

Amelia Earhart, Carrie Chapman Catt and the LWV of Duluth in the 1930s

Archival information at the UMD Library revealed the League of Women Voters of Duluth was very active in the 1930s, and had notable interactions with national dignitaries.

In the 1930s, an annual quota of \$400 was paid to the State, and an average of \$200 was budgeted for Duluth operations. Annual membership dues paid for about half of the yearly expenses. To raise the remainder, fundraisers such as bridge parties, teas, picnics and member contributions were employed. In 1935, a unique endeavor was used to help pay the bills. That year, Mrs. E.C. Congdon proposed having Amelia Earhart give a lecture in Duluth. It is hard to discern if the Earhart lecture at the Duluth Armory was intended to be a fundraiser, but the profits from the lecture were used to help balance that year's budget.

After the 19th Amendment was ratified, Carrie Chapman Catt, founder of the LWV, turned her attention to lasting peace. In the 1920s and 30s, Catt led the National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War (NCCCW). In the 1920s, the LWV of Duluth had established a local chapter of the NCCCW. Each year, representatives from the LWV of Duluth and other local women's organizations participated in "Marathon Round Tables" by studying information provided by the NCCCW. Annually, notable presenters reported on the NCCCW's national conferences at Duluth Peace Teas. Notes from the 1931 Peace Tea indicated greetings from Catt were received; over 350 people attended the Tea; and action subsequent to the tea included sending a telegram to President Hoover commending him on his Sino-Japanese policy. In 1936, the LWV of Duluth decided to end official ties with the NCCCW and join the newly formed Duluth Peace Council. Enthusiasm for the NCCCW waned nationally as WWII approached, but later was resurrected under different titles.

In 1933, Miss Belle Sherwin, a member of FDR's advisory board for the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA), was the National President of the LWV. She asked local LWV chapters to cooperate with the National Recovery Administration (NRA), an implementing agency of the NIRA (and component of the first New Deal). The purpose of the NRA was to have government, business, and labor work together to end the effects of the Great Depression. The Duluth Chapter of the LWV took Sherwin's ask to heart. That very year, Duluth LWV members had prominent roles within the local division of the NRA. Just before the two-year sunset of the NRA, the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional; however, many of the policies such as minimum wage, abolishment of child labor and support of collective bargaining were included in the second New Deal.

A Sample of LWV Duluth Activities in the 1930s

- initiated meetings with local organizations to encourage their members to back measures the LWV was promoting
 - At the call of the National LWV president, a presentation supporting the Social Security Act was held at the Glass Block Tea Rooms where local representatives from 12 organizations attended
 - A Speakers Bureau was active to educate local organizations about policies backed by the LWV
- observed city council, county commission and school board meetings
- held classes on how the county government worked
- manned downtown booths prior to elections "where women (or anyone)" could obtain a sample ballot and learn the procedure of voting; one year 800 people visited the downtown headquarters in a week

- interviewed the State of Minnesota' senators and representatives and Minnesota's U.S. 8th congressional district representative prior to their opening congressional sessions
- communicated routinely with elected officials/public leaders (via petitions, letters, phone calls, telegrams and dialogues) regarding matters of importance to the LWV
 - 5,000 cards petitioning the political parties to pledge to abolish the spoils system and utilize the merit system (civil service) in federal, state and local governments were distributed
 - letters to State legislators were sent supporting a minimum wage
 - signatures for the disarmament petition were obtained
 - letters to the President and congressmen were sent to urge them to adhere to the World Court
 - when a dialogue with a 2nd district commissioner was less than satisfactory, archival notes revealed “the commissioner was reminded, educated voters were interested and informed what the county board is doing and are holding the commissioners responsible for honest efficient administration in county affairs.”
- Worked with local newspapers and radio stations to make the LWV and their interests visible to the public; during one typical year, over 45 notifications, 25 articles and 20 photographs were published and weekly programs for 5 months were broadcasted on WEBC radio

A Sampling of the Subjects studied and Topics Presented in the 1930s

The 1925 Geneva Convention	The Gold Reserve Act
Unemployment insurance	Immigration
Austro-German custom trade pact	The World Court
International Labor Convention	Tennessee Valley Authority
Duluth adult education classes	The merit system of pay (civil service)
War and peace of the major nations especially China, Japan and Russia in relation to the U.S. World Debt	Duluth Teacher Retirement Fund lecture by Miss Laura McArthur, Principal of West Junior High School
Hygiene in Rural Communities	Public school administration departments