

THE NEW CITIZEN'S POINT OF VIEW

Women's Committee on Public Information: Obituary

By DEEMS VEILLER

NINE months ago two women sat pounding typewriters in a vestibule at 8 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C., and this was the Division on Women's War Work of the Committee on Public Information.

It started suddenly. Clara Sears Taylor, a Denver newspaper woman, had an inspiration. She was in Washington and wanted to find out something about women. She spent a day chasing her information and then didn't get it. Washington was a blind alley; everything was there, but you couldn't find anything.

She was reporting for Mr. Creel at the time, and she went to him and said that the effort of women should be coordinated and that the Creel committee should be coordinating it.

Mr. Creel was interested; the only trouble was that available space was lacking at 10 Jackson Place. It was crowded to the doors.

But at last Mrs. Taylor discovered a vestibule that was empty. It didn't even have a vestibule light in it. So she put her desk in there, pulled the droplight over from the hall and set up headquarters as best she could.

Then she asked the business manager for a stenographer. He gave her a typist. Their two desks stood side by side in the vestibule and things began to hum.

Soon 5,000 letters were drafted and written and posted to 5,000 women's organizations doing war work, asking them to describe their membership, outline their activities and send pictures.

The typist worked overtime that week, for when she got through with the first 5,000 letters she wrote all the editors in Ayer's Newspaper Annual, and any one knows that is a fat book.

And then Mrs. Taylor was stumped. Where was she going to put the answers to her letters? There was hardly enough room in the vestibule for two women, let alone a lot of mail.

But between the two desks was a space of almost a foot, and two files fitted in there. This packed the vestibule tight as a drum, but provided a place for the letters.

They came in fast and furious, so that Mrs. Taylor begged a college girl whom she knew to come and work for her for ten days for nothing. She knew that in ten days the project would either swing or fail.

All That It Needed Was a Chance

In ten days mimeographed copy was on the table for the thousand best correspondents in the world to call for and wire back from Washington to their home town, the news of women and what they were doing for the war. The Associated Press and The United Press and The International News Service in the hall sent the stuff out too, so right from the beginning it had a pretty wide circulation. All it needed was a start.



Red Mud, a Man and Chivalry

By MARTHA CANDLER

MADAME'S massive person was the personification of an almost pagan joie de vivre as she swung westward toward the "L" shudders up, eyes sparkling, tasting at the air and finding it a rare intoxicant.

"You keep the change, sonny," she whispered to a tired looking little vender of peppers, and hurried on to buy a carnation for her buttonhole. She passed the avenue, and at the next corner caught sight of a timid, bent old woman, like a crawling thing come forth from dark places and, dazzled by daylight, standing at the crossing, hesitating. Madame rushed forward, but before she got there the leader of a small group of workers had seen the woman also.

He was distinguishable as the foreman of the group by a certain quality of leadership, and not by his general appearance, for his waist-high topboots—those worn by sewer workers—were as thickly caked with wet, reddish dirt as the other men's. He, like them, carried tools and a metal luncheon kit. Without a moment's hesitation he walked up, and, taking the little woman by the arm, piloted her across to the other side. The other men, following, nudged each other and laughed. Safely on the other side, the little derelict looked up full into his face, and Madame caught in her dimming eyes something of the brightness of a sunbeam which has suddenly found its way gloriously into a dank cellar, long dark. Instinctively, the man's hat came off, and he stood uncovered a moment—then, swinging into step with his men, went on his way.

"Just a moment, sir, if you please," Madame's deep, rich voice halted him. Without a word she held out her hand. As she grasped his muddy palm, she said, too low to be overheard by the workmen: "You've redeemed many a one of your sex to-day, sir."

"I—smug conventionality!" she muttered when she again stood alone on the sidewalk, looking ruefully down at her erstwhile immaculate glove, and bethought herself of the luncheon with some artists and diplomats and others. "Now I'll have to tell them I fell down, and I hate being awkward!"

