

6-2012

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The World War II Home Front in New York State: Evaluating the Success of the Office of
Civilian Mobilization in Stimulating Volunteer Efforts

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Honors in the Department of History

Department of History
Union College
June, 2012

ABSTRACT

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Evaluating the Success of the Office of Civilian
Mobilization in Stimulating Volunteer Efforts

The image of a unified home front of individuals and communities who rallied their efforts for a patriotic cause during World War Two is a widely held popular belief, supported by some scholars. This thesis examines the validity of the claim and whether or not mobilization efforts were a natural disposition for many Americans. Did citizens join together and engage in grass roots mobilization to strengthen the home front or merely act in their own self interest and only take substantial action when put under pressure by the government? The study relies on the records of the New York State War Council, specifically of the Office of Civilian Mobilization (OCM), which was responsible for establishing volunteer programs on the home front.

The records reveal that the Office strenuously put forth efforts to push the localities to do more, increased its control over the counties' and cities' war efforts, and eventually conducted programs on its own. A great effort on the state Office's part was required to get the majority of New Yorkers to serve their communities on the terms set out by the organization. In some counties, such as Schenectady, local war councils were effective in stimulating volunteer efforts. However, Schenectady was more of an exception because it head-started many of its programs prior to state intervention. Participation in New York State mobilization efforts was therefore quite irregular and the war did not galvanize patriotism to the extent that was popularized by earlier sources.

The OCM's efforts also reveal the central role that women played in the efforts to mobilize home front volunteers due to numbers that participated in their programs, specifically as Block Leaders. In deciding to volunteer instead of join the labor force, many women chose

the “traditional” avenue for serving the war effort. This fact also demonstrates that the war helped to maintain instead the conventional attitude about women and their place in society.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

On December 7th, 1941, the Japanese America was drawn into a world war for the second time. Having suffered from a Great Depression for almost a decade, the War provided the economic recovery the country needed. Higher wages, an income tax, and large scale mass production gave America a chance to fight for a just cause and return to a prosperous leading world power. Thousands of aircrafts, naval vessels, tanks, and guns were produced in a short period of time. America's economy was not the only aspect of society affected by the war. Some groups of people, such as women, were able to achieve new opportunities by joining the work force. While others, such a Japanese Americans lost all their rights when they were placed in internment camps. From the absence of a father or brother who was serving overseas to rationing important materials such as rubber, most families felt the impact of the war at home.

Another important aspect of World War II was the ways in which the states were able to mobilize their citizens and therefore contribute significantly to the war effort. According to author Karl Drew Hartzell, America's success in winning the war did not only depend on the strength and vigor of its soldiers but on the actions of the 48 states; the operation of such a large scale endeavor could not be handled from Washington alone.¹ The states were responsible for implementing the national government's policies and creating their own war programs that were vital for carrying out the war effectively. One of the states that played an important role in the effort and created a comprehensive war program was New York.

With ten percent of the country's population, New York had a large responsibility in war mobilization. It was also one of the wealthiest states, largest manufacturing centers, and held the nation's major port. Most importantly, New York had \$21.5 million worth of war contracts by

¹ Karl Drew Hartzell, *The Empire State at War: World War II* (New York: The State of New York, 1949), xi.

the end of the war.² How was New York able to accomplish such a large feat? According to Mr. Hartzell, It was not only the state's population and availability of large production plants but the skilled leadership and organization of its war council that was able to successfully mobilize an entire state.³ The purpose of the War Council, established originally as the State Defense Council in 1940, was to coordinate the state's efforts to sufficiently mobilize civilians and therefore contribute effectively to the war effort. New York State's War Council was therefore concerned with establishing programs that recruited volunteers for every aspect of the home front, training and educating the public, and dealing with any issues that arose in specific cities with regards to mobilization. A section of the War Council that played an important role in the daily lives of citizens, especially women, was the Division of Civilian Mobilization.

What began as a small division of Women's participation on the State Defense Council eventually turned into one of three main components of the New York State War Council, and would come to involve over one million volunteers in defense efforts.⁴ Just as protecting citizen's lives and property was important during the war, the mass mobilization and coordination of volunteers for community services would serve a significant purpose in fighting the war at home. The main purpose of what came to be known as the Division of Civilian Mobilization was to allow ways for individuals, particularly women, on the home front to aid America in the war. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, it appeared that many Americans were ready and eager to help in any way they could. The State had to come up with an organized and efficient method to utilize their energies and resources towards the war effort.⁵ The Volunteer Division was initially a small operation which placed and organized volunteers. It eventually

² Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, xi-xii.

³ Ibid, xii.

⁴ Ibid, 129.

⁵ Ibid, 128.

turned into a comprehensive network of over 600 volunteer offices that directed and carried out state mobilization programs while also promoting community services. Whether it was by providing leadership opportunities for civilians or a day care center for the new working mother, the programs created by the Division of Civilian Mobilization covered numerous aspects of citizens' lives and affected a large number of New Yorkers in one way or another.

The work of this office was significant for utilizing the skills and energies of those who wanted to make home front mobilization a success. Although not every state had large numbers of citizens who were willing and ready to do what they could at home to win the war. One finding of this thesis was that civilian mobilization was not a natural disposition for many and had to be driven by the efforts of the Division of Civilian Mobilization. In New York, the Division imposed more and more on the local war councils to fully mobilize their communities for civilian services. As demonstrated by its records, the State Division of Civilian Mobilization strenuously put forth efforts to push the localities to do more, increase its control over the counties' and cities' war efforts, and eventually conduct programs and activities on its own. Some local war councils, such as in Schenectady County, were able to efficiently mobilize individuals and make a substantial effort in fighting the war at home. However, Schenectady served as a model example because it took many initiatives on its own and was therefore an exception. For the most part, many local councils did not meet the hopes and expectations of the state-level planners. By examining the Office of Civilian Mobilization's records, it is evident that great efforts on the state officials' part were required to get the majority of New Yorkers to serve their communities, especially initially, on the terms set out by the organization. The New York State Office of Civilian Mobilization's efforts during the war help to shed light on a more realistic view of what the home front looked like and how people experienced the war.

Participation in New York State mobilization efforts was therefore quite irregular and the war did not galvanize patriotism to the extent that was popularized by the media and earlier historical sources. This revelation is part of a larger debate in the scholarly sources on whether or not World War II was the “good” war in that it unified the majority of Americans to sacrifice their efforts for the common goal of winning the war.

It is only in recent decades that the significant wartime home front has been viewed as an important subject of historical research and become a popular topic of scholarly work.⁶ As a result, there is now a wide selection of scholarly sources that look into the various aspects of the effects of the war. Readers are now offered lively disputes over a variety of subjects, such as how the war impacted the home front and specific groups of people like women.

According to author John Jeffries, there were two dominant frameworks that shaped the analysis of the war’s domestic impacts: the idea that World War II was both a true watershed and the “good” war in American history.⁷ In Jeffries opinion, it is these two ideas that provided the structure for understanding the war years for their complexities and historical context. Jeffries also described how some authors have disputed these popular views. These changes in interpretations came about during the war’s 50th anniversary when long term effects could be analyzed and the war’s impact reevaluated.⁸ Jeffries explained how the two frameworks emerged in the first place and could now be disputed. Similar to Jeffries, author Allan Winkler argued that in the post war era many American historians primarily focused on the Great Depression and the urgent threat of the Cold War rather than the war.⁹ When America entered Vietnam, more scholars began to look back at World War II more systematically and primarily

⁶ Allan M. Winkler, “World War II Home Front: A Historiography,” *OAH Magazine of History* 16 (2002): 5.

⁷ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The WWII Home Front* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 1996), 4.

⁸ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 8.

⁹ Winkler, “World War II Home front: A Historiography,” 5.

looked into how the war was fought. They also emphasized the notion that World War II was the “good” war. The war was “good” because Americans had contributed greatly to an allied victory while fighting valiantly and with honor; democracy had triumphed.¹⁰ America had also emerged from the war as one of the wealthiest nations in the world, leaving the Great Depression in its past. Most importantly, the war was for the most part fully supported at home and fought by a country unified behind the sole purpose of taking down the Axis powers. The sources focused on the idea that America emerged a superpower and defeated one of the most threatening manifestations of evil ever seen in human history. The war years were therefore remembered as the golden days.

America’s involvement in Vietnam was also contrasted with the country’s World War II experience, sharpening this sentiment. Many Americans did not support Vietnam because they viewed it as the war where American soldiers committed war crimes, suffered severe post traumatic stress, and died for reasons which perhaps they and their families did not understand. Many Americans did not truly believe in America’s involvement in Vietnam because it was used as a tool for U.S. national interests. Vietnam was also the war that United States did not clearly “win.”¹¹ While the country had recently emerged from the “bad” war of Vietnam, Americans needed to be reminded of their “glory days;” when they had helped to defeat Nazis, left a Great Depression in its wake, and created a better future for their country. For these reasons, the myth of World War II as the “good” war emerged largely in the post Vietnam era by scholars of the time period.

When the time came for the 50th anniversary of World War II in the 1990s, the scholarly consensus had begun to shift. These scholars have argued that World War II was not the

¹⁰ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 9.

¹¹ Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 15.

mythical “good” war that so many remembered. The long term effects could be analyzed and understood for their negative implications on the country as a whole. World War II could now be seen for its psychological impacts on veterans, the discriminatory practices that continued to exist at home and in the military, and its internment of thousands of innocent Japanese Americans. The war also permitted the government to become very coercive and intrusive, tended to help the rich more than the poor, and disrupted communities across the country.¹² These examples demonstrated why World War II could no longer be depicted as the golden days in our country’s history.

Many of the sources which helped to shape the “good” war view focused on similar themes in order to effectively prove their opinions. These types of sources largely discussed how the war inspired nationalism, created better opportunities for minorities, and ended the Great Depression that had plagued America for so long. For example, Keith L. Nelson’s *The Impact of War on America Life: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (1971) examined the impacts of the major wars in America’s history and was composed of articles written by other scholars. The section on World War II dealt with the war’s impact on America’s economy, politics, society, and culture. Nelson’s own brief analysis of the war claimed that it was in many ways “a less shattering experience” than the First World War.¹³ According to Nelson, World War II left America with a position of command because its own territory was free of destruction and it had recovered from an economic collapse.¹⁴ In order to support his view about the war, Nelson included specific articles that paralleled his own opinions. For example, the article included by Ernest W. Burgess argued that the status of women reached incredible heights while Richard

¹² Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 10-11.

¹³ Keith L. Nelson, edit., *The Impact of War on American Life: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (New York: Holt, Rinhart and Winston, Inc., 1971), 93.

¹⁴ Nelson, *Impact American Life*, 94.

Dalfiume wrote about how World War II served as the “seedbed” for the Civil Rights movement.¹⁵ Nelson also incorporated an article written by Merle Curti, which argued that the war created a strong sense of nationalism; this was especially evident overseas where an effort was seen to promote systems and ideals similar to that of America. Curti argued that Many Americans felt proud of what their country had accomplished and that “no war had been fought with as much unanimity as World War II.”¹⁶

Richard Polenberg’s *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (1972) also focused on the positive achievements of the war. For example, his chapter on the social impact of the war stated his view that sacrifices were made by everyone on the home front, but that these could not really be characterized as sacrifices because Americans wanted to contribute to the war.¹⁷ Most people believed that their country was fighting for a good cause and they wanted to help in any way they could. There were “victory gardens” planted, drives hosted to collect valuable resources such as plastic and metal, and corps of auxiliary police were organized.¹⁸ Polenberg also conceded that racial injustice continued, but that the war brought about the beginnings of the government’s undermining of discrimination, such as with the Supreme Court’s decision to ban white-only primaries.¹⁹ Like Nelson, Polenberg used both nationalism and the slight changes in race relations as examples of positive impacts of the wartime era.

Another source that helped to fashion the myth of the “good” war was Gerald D. Nash’s *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-1945* (1979). Nash’s main

¹⁵ Ernest W. Burgess, “The Changing Family,” and Richard Dalfiume, “Beginning the Negro Revolution,” in *Impact of War on American Life: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, ed. Keith L. Nelson (New York: Holt, Rinhart and Winston, Inc., 1971), 133.

¹⁶Merle Curti, “Militant Nationalism,” in *Impact of War on American Life: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, ed. Keith L. Nelson (New York: Holt, Rinhart and Winston, Inc., 1971),159.

¹⁷ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 132.

¹⁸ Polenberg, *War and Society*, 133.

¹⁹ Ibid, 243.

argument was that the Second World War dragged America out of the depression and into the role of a super power and also allowed for minorities to attain great achievements. Like Nelson and Polenberg, Nash argued that the war created ways for minorities to attain some aspects of equality. They had new job opportunities, federal regulations requiring fair employment practices, and could now serve in the army.²⁰ Urbanization also led to the migration of large groups of minorities to cities, therefore lending them more political power.²¹ Nash also agreed that not all the impacts of World War II were positive, but that it should be remembered most importantly for ending the Great Depression and transforming the mood of Americans from cynicism and dread to that of “optimism and high expectations of the future.”²²

Paul D. Casdorph's *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II* (1989) also contributed to the sentiment that World War II was the “good war.” Casdorph's book looked specifically into the domestic impacts of the Second World War and believed that it altered every type of relationship in one way or another. Most importantly, the war put money back into Americans' pockets, causing the “good times to roll along.”²³ Casdorph concluded that America exited the war much better off than when it had entered, and that the war years were generally ones of happiness for those who participated in them. Casdorph described a picture of a prosperous nation where nationalism had reached new heights; veterans had returned home with the common feeling that they had served a just cause.²⁴ In characterizing the sentiment of those Americans who did not fight or lose loved ones, “World War II was nothing short of wonderful.” After all, America had helped to defeat Hitler and Tojo and emerged from

²⁰ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1979), 144.

²¹ Nash, *Organizing America*, 144.

²² Ibid, 158.

²³ Paul D. Casdorph, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during World War II* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), ix.

