations.[82] It was not necessarily new for women nutritionists to think or work internationally, as Flora Rose had done at the end of World War I. But it *was* new for them to openly promote the idea of greater national or even international intervention in getting food to consumers who needed it—something the AHEA did not do in 1919.

Given close linkages between food consumption and peace that the League promoted, it was understandable that the very first international conference about postwar political economy centered agriculture and food markets. Along with Dr. Louise Stanley, a former head of the U.S. Bureau of Home Economics, Williams and Stiebeling served as members of the technical secretariat at the Summer 1943 Hot Springs, Virginia conference that birthed what became the

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[80] “Dr. Williams and the League of Nations Nutrition Committee,” *Journal of Home Economics* 29 no. 3 (March 1937): 182

[81] Faith Williams and Carle Zimmerman, *Studies of Family Living in the United States and Other Countries: An Analysis of Material and Method* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1935).

[82] Hazel Stiebeling, “Diets at Four Levels of Nutritive Content and Cost,” U.S. Dept. Agr. Circ. No. 296, (Washington, D.C.; USDA, 1933). By her standards, roughly two-thirds of the world consumed poor diets.

United Nation’s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Some delegates expressed concern that they had been brought to Virginia to sign off on proposals that had already been designed by others, but their interests were piqued when they learned that they would actively set the agenda.[83] These three U.S. women saw “building a peace in terms of human needs” as an urgent task of any emerging form of world government, and they would not be disappointed by what they saw at that conference.[84]

Many of the nutritionists in the hall found one feature particularly thrilling: the world premier of the British Ministry of Information film *World of Plenty,* which laid out the redistributive economic thinking of Scottish nutritionist John Boyd Orr.[85] Though the British state deemed Orr’s views too unorthodox to send him as an official delegate, the film may have inserted an even more forceful and visually stunning advertisement for them than he could have delivered himself. Organized into three parts—food in the past, present, and future—the film offered a harsh condemnation of the way international markets had failed to distribute food between nations during the interwar years. It then celebrated rationing and food control across Allied nations during the war. Yet its vision of the future was most radical. It argued that scientific advancements in production enabled the cultivation of enough food to feed the world if spread evenly, and it passionately proposed an international food organization that could manage prices and supply on behalf of the “common man” everywhere. Its conclusion, a rousing recitation of the slogan that the Allies were fighting for “a world without want, starting with want of food,” was received with fervor as all three-hundred delegates rose to their feet with applause and cheers.[86]

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[83] Collingham, *Taste of Freedom,* 481.

[84] Stanley, “Toward Freedom from Want,” *Journal of Home Economics* 35 no. 7 (September 1943): 413–414.

[85] Richard Farmer, “Exploiting a Universal Nostalgia for Steak and Onions: The Ministry of Information and the Promotion of *World of Plenty* (1943)” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30 no. 2 (May 2010): 169–185.

[86] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 482.

World of Plenty offered a vision of a new kind of international organization that would extend the unprecedented level of state control over food during the war into the peace. It also introduced a new kind of social contract between citizens, who had a duty to cultivate healthy bodies, and states, which had duties to provide the food necessary for them to do this. In this task, states would not be left to the free market but rather aided by an international community. Not everyone agreed that this was possible or desirable, however. Some members of the British ministry of food believed Orr's film "dangerous," and were unwilling to give up the sovereignty over their own food systems that an interventionist international food organization would require.[87] While many in the USDA were enthusiastic, several members of the U.S. State Department were too invested in the maintenance of free trade to take the film's provocations seriously.

Beyond this critical debate, social relations at the Hot Springs conference could hardly be characterized as a glimpse into utopia. When nine Black delegates arrived from around the globe to Virginia for a month of discussion, they quickly came face to face with U.S. "jim-croism [sic]." Uncertain about where or how to house them, U.S. officials treated these delegates with a certain awkwardness until finally deciding to put them up in bedrooms in the Carver Hall dormitory. For the African American press, this "undue alarm and concern over the housing of nine Negroes" was a profound embarrassment that only went to show "why the United States… will never be the world's leading nation."[88] In addition to the crisis over lodgings, Black African delegates could face social snubs at the Hot Springs conference itself. According to U.S. delegate Murray Lincoln, who also represented the Cooperative League of the U.S., most white American and European attendees spent almost all afternoons engaging in elite lawn sports. Because

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[87] Farmer, "Universal Nostalgia for Steak and Onions."

[88] Charles Pearce, "Washington," *The People's Voice* (New York, NY), June 12, 1943, 12. This event foreshadows the discriminatory treatment that nonwhite foreign diplomats would experience in the first decades after World War II. See Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Right: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2011).

Lincoln did not play, he spent his evenings in conversation with "all the fellows from the small nations who also couldn't play golf."[89] One of his favorite conversation partners was Ethiopian economic minister Lidj Deressa, whose experience allowed him to offer insights that Lincoln believed were too often missed in conversations on the conference's main stage.

Despite these serious limitations, Louise Stanley's report on the proceedings of the conference for the American Home Economics Association brimmed with the same optimism as *World of Plenty.* This meeting, she said, laid the foundation for a global organization that would have power to "stabilize consumption" the world over "as a necessary base for an economy of abundance." Stanley agreed with Orr that contemporary agricultural methods could produce enough food to give all consumers a reasonable standard of living. Poor, profit-driven systems of distribution and pricing got in the way, but she hoped that a future FAO might overcome those barriers to consumer access.[90] Inspired by *World of Plenty's* powerful visuals, she could imagine an international body of food experts that would partly act as an information clearinghouse as nutrition committees of the League of Nations had done, collecting and synthesizing data on costs and standards of living in each country. This body would also conduct its own studies on the best ways to organize the trade of food so as to smooth its movement across borders and "prevent serious market dislocation" as had happened in the Depression. She hoped that the FAO might have some activist components, though she imagined that it would primarily have an ability to suggest that nations implement particular welfare policies within their own borders.

What particularly excited Stanley was that new social contract that the Hot Springs conference introduced between citizens and their states to promote national health offered an important place for home economists like herself in national governments. UN members would be populated by consumer citizens who would support the global food infrastructure by cooperating with their own local or state programs. Here, home economists had a critical role to play, educating consumer desire to ensure that housewives made the most of their own purchasing power and recognized the "importance of adequate food to human welfare."[91] Stanley's glowing report of the conference ended with an injunction to all home economists in her audience to study the Hot Springs proceedings and discuss these new possibilities for world government and peace with women in their food saving clubs.

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[89] Murray D. Lincoln, *Vice President in Charge of Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), 173.
[90] *Ibid.,* 413.

Public sentiment also shifted so as to make a more interventionist kind of world food organization imaginable. Even some politically moderate women's organizations publicly supported a vision like Stanley's. The ACWW was one such group of moderates. Its Advisory Sub-Committee on Postwar Reconstruction developed a plan for postwar peace that its U.S. Liaison Committee head, a Mrs. Roop, forwarded to the Hot Springs conference.[92] It demanded that all UN governments should see "that their populations are properly fed, and that this should rank as a primary and not a secondary duty."[93] They were tired of governments offering consumer education and teaching women how to live at a minimum standard when they should be offering mechanisms to maximize market baskets.

Most radically, the ACWW claimed that seeing food as a market commodity approached the problem from the wrong direction. Food should neither be halted at borders nor be purposefully destroyed "in order to conform to a price standard" as the AAA in the United States had done. Instead, they called on the emerging FAO to help organize the distribution of food "from the point of view of human needs, rather than from the point of view of profit and loss."[94] Because the organization represented rural women, they issued a memorandum to Hot Springs that urged delegates to remember that farmers were also consumers. They should not be driven by poverty and poor prices to sell high-quality produce for cash, then exchange that cash for food of lesser quality. Mrs. Roop was delighted that the vision illustrated in *World of Plenty* had so many parallels with the ACWW’s own.

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[91] *Ibid.*

[92] Mrs. Roop, Commentary in "ACWW Calling," *The Countrywoman* 8 no. 115 (September 1943): 3.

[93] ACWW, "Memorandum Prepared by the Advisory Subcommittee on Reconstruction," (London: ACWW, 1946). First printed in *The Countrywoman* 8 no. 110 (May 1943): 1–2.

[94] "Those in Favour…?," *The Countrywoman* 8 no. 117 (December 1943): 2–3.

Though the women joined through U.S. ACWW affiliates typically cast the U.S. farm housewife as a white midwestern woman, this occludes the nearly four and a half million African Americans engaged in agricultural labor in 1940.[95] Constance Daniel, who had spent much of the 1930s employed with the New Deal Farm Security Administration, was not one of the nine Black attendees at Hot Springs and had not seen *World of Plenty*. Yet, the image of what an eventual food organization needed to do in order to keep the peace was clear in her mind. Daniel intimately understood the importance of accessing good food and argued in one essay that “there could be no peace in a half-starved world.”[96] Working with African American farm families in the rural south, she was all too familiar with the devastating impacts of the agricultural depression of the last two decades, moving her to place food justice at the center of her idea of a political economy of peace.

The activist international organization that Daniel envisioned would reject Malthus’ pessimistic axiom that populations would always outgrow available food supply. Instead, she agreed with Orr and Stanley that it should act on the findings of the 1936 League of Nations Nutrition Committee that showed that scientific advancements in production might be able to substantially decrease international hunger. She also agreed with Roop when she claimed that it was only “practical geopolitics” to develop an international organization that could move food from over-producing nations to raise farm incomes, stabilize agricultural prices, and ensure that there was no longer hunger in the midst of plenty.[97] This would need to operate outside of the capitalist market relations that currently structured world trade. Yet, she saw nothing good or "natural" about that market mechanism. She characterized supply and demand not as a sound economic law, but rather as a "distortion" that resulted in starvation, crop destruction, and other market failures.

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[95] The 1940 U.S. Census recorded 12,865,518 African Americans and estimated that 33% of them were employed in agriculture.

[96] Constance Daniel, “Peace or a Lull Between Wars?”

[97] *Ibid*.

When the United Nations Organization released the first draft of the constitution of what would become the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1944, Daniel welcomed this "first serious attempt at world action to root out hunger as a cause of war."[98] Again sharing the view of primarily white farm women in the ACWW, she hoped that those who established the organization would recognize that food was not a commodity, but rather a human right. Yet, her analysis veered from that of either white USDA home economists and the ACWW when she added a layer of anti-colonial critique. If the FAO's founders authentically built such a belief in their organization, then they could no longer use food as a political carrot to force "have-not" nations to obey the political will of those who happened to have a surplus harvest. To be an instrument of both "freedom from want" *and* self-determination, the FAO could not force colonized, cash-poor, or otherwise "have-not" nations to "beg" for food aid, entrenching them as subordinates. These citizens should not be permanent recipients of imported aid, but rather be supported in rebuilding their own nations' agriculture as a matter of basic dignity.[99]

Daniel knew that her interventionist conception of an FAO was not promised. Its successful implementation would depend "largely upon the kind of support it receives from 'the people' from its organizations."[100] Daniels expressed some tentative hope that the people in the U.S. might be up to the task of exerting pressure on their government to push for this "strong instrument for peace," but other Black internationalists had doubts. Back at Hot Springs, Ethiopian economic minister Lidj Deressa had remained skeptical of the feel-good messaging in *World of Plenty,* instead admitting to his new colleague Murray Lincoln his belief that “you people in the free democracies won’t work hard to change things. You are too pleased with them as they are.”[101] Despite this complacency, Deressa felt certain that the postwar world was heading to an explosion of anti-colonial revolutions, and that very likely, these newly-freed nations would experiment with forms of state socialism. He explained to Lincoln that this political economy was so enticing because “the Communists exist solely to change things. These people … are going to be looking for a change. … They want to better themselves.” Yet they felt they could not look to Western liberal democracies because “you people who have democracies … are not ready to fight to spread the benefits of the democratic state.”[102] Lincoln thought about this stimulating conversation long after the event, finding it more provocative and timely than the events on the conference’s main stage.

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[98] *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] *Ibid.*

By war’s end in 1945, the scope of the future Food and Agriculture Organization remained unclear. Wartime governments had asserted impressive command over food resources, agricultural production, rationing, and price control, and some in the Allied nations had real hope that such processes could be internationalized and brought into the peace. This was not just theoretical, but had been practiced through the inter-governmental organizations that coordinated allied resources, like the Combined Food Board. If some of these mechanisms could be adjusted for peacetime, then a future food organization might have power to stabilize prices on an international level and actively stimulate new methods of agricultural production. Yet Daniel and Deressa posed a key question: would western democracies be willing to do the work –and surrender the sovereignty-- necessary to make such an organization possible?

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[101] Lincoln, *Vice President in Charge of Revolution,* 174.
[102] *Ibid.,* 174.

