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The purpose of this study of the Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York, was to examine the movement in a limited context in order to provide evidence for broader characteristics of the movement and to indicate any unique qualities. One of the most extensive local Klan membership lists available afforded an opportunity to determine which groups were more inclined to join the movement and the determinants involved in an individual's commitment.

The typical Buffalo Klansman was a blue-collar worker who lived near an ethnic concentration or knew someone who did. He was a prohibitionist whose beliefs were re-enforced by the sermons he heard in church. And finally, he was an average citizen who perceived immigrant union and political activity in conspiratorial terms.

In addition to providing an opportunity to determine the class characteristics of those most susceptible to Klan propaganda, the study also allowed an examination of the interrelationships between the Klan, the Anti-Saloon League and the Protestant churches. The impact of the press and those in positions of influence or authority on the dynamic processes involved in the Klan's rise and fall is also considered. Moreover, as a fraternal organization, the Buffalo Klan was more typical of the countless local Klans across the country which have received less attention than their more notable counterparts in the south and west.

THE KU KLUX KLAN IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK, 1922-1924

A CASE STUDY

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920's was not an aberration in this nation's experience but another of the numerous movements which reacted to a subversive stereotype. Those Americans involved in the Salem witch hunt, the Know-Nothing Party, the Reconstruction Klan, the American Protective Association, and even the McCarthy crusade of the 1950's reacted to different circumstances, yet they exhibited common characteristics. Fear of cosmopolitanism and diversity, a desire for public morality, and a sincere, although distorted belief that society's survival was threatened, convinced the participants on each occasion that it was their civic duty to defend and preserve the status quo.

Such concerns were particularly prevalent in the early twentieth century when intellectual trends and social forces contributed to intense nativism and a desire for conformity. Recent immigrants differed in language, customs, religion, educational experience, and cultural background from their predecessors. The tensions generated by World War I spy hunts, the Red Scare, and violent labor disputes, inflated public fears, creating a belief that the immigrant was a threat to public morality, Anglo-conformity, and democracy. A vast number of organizations responded to the emerging immigrant-radical stereotype. The American Legion

and the Anti-Saloon League as well as local Protestant and Americanization groups called for a moral resurgence of American life, Anglo-conformity and immigration restrictions. None was more insistent than the Klan.

Although numerous studies of the Klan exist, few analyze the characteristics of individual members such as their occupational or class traits, although membership lists exist for some areas. This omission is in part, of course, a result of inadequate evidence. Secrecy was both a strong element in the organization's appeal and a deliberate attempt to shield the hierarchial leadership from public scrutiny and accountability to the membership. Even though Buffalo's Provisional Klan Number 5 guarded its privacy, an available membership list complete with names, addresses and occupations affords a unique opportunity to penetrate that veil of secrecy and determine which groups were more inclined to join the Klan and what determinants were involved in an individual's commitment. The brevity of the Klan's activity in Buffalo from 1922 to 1924 facilitates a detailed examination of the dynamic processes involved in its rise and fall, the impact of leadership on tactics, and the role of the press and other community institutions on the Klan's growth and decline. And possibly most important, an examination of the Buffalo Klan affords an opportunity to study a predominately fraternal Klan in a northern urban environment.

CHAPTER I

"THE TIME IS RIPE"

Although William Simmons founded the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915, the order remained relatively insignificant until World War I released previously latent sources of societal strain. National tensions which developed during the war and the postwar hysteria predisposed many to perceive certain groups and events in conspiratorial terms. Strikes and union activity became synonymous with Communist attempts to subvert free enterprise, Jews became wealthy bankers and businessmen who exploited the public, and Catholic priests became papal agents dedicated to establishing a state religion. By the same token, blacks were viewed as "uppity niggers" who forgot their place in society or, worse still, sexual threats. And the new immigrants became radical Bolsheviks who refused to assimilate into American society. Playing on these fears, Klan organizers visited rural areas, towns and cities and skillfully applied the dictates of national Klan propagandists, Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Clarke, who urged them to appeal to local issues in search of new recruits.

Local conditions in Buffalo, New York, aided Klan organizers. The residential patterns and growth of parallel social and economic institutions in the Polish and Italian communities convinced many whites that the immigrants refused to accept American customs. Two violent labor disputes

involving large numbers of first- and second-generation Polish-Americans intensified the public's fear of the aliens. The election of a "wet" mayor in 1921 with considerable immigrant support convinced many that the aliens not only refused to assimilate but desired to change American customs. A subsequent vice and liquor scandal in a black-Polish slum made it painfully obvious that action was necessary to preserve American society from what Madison Grant called the "mongrelization of the white race." More important to the Klan's success than the public's perception of the immigrant-radical threat was the existence of community groups which saw their task as combating evil influences and protecting American values. In short, local determinants convinced Klan organizers that many potential converts lived in the area.

Local conditions also limited the Klan's choice of enemies. Only 5.68 per cent of Buffalo's 351,907 inhabitants were Jewish and only 0.89 per cent were black. Although Roman Catholics comprised 63.58 per cent of the population in 1920, Catholics first arrived in the area among the easily assimilable Irish and German immigrants in the early and midnineteenth century. The new Catholic immigrants who arrived after 1880 were no longer of Anglo-Saxon or northern European stock but from eastern and southern Europe. Moreover, they spoke neither English nor German but Polish, Russian, Hungarian or Italian. Predominately from small rural villages where the church was an active

cohesive force, they still looked to their priests for guidance. In short, they were different in language, religiosity, customs, political ideas, and behavior from their predecessors.

The relative size of the new immigrant communities decreased between 1900 and 1920. Foreign-born whites constituted 29.58 per cent of the city's population in 1900 but only 23.98 per cent in 1920. A similar trend was evident among white natives of foreign or mixed parentage (44.18 per cent in 1900 and 42.49 per cent in 1920.) The number of native Poles reached a peak of 6.94 per cent in 1910 and declined to 6.70 per cent in 1920. Only the Italians (3.23 per cent in 1920) and the blacks showed any consistent increase during the period.[1]

The emerging parallel social, cultural, and economic institutions in the ethnic communities which catered to the immigrants and allowed them to remain isolated, generated greater concern than the communities' size. The Broadway-Fillmore section of Polonia where the clerks were bilingual or spoke only Polish, rivaled the downtown business section in the number and variety of stores. Area merchants who founded the Polish Businessmen's Association to strengthen

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[1]U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, I, Part 1, 630; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, III, 708-709, 738; Census of Religious Bodies: 1926, I, 381-382.

their economic condition, held numerous meetings and social events, contributed to area charities, and encouraged the establishment of other businesses. The Polish-National Alliance, Polish Union of America, and Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, sold family insurance policies while the Alliance of Polish Women in America had a more limited appeal. Six parochial schools offered an alternative to public education, teaching Polish history, culture, and language, while the Polish Literary Circle and Polish Union's library attempted to instill old-world traditions in those attending public schools. The Central Committee of Allied Societies and Organizations, founded in 1922, coordinated activities among the numerous dramatic, singing and literary societies and urged Polish-Americans to increase their power in local, state and national elections. The parishioners of Saint Stanislaus Church and Saint Adalbert's Basilica purchased cemeteries to retain the community's cohesiveness in the next world as well.[2]

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[2]For information on the Polish section of Buffalo, see a series of articles by John Daniels, Director of the Buffalo Social Survey, in the Buffalo Express: January 23, 1910; February 6 and 20, 1910; March 3 and 10, 1910, and April 6 and 17, 1910. Also examine the parish history sections in the following anniversary albums: Album Pamiatkowe Zlotego Jubileuszu Parafji Sw. Mojciecha, B.M. 1886-1936 (Buffalo, 1936); Ksiega Pamiatkowa Zlotego Jubileuszu Osady Polskiej i Parafji Sw. Stanislawa B. i M. 1873-1923 (Buffalo: 1924); Pamietnik Zlotego Jubileuszu Parafji Przemienienia Panskiego 1893-1943 (Buffalo: 1943); Queen of Peace, Buffalo, N. Y. 1920-1970 (Buffalo: 1970). Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Buffalo's Foreign Population Vol. II, (Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook).

Conditions in "Little Italy" were very similar. Most Italians arrived after 1900 and found employment in the building trades. Some, however, continued to practice old-world crafts; others became vegetable pushcart peddlers while some resumed village customs and raised goats in their yards. The San Domata Mutual Aid Society, Sanfele Mutual Aid Society, and Dante Aleghaeri Club offered companionship and attempted to place newly arrived Italians in an apartment and a job. Area merchants established a business association and labor elements organized a union. The Club Parochiale di St. Antonio acted as a central cohesive force, promoting educational, spiritual, economic and social activities.[3]

The cohesiveness of the ethnic communities acted as a necessary psychological crutch for the displaced immigrant, providing a refuge rather than attempting to change his behavior patterns. Torn away from his native village and often his family, unemployed and penniless, and in a strange environment where he had difficulty being understood, he chose to live with "his people." Although he was crowded with them into inadequate housing, the smell of native

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[3]See the Buffalo Courier, January 15, 1922, p. 10; and the local history section in Chiesa di St. Antonio da Padova, 1891-1921 (Buffalo: 1921), p. 4; Buffalo Foreign Population, Vol. I

cooking, sound of native music, and the sight of old-world festivities, made his transition into American society less traumatic.[4]

As early as 1898, the Buffalo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution demonstrated its determination to integrate the immigrant into American society. It prepared a series of foreign-language lecturers on American history and government to assist those applying for citizenship. Concerned citizens in New York City founded the North American Civic League in 1909 to lobby for a state-financed Americanization program and support local educational programs. A night education course designed to prepare aliens for citizenship was the core of Buffalo's official attempt to assimilate the aliens.[5] Success, however, was limited. In 1930, 16.9 per cent of Buffalo's Italian population and 17.6 per cent of the Poles over ten years of age were unable to speak English.[6]

Ethnic cohesiveness did not cause the emotional response precipitated by immigrant union activity. Many

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[4]For information concerning the effects of ethnic concentrations on immigrants, see: Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951); John Higham, Strangers in the Land (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), pp. 236 f.; and Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[5]Higham, pp. 237, 240-241; Buffalo Express, January 1, 1922, sec. 6, p. 1.

[6]Stanley Lieberson, Ethnic Patterns in American Cities (New York: The Free Press, 1963), pp. 210-211. The non-English speaking element among Italians and Poles was more than three times that of any other group.

Buffalonians attributed prewar unionization to the activity of the International Workers of the World (IWW). Although a hard core of 500 Marxist Socialists held weekly meetings in predominately immigrant areas and published a newspaper, Die Arbieter Zeitung, the IWW engaged in strike coordination only during the 1913 streetcar strike. Its verbal support of nearly eighty strikes in the prewar years, however, convinced many people that the IWW was creating a permanent state of industrial chaos.[7]

World War I brought a respite from strikes but postwar inflation and increased union frustration over working conditions precipitated a labor confrontation in 1919. The National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers was especially successful among immigrant steel workers in the South Buffalo and Lackawanna mills. Supported mostly by unskilled laborers who worked seventy hours per week for $28, the union demanded better wages, working conditions and company housing, and shorter hours. Although the strikers comprised only 15 per cent of the labor force, their threats of physical violence convined 60 per cent of the employees to remain at home. Clashes erupted between strikers and non-union employees reporting for work under police protection.

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[7]Ryie E. MacTaggart, "A Labor History of Buffalo" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Canisius College, 1940), pp. 235, 280-282; John Kager, "A History of Socialism in Buffalo, 1900-1914" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Canisius College, 1951), p. 39.