²⁴ Casdorph, *Good Times Roll*, 257.

the war with their territory unscathed. Casdorph's book left the readers with a sense that it was indeed the "good war" for those Americans who had experienced it.²⁵

Another book that has often been placed in the same category as Nash's, Nelson's, and Casdorph's works was Studs Terkel *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (1989). Terkel's book served to tell the story of World War II through the words of those who actually experienced it. The stories of nurses, civilians, soldiers, and laborers are explained on the pages through interviews conducted by the author. Although Terkel does not leave out the horrific, gruesome, and awful aspects that many people witnessed and experienced during the war. At the same time, *"The Good War"* carried a positive theme throughout and depicted an image of a country that emerged from WWII a better, stronger, and invigorated nation. For example, one veteran claimed, "I honestly feel grateful for having been a witness to an event as monumental as anything in history and, in a very small way, a participant."²⁶

Starting in the 1980s, a series of books began to challenge the view held by many Americans that World War II was the "good war". One of the first sources to do this was Paul Fussell's *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (1989). Fussell paints a very different picture than the one depicted by Nash or Casdorph. A World War II veteran himself, Fussell began his book by directly stating how "For the past fifty years the allied war has been...romanticized almost beyond recognition by the sentimental...I have tried to balance the scales."²⁷ *Wartime* took the reader into the battlefield and allowed them to see what the war really looked like from a soldier's perspective. Fussell described the soldier resorting to alcohol to relieve the stress, fear, and boredom; it became difficult for many soldiers to perform their

²⁵ Ibid, 248.

²⁶ Studs Terkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 16.

²⁷ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix.

duties without some “alcohol insulation.”²⁸ He also discussed how citizens were often deprived of the resources that had previously been easily obtainable. His book had a section on rationing certain materials, such as rubber, paper, whiskey, and other common conveniences to demonstrate a negative impact of the war on the home front. Many Americans experienced “distinct shock” when they were told by the government that they could no longer buy what they wanted because visible consumption traditionally indicated a level of wealth and governed the “psychological relations” among individuals.²⁹ This constriction on American’s rights as consumers was therefore a “heavy blow to the psyche.”³⁰ His final chapter was perhaps the most important because it argued that the real war experienced by the soldiers would never be known by those who did not endure it nor accurately portrayed to the public.³¹ According to Fussell, the optimistic propaganda and publicity surrounding the war had created an experience so opposite the truth that the soldiers would never be able to convey to the public what their experiences were truly like on the front; the home front had no idea of the reality that was World War II. With a powerful conclusion, “...the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible. As experience, thus, the suffering was wasted. America has not yet understood what the Second World War was like...”³²

Michael C. C. Adams’ *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (1994) also argued against the popular “good war” view. Adams’ book differs from Fussell in that he did not use personal accounts or primary sources to make his conclusions. Instead, he primarily draws on what other authors have used as evidence for the “good war” myth in order to provide a new analysis of similar evidence to paint a more realistic picture of the home front. Adams does

²⁸ Fussell, *Wartime*, 101.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 101.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 195.

³¹ *Ibid*, 269.

³² *Ibid*, 268.

mention Fussell as an excellent source for understanding the war front and for also paralleling his own views that the Allied victory had obscured the wars imperfect realities.³³ Adams wanted his readers to understand the war for all of its dimensions and challenge the oversimplified and glorified image of the war that had been created by earlier scholars and the popular media. Adams began by describing how America had essentially “reinvented” its past.³⁴ He argued that over time popular memory became a selective memory and everything about the war that had been difficult and caused hardship was forgotten; a better past was created.³⁵ In Adams’ view, World War II was a brutalizing experience for many that caused mass destruction, permitted for injustices to occur, and left physical and mental scars on veterans. The war also completely disrupted the fabric of American society that nurtured conformity and only created more obstacles for many minorities.³⁶ His work did not demean the achievements of the United States and democracy in the war, but wanted the reader to understand all of its complexities.

The views of authors such as Adams, now held by many other historians, has even caused some initial proponents of the “good war” thesis to publish works that refuted their original publications. One of these authors was Richard Polenberg. Twenty years after writing his book, *War and Society* (1972), he published an article titled, “The Good War? A Reappraisal of How World War II Affected American Society,” in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. He began by describing why in fact World War II had primarily been seen as a positive experience for America: it was fought by people united under one cause, brought immense prosperity, and created opportunities for many minority groups.³⁷ At the same time,

³³ Adams, *Best War Ever*, 137.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 154.

³⁷ Richard Polenberg, “The Good War? A Reappraisal of How World War II Affected American Society,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100 (1992): 296.

new revelations had come to light that caused Polenberg to reevaluate how the war truly impacted the home front. He discussed how during the war the government had imposed extensive censorship, labor had “subordinated” the interests of their workers for the government, and racist practices continued both in the work place and military.³⁸

Polenberg’s original book, *War and Society* (1972) also evaluated another important aspect of the war that was important for understanding its impact on the home front. This was whether or not the war radically altered the fabric and character of American society. His book therefore focused on another important World War II debate that has been the topic of many World War II sources: had the war directly caused changes that occurred on the home front or merely accelerated changes that were part of trends that had been unfolding in America for years? It was therefore not only a question of whether it had positive or negative impacts, but whether or not these impacts were caused by the war or merely hastened by it. Putting it clearly in his prologue, “Pearl Harbor marked more than the passing of a decade; it signified the end of an old era and the beginning of a new.”³⁹ *War and Society* pointed out how the government’s power greatly increased because of the war. World War II had allowed for the federal government to employ more Americans, spend more money, and increased the number of interactions with civilians. Most importantly, the war era required a government that exercised greater control over the lives of its citizens.⁴⁰ The war also changed America’s foreign policy; it was no longer about whether the country should try and remain neutral and isolated but how much she should intervene in other nation’s affairs, especially when it came to the threat of

³⁸ Polenberg, “The Good War?” 299.

³⁹ Polenberg, *War and Society*, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 240.

democracy.⁴¹ In general, Polenberg's book argued that the war was a watershed in American history.

John Blum's *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (1976) also addressed the question of whether World War II was a watershed in American history or a catalyst for change but reached a different conclusion than Polenberg. Blum's book was not so much a complete analysis of the home front as a whole but rather looked at specific aspects of American culture and politics during the war era and how they were interrelated. *V was For Victory* attempted to explain how the wartime experience influenced and often times shaped the expectations of many Americans for the future of their country both at home and abroad.⁴² Contrary to Polenberg, Blum emphasized the changes which occurred on the home front as continuities rather than direct results of the war. For example, he discussed how similar to other minority groups, African Americans suffered from white hostility during the war. However, black oppression at the hands of whites had existed since the 17th century and was therefore not a new aspect of American society. Even while America was preparing for the war, many black Americans found themselves excluded from industry.⁴³ As Blum pointed out, numerous black Americans were extremely unhappy with the prejudice that constantly constrained their lives. Prior to America's entry in the war, blacks began to take action to gain equality. For example, A. Phillip Randolph, soon to be head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, began planning a Negro march on Washington beginning in January 1941. Randolph wanted to put pressure on the Federal Government to demand the rights of blacks in National

⁴¹ Ibid, 242.

⁴² John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), xi.

⁴³ Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 185.

Defense Employment and the armed forces.⁴⁴ The war had essentially intensified the determined will of blacks to attain freedom and equality because many African Americans had joined an inherently segregated war effort. President Roosevelt responded with an Executive Order that established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to ensure that there was no discrimination in the hiring practices in the government and defense industries. Although, the Committee proved limited and discrimination practices still took place during the war. Nevertheless, the sentiment for change which eventually took place with regards to blacks' rights began to take root prior to America's entry into the war. Blum also used the struggle of African Americans to demonstrate how the American culture influenced politics at the time; "In wartime, indeed, politics reflected as much as ever the many aspects of American culture...and, not the least, the desires and the anguish of the outsiders, especially the blacks."⁴⁵

The second edition of Allan Winkler's *Home Front U.S.A.: America During World War II*, (2000) reinforced the watershed theory proposed by Polenberg. *Home Front* dealt primarily with the way American society changed during the war time period by discussing how the economy, politics, and society were impacted by the war. Originally published in 1986, Winkler argued how World War II truly transformed all aspects of American society and was a watershed in the country's history. Winkler pointed out how during the war period there was a demographic shift, some minority groups were allowed social and economic gains (while others were not), industry and big business grew substantially, and the federal government's power also increased.⁴⁶ In Winkler's conclusion he addressed how not all of these changes could be seen as factors of the war and some were indeed accelerated by the war. Nevertheless, Winkler's main

⁴⁴ Ibid, 186.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 220.

⁴⁶ Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front, U.S.A.: America during World War II* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2000), 107-108.

point is that the war completely transformed America's way of life. The changes American society experienced were extensive, had both positive and negative effects, and impacted every American's life at home in one way or another. According to Winkler, "...the changes that occurred between 1940 and 1945 stand out vividly...the transformation the United States experienced was profound."⁴⁷ With his second edition, Winkler addressed in his prologue the new literature which had been written about World War II since his first publication. He discussed how the war had generally been viewed as a positive experience because of the opportunities it offered many people, the recovery it created of the U.S. economy from the Great Depression, and it allowed for the triumph of democracy. At the same time, Winkler noted that this view had been recently disputed by many scholars.⁴⁸ With these new publications and the passing years, American had begun to realize the long term consequences of their war time experiences and decisions. Winkler does not agree nor disagree with these new scholars, but introduces their new point of view as a way to "examine even more carefully the home front achievements and repercussions of the greatest struggle of all time."⁴⁹ Although these new revelations are discussed, Winkler still interpreted World War II as a true turning point in American history.

Jeffries *Wartime America* (1996) was neither in agreement nor opposition to Winkler's *Home Front* and the sources already discussed. Jeffries book can be characterized as a culmination of all the authors and their arguments mentioned above in that he does not render a simple verdict as to whether or not the war was a watershed and the good war. He instead analyzed the effects on the home front using these two frameworks to understand the

⁴⁷ Ibid, 110.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 2-3.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 4.

“complicated impact” of the war on America.⁵⁰ Jeffries weaved together a balanced analysis of the traditional arguments and revisionists opinions. His book began by discussing how and why the revisionists’ theories formed and what their main points were. According to Jeffries, the main arguments of the revisionists was that social changes were not a direct result of the war and that it could not be seen as “good” because of its negative long term impacts. Jeffries does not have a decisive opinion on the debates and instead analyzed how both sides of the arguments could be seen in America during the war years. He discussed how one could find both changes and continuity during the war years. For example, the war created new circumstances for minorities that laid the foundation for change in the postwar era. At the same time, patterns such as the ethnic prejudice and fears of disloyalty during the war years were a consequence of significant continuities from the past.⁵¹ For Jeffries, it was also impossible to define whether World War II was the “good war” because the war’s impact differed from person to person, group to group, and area to area.⁵² An example he used was how women and African Americans were given new opportunities and political power because of the war, but these changes were not always welcomed by all. Many whites resisted the advancement of blacks and people devoted to the traditional way of life grew concerned over the changing role of women.⁵³ He believed it was the historian’s job to analyze, understand, and explain rather than offer judgment. As stated by Jeffries, “there were many different experiences in wartime America, a variety of stories and developments that must be probed to gauge the domestic impact and meaning of World War II.”⁵⁴ *Wartime America* was therefore a thorough analysis of the home front experience because

⁵⁰ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 198.

⁵¹ Ibid, 144.

⁵² Ibid, 14.

⁵³ Ibid, 197.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 15.

it explained how the war was a complex event in history that could not be simply characterized as either good or bad and a watershed or an accelerating factor.

When discussing the impacts of the war on the home front, all of the mentioned works touched on how specific groups of people were affected. They mainly used the war's effects on blacks and women to demonstrate whether or not the war made opportunities for great advancements possible and if these opportunities had laid the foundation for future social changes. Relating to the larger debate about the war in general, most of the literature dealing with women's roles in World War II has evaluated the popular idea that the war profoundly changed women's lives for the better. Many earlier sources argued that the war brought positive changes for women due to the opportunities it offered them in the various industries, although it is disputed whether or not these changes continued in the post war era and played an important role in shaping the future role of women in society.

An example of the traditional view of the war's impacts on women's employment is William H. Chafe's *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (1991) which studied the political and social experience of women in America throughout the 20th century. Chafe's book was originally published in 1972, when the literature on women's history had just begun to gain legitimacy.⁵⁵ He made changes to his first edition in order to acknowledge the impact of the scholarship that emerged over the past two decades with regards to women's history and used the new evidence of women's experience with a more "up to date conceptual framework."⁵⁶ Chafe points out these developments, although they do not change his interpretation of the war's impacts on women. He argued that World War II dramatically altered the economic situation for women, increasing the size of the labor force by 50% (three out of

⁵⁵ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vii.

⁵⁶ Chafe, *Paradox of Change*, viii.

four were married), and that even public attitudes began to change with the government and media encouraging them to work. Many women decided that they wanted to remain in the workforce, although their postwar jobs paid less and were more often than not traditional women's work. Despite the fact that conventional ideals on a woman's place in the world persisted, women's lives had changed and a new era of potential activity was now open to them; the war was a crucial turning point for women in America.⁵⁷ The war had created a "social legitimacy" about working women, especially married women that continued in the post war years. The new advancements achieved by women during the war were instrumental in causing the attitude change towards their role in society that took place in the 1960s.⁵⁸

Leila J. Rupp's *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (1978) disagreed with Chafe's original publication and argument about the war's permanent impact on women in the labor force. Rupp's book compared the effects of propaganda on persuading women to join the work force in the United States and Nazi Germany. Rupp demonstrated that the war provided the "first real chance for employment" and that propaganda efforts were successful in obtaining women's participation.⁵⁹ *German and American Propaganda* also argued that although women were allowed to join the workforce, they did not remain there afterwards. The war was therefore not responsible for permanent changes in the participation rate of women in the labor force.⁶⁰ Rupp also pointed out that the largest incentive for women to enter the work force was money. The war industry offered American women higher wages than they could have earned ordinarily.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid, 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 232.

⁵⁹ Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 169.

⁶⁰ Rupp, *German and American Propaganda*, 177.

⁶¹ Ibid, 169.

Karen Anderson's *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (1981) evaluated the nature and degree to which the war affected the status of women and the development of family life and values. Similarly to Chafe, Anderson argued that women answered the call to take the jobs typically filled by the men who had left for war. Two million married women entered the work force and marked a "temporary retreat from prevailing notions of women's capabilities and proper roles."⁶² She agreed with Chafe in the sense that women's lives were permanently changed by the fact that many remained in the work force. Despite the public pressure faced by women to return to their traditional roles in society when men returned, many women did stay in the labor force after the war. For many women this meant taking jobs at a lower rate and skill level than they had been used to during the war because the "sex-segregated labor market" was restored after the war.⁶³ Anderson therefore differed from Chafe in her argument that these positive gains were temporary because women's status in the labor force in the post war era did not improve and many found themselves stuck in traditional, dead-end jobs.⁶⁴ The progressive changes that had occurred were largely thwarted in the years following the war and conventional attitudes regarding women's role in society prevailed.

Following a similar path to Chafe was Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise's *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (1994) and Doris Weatherford's *History of Women in America: American Women in World War II* (1990) in that both argued that women reached new heights of achievement because of the war and stepped forward with great "enthusiasm" to fill the roles vacated by the men who had left. Both sources explained how women struggled and

⁶² Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 4.