Chapter 6. "No Real Peace in a Half-Starved World"

Women's Fight for an Activist FAO, 1945–1946

In 1945, twenty of the 44 nations present at Hot Springs signed the original constitution that established the Food and Agriculture Organization. The constitution had been worded vaguely enough to leave the central question of whether the FAO would be primarily activist or advisory somewhat open, though it did not grant the organization any interventionist powers. As delegates gathered for the FAO's first official meeting in Quebec, what *was* clear was the dire food situation that many parts of the world faced. Available food supply had fallen by 12 percent during the war, yet this deficit was distributed unevenly between nations. While Americans continued to enjoy a surplus, they only reluctantly imported food to their occupied zone of Germany, enabling a diet of around 1,135 calories a day.[103] When Constance Daniel talked about a *half* starved world, the other "half" referred to colonized countries or nations in the Global South where food shortage was most acute. British India only slowly recovered from mismanagement of food that caused the Bengal famine in 1943, enabling consumers only about 269 grams of grain a day.[104] Millions on the island of Java died of starvation, while Koreans teetered dangerously close to the brink of starvation themselves. By 1946, almost thirty million people in China had suffered effects of severe malnourishment. Food was available to Latin Americans, but rampant inflation curbed purchasing power, and consumers had to shell out almost all the money they made just to purchase half the market basket of 1939.[105]

The FAO was tasked with creating long-term policies to help rebuild the global food economy, but some of this acute need would be ameliorated by the UN Relief and Reconstruction Administration (UNRRA). Local councils of the NCNW did participate in food saving drives and sent donations of used clothing along to the UNRRA.[106] For Black educator Ethna Beulah Winston, a great deal was at stake in the way this aid was administered. “The means through which these lives can be reconstructed and rehabilitated will determine whether or not we … compromise on ideal patterns for government,” she claimed, “or bring about a feeling of world wide brotherhood among human beings” who feel the aid is motivated by the “common welfare of humanity.”[107]

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[103] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 467.
[104] *Ibid.*, 469.
[105] *Ibid.*, 469.

Bringing about this “feeling of world wide brotherhood” required challenging political work. Western democracies would need to come to terms with the basic dignity inherent in all peoples, and earnestly doing this would necessitate serious shifts in the distribution of international power. Winston’s comment was inspired by what she learned about the “inside story of the life and needs of Indian women and children” from Bethune’s friend Vijaya Pandit. What Pandit shared with the women in the NCNW was not an isolated story— Winston claimed that it was “similar to that of other colonial minorities where long suffering and deprivation have been imposed by sovereign rule.” While Winston learned from Pandit in the United States, Black home economist Dr. Flemmie P. Kittrell was undertaking a trip to Liberia to develop a report on the nutritional needs of that nation’s citizens for the U.S. State Department.[108] There was critical need for humanitarian aid. Yet if they were truly committed to “freedom from want,” the U.S. and Britain could not use this aid as a means of drawing attention away from the imbalances of global power that helped create economic scarcity in the first place.[109]

In order to meet the demand for aid, Daniel urged a shift in U.S. food policy. “The startlingly plain fact about the food situation is that we Americans, who helped to win the war with food, are fast helping to lose the peace by our self-indulgence and lack of a stable policy in the distribution and purchase of food," she claimed in one essay.[110] When U.S. citizens flaunted their ability to return to economic plenty by enjoying over 3,000 calories per day when Europeans got closer to 1,000, it was "not only callously bad taste—it is bad politics."[111] She joined a broad movement of Americans who urged the U.S. government to return to a rationing program to free up food supplies to distribute to what she called "have-not markets," which included not only displaced peoples and "famine-stricken people" abroad but also impoverished families at home.[112]

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[106] *Aframerican Woman’s Journal* (December 1945), back cover.

[107] E. Beulah Winston, “Along International Horizons,” *Aframerican Woman’s Journal* 5 no. 4 (Winter 1945): 18.

[108] Brandy Thomas Wells, “I Think of Myself as an International Citizen.”

[109] Winston, “Along International Horizons,” 24.

It was against this backdrop of mixed trauma and hope that the delegates met for the first regular conference of the FAO at Chateau Frontrenac in Quebec on October 15, 1945. Britain once again did not send John Boyd Orr as an official delegate to this meeting, still finding his views too unorthodox and his persistent criticism of UK food policies too irksome. Instead, he attended as a private observer. Orr felt uneasy about the engagement and spent most of his time in silence, knowing that the policy of the British government was to promote the FAO as an advisory body with no regulatory powers. When a Canadian delegate invited him to give a speech near the end of the conference, Orr rose and announced his disappointment with the direction the organization's leaders had taken it. "The hungry people of the world [want] bread," he put it succinctly, "and they [are] to be given statistics."[113] Yet, he used his speech to suggest that there was still time to turn the organization around. Rather than offering data and technical assistance, he suggested that the first FAO Director-General could amend the constitution, or draft a new one, that gave the body the authority and funds it needed to regulate food outside of the mechanisms of the free market. Most American, British and Commonwealth officials were not charmed by his speech, and yet, through what the British described as a “devious process of elimination,” the directorship was given to John Orr.[114]

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[110] Constance E.H. Daniel, "Plain Facts About the Food Situation," *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 6 no. 1 (March 1946), 11.

[111] *Ibid*.

[112] On this broader movement, Amy Bentley, "Chapter 6- Freedom from Want: Abundance and Sacrifice in U.S. Postwar Famine Relief," in *Eating for Victory.*

[113] Cited in Amy Staples, "To Win the Peace: To Win the Peace: The Food and Agriculture Organization, Sir John Boyd Orr, and the World Food Board Proposals," *Peace and Change* 28 no. 4 (2003): 499.

Orr quickly went to work on a set of amendments to the FAO constitution, even if he was pessimistic that sufficient nations would sign on to his new proposal. In August 1946, he released his first draft plan for a World Food Board (WFB). At its center would be a system of warehouses to hold buffer stocks of crops that could help manage international agricultural prices. If this buffer stock system could hold prices high to incentivize agricultural production while keeping them reasonable enough to avoid barring access to consumers, then Orr believed that many of the problems that plagued the Depression decade in North America and Western Europe could be mitigated. When prices on the world market slipped below the minimum threshold, the WFB would buy up surplus stocks. When they climbed above the maximum and out-priced what consumers could afford to pay, the stocks could be released back onto the market to depress prices back to a reasonable level. He believed that buying low and selling high would generate some of the revenue needed to pay for the significant costs this system would incur.[115]

Encouraging food production outside of the Global North would require different strategies. The WFB would undertake an intensive modernization campaign in what would become known as the “third world,” offering not only technical assistance but also capital, supplies, and equipment necessary to reorganize farming practices. To finance this, the WFB would extend long term credit that would be yoked to indices of economic growth rather than set to a rigid repayment schedule. These loans would not be issued with a profit motive in mind, but he believed that they would pay for themselves through their increases in agricultural efficiency. To deal with the current crisis in food, however, the WTB would facilitate food aid to nations that needed it. Centralizing this aid made it harder for an individual nation to use it to its political advantage, and it would also provide a good channel for surpluses that would otherwise threaten to crash prices on the world market. Over the long term, Orr did not want to create conditions of dependence on aid. Ideally, the WTB would improve purchasing power enough to enable consumers around the world to access a nutritious diet through ordinary market means, and would not stifle or upend production in the "third world" by flooding their markets with cheap imports.[116]

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[114] *Ibid.*, 500.

[115] *Ibid.*, 502.

As Orr disseminated his plan, he had a sense that ordinary consumers and farmers would be more likely to support a World Food Board than many governments. Yet "if we believe in democracy," he felt, "then governments must carry out the wishes of their people."[117] Believing that U.S., Canadian, and UK citizens could push their skeptical governments to amend the FAO constitution to create a version of the World Food Board, Orr launched a promotional campaign to educate public opinion on the matter. In one speech before a Canadian agricultural organization, he urged that ordinary farmers, along with "the women's associations and other organizations of townspeople" should distribute copies of the plan for a WTB, discuss them, and make their opinions known to their governments. The United States Department of Agriculture willingly lent its support to this promotional campaign, and women in the Bureau of Home Economics and the Farm Security Administration promoted the plan. Home economists working with the extension program were all too familiar with the way low farm incomes during the 1920s and 1930s had slashed family purchasing power and left farm households open to diseases resulting from malnutrition. They believed that the WFB offered a way to maintain high wartime farm incomes that might be more sustainable than costly and temporary state subsidies.[118]

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[116] Staples, "To Win the Peace," 502.

[117] John Boyd Orr, "The New World Food Proposals: Address Broadcast from Washington D.C. to the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture," box 34, folder "United Nations," American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences records 1899–2008, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, (Henceforth cited as AAFCS Records, Cornell).

[118] Staples, "To Win the Peace," 506.

There were some key differences between the way Orr discussed his plan and how Constance Daniel presented the need for an activist international food organization. Somewhat like James Warbasse and his supporters in the Cooperative League of the U.S.A., Orr constructed the problem as a simple conflict between a homogenized group of "the people" – consumers and farmers – versus "the interests" – large agribusiness firms and national governments fearful of either a loss of sovereignty or the high up-front costs demanded by the WFB's credit and storage facilities. Thus, for Orr, there was "no doubt whatsoever in my mind that 99 percent of the people of the world" wanted the things that the World Food Board could do.[119] He cast the desire for affordable food as so universal that it was even beyond politics. He often claimed that if "the nations cannot work together on food, they can work together on nothing" because this desire was such a constant amongst citizens.[120] In contrast, Daniel saw no such universalism. Her decades on the ground ministering to Black families through the FSA meant that she certainly did not see food as a matter outside of politics. "We need to face up to the fact that people starve in the midst of plenty," she urged, "because *politically* we have no effective system of food distribution."[121]

In 1946, Daniel claimed, "oppressed peoples of the world are looking our way with eyes not always pleading." She still imagined, and even promoted, a U.S.-led world order that could satisfy those expectant glances, but the U.S. would need to do a better job living up to its own democratic ideals. If the nation wanted to position itself an effective leader of the postwar world, then U.S. consumers would need to adopt a sense of themselves as part of an expansive international community that considered the needs of "our two million dead neighbors in Bengal

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[119] Orr, "The New World Food Proposals."

[120] Orr, "A World Program for Food and Peace," collection no. 6578, box 34, folder "United Nations," AAFCS Records, Cornell.

[121] Daniel, "Plain Facts about the Food Situation."

Province, India, who have starved to death since 1942” as intimately as they did the needs of their physical next-door neighbors.[122]

The World Food Board was not necessarily a boon to U.S. consumers. Though its concessionary aid schemes and buffer stock plans would not have been as wasteful as the AAA had been, they could have had a similar effect: increasing farm incomes by decreasing the supply of food available to U.S. consumers, thus increasing the cost. Yet, by gesturing to the needs of “our neighbors in Bengal,” Daniel claimed that peace depended on an expansive and global conception of consumer interest, not a narrow U.S.-centric one. She knew that any kind of activist international food organization would not be “comfortable” for Americans. Yet to be successful, Daniel claimed, the FAO must “have in it no hiding place at all for the “sheltered” people who wish to remain sheltered.”[123] In other words, the world food policy she had in mind would push nationalist U.S. citizens to think beyond their own immediate interests. To prevent further conflict, any new system of international food distribution had to take seriously the consumer needs of colonized people around the world as a matter of basic dignity.

Yet, Daniel’s call did not neglect needy consumers at home. Alongside this “more effective coordination of international planning and monetary agencies dealing with food,” Daniel and the broader NCNW also called for a set of welfare policies that would ensure that all consumers could access a minimum nutritional intake, even if exporting aid did increase prices. First, the NCNW urged a postwar continuation of the Office of Price Administration, just as they pushed the U.S. government to maintain FEPC to provide access to fair wages.[124] Together, these policies would offer Black Americans a promise of higher purchasing power. Second, Daniel suggested that the Truman administration should bring back the New Deal Food Stamp subsidies to needy families and extend the free school lunch program, which only operated in a fraction of the nation' schools.[125]

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[122] *Ibid*.

[123] Daniel, “Peace or a Lull Between Wars?”

[124] “Findings: Resolution Committee” *Aframerican Woman’s Journal* 5 no. 4 (December 1945): 24.

Daniel was certainly correct that food was not above or outside of politics. Orr's activist vision for the FAO was anything but "comfortable" for major world powers, and it was not necessarily a boon to all consumers. Orr saw not only saw interests of food consumers and producers as fundamentally compatible, but he also believed that food importing and food exporting countries would share an identity of interests. Stabilizing prices at an international level would ensure that *both* those purchasing food and those growing it received a square deal, he often claimed. The UK government felt differently.[126] As a major importer of foodstuffs, the UK worried that concessionary sales might incentivize producing countries to raise prices for other customers. This would create a bifurcated world order in which the costs of aid to developing nations would be permanently subsidized by consumers in wealthier importing countries. At the same time, Orr's international warehouse and an increase in international demand to meet the FAO's nutritional standards could increase the cost of food on the world market. The costs of the warehouses also seemed prohibitive to the imperial nation, which struggled to maintain its place as a global power despite significant and growing indebtedness. They estimated that the WTB would cost Britain an estimated 35 million pound sterling to set up, and they expressed alarmed at Orr's "light-hearted" attention to these financial details.[127]

On the other hand, the United States—the world's most significant food exporter—also had serious concerns about the WTB. William Clayton, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, saw Orr's plan as totally at odds with his conception of U.S. international interests, which centered around the promotion of global free trade. The U.S. State Department wanted open markets for U.S. produce exports abroad, but they also wanted control over their concessionary food aid as a tool for building goodwill abroad. While Truman's State Department was not totally opposed to the basic ideas of the WTB, they preferred using the newly-formed International Trade Organization (ITO) to deal with issues of trade and commodity prices, not the FAO. The U.S. State Department claimed that its rejection of Orr's plan was be in the best interest of U.S. consumers, who should enjoy the right to purchase food on the free market without the intervention of any form of broad scale economic planning.[128]

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[125] Daniel, "Plain Facts about the Food Situation."
[126] Staples, "To Win the Peace"
[127] *Ibid.*, 506.