Four workers died and hundreds were injured. State police and armed troops restored order after two weeks of martial law.[8]

The press was unanimous in its condemnation of the strikers and depicted recent immigrants in a stereotypic manner later adopted by the Klan. The ultraconservative Commercial characterized the strikers as Bolsheviks who refused to educate their "children according to American standards or to purchase homes in the community."[9] Union success in the steel industry would establish a dangerous precedent that would quickly spread to other industries, crippling free enterprise. Through the unions, the paper charged, radicals attempted to overthrow the government and perpetuate a continuous state of industrial chaos.[10] The Catholic Union and Times supported the laborers' right to strike but condemned the violent tactics of "Socialists who attempted to create the impression among workers that they were at war with their employers."[11] The moderate

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[8]Robert Murray, Red Scare (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 137; Buffalo Express, September 23, 1919, to October 10, 1919.

[9]Buffalo Commercial, September 20, 1919, p. 4.

[10]Ibid. January 6, 1920, p. 4

[11]Catholic Union and Times, September 25, 1919, p. 4.

Evening News blamed the strikers for initiating the violence and charged the union with the responsibility "to prevent the conditions which lead up to clashes, or disorder."[12]

The emotional reaction to the strikes coincided with a national belief that all strikes were inherently "crimes against society, conspiracies against the government, or plots to establish Communism." Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's national hunt for radicals was, in part, a reaction to that fear. One hundred and twenty-nine socially prominent Buffalonians reacted to Palmer's emotion-charged rhetoric and assisted federal agents in the arrest of 139 suspected radicals in January 1920. Their reaction to a demagogic appeal was an indication of how deeply they feared domestic radicals and their willingness to participate in acts aimed at limiting radical influence. Their participation also indicated that they were willing to force aliens to comply with their view of proper behavior patterns. Above all else, it was a forewarning of future events.[13]

If the raiders hoped their actions would mark the end of union radicalism in Buffalo, they were disappointed. Although the International Railway Company, which operated

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[12] Buffalo Evening News, September 24, 1919, p. 12.

[13] Elwin Powell, The Design of Discord (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 95; Stanley Coban, "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-1920," Political Science Quarterly, LXXIX, no. 1 (March 1964), pp. 52-75.

the streetcar system, agreed not to reduce the high level of wartime wages until mid-1922, two 10 per cent reductions occurred before June 1922. Car repairmen struck over the wage cuts, the absence of a written contract since 1920, and union recognition, thus halting all service. Within a few days, cabs, jitneys, and cars operated by strikebreakers, restored service to most primary routes. Strikers and their families pelted the operators with rocks and eggs, beat and dragged women and children off cars, planted dynamite in cars and barns, shot guards and police, and hurled acid, blinding at least one strikebreaker. Six people died, hundreds were injured and thousands of dollars of damage was done to company and private property.[14]

The bombings, at least, appeared to be part of an organized plot. Bombs exploded in the Cold Springs barns on July 20 and in a number of cars simultaneously in different areas of the city on July 31 and August 12. The police arrested six union officials for transporting and supplying the strikers with dynamite. The arrests and public fear fueled rumors that the strikers planned to use explosives to further disrupt the city.

The press denounced the violence and expressed concern over the participation of Polish immigrants in the

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[14]For the most reliable and complete information on the strike, see: Buffalo Express, July 7, 1922 to October 5, 1922.

union. The Polish Businessmen's Association's claim that the police used "excessive and unnecessary force in curtailing the violence" clearly placed Polonia's business leaders in support of the union. The Express believed the strike was a "question of law and order, of the supremacy of government over the individual, of the rights of organized society against the reactionary, barbarian instinct for disorganization and destruction."[15]

In addition to union activity, immigrant political power stirred images of destruction in the minds of many people, increasing social polarization--a prerequisite for public susceptibility to Klan propaganda. The 1921 mayoralty election between incumbent Mayor George Buck and former brewery manager Frank X. Schwab, both Independent Republicans, was a symbolic struggle between the traditional Protestant establishment allied with older immigrant groups against newer immigrant groups in the southern half of the city.[16] Schwab addressed small gatherings on street corners and in meetings at the Jewish Community Hall, Polish Union Hall and Afro-American Social Club. In addition to a modification of the prohibition laws and an affirmation of civic decency and fatherhood, he supported economy and efficiency

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[15] Buffalo Express, July 21, 1922, p. 6.

[16] Buffalo Commercial, October 19, 1921, 4. The Commercial was the most outspoken proponent of this view but not the sole believer.

in civic administration, relief for the unemployed, and greater personal liberty. He promised to reorganize the Police Department, abolish the Buffalo Dry Squad which enforced the Volstead Act, create harmony within the faction-laden City Council, and dismiss School Board members who opposed his plans for the construction of vocational schools in immigrant areas.[17]

Ignoring Schwab's other appeals, Mayor Buck concentrated his campaign attacks against his opponent's prohibition plank. Buck warned that the city's reputation as a progressive law-abiding community would decline if a "wet" candidate won. He branded Schwab as a lobbyist who represented only a small minority of the city's population and repeatedly charged that Schwab appealed to racial prejudice and fostered "disunion, factionalism and disruption."[18]

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[17] Buffalo Express, October 25, 1921, to November 4, 1921. Schwab's opposition to the Volstead Act can be attributed to two factors. Publically, he said the law failed to end the production of alcoholic beverages since normally lawful citizens produced their own concontions at home where their children could sample them. Privately, he knew that he stood to gain financially from the reopening of the Buffalo Brewing Company where he was a manager. In June of 1922, he was fined $500 for the production of beer in the plant after the Volstead Act became effective.

[18] Ibid. October 28, 1921, p. 4. Buck's repeated references to the city's east-west split and his anti-immigrant speeches intensified social tensions.

Prohibitionists and the press joined Buck in his battle. William Anderson, State Superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, asserted that law enforcement, personal decency, and honesty were crucial campaign issues. He questioned Schwab's integrity and accused him of attempting to deceive the "voters, some of them ignorant and not any too well acquainted with either our language or our institutions."[19] Charles C. Penfold, pastor of the Sentinel Methodist Episcopal Church, called on his congregation to vote for a "dry" candidate and "clean government."[20] The Express accused Schwab of relying on thousands of home brewers to elect him on a prohibition plank which he could not fulfill, while the Evening News believed that Schwab would win only if those who believed in good government remained apathetic and failed to vote.[21] The Commercial warned that Schwab's election would be a "public calamity" brought on by "elements that do not appreciate the value of their citizenship, that have no civic pride.....that would be among the first to respond to the call of the radical and the Bolshevist to riot and destroy."[22]

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[19] Buffalo Express, October 27, 1921, p. 1.

[20] Ibid. November 3, 1921, p. 8.

[21] Ibid. November 4, 1921, 8; Buffalo Evening News, November 7, 1921, p. 8.

[22] Buffalo Commercial, November 4, 1921, p. 4.

Over 50 per cent of the voters failed to heed the warning and voted for Frank Schwab. For many, it was obvious which group provided the slim-winning margin. A comparison of the ward returns with the number of potential voters indicates that in areas of high ethnic concentrations, Schwab was more likely to receive a majority. Schwab lost in the twenty-third and twenty-fifth wards where the number of white natives of native parentage exceeded the combined total of all other groups. He won handsomely in the ninth and tenth wards, predominately newer immigrant areas. Although this trend is not evident in each instance, it is partially indicative of who supported each candidate.[23] Ethnic elements proved to be the critical determinant in the election. Projecting their fears, many of Buck's supporters would blame the aliens for the consequences.

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[23] Buffalo Express, November 9, 1921, p. 1. See Table 1 and Figure 1. Voter registration figures, if they existed for 1921, would not indicate the respective electoral strength of the various groups in a ward. The potential voter strength indicated in Table 1 should not be confused with the number of registered voters. It is only an indication of the composition of the wards. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, III, 708-709. The trend is not as evident in a few wards. In the fifth, thirteenth, sixteenth and twenty-first wards, a higher proportion of registered voters among white natives with native parentage could account for the discrepancy. In addition, mobilization of the electorate in those wards by the Anti-Saloon League and various church organizations may have been a factor.

TABLE 1

1921 Ward Election Results Compared
to Potential Voter Registration

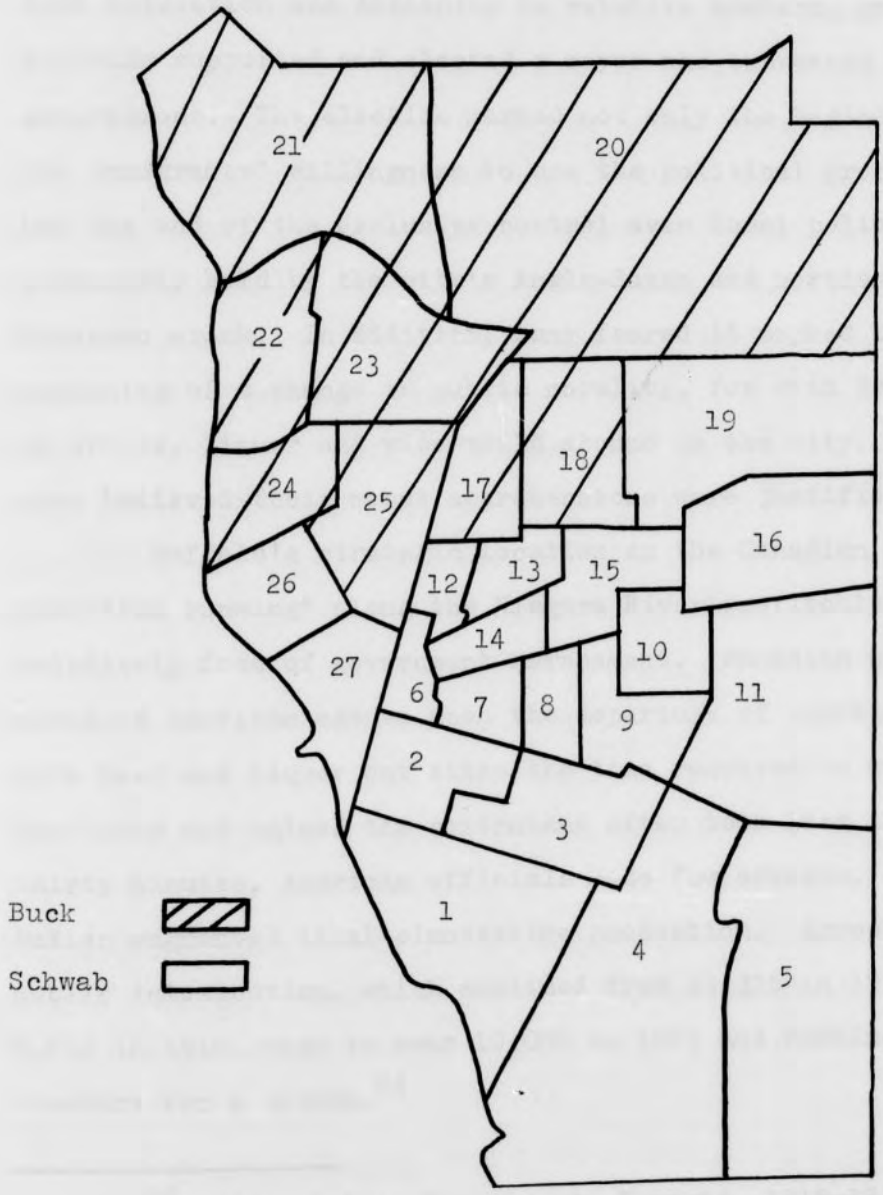
Wards	WN-NP 21+	WN-FMP 21+	FB Naturalized 21+	Black 21+	Schwab Vote	Buck Vote
1	1948	3517	1714	---	2706	960
2	1825	1795	1737	203	1212	413
3	1399	1840	1353	53	1219	527
4	2680	2332	1112	2	1674	1140
5	4649	5798	2509	3	3846	3386
6	2013	2117	1146	1525	1844	594
7	1269	2109	1721	864	1575	723
8	1984	3210	1756	71	1862	1117
9	517	2597	1786	23	1367	504
10	75	3155	2814	2	2176	434
11	1817	3965	2849	9	2547	1215
12	2203	3063	1069	1	1910	1223
13	2101	4250	1288	6	1953	1675
14	2165	3784	1850	143	2358	1185
15	1206	4678	3308	2	2898	984
16	2029	5404	2454	8	1916	1518
17	5207	6033	3295	172	2846	3697
18	4720	6380	2374	29	3132	3969
19	3634	6835	3590	18	3453	2452
20	10387	9588	3544	63	4392	8109
21	3726	5056	3474	4	2847	3047
22	3064	4897	3001	28	2230	3717
23	8000	5274	2242	26	1740	6365
24	5381	4760	2155	46	2621	3433
25	7377	4432	1621	61	1666	4574
26	2899	2932	2844	34	1970	1367
27	2926	2225	2469	14	1571	1046
					62531	59974

Key:

WN-NB 21+ = White natives-native parents, 21+ years
WN-FMP 21+ = White natives-foreign or mixed parents, 21+ years
FB-Naturalized 21+ = Foreign-born, naturalized citizens, 21+ years
Black 21+ = Blacks, 21+ years.