⁶³ Anderson, *Wartime Women*, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

triumphed to make a place for themselves in the various industries that were now available to them. Many women took the jobs provided by the war industries because they needed the money to support their families and they also wanted to help their country and therefore felt it was their patriotic duty to work. Similarly to Rupp, they differed from Chafe in their claim that even though women gained new opportunities, they often returned to their traditional roles without protest. Many women were happy to have the important men back in their lives and a return to “normalcy” again.⁶⁵ When the war ended it was no longer their responsibility to work and many were glad to see their employment days come to an end.⁶⁶

A more detailed study of women’s role both on the front and at home was Emily Yellin’s *Our Mother’s War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (2004). Yellin’s book which also discussed how six million women entered the work force, performed non-combatant military work, and made strides in fields such as politics and athletics. Most important for this study is Yellin’s section on the volunteer efforts of women. Through organizations like the Red Cross, the USO, and the Office of Civilian Defense, women were able to find ways to aid the war effort from their own neighborhoods. The programs therefore served as ways for women to find outlets for their energy and desire to help.⁶⁷ Weatherford’s *History of Women* also discussed how women participated in other wartime activities on the home front and touched on how women joined volunteer organizations, such as the Women’s Volunteer Services, which taught women how to provide emergency services. According to Weatherford,

⁶⁵ Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), ix.

⁶⁶ Doris Weatherford, *History of Women in America: American Women in World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 186.

⁶⁷ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 167.

these organizations accomplished a lot during the war and often provided a great way for unemployed women to participate in the war effort.⁶⁸

Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (2003) and Meg Jacob's article "How About Some Meat? The Office of Price Administration and Consumer Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up" dealt with a different way in which women "volunteered" and aided the war effort on the home front. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) during the war defined a woman's chief role and responsibility to be a smart household consumer. They served in a variety of different positions from OPA price checkers to civilian defense block leaders.⁶⁹ Women were elevated to a new level of civic authority because the government paid close attention to regulating consumption which converged with the ideology of women as representatives of their communities' interests.⁷⁰ By being smart and efficient shoppers for their households, women were serving the war effort at home.

An article which disputed the popular belief over women's employment during the War held by many is Claudia D. Golden's "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment." Golden argued that the war did allow for many women to join the workforce, although the numbers and their implications could not be exaggerated. According to Golden, the war's impact was modest which can be seen in the fact that more than half of the women who entered the workforce between 1940 and 1950 joined after the war was over.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Weatherford, *History of Women*, 239.

⁶⁹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 79.

⁷¹ Claudia D. Golden, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," *The American Economic Review* 81 (1991), 741.

Another important aspect of war was how the home front appeared in specific areas of the country. There are some works that have been written on a state level. For example, there have been books written about what the home front looked like in states such as Michigan and New Jersey, but very few on New York State.⁷² With regards to the state's effort as a whole, the best book to start with is Karl Drew Hartzell's *The Empire State at War: World War II* (1949). Dr. Hartzell was hired by the New York State War Council to preserve the record of New York's contribution to the war effort. The book is based on the War Council records currently located at the New York State library in Albany. *Empire State at War* provided a detailed description of New York State during World War II. Dr. Hartzell's work was a celebratory account that began by claiming that New York's contribution was successful in aiding America's victory because it had the most wealth, largest population, and the nation's primary port. These factors meant New York had a "tremendous load to carry."⁷³ *Empire State* explored areas such as production for the war, the impact of the war upon individuals and communities, and most important for this study, civilian mobilization. He discussed how World War II affected demographic patterns, created strains on the home with male figures often missing, and dramatically altered both the economic and social patterns of America.⁷⁴

One of the only other books that examined New York during World War II was Milton M. Klein's *The Empire State: A History of New York* (2001). Although Klein's study was a comprehensive history of New York State, it had a significant chapter that dealt specifically with the home front during the war. Similarly to Hartzell's study, *The Empire State* argued that New York's resources were vital for winning the war. He claimed how the war "marked the height of

⁷² Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 200.

⁷³ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, xi.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 379.

the Empire State's influence over the country's economy and culture.”⁷⁵ Klein also discussed the numerous social impacts of the war, some of which were included in the larger debates about the effects of the war, such as how labor shortages provided opportunities for women and African Americans and child care programs were created to meet the needs of working mothers. A large part of the chapter also focused on war production in the state, such as the defense contracts and factories that were produced. According to Klein, the state manufactured 12% of the United States' war production but was ranked second in value to California for federally financed war plants.⁷⁶

Most of the sources that have focused on a broad evaluation of World War II's impacts on the home front have dealt primarily with two essential debates. Was the war a turning point in America's history or were the changes that occurred in its aftermath a result of patterns that had developed prior to the conflict? Was the Second World War also the “good war” that united people for a common purpose, whether fighting or on the home front, or did it have more negative long term implications that superseded its mythical status? Many authors have used similar evidence to support either view of each debate. For example, some argued that specific groups, such as women, achieved tremendous feats that would have occurred either regardless or directly because of the war. Much of the literature on women during World War II has focused on their role in the work force to argue that the war was a positive experience; large numbers of women entered the labor industry, changing society's attitude about their role in the world.

Another significant aspect of women's contributions to the war was their volunteer efforts, which are not a primary focus of the majority of scholarly works. Many books mentioned how they volunteered, although these focused largely on the Red Cross or their

⁷⁵ Milton M. Klein; with the New York State Historical Association (Cooperstown, NY) edit, *The Empire State; A History of New York*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 600.

⁷⁶ Klein, *History of New York*, 603.

cooperation with the OPA and not on their role in the Division of Civilian Mobilization.

Women's volunteer work was important in that it demonstrated how pre-war traditional values persisted during the war, discrediting the claim of earlier sources that it had been a "good" war because it completely changed people's perception of women and their role in society.

Another significant feature of the war was how those who remained at home reacted to what was happening overseas. Did the majority of Americans rally together and engage in grass roots mobilization to strengthen the home front or merely act in their own self interest and only do what they had to when put under pressure by the government? This question relates to one of the central debates about World War II. Many earlier sources argued that the war was "good" in that the majority of Americans were unified and served their communities wholeheartedly in order to fight the war at home. Others have disagreed and debated that not all citizens were as patriotic and collectively participated in civilian mobilization. By examining the Office of Civilian Mobilization's records, it is evident that great efforts on the state officials' part were required to get the majority of New Yorkers to serve their communities on the terms set out by the organization. Participation in New York State mobilization efforts was therefore quite irregular and the war did not galvanize patriotism to the extent that was popularized by the media and earlier historical sources. The New York State Office of Civilian Mobilization's efforts during the war help to shed light on a more realistic view of what the home front looked like and how people experienced the war.

Chapter 2: Establishing the Office of Civilian Mobilization

World War II was a global conflict like nothing before it in that the vast armies engaged in new tactics and used innovative technology on land, sea, and in the air. This war was not only fought by soldiers and required the mobilization of those civilians who remained at home working in the factories and salvaging important resources. On a national level, mobilization for the war was taking place prior to America's official entry after the attack on Pearl Harbor. On May 16, 1940 President Roosevelt called for the production of fifty thousand airplanes annually in anticipation of the inevitable surrender of France.¹ America began to prepare for the ultimate conflict with Germany, and many local governing bodies moved to take action. The government had many new challenges to meet in the months leading up to the War: plants needed to be built or expanded, there were new production needs, and wages and prices had to be controlled as to prevent inflation.² The government would ultimately prove successful in meeting these wartime demands, although it was not an easy path. Factors such as the constraints of federal programs and liberals' mistrust in a policy dominated by business made economic mobilization prior to Pearl Harbor a slow development.³ The government provided financial support in the form of low cost loans or tax write-offs to get businesses to invest in production facilities.⁴ Numerous defense contracts were formed in order to rapidly produce high quality war materials. The Roosevelt Administration's main concern became mobilizing the country's resources and resulted in the production of planes, battleships, submarines, and secret developments such as the atomic bomb.⁵ This technological mobilization was what America needed in order to leave the

¹ Karl Drew Hartzell, *The Empire State at War; World War II* (New York: The State of New York, 1949), 4.

² John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 18.

³ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 18.

⁴ Ibid, 20.

⁵ Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States in the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 45-46.

Great Depression behind and emerge a renewed and prosperous nation to help win an Allied victory. The United States also had to mobilize people as well, and by the summer of 1941 the Army had grown to about 1.5 million men.⁶

Individuals were not only mobilized for the Military, but for home front defense. In May 1941, the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) was formed in Washington, D.C. by executive order.⁷ The OCD was formed in order to preserve the welfare of neighborhoods and mobilize communities for the war. The individuals involved in its formation believed that the preservation of the education, health, and wellbeing of their families and neighbors was an integral part of defending America during a time of war. Headed by former New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, the OCD directed the thousands of programs that served to protect and provide for citizens nation-wide. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also played an important role in establishing the plans to make use of women's volunteer power in the defense efforts of America. She worked with LaGuardia, who focused mainly on the civilian protection aspect of the division.⁸ The First Lady became head of the operations of the Volunteer Participation Division of the office whose purpose became to find significant activities for locally recruited volunteers. Although, the First Lady resigned from the OCD in February 1942 due to the criticism she received for taking an official post in her husband's administration; she believed she was hindering the program rather than helping reach its maximum effectiveness.⁹ As head of the Volunteer Participation Division, she and LaGuardia toured the local communities to see the progress of the Volunteer Divisions of the local councils which initially "had beautiful plans on

⁶ Sherry, *Shadow of War*, 47.

⁷ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 171.

⁸ Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1971), 644.

⁹ Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, 652.

paper” but little to say about their actual operation.¹⁰ According to scholars, it was only when the war broke out that an immense spurt in civilian defense activity took place and many volunteers looked for ways they could be of use.¹¹

Volunteer offices in local communities across the nation were also formed under the direction of the OCD.¹² These local volunteer offices served as “clearing houses” for those wishing to volunteer and in their initial stages were known for their training of air raid wardens.¹³ Under direction of the OCD at the national level, programs such as scrap and metal drives, war bond campaigns, and Victory Gardens were developed to get individuals involved in the war efforts of their communities. Although these programs were not directed at women, most of the volunteers were females. Prior to the war, other women’s volunteers agencies engaged in war related activities, such as the Junior League and American Legion Auxiliary. These organizations designed “military style” uniforms for the women who volunteered. The uniforms were a symbol to those who wore them that it was “time to stop all the useless little gestures, to stop being Little Women and be women.”¹⁴ It was time for women to step out of their homes and serve a greater purpose by aiding the war effort. The uniform was to represent the “double-duty” lives of women who volunteered for the war but were also wives and mothers. LaGuardia was the main proponent behind the uniforms and believed they would appeal to women and therefore encourage them to volunteer. The American Women’s Voluntary Services (AWVS), founded in 1940, had also been active in the war effort prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor by preparing cities for bombings and set up 350 branches across the country in the first two years. Because American cities were never bombed, the AWVS became similar to the

¹⁰ Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, 647.

¹¹ Ibid, 648.

¹² Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*, 171.

¹³ Ibid, 172.

¹⁴ Ibid, 172.

Volunteer Offices in that is local branches served to place volunteers in their appropriate functions; both had changed their focus from civilian defense to mobilization. By the close of the War, AWVS trained 325,000 women volunteers for defense efforts in the form of protection and service programs, such as driving ambulances and working in canteens.¹⁵

Due to New York's large population, strategic Atlantic seacoast location, and large industrialized economy, it became a leading state in establishing programs for defense prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁶ All of the state's efforts for war production therefore began to increase rapidly and New York needed to create an organization system that would enable the local communities to take on some of the responsibility for other defense efforts. New York Governor Lehman therefore organized a conference on July 1, 1940 of all the city mayors. At the conference defense production and "social dislocation" were discussed, and Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti was made the State Coordinator on National Defense in order to take some of the burden off of Governor Lehman.¹⁷ Throughout the summer of 1940 defense work in New York expanded, and the Governor requested an advisory committee to help meet the increasing needs of the state. He therefore appointed a State Council of National Defense on August 1, 1940 that consisted of leaders from numerous industries. According to a *New York Times* article, the formation of the council without legislative authority was an "action unprecedented in peace time" and its primary duty, at first, was to advise the governor on preparing for national

¹⁵ Yellin, *Our Mother's War*, 172.

¹⁶ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 5.

¹⁷ Ibid, 8.

defense.¹⁸ It was not until February 20, 1941 that the council was given statutory authority with the passage of Chapter 22 of the Laws of 1941.¹⁹

The Council was originally made up of representatives of industry, labor, banking, and agriculture, demonstrating that New York State initially perceived its problems as economic.²⁰ The Governor had chosen these specific individuals because of their knowledge on how to increase production.²¹ As time passed and the council evolved in the months leading up to the war, its purpose evolved to educate, defend, and most importantly, mobilize the public by obtaining volunteers for necessary activities on the home front. Vital to the council was the volunteer efforts of every New York State citizen in order for all of the programs to be carried out efficiently. The volunteers were expected to fulfill the social needs of their communities that were emerging from the upcoming war. The Defense Council needed the local communities to organize, and the cities and counties soon met the requests by the state to appoint their own local defense councils.²² In March of 1941 the Legislature authorized the local councils by statute, and they were provided, within their respective jurisdictions, with “powers” that paralleled those of the states. Although it is not certain what those powers actually entailed because their purpose was stated as to evaluate the impact of the war and promote state and national security, utilize the available resources, and coordinate all activities. Although America had not entered World War II at this point, the increasing power of the Axis was causing some alarm across the country. As 1941 came to a close, more people were convinced of the inevitability of the United States’ entry

¹⁸ “Governor Creates a Defense Council for State Speed-Up: Calls Leaders of Industry and Labor to Advise on Steps to Increase War Materials,” (Special to the New York Times) *New York Times*, August 2, 1940.

¹⁹ Daniel J. Linke, *They Also Served: New Yorkers on the Home Front, a Guide to Records of the New York State War Council Held in the New York State Archives* (New York: New York State Archives and Records Administration, 1995), 5.

²⁰ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 291.

²¹ “Governor Creates a Defense Council.”

²² Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 292.

into the war, and according to Hartzell, support for the local councils and programs began to grow across New York State.²³

As of August 1941, there were three large divisions of the Defense Council: civilian defense (which was essentially headed by the military), women's activities, and the production of war materials (which also included vocational training if need be).²⁴ In order to carry out its duties, the Defense Council decided that volunteer registration bureaus needed to be established in the localities as a way to place people in organizations where they could use their acquired skills and experience. The local defense councils were also urged to use the resources and organizations already available to them. The State Defense Council did not want the local boards to take away manpower from pre-established organizations in their communities and therefore insisted they work through existing channels.