Competing U.S. opinions came to a head when the World Food Board Preparatory Committee met in Copenhagen, Denmark in September 1946. U.S. Undersecretary of Agriculture Norris E. Dodd disobeyed State Department instructions and announced his nation's support for the plan. UNRRA Director and former Democratic New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia wasted no time in setting up a commission in Washington to prepare for what he called "the opportunity of the age." At this meetings' first commission, the State Department forced Dobbs into the politically difficult position of withdrawing the nation's support.[129]

While a dearth of high-level U.S. and U.K. support already sounded the plan's death-knell by late 1946, Orr's campaign to develop strong public opinion in favor of the WFB had worked well enough to make it politically difficult to reject outright. In January 1947, the Preparatory Committee produced a plan for a "World Food Council" that would have some of the capacities of the WFB, even if it fell drastically short of Orr's more visionary proposal. Rather than holding buffer stocks internationally, individual nations could establish limited buffer stock warehouses, and the Council could set international standards for managing them. It would not have a credit facility that allowed for repayments adjusted to a nation's revenue, but it would enable technical assistance missions that could be funded by loans from the newly established World Bank. [130] Orr set to work on another impassioned public relations campaign in favor of these amendments. The NCNW was among the civil society organizations that invited FAO officials to write in favor of the World Food Broad proposals in the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* to encourage the plan's discussion within U.S. Black women's clubs.[131]

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[128] *Ibid*.

[129] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 484.

Despite Orr's work to drum up support, many U.S. left-liberals were not as impressed by the Council plan. *The Nation* criticized the U.S. State Department's apparent inability to tell between the "restrictive nationalistic controls" offered by their counterproposal and Orr's "international controls which have as their aim stimulation of production of trade."[132] When the plans for the Council came to a vote in July, member nations did decide to establish a World Food Council, but in an even more truncated form. Because nations could not agree on the exact form of limited buffer stocks, they entirely eliminated all plans to influence price and supply. Later that year, member states voted to further limit the regulatory power of the body by capping the budget of the FAO at $5 million annually. By the end of his term in 1949, Orr was left as a crusading activist at the head of a very limited, and for him deeply disappointing, institution. The rejection of a more activist FAO also deeply disappointed some nations, notably the organization's Indian delegation.[133]

In his public relations campaigns during 1946 and 1947, Orr admitted that his ideas were partly inspired by consumers' responses to the market failures of "the crazy world in which we lived in prewar days." [134] While he estimated that half of the world's residents did not have enough to eat in 1939, others were bogged down with unmarketable surpluses that brought financial ruin. In these circumstances, it was "no wonder" that so many consumer activists "wanted to adjust the economic system so that as far as food and other essentials of a full and healthy life were concerned there would be production for consumption and distribution according to need."[135] Orr's plan brought these consumers' demands to the peace table through his brief time at the FAO, for the first time setting a minimum standard for individual consumption and making it the responsibility of an international governing body to meet that need. In doing so, he offered a road not taken in postwar planning that presented one rallying ground for a spectrum of women that ranged from professional nutritionists to farm wives. In turn, many of these women began to make more explicit links between food consumption and peace than they had previously considered. Orr's plan had its own share of blindspots and limitations, not least an aversion to what he deemed "ancient" farming methods and a determination to modernize agriculture in the Global South along a specific Anglo-American trajectory. The U.K. delegation's point that the plan might actually dis-incentivize agricultural production in the "third world" and create a long-term dependence on aid or cheap imports would also have been a concern. Yet, U.S. and British commitments to their brand of free trade liberalism would mean that the world would never have the opportunity to try this robust international system of food planning, for all its potential faults.

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[130] Staples, "To Win the Peace," 507.

[131] The FAO's Director of Information Gove Hambridge wrote strongly in favor of the World Food Board for the NCNW and invited them to let the U.S. government know if they supported the idea. Much like Orr, he explained that that "what the [UN] governments want is determined by what the people want—in this case, producers and consumers of food." Gove Hambridge, "World Food Proposals," *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 6 no. 4 (January 1947): 10–12, 31.

[132] Cited in Collingham, *Taste of War,* 484.

[133] Staples, "To Win the Peace," 511.

[134] Orr, "The New World Food Proposals."

Even as the World Food Board and World Food Council plans failed, the critique of U.S. liberal food policies developed by the NCNW, and especially articulated during the war years by Constance Daniel, had a much longer legacy. Flemmie Kittrell would be motivated by her belief in the importance of the home for peacemaking and nation-building when she applied for Fulbright funding to travel to India in the wake of its independence from Britain in 1949.

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[135] *Ibid.*

Believing that "in the face of transition, the family and the home must remain the cornerstone from which learning flows to enable society to handle change in a progressive way," she was determined to work with families on the ground in an effort to help them maximize use of food supplies and purchasing power. [136]Though she conducted a number of similar missions through the 1970s under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, she often silently admitted her belief that it had its priorities wrong— it needed to pay closer attention to how ordinary families accessed fundamental needs of food, clothing, and shelter.[137]

The conditions of possibility for peace begin in the home, or even in the body. As Winston put it, "American Indian, American Negro, miners' children, and the children of the tillers of the soil are hungry, unprotected, insecure and not quite sure how they may find comfort—yet we count on these same children to be the ambassadors of the peace for which we plan?"[138] Beyond the U.S., Winston pointed out, hundreds of millions of people starved in Europe, India and China. How could we ask these disempowered people to believe in, let alone uphold, the UN organizations if they are seen to be doing nothing for their most immediate needs? From Bethune's vantage point at the San Francisco Conference, "the great UN charter" and those of its member organizations, were "but a superstructure, and unless the principles… are used in daily lives, there will be no peace."[139] For her, as for Winston, Kittrell and Daniel, international organizations could only gain trust if they worked against discrimination in all its forms and kept up the struggle for greater material security and dignity for all—making "world brotherhood" (and sisterhood) not only imaginable but also tangible.

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[136] Cited in Brandy Thomas Wells, "I Think of Myself as an International Girl," 251.

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] E.B. Winston, "Children of Today Ambassadors of Peace," *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 6 no. 2 (June 1946): 18–19. Another example of this kind of thinking is found in Marechal-Neil Ellison Young, "Growing with Your Children: Peace Time Goals for Our Children," *Aframerican Woman's Journal* 5 no. 4 (December 1945): 15, 24.

[139] Bethune, "We Build Together for Peace." n.d. (1945?) series 1, reel 2, folder 25, MMB Papers, microfilm.

Chapter 7

“World Peace is Our Business”: Cooperative Peace Planning and the Making of CARE, 1939–1946

In December 1940, former manager of the London-based International Cooperative Trading Agency (ICTA) Waling Dykstra boarded a Dutch freighter bound across the Atlantic to New York City. The ICTA had formed in 1938 to “act as an international wholesale to facilitate the exchange of goods among producer and consumer cooperatives.”[1] For its sixteen member nations, the ICTA linked export shipping businesses and importing cooperative wholesalers, connecting those wholesalers with cooperatively produced goods whenever possible. U.S. cooperative leader Howard A. Cowden once celebrated the ICTA’s trade networks as the sinews of international peace and fairer trade.[2] Yet three months before Dykstra’s trans-Atlantic journey, the ICTA closed its doors for the foreseeable future. Nazi occupations on the European continent meant that too many of its member nations could not reach its London headquarters. The evening after he boarded the freighter, the London building that had housed the ICTA was bombed in the blitz.

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[1] “Vital World Task Awaits U.S. Co-ops: Former Head of International Agency Sees Trade Revival,” *The Cooperative Consumer* (North Kansas City, MO), January 13, 1941, 2.

[2] Howard Cowden, Speech at the Twelfth Cooperative League Congress (1938). MS 63–014, box 2, folder 5, Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Papers 1914–1982, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI. (Henceforth CL Papers, WHSA).

Chapter 7. "World Peace is Our Business"

Even as the trade infrastructure that consumer cooperators had built throughout the interwar years lay in ruin, Dykstra remained optimistic about the future of cooperative commerce—especially in the United States. From New York City, he boarded a westbound train to North Kansas City, MO, where he took up work as a manager with the Consumers Cooperative Association (CCA), one of the most rapidly growing consumers cooperative organizations in the United States. Even before U.S. entry into the conflict, its manager Howard Cowden had already begun to turn North Kansas City into a center for cooperative wartime planning. When Dykstra disembarked his train, he joined dozens of other refugee cooperative leaders who had become acquainted with Cowden during their time together at the ICA. When the Czechoslovakian Emmy Riedl, one of the leaders of the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), fled her home after the Nazi invasion in 1939, she had also set sights on the invigorating discussions in Kansas City, where the local women's guild "promised her something to do."[3]

After settling in to his new home, Dykstra had an opportunity to address his colleagues at the CCA. In his introductory speech, he declared that a "vital world task awaits U.S. coops."[4] If the war impoverished Europe and pushed the U.S. to a new center of international trade, then it would be up to Americans to build a cooperative movement strong enough to serve as a model of fairer trade to the world. The exigencies of war could draw consumers to cooperatives significantly grow the businesses—memberships in the English CWS dramatically increased over the course of World War I.[5] Further, if U.S. coops played a visible role in reconstructing Europe after the peace, then they would have an opportunity to show the world the powerful force for peace their movement had become (Figure 7a). Through his declaration, Dykstra introduces one of the central questions of this chapter: given the complete destruction of international cooperative trade machinery, what accounts for the incredible optimism of U.S. cooperators? Second, buoyed by this optimism, what kinds of transformations did U.S. cooperators think were plausible, and how did they make those claims on the peace table during and after World War II?

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[3] "Circular Letter," April 4, 1939, U DCX, box 4, folder 2, Records of the International Women's Co-Operative Guild, 1921–1961, Hull University Archives, Hull, UK. (Henceforth ICWG Papers, Hull).

[4] "Vital World Task Awaits U.S. Co-ops."

[5] Percy Redfern, "Chapter 10: Co-Operation with the State," *A History of the CWS* (London: Dent and Sons, 1938), 101–129

The rapid growth in the membership of U.S. cooperatives shortly after Dysktra’s arrival was one factor that made him optimistic about the future.[6] Consumers increasingly turned to coops as a means to tame food inflation from December 1940 to December 1941. Florence Parker at the Bureau of Labor Statistics noted a remarkable growth of 40 percent over the course of just that year.[7] Even after the establishment of the Office of Price Administration (OPA) and the institution of ceiling prices in 1942, there remained foods that lay outside these tools’ regulatory sphere. Thus, some women found that their personal experiences with local economies of food offered an entry point into co-ops and to broader international politics.

U.S. cooperative leaders knew that in order to grow their movement, they would have to win over “Mrs. Consumer.” Yet beyond the act of consumption, there remained significant disagreements about what it meant to participate as a cooperative woman in the 1940s. For women in the midwestern United States, especially in those states served by the Central Cooperative Wholesale (CCW), being a cooperative woman meant serving the movement in distinctly gendered ways as a housewife, mother, and consumer. Women, they claimed, should take the big ideas of the movement and bring them into the family home. In 1938, these women established a National U.S. Cooperative Women’s Guild (USCWG) based in Superior, WI.

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[6] After a steady increase over the course of the war, by 1944, there were 2,810 local cooperative grocery stores serving an estimated 690,000 Americans and conducting $280 million in trade annually. “Operations of Consumers’ Cooperatives in 1944,” *Bureau of Labor Statistics* bulletin no. 843 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945).

[7] Florence Parker, “Consumer Cooperatives in 1941,” *Bureau of Labor Statistics* bulletin no. 703 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942).

Simply claiming that the guild was "national" did very little to bring other women into agreement on this point, however. On the Eastern seaboard, women shoppers helped make the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale one of the nation's largest food wholesalers by the end of the war.[8] Yet, they did not form an official Women's Cooperative Guild or join the USCWG, as they were invested in building a business movement in which women could participate in marketing and political committees on the same terms as men.[9] At the same time, Black women played increasingly significant roles in building community food cooperatives in order to stretch purchasing power during and after World War II.[10] These women were not usually in very close contact with the USCWG, as they tended to be more focused on taking international ideas about cooperation and using them to lay down the roots of intersectional economic justice in their local communities.

These three strands of U.S. women's cooperative thought hardened in the 1940s and meant that, for the most part, the only U.S. cooperative women who had a direct line of communication with the London-based International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) were the women who chose to federate with the USCWG. These primarily included white farm housewives concentrated in CCW territories of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan and in North Kansas City, MO. Even so, the ICWG was not the only site for cooperative women's international thought during the war. This chapter explores not only the claims that the ICWG claimed to make on behalf of cooperative women everywhere, but also the ways women in the United States developed and acted on intellectual trajectories of their own.

In some ways, the persistent optimism of the CL paid dividends. A number of representatives of the CL did find their way to major postwar planning meetings. CL President Murray D.

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[8] Wallace J. Campbell, "Record Business; Growing Membership; New Production Facilities Acquired by Co-Ops in '44," *Cooperative League News Sevice* (New York: NY), January 4, 1945, 1–3.

[9] Jacqueline Smith, "What No Womens' Guilds?" 1942, MS 63–14, box 2, folder 33, CL records, WHSA.

[10] See for example Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (Penn, 2014).