Figure 1

1921 Ward Election Results



For those who perceived Schwab as a special-interest lobbyist relying on radical support, it was relatively easy to foresee the election's implications. Although the foreign-born population was declining in relative numbers, previous arrivals supported and elected a mayor who expressed their aspirations. The election marked not only the beginning of the immigrants' willingness to use the political processes but the end of the exclusive control over local politics previously held by the city's Anglo-Saxon and northern European stock. In addition, many feared it marked the beginning of a change in public morality, for with Schwab in office, liquor and vice would abound in the city. They soon believed their worst apprehensions were justified.

Buffalo's strategic location on the Canadian border made "rum running" along the Niagara River profitable and relatively free of government harassment. Canadian officials notified American agents upon the departure of craft laden with beer and liquor but since the time required to cross the river and unload the contraband often took less than thirty minutes, American officials made few arrests. Importation augmented local clandestine production. Arrests for public intoxication, which declined from 13,315 in 1918 to 8,853 in 1919, rose to over 10,000 in 1923 and remained constant for a decade.[24]

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[24]Buffalo Police Department, Reports, 1915-1933.

Although the extent of prohibition violations did not actually increase after Schwab assumed office in January 1922, the public's perception of the problem did. Before May of 1922, newspaper reports on violations appeared on back pages in small articles thereby creating the impression of relative unimportance. On May 1, 1922, the psychological impact of the reports changed substantially when the Express published the first of a six-installment, feature-length, front-page series on conditions in a black-Polish slum near downtown Buffalo. A reporter discovered flagrant prohibition violations in the four incorporated social and gymnastic clubs he visited. Members, businessmen, and curious young couples purchased whiskey, gin, sherry, port, apricot cocktails, and home brew. Drunks cluttered the streets and alleys outside the clubs while "evil women, quite friendly even to total strangers" plied their trade inside. Two mulatto dancers shocked the reporter who called their lewd exhibition "the most nauseating spectacle to a sober mind possessed of a slight degree of civilization and refinement." A uniformed police officer, who entered one club for a drink, made no attempt to arrest anyone present since he was a member. Most patrons were characterized as "depraved individuals" with "drink-sodden senses."[25]

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[25] Buffalo Express, May 1 to 6, 1922.

The articles implied a more sinister regular patron. Two of the city's twenty incorporated clubs were "Negro clubs" while many others had ethnic names. The Roma Club's charter stated its goal was to "encourage, promote and cultivate the social relations among the members of the society and to extend the benefit of fraternal intercourse among the Italian citizens of Buffalo."[26] Mulatto dancers, black musicians and waitresses "thoroughly dressed from the chin up" entertained and served patrons.

Many people believed Schwab allowed these conditions to develop to reward his supporters. They perceived the mayor's reservations concerning the legality of closing the private clubs as a refusal to enforce the laws.[27] The mayor, however, was not so lax as his detractors believed. He promptly stationed police officers outside the clubs to check membership cards and discourage the curious from entering. The deterence resulted in a swift decline in business and the closing of three clubs.

But critics of the mayor were not satisfied by such acts. The Anti-Saloon League and five fundamentalist

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[26] Buffalo Express, May 6, 1922, p. 7

[27] Schwab proposed a licensing system in March which he considered essential to legally enter and search private clubs. Each restaurant or club would pay a yearly $5 fee and file a deposition describing the food and beverages served. If a club deviated from its filed statement, the police could cancel its license. The enforcement procedures in the system were extremely vague and when the necessary legislation was passed by the Common Council in July, the system proved ineffective.

Protestant ministers mobilized public opinion and founded neighborhood organizations concerned with what they perceived as Buffalo's moral decay. Skeptical of Schwab's promises to enforce the prohibition laws, William Anderson favored a citizen's campaign to sensitize the public with the Anti-Saloon League coordinating activities among various local organizations which in turn would pressure the police into enforcing the laws.[28] Accordingly, a number of ministers established committees within their churches to investigate local conditions and publicize their findings. In addition, each minister emphasized vice conditions and prohibition violations in sermons, criticized the mayor and blamed Schwab and his supporters for local immorality. Charles Penfold of the Sentinel Methodist Episcopal Church repeatedly referred to the rampant vice on the west side [he implied the Italian community] while Littleton E. H. Smith of the Ontario Street Presbyterian Church criticized Schwab for his selective enforcement of laws.[29]

The zeal of the Crusading Ministers and their fundamentalist followers was more than a simple expression of

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[28] Buffalo Express, January 1, 1922, p. 7.

[29] Other committees were founded by Robert J. MacAlpine of the Central Presbyterian Church, Robert T. Doherty of the Woodside Methodist Episcopal Church, and Chester Cowardline of the Ontario Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

civic duty. Immigrant political and economic assertiveness was viewed as a corruption of nineteenth-century America's socio-economic structure and a threat to Christian society. Alien control of City Hall led to increased public immorality which was viewed as an indication that modernism was infecting the social fabric. To fundamentalists, modernism meant a decline in church influence, a breakdown of parental control, and a looser personal code marked by a change in sexual patterns, drinking, smoking, dancing, and short skirts.[30]

The Buffalo press supported the view that modernism was indeed having a deletorious effect. When the Erie County Health Commissioner attributed a marked decline in Buffalo's birth rate during the first quarter of 1922 to improved and, incidentally, "illegal and immoral" birth control devices, his views were duly reported to the newspaper-reading public.[31] The sermons of Reverend Doctor J. Frank Norris also received considerable attention in the Express. Blaming short skirts, eyelashes, and nude hosiery for a breakdown in family life and respect for the law, the "Texas Tornado," as he was called, predicted divine wrath in

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30David Danzig, "The Radical Right and the Rise of the Fundamentalist Minority," Commentary, XXXIII, no. 4 (April 1962), p. 292; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, The Politics of Unreason (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 115-117, 131-132.

31Buffalo Express, April 9, 1922, sec. 5, p. 3.

the form of war if moral decency continued to decline. The automobile, however, was the worst offender. A "red light district.....on rubber tires," it allowed young couples greater mobility and a means to escape the watchful eyes of parents.[32]

Responding to Norris' warnings, Smith and the other "crusading ministers" attempted to control youthful exuberance in public dance halls where young men arrived with hip flasks and left with flappers on their way to lonely roads and "petting parties." Indeed, it was in the dance halls where the fundamentalists saw the most dangerous effects of Schwab's permissiveness for liquor and sexual temptation symbolized all that was evil and destructive in society. For such men, Mayor Schwab and his supporters were more than symbols of society's ills; by projection, they were the cause.

When Klan organizers arrived in Buffalo, they found a target which was widely accepted by many as the cause of public immorality. "Wets" and immigrants were enemies which easily fitted into the Klan fundamentalist-nativist ideology. The local context--immigrant participation in violent strikes, the election of a "wet" candidate, and public sensitivity to prohibition violations and vice--provided a fertile seedbed in which the Klan could grow. Many people were already

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[32]Buffalo Express, April 2, 1922, sec. 4, p. 1.

participating in organizations to control social behavior, discredit the mayor and regain control of city hall. Basic organizational recruiting to achieve those goals had begun even before Klan organizers arrived in the "City of Good Neighbors."

CHAPTER II

THE KLAN ACTS

Provisional Klan Number Five attempted to accomplish two interrelated goals: to end vice and prohibition violations in the city and to sensitize the public to what it perceived as Schwab's lack of moral leadership. Initially, Klan leaders chose persuasive tactics. A year passed, membership grew, and yet the Klan accomplished little. Prostitutes roamed the streets and liquor was readily available in social clubs and bars. The Klan's failure to achieve massive support, increasing public criticism, and growing public apathy to the immigrant-radical stereotype, convinced some leaders and members that more forceful, coercive tactics were necessary to "clean up" Buffalo. The change in tactics achieved little except to further alienate the press and to foster a split among the "crusading ministers" who previously supported Klan ideals. The fraternal order (turned law enforcer) began to falter even before public reaction to its only violent act marked its demise.

Public susceptibility to Klan propaganda in 1922 made local organizers dream of almost unlimited growth. District Kleagle Mitchell announced a membership drive three weeks after the initial publication of the Express

exposé since "the time was ripe."[1] Although the Klan held biweekly meetings during the previous nine months, the hundreds of local members were insufficient to warrant a national charter. Hoping to remedy this situation, Mitchell denied the Klan opposed any group and affirmed its support of white supremacy, a free press, separation of Church and State, free public schools, and law and order. Additional assistance was forthcoming from State Kleagle Major E. D. Smith, who, posing as an Army recruiting officer, visited Buffalo in early September.[2]

As elsewhere in the country, prohibition enforcement was the primary appeal utilized in the New York and Ontario (Canada) recruitment campaigns. Reverend Doctor Oscar Haywood, a national Klan lecturer, visited Buffalo and stated that Klan leaders were "in general sympathy with the Eighteenth Amendment.....suppression of liquor traffic.....and enforcement of the Volstead Act."[3] Klan Number Five actively supported these goals as an Express reported learned when he attended a Klan initiation. Picked up in a car, blindfolded, and whisked away to a secret ceremonial ring, he was told by Klansmen that any white native, Protestant Gentile, who supported public schools, Americanism and prohibition, could join. Locally, the Klan supported strict enforcement

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[1] Buffalo Express, May 23, 1922, p. 1.

[2] Ibid. November 30, 1922, p. 1.

[3] Ibid. November 27, 1922, p. 1.

of the Volstead Act and demanded that Governor Alfred E. Smith veto the repeal of the Mullan-Gage Act.[4]

During this formative stage, the Klan used a number of expressive tactics to dramatize its presence, convince the public of its admirable intentions, and create a sense of common experience among its members. Cross burnings in the city, suburbs, and on Grand Island in the Niagara River, and public initiations attracted the curious from the immediate area as well as the press. Charitable contributions were used here as elsewhere in an effort to re-enforce an image of benevolence. In March 1923, for example, hooded Klansmen entered the Kenmore Presbyterian Church, interrupted the sermon, read a letter declaring their devotion to Christianity and prohibition, and left a donation.[5] More than a year later, eight members visited the Protestant Home for Unprotected Children. They sang a few religious hymns and talked to the children before leaving a "purse of gold."[6] To promote the organization and defend it from charges of violence and nativism, national Klan lecturers were brought

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[4]Buffalo Express, May 28, 1923, p. 3. The Mullan-Gage Act was a New York law passed to implement state enforcement of the Volstead Act.