Up to this point in time, there was little room given to women in the defense program because the Defense Council was concerned primarily with the protection of civilians and producing war materials. For the most part, men did this type of work to meet the council's concerns. Many felt that women could play a much more important role on the home front because they could best understand and meet the social needs of the community during a time of war. Men were primarily concerned with protecting the communities while women were seen as vital for gearing their neighbors to volunteer in one way or another.²⁵ During this time period, many women in America were housewives whose primary role was taking care of their children and homes; they therefore had deep connections in their neighborhoods with the other women and families of the community. Women were seen as valuable because they could be the most

²³ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 292-293.

²⁴ "Minutes of Luncheon Meeting, Office of Director of Women's Division State Council of Defense," August 5, 1941, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A2339, New York State War Council Records, New York State Archives and Records Administration (NYSWC).

²⁵ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 131.

effective tool in mobilizing their communities to volunteer. Many of the secondary sources argued that the opinion held by the majority of Americans believed that if a woman was not employed (which was the case for many), it was her duty to devote herself to her home and community, which included engaging in volunteer activities. This belief was based on the conventional idea that volunteering was reserved for the “appropriate sexual sphere” of women.²⁶

Governor Lehman decided on Mrs. Clarice Leavell Pennock, a former sociology and history teacher from Syracuse, to head the newly established Women’s Division in the summer of 1941.²⁷ At two similar meeting held in Albany on August 5th and September 8th of representatives of social welfare and women’s agencies from across the state, Mrs. Pennock announced the main objective of the Women’s Division. She instructed those present that its purpose was to help communities establish central volunteer bureaus in order to coordinate the efforts of programs by recruiting, classifying, and placing volunteers. At the meetings, Governor Lehman emphasized four important duties of the Women’s Division: supporting emergency defense activities, providing the public with information about the war abroad while also stressing the conservation of democratic values at home, continuing social services that were essential for defense, and providing every citizen the opportunity to defend their own community.²⁸ By creating ways for the public to volunteer in one way or another, Governor Lehman argued that citizen morale would only increase. The Council advocated the idea that families and communities needed to band together against weaknesses such as hopelessness or

²⁶ Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 88.

²⁷ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 129.

²⁸ “Minutes of Luncheon Meeting, Office of Director of Women’s Division State Council of Defense,” August 5, p.1, 1941, Folder 1, Box 1, A2339, NYSWC.

indifference felt by individuals in order for America to reach her full strength.²⁹ As stated by Governor Lehman, “We need wide citizen participation for the safety, health and wellbeing of our national life.”³⁰ The Council also wanted to maintain the social programs which already existed and emphasized how each organization needed to coordinate their efforts so that no overlapping occurred.³¹

During this time the State Defense Council also wanted local branches to encourage the participation of more women on their boards because many were already part of various volunteer organizations that they could mobilize together. Mrs. Pennock and the Defense Council called on these women to use their resources and pull women both in and outside of their organizations together for the common defense of the state and therefore the country.³² Many already had the expertise and the experience and could coordinate the organizations in their communities so that all the resources could be utilized to make the Division successful. Women were therefore seen as essential by the government for establishing the volunteer bureaus and a focus of the Defense Council became stimulating women to volunteer. Women also needed to hold positions on the local councils. The State Council determined that these women had to have certain qualifications, such as knowledge of how to stimulate volunteers, have a wide variety of interests (and therefore not promote one particular organization over others), and she also had to have experience and the necessary prestige to command respect of all the groups.³³

²⁹ Eva Abramson, “Minutes of Meeting, Office of Women’s Division State Council of Defense,” September 8, 1941, p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³⁰ “Minutes of Luncheon Meeting, Office of Director of Women’s Division State Council of Defense,” August 5, 1941, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A2339, NYSWC.

³¹ Eva Abramson, “Minutes of Meeting, Office of Women’s Division State Council of Defense,” September 8, 1941, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³² Ibid, 2.

³³ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Letter to State Council of Defense,” November 10, 1941, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

This particular meeting also outlined the essential duties of the local defense councils at the time. The first of which was to train workers for defense industries (New York State had already trained upwards of 80,000 workers for defense industries). Second, to protect civilians by creating evacuation plans, rationing food, and mobilizing police men and firefighters. Third, to strengthen health facilities in case of an imminent disaster while also maintaining existing social agencies. Lastly, to educate adults on how to protect their own citizenship rights. The members of the meeting also left with instructions to take the plans back to their local boards for setting up volunteer bureaus and getting members involved in these activities.³⁴

By the end of fall 1941, the Division of Women's Activities was changed to the Division of Volunteer Participation.³⁵ The name of the division was changed because men were also called upon to volunteer, though it is important to note that most of the volunteer services were provided by women in their communities. These individuals sacrificed their time for the war effort and were seen primarily as "volunteers" and not workers. This was significant because although this Division represented a way for women to get involved in the war effort, they still could only fill traditional female roles. Volunteering was a long standing role for many middle class women. The fact that women were encouraged largely to volunteer also related to the popular belief about women in World War II. Many early scholars argued that the war was a good experience in that it created new opportunities for women that changed their lives and laid down the foundation for future social reform.³⁶ According to these authors, the war allowed a change in the attitude towards the expectations of women in society because they were able to

³⁴ Eva Abramson, "Minutes of Meeting, Office of Women's Division State Council of Defense," September 8, 1941, p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³⁵ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Letter to State Council of Defense," November 10, 1941, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³⁶ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 232.

join the labor force in large numbers. This may have been true for many of the women who often found themselves forced to take on jobs with the absence of a husband and his financial support. A different story is seen in the efforts of the State Defense Council to get women to volunteer. The Council's emphasis on volunteering as women's avenue for war involvement demonstrated how traditional attitudes about women's role in society continued during the war. The Council's efforts and eventual success (according to the Council) in stimulating women to volunteer revealed how the war did not transcend the conservative views about a woman's place in the world which was serving their homes and communities. In answering the call to volunteer, many women demonstrated their own commitment to traditional values.³⁷

Beginning on October 16, 1941 a two-day training institute was held in Albany that outlined all the ways in which the volunteers, mainly women, could serve their communities. This meeting was attended by the female members of the local defense councils and was significant because it instructed them on the State's plans for establishing and organizing the volunteer offices and the procedures they were meant to carry out.³⁸ The councils had a lot of work to do because they had to familiarize themselves with the existing local agencies and organize the volunteers based on their qualifications and experiences. Volunteers were asked to help out in almost all aspects of public life and areas affected by defense mobilization, ranging from recreation and nursery school programs to schools and churches. Volunteers could be used to combat delinquency by aiding police, becoming big brothers or sisters to troubled youth, and provide recreational activities to camps and defense production areas.³⁹ Volunteers could aid civilian protection in case of an invasion by promoting junior safety councils and teaching fire

³⁷ Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front, U.S.A.: America during World War II* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2000), 62.

³⁸ "Resume Institute for Members of Local Defense Councils, October 16 and 17," 1941, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³⁹ Ibid, .2.

aid. The state also called on volunteers to teach by reading stories to production workers' children, coaching athletics, assisting in training programs, and instructing citizenship classes.⁴⁰ With regard to schools, volunteers could plan events for children, educate mothers, on proper child care, help maintain libraries, conduct art and music classes, and help with the school lunch programs. Red Cross nutrition aid, canteen, and nutrition courses were also to be provided at local colleges.⁴¹ According to the Defense Council, it was important for national defense to have healthy and therefore strong individuals on the home front. The institute also discussed ways to organize, finance, and train volunteers in large and medium sized cities and small towns.

Major General John F. O' Ryan who dealt primarily with the protection aspect of the Division spoke at the conference about how the communities needed to be prepared in case of imminent danger by having volunteers enlist for specific emergency services, such as rescue squads and fire wardens. Volunteer programs on a national level, such as the U.S.O., Consumer Information, Salvage Programs, and the American Unity Programs also needed the help of volunteers. The U.S.O. units offered ways for communities to directly give service to enlisted men by providing overnight shelter or aiding recreation programs. The State Defense Council recommended that the localities set up Consumer Interest Committees to educate the public on how to "buy wisely" and not waste goods.⁴² This was eventually replaced by the Office of Price Administration (OPA) on a national level. The purpose of the OPA was to create a system of rationing and price controls that directly reached communities through enlisting the help of female shoppers to fight inflation.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁴¹ Ibid, 4-6.

⁴² Ibid, 4-6.

⁴³ Meg Jacobs, "How About Some Meat? The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946," *The Journal of American History* 84 (1997): 910-911.

Another important aspect of the institute was its focus on unifying the committee. The training institute came up with ways to create unity in communities by using radio programs, newspapers, organizations such as labor unions, and youth based programs as a means to appeal to the community at large. At the time, the council also recognized that bringing communities together would be difficult due to the prejudice that many felt towards specific races and nationalities. The council therefore encouraged the members present to try to end discrimination in their communities and work with foreigners and minorities by taking a different approach to finding out what they could learn from these various groups of people and how they could help. A message of the council was that such racist attitudes were a “serious stumbling block in achieving national unity.”⁴⁴ Communities were also encouraged to appreciate the different cultures and avoid accusing people of different ethnicities of anti-American feelings just because they were foreign born. The Division most likely emphasized unification to demonstrate its dedication to the democratic ideal of equality and unity. The Division often encouraged citizens to be open to and work with other races and ethnicities, though it did not usually take decisive action to ensure that this goal was reached. It appeared that when the Division did promote unification, it was an attempt to show it had worked to transcend the racial tensions of the time and incorporated everyone in its mobilization efforts. In reality it did not do a lot to cater to the needs of minorities or put a large effort into making them feel part of the community.

This significant meeting was also important for drawing the line between the division of civilian defense and the volunteer participation. The Civilian Defense Division was headed by General John F. O’Ryan and dealt primarily with air raids, police mobilization, and auxiliary

⁴⁴ “Resume Institute for Members of Local Defense Councils, “October 16 and 17, 1941, p.4-6, Folder 1, Box, A4339, 4-6, NYSWC.

services.⁴⁵ The Volunteer Division had two main objectives: to motivate women to participate and volunteer in defense programs and establish volunteer offices for the training of all citizens. The Volunteer Division was to stem from the local defense councils, develop services for individuals with various skills, and represent the community as a whole. These three meetings underscored the importance of the Division of Volunteer Participation while also educating the local representatives on where to place volunteers. At this point the objective of the Volunteer Office seemed to encompass all areas of a community and centered on activities that were traditionally engaged in by women. From the records it appeared that the office had extensive plans for ways to get the communities involved and therefore mobilized. These three meetings highlighted the hard work that the Division had already put in to creating all the possible ways in which volunteers could be used. It was evident that they anticipated large numbers of New Yorkers to volunteer their time for the war effort.

It was difficult initially for the State Department and War Council agencies to reach a clear understanding of the actual procedures and policies they were to carry out with regards to the local war councils. Some counties, especially the smaller and more rural ones, were slow to form their local volunteer offices. In order to strengthen the ties between the local agencies and the State Division of Volunteer Participation, three subordinate agencies were established: the Section of Citizen Morale, the Volunteer Office, and the Section of Civilian War Services. The Section of Citizen Morale was responsible for creating unity among the community; the Volunteer Office's purpose was to set up and direct all the local volunteer branches; and the Section of Civilian War Services was in charge of the communities' over all needs such as housing, nutrition, and child care.⁴⁶ Around November 1941, volunteer field agents were also

⁴⁵ Ibid, 4-6.

⁴⁶ Linke, *They Also Served*, 5.

made available to the local war councils to analyze the specific needs of communities and suggest ways in which they could efficiently put state programs into action.⁴⁷

According to Hartzell, in the months leading up to America's entry into World War II, the morale of the defense councils was not as strong because many Americans were not quite convinced that their country would enter the war. Publicity had focused too much on creating a sense of fear and danger in order to gain support for the defense programs; the Defense Council instead wanted to create a section of the Division of Volunteer Participation that emphasized the importance of democratic ideals to remind Americans what their country and allies were fighting to preserve. The democratic way needed to prevail over the socialist Nazis and the Division felt that Americans had to remember why their system was the best way of life. The Defense Council therefore appropriated specific funds for the creation of a Section of Citizen Morale.

The State Council believed that the strongest defense against America's enemies was a unified home front. Beginning in 1942, plans began to take root for the development and formation of the new Section whose main goal was to bring all citizens together for the common good of the country. A proposal was written to establish that the new section that would primarily deal with "people's ideals, the issues, the goals-the morale of America in the war."⁴⁸ It was at this meeting that Governor Lehman appointed a Council for Citizen Unity composed of 25 members and Union College President Dixon Ryan Fox was made the chairman. The general objectives of the section was to essentially "build unity" among every type of American, help to spread information, and promote an understanding of war issues such as inflation, news policies, and American ideals over fascist teachings.⁴⁹ In order to carry out these objectives, the Citizen Morale Council was to support group discussions on all issues dealing with the war attended by

⁴⁷ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 132.

⁴⁸ "Section for Citizen Unity, Report for 1942," February 15, 1943, p.1, Folder 2, Box 2, A4327, NYSWC.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 9.

as many members of the community as possible. In order to reach out to the community, the local council was supposed to use forums, union meetings, and radio town meetings. By utilizing these resources, the council would be able to take the national issues at hand and show how they related to the local labor unions or small business owners. This way, the local councils could generate support for the war and develop “clear headed public opinion with strong grass roots in individual thinking.”⁵⁰ Another way it was to promote unity was by bringing all people of the community together, especially minority groups, and having them participate on the war committees. If instances of discrimination were discovered then all efforts were to be put forth to correct it and prevent it from reoccurring.

According to Hartzell, the Section for Citizen Unity was formed in order to awaken people to the threat posed by their feelings of indifference towards what our allies were fighting for in Europe. Therefore, when America did enter the war and many were in support of fighting democracy’s enemies, the initial need for the Citizen Unity Council no longer existed. Although, the Section did continue through 1943 until it was abolished in December of that year.⁵¹ Throughout its duration, the program did not prove very effective because there was often a lack of understanding among the people over what its main purpose and function was. As described by Hartzell, this was often due to the fault of the Council, which “suffered from the inability...to phrase clearly enough for the comprehension of the average man and women just what it was they were driving at.”⁵² It appeared that the Section set out to do a lot in order to unite citizens of all ethnicities and origins and get them involved. In reality, the Unity Council did much more talking than taking direct action, and served more as a forum for providing information and hosting discussions on the war. The Unity Council wanted to promote equality and inclusiveness

⁵⁰ Ibid, 9.