Lincoln represented the League on the official U.S. delegation at Hot Springs, VA in 1943. In 1945, the CL sent a delegate to the San Francisco Conference that birthed the UN. James Warbasse and Howard Cowden organized an entire cooperative postwar conference in early 1944, which made an impression on influential United Nations leaders like Herbert Lehmann, the first Director-General of the UN Relief and Reconstruction Administration (UNRRA). They also worked on their own, outside of these formal international bodies. Moved by their desire to help rebuild Europe, Murray Lincoln managed the collection of a “Freedom Fund” that would help fund cooperative reconstruction. In 1945, one-third of that fund became the critical starting capital for the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, a cooperatively organized relief organization that delivered food packages to needy families across Britain and the European continent. CARE delivered “person to person” aid that reached nearly two million European families in the immediate aftermath of war. It later expanded its reach to Asia and Africa and grew into the largest non-governmental aid organization in the United States. Though this was not as radical as some of the more ambitious visions that had been laid out by the ICWG, it was nevertheless a meaningful and enduring contribution.

As the U.S. cooperative movement grew and took firmer shape, it distanced itself from earlier and more radical arguments about political economy and peace its leaders made in the 1920s and 1930s. Even if their more radical plans did not find adoption and the ICA became more mainstream, many cooperative women’s leaders themselves found a place in the budding UN. There, they continued to voice their argument that housewives’ unpaid work in the home was fundamental to the function of capitalism. For example, Emmy Freundlich of the ICWG spent her final days in New York City in the company of long-time co-op supporter Dorothy Kenyon.[11] There, she sat in on meetings of the Committee on the Status of Women. No matter how large cooperative ideas became however, or how leaders at the top might have cast them, their success always relied on the practice of local economic democracy—giving women ample opportunities to discuss and strive toward their visions of gender justice at small scales.

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[11] Dorothy Kenyon, “United Nations Commission on the Status of Women,” *International Woman Cooperator* 3 no. 6 (November 1947): 1–2.

The International Cooperative Women's Guild Plans for Peace

When ICWG President Emmy Freundlich fled Austria for London in 1939, her daughters found work at the central office of the Cooperative Wholesale Society. Though she herself had contemplated making the journey to Kansas City, Freundlich preferred to stay closer to them. Her proximity to British ICWG secretary Theo Naftel also made it easier for her to communicate official guild policies on the quickly-changing wartime situation. The ICWG made the unfortunate political choice of supporting its member organizations who remained staunchly pacifist late into 1939. As late as August 1939, the ICWG promoted a peace march in Oslo as one part of an "international peace front around the world" organized by the pacifist "mothers and housewifes [sic]" who opposed war on all counts.[12] The English Women's Cooperative Guild was another staunch group of pacifists, and as that guild's historians have shown, this unwise move did much to erode its political and social power in wartime and postwar Britain.[13]

After war swept the European continent in September 1939, the ICWG's closest adherents in the United States held tight to their own pacifism. In December 1939, Maiju Nurmi of the USCWG wrote from Superior, WI to London to assure President Emmy Freundlich that her group remained committed to working for "world peace" despite the outbreak of war. They pledged to "renew our efforts this Holiday season for the cooperative movement knowing it to be the most practical and direct route to international peace.”[14] They then went even further, opposing U.S. entry into the conflict and urging the maintenance of “Peace through the development of attitudes and activities based on the peoples' Cooperative Movement, which must effect every phase of our individual and national life.”[15]

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[12] 'Guild Circular," August 24, 1939, U DCX, box 4, folder 2, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[13] For example, see Gillian Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-Operative Guild from the 1880s to the Second World War* (Taylor and Francis, 2005).

This resolution did not reflect the beliefs of all women in the U.S. cooperative movement. Because Maiju Nurmi and other leaders of the Superior-based USCWG served as Freundlich’s only correspondents, they gave her a skewed perspective of U.S. cooperative women’s readiness to accept the ICWG’s ideological positions. Despite Nurmi’s insistence that the USCWG was growing “month by month,” it still primarily spoke for women in the Upper Midwest, Chicago, and Kansas City.[16] Given this distorted picture, the ICWG was overjoyed by what they saw as the rapid progress of their “New World” cooperative sisters to build a unified women’s movement in the country. “Hold fast!” Freundlich and Naftel wrote in a mid-1940 guild circular in optimistic reference to the U.S. movement. “See how the idea of international cooperation among women is steadily gaining ground and that more and more countries are realising that women can build the movement’s future!”[17]

As they were increasingly drawn into the ICWG’s ideological orbit, the gulf between the thought of the Superior-based USCWG and cooperative women in other parts of the country continued to widen. On March 8, 1940, Superior guild leaders reported to Freundlich that they had read an official ICWG message over a local North Wisconsin radio station to mark International Women’s Day.[18] “In providing for the needs of their families,” the radio message began, “the mothers and housewives control three-fourths of the national income in every country and this gives them the power to compel the just distribution of all kinds of goods.”[19] Thus, the message continued, a more just postwar economy was up to the women. Guildswomen at the core of the new USCWG wholeheartedly embraced the links among homemaking, consumption, and peacemaking that the ICWG laid out. Just as these Midwestern guildswomen deepened their commitment to playing a strongly feminized role as cooperative housewives, some women in the Eastern States became increasingly outspoken about their opposition to what they saw as sex segregation in the cooperative movement.[20]

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[14] “Guild Circular,” February 14, 1940, U DCX, box 4, folder 3, ICWG Papers, Hull.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] “Guild Circular,” July 15, 1940, U DCX, box 4, folder 3, ICWG Papers, Hull.
[18] “Guild Circular,” March 12, 1940, box 4, folder 3, ICWG Papers, Hull.

As 1940 came to a close, Emmy Freundlich and Theo Naftel delivered a New Year’s message to their U.S. contacts that strongly emphasized the image of the cooperative homemaker as the ultimate peacemaker. Declaring that “if masses of women workers and housewives in all countries had made it their business to understand something of national and international affairs, and of economic causes and their political effects, if they had striven for wider vision and wider influence,” then their children might not be living through the devastating war that resulted. Now, as the Second World War raged, “housewives… will have to realise that to safeguard the interests of the home they will have to look far beyond it to all the national issues that determine its security.”[21] Sustainable peace began at home, but Freundlich and Naftel wanted to make clear that the task ahead was not confined to private spaces. Women “must look beyond help to individuals, vital though this will be. They must take their share in building a different world….”[22] What would this world look like, how could it be built, and what would be the role of the woman consumer? In the next year, the ICWG began to develop and publicize their answers to these provocative questions.

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[19] *Ibid*.

[20] This alternative perspective is detailed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. See also Jacqueline Smith, “What No Women’s Guilds?” (1942).

[21] Emmy Freundlich and Theo Naftel, “New Years Message,” 1941, U DCX, box 4, folder 4, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[22] *Ibid.*

In early 1941, Freundlich and Naftel set to work on the ICWG’s first official peace plan at the CWS’s central London office— sometimes taking cover in a Leicester country house to avoid the blitz. Their timing suggests that these women envisioned a set of economic rights as central war aims before the Atlantic Charter was signed in January of the next year.[23] As John Boyd Orr’s World Food Board plan would do several years later, their plan urged that the international governing institutions in the postwar period should engage in some level of economic planning to make it possible for consumers everywhere to access a baseline of goods and essential services. The plan’s list of “basic human rights” that “must be recognised by any State entering into a World Federation of Nations” included free medical care, free education, housing, and “the right to maintenance by the community,” which included the radical idea of social insurance for housewives.[24] This was a tall order, but the plan’s drafters believed that cooperative provision of social insurance, housing, healthcare, and food would be critical in helping nation states provide such basic material rights to citizens.

They proposed that an International Economic Office could take charge of the immediate task of purchasing surplus food and raw materials and distributing them where needed, but after the immediate emergency passed, their plan anticipated that local co-operatives would play a major role. Ideally, a global fund would support the establishment of farmer-owned fields and worker-owned factories that would trade with large-scale regional wholesalers, which would supply stores that sold direct to consumers. To ensure that necessary food and other core commodities could flow across borders with minimal interference, wholesalers would ideally be supported by regional free trade zones, for example, a zone in Europe and on the

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[23] “Suggestion for a Programme of Postwar Reconstruction to Be Considered by the International Women’s Organisations,” February 6, 1941, folder 3, Liaison Committee of Women’s International Organisations Archives, International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam, Holland). Accessed via “Women and Social Movements International,” Henceforth Liaison Committee Archives, IISH.

[24] *Ibid.*, 1.

American continent.[25] Overall, the plan assumed that the destruction of old trade practices that came with war gave an opportunity to build up an economy in which producers and consumers directly owned a greater share of business, and that this form of ownership itself could protect and sustain democracies. Its expansive conception of “freedom from want” pushed beyond merely providing access to consumer necessities; it also called for collective power over the source of those goods, and proposed cooperative production and consumption as the ideal way to safeguard that power. As one member of the English WCG saw it, the plan put the “means of life into the hands of the people.”[26]

This plan reached U.S. women through an array of ICWG contacts, including the USCWG’s secretary Anne Spencer. It was republished in women’s magazines like the *Co-Op Homemaker,* which had excellent circulation in North Kansas City, and it was discussed at local women’s guild meetings in the Central Cooperative Wholesale territory.[27]

In addition to circulating in these cooperative circles, ideas from the ICWG’s plan attracted attention across mainstream international and national U.S. women’s clubs through contacts in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA).[28] They were not, however, always well-received. When the ICWG first delivered an early draft of their plans to the Liaison Committee of Women’s International Organizations in London, Kathleen Courtney of the Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs politely suggested that the plan did not feel grounded in political reality. "A large number of proposals on a vast scale are put forth" Courtney suggested, "with little or no indication of the difficulties which surround their achievement."[29] Courtney's point ultimately proved correct—much of the plan was unworkable—but she clearly dismissed the hard work that the ICA was doing to rebuild cooperative supply chains after the conflict.

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[25] *Ibid.*, 3.

[26] “Sees Important Opportunity for the Role of Women: English Leader Urges Cooperative Trade on a World Scale,” *The Cooperative Consumer*, December 14, 1943, 5.

[27] Spencer reportedly republished them in serial form in the monthly bulletin of the USCWG. ICWG Guild Circular, December 9, 1941, U DCX, box 4, folder 4, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[28] For example, The American Margaret Dingman, with whom Freundlich had worked on the Women’s Disarmament Committee, offered to share the draft with the Central Committee of the WILPF in the United States as well as the U.S. YWCA. According to ICWG President Emmy Freundlich, Dingman made “wide use” of the draft in discussion meetings during the summer of 1941. “Meeting Minutes,” September 17, 1941, folder 3, Liaison Committee Records, IISH. Accessed via WASI.

Gertrude Baer of the WILPF, on the other hand, saw the basic contours of the plan as offering the best hope for a more peaceful postwar world. At a New York City meeting of the Committee on the Participation of Women in Post-War Planning (CPWPWP), Baer suggested that building local, democratically "planned economies" that could organize the flow of commodities according to human need could sustain global democracy against the threat of fascist autarky that so haunted the interwar world.[30] When a similar discussion came up again at a future CPWPWP meeting, a Miss Van Wanen responded that it was not the right cultural moment to speak of a "planned world or a planned economy…. I can assure you that everyone in Europe will be glad to be away from a planned economy" and would more readily embrace a liberal free market in which a wide variety of consumer goods were easily accessible.[31] The ICWG was clearly not the only group who saw themselves speaking for the rights of the consumer, as women like Van Wanen saw the demolition of trade barriers and all forms of "planning" as a more promising path to "freedom from want."

Despite opposition from multiple directions, a firm and surprisingly optimistic nucleus of mostly Midwestern women formed around cooperative peace planning. As the war progressed, leaders of women's guilds who wrote in the co-operative press, both nationally and in smaller regional papers, increasingly expressed senses of themselves as citizens of a "world neighborhood" whose acts of purchasing and promoting co-operative goods offered the building blocks of a new kind of internationalism.[32] One of those women was Chicago-based Margedant Peters, editor of the Chicago-based *Co-Op News* and member of the Central States Women's Cooperative Guild.

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[29] "Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations: Suggestions and Amendments to Draft Statements on Reconstruction," April 28, 1941, folder 3, Liaison Committee Archives, IISH. Accessed via WASI.

[30] "Minutes of Conference," September 15, 1942, MS 0842, series 1, box 16, Folder 4 (1942 A-Z), Mary Emma Woolley Papers 1857–1947, Mount Holyoke College Special Collections, South Hadley, MA (Henceforth cited as MEW Papers, MHC).

[31] "Roundtable of Representatives of Women's Organizations in re: Women's Opportunity to make full contribution of planning and establishment of world cooperation," October 28, 1942. MS 0842, series 1, box 16 folder 4 (1942 A-Z), MEW Papers, MHC.

In May 1943, when the left-leaning U.S. periodical *Common Sense* published an editorial urging the American people "to speak about the form of peace and reconstruction" that they longed to see after the war, and to make sure that Allied postwar planners heard these concerns, Peters took the invitation seriously and offered her idea in a letter to the journal's editors. "I should like to place before you the principles of the consumer cooperative movement as a possible solution" to the problems raised by postwar reconstruction, she began.[33] After the defeat of Nazi Germany, she suggested that if rightful owners could not be found, then mines, farms, and factories that had been seized by the state could be "acquired by the International Cooperative Wholesale—the joint agency of consumer cooperatives throughout the world."[34] International or U.S. loans, she hoped, might aid in this acquisition. "This would be an immediate way to ensure that these industries would work for the benefit of the people—both the people of these nations and the people of the whole world." Because they would work through these collectively-owned business structures and not nation-states, this economic reconstruction would not need to wait until democratic governments could be fully restored.