[5]Ibid. March 26, 1923, p. 1. This technique was used by local Klans everywhere. The money was normally collected on a regular basis at Klan meetings.

[6]Buffalo Commercial, July 11, 1924, p. 10.

in who compared the Klan's exclusion of Catholics, Jews and blacks to the established membership requirements of the Masons and other fraternal organizations.

But burning crosses and filling collection plates were not enough. By early 1924, Buffalo Klansmen would resort to forceful tactics to sensitize the public to the city's moral problems and the need for strict enforcement of the prohibition laws. Beginning in March, the Klan staged a series of raids occupying roadhouses and intimidating the owners and patrons, thus convincing some "wets" that further violations would result in violence. These weekly raids were abandoned, however, when a few recalcitrant violators stationed armed "guards" outside the premises.[7]

The change in tactics was partially due to a failure to achieve support from those in positions of authority. The Klan failed to enlist more than a dozen clergymen, a few police officers and only one wealthy individual. More importantly, persuasive tactics proved ineffective in pressuring the police or the mayor into increased law enforcement. The Klan's leadership, especially Littleton E. H. Smith, believed that if the Klan resorted to coercion, the police would respond to Klan demands. Smith was already experienced in transforing an investigative body into a

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[7] Buffalo Express, March 19, 1924, p. 5; March 23, 1924, p. 1; and March 24, 1924, p. 4.

private police force after he was appointed Chairman of the Buffalo Council of Churches' Social Services Committee. He and a band of assistants raided bars and prostitutes' houses, turning the evidence over to police after notifying the press. During the same period, Smith led hooded Klansmen in similar raids.

The expressive nature of the Klan persisted into his new coercive stage. The raiders notified the press of any positive achievements and challenged the mayor and the police to follow their example. Criticism of Mayor Schwab was an essential part of the local Klan's propaganda. Believing he was addressing a businessmen's meeting in March 1924, the mayor was interrupted by fifteen hooded Klansmen who said that the "Eighteenth Amendment and the laws against prostitution were not being enforced in the city."[8] Schwab later learned that he addressed a Klan-organized meeting.

Members of the hooded order hoped to achieve more than strict enforcement of prohibition through its criticism of the mayor. In late 1924, the Klan issued a statement which said, in part, that "The Klan's fight in Buffalo will not be fought with bullets but with ballots."[9] The statement was also indicative of increased political activity in 1924

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[8] Buffalo Express, March 25, 1924, p. 1.

[9] Buffalo Commercial, September 15, 1924, p. 10.

under Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans. Furthermore, the election of a prohibitionist in 1925 was possible since Schwab won in 1921 by a slim margin. If the Klan could convince the public that the mayor was completely responsible for the city's moral decline, it believed the goal of a clean city was attainable.[10]

Public criticism of the mayor, acts of charity, and threats to roadhouse owners which were never executed, were all legal, although the raids did violate the law's spirit. The nonviolent nature of the Buffalo Klan from the time of its inception to late August 1924 is apparent. It complied with the Walker Law's incorporation clause but refused to cease wearing hoods or issue a complete membership list for publication.[11] If it was guilty of any other transgressions, no record exists. Only one potentially violent act was attributed to the Klan. Three unidentified Polish Catholic

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[10]Arnold Rice indicates in "The Southern Wing of the Ku Klux Klan in American Politics" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1960), p. 71f, that local politics was the chief arena of Klan political activity. National and state politics and the Klan's impact in those areas received more scholarly and contemporary attention since local evidence of political influence is more difficult to find and greater importance has traditionally been accorded to large elections. Although little evidence of political activity is available in Buffalo, it would appear that, in this respect, the Buffalo Klan was typical of local Klans in the South. Also see: David Chalmers "The Ku Klux Klan in the Politics in the 1920's," Mississippi Quarterly, XVIII (Fall 1965), pp. 234-47; Chalmers, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Sunshine State: The 1920's," Florida Historical Quarterly XLII (January 1964), pp. 209-215: and Kenneth Harrell "The Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana, 1920-1930," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1966), p. 268f.

[11]Buffalo Express, July 11, 1924, p. 10.

priests and members of their parishes received Klan threats promising forceable removal of the priests from Buffalo if they refused to leave voluntarily. The priests did not request a police investigation nor were they threatened again.[12]

Violent or nonviolent, the Klan was unable to shed the image the organization projected elsewhere. Public criticism of the Klan and its tactics came from religious groups of all denominations, the Polish community, and the press. Rabbi Louis J. Kolald of Temple Beth Zion spoke out soon after the Klan initiated its 1922 membership drive. Calling the Klan "a dastardly, underhanded group of citizens," he denounced it as un-American rather than anti-Jewish or anti-Catholic. The Klan's rise was a temporary result of the unsettling strain that followed World War I, he suggested, and would come to naught in a nation "full of right-minded and right-principled people" who were "truly American" as opposed to those super patriots who parade "their Americanism under a cloak of Klanism."[13]

C. Lukaszykiewicz, a Polish playwright, was more critical of those who ferreted out suspicious movements. His play, entitled "Ku Klux Klub," ridiculed the secret organization and the reporters who overrated the Klan's

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[12] Buffalo Express, November 7, 1922, p. 1.

[13] Buffalo Commercial, June 2, 1922, p. 10.

power. In the play, Franck, a small boy, sends a letter to a man named Brzuchowiak telling him to watch the janitor and organist of his church. Franck signs the note, "Ku Klux Klub." Trembling with fear, Brzuchowiak faints after reading the letter as a group of reporters and publishers enter the room brandishing pencils and pads, hurriedly taking notes. The papers are full of Klan stories the next day. A few days later, four hooded Klansmen enter Brzuchowiak's room and demand the letter. He refuses and cries out, "Santa Claus, oh, Santa Claus!" for help. Santa dashes into the room with his reindeer, tears off the hoods, and discovers that the four men are reporters. When the play was performed, two federal agents replaced Santa.[14]

The press was less cavalier toward the Klan. Proud of its consistent law and order editorial policy, the Commercial condemned the Klan's control of the Oregon legislature as representative of midnineteenth century Know-Nothingism and a manifestation of all that was un-American and undemocratic.[15] The narrow-minded and bigoted joined

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[14] Buffalo Express, December 15, 1922, p. 8.

[15] Buffalo Commercial, May 22, 1922, p. 4. See Paul M. Holsinger, "Oregon School Bill Controversy, 1922-1925," Pacific History Review, XXXVII (August 1968), pp. 327-341, for information on the Klan's political influence in Oregon.

what in the final analysis, the paper believed, was a "vicious, dangerous and repugnant" organization, and hopefully an ephemeral one. Thriving on racial prejudice and emotional frenzy, it purported to uphold the law which it subverted through its actions.[16] The Express stated that the "Klan has no capacity for good" and predicted that its success would be limited "so long as Americans retain a semblance of a sense of humanity."[17] Klan activity in Oklahoma received considerable attention in the Buffalo press. The Express believed Governor John C. Walton of Oklahoma was opposed by politicians willing to "put the machinery of government in the hands of such elements that have little excuse for looking down on the Bolsheviks of Russia."[18] As one would expect, the ethnic press voiced its opposition in much the same rhetoric. Dziennik Dla-Wszystkich (Everybody's Daily) called the secret order a "group of organized bandits who act under the cover of patriotism, brotherhood and charity." The paper believed that it was essential for those who opposed the Klan to

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[16] Buffalo Commercial, June 1, 1922, p. 1.

[17] Buffalo Express, December 5, 1922, p. 8.

[18] Ibid. November 2, 1923, p. 8. See Charles Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 130-155.

appeal "to the feeling of justice" in all Americans and not to "think of using un-American tactics and force." The Buffalo Volksfreund echoed the Dziennik's opinion.[19]

For others, public criticism of the Klan was a more difficult decision. A few days after the Klan interrupted Sunday morning services at the Kenmore Presbyterian Church, the congregation's Christian Endeavor Society disavowed any connection with the Klan or any other group which excited "religious, ethnic or racial prejudices." The society issued another statement five days later, criticizing the interruption of services without mentioning any group or event. The society apparently believed it was better to accept the Klan's donation and issue a mild rebuke without offending the secret order.[20] Whatever the reason, the attitudinal change was indicative of a general reluctance by Protestants to assume a clear position before 1924.

The direct action techniques of Smith's Social Services Committee and the Klan precipitated a clear break

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[19] Dziennik Dla-Wszystkich, November 25, 1922, p. 4; Buffalo Volksfreund, November 25, 1922, p. 4. The local Italian paper, Il Corriere Italiano, was silent on Klan activity. The paper was prmarily a source of local Italian-American activity announcements and articles on Italian political and social developments. It did not publish any editorials and apparently was intended as a supplement to English language papers rather than a substitute.

[20] Buffalo Express, March 28, 1923, p. 8; April 2, 1923, p. 4. The Kenmore Klan list contains only ten names. No officer of the society is listed but the possibility of Klan influence within the organization cannot be ignored.

among the previously unanimous Crusading Ministers. Robert MacAlpine agreed with the Klan's fear of a Vatican threat to American democracy but was even more fearful of the Klan's activity and secrecy.[21] Charles Penfold, who had been nominated for Klan membership but refused, was more explicit. Referring to Smith, he said that "Intolerance and bigotry are a menace to free institutions and the man who cultivates them by intemperate of ill-advised speech is a danger to the community.[22]

In large part because of such criticism, the public, by mid-1924, perceived the Klan as a menace to societal stability. Fear of the Klan's coercive tactics and attempts to assume the responsibility for law enforcement displaced the immigrant-radical threat. More important, an internal debate over coercive tactics began to erode the consensus among the Protestant Ministers who favored social control. Many Klansmen began to question the Klan's ideals and wondered where the change in tactics would lead. Yet the allegiance of the majority of the 4000 local members remained steadfast.

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[21] Buffalo Express, June 30, 1924, p. 5.

[22] Ibid. July 4, 1924, p. 4.

CHAPTER III

KLAN MEMBERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

The problem of determining individual motivation defies a precise and complete answer, especially when one is dealing with the members of a social movement. Despite personal differences, all participants share a number of common beliefs. Internal disputes among the membership will occasionally erupt, yet a degree of consensus is normally maintained. In order to understand how this consensus emerged, it is necessary to determine who the members were and if they had any common characteristics which made them more susceptible to the propaganda emanating from the movement. In short, what groups were more inclined to join the Klan in the twenties?

Kenneth Jackson attempts to answer this question in his study of the urban Klan.[1] His occupational analysis of small numbers of Klansmen in Chicago, Aurora, and Winchester, Illinois, deals with such small samples that the results are, at best, of limited importance and, at worst,

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[1]Kenneth Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 62-64, 108, 114, 119-120, 153, 225, and 242.

misleading.[2] His comparison of residential information for Klansmen in Indianapolis and Denver and their proximity to black and ethnic concentrations would reveal more about those participants if additional parameters were utilized. His profile of a typical Knoxville Klansman is based upon three primary parameters--occupation, residence and church affiliation. Yet even in this case, the size of the sample (350) was only a fraction of the Klans' strength in Knoxville.