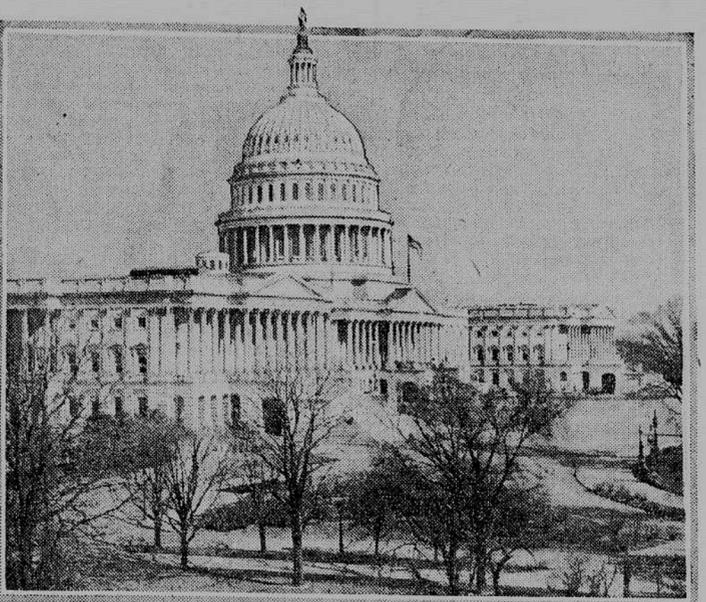


George Creel, Chairman of the Committee on Public Information in Washington

The division kept growing. It moved out of the vestibule into a room, then spread until it occupied almost an entire floor. The letters that were stored in the vestibule grew into a stupendous and valuable collection of material; grew into living, breathing, working files. Nothing went into these files that was not simply screaming for attention.

There was the personnel file, listing the name of each organization and its newspaper and magazine publicity manager; there was the clipping file, which corresponded to a newspaper "morgue," and the bibliography and index of releases, cards 5 by 8 inches, listing women's activities and giving a short news story.

In addition to this the division kept up a constant, open, intimate correspondence with the women of America. If they wanted to know



The other Allied nations are granting full recognition to women. Shall the men in this building houses be the last to fall into the line of progress?

something they wrote there and found it out. There was a human element in every word sent out; no form letters were used.

A week ago Clara Sears Taylor was the head

of a staff of twenty-two women who were collecting, collating, distributing news of the work of women in war time.

They sent 2,861 papers daily columns of from



Clara Sears Taylor, ex-Chairman of the ex-Division on Women's War Work of the committee

twelve to twenty stories each, and these stories have been used on editorial pages, in magazine sections, by women column writers, and in any and every way possible for a newspaper to use a story. They gathered information from national organizations of women's war work, government departments, decentralized organizations of women's work, colleges, churches, from England, France, Italy and Belgium; from the colored women of America; from every available source they culled the record of women's splendid achievements since the war began.

What the Division's Mission Was

In the report of the hearing on the sundry civil appropriation bill the cost of the division is given at \$25,000 a year. In the same report Mr. Creel describes its activities as follows:

"The Division on Women's War Work gets

out a press service for the women which goes into the newspapers of the country. It has connections with all of the women's societies of the country, and it works through the women's clubs for patriotic purposes. It is particularly active among the colored women of the country, trying to drive home to them the truths of the war and to get a better spirit among them. In addition to the press service it gets out brochures for the colleges and schools; but the larger work is the stimulation of women's groups, bringing them together so that they may understand each other and learn what each is doing."

During the hearing Mr. Creel was closely questioned:

The Chairman—"Mr. Creel, what have you to say in answer to my inquiry as to whether or not this field is being more or less occupied by the Council of National Defence?"

Mr. Byoir, associate chairman of the Committee on Public Information, answered:

"I think, Mr. Chairman, that there is a distinct difference in the field of operations, in that all of those other organizations are doing decentralization work in the way of organizing these groups away from Washington. That takes place in every department of the government. For instance, the food administration, in its conservation campaign, goes out and organizes the women in all the localities of the country for food conservation work. It has been done in the same way with respect to the labor situation. The function of this bureau [Mrs. Taylor's division] is not that of organizing.