The international co-operative movement could also play an important role in immediate relief work; men and women from the cooperative movement in US, England, and China could be trained to participate in missions to assist the development or reconstruction of cooperative farms, wholesalers, and grocery stores abroad.[35] By 1943, U.S. women were already engaging in work in to help build cooperatives in rural China to help facilitate aid in the midst of violent conflict. She also took inspiration from the part that cooperative producers and wholesalers already played in providing material aid: the CL estimated that around one-third of the foodstuffs handled by the Lend-Lease Administration came from U.S. cooperative farms.[36] In Europe, cooperative retailers and wholesalers had proven themselves before war broke out: during the interwar period, they handled anywhere from 10 to 40% of commerce on that continent.[37] It seemed to Peters that if U.S. or international loans could help rebuild these once-robust networks of buying and selling, then they could provide a cost-effective method of non-profit post-war food distribution.

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[32] Dorothea Kahn, "Would Have Coops Join World Trade," *The Cooperative Consumer* (Kansas City, MO), August 30, 1943, 1.

[33] "Common Sense Gets Views of One American," *The Cooperative Consumer,* May 31, 1943, 7.

[34] This was not original to Peters but was an idea that circulated in the U.S. cooperative press in 1943. An article entitled "Turn Nazi-Owned Properties into Cooperatives at Close of War" was syndicated from the *Cooperative League News Service,* April 29, 1943, 1.

Given her location, Peters would have been familiar with the ICWG peace plans. Her ideas agreed with the English WCG's point that expansion of cooperative trade put "means of life into the hands of the people." Yet those plans were not her only influence. She was also well aware of Howard Cowden's postwar planning work in North Kansas City. She also likely knew that CL President Murray D. Lincoln was managing a U.S. "Freedom Fund," a pool of money that the CL intended to use to help fund European cooperative reconstruction after the war. Thus, the plan that she developed was a particularly American take on the ICWG idea. Though her thinking was situated at the nexus of these two influences, it ultimately anticipated and celebrated a far more US-centered postwar order than the London-based ICWG would have hoped for.

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[35] "Common Sense Gets Views of One American," 7.

[36] "Toward Global Cooperation," *The Cooperative Consumer,* December 15, 1943, 7.

[37] *Ibid.*

African American Women's Cooperative Planning

The women who made up the executive board of the U.S. Cooperative Women's Guild and the ICWG's wartime representatives in London were almost exclusively white.[38] Some, like Freundlich, spoke in favor of the housewife as a powerful social agent despite their own positions as middle-class reformers with established political careers. Yet, the USCWG represented only a small portion of U.S. women. It was not the only organization to claim that cooperative business forms could offer a basis for a more peaceful postwar economy. For Halena Wilson, a working-class African American woman and president of the Chicago chapter of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), cooperatives offered an avenue toward Black economic self-sufficiency. Just as Nanny Helen Burroughs had done in a D.C. Suburb in the 1930s, Wilson took the internationally-developed ideas of consumer cooperation and used them to engage in a more local kind of economic postwar planning.

Developing Black community-owned grocery stores became especially critical as the European war inflated U.S. prices. In a 1941 letter to BSCP President A. Philip Randolph, Wilson suggested that "since the high cost of living and other matters having such a direct bearing upon the home are being given such wide publicity at this particular time," it would be the ideal time to being raising capital to start a string of BSCP cooperative grocery stores.[39] Indeed, food prices escalated some 1.24% a month from December 1940 to December 1941. Even after the establishment of OPA and the General Max ceiling price in 1942, a some foods, like eggs and butter, fell outside of its regulatory sphere until its regulations were tightened in the following year.

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[38] The ICWG was also in contact with women involved in the cooperative movement in India and China, but these non-Western women played no visible role in drafting the statements that came out of its London office.

[39] Helena Wilson to A. Philip Randolph, October 17, 1941, Reel 8, Box 34, Folder "Brotherhood Co-Op Buying Club, 1941–1943." Records of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Series A., Part 2, Records of the Ladies Auxiliary of the BSCP, 1931–1968, Holdings of the Chicago Historical Society and the Newberry Library, 1925–1969, [microform]. (Henceforth BSCP Records, pt. 2., microfilm).

While Wilson joined the National Council of Negro Women in supporting the OPA, she felt that the co-op could ultimately offer greater food stability through self-sufficiency. As she explained in a later letter to Randolph, “a program of this kind is realistic as well as profitable and may be the beginning of activities which will keep within the Negro race the high sums that are now being spent in other places. Once the Negro develops his economic strength by keeping his money within the race he will be a power to be reckoned with and the Consumer Movement represents an ideal step in this direction.”[40] While historian Jessica Gordon Nembhard has shown that Wilson’s passion for consumer cooperation played a meaningful role in popularizing the economic form in the Midwest during the 1940s and early 1950s, historians have not yet considered her entanglement with women’s postwar planning efforts.[41]

By 1943, Wilson had formally organized Black housewives in the BSCP auxiliary into a “buying club” that supplied a basic selection of staple and canned foods and household products, temporarily housed in the basement of one of the Porters’ homes.[42] The BSCP co-op soon affiliated itself to the Central Cooperative Wholesale based in Chicago, which enabled it to access goods at a lower markup than private grocery wholesalers. Wilson used these connections to invite Chicago’s cooperative leaders to speak at BSCP auxiliary meetings. One of the most influential of these was Margedant Peters’ husband, the Canadian-born, ethically-Japanese social scientist S. I. Hayakawa. Wilson claimed that his 1943 address on the “social value” of cooperatives’ capacity to “harmonize friction resulting from different cultures, races, and prejudices” strengthened her resolve to build up the cooperative grocery.[43]

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[40] *Ibid*.

[41] Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage*.

[42] Halena Wilson to “Dear Members,” November 19, 1943, reel 8, box 34, folder “Brotherhood Co-op Buying Club, 1941–1943,” BSCP Records, pt. 2, microfilm.

[43] “Cooperatives Discussed by Noted Author: Dr. Hayakawa Talks to BSCP Auxiliary,” *Chicago Defender,* May 1, 1943.

Wilson also kept her group abreast of developments in large-scale cooperative postwar planning, tuning into regular broadcasts of the CL's radio show, *Here Is Tomorrow,* a "dramatization of the opportunities for the postwar world."[44] Claiming that "blueprints laid out in Washington, London, Moscow or Chungking cannot be adequate," the talk show intended to inspire "hundreds of thousands of Americans" to "think through and plan for themselves how we can achieve a democratic program for a postwar world."[45] The CL fought hard for this opportunity to be heard by a broad U.S. public. When NBC and Columbia refused to sell them time in early 1943, they drew on the support of Senator George Norris, who pressed for a Senate investigation of the issue. Given this political pressure, the networks relented and reluctantly allowed coops to buy time. The struggle to broadcast cooperative postwar planning ideas suggests that radio monopolies took them seriously enough to see them as real threats to private enterprise.[46]

Wilson herself found these broadcasts inspiring, and believed that co-ops could provide Black housewives with a critical space to imagine what a postwar world structured around fair access to goods, civil rights, and economic justice could look like. "None of us know for certain what the postwar period will bring," Wilson wrote in a letter addressed to co-op members in 1943, but "it is quite evident that we cannot expect other races to think for us or to plan for our wellbeing when we are unwilling to plan for ourselves."[47] She assured that "the Cooperative Movement is a means by which people with limited funds may plan for themselves," and that a more just postwar world could start with conversations at BSCP co-op membership meetings.

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[44] "Here is Tomorrow" Press Release, 1943, reel 8, box 34, folder "Brotherhood Co-op Buying Club, 1941–1943," BSCP Records, pt. 2, microfilm.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] For example, *The Nation* claimed that the radio networks "have learned that the co-op movement is neither a freak affair nor a subversive organization but an eminently sensible means of self help, embracing several million consumers and enjoying formidable political backing." Quoted in Wallace Campbell, "Radio Controversy Establishes Fundamental Points," *Consumers Cooperation 29* no. 1 (January 1943): 6–7.

[47] Helena Wilson to "Dear Members," January 7, 1943, reel 8, box 34, folder "Brotherhood Co-op Buying Club, 1941–1943," BSCP Records, pt. 2, microfilm.

Despite this interest, there is no archival evidence that Wilson ever communicated with the International Cooperative Women's Guild, though the ICWG did make note of her efforts to organize African American labor women into consumer cooperatives after the war in 1946.[48] Further, while the USCWG also welcomed the women into her organization, it is unclear from Wilson's archives that she ever corresponded significantly with this body. What explains this silence, given Wilsons' interest in the role co-ops could play in planning for the peace? Most obviously, the ICWG did not know of Wilson. Especially during the war, its operations were based in London and perilous transatlantic travel meant that most of the women who gained direct input on ICWG plans were either British, had come to London as refugees during the conflict, or were well-established contacts of the ICWG like Nurmi. The ICWG almost certainly did not learn of Wilson's work until after the bulk of its planning documents had been drafted. The BSCP also struggled to keep its grocery store afloat and operated the co-op out of a member's basement for the duration of the conflict. Wilson may have seen it as most prudent to focus her energy and funds not on abstract discussion, but on the pressing work of on-the-ground movement building. Even so, Wilson was international in her outlook, taking inspiration from an idea conceived globally and using it to lay down roots of intersectional economic justice locally.

Coops at the FAO and UNRRA

Broader mixed-gender organizations also played a critical role in getting co-operative ideas on postwar agendas. James Warbasse formed a US-based International Council of Cooperative Reconstruction in 1942 to collect and draw attention to plans for cooperative peace. Warbasse appointed Howard Cowden as chair. Using his contacts from the ICA, Cowden gathered 28 cooperative movement leaders, including two women and a host of European refugees and a representative from Latin America.[49] Murray D. Lincoln, who took over after Warbasse resigned as President of the CL, was pleased to report to the group that the Hot Springs, VA conference had given co-ops a hearing. The conference report praised them as a mode of food distribution and invited nations to re-evaluate their laws to be more favorable to co-op development.[50] CL leaders were most thrilled when Herbert Lehman, director general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, sent a note expressing hope that coops could form the basis of an "enduring peace."[51] In return, the CL's International Committee supplied the UNRRA with maps of prewar cooperative stores and warehouses in "five victim countries in Western Europe" as well as Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. They claimed that if these networks of buying and selling could be rebuilt, they might offer a cost-effective route of aid. As one World War I relief worker had estimated in 1919, extant cooperative infrastructure meant that each dollar of relief funds spent through cooperative channels was "worth $5 spent in any other way."[52]

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[48] "Guild Life and Work: The Central and Northern State Guilds and Clubs," *International Woman Cooperator 2* no. 3 (May 1946): 3.

In response to this encouragement, U.S. cooperative leaders called an International Cooperative Reconstruction Conference in January 1944 in the nation's capital. There, directors of the CL meet with representatives from 22 other nations to draw up blueprints for an "International Cooperative Trading and Manufacturing Association," which would rebuild the destroyed International Cooperative Trading Agency. Its basic contours parallel the basic idea of the ICWG and U.S. co-op women. According to Cowden, the organization's food distribution section would integrate data from existing cooperative trading bureaus in London, Copenhagen, Montreal, Winnipeg, New York, Buenos Aires, Ceylon, Accra, Casablanca, and elsewhere in an effort to cut wholesale costs and bring consumers in contact with cooperatively grown food at low prices. Cowden suggested that the organization would not need much more than a $100,000 U.S. loan to get started. It could operate on an agency commission basis, not taking title of the goods nor needing a large capital outlay for inventories. The larger investment he requested from the UNRRA would go to rebuilding war-torn cooperative businesses on the ground—yet he promised that if an international fund of $50,000,000 could be developed for this purpose, the agencies would be delighted not only with the potential return on capital investment, but also with the political stability such a move could promote.[53] Coops, he and the ICWG claimed, could offer not just immediate redistribution but a long term strategy for getting food in the hands of working-class consumers, especially because these retailers enjoyed the pre-existing trust of consumers who used them before the outbreak of war.

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[49] "Announces the After War Committee," *The Cooperative Consumer,* March 17, 1942, 2.

[50] "UN Provide Means for Co-op Help," *The Cooperative Consumer*, June 15, 1943, 1.

[51] "Co-op Relief Conference to Emphasize Self Help," *The Cooperative Consumer,* December 31, 1943, 5.

[52] Howard A. Cowden, "An International Cooperative in Food and Petroleum," reprinted in *Coops Plan for the postwar world: a report on international planning done at the Washington Conference, January 19–20, 1944* (Chicago: Cooperative League of the United States of America, 1944), 29.

In making these proposals, Cowden clearly hoped for a significant expansion in international cooperative trade. Yet, the refugee cooperators in his inner circle made him aware how deeply the conflict had torn pre-war business operations and food systems apart. What could have inspired his hope that such an ambitious postwar cooperative trading agency could be possible? In part, Cowden took inspiration from what he witnessed in the United States. He seemed to be surrounded by evidence that cooperatives could take root and grow in the midst of adversity. When Cowden gave this address, he knew that 150 new cooperative grocery stores had opened in the United States since Pearl Harbor.[54] Thanks to dedicated managers like Jacqueline Smith, the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale was now in the largest 10 percent of all U.S. grocery wholesalers, and its largest stores were full-service establishments that could do up to $10,000 in business each week. National Cooperatives, Inc—the central purchasing agency that supplied U.S. cooperative wholesalers—expanded into Canada and added at least two or three major wholesalers to its list of members in each year of the war. Cowden was most excited about NCI’s increased move into acquiring plants to produce its own consumer goods. Closest to his heart was the CCA’s acquisition of an oil refinery in Kansas, celebrated by the ICA at the world’s first consumer-owned plant of its kind.[55]

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[53] *Ibid*.