⁵¹ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 134.

⁵² Ibid, 134.

because it was part of the American ideal that was being fought for, but it did not do much to carry out this goal. According to Hartzell, some people even believed that promoting such activities (that brought all races together) were dangerous because these could lead to “...radical social changes...it was thought they should be discontinued.”⁵³ This also demonstrated that many of the unity programs were most likely not bought into by some Americans.

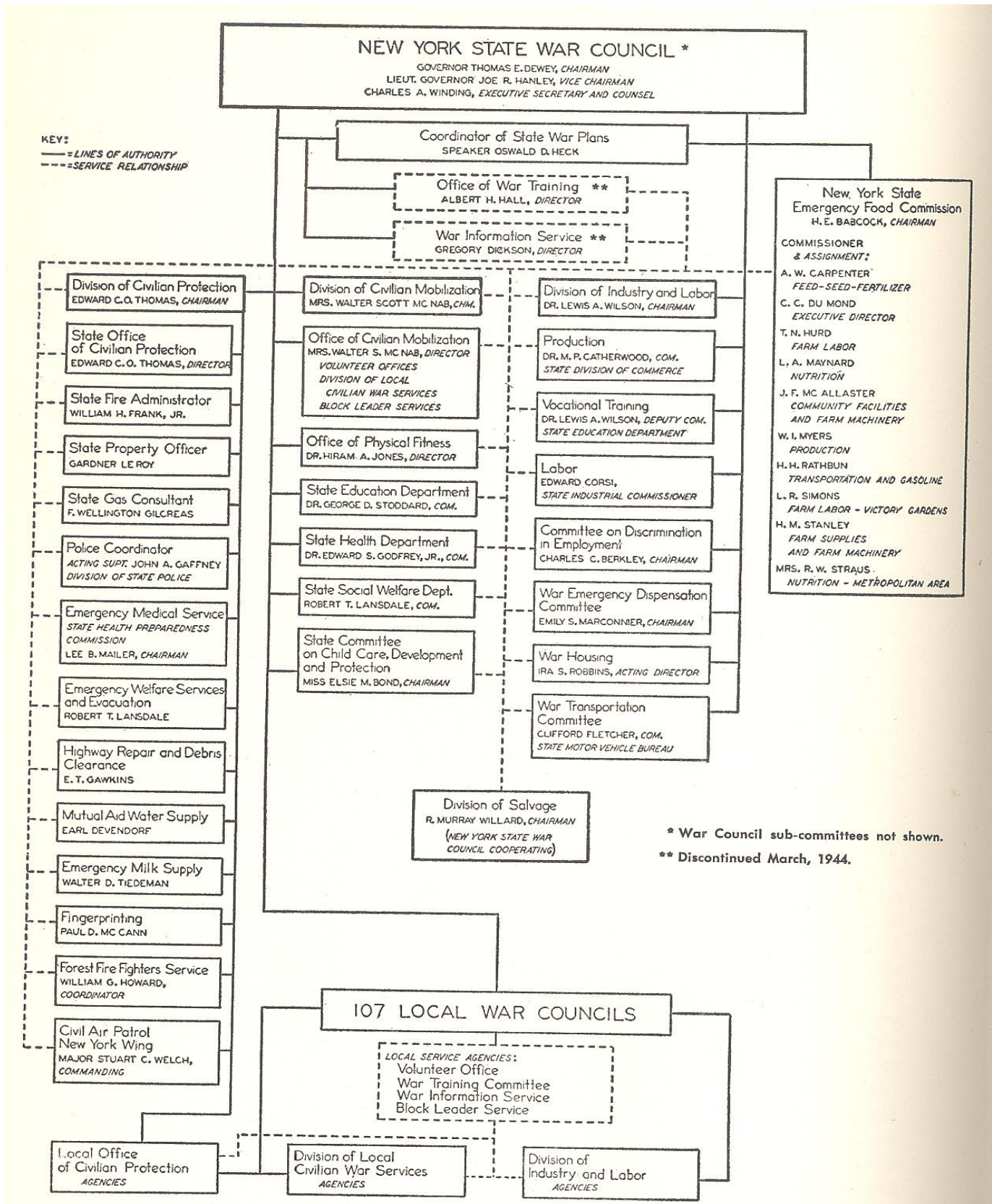
In April 1942 the New York State War Emergency Act was passed to solidify the laws of the previously established Defense Council to meet the new demands of the war. To begin with, its title of the Council of Defense changed to the New York State War Council and it now had twenty members. The act stated that the War Council was to aid the war effort by “formulating and assisting in the execution of plans for the mobilization and efficient utilization of the resources and facilities of the state.”⁵⁴ The War Council was given more power in that it could form its own policies instead of administering existing programs. It now had the power to “adopt, promulgate, and make effective plans, rules, and orders with respect to any matter deemed by the State War Council essential to the war effort.”⁵⁵ Resolutions and legislation passed by the War Council dealt largely with enforcing rules and regulations. The Act also created three main divisions in an effort to coordinate the efforts of the local war councils: the Division of Civilian Protection, Division of Industry and Labor, and the Division of Civilian Mobilization (Figure 2.1). All civilian protection activities and units in the State were placed under the direction of General Haskell, chairman of the Division of Civilian Protection. General Haskell was given the power to give orders to all the programs which dealt with civilian protection under his Division. The purpose of the mobilization and labor divisions were to bring the previously defined “miscellaneous” units of their respective activities together under a single

⁵³ Ibid, 134.

⁵⁴ “Digest of the Addresses Made at the Time,” January 12 and 13, p.1, 1944, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

⁵⁵ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 295.

Figure 2.1: Chart of New York State War Council, November, 1943



Source: Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 294.

umbrella organization. This way the efforts of all the groups could be accounted for and coordinated and the programs could be strengthened.⁵⁶ Under the War Emergency Act, a single command was created at both the state and local levels so that individual directors had command over their services across the state and local directors in their specific communities. A line of authority was established from the state to the local governments so that the communities could act accordingly to state wide policies (Figure 2.1).⁵⁷

The Division of Volunteer Participation was also changed to the Office of Civilian Mobilization (OCM) and placed under the Division of Civilian Mobilization.⁵⁸ The OCM was to “function as an agency of the State War Council responsible for the mobilization of citizen volunteers to perform duties in Civilian Protection, Civilian War Services, and other activities pertinent to the war effort.”⁵⁹ According to the State, for the war effort to be effective, the local war councils had to ensure efficiency in supporting their communities’ wartime needs and objectives. The local councils were supposed to be a neutral body that could direct and unify a community war effort without wasting resources. The local war councils therefore had to be reviewed periodically by OCM field representatives to ensure that they met regularly and had an active membership.⁶⁰ This demonstrated how the State Council was worried about the efficiency of home front mobilization on a local level and therefore had to work hard to ensure that the right measures were being taken to reach their standards. The local Councils also had to have a Division of Civilian War Services to deal with the war’s impacts in their communities. As stated by Mrs. Walter Scott McNabb (who took over as the Director of the OCM in the winter of 1943),

⁵⁶ Eva Abramson, “Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization,” June 24, 1942, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4338, NYSWC.

⁵⁷ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 295.

⁵⁸ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Letter to Chairman of Volunteer Participation,” April 23, 1942, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

⁵⁹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, *Duties of the State Office of Civilian Mobilization*, February 1, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4335, NYSWC.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 1.

the Division of Civilian War Services was to provide a focal point for the community service programs and to coordinate all these programs as well.⁶¹ The Civilian War Services dealt primarily with child care, nutrition, physical fitness, youth groups, and public school education to determine the effects of the war on communities and try to find solutions. The Act also wanted to ensure that a “central pool of volunteer manpower” was maintained in each community so that the council could fulfill its role.⁶²

The OCM reports at this time revealed that the Council experienced a lot of difficulty in getting the localities to understand their new responsibilities under the act; some reacted with “non cooperative criticism of the purpose of the war act.”⁶³ The OCM believed that the local offices were poorly organized and that they needed to improve their “control and regulation” of the localities to make improvements in volunteer efforts.⁶⁴ Many local councils were exceptionally slow in making new appointments for chairmen of Civilian Mobilization. By June 1942 the State Council believed it had given the local councils plenty of time to reorganize themselves and were frustrated with the slow progress. For example, Elmira was noted as a town that had not taken much action to establish an OCM. It still did not have a fully operated mobilization office by July because the town was unclear on how to organize it.⁶⁵ Many locally appointed OCM chairmen were realizing that a large effort was required on their part to produce effective volunteers. Some of them were therefore replaced because their skills and energies were not proving efficient enough to carry out their duties.⁶⁶ The setting up of the three main

⁶¹ “Digest of the Addresses Made at the Time,” January 12 and 13, 1944, p.2, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339,

⁶² Winthrop Pennock, *Duties of the State Office of Civilian Mobilization*, February 1, 1943, p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4335, NYSWC.

⁶³ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of May, 1942,” p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

⁶⁵ “Civilian Mobilization Chairman,” July 30, 1942, p.1, Folder 24, Box 1, A4328, NYSWC.

⁶⁶ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of June, 1942,” Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

divisions after the passage of the War Emergency Act demonstrated how the War Council had become rather bureaucratic with the power it had been given. It intended to impose that power whenever necessary on the local councils in order to get them to reach the high expectations it had set for the home front. Due to the localities' consistent inefficiency in carrying out war programs, the Council often expanded its power and control over the local councils so that they would meet the goals of the state.

When local councils were instructed to begin establishing Civilian War Service Sections under the War Emergency Act, many communities were slow to start them and were initially confused as to what sort of relationship the division was to have within the council itself. The OCM therefore set out to ensure the efficiency of the Civilian War Service Sections of the local councils. It declared in its progress reports it now had the responsibility to "service Civilian War Services Divisions as part of their general assignment to local war councils throughout the State."⁶⁷ By August 1942, only 48 sections had been established throughout the state.⁶⁸ Some reports even indicated resistance from the local councils in establishing Civilian War Service Sections. For example, many rural communities believed they did not have a need for the specific division like the urban communities did. They also did not clearly understand how to organize their community to effectively carry out Civilian War Services.⁶⁹ Such an example was Flexner, Ithaca, which was concerned with other activities, primarily farming and preserving food, and did not think a Civilian War Service section was relevant for its needs.⁷⁰ The OCM stated how its representatives had to drive "home more forcibly" the responsibility of the local

⁶⁷ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of September, 1942," October 8, 1942, p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁶⁸ "August Monthly Report on Civilian War Services by the State Department of Social Welfare for the Office of Civilian Mobilization," Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYWSC.

⁶⁹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of November, 1942," p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁷⁰ "Civilian Mobilization Chairman," July 30, 1942, p.1, Folder 24, Box 1, A4328, NYSWC.

councils to establish the sections.⁷¹ The Division of Civilian Mobilization therefore released a “Handbook of Civilian War Services” that described why the section was needed, its essential purpose was, its organization, the available resources, and its relationship to other agencies. Essentially, the Division was supposed to recognize the community’s problems, determine what facilities and services could be used to help fix the situations, and promote the programs to the community.⁷² It was only after the handbook was written and distributed that things became clearer and the program appeared to make some progress.

In order to supervise the local divisions separately, the OCM used control charts that provided numbers of volunteers and where they were placed for each local council. Field staff also began to work more directly with the local Civilian War Services divisions. It was apparent that many local councils believed that they would perform the functions of the Civilian War Services on their own terms without instructions from the State. The OCM therefore continuously stressed to the local councils that they had to meet frequently with the Office, survey the conditions in their communities, and remedy any of its weaknesses in compliance with the state’s requirements.⁷³ Field representatives were also instructed to make careful reports of the local subcommittees that had formed as part of the Civilian War Services Division so that the OCM could understand the specific needs of communities and take appropriate action to remedy them. OCM reports indicated that the local councils frequently complained over the great number of unrelated visits from the state agents, resulting in confusion and further resentment over their responsibilities.⁷⁴ The OCM also expanded the Civilian War Services by

⁷¹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of August, 1942,” Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁷² *Handbook Of Civilian War Services*, p.4, Folder 3, Box 2, A4327, NYSWC.

⁷³ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of December, 1942, “January 7, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁷⁴ “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of October, 1942,” November 10, 1942, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

creating an executive committee at the local level that consisted of the chairman and three lay members with standing in the community. The purpose of the committee was to divide the areas of need and activity of a community into the three classifications of health, community welfare, and education, with the each lay member the leader of one section.⁷⁵ The OCM's increased instruction and regulation of the local councils revealed that the communities were not mobilizing as efficiently as had been expected by the state. The Office therefore had to work hard in order to get the local councils to follow their rules and do what was asked of them.

On May 14, 1942 a resolution was passed by the OCM that demonstrated how women would play the most important role in carrying out the volunteer efforts of the state. The resolution was a pledge specifically for women that they had to take as volunteers during the War.

We, as representatives of organized women of New York State...pledge ourselves to do everything within our power, individually and collectively to win the war and to prepare for peace, and to strengthen the organization and activities of the State, county and local war councils.⁷⁶

The oath was significant in that it was reserved specifically for women, indicating that all volunteer activities would be organized and taken up by the women of the local communities. The oath therefore implied that women served primarily to volunteer during the war. They also served in the war production industries, but by studying the OCM it is clear that they were also important for mobilizing their neighborhoods. The activities they engaged in allowed them to play a part in the war effort, although these activities were still "traditional" gendered roles for women. This oath was therefore important with relation to the debate about women's role in

⁷⁵ Harold H. Schaff, "Report on the Activities of the Office of Civilian Mobilization of the New York State War Council for Three Month Period, December 15, 1943 to March 15, 1944," March 23, 1944, p.7, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁷⁶ "Resolution," May 14, 1942, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

World War II. A popularly held belief purported by some scholars was the idea that the war had created advancement opportunities for women. These opportunities allowed for society to see them as something other than homemakers both during and after the war. This may have been true for those who joined the work force (which for many was only temporary). In studying the OCM's activities and women's active role in volunteering to mobilize citizens on the home front, the compliance of women to aid the war effort through conventional means was demonstrated. This evidence, along with the fact that the OCM directed its efforts towards appealing to women to volunteer, indicated that the war did not cause a change in society's attitudes towards women's but instead reinforced its conventional views. Therefore, the war was perhaps not so "good" because pre-war attitudes and practices towards women prevailed.