The unusually lengthy list of Buffalo Klansmen contained 3,884 names, primarily from western New York.[3] Buffalo residents numbered 1,829 (47.09%). Although most of the 3,884 entries include occupational information, only the majority of Buffalo entries include exact street addresses. This analysis, therefore, will concern only those 1,829 names.

Blue-collar workers comprised approximately 60 per cent of Buffalo's labor force in the 1920's while an additional 20 per cent were lower-level white-collar workers.[4]

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[2]The figures Jackson presented indicate that 64.4 per cent of Aurora's Klansmen and 60.8 per cent in Chicago were white-collar workers which contradicts all available evidence on the nature of the Klan's appeal.

[3]Exposé of Traitors in the Interests of Jews, Catholics, Negroes and All Respecters of the American Principle of Civil and Religious Freedom.

[4]Edwin Powell, The Design of Discord (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 83.

An occupational breakdown of the local Klan's membership indicated that involvement of a cross-section of society. Mechanics, bakers, butchers, physicians, clergymen, contractors, machinists, salesmen, and one State assemblyman joined. The majority (62.16%)were blue-collar workers, with unskilled laborers the largest group (10.66%). Salesmen (7.87%) comprised the largest group among white-collar workers (34.66%).[5]

That the majority of members were blue-collar workers is not surprising, since the recent immigrant competed primarily with this group for employment. The Klan offered a solution to the alien's economic challenge by calling for quota restrictions. Moreover, the Klan's robes and orders of membership appealed to many in lower socio-economic and educational levels. The robes identified the Klan as a separate group in society dedicated to preserving the status quo while the orders of membership served the same motivational function as medals and ribbons, rewarding active members and inspiring them to a deeper commitment. The need for peer group recognition is often greater if one's job or social position fails to elicit respect. As Wizards, Goblins, Dragons, Titans, Cyclops, Hydras, and Furies in command of Empires, Somains, Realms,

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[5]See Tables 2, 3 and 4, on pages 40-42.

TABLE 2

Blue-Collar Klansmen

Occupation	Number	% of Total Membership
Miscellaneous Unskilled	195	10.66
Railroad Workers	182	9.95
Machinists	159	8.69
Foremen	100	5.47
Auto Mechanics	69	3.77
Carpenters	61	3.34
Electricians	61	3.34
Miscellaneous Skilled	38	2.08
Painters and Decorators	33	1.80
Chauffeurs	25	1.37
City Employees	25	1.37
Miscellaneous Construction	16	.87
Other Government Employees	16	.87
Butchers	15	.82
Pipefitters	14	.76
Steel Workers	14	.76
Plumbers	12	.66
Sheetmetal Workers	12	.66
Street Railway Workers	11	.60
Trucking and Carting	11	.60
Printers	10	.55
Bakers	9	.49
Draftsmen	7	.38
Firemen	7	.38
Uphosterers	7	.38
Barbers	5	.27
Ice Co. Employees	5	.27
Milkmen	5	.27
Artists	3	.16
Policemen	3	.16
Photographers	2	.11
Servicemen	2	.11
Tailors	2	.11
Farmers	1	.05
	1137	62.16%

TABLE 3

White-Collar Klansmen

Occupation	Number	% of Total Membership
Salesmen	144	7.87
Merchants	84	4.59
Clerks	77	4.21
Insurance Agents	45	2.46
Engineers	43	2.35
Contractors	35	1.91
Plant Managers	30	1.64
Newspaper Reporters	23	1.26
Bankers	16	.87
Druggists	14	.76
Physicians	12	.66
Clergymen	11	.60
Inspectors	11	.60
Electrical Contractors	9	.49
Sales Managers	9	.49
Accountants	7	.38
Buyers	7	.38
Jewelers	6	.33
Lawyers	6	.33
Dentists	5	.27
Chiropracters	4	.22
Hotel Managers and Auditors	4	.22
Realtors	4	.22
Advertising	3	.16
Chemists	3	.16
Furriers	3	.16
Optometrists	3	.16
Undertakers	3	.16
Veterinarians	3	.16
Musicians	2	.11
Male Secretaries	2	.11
Street Railway Supervisors	2	.11
Architects	1	.05
Roominghouse Owners	1	.05
Sales Company Presidents	1	.05
	634	34.66%

TABLE 4

Miscellaneous Klansmen

Occupation	Number	% of Total Membership
Retired	4	.22
Students	2	.11
Unemployed	1	.05
Unknown	51	2.79
	58	3.17%

Provinces, and Klans, many achieved the recognition they desired. The Klan's titles and vocabulary created a mystical impression similar to that of a religious cult and hinted at a medieval origin, when the chivalry of knights protected the weak and oppressed.[6] Perhaps more importantly, the terms connoted an image of awesome uncontrollable power and terror. Conversely, parades, cross burnings, picnics, weddings, Klonklaves, and the more mundane biweekly meetings, provided members with an opportunity to socialize, discuss local conditions, and decide upon a course of remedial action. Lonely men could find companionship; frustrated men could articulate their grievances.

Some merchants, contractors, doctors, insurance agents, and druggists probably joined for economic reasons. Klansmen in every locality received lists of local businessmen who were either fellow Knights or sympathizers with instructions to patronize their shops. Indeed one of the primary characteristics which distinguished the Klan of the 1920's from its Reconstruction predecessor was the prevalence of the profit motive. From Imperial Wizards Simmons and Evans down to local leaders, the profit potential was a significant factor.

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[6]Henry P. Fry discusses the importance of the medieval implications in much of the Klan's vocabulary in, The Modern Ku Klux Klan (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1922). Although most of his examples are taken from the Reconstruction Klan, the psychological impact of the second Klan's rhetoric is similar.

While occupational information indicates that the Klan appealed to all groups except the very wealthy, residential information indicates a number of determinants which partially accounted for Klan membership. Proximity to the Slavic community in the northwestern section of the city, to the Italian community on the West Side, to blacks in the central city, or to Polonia on the East Side, made the immigrant-radical threat more immediate.[7] Nearness to minority concentrations, however, fails to explain the large number of Klansmen in the northern and southeastern areas of the city. Second- and third-generation immigrants lived throughout the area but, due to normal assimilative processes, they projected a low profile.

Nor does a comparison of the number of Klansmen in the areas which supported Mayor Buck or Frank Schwab in the 1921 election provide a complete answer since the number in each area is approximately the same.[8] The number of Klansmen who lived near the ward lines where the vote split is significant since their minority position was more painfully obvious. The results in the fifth ward, where Schwab won by only 260 votes, could have influenced some to foresee an electoral reversal in 1925 if Schwab's administration could have been discredited.

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[7]See Figure 2 on page 45. The map is based upon the available residential information for 1708 Buffalo Klansmen.

[8]See Figure 3 on page 46.

Figure 2

Comparison of Ethnic Concentrations
and Klan Membership

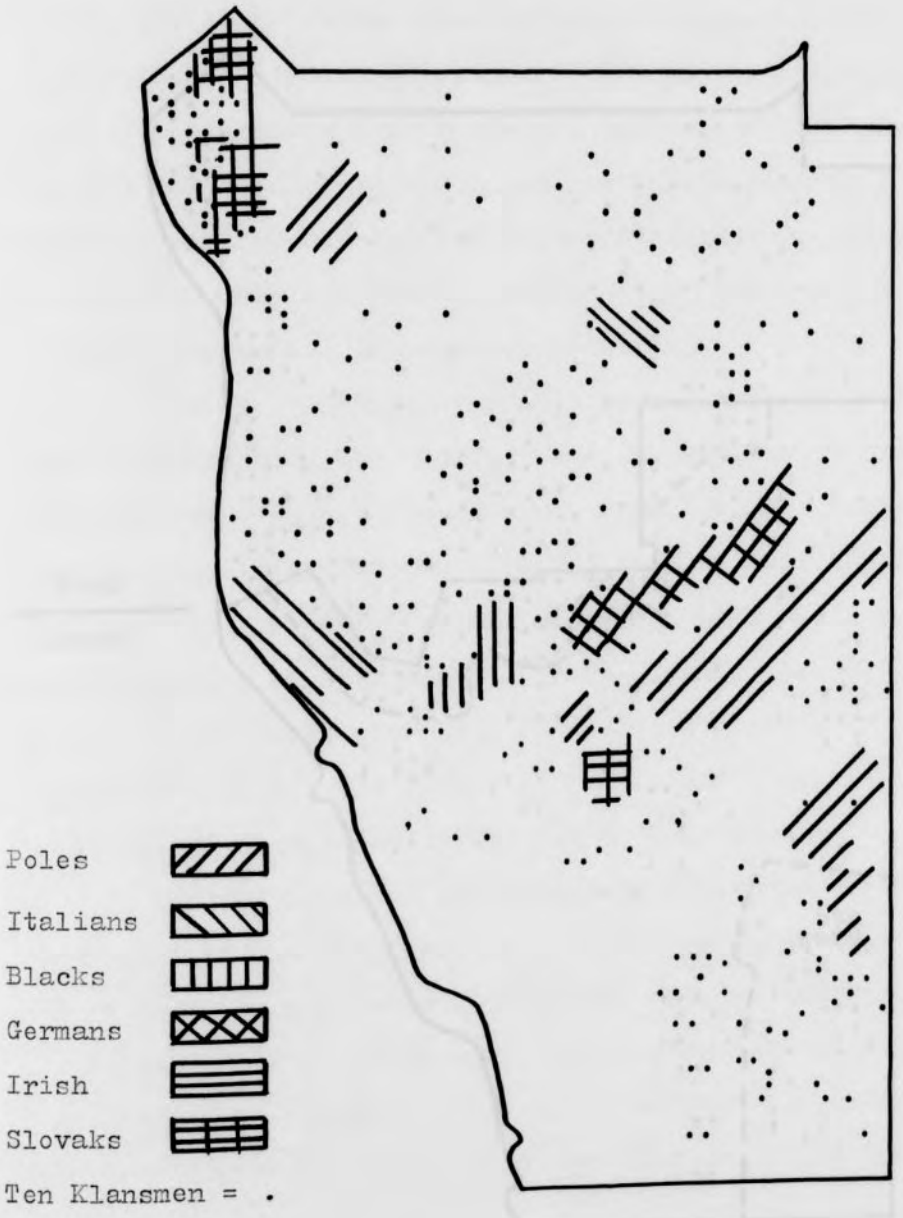
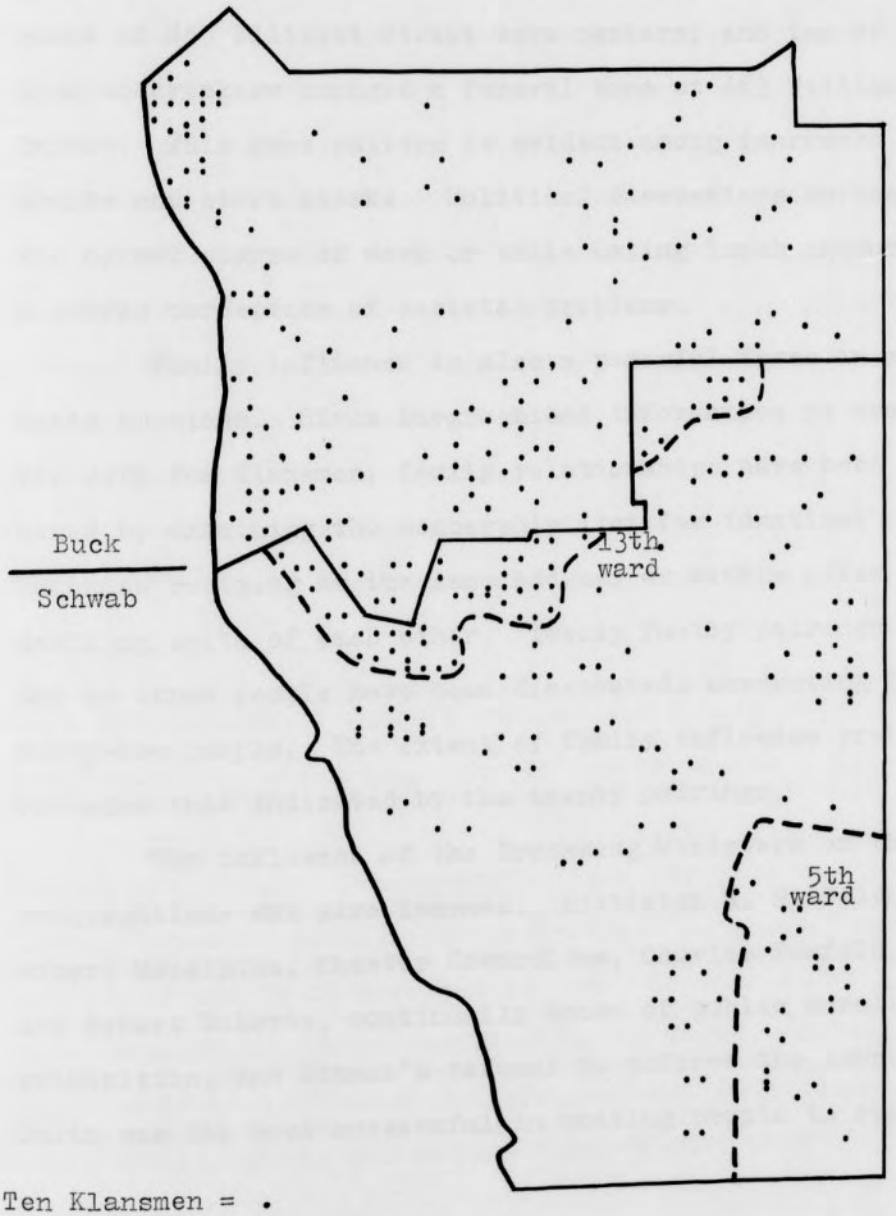