"We do not go outside and do field work and establish offices, but we maintain in Washington for all parts of the country and for the information of those women's organizations a press service which handles all of those activities and ways in which women can help serve the nation in war times. It is useful in the negro situation which I mentioned, where there is a great need for definite information, because we are running into a great deal of rumor and propaganda in that field. That is something that is very active among the negroes, and the War Department has a special Assistant Secretary of War especially designed to work in this very unsettled situation. The value of this bureau is simply to be a clearing house for information as to what is most important for women to do, and they are doing it through the cooperation of colleges and women's organizations all over the country."

The foregoing is dated June 11—not much more than a month ago.

To-day there is no Division on Women's War Work in the Committee on Public Information. It has been abolished to save money—as being the least important department of the bureau.

The women's division was a factory for raw material—for women in the making—but the factory has been shut down.

Women are no longer sending the women's story out to women.



Women Give as the Need Arises

By MIRA BURR EDSON

WHILE man's work has been extensive, woman's has been intensive; while he has had to do with subduing nature and transforming things, her work has been in serving and in relating personalities. She is, as woman, a past master in human relationships. She has always provided that "social glue" which is so important and so difficult to see or define.

Woman's interest in the life element is not mere sentiment, as it has been so often called; it is a constructive idea as well, and one which has lain at the base of her very practical activities. She has had to care for those who are unequal, who are not to be rewarded according to their deserts, but given to according to their need. She has had infants, strong or weak, and the charge of the old and the infirm. She has cared also for the needs of her lord and kept him content, and in times of hurt or illness she has nursed him. In some way she has met the needs of all, and that at the instant when there was need, and not according to schedule or justice. Some sort of justice, too, became established in the midst of all this—a justice in which the thought of their deserving was hardly present, and any measure of the value of their productivity was noticeably absent.

Consideration for the young, the old, for all sorts and conditions of mankind, must now enter into our plans for laws and for the conditions to be made in industry. It is found, moreover, that the "human factor" is an important one, and that it is variable. Its amount of energy is increased or diminished by a multitude of seemingly extraneous things. And our having perceived this means that the making over of political economy will result. And in this making over it may well be that the work of the woman citizen will be to bring into the larger life of the world those qualities and gifts which hitherto have been too closely confined to her own hearthstone.

Creel Gave and Creel Has Taken Away

By IDA CLYDE CLARKE
Washington Editor Pictorial Review

WHEN the government at Washington set about creating its war machine it followed the precedent of the Maker of the universe in that it created the man body first. When it got good and ready to make the woman body it extracted nothing whatever from the man body, not even a rib or a piece of governmental backbone. Some people say it was because the Council of National Defence never had any backbone. I don't know.

Anyway, the woman's committee, a sub-committee of the Council of National Defence, was empowered only to "advise," and was frequently admonished not to "initiate." Now, of course, when you appoint a committee to advise you, and when you never ask its advice, the committee naturally has plenty of time on its hands.

It was the same way with George Creel. When the President said that the right kind of information must be disseminated from Washington about the war and that the wrong sort of information must be suppressed, and when he appointed Mr. Creel civilian chairman of a "Committee on Public Information," Mr. Creel immediately gathered unto himself a staff composed of a number of men, but not one woman, though women are supposed to be first-class news disseminators. A perfectly lovely young man was told to "drop around" once in a while to see what was going on at headquarters of the woman's committee of the Council of National Defence. Imagine a nice young reporter of the class of 1925 checking up once a week on Anna Howard Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, Ida Tarbell and the rest of them!

On June 19, 1917, representatives of two hundred national organizations of women were called to meet at Washington to discuss plans for making women's work effective in the national war programme. It was a great meeting. For the first time in the history of the country all of these organizations came together on a common basis and expressed a common purpose. Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants, suffragists and anti-suffragists said with one voice, "Here we are, take us."

I looked in vain for the newspaper reporters, for this was the most significant meeting of women America had ever seen, and back in forty-eight states women were waiting to hear what was happening at Washington.