[54] Wallace J. Campbell, “Record Business; Growing Membership; New Production Facilities Acquired by Co-Ops in ‘44,” *Cooperative League News Service*, January 4, 1945, 1–3.

U.S. cooperatives recorded rapid growth and unprecedented success during the war, and Cowden expected that Europeans would also enthusiastically work to quickly rebuild destroyed cooperative businesses. In 1939, he estimated that 143 million members of European co-operatives did annual business of around 20 billion dollars.[56] After the war, he believed that Europeans would want to get to work restoring these structures of economic democracy as soon as possible as one way of brushing the dust of fascist autarky from their shoulders. Evidence offered by his European contacts only reaffirmed those beliefs. For example, at one CL rally, Czech economist and UNRRA worker Frank Munk recounted his recent visit to a Greek village that had been destroyed by the Nazis. There, he claimed that residents got to work reconstructing their co-ops before even rebuilding their own homes.[57] Given such enthusiastic reports, it is understandable why Cowden would have announced in 1945 that “there is ample reason to believe that there will be a substantial growth of world wide cooperative trade.”[58]

However optimistic Cowden seemed, he knew that the CL and the ICA would need as much help as it could get in the difficult work of reconstructing and expanding European cooperative trade infrastructure. In May 1945, Cowden and CL Assistant Secretary Wallace Campbell would lay out their request for that help as official representatives of the ICA at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco.

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] “To Curb Power of Cartels, Take their Business Away Cowden Tells Delegates,” *Cooperative League News Service*, May 17, 1945, 2.

[57] Mary Dillman, “Charles Taft, Dr. Frank Munk, Congressman Voorhis Address Huge Freedom Fund Rally,” *Cooperative League News Service*, March 8, 1945, 3.

[58] “To Curb Power of Cartels, Take their Business Away.”

Planning a Cooperative Peace at the United Nations

Before they reached San Francisco, Campbell and Cowden developed a memorandum that clearly spelled out what both the ICA and the CL hoped from the new United Nations Organization. Their proposal reminded the UNO of the declarations in favor of cooperative development issued by leaders of the FAO and UNRRA. They assured that plans were underway to expand international cooperative trade after the war. To support these plans, they proposed that the UN develop an International Cooperative Office that would have the same power, dedicated staff, and status as bodies like the International Labor Office and Food and Agriculture Organization. It would be tasked with “collecting and disseminating information about cooperatives of all types throughout the world” and “proposing measures suitable for the promotion of free exchange of commodities and services among nations.”[59] If this was not possible, then Campbell and Cowden urged the UN to offer the ICA consultative status with the UN’s Economic and Social Council. In either case, the two men argued that offering cooperators a prominent place in the UN would be the best way to give the “organized consumers” of the world a voice in this emerging global institution.

The proposal presented on behalf of the ICA included some the concerns that cooperative women had been thinking about over the last five years. If an International Cooperative Office had been established, for example, it would have gotten the ICWG far closer to its own goal of pushing nation-states to create trade laws favorable to cooperative expansion. Yet, the plan presented by Cowden and Campbell did not go far enough to assure economic justice for the woman working in the home—a group that the ICWG believed it had a duty to represent on a world stage. Thus, in 1945, the ICWG also submitted a final draft of their proposal for a postwar world to San Francisco. Drawing on the language of the Hot Springs meeting, the women’s memo urged that “the primary aim of postwar reconstruction of production and distribution must be the satisfaction of the needs of all the peoples.” They continued to press for consumer representation in international organizations as well as a set of basic economic human rights that included social and economic rights for housewives. Much as the official ICA plan did, they also claimed that if the nation-states invested in cooperative infrastructure aimed at the “distribution of foodstuffs and all necessaries,” they would not only smooth the movement of goods but also offer people a means of directly participating in and bolstering their own economic lives—leading to more active citizens.[60]

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[59] “Propose Establishment of Cooperative Office in United Nations- Suggestion Made in San Francisco; Several Nations Backing it But No Action Yet,” *Cooperative League News Service,* May 10, 1945, 1.

A month after the conference, the ICWG’s London office received a reply from the San Francisco conference’s information officer. While he began by assuring the women that “human rights and fundamental freedoms for *all* are expected to be guiding purposes of the proposed international organisation,” he reminded them that their most far-reaching proposals far exceeded the capacity of the UN charter as they would impede on the “right of each country to make its own laws.” The ICWG was not deterred; instead, they hung on to the “encouragement” offered in the UN information officer’s letter—his note that “it is heartening indeed to know of the sincere interest of your group in the problems involved in the establishment of an international organisation, for it is realised that the attainment of this objective will require the sustained support of informed people in countries throughout the world.” ICWG leadership took this as an invitation to maintain their efforts to organize women as world citizens on the ground and to use their organization to inform consumers around the globe of what they saw as the promise of cooperation in fostering social democracies.[61]

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[60] “Memorandum Submitted to the Members of the International Conference of the United Nations, San Francisco, April 1945,” *International Woman Cooperator* 1 no. 3 (May 1945): 1.

The UNO also rejected Campbell’s and Cowden’s idea of an International Cooperative Office, but it did give the ICA consultative status with the UN’s Economic and Social Council. Even if the UN promised the ICA a voice in postwar international governing bodies, cooperative women would still have their work cut out for them. Stripped of the ICWG’s radical plans for cooperative insurance, healthcare, and other basic economic rights, Cowden’s big ideas of increasing international cooperative trade through a postwar International Cooperative Trading and Manufacturing Association might have just been another method of making the world safe for U.S. trade and investment. Despite cooperatives’ alternative and more democratic form of ownership, what Cowden proposed might simply have offered a cost effective way of investing U.S. funds abroad to foster an economic model that could function within larger liberal, free market economies. There was, in other words, nothing inherently anti-racist or feminist about cooperatives. If co-op trade did expand in the postwar years, then social movements like Wilson’s or local Women’s Cooperative Guilds would need to use that trade infrastructure to press for social democratic ideals on the ground.

Reconstructing Cooperative Europe: The “Freedom Fund” and the Making of CARE

Leaders of the ICA, CL, and ICWG wanted to work directly through the emerging UN organizations whenever it was possible to do so. Yet, they also recognized that those organizations would not be able to provide all of the support that they needed, so they also built their own structures to help facilitate cooperative rehabilitation and reconstruction. The ICA’s Freedom

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[61] “Reply from San Francisco,” *International Woman Cooperator* 1 no. 4 (July 1945): 4.

Fund might have been one of the most important of these structures. So named because it intended to rebuild economic democracy after its fascist destruction, the "Freedom Fund" was "a worldwide effort to restore and rehabilitate cooperatives in devastated areas."[62] In one press release, the CL broadly summarized "reports from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Holland, Norway, France and other countries" to convey a sense of urgency. Where the Nazis invaded, they often looted co-op stores and warehouses or engaged in "wholesale confiscation of co-op property." If co-ops evaded physical destruction, then they were "deprived of their democracy and forced to change from people-owned instruments of self-help into state-controlled instruments" to serve the Fascist order.[63]

In the United States, promoting and contributing to the fund offered one practical way for women to help build towards a cooperative peace beyond simply choosing to do their shopping at the co-op. Women might speak at or help organize local Freedom Fund rallies to try to get donations from friends and neighbors. The highest profile rally took place on February 27, 1945 at the Department of Interior Auditorium, when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt addressed a standing-room only audience of over one thousand Americans, including "a score of senators, congressmen and foreign government officials."[64] She urged contribution to the fund and claimed that cooperatives did not just offer economic benefits, but even more importantly inculcated "a spirit of working together." She concurred with California Congressman Jerry Voorhis, another speaker at the rally, that "the revival and expansion of cooperatives" offered a promising “economic foundation on which a peaceful world can be constructed.”[65] In addition to Roosevelt, the Freedom Fund found financial support from a number of high-profile women thinkers and reformers, including Ruth Bryan Owen Rohde, Dorothy Kenyon, and *Nation* editor Freda Kirchwey.[66]

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[62] "John Winant, Jan Masaryk, Ruth Bryan Owen Rohde, Mrs. Harriman Sponsor Freedom Fund," *Cooperative League News Service*, March 13, 1945, 1.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] Mary Dillman, "Mrs. Roosevelt Praises Sprit of Cooperatives as Factor in Reconstruction," *Cooperative News Service* (New York, NY), March 8, 1945, 3. Roosevelt was an enduring supporter of cooperatives. In 1948, she used the business structure as a metaphor for the broader process of postwar planning, claiming that "we are trying to do via the United Nations the same kind of thing we really do every time we form a cooperative… getting together people to work for a common objective." "Mrs. Roosevelt Says United Nations and Coops Have Same Goal," *International Woman Cooperator* 4 no. 1 (January 1948): 3.

At war’s conclusion in September 1945, the CL had raised $100,000 for the Freedom Fund. The cash was earmarked for a specific task, but some of it ended up getting rerouted to another—ultimately more influential—end. Towards the end of 1944, UNRRA worker Arthur Ringland and his colleague Lincoln Clark came to Wallace Campbell at the CL’s New York office with an idea for a large-scale relief project.[67] They proposed that the CL use its Freedom Fund to help finance a service that would deliver food packages to war-torn Europe. At first, Campbell turned the idea down. He knew that the Freedom Fund could not be used for this purpose and worried that if a package delivery service *was* workable, then it would be duplicated by several other charities. This would leave the CL to deal with difficult competition. Instead, he suggested a cooperatively-owned aid organization. Any charitable or humanitarian group in the U.S. could become a member-owner of this co-op in the usual way—by contributing a share of capital. Ringland and Clark agreed to give his idea a try. The three men took their plan to the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service (ACVAFS), a federation of 80 humanitarian groups, to see if there was any interest.[68] If they could get the organization up and running, Campbell promised to contribute one-third of the Freedom Fund to use as start-up capital.

In October 1945, Campbell, Ringland, Clark, and ACVAFS secretary Charolette Owen gathered together 22 U.S. organizations that agreed to become owners of their new cooperative.[69] All of them were private, non-profit, and non-governmental organizations that had some experience working in humanitarian relief or international relations. Lincoln's wife Alice Clark came up with the name Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE), and on November 28, 1945 it was officially launched.[70] The group faced a few bureaucratic roadblocks in its attempts to register as an aid organization with the President's War Relief Control Board. Yet by early January 1946, they received requisite approvals and Herbert Lehmann of the UNRRA gave CARE control of up to 2.8 million packages of leftover U.S. army rations that had been sitting on a base in the Philippines.[71] These were "ten-in-one" packages, designed either to feed one man for ten days or ten men for a day. They contained mostly canned meat, biscuits, and other pre-prepared foods that could be eaten easily in the field—not ideal for families, but the quickest and most convenient unit that CARE could quickly get its hands on.[72]

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[65] *Ibid.*

[66] “John Winant, Jan Masaryk, Ruth Bryan Owen Rohde, Mrs. Harriman Sponsor Freedom Fund,” *Cooperative League News Service,* March 13, 1945, 1.

[67] Wallace Campbell, *The History of CARE: A Personal Account* (Prager, 1990), 8–10; see also Murray D. Lincoln, *Vice President in Charge of Revolution* (McGraw Hill, 1960), 205.

[68] Campbell, *History of CARE,* 10.

[69] *Ibid.,* 16. See also Lincoln, *Vice President,* 206.

CARE launched at a moment when, according to one poll, some 70 percent of U.S. consumers expressed willingness to endure cuts in their own food supply to feed famine-stricken people abroad.[73] Historian Amy Bentley has shown that women consumers even petitioned Truman's government to reinstate some rationing controls to make sure that families abroad could access the food they so desperately needed.[74] Among these women was Constance Daniel of the NCNW, introduced in the previous chapter. Yet, Truman refused to implement controls of any kind during the peace, worried that doing so would make his administration unpopular. He invited Americans to voluntarily consume less, though these appeals did little to influence purchasing habits.[75] In this context, CARE gave U.S. consumers an opportunity demonstrate their sincerity by engaging directly in person-to-person aid, even if it did not have the infrastructure to send goods any further than Europe. When the program launched publicly in February 1946, U.S. consumers could purchase one CARE package for $15. CARE itself would pay the U.S. government $6.50 for each unit and use the rest of the funds to finance the goods’ transport. When they purchased a CARE package, Americans could choose to route it directly a family that they knew personally, or to send it wherever it was needed.[76] CARE administrators made sure that no more than 60 percent of its packages would be earmarked to particular families so that at least 40 percent could be distributed based on need.[77]

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[70] Campbell, *History of CARE,* 16.

[71] "CARE signs contract for 2.8 million food parcels," *Cooperative League News Service,* February 14, 1946. However, they were not obligated to take any of the packages that they were unable to sell to donors, so they would not operate at a loss if they miscalculated demand.