Figure 3

Comparison of 1921 Election Results
and Klan Membership



Peer group influence appears to be another significant determinant. Twelve physicians, three of whom had offices at 633 Main Street and two at 494 Franklin Street, joined the Klan; three veterinarians who shared office space at 455 Ellicott Street were members; and two of three Klan undertakers managed a funeral home at 483 William Street. This same pattern is evident among insurance agents and store clerks. Political discussions during the normal course of work or while eating lunch encouraged a shared perception of societal problems.

Family influence is also a powerful force in molding men's opinions. Since biographical information is available for very few Klansmen, family relationships have been determined by examining the membership list for identical surnames residing at the same address or within a few dwelling units of each other. Twenty family pairings of two or three people have been discovered, accounting for forty-two people. The extent of family influence probably exceeded that indicated by the twenty pairings.

The influence of the Crusading Ministers on their congregations was also immense. Littleton E. H. Smith, Robert MacAlpine, Chester Cowardline, Charles Penfold, and Robert Doherty, continually spoke of public morality, prohibition, and Schwab's refusal to enforce the laws. Smith was the most successful in uniting people to oppose

evil influences in the city.[9] Hundreds attended Sunday night services at the Ontario Street Presbyterian Church to listen to Smith's sermons on temperance and sin. Praised for his fearless stand for justice and his quiet and sincere nature, the "Crusading Minister" was admired by most of his parishioners, some of whom were Klansmen. Only twelve members of his flock are identifiable from a comparison of fragmentary parish records with fifty-one Klansmen from the church area, yet his influence appears to have been immensely greater since many from all section of the city attended his sermons without officially joining the parish.[10] The primary bond which united those who listened to Smith's sermons was temperance rather than theology. Smith was intensely interested in preserving a dry city through his work in the Christian Endeavor Movement, the Klan, and the Buffalo Council

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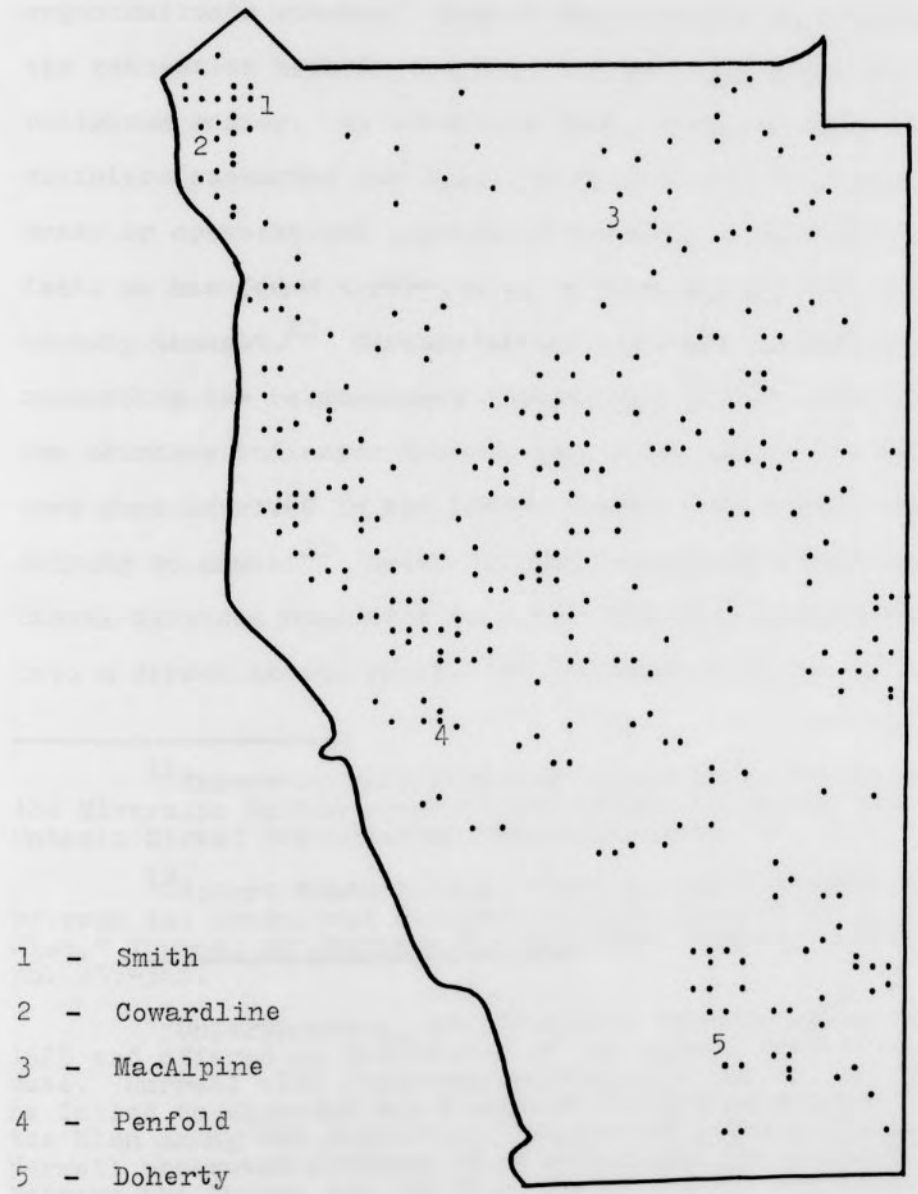
[9]See Figure 4 on page 49. Both Smith and Cowardline were Klansmen while Penfold refused the Klan's offer to join. Doherty expressed his desire to join but was born in Canada and therefore ineligible. The influence of the clergy in Indianapolis was also great. See Jackson, p. 150.

[10]Smith preferred to work in his home rather than the parish office. Consequently, when his home was bombed in April 1924 (see pp. 55-56), most of the parish records and his personal papers were destroyed. Only one Communicant Book still exists from the 1920's but many pages are missing while most are badly torn and soiled. Whether his family inadvertently or purposefully destroyed any remaining papers, in an attempt to conceal certain family facts, cannot be determined. Two of his daughters and his private secretary, all of whom still live in Buffalo, refused to discuss Smith and his activity under any conditions. "Ontario Street Presbyterian Church Communicant Book, 1920-1928."

Figure 4

Comparison of Crusading Ministers' Churches and Klan Membership



of Churches' Social Services Committee.[11]

The activity of the Protestant ministers in the Klan implicated the Buffalo Council of Churches in the organization's success. Robert Moats Miller has studied the connection between the Klan and national Protestant religious bodies. He concludes that, although many local ministers supported the Klan, at no time did the Protestant press or convocations approve of or support the Klan. In fact, he has found criticism to be more common than previously thought.[12] Circumstantial evidence available concerning the relationship between the Buffalo Klan and the churches indicates that on the local level, the churches were more involved in the Klan's growth than Miller would be willing to admit.[13] Smith assumed leadership of the Council's Social Services Committee in early 1924 and transformed it into a direct action group. At the same time, he led

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[11]Interview with Reverend Albert Kunz, Pastor of the Riverside United Presbyterian Church (formerly the Ontario Street Presbyterian Church), October 22, 1971.

[12]Robert Moats Miller, "Note on the Relationship between the Protestant Churches and the Revived Ku Klux Klan," Journal of Southern History, XXII (August 1956), pp. 355-368.

[13]Unfortunately, the Council's records start in 1925 and offered no indication of its action before that date. Harrell also supplemented Miller's thesis. Although he failed to discover any instances of public support for the Klan among the Protestant leaders or press in Louisiana. Harrell presented evidence that some found the connection between the Church and the Klan "notorious." See Harrell, pp. 286-292.

Klansmen on Saturday night roadhouse raids. The change to direct action in both cases was partially due to Smith's zeal and it is conceivable, though impossible to prove, that the same people assisted him in both raiding parties. The Council's failure to criticize the Klan, before or after Smith admitted his Knighthood, is also significant.

The interrelationship between the Klan and the Anti-Saloon League is more obvious. The League coordinated activities among various prohibition groups, the Protestant Churches and the political parties. Although State Superintendent William Anderson denied he was a Klansman, he believed the Klan was "a necessary arm of the Protestant war versus evil."[14] Both the Klan and the League viewed prohibition as the panacea for Buffalo's moral ills and Schwab's reluctance to enforce the laws as a direct threat to the goal of a "clean city." The mutual verbal support, common perception of societal problems, and common goal, indicated that they probably drew support from the same elements.[15]

Local determinants and resonance to the immigrant-radical stereotype increased individual susceptibility to Klan propaganda which re-enforced local fears. In one

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[14] Buffalo Express, October 6, 1923, p. 9.

[15] Evidence of cooperation between the League and the Klan in Atlanta also exists. See Jackson, p. 31.

pamphlet published in 1923, Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans stated his views on immigration. He believed the "broad spread of anarchist sentiment brought to America by diseased and festered sinners of despoiled and broken Europe" threatened the nation's democratic future. Mediterranean and Central Europeans accepted unskilled jobs for lower wages than native whites thus limiting the "100% American's" ability to find employment. He viewed the alien's refusal to assimilate as even more menacing since Anglo-conformity was a fundamental of liberty.[16] During the four years before the pamphlet became available to Buffalo Klansmen, the local press depicted immigrants as Bolsheviks who refused to educate their "children according to American standards or to purchase homes in the community" and who had demonstrated a "reactionary, barbarian instinct for disorganization and destruction."[17] In another pamphlet, Evans warned that the Roman Catholic Church encouraged naturalized immigrants to vote as a block.[18] Schwab's opponents were well aware of the fact that many of the mayor's supporters were Catholic.