Another important aspect of their oath was the women's pledge to protect the well-being of all citizens regardless of race, nationality, gender, or color. A main concern of the OCM was creating a unified home front; the volunteers therefore had to take an oath not to discriminate against specific individuals or organizations based on personal bias. Lastly, the women pledged themselves to preserve the "American way of life" which meant the freedoms, liberties, and opportunities the county was to provide for all citizens.⁷⁷ This was more to show the Office's intention to honor important democratic principles. In reality, it did not take much action to reach this goal of true unity. The Office talked a lot about unifying all citizens, making immigrants feel welcomed, and preserving equality, although it often turned out to be an empty promise.

An extension of the OCM which developed in order to deal with the issue of organizing communities effectively and allowed another way for women to lead volunteer efforts was the

⁷⁷ "Resolution," May 14, 1942, Folder 1, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC

Block Leader Program introduced in October 1942.⁷⁸ According to Hartzell, the program was created in order to bring the “full strength of communities” in support of the programs.⁷⁹ This fact indicated how the War Council felt the need to impress more power on the local councils because they were not meeting the hopes of the state-planners with regards to mobilization; not as many citizens were doing their job on the home front as was expected of them. In order to carry out the Block Plan, a guide of proposed course content for the block leader training program was sent to the chairmen of local war councils that outlined the lessons to be taught to block leaders. The manual outlined the purposes of the program and the necessary qualifications for a block leader.⁸⁰ The objectives of these leaders were to inform their communities about vital war information, collect information needed for community planning, and promote cooperation. According to the State Council, they had to have patience, the willingness to sacrifice, and patriotism.⁸¹ In order to become a Block Leader, one had to go through an orientation of all Civilian War Services and receive instructions on community projects on how to be a democratic leader. Block Leaders also had to contact all the neighbors in their sector in order to suggest ways they could assist in war services, educate the community on the war effort, and provide the war leaders with the general opinions of their communities with regards to the local war councils’ actions.⁸² The Block Leaders also conducted surveys of their blocks to find out information about available space for incoming workers, children who need daycare because their mothers were working, and women available for the war industry. It is no surprise that many women would come to serve as Block Leaders; they already knew their communities and

⁷⁸*The Block Plan of Organization for Civilian War Services*, October 18, 1942, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

⁷⁹ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 136.

⁸⁰ *Proposed Outline of Course Content for the Block Leader Training Program*, October 28, 1942, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁸² *Ibid*, 3-4.

neighbors and were therefore ideal candidates for the program. Serving as Block Leaders was another example of how women took traditional means to aid the war effort, demonstrating that conventional ideals were not overturned during the war to the extent that was popularly believed. The Block Leader also had the responsibility of promoting the Civilian War Service programs and provided its resources to the community.⁸³ The training program distributed to the local councils also instructed Block Leaders on good methods of leadership and how to develop morale within their communities.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid, 5.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 12.

Chapter 3: The Office of Civilian Mobilization Expands its Power

An important aspect of the Block Plan programs is that it demonstrated how the OCM not only established these local volunteer agencies but became active in putting the programs into operation. In its initial stages the office was concerned primarily with establishing the volunteer bureaus that would be responsible for carrying out the state war programs. The preliminary meetings of the Volunteer Division which eventually turned into the OCM demonstrated how the Office's primary concern was creating the structures that would implement the State War Council's programs and initiatives. As the war progressed and there was a greater need for home front activities, a significant shift in the OCM's objectives became to ensure that their programs were taking place effectively on a local level.

With America's entry into the war the main concern of the OCM was to establish local volunteer offices so that they could register and place volunteers in appropriate areas. By the fall of 1942, 600 volunteer offices had been established across New York State. The OCM had practically completed its task of creating the structures of these volunteer offices and began to transition its focus on implementing the war programs. During this time Director Mrs. Clarice Leavell Pennock wrote in her report to the State War Plans Coordinator that it "must increasingly turn its attention to efficiency and procedures in the offices."¹ This statement alone demonstrated that the OCM was clearly concerned that the local offices were insufficient in carrying out their duties and it now had to intervene directly to get volunteer efforts accomplished. After establishing local war councils in the majority of counties and cities in New York State, it was time for the OCM to focus on ensuring that the war programs were effectively carried out. From the reports it was clear that a lot of work was needed to help the volunteer

¹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of December, 1942," January 7, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

offices and there was mounting concerns the local councils were not executing the programs successfully.² In order to do this, the office had to directly assist the volunteer organizations. The OCM held divisional conferences to bring specific instructions to the local war councils on how to establish successful Block systems and to increase the effectiveness of the volunteer organization and function of the Division of Civilian War Services.³ These conferences also served as a way for the chairmen of specific programs, such as of the Block Plans and Volunteer Offices, to meet and trade ideas and possible solutions to existing problems. The OCM also developed a specific form to be filed out by local councils as to provide the head office with a “master report” of the county’s or city’s recent activity. These reports began in January of 1943 and were used by the OCM field staff to target specific areas of weaknesses in each locality and determine ways they could help to resolve them. The OCM had to remain in constant and direct contact with the local councils in order to develop and maintain effective programs and “keep them thoroughly aware of their responsibilities under the War Emergency Act.”⁴ The State War Council depended on the efficacy of local war councils doing their job, and it was the OCM’s duty to ensure that they were successful.

In May 1942, the OCM issued a memorandum requesting more funds to support a greater number of field staff. In order for the office to continue to meet its responsibilities to the local councils and communities, it needed full time field representatives. The OCM was trying to expand its reach and have more of a say on the local level. The representatives were the State’s direct contact with the localities and were therefore very important for carrying out effective programs. At the time two of their men were on loan from the State Department of Social

² Ibid, 1.

³ Ibid, 1.

⁴ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of January, 1943,” February 15, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

Welfare and were about to be recalled, leaving the OCM with three field men and one director. The OCM requested six men in order to report on each area of the state. Director Mrs. Winthrop Pennock also requested a “specialist in office management and filing methods” in order to organize all the Office’s records. Lastly, two program supervisors were requested to work in aiding the local sections of Community War Services and other educational programs.⁵ These requests demonstrated the shift in the OCM becoming more involved with the local war councils because they were not living up to its expectations. The Office’s reports from this time revealed how a tension between the state and local mobilization efforts existed and the State Council constantly pushed the localities to do more. It also increased its scrutiny of the communities and in an attempt to stimulate a more efficient mobilization effort, became much more intrusive and controlling of what occurred on a local level. These patterns demonstrated that it took a great deal of effort to get the local councils to fulfill the expectations set by the OCM, indicating that perhaps not all communities and every citizen was willing to sacrifice their time and efforts for the war effort. Mobilization efforts were therefore not that successful, especially in its initial stages, and the home front was not as completely unified as the state had anticipated.

Beginning with the official bulletins released by the OCM in the spring and summer of 1942, one can see how the office attempted to shape the behavior of local councils by issuing instructions and advice and answering specific questions of individual counties. These demonstrated how the OCM became more involved in the local offices in order to assess whether they were successfully mobilizing their communities. The local offices were clearly not doing their job in mobilizing their communities and the Office needed to change that. It had set high expectations for New York in providing a strong and unified home front where able citizens

⁵ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Memorandum to State War Council,” May 28, 1942, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, 2, NYSWC.

were supposed to be doing their job and contributing to the war effort. The OCM therefore issued official bulletins to the chairmen of local war councils in order to convey “information, suggestions, and comments regarding the war job” the state was doing.⁶ The bulletins used examples of successful counties to demonstrate ways problems were solved and programs efficiently carried out. They offered advice on how to organize volunteers, suggested ways volunteers could be put to use, and proposed significant war films that could be shown to the community.⁷ An example is in the May 22, 1942 “News Bulletin” which discussed how the Albany Volunteer Office used a local college to research, write, and produce a series of evening radio scripts to carry the Governor’s message to every home in the county.⁸ These examples were continuously used to provide models for the other cities to follow if they were to face similar issues.

Monthly OCM reports to the State War Plans Coordinator also reflected the development of the office in attempting to ensure efficiency of war programs on a local level. Regional conferences were held during July 1942 that claimed progress had been made to help local war councils understand the role of the Volunteer Office and be more willing to cooperate with civilian mobilization programs. It is apparent that the Office had to continuously strive to get the local councils to work with (and therefore follow the instructions) of the state. During this time the OCM also made important agreements with federal agencies that already had extensive organizations of their own. This way the volunteer offices could be used to their full extent and there would be no duplication of specific efforts on a local level. For example, in July 1942 the OCM promised to work closely with the United States Employment Service in order to recruit

⁶ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, *Civilian Mobilization News Bulletin*, April 17, 1942, p.1, Folder 7, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

⁷ Ibid, 3-5.

⁸ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, *Civilian Mobilization News Bulletin*, May 22, 1942, p.3, Folder 7, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

workers during times of emergency agricultural shortages.⁹ Another example that demonstrated the OCM's attempt to increase its level of control at the local levels was the system it developed of dispatch and timing to control when programs were released from the State to the local councils so that they could fully complete one duty before they were issued another. According to the OCM, this system eliminated much confusion that had existed among the councils while also making them more efficient.¹⁰ Even with these new efforts, reports still reflected a growing concern of the OCM that communities were showing a lack of interest in war services. In its report for March 1943, the Office "had found, through recent reports, that there has crept into many communities a lack of interest and a general let-down in activity."¹¹ This was especially evident in the rural communities, such as St. Lawrence and Allegany, which were primarily concerned with farm labor instead of war services. According to the report, They repeatedly demonstrated their lack of incentive to vigorously mobilize their citizens to serve their community and therefore did not accomplish much.¹² Civilian Mobilization was clearly not as successful among the localities and the OCM had to continue to bear down in an attempt to get the results it wanted.

By 1943 the State War Council's primary concern was no longer focused on protecting civilians from immediate attack but on strengthening the communities at home. Director Mrs. Winthrop Pennock believed that Civilian War Services were important to prosecuting the war at home more so than the protective services which had been a main focus of the State War Council

⁹ Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of July, 1942," p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

¹⁰ Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of November, 1942," December 1, 1942, p.4, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

¹¹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of March, 1943, April 2, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

¹² Harold H. Schaff, "Report on the Activities of the Office of Civilian Mobilization of the New York State War Council for Three Month Period-December 15, 1943 to March 15, 1943," March 23, 1944, p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

up to that time.¹³ In focusing more on social services, the role of women in the OCM's efforts was elevated. An example was the house-to-house canvass that occurred to find inactive nurses and encourage young women to sign up for nursing courses. These canvasses were done by Block Leaders under the direction and supervision of the OCM. The local councils compiled reports to demonstrate that the efforts of these groups were highly successful.¹⁴ The fact that canvasses were required to get individuals involved demonstrated that a large effort needed to be put forth in order to obtain volunteers, and it was largely the efforts of women that was required to make any substantial gains in mobilizing civilians. As Block Leaders, they were instrumental in directly reaching out to the community and carrying out the OCM's programs. These women were therefore necessary for enlisting the services of those who did participate in the home front activities and without them and their efforts, it is most likely that very little would have been accomplished with regards to mobilization. This also goes back to the fact that there were important roles other than the "Rosie the Riveters" that were essential for the home front. Although in volunteering for the OCM in large groups, women confirmed society's belief that their place was serving their homes and communities. The war therefore did not diminish conventional ideals about their place and role in society.

In order to expand its communication with the local councils and provide ways to develop home front morale (and therefore increase the strength of the War Council) the OCM developed discussion outlines and "campaigns" to be carried out in every city and town. The first of such an example was the "Fighting the War at Home" program. The program was designed to reach every home in all communities and "arouse active participation in an all out

¹³ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of March, 1943," April 2, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

¹⁴ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of May, 1943," June 14, 1943, p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

war program, not only on the battle fronts, but on the home fronts as well-it will be as far reaching in its effect as the people participating make it.”¹⁵ The program was a course to be carried out by the local councils and served as a discussion outline of protective measures, salvage and financial issues effecting the prosecution of the war, and home front problems such as nutrition, child care, and morale. The discussion topics were carried out through neighborhood group meetings that included all races and both genders. Although the discussion outline stated it was to include people of all races, it did not provide any guidelines or instructions on how to do this. In fact, there was no indication about the kinds of people who went to and engaged in these discussions, further demonstrating that the OCM wanted to make it appear that it was putting the effort into respecting democratic principles when in reality it did not do much to ensure this goal was reached.

Leaders of local organizations were to carry out the discussion programs in the communities and had specific duties, which included engaging the neighborhood group and drawing them into the discussions.¹⁶ These meetings were to be held in public facilities such as auditoriums or churches and were also to have a “hospitality committee” to ensure the comfort of the attendees and their hopeful return to the next discussion. The OCM created detailed instruction manuals to carry out this program that were issued to every local council. The success of these neighborhood discussion groups depended largely on the discussion leaders and their ability to get the attendees to want to do more in their communities. The OCM therefore took extensive measure in an attempt to make the program appealing to the community so that people would attend. This was another example of how it continued to bear down even harder in specifying how local councils were to operate their programs. These facts demonstrated that the

¹⁵ “Fighting the War At Home,” May 1, 1942, p.1, Folder 22, Box 1, A4328,NYSWC.

¹⁶ Ibid, 2.

Office was concerned over whether or not people would participate and how well it would be carried out by the local councils. This unease and large effort on part of the OCM reflected the conclusion that civilian mobilization was not as effective and people were not serving the home front as had been expected. When relying on the OCM reports to the State War Council, it appeared that the neighborhood course was received with enthusiasm and put into practice in a number of communities. Its evidence for this claim is only supported by the fact that 4,589 copies had been distributed. The OCM also claimed the discussion program was well received by minority groups and poorer classes of the communities. The OCM clearly believed that the program was serving its purpose-to reach every individual of the population.¹⁷ It is important to note that there was never any substantial evidence in these reports, such as exact numbers or actual lists of attendees, to support the assertion that all citizens in the community participated.