[72] A CARE package might contain around 10 pounds of canned meat, stews, and hashes; 6.5 pounds of cereals and biscuits; 3.9 pounds of candy and sugar; 2.3 pounds of canned vegetables; 1 pound of coffee and juice powders; 0.8 pounds of canned milk; 0.5 pounds of preserved butter; 0.4 pounds of canned processed cheese; 2 oz of salt. Campbell, *History of CARE,* 47–48.

[73] Collingham, *Taste of War,*

[74] Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory*.

[75] Collingham, *Taste of War.*

CARE could not operate without approval from governments in the countries it wanted to serve. Its first written agreement came from the Social Democrat Leon Blum in France.[78] Whenever possible, CARE utilized the cooperative trade infrastructure of the European nations it operated within. This often led to a symbiotic relationship between CARE and the Freedom Fund. In France, for example, the Freedom Fund enabled the Société Générale des Coopératives de Consommation (SGCC) to repurchase trucks that had been destroyed during the conflict.[79] The SGCC then used those vehicles to transport CARE packages from cooperative wholesalers’ warehouses to distribution centers, where families could collect them. This brought the cost of distributing each package down to just 50 cents.[80] After striking up an agreement in France, CARE managers moved on to Italy, Greece, the UK, West Germany, Norway, and Finland. Unlike Hoover’s American Relief Administration after World War I, CARE did not consciously use food aid to reward nations that aligned with U.S. political interests and punish those that did not. Before the Cold War forced it out of the Soviet bloc, CARE operated "substantial" distribution centers in Romania, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.[81]

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[76] Because CARE was not means-tested and did not allocate food based on need, the UK Labour government at first did not allow the organization to operate in Britain. However, they became concerned that refusing any food imports would be bad political optics at a time when civilian rationing was still practiced. Ultimately, the UK did invite CARE to operate within its borders. Campbell, *History of CARE,* 41.

[77] *Ibid.,* 41.

[78] *Ibid.*, 37.

[79] “First Freedom Trucks Arrive in France,” *Cooperative League News Service,* December 6, 1945.

[80] Campbell, *History of CARE,* 37–38.

In nations liberated from fascist control, cooperative structures were usually too badly damaged to be put to work so quickly. Mussolini had systematically destroyed cooperatives during the interwar years, leaving cooperators in liberated Italy little to work with after the war.[82] Need for food was also acute. When the U.S. army marched into Italy, they found Romans living on a ration of just 663 calories a day. Under these conditions, the infant mortality rate increased to 438 out of every 1,000 live births.[83] The Italian food shortage was so significant that Italian officials warned CARE managers that they could not use an open distribution center. This would make it too easy to steal packages, which could sell up to ten times their value on the black market. In order to make sure that Italian families got the packages ordered on their behalf, CARE had to route the packages through the postal service—making delivery in that country very expensive.[84] When Italy's Confederation of Consumer Cooperatives reformed however, it began handling package distribution itself.

By the time 1946 came to a close, CARE had sold and distributed 1.8 million packages to European families.[85] They discontinued the ten-in-one military ration that year, instead moving to bundles of goods designed by nutritionist Janet Leckie. These packages had more raw materials, like flour and cooking fats, to enable women to plan their own menus rather than relying on pre-prepared foods intended for soldiers in the field.[86] Even though ten-in-one packages were not ideal, CARE made important contributions in 1946. When Campbell visited Zurich, Switzerland for the ICA meeting in 1946, he had not planned to inspect CARE distribution centers in Western Europe, “but it turned out that way because virtually everywhere I went, I found people who wanted to show me how CARE was working and how much it meant to them.” He was overwhelmed not only by how effectively cooperatives were distributing CARE packages, but also by his newfound realization of the need for what the organization was doing. “Intellectual knowledge” gained through working with the CL “did not prepare me for the deep, soul wrenching impact that hunger and potential had… or for the wave of relief and appreciation that surged up when CARE and other groups moved to help lift those threats.”[87]

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[81] *Ibid.,* 37–38.

[82] *Ibid.,* 40. Impressive reports came to the CL that Italian cooperators did begin to rebuild very quickly. Enrico Dugonic, who had served several terms in the Italian parliament before Mussolini's rise to power, began work immediately after the Nazi defeat in May 1945 to rebuild co-ops, and by the end of that year he claimed that Italians had re-established some 15,000 cooperative enterprises. He urged the Freedom Fund to send funds to help to get them back on their feet. "15,000 Italian Cooperatives Appeal to the U.S.A.," *Cooperative League News Service,* May 24, 1945, 2.

[83] Collingham, *Taste of War,* 517.

[84] Campbell, *History of CARE,* 40.

[85] "CARE Sends 25 Million Lbs of Food to Europe," *Cooperative League News Service*, December 19, 1946, 1.

Legacies

A small but dedicated group of men and women pushed enthusiastically to give co-ops a hearing as the basis for a more democratic international economy after World War II. These ideas gained meaningful attention, promoting a road-not-taken in New Deal social planning on an international scale, even if some of their most ambitious ideas proved unworkable. CARE, which became the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, is perhaps the most visible legacy of cooperative postwar planning. In 1945, Howard Cowden convinced the ICA to form an International Petroleum Cooperative Association that would move towards his decade-long dream of democratizing access to oil.[88] The IPCA continues to exist, just as the ICA maintains close ties to the United Nations.

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[86] Campbell*, History of CARE,* 45.

[87] *Ibid*., 42.

[88] “Lincoln and Cowden go to Eruope [sic] for International Cooperative Meetings,” *Cooperative League News Service,* July 5, 1945, 1.

As the CL's ideas gained wider international purchase, the body distanced itself from the more radical arguments that its leaders made in previous decades. In 1934, General Secretary Ernest Bowen created a stir amongst left-liberal New Dealers when he claimed that consumer cooperation could democratize control over economic resources more profoundly than any other system that had been tried. [89] After World War II, the CL moved away from its earlier idea that economic cooperation could bring profound social transformation or drastically reform capitalism. Instead, they claimed that co-ops were but one useful sector in a broader capitalist economy. As the Cold War set in, CL President Murray Lincoln denied that his organization ever had meaningful ties with the left. "The cooperative movement has somehow gained a reputation among many people for being left of center in political outlook," he wrote in his 1960 memoir. "At least, that's what Ernest Ditcher and his Motivational Research Institute discovered when they ran an analysis on what the public thought of when they heard the word cooperative." Yet, he affirmed, "we are not leftist in our political outlook."[90]

As leaders in the CL and ICA left their most radical ideas behind, the ICWG carried a more explicitly left-leaning cooperative tradition into postwar feminist spaces. In 1944, Freundlich had urged the ILO to adopt a resolution that would encourage nations to extend postwar social insurance schemes to cover unwaged women working in the home.[91] She claimed that housework was never private or only for the good of her family. A woman's efforts to provide the care her family members needed in order to go to work or school each day was a benefit to the whole community. "The truth is that the housewife's work is indeed an occupation," she argued, "which has all the features of regular employment except a wage."[92] Since the housewife was a worker, Freundlich argued, she should be seen that way by the state. When the ICWG obtained consultative status B with the UN's ECOSOC in 1947, Emmy Freundlich relocated to New York City to observe the organization on behalf of the Guild and insert her radical critique of social insurance systems. There, she quickly befriended Dorothy Kenyon, U.S. delegate to the UN's Commission on the Status of Women and long-time CL organizer. Kenyon invited her to come along to observe commission meetings.[93] From this position, these women and their allies continued to press the UN for a robust conception of 'freedom from want' that would take into consideration what they saw as women's particular economic interests and needs.[94] Further, while it is difficult to draw a direct intellectual legacy, Freundlich's arguments about the fundamental role unpaid care workers played in capitalist economies had a much longer life, animating a tradition of Marxist Feminism popular in the 1970s.

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[89] E. R. Bowen, "Cooperation: America's Answer," *Consumers' Cooperation* 20 no. 5, (May 1934).

[90] Murray D. Lincoln, *Vice President in Charge of Revolution,* 188.

[91] Emmy Freundlich, "Social Security for Housewives" *International Labour Review* 50, no. 2 (1944): 160–168.

[92] *Ibid*.

Cooperative philosophies fostered during the interwar years inspired an enduring series of postwar institutions. Yet, as Wilson's example illustrates, ideas shared through global spaces could also scale down to have meaningful local resonances. Shortly after the war, Wilson and the other women who served with her on a joint Labor-Co-op postwar planning committee explicitly took inspiration from cooperative women's guilds elsewhere, especially in Great Britain and Sweden.[95] They also participated as much as possible in international relief efforts, donating excess supplies from their store to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. In these ways, they exerted an international outlook but prioritized the development of coops within national BSCP Ladies' Auxiliaries as a path toward Black economic self-sufficiency. After all, no matter how big co-operators' ideas became, the co-operative is fundamentally a

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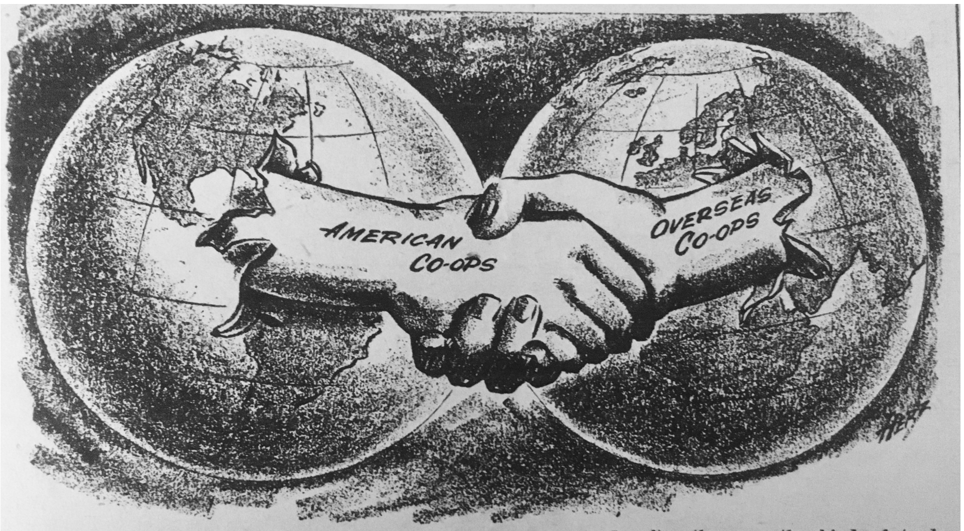
[93] Kenyon also assured Freundlich that she was keen on meeting European guildswomen and attending the upcoming ICWG conference in Prague. ICWG Guild Circular, December 17, 1947, U DCX, box 4, folder 8, ICWG Papers, Hull.

[94] Dorothy Kenyon, "United Nations Commission on the Status of Women," *International Woman Cooperator* 3 no. 6 (November 1947): 1–2. The report notes that Helen Furhmann also "watched over the interests" of the ICWG at the 1947 CSW meeting at Lake Success.

[95] Memo: "Council of Cooperative Development," 1947, reel 9, box 34, folder "Brotherhood Co-op Buying Club, 1946–1947," BSCP Records, pt. 2, microfilm.

local democratic structure. Even as co-ops scale up, it is ultimately up to member-owners on the ground how robust and inclusive their practice of economic democracy will be.

Chapter 7. "World Peace is Our Business"



The promise of peace-promoting international cooperative trade after the war—the kind of trade where goods are exchanged to satisfy human need rather than for purposes of exploitation.

Figure 7a: "A Vital World Task Awaits U.S. Co-ops"
Reprinted from *The Cooperative Consumer* (North Kansas City, MO), January 30, 1943, 5.

Epilogue

During the interwar years and over the course of World War II, U.S. women peace activists used their identities as consumers to make claims about global institutions and international economic justice. Some peace activists advocated for the rights of consumers on an international scale. In the wake of World War I, they argued that a healthy peace relied on building international institutions that could take consumers' needs for food and other core commodities seriously.[96] Some women, many of them trained home economists, worked for this idea through League of Nations committees, collecting statistics on demography and human need to demonstrate intimate ties between consumer access and peace.[97] Others, organized through the consumer cooperative movement, felt that no formal international organization could be up to the task. Thus, they set to work on building their own institutions. They sought to construct a "political economy of peace" from the bottom up by fostering small-scale units of economic democracy that they believed could scale up to something transformative.

Those in charge of drafting the peace after World War I regarded visions of an international organization that could help provide for basic consumer needs as outside of the realm of political possibility. Yet, important shifts in the ways Western democratic governments understood their obligations to citizens made such a body increasingly possible to imagine after World

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[96] Some of these are also developed in Mona Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights After the First World War* (Columbia, 2020).

[97] Especially through the League of Nations Mixed Committee on Nutrition. See for example Nick Cullather, "Chapter 1" *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Harvard, 2013).

War II.[98] Thus, the peace table during and after that conflict offered a critical moment for consumer diplomats to make their interventions and offer some of their most robust proposals for institutions that they believed could undergird a "political economy of peace."