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[16]Hiram W. Evans, The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward Immigration (Atlanta: 1923), p. 4.

[17]Buffalo Commercial, September 20, 1919, p. 4; Buffalo Express, July 7, 1922 to October 5, 1922.

[18]Evans, The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy (Atlanta: 1923), pp. 1-5.

The analysis of Buffalo's Klansmen indicates a number of determinants which increased individual susceptibility to Klan propaganda. An individual joining the Klan was likely to be a supporter of Mayor Buck, live near an ethnic concentration or knew someone who did, and attend a church where sermons were preached on temperance, sin and public morality. Perhaps more important, he probably knew or worked with a Klansman before he joined the movement and he almost certainly perceived societal problems in a stereotypic manner similar to that of the Anti-Saloon League and Buffalo Council of Churches' Social Services Committee. He was definitely a prohibitionist who favored social conformity and feared the destructive effects of cospolitanism. Above all else, he was an average citizen who was concerned with a decline in public morality and committed to preservation of the status quo.

CHAPTER IV

"EXPOSÉ OF TRAITORS"

Nationally, the Klan experienced a dramatic decline in membership during 1924. Tensions released by World War I and the Red Scare subsided; immigration restrictions and increased prosperity made the immigrant-radical threat seem less tenable. In addition, the much-publicized Klan-initiated violence which occurred in Louisiana and Oklahoma served to discredit the organization's expressed ideals. Locally, disillusionment with the secret order was in large part due to other factors. Criticism of the Klan in the local press and from religious groups was mounting. The climax occurred in Buffalo when a single act of Klan-initiated violence and a series of scandals transformed the Klan's image from that of a fraternal organization concerned with public morality to that of a vindictive and violent group of adulterers and thieves. In short, the public's mood changes drastically in the two years after Kleagle Mitchell announced a membership drive in Buffalo.

An alteration of the public's perception of the immigrant and his role in American society was evident in the Buffalo press by 1924. The period of Klan growth followed closely after articles and editorials depicting

the immigrant as an immoral, violent drunk who attempted to control the community's destiny by electing a "wet" mayor. The violent strikes of 1919 and 1922, the election of 1922, and the vice scandal in the same year, had increased public awareness of societal problems while an emotional editorial response to those events heightened public susceptibility to Klan propaganda. During 1923, however, criticism of the Klan replaced immigrant scare stories. Violence, once an alien trait, became associated with the southern and western Klans. Thus, the Buffalo press seemed to be in tactic agreement with the Saturday Evening Post which dismissed earlier concern over a largely mythical immigrant-radical threat as "nothing but the last symptom of war fever."[1]

Old stereotypes were resurrected occasionally. One such lapse followed the bombing of Littleton Smith's home by four unidentified men. Although the explosion destroyed the minister's home and damaged neighboring structures, no one was killed or injured. Smith was returning from a meeting in another section of the city (possibly a Klan meeting) and his family, fearful of previous threats by the "Black Hand," was staying with friends. Federal investigators, fearing the act was the first of a series against prohibitionists, searched the

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[1] Saturday Evening Post, March 22, 1924, p. 28.

wreckage for clues and guarded the homes of Charles Penfold and Robert Doherty.[2]

Public reaction was swift and emotional. The Express blamed Schwab's permissiveness for creating the climate in which individuals would seriously contemplate violence. "The outrage," the paper stated, "was another startling climax in the crime wave which has so long disgraced the community [and] may well spur both public opinion and the authorities to sterner resolution."[3] The Commercial condemned the act in the same rhetoric used to criticize the 1922 streetcar strike.

> What a heinous crime! It must necessarily be laid at the doors of the wets, who have felt the effects of the minister's activities for the enforcement of the Volstead law. It was their way of revenging themselves. Their rage carried them beyond all bounds and their criminal and murderous minds conceived the idea of making the enemy pay with his own life and the lives of his wife and children.
>
> No matter what the average citizen's attitude is towards the wet and dry issue or the part the Rev. Mr. Smith has played in recent raids or whether he is a member of the Ku Klux Klan, he cannot but denounce the perpetrators of last night's outrage. It was the diabolical work of inhuman and diseased minds.
>
> The minds of the bootleggers and their ilk who planned the attack.....are of the same piece of minds of the arch criminals who set the explosion that wrecked the Niagara Falls high-speed train line at Elmwood during the street carmen's strike.[4]

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[2] Buffalo Express, April 18 and 19, 1924.

[3] Ibid. April 19, 1924, p. 8.

[4] Buffalo Commercial, April 18, 1924, p. 4.

A public meeting, called by the Council of Churches, supported Smith's prohibition activity and demanded that city officials take prompt, stern action to enforce all laws. Four thousand people attended and threatened to request the mayor's impeachment if he failed to implement speedy and constant police action to arrest all lawbreakers.

The "drys" had a new issue; the press resurrected an old stereotype. Yet, except for the mass meeting, calm prevailed. The direct action techniques of Smith and the Klan produced criticism in the press and a split among the crusading ministers.

Events during the summer forced the Klan to test the public's disillusionment with violent tactics. The K. B. Adsign Company, a facade for the local Klan, reported in July 1924 the theft of a mailing list and $250. Two weeks later the mayor received a letter reportedly written by a dissident Batavia Klansman which offered to sell the list for $200. Although the money was never paid, an alleged telephone tip led police to a number of file boxes in the basement of the Calumet Building where the Klan rented office space. District Attorney Guy P. Moore, a prohibitionist, ordered the police to return the boxes to their legal owner. But Mayor Schwab, envisioning a different role for the list, offered the names to any paper which would publish them. No paper, however, would assume

the responsibility for publication since it was impossible to verify that the 1,752 individuals listed were Klansmen.

But published or unpublished, the list was the object of intense interest. Hundreds swarmed into police headquarters to see if suspected employees, neighbors or friends were Knights. On August 14, 3,000 people expressed their desire to examine the list. Many of those listed denied affiliation with the Klan, charging that Mayor Schwab desired to discredit their prohibition activity; others admitted a prior connection but stated that they quit after learning of the Klan's true nature. People boycotted Klan businesses; employers dismissed individuals whose names appeared on the list; and one individual, many believed, committed suicide after killing his wife and two sons rather than face his friends.[5] The police withdrew the list from public view due to the unmanageable crowds, large anti-Klan demonstrations in south Buffalo, and the bombing of a crusading minister's home in Niagara Falls. Five days later, when a second list containing the names of 1,937 Buffalo residents and 2,088 individuals from

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[5]See the Buffalo Commercial, August 7 and 8, 1924. Henry H. Lyon, an electrical engineer, was operated on for an enlarged thyroid gland in 1904. After his suicide, the autopsy indicated that a violent hormone reaction to the operation performed twenty years before caused a state of instant insanity which caused his actions. Whether publication of the list was a factor is impossible to determine. Jackson perpetuates the belief held by many Buffalonians, p. 174.

surrounding areas became available, access was limited to reporters. A court battle eventually opened the list for public viewing.

It is impossible to determine how Samuel M. Fleischmann, a local publisher, obtained 3,884 of the names which he published in pamphlet form in September. But publish them he did and copies, available at news stands and on street corners, were clearly best sellers. Delighted with the success of this initial venture, Fleischmann offered $3,000 to anyone who could provide the names of the additional 3,000 Klansmen he believed lived in Buffalo. His offer went unaccepted perhaps because of fear of reprisals, or because a list of such length did not exist.[6]

Even before publication, the release of the lists removed the protection offered by Klan hoods. Hidden behind masks, Klansmen were able to enter churches, raid roadhouses, and intimidate individuals without fear of identification or the disapproval of employers, friends or family. The prospect of being attacked by a hooded Klansman without the benefit of legal recourse increased the Klan's fear-producing potential. But without the

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[6]Available information indicated that there were 3,689 Buffalo Klansmen. Jackson's estimate of 7,000 members appears to be based upon personal opinion rather than on the information in the local press or the available list. Four thousand members would be a more accurate estimate. See Jackson, p. 239.

protection of hoods, individuals became susceptible to the onus the organization acquired by 1924.[7]

Many Klansmen believed the breach of Klan secrecy required punishment. The lives of Mayor Schwab and his family were repeatedly threatened. Although the mayor initially dismissed the threats as the work of cranks, additional security officers were assigned to guard his house.[8] The real victim of Klan wrath, however, was not Schwab but the Klansman who gave the list to the mayor in the first place. The chief suspect was Edward Obertean who joined the Klan in 1922 when he was still a member of the Buffalo Police Department. Although officially removed from the payroll in 1923, he was assigned as a special undercover agent under a Deputy Police Commissioner charged with the responsibility of ridding the city of the Klan.[9] Obertean's fear of Klan revenge increased steadily, reaching a peak in late August when he was called a traitor at a Klan meeting.

In order to determine Obertean's complicity, Thomas H. Austin, a North Carolina Klan investigator, arrived in Buffalo

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[7]A similar occurrence contributed to the decline of the movement in Chicago, An anti-Klan paper systematically published the names of area Klansmen. See Jackson, pp. 104 and 125.

[8]Buffalo Express, August 28, 1924, p. 14; September 14, 1924, sec. 8, p. 1.

[9]Another version asserted that Obertean joined the Klan in 1924. Since his membership application was Number 227, it is safe to assume he joined in 1922.

during the third week of August. On August 31, a confrontation occurred. Austin and Carl Sturm, a local Klansman, met at the home of Buffalo Kleagle George C. Bryant and the three drove through the Kensington Avenue section of the city until Austin noticed Obertean's automobile. A long chase ensued. Finally Obertean stopped and jumped out of his car. Sturm and Bryant leaped from their car as Obertean fired the first of nine shots exchanged between the men. Obertean and Austin died immediately and Bryant was seriously wounded.[10]

Buffalo was shocked. The Express compared the double murder with memories of the west and south during the 1860's.[11] The Courier recounted the progression of Klan violence from the southwest to the northeast and pleaded "in the name of common sense" that the country "be rid of the KKK so that law may be enforced by the duly designated individuals."[12] The Evening News compared the Klan to the Know-Nothing Party of the 1950's which attempted to "poison American ideals and political framework" and expressed confidence that the assassination would mark

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[10]For the best information on the event, see the Buffalo Express, September 1 to 5, 1924.

[11]Ibid. September 2, 1924, p. 8.

[12]Buffalo Courier, September 3, 1924, p. 6.

the passing of the Klan from Buffalo.[13] The Buffalo Volksfreund was equally confident concerning the Klan's demise while the Dziennik Dla-Wszystkich did not express an opinion, possibly for fear of reprisals.[14]

The assassination alone might not have been sufficient to totally discredit the organization had it not been for other events which re-enforced the public's disillusionment with the Klan. A police officer arrested Arthur C. Acker, an admitted Klansman, for illegally selling contraceptives in Buffalo.[15] Another officer noticed a parked car along a lonely portion of Delavan Road. He arrested the couple in the front seat for "outraging public decency." The two people identified themselves as Reverent Charles Penfold and his wife. Four days later, however, Freda Lohr, a married mother of three and a choir member in Penfold's congregation, confessed that she was with the minister and would plead guilty in court. After admitting his guilt, Penfold was sentenced to thirty days in jail as 800 people stood outside

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[13] Buffalo Evening News, September 1, 1924, p. 8; September 16, 1924, p. 8.

[14] Buffalo Volksfreund, September 4, 1924, p. 4.