Late in the afternoon one newspaper man "dropped in." But he had orders, so he said, to take nothing about women's stuff that was not sensational. A second one arriving a few moments later was given a wider scope for the exercise of his genius—sensation or humor would do for him!

That day Herbert Hoover made his first official pronouncement to the women of America, and the first food-pledge campaign was launched. But there wasn't anything either humorous or sensational about it, and so the

newspapers of America conveyed no message to the women of America as to what the government expected of them in the prosecution of war.

Be it said to Mr. Creel's credit that soon after this he was convinced, after the matter had several times been brought vividly to his attention, of the wisdom of placing a woman on his staff to gather and disseminate news concerning women.

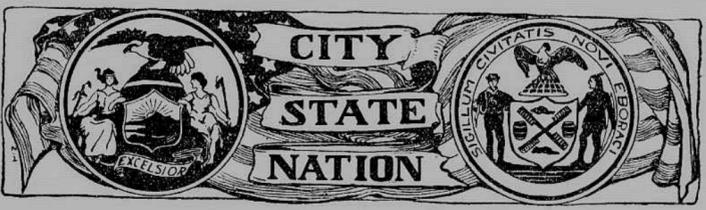
The woman selected was Clara Sears Taylor, a newspaper reporter of Denver, and her mere job soon grew into the woman's division of the Committee on Public Information. In those early days Clara Taylor had a hard job making the men on the committee see things as she saw them. In the first place, the committee itself has never been strong in the graces of the public—to say nothing of Congress. Some one has said of the "Holy Roman Empire" that it wasn't holy, and it wasn't Roman, and it wasn't an empire. Well, that was the way some people thought about the Committee on Public Information—that it wasn't a committee, that it wasn't public, and that it had no information.

But Clara Taylor began to put the news division of the committee on the map. In a few months there wasn't a newspaper editor in America who didn't know that the women of America were doing a great big share of the nation's war work, and there wasn't a magazine editor in America who didn't know that the woman's division of the Committee

on Public Information was a veritable gold mine of information.

In that department has been gathered for the first time in the history of the country information concerning the work of women. In the files are hundreds of pictures of prominent women, and many interesting facts and figures concerning women and their work that have never been collected and classified before. Every day thousands of newspapers all over the country were informed by means of bulletins from this division of the activities of women—activities that are most inspiring and helpful to other women everywhere.

This is the first chance women have had to hear through a reliable, governmentally authorized agency of what other women are doing. Newspapers were originally made of, by and for men. A study of the earliest newspapers will reveal that for a great many years after they were established women, to get publicity, had to do at least one of three things—she had to be born, get married, or die, and even then she had to pay for what notoriety she got. Women got their first perfectly pure and untrammelled publicity when they began to go to Reno, and the divorce court took rank along with the cradle, the altar and the last sad rites. Then the masculine editors decided that pink teas entitled women to publicity, including decorations and menus, and behold the advent of the society editor—masculine, of course, for what woman was qualified to write about her own sex?



FROM New York to California, from London to Hawaii, the women's liberty bell is ringing. Only in Washington it has not been heard. Our government has sent an army to go "over the top" in the front line trenches of France—but our government is a laggard in the line of progress at home.

In England women vote, and go to the front, holding the rank of men who perform the same duties. In America they must besiege the capital, in what has seemed a losing fight, to gain even so small a thing as the official right of an army nurse to give orders to the orderly who works under her direction.

The people in Washington withhold no duties and responsibilities from the women of the nation—we are gladly made welcome when we offer to work! They withhold merely the recognition, the rights and the privileges which would serve to make this work easier and more effective. Witness the women's committee of the Council of National Defence, organized "to advise, but never to initiate"—and no funds provided to do even this. Witness the food administration campaign, wherein the responsibility of conservation in this country was put first squarely up to its womanhood—and not a single woman was given a voice in the campaign. Witness the delay over the Federal suffrage amendment. And witness the action of the Committee on Public Information.

This seems to the New Citizen more like a step backward than a step forward in the line of progress. How does it look to you?

The New Citizen's page is open to you all. We want your point of view. MURIE DE MONTALVO