Other women used their purchasing power *directly* to build the cooperative movement or orchestrate boycotts against nations that they believed violated international law. Action and advocacy are not two totally separate, parallel forms of consumer diplomacy. Instead, there could be productive dialogue between buying practices on the ground and advocacy at the top. The ways in which these consumer diplomats expressed the motivations for their actions tells us something about the kinds of international organizations they found most desirable. For example, the boycott was a tool that could be used by a politically diverse set of actors. Those rejecting imports of "aggressor" nations were divided between whether or not to throw their support behind the League of Nations. While the liberal internationalist women who make up the bulk of this dissertation primarily supported the League, some interwar internationalists had little faith in the institution. Instead, they believed that the organization was fundamentally bound to the imperial politics practiced by its most powerful member states and unable to foster a meaningfully democratic global community. Those consumers supported the boycott as a tool of participatory global democracy, or in the words of the Trinidadian socialist CLR James, a kind of "workers' sanctions."[99]

Interwar consumer diplomacy took its shape from three intersecting historical contingencies. The first of these was a lively post-World War I conversation about how new global economic institutions might operate and what kinds of powers they should have to influence or shape the policies of sovereign nation-states.[100] These included questions of the morality and political feasibility of economic sanctions. This post-World War I uptick in public interest about how the world ought to be governed occurred just as U.S. women began to fashion a new political voice in the aftermath of the suffrage amendment. Women's enfranchisement presented a second major turning point. Even though the U.S. was not part of the League of Nations, U.S. women studied and discussed problems of international government in local women's clubs or read about them in magazines like the *Ladies Home Journal*.[101] Doing so gave expression to their understanding of themselves as citizens not only of their nation, but also of the world.[102] Just as these two overlapping historical processes made way for a new era in women's international thought and action, the emergence of new political conceptions of the consumer, the third crosscurrent, began to transform across Western industrial democracies. As an often feminized political and economic actor, the "citizen consumer" offered a clear outlet for some women who desired a means of registering direct protest against not only domestic concerns, but also international ones.

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[98] Lizabeth Borgwardt has claimed that this fundamental shift is akin to an externalization of the New Deal, but I have found it more likely to be a result of a more multilateral social planning ethos. Borgwardt, *New Deal for the World" America's Vision for Human Rights* (Harvard, 2005). On the way the New Deal borrowed from contemporaneous social policies, see Kiran Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, 2016).

[99] Cited in Nicholas Mulder, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (Yale, 2022).

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The practice of consumer diplomacy from the end of World War I until the dawn of the Cold War was shaped by the intersection of these three historical currents. In the decades since, practices of consumer diplomacy continue to offer ways for U.S. citizens to think about their place in the world, albeit in changing and historically specific ways.

For historian Lizabeth Cohen, a new kind of consumer citizen become prominent in the postwar U.S. – one whose private purchases helped public welfare by enabling growth in industrial volume, keeping wages high and unemployment low. Cohen places this "purchaser as consumer" at the center of her postwar "consumer's republic," a political economic order defined by its particular brand of privatized Keynesianism.[103] This economic model promised a higher standard of living for all through economic growth rather than through redistribution of existing wealth. Yet, the "consumer's republic" did not necessarily lead to a more democratic distribution of basic goods; it simply re-entrenched many marketplace inequalities and barriers to access for women and people of color.[104]

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[100] This trend is most recently illustrated in Jaime Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard, 2022).

[101] For example, see Katarina Rietzler, " "Mrs. Sovereign Citizen": Women's International Thought and American Public Culture," in *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy: New Histories*, ed. Christopher McKnight Nichols and David Milne (Columbia, 2022), 92–114.

[102] See especially Megan Threlkeld, *Citizens of the World: U.S. Women and Global Government* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

As the Cold War set in, such a conception of the consumer did new kinds of diplomatic work. U.S. consumers' alleged access to unprecedented choice, credit, and modern labor saving technologies offered a global advertisement for the supremacy of U.S.-style regulated market capitalism over state communism.[105] It became less common for women on the social-democratic left to use the figure of the consumer to argue for greater access or marketplace justice as they had done in the 1930s and 1940s. The argument did not disappear completely, however. Esther Peterson carried on this labor-feminist tradition as President Lyndon B. Johnson's Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs, though she had little access to the funds and political clout she needed to do her work.[106] More often, conservative housewives' unions used this economic identity to advocate for greater market choice, rather than to promote social policies that would democratize consumer access.

After the Keynesian consensus in U.S. politics fell away in the late 1970s, the notion of the consumer as a political figure transformed once again. Some historians have suggested that the idea of the consumer declined in importance as an economy predicated on industrial growth gave way to a model in which wealth is primarily generated through investment.[107] This financial economic regime at home was coupled with promotion of the unfettered movement of goods and capital abroad. To facilitate this free trade, the post-World War II General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) transformed into the World Trade Organization (WTO) by 1995. Yet, the neoliberal and often coercive form of free trade practiced by the WTO holds only a passing resemblance to the vision of free trade that consumer cooperators and peace activists like Jane Addams had promoted in the wake of the First World War. Some women peace activists committed themselves to working towards a form of freer trade that they believed could deepen democracy, lower prices for consumers, remain amenable with national welfare states, and accompany a peaceful, non-interventionist foreign policy. This was in line with a mid-nineteenth century intellectual tradition established by British liberal Richard Cobden. In stark contrast to these Cobdenites, neoliberal free traders are not opposed to engaging in military conflicts to prop up illiberal regimes favorable to U.S. financial interests. Historian Marc-William Palen does not believe that the views held by women peace activists have been *co-opted* into this deeply undemocratic political economy. Instead, he casts these as two discrete, competing U.S. traditions of free trade.[108]

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[103] Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

[104] *Ibid.*

[105] See especially Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe* (Harvard, 2006).

[106] Emily Twarog, *Politics of the Pantry: Housewives, Food, and Consumer Protest in Twentieth Century America* (Oxford, 2017).

Neoliberalism also arguably has a cultural component. For Wendy Brown, neoliberal narratives promote a sense that everything can be "economized," or restated in terms of market exchange. Even the most personal relationships might be submitted to this logic. For example, people might be invited to engage in self-cultivation practices to enhance their own market value as "human capital."[109] Many scholars who criticize contemporary consumer activism view boycotts and buycotts as flimsy, market-based substitutes for political engagement. They argue that consumer politics only deepens neoliberal logic by presenting the market as the primary outlet for citizens' choice or political self-expression. Similarly, sociologist Zygmut Bauman views the uptick of consumer activism in the twenty-first century as symptomatic of a waning interest in formal politics and a growing detachment from collective concerns. This, he claims, is the result of a popular sense that under neoliberalism, real power has become dislocated from formal political processes.[110] Other scholars have dismissed fair trade consumption and boycott movements as merely ways for shoppers to try on humanitarian causes or performatively care for distant others while avoiding any serious commitment to social justice.[111]

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[107] For example, Kathleen Donohue, *Freedom from Want: American Liberalism and the Idea of the Consumer* (Johns Hopkins, 2003).

[108] Marc-William Palen, "Competing Free Trade Traditions in U.S. Foreign Policy from the American Revolution to the "American Century," in *Ideology of U.S. Foreign Relations: New Histories,* Christopher McNight Nichols and David Milne, eds. (Columbia, 2022).

[109] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Princeton, 2015).

Without diminishing the serious concerns about neoliberal threats to democracy that these scholars raise, I suggest that contemporary consumer diplomacy might offer a space to think about other possible terms of trade. If *two* competing ideas of global trade exist, then the U.S. Cobdenite tradition exemplified by Addams offers an available framework around which to imagine an alternative form of globalization.[112] The 1990s anti-sweatshop campaign aimed at Nike shoe production lines offers one example of this in action. Certainly, some consumers rejected Nikes in favor of other sneakers as a political fashion statement. Yet, many activists used the protests to lay out and draw attention to an alternative vision of globalization that rejected the neoliberal trade practices of the WTO.[113] Over the last two decades, U.S. citizens interested in a more multi-lateral conception of globalization have undertaken a variety of grassroots consumer campaigns. Some have organized boycotts to support temporary protectionist policies that they believe will promote sustainable economic development in the Global South. Other consumers have demonstrated willingness to pay more for Certified Fair Trade or cooperatively made and marketed goods.[114] These current actions flow from the same Cobdenite tradition that yoked together freer trade, democracy, and peace that motivated interwar consumer diplomats.[115]

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[110] See for example Zygmut Bauman, *Can Their Be Ethics in a World of Consumers?* (Harvard, 2008) and Bauman, "Exit homo politicus, enter homo consumens," in *Citizenship and Consumption,* Frank Trentmann, ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[111] Others have discussed the modern consumer activism as a kind of aesthetic or "lifestyle politics." For example, W. Lance Bennett, "The UnCivic Culture: Communication, Identity and the Rise of Lifestyle Politics," *Political Science and Politics* 31 no. 4, (Dec. 1998): 755.

[112] Palen, "Competing Free Trade Traditions in U.S. Foreign Policy."

[113] See for example, B.J. Bullert "Strategic Public Relations, Sweatshops and the Making of a Global Movement," Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Working Paper No. 2000–14, (Harvard, 2000).

Consumer politics have remained a space to think through our values and translate those beliefs into concrete, daily practices. Grassroots movements can, in turn, shape ideas about the "political economies of peace" that might be possible. Yet, contemporary fair trade activism can also reveal shoppers' conception of a sharply bifurcated world order. Through their fair trade purchases, residents of the Global North might make a series of political claims on the behalf of producers in the Global South, reifying and rehearsing global divisions in power and decision making.[116] Many of these consumers see themselves as acting out of a sense of responsibility to protect the basic dignity of distant others. Yet, the way these politics are practiced can reveal biases and blind spots in the way consumers imaginatively construct and place themselves within a global public. In these ways, contemporary fair trade activists share something in common with the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) during the interwar period. While they believed themselves to be building an international commercial movement that would serve the needs of all "cooperative housewives" around the globe, ICWG women's conception of those needs were based on a limited Western European framework. In order to build the expansive kind of economic democracy they talked about, leaders of the ICWG would have to actually share power with women in colonized nations—not make decisions about their wellbeing on their behalf.

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[114] Palen, "Competing Free Trade Traditions," 140.

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] A similar claim is evaluated in Eleftheria J. Lekakis, "A liquid politics?: Conceptualising the politics of fair trade consumption and consumer citizenship," in *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization 13* no. 2 (2013): 317–338.

Epilogue

Contemporary consumer boycotts intended to punish "aggressor nations" also reveal assumptions about international community. Boycotts against Russian firms to protest that nation's war with Ukraine offer one example. Because Russian goods make up just 1 percent of consumables available for purchase for Americans— and just about 3 percent of U.S. oil—an export-focused consumer boycott like the 1937–39 campaign against Japanese silk would not be very useful. Instead, the most effective U.S. boycotts have been against Western companies that continue to trade or operate with Russia. For example, consumer pressure against the Swiss chocolate conglomerate Nestle in 2022 provoked them to cease operations in Russia.[117] These moves came out of a now almost culturally unquestioned sense that members of a global community have an obligation to cease trade with a state deemed a threat to the whole. We might ask why the same firms continue to do business with, for example, Saudi Arabia, despite its war in Yemen. Which wars "count" or gain visibility to Western firms? What does this limited field of vision suggest about Western consumers' sense of who "belongs" in a global community that must be upheld with the pressure of their pocketbooks?

Consumer diplomats' campaigns raise similar questions about how far and in which directions the notion of a global community can stretch. In the mid-1930s, Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia raised opportunities for consumer boycotts, especially because the U.S. did not join the League of Nations in placing formal sanctions on Italy. Hitler's increasingly blatant antisemitic violence in Germany offered yet another opportunity for a boycott. While U.S. consumers did reject both German and Italian goods, neither of these movements gained the same media attention or popularity as the Japanese anti-silk boycott. In part, this was because U.S. hosiery mills imported a significant share of Japanese silk, which gave consumers the clearest opportunity to cut off cash flow. As objects of clothing worn on the body, silk substitutes were also very visible and easy to promote. Yet, boycott campaigns also featured language that could tie in to concurrent movements for economic nationalism, for example, when they informed consumers that they could identify Japanese products by their "cheap" construction. As Chapter 5 has argued, even well-meaning boycott pamphlets cast Chinese people as pitiful objects rather than agentive subjects, just as they sometimes overstated characterizations of autocratic and calculating Japanese "militarists."[118] Given the greater success of the campaign, these appeals seemed to resonate more profoundly with U.S. consumers than those that drew attention to victims of Hitler's or Mussolini's simultaneous state violence.

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[117] "Nestle isn't making a profit in Russia, and has stopped sending Nespresso and San Pellegrino as pressure to leave mounts," *Fortune,* March 21, 2022. Accessed via `https://fortune.com/2022/03/21/nestle-no-profit-russia-stopped-sending-nespresso-san-pellegrino-pressure-leave-mounts/`

The act of purchasing continues to rupture clear boundaries between the private space of the home and the world outside, opening up a space for political activism in everyday life. Yet as my dissertation has suggested, consumer activists should be careful not to return to a reflexive faith in Adam Smith's eighteenth-century notion that shoppers have the power to check the excesses and exploitations of market capitalism merely by withdrawing their dollars. This conjecture could conceivably work only in the freest and most unfettered competitive market system—far from the situation that we inhabit. Overstating the power in consumers' hands can be a way for nation-states to shirk public duties, instead of hoisting them onto private citizens' shoulders. It is hardly the responsibility of consumers *alone* to minimize ecological harm, direct dollars away from political regimes whose practices violate international law, or withdraw support from firms that violate fair labor standards. Nation-states and international organizations must do the lion's share of that work. Yet, consumer intervention in both national and international affairs continues to offer a site for thinking about and openly discussing what is possible, desirable, and just in our world.

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[118] American Boycott of Aggressor Nations, *Who Bought the Bomb?* (New York: Self Published, 1938).

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