[15] Buffalo Express, September 2, 1924, p. 1. A similar event occurred in Atlanta when a Klansman was arrested for drunken driving. See Jackson, p. 34.

the courthouse jeering and booing. To make matters worse, six Klansmen protested the trial by burning crosses and stopping cars near the spot where the police arrested Penfold. Compounding their mistake, Smith and other Klan leaders protested what they perceived as police prosecution of prohibitionists.[16] Smith made a similar error in judgment when he arrested two suspected drug smugglers in late September and presented the evidence to the police after briefing a number of reporters. Chemical analysis of the seized "opium" indicated that it was baking powder. Although Smith may have been the victim of a deliberate attempt at deception, his reputation never recovered.[17] An official investigation of Klan finances proved more damaging than the actions of individuals associated with the secret order. The District Attorney's office discovered the misappropriation of over $20,000 in initiation dues by Klan leaders.[18]

Public disillusionment with the Klan was not solely due to its newly acquired image as a group of violent-prone, adulterous, swindling individuals. Prohibition failed to

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[16] Buffalo Express. September 20 to 28, 1924.

[17] Ibid. September 30, 1924, p. 14; October 2, 1924, p. 4.

[18] For information on the "John Doe Proceedings," see the Buffalo Evening News, September 20, 1924, to January 24, 1925. Local misappropriation of initiation dues was a common occurrence in many areas of the country.

achieve any positive results. Bootleggers prospered almost everywhere and Canadian liquor sold well in the north. The number of individuals arrested in Buffalo for public intoxication between 1923 and 1933 never fell below 10,000, a slight increase compared with the annual figures for 1919-1922.[19] The extent of the problem remained constant while the public's concern declined. Legislation was ineffective except where rigorous enforcement remained constant. In the final analysis, the coercive methods of the prohibitionists accomplished little that was beneficial to the cause.

A larger problem, inherent to movements for social control, also had an effect. Born in fear, the Klan defined societal problems in demagogic and conspiratorial terms. Its "aggressively moralistic stance" depicted good and evil in absolute terms requiring immediate action without reflection. As time passed, many businessmen and professionals, who were normally the first to respond to Klan membership drives, defected due to the Klan's violence, blatant bigotry and the opposition of many in positions of authority. Many of those in lower-level socio-economic groups remained in the organization since, as a group, they tend to exhibit a greater tendency toward "ethnic

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[19]Buffalo Police Department, Reports, 1915-1933.

prejudice, political authoritarianism and chiliastic transvaluational religion."[20] A social application of Gresham's law applied. As more lower-class individuals joined, more socially prominent individuals defected; and as the socially prominent defected, the more militant lower-level groups achieved greater control thus forcing more businessmen and professionals to defect. The Klan's appeal to "true believers" was its greatest source of strength and its greatest weakness.

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[20]Lipset and Raab, p. 117; Seymour Martin Lipset, "Democracy and Working-class Authoritarianism," American Sociological Review, XXIV (August 1959), pp. 482-501.

CONCLUSION

An examination of a social movement in a limited georgraphic context should afford an opportunity to offer generalizations about the broader movement providing evidence for common characteristics as well as those which are unique. An examination of the Klan in Buffalo provides just such an opportunity. The local response to Klan appeals and actions, the use of persuasive tactics, and the change to coercion and violence which resulted in a decline in membership, were typical of Klan activity elsewhere. Indeed, there is reason to believe that Provisional Klan Number 5 better typified the movement than did more active local Klans which have received greater attention due to their violent nature or intense political activity. More important, its membership conforms to the wide social cross-section which historians have assumed to be the basis of Klan support. But whereas previous studies have offered no substantial supportive evidence--the statistics in Kenneth Jackson's study of the urban Klan are fragmentary at best--analyses of Buffalo Klansmen provided the kind of extensive and reliable information that transforms assumptions into hard evidence.[1]

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[1]See Jackson, pp. 62-63, 108, 114, 119-120, 153 and 225.

The members of Buffalo's Klan were average citizens from every section of society. Their perception of societal problems conformed with the views presented by the Klan even before Klan organizers arrived in the city. At no time did the Klan create public susceptibility to its appeals but it did accentuate individual resonance.

The evidence of peer group, family and clerical influence adds measurably to our understanding of individual motivation. Simply stating that personal resonance to prevalent stereotypes or Klan propaganda influenced concerned citizens to join the Klan fails to consider individual socialization and its impact on decisions. In his study of the Louisiana Klan, Kenneth Harrell mentions the existence of numerous local Klan charter membership lists which indicate that the Klan attempted to recruit "substantial people in the community" in its initial membership drives.[2] Some of those lists are from small towns and rural areas which tend to exhibit a higher degree of interpersonal contacts than urban areas. A close examination of such lists may indicate further evidence of peer group, family and clerical influence which contributed to an individual's susceptibility to Klan propaganda.

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[2]Harrell, p. 296. The lists are among the papers of William D. Robinson in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The role of the press, especially the local press, and its relationship with public susceptibility to Klan appeals needs to be emphasized for it was a significant factor in the Klan's Buffalo success. The importance of publicity given the Klan by the New York World's exposé, Congressional hearings and local papers in the Southwest and Indiana is widely accepted.[3] In each case, the Klan was given a public forum to present its views, announce its activities, and call for support. Its success was partially dependent on its ability to thus sensitize the public to its existence and its solutions to societal problems.

The impact of the Buffalo press was qualitatively different. The papers helped to create an immigrant-radical stereotype which stirred a number of Protestant ministers to form committees to enforce public morality before Klan organizers arrived and skillfully incited public fears. Ironically, the Commercial, which vehemently opposed the Klan, was probably most responsible for the creation of the stereotype. Nor were national publications blameless. The Saturday Evening Post published Kenneth Roberts' nativist articles which characterized eastern and southern Europeans

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[3]See Harrell, p. 153; Alexander, pp. 8-19; and John A. Davis, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1920-1930: A Historical Study" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1966), pp. 111-112.

as drunken, shiftless, violent individuals and called for immigration restrictions. The link between exclusion of would-be immigrants and social control of those already in this country was implied. The creation of the stereotype resulted in the establishment of precursor groups of the Klan which further increased public susceptibility.

The press possessed the power to promote as well as discredit the Klan. In Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis and Buffalo, anti-Klan editorials affected the public's opinion of the organization. The change in editorial policy away from the alien threat to an outspoken anti-Klan stance not only made it increasingly difficult to recruit additional members in Buffalo but also limited the Klan's ability to retain the support it possessed. Immigrants no longer constituted the primary threat to social stability. Violent Klan activities in Louisiana and Oklahoma caused many people to view the Klan as a personification of violence-prone radicals who, they believed, threatened American life in the early 1920's. In contrast, press support of the Klan's opposition to Governor John C. Walton in Oklahoma was a significant factor in its success in state politics.[4] In addition to promoting the Klan's activities, various Oklahoma

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[4]Alexander, pp. 138-139; also see Jackson, pp. 43, 47 and 87 for the impact of anti-Klan editorials.

papers condoned and supported the Klan's goals. That support tended to silence hesitant critics as well as influence many to join the movement.

Those in positions of authority or influence had an impact similar to that of the press. In Atlanta, Dallas, Tulsa, Memphis, and Portland, Oregon, the police openly sympathized with the Klan and ignored illegal Klan acts and anti-Klan complaints.[5] This hesitancy of the police to enforce the laws against the Klan allowed greater mobility in an area and relative freedom of action. Public ceremonies and demonstrations would be tacitly, if not officially, sanctioned. The lack of support in city hall and in Buffalo's police department is, therefore, extremely significant. Every roadhouse raid occurred outside the city limits where Schwab lacked jurisdiction and where town police lacked the necessary manpower to combat the secret order. The Klan was forced to bypass the more notable examples of prohibition violations and vice conditions in the core area and concentrate on less serious instances. Their level of success was thereby limited.

In other areas of the country, support from those in positions of authority assisted the Klan's search for recruits. Henry Ford's anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant views were well known in the Detroit area. Rumors persisted

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[5]Lipset and Raab, p. 124; Jackson, p. 38, and Alexander, pp. 67 and 150.

prior to 1925 that Ford offered the Klan financial support. Whether or not he was a Klansman is not important. That many people associated his views with those of the Klan is. That association influenced many to join the Klan since they were able to perceive the organization as respectable.[6] On the other hand, no respected businessman or official of Ford's stature openly supported or was associated with the Klan in Buffalo. Many individuals who agreed with the Klan's goals but questioned the wisdom of its acts might have decided to join if they could have identified the Klan with a person whom they respected. Thus without the support of men of authority or influence, the Buffalo Klan's success was limited to its ability to sensitize and influence the opinions of potential members in an area. The absence of support or active criticism made that task more difficult.

As the opinions of prominent individuals had an impact upon Klan success, so too, the size of the local Klan and the number of potential members in an area was a determinant in the type and extent of activity. In northern Louisiana where parishes were predominantly Protestant, the Klan was relatively powerful and active while in predominantly Catholic southern Louisiana, the Klan experienced problems in recruiting members.[7] Similarly, in predominantly

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[6]Jackson, pp. 127, 142 and 274.

[7]Harrell, pp. 120, and 268-279.

Catholic Buffalo, the Klan recruited approximately nine per cent of the potential membership pool by 1924 and prospects for further growth were probably limited.[8] Although the change in tactics in 1924 was largely dependent upon a leadership decision and the absence of positive accomplishments, it is also possible that local leaders believed the Klan was no longer capable of growth. Coercion under these circumstances would not alienate any potential converts and would probably strengthen the commitment of many in the organization.

Even if this relatively small pool of potential members is considered, the extent of activity and violence was extremely low in comparison to more notable examples in the south and west. Klan violence in Louisiana occurred in small towns and farmlands which tend to exhibit a higher level of concern over social morality.[9] In Williamson County, Illinois, for instance, the pattern of Klan violence was an extension of an accepted vigilante tradition which continued into the period of gang warfare in the 1930's. By the same token, Klan violence in Tulsa was typical of that city's "sordid history of violence" which included

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[8]This figure is based upon the estimation of 4,000 Buffalo Klansmen. The number of white native males over twenty-one years of age, with native parentage, was approximately 45,000 in 1924. See Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, III, p. 708.

[9]Harrell, pp. 268-279.

lynching, race riots and vigilantism.[10] The fraternal nature of the Buffalo Klan is therefore typical of most local Klans where traditions of violent social control were absent. Although many instances of Klan-initiated violence exist throughout the country, they seem to be smaller in number than one would expect from a movement of the Klan's size and nature.

It would be easy to condemn the Klan as a violent, ultra-conservative, nativist organization. Murders, lynchings, and whippings occurred in far too many localities and far too often. That view, however, seems overly simplified when applied to the Klan in Buffalo. Provisional Klan Number 5 grew out of the public's fears and frustrations over a decline in social morality and immigrant activities. It was a fraternal organization which attempted to solve the societal problems its members perceived. Condemnation of its blatant bigotry would be too easy; understanding how and why Klansmen reacted to societal strain in certain ways is more difficult.

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[10] Jackson, p. 85; Paul Angle, Bloody Williamson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 144-154. It would be interesting to compare lynching statistics for a number of small areas with the instances of Klan-initiated violence. The figures compiled by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on lynching between 1889 and 1918 revealed that 219 people in the north, 156 in the west, and 2,834 in the south, died at the hands of lynch mobs. Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Louisiana led the list. Klan violence was correspondingly high in those areas. See NAACP, Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 (New York: 1919), pp. 29-41. Another comparison of the cities which experienced race riots before 1920 and the level of Klan activity may also prove enlightening.

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INTERVIEW:

Kunz, Reverend Albert, Pastor of the Riverside United Presbyterian Church, formerly the Ontario Street Presbyterian Church. Private interview held on October 22, 1971.