The OCM also wanted to preserve traditional family values and ideals and therefore created discussion outlines focused on ways in which mothers could be aided, especially by child care programs and nutrition courses, when they were out serving their communities in one way or another.¹⁸ State officials were concerned that the war would cause families to break apart with fathers, sons, or brothers away from home fighting the enemy. The discussion outlines issued by the OCM to be carried out by the “Fighting the War at Home” program therefore dealt primarily with maintaining morale in every home, more so than the other areas discussed. They also believed it to be important that women felt a part of the war effort, even if they could not directly produce weapons or volunteer their time. The OCM created a specific discussion outline directed towards women who remained at home during this time reminding them that their job was important for the war. The discussion emphasized that homemakers dealt with numerous

¹⁷ Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of June, 1942,” p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

¹⁸ “Morale Begins at Home; A Discussion Program,” May 13, 1942, Folder 3, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

tasks, such as budgeting, cooking, and most importantly, educating their children. The OCM wanted to convey the idea that women who remained at home were just as significant as those working in the factories, and it was important that they knew it.¹⁹

The second discussion emphasized how women workers were also very important during these troubling times. They were vital for producing the war materials necessary for an Allied victory. With so many men fighting the war themselves, women were called on to fill in their shoes. These discussions therefore were important for letting women know what they could expect to get paid, how they would be trained, and the availability of child care programs for working mothers.²⁰ Another important focus of these discussions was the preservation of democratic principles. New Yorkers were taught that World War II was a “total war” that impacted everyone in one way or another and that democracy was to “arise and shine in every community.”²¹ The OCM conveyed the idea that democracy was under attack and it was every civilian’s responsibility to preserve their way of life against their enemies. From these discussions it is evident that the Office wanted to convey ideals which it believed were important for fighting the war. This meant making women feel included in an effort that historically involved the sacrifice of men (for the most part) and people aware of the threat to their country’s political ideology. It was these discussions, according to the OCM’s assessments, which were significant for inspiring people to unite and volunteer their efforts. The fact that the OCM needed to create these discussions showed that not many people were participating to the extent the state had anticipated. If the State felt that people needed to be reminded of why their contributions were necessary and that there was a real threat to democracy, than mobilization

¹⁹ “Is the Homemaker’s Job Important? A Discussion Outline,” May 12, 1942, Folder 3, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

²⁰ “Wanted: Women Workers; A Discussion Outline,” May 13, 1942, Folder 3, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

²¹ “No Blackout for Democracy; A Discussion Outline,” May 12, 1942, Folder 3, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

efforts were most likely not as well received and citizens were not engaging in them to the extent that had been hoped.

The War Council also worked hard to educate the public by providing films for local councils to show to their communities. In preparing the state for the Allied invasion of France in June 1944, the State Council held a conference for the local chairmen to attend. The meeting provided the city officials with important films which were to gain support for the Allied invasion of Normandy by the civilian population.²² The program as a whole, entitled “The War Council and its Community,” provided films that were similar to what the Council had been pushing on the communities all along. For example, some films instructed women how to cook efficiently, communities how to salvage war materials, and every citizen on the importance of keeping military information a secret. Other war films included encouraging working mothers to place their children in day care facilities that “facilitated healthy development.”²³ They also demonstrated the dangerous threat posed by Germany and Japan in an effort to show how hard civilians would have to work together and with America’s allies in order to defeat the enemy. These films reiterated the OCM’s concern that citizens were not participating and attempt to appeal to more people to get involved in volunteer efforts.

Through regional conferences held in January 1943 to determine the progress of local War Councils, the OCM discovered that a main problem that many communities were facing was juvenile delinquency.²⁴ This was not only a problem seen in New York. The war was impacting all communities across the nation and effecting family life, often disrupting or even

²² Mrs. Walter S. McNabb, “Letter to Mayors, Chairman of Boards of Supervisors, Executives of Local War Councils,” January 5, 1944, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

²³ “The War Council and its Community,” January 12 and 13, 1944, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

²⁴ Mary S. Bruner, “Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization,” January 27, 1943, p.9, Folder 1, Box 1, A4338, NYSWC.

destroying marriages.²⁵ The OCM was especially concerned with preserving traditional family values, which was reflected in many of the discussion outlines, some of which, for example, were geared towards instructing women how to take care of their children while fulfilling their new war time responsibilities.²⁶ Numerous wartime circumstances caused problems of juvenile delinquency and sexual promiscuity to become a national concern. The absence of fathers and husbands put strains on the loved ones left behind. This, when combined with the fact that many households were headed by women who had to now both work and deal with household duties, took its toll on children and led to many of them departing from the “norms” of society. For boys this may have meant rebelliousness or small violence and for girls sexual promiscuity, all activities that represented the dangerous impact of the war on old standards.²⁷

In order to distract the youth from less “wholesome” activities, the OCM instructed the local councils to form “Youth Service Councils.” These councils were composed of individuals aged 16 to 25 and provided means for youth to be involved in their community service programs and the war effort. The council was also supposed to represent the various youth groups of the community, such as the Boy Scouts or Y.W.C.A.²⁸ Under the OCM, a Junior Citizens Service Corps was also formed during this time which allowed for Federal recognition of the boys’ and girls’ efforts in their communities. To be a part of the corps, one had to provide one hour of community service a week.²⁹ The corps focused on war time community services, such as collecting scrap materials, making war materials to be used in Service Men’s Centers (such as bulletin boards and ping pong paddles), and sorting through donated materials as well. The

²⁵ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 87.

²⁶ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, “Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of May, 1942,” p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

²⁷ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 91.

²⁸ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, April 23, 1942, Folder 14, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

²⁹ *The United States Junior Citizens Service Corps; OCD Publication 3623*, p.1, Folder 14, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

Junior Citizens Service Corps were also instructed to welcome new families to towns, volunteer in hospitals, and assist in the care of small children of working mothers.³⁰ The needs of youth in war time were also met by the OCM Victory Corps program. Formed in high schools across the state, the program's purpose was to enlist upperclassmen from high schools for civilian war services. The Volunteer Office could therefore request the service of young teens through the Victory Corps where their specific service was needed.³¹ These programs represented ways the OCM attempted to get the youth of New York involved in the war effort and keep them from falling into dangerous paths that would alter the fabric of society. From the reports it can be concluded that these efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency were not all that effective. Problems persisted throughout the war and needs of youth in war time were consistently cited as issues effecting the volunteer offices.

Geneva and Syracuse were among the cities reporting problems with juvenile delinquency. Miss Scotia Ballard, executive secretary of the Council of Social Agencies, summarized the problems that currently faced the youth, which largely had to do with female delinquency. She brought up an example of how many young girls were typically attracted to men in uniform, leaving out the boys their own age. There were other types of "delinquency" such as crime in the local communities. Very young girls were found "frequenting night clubs and taverns and promiscuous and loose relations resulting with men in uniform."³² Ms. Ballard therefore suggested that more recreational activities be held to encourage young teenage girls to interact with boys the same age rather than being tempted by older military men.³³ The OCM believed that conservative values needed to remain a consistent part of life, even during a time of

³⁰ Ibid, 1-16.

³¹ Mr. Jackson, "Letter to Field Directors," October 19, 1942, Folder 5, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

³² Donald A. Campbell, "Minutes of the Meeting of Civilian War Services," June 23, 1943, p.4, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

³³ Ibid, 4.

war. A committee was therefore formed to meet the needs of youth in wartime, known as the “Social and Delinquency Problems of Youth” in June 1943. In a report submitted by the committee to the OCM, it recommended that communities create organized groups with adult supervision that would allow teens to engage in recreational activities and that buildings (such as schools) needed to be made available for such activities.³⁴ The council also stressed the importance of maintaining a high standard of education by showing documentary films and also allowing the children to organize their own recreational activities (under parental supervision). Parents were also encouraged to attend “Guidance Clinics” held in their communities by the local council to educate them on how to successfully keep their child out of trouble and presented ways in which other cities had effectively eliminate youth delinquency.³⁵

The OCM was especially concerned with ensuring that girls and women remained loyal to the moral standards of the time. The committee suggested ways to enforce the legal drinking age because it was evident that girls under the age of 18 were being served liquor and attending bars. It therefore recommended that at least two police women be employed in each city to supervise these bars and enforce the law. The panel recommended that girls 15 years or younger be escorted by an older family member if she was out after 10 o’clock p.m. It was also recommended that police forces patrol their local parks on a regular basis, churches offer religious education and courtship courses for high school students, and service men 25 years or older be prohibited from recreation activities/centers which were unable to serve alcoholic beverages.³⁶ It is clear from the panel’s reports that the New York State OCM was very concerned with maintaining moral standards even during a time of war. The OCM was

³⁴ “The Needs of Youth in Wartime; Report of the Special Panel on Social and Delinquency Problems of Youth,” June 29, 1943, p.3, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339,3, NYSWC.

³⁵ Ibid, 7.

³⁶ “Report of the Panel on Social Protection to the Youth,” July 8, 1943, p.3-4, Folder 2, Box 1, A4339, NYSWC.

discomforted by the fact that young women were stepping outside the bounds of propriety and it wanted to preserve the traditional way of life. In fact, many communities nationwide during the war adjusted their law enforcement practices to address the so called “teen-age troubles.”³⁷ For example, they had youth curfews and laws mandating parental responsibility for the actions of their children. Extensive measures were taken to induce conformity to laws with regards to young girls. Some official programs, such as the wartime sexual protection program, were intent on preventing female “sexual delinquency” and safeguarding public morals and health. It suggested ways local laws could be changed so that women and girls who behaved in a suspect manner would be apprehended or turned over to juvenile courts.³⁸ The OCM’s efforts to maintain conventional ideas and standards reflected the same concerns of the national government. Officials wanted pre war concepts about family life, youth, and especially women, to continue during a changing time period. The efforts of the OCM to preserve conservative values demonstrated that the war did not allow for a change in society’s attitude towards women but actually caused a backlash where their liberty, specifically their sexual freedom, was limited.

The most important development of the Division of Civilian War Services was the Block Leader Program. Many of the programs created by the Civilian War Services relied on the support of all New York households in order to be successful, and the block leader program provided a means for a direct connection between the households and the Council.³⁹ The OCM was instrumental in establishing the Block Plans throughout the state by appointing chiefs in each city and organizing the block leaders. A significant aspect of the Block Leader Program

³⁷ Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 103.

³⁸ Anderson, *Wartime Women*, 104.

³⁹ “Relationship of the Division of Civilian War Services,” Folder 3, Box 1, A4327, NYSWC.

was that by November 1942, approximately 90% of the leaders were women.⁴⁰ The program was important for the women of New York because it served as one of the premier ways for them to be involved in the war effort. It is true that women did work in the war production plants, but for the majority of homemakers the Block Program was instrumental in providing a way for them to become involved with home front mobilization. The regional conferences held in early 1943 by the OCM also instructed the local councils how to organize the Block Plan, carry out important programs by means of it, and presented a Block Leader Training Course. The Civilian War Service Sections had not been set up in every county and the conferences were held in order to push the local councils to take more action in setting them up correctly. The OCM was still pushing for people and communities to participate at this time because it was not seeing successful mobilization on a local level.

The OCM also took the time to investigate the success of the Block Leader Program in individual counties and looked for various ways it could be used, demonstrating another example of how the Office wanted more control over the localities. For example, the Army had requested the use of the OCM to recruit female volunteers for an auxiliary branch of the armed services known as the Women's Army Corps (WAC). In June 1943, the OCM therefore planned a state wide campaign for Block Leader Services to obtain the names of those individuals interested. The Block Leaders were instrumental for the campaign, which ended up recruiting 1,715 potential candidates.⁴¹ OCM field staff often interviewed local councils to determine activities where Block Leaders could be used. The Office would issue out memorandums directing the

⁴⁰ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of November, 1942," December 1, 1942, p.2, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁴¹ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Monthly Report of the Office of Civilian Mobilization for the Month of June, 1943," July 21, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

localities on the areas it needed to focus on.⁴² This use of Block Leaders was also more of a “responsive mechanism” because it allowed for a direct connection from the State to the local communities and was therefore very important to the OCM. The Office wanted to make sure that the program was carried out and established effectively.

Another program that was initiated by the OCM which demonstrated its involvement at the local level dealt with the creation of the Child Care Committee. On a national level, child care had been a controversial topic as more women began to enter the work force during the War. Some groups, such as the United States Children’s Bureau, did not support child care programs because they did not think it was in a child’s best interest to be cared for by someone other than its mother. The Bureau argued that mothers belonged at home with their children and pushed for government policy that defined motherhood as a patriotic service in itself. With the demands of the war on the defense industries in America, those concerned with meeting the needs of the war supported child care programs that would allow women to join the workforce.⁴³ With the labor shortage experienced as men left for the war, women workers were in high demand. The debate focused on whether or not a woman’s duty to her family was more important than her civic duty. Some defense contractors, such as Curtis-Wright in Buffalo, opened day care centers for their employees and the government’s campaign to recruit women for war production industries publicized available child care centers.⁴⁴ Supporters of keeping mothers at home seemed to influence the national government’s programs for children because

⁴² Donald A. Campbell, Volunteer Office, “Block Leader Service, and Civilian War Services Programs for the Remainder of 1943,” September 29, 1943, p.1, Folder 1, Box 1, A4333,NYSWC.

⁴³ Elizabeth Rose, *Mother’s Job: The History of Day Care 1890-1960* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1999), 153-154.

⁴⁴ Rose, *Mother’s War*, 162.

the child care programs that grew out of this need to mobilize women workers were never able to fully meet the demands of working mothers and their children.⁴⁵

What did result was the passing of the Lanham Act in 1941, which served to help meet the needs of areas experiencing increased migration from the demands of the defense industries by providing funds for construction projects, such as for schools or roads. The Lanham act had many deficiencies that made it insufficient to meet the needs of communities with increased numbers of working mothers. For example, the application process for funds was cumbersome and there was not an effort to ensure the child care facilities were adequate. The centers themselves often had high fees, short hours, and were inconveniently located. Nevertheless, the Lanham Act was used by many communities to gain the necessary funds for the child care programs that were successfully established.

In New York State, the OCM did not agree with the opinions of the Children's Bureau and decided to try and meet the needs of its working mothers. On June 23, 1943, a child care program was created under the direction of Mrs. Pennock and the OCM.⁴⁶ The purpose of the committee was to help the local councils obtain the funds necessary to develop community programs to deal with child care problems. It was very evident by this time that many women, especially those with children, were employed in the numerous war production factories throughout the state. For example, in July, 1942 Buffalo, which had defense contractors that had already opened up child care centers, conducted an experimental survey in order to determine the needs for additional child care facilities. It was discovered that there was a lack of agreement in the community over the needs of child care and different ideas about how to resolve them. The survey's purpose was to determine population density, female population (for a possible labor

⁴⁵ Ibid, 166.

⁴⁶ Karl Drew Hartzell, *The Empire State at War; World War II* (New York: The State of New York, 1949), 213.

supply), child population, and income groups.⁴⁷ The survey demonstrated that eighty percent of the women in Buffalo were employed in 30 of the 284 plants and that an additional 64,000 workers would be needed in the next six months, fifty percent of which were to be women. From June to September 1942, there was a fifty percent increase in employed mothers in upstate New York alone. The State War Council knew it had to help the working mothers of New York if they were going to serve in the factories and help meet the demands for an allied victory. After the survey was conducted in Buffalo, the Child Care, Development, and Protection Committee, which was a part of the Civilian War Services Section of each local council, was to add an individual to periodically conduct the surveys to evaluate, issue recommendations, and create more facilities or programs to try and meet the needs of the working women.

In order to handle the child care problems in the communities, the Committee encouraged using the Lanham Act in order to gain access to Federal funds for child care facilities. A memorandum was therefore composed by the OCM and distributed to the school superintendents, public welfare commissioners, and local Child Care, Development, and Protection Committees. The memorandum's purpose was to instruct local communities how to apply for the Lanham Act funds for child care facilities.⁴⁸ The Federal funds were available only to those communities that had defense industries and were to be used for day care facilities for children of working mothers. The available funds were supposed to supply, staff, and organize the facilities when the costs could not be provided locally. The types of projects to be funded by the Lanham Act were day care facilities for nursery schools, day nurseries, and before/after

⁴⁷ Eva Abramson, "Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization," July 24, 1942, p.3-4, Folder 1, Box 1, A4338, NYSWC.

⁴⁸ "Memorandum to the School Superintendent, Public Welfare Commissioners and Local Child Care, Development and Protection Committees," May 1942, p.1, Folder 2, Box 1, A4333, NYSWC.

school programs for children aged 5 to 16 years old.⁴⁹ In establishing these facilities, the projects had to be sponsored by the local board of education or the local department of welfare. It was left up to the local Child Care, Development and Protection Committee to determine the child care needs of specific communities by employing a survey like that used in Buffalo. Once the survey was conducted the committee formed a plan to be sent to the State Committee. If the State agreed with the plans, the appropriate application forms had to be filled out and then the funds would directly be transferred to the local committees.⁵⁰

By October, 1942 the Child Care Committees had trained 3000 child care aides and distributed bulletins advertising the program.⁵¹ The OCM worked to promote and publicize the child care programs through the use of magazines and state newspapers. Problems soon occurred because the application process for the federal funds through the Lanham Act proved difficult to complete. Reflecting the controversy over child care programs at the national level, there was a general lack of agreement with regards to needs and varying ideas about what should be done among many communities.⁵² There were also disputes among the local councils about alternative options to building child care facilities, and suggestions arose such as to keep the schools open longer for children with working mothers.⁵³ Another dispute was over the fact that too much of the emphasis had been on nursery schools and not enough on elementary aged children; many officials wanted to integrate recreational activities with the child care programs. According to minutes from OCM meetings, the office had many problems getting the applications approved by the Workers Progress Administration (which processed the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid 2-3.

⁵¹ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 214.

⁵² Eva Abramson, "Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization," July 24, 1942, p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4338, NYSWC.

⁵³ Albert B. Meredith, "Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization," November 25, 1942, p.3, Folder 1, Box 1, A4338, NYSWC.

applications) because of the limitations set by the agency.⁵⁴ It appeared that the OCM had a poorly organized Child Care program because it had difficulties preparing the applications and determining which areas met the qualifications for the grants. Many communities reported their dissatisfaction with the process for acquiring funds and believed that Lanham grants should have been made for the state and then given to the communities.⁵⁵ By the beginning of 1943, it was felt that the committee under of the OCM was not fulfilling its duties and that there were too many coordination problems. The State War Council decided to abolish the committee and created an official State Committee on Child Care, Development, and Protection that was appointed by the Governor.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁵ "Minutes of Meeting of Division of Civilian Mobilization," December 29, 1942, p.5, Folder 1, Box 1, NYSWC.

⁵⁶ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 215.

Chapter 4: Schenectady County: An Exemplary Local War Council

According to Hartzell, the “vast majority of New Yorkers eagerly and anxiously did what they could to help win the war. When it came to the test, the democratic microcosm [the State War Council] proved sound.”¹ What truth was there to this claim? The OCM’s literature claimed success on nearly every front and was very involved in the local communities. Clearly this did not necessarily mean that the OCM was effective in getting entire communities to participate in their programs. In the beginning, it appeared that many of the offices that had been established were “paper organizations” that were not very efficient.² The success of the mobilization programs depended largely on the efforts of the officials and chiefs of the local war councils; their effectiveness therefore varied from city to city.

A county which played an important role in New York’s war effort and proved rather successful in mobilizing citizens was Schenectady. Located in Upstate New York about 30 minutes outside of the Capital, Schenectady (an area with about four percent of the State’s population) played a principal role in producing war materials due to the fact that both General Electric (G.E.) and the American Locomotive Company (A.L.C.O.) were located there. Schenectady was one of the first counties to take the initiative in preparing for the war by forming a local Citizens Committee on National Defense in the summer of 1940.³ The Committee was used on numerous occasions as a model to other counties in developing the State War Council’s programs, particularly those of the Office of Civilian Mobilization and Civilian War Services.⁴ According to the OCM reports, the majority of local councils were ineffective in meeting the expectations of the State War Council and carrying out its programs. However,

¹ Karl Drew Hartzell, *The Empire State at War; World War II* (New York: The State of New York, 1949), 5.

² Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their Relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt’s Private Papers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1971), 648.

³ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 358

⁴ Ibid, 360.

Schenectady demonstrated that the O.C.M.'s programs did see success in certain counties, especially because it had taken many measures on its own without the state's intervention. This initiative and success on a local level was not common and Schenectady was the exception rather than the rule for how local councils acted throughout the war. The Schenectady War Council revealed that the OCM's efforts did not go to waste and some counties did strive to serve the war effort.

By the spring of 1941, the Schenectady County local Defense Council was leading the way in meeting the war time needs on the home front. Within a year of its establishment, the county had registered more than 15,000 volunteers at the Volunteer Office of Civilian Mobilization. As stated in the *Schenectady Union-Star*,

The County War Council has been widely recognized as one of the most active and best organized in the state. The methods used in organizing and developing many of its war-time activities have been recommended by state war council agencies as models for other communities.⁵

On December 11, 1941, immediately after Pearl Harbor, the Volunteer Office was established in Schenectady with the chairman, Mrs. Patrick Garey, appointed as head of the committee. The physical set up of the office was commended in its early stages as well organized in a businesslike manner. The office's location, the Proctor Arcade, was central in downtown Schenectady and close to both G.E. and A.L.C.O. By March of 1942, Schenectady offered a number of training courses provided by the OCM for its volunteers on nutrition, child care, civilian protection, and much more.⁶ These courses taught individuals how to meet the health needs of their families and neighborhoods, salvage food, handle crises, and train individuals in

⁵ April 1, 1942, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

⁶ Walter Tracey, "Field Report, Volunteer Office of Schenectady," March 24, 1942, p.2-3, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

child care.⁷ Schenectady had its own innovations as well, such as a job-evaluation committee to assess whether the volunteers were being used for appropriate tasks. The county also had its own volunteer manual to provide instructions for training workers, define the responsibilities of specific committees, and standardize the practices of the local office.⁸ The State OCM Manual, monthly report forms, and other material that was designed to help local councils establish and maintain successful volunteer offices were built off of Schenectady's material.⁹ There are numerous accounts where the local war council in Schenectady was praised for its work and efficiency. After State officials visited the city to report on its progress, OCM director Mrs. Pennock wrote a letter to Schenectady expressing the State's appreciation for the county's efforts. Mrs. Pennock said there were many aspects of the system in Schenectady, such as its Volunteer Office's supportive relationship with the Office of Civilian Protection, which the State Office found to be exceptional and useful for other struggling communities.¹⁰

The OCM also singled out Schenectady for its successful public relations strategy. The Council worked closely with churches, school officials, and the local newspapers for publicity.¹¹ According to the OCM, these relationships were necessary for a War Council to be successful. From the outset, Schenectady had a very detailed and organized publicity plan where the two main newspapers, the *Schenectady Gazette* and *Union Star* had the responsibility of publishing information on the day of the week at specific times of the month, such as the numbers of enrolled peoples and their responsibilities, descriptions of training classes, and aims of the OCM.¹² The newspapers were also important for advertising the needs of the volunteer

⁷ Janet Webb, *Training for volunteers, Spring 1943*, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

⁸ Helen M. Hall, *Schenectady Volunteer Manual*, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

⁹ Helen M. Hall and Jean M. Carrall, "Annual Report 1943, Office of Civilian Mobilization, Schenectady, NY," November 1, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

¹⁰ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Letter to Mrs. Ferguson," April 1, 1943, Folder 52, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

¹¹ Tracey, "Field Report, Volunteer Office of Schenectady," March 24, 1942, p.5, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

¹² *Publicity Plan, V.O.C.D.*, Folder 6, Box 2, A4324, NYSWC.

office and how citizen participation remained a constant necessity. By the fall of that year, the Schenectady papers were praising the work of the OCM for putting forth up to 700 hours of work individually and described how the OCM was working to educate the youth of the city.

As early as the fall of 1941, local newspapers were publicizing the purpose of the New York State War Council and focused largely on the efforts of women during the war and the need in general for women to participate. Women were to maintain the social health of the community and teach each other how to build up their neighborhoods to “give the soldiers something worth defending.”¹³ First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, in her role as head of the national Division of Volunteer Participation, even made her way to Schenectady where the newspapers carried her message that there was an important place for the home maker during a time of war. If they were unable to participate in the volunteer efforts, then it was their duty to maintain a healthy home life.¹⁴ The First Lady expressed the belief that it was their responsibility to focus on home nursing, first aid, nutrition, and budget management. The First Lady also urged individuals to maintain morale and to always put the community’s interest ahead of their own. The papers also tried to appeal to the patriotic spirit of these women and emphasized that those who did participate truly believed in a democratic victory.¹⁵ The most important purpose of the papers was to advertise to the women of Schenectady ways in which they could volunteer their efforts for protective services, emergency welfare, the rationing board, and nurses’ aides. They always carried a message that enrolling to volunteer was a step closer to victory.¹⁶

¹³ Nona Baldwin, “Organizes Work For Women in State Defense Council: Mrs. W. Pennock Seeks to Build Up Communities of Greater Strength in Peace at War,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1941, Folder DC Council Clippings Schenectady, Box 2, A4329, NYSWC.

¹⁴ “Homemaker’s Place in Defense Described by First Lady,” *Schenectady Union Star*, February 14, 1942, Folder DC Council Clippings Schenectady, Box 2, A4329, NYSWC.

¹⁵ “A Call to Arms! 50 City, 50 Scotia Women Enrollees Needed for Mass Feeding Classes,” *Schenectady Union Star*, August 12, 1942, Folder DC Council Clippings Schenectady, Box 2, A4329, NYSWC.

¹⁶ “Back America’s Fighting Men by Joining Civilian Army,” *Schenectady Union Star*, September 17, 1942, Folder DC Council Clippings Schenectady, Box 2, A4329, NYSWC.

A specific example of how the local newspapers publicized OCM efforts was during Civilian Mobilization Week. During the week of September 21, 1942, Schenectady County held specific events to both celebrate the work done by the local War Council and emphasize the need for increased enrollment of volunteers.¹⁷ The week consisted of school programs, radio addresses, athletic shows, community talks, and merchant window displays. Talks were also given in classrooms based on a government booklet that was distributed to all children titled “What Can I Do?” The events of the important week were publicized in the *Schenectady Gazette* alongside an ad which asked what they were doing for the war. The ad also said that there was a job for everyone who had the time to spare and that “it is the patriotic duty of every man and woman to do everything possible for our country and our community in this time of strife when the very existence of our nation is at stake.”¹⁸

Schenectady County also used the radio as a means of communicating important OCM information to the public. Radio programs appealed to individuals to enlist in the Block Leader’s plans and volunteer in any way possible.¹⁹ These broadcasts described the work being done and the future plans of specific committees and according to reports, often received a very positive reaction from listeners. Some of Schenectady’s radio programs were even distributed to other local war councils to be used in their broadcasts. One of these focused on drawing on the listener’s patriotic spirit by beginning the broadcast describing the attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s heroic response. From the broadcast’s transcript one can see that it was dramatic, featured emotional music, and attempted to inspire in its listeners a desire to volunteer. This

¹⁷ “Civilian Mobilization Week Begins: Plans Complete For Program Emphasizing War Council Work; Volunteer Need,” *Schenectady Gazette*, September 21, 1942, 3.

¹⁸ “Civilian Mobilization Week Begins.”

¹⁹ Katherine Rozendal, “Report for War Council,” February 3, 1943, Folder 6, Box2, A4329, NYSWC.

broadcast was even requested by Mrs. Pennock to be used by other cities.²⁰ The fact that Schenectady created a radio broadcast that was not only popular within its own community but used with others as well was an example of how the county was an innovative leader in mobilization efforts.

One of the programs initiated in Schenectady County which was the first of the kind in the state was the recruiting and training of volunteers for the W.P.A nursery schools. This began in July, 1941 and served as a proving ground for other counties. Any of the problems encountered with the experiment were used to “shed light” on better methods for similar projects in New York.²¹ According to the training program’s report, there was a shortage in regular nursery school employees and securing volunteers became a primary objective. The Nursery School Advisory Committee therefore reached out to the Junior League and Young Married Women’s Club and advertised in the local papers in order to attain the volunteers that were fit for the position of caring for young children. The people who volunteered from the ads in the paper turned out to be the most reliable because they largely had a teaching background and therefore had something to add to the program. The training entailed a two-week intensive program where ten hours of observation-participation in nursery schools was followed by the distribution of materials and discussions.²² From the “Schenectady experience” important points were taken: programs had to be appealing to volunteers that need to be supervised, motivated, and made to feel appreciated for their efforts in order to enlist their services. The training program was also most likely initiated in Schenectady due to the fact that many women were already working at war production plants of G.E. and A.L.C.O and needed child care that was not yet supported at a state level.

²⁰ N. Ruffner, November 4, 1942, Folder 50, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²¹ *Schenectady Training Program for Volunteers, New York State*, Folder 50, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²² Ibid.

Schenectady County's recreation committee also demonstrated how the city made the OCM's objectives effective on a local level. The Schenectady Recreation Committee was under the leadership of Frank Callahan and was commended for "translating into local action the ideas which are developing in the State Advisory Recreation Committee."²³ A meeting held by the committee was attended by a State official who reported that the committee demonstrated the right methods to use in trying to carry out the state's objectives, overcome local problems, and secure positive results. At the specific meeting, a subcommittee attended which brought in a report that determined there needed to be a greater use of school facilities in numerous communities for recreational activities. For example, a swimming pool was not being used because it needed repairs and nothing was being done to fix it. A resolution was therefore reached at the meeting where the Recreation Committee would bring the information from the report to the mayor and also request a meeting of the School Board and Superintendent. The same letter containing the committee's concerns was also sent to the City Manager, press, and Mayor.²⁴ From these records it would appear that the County was very thorough in ensuring that the War Council carried out its duty to the best of its ability.

Upon the one year anniversary of the creation of the Schenectady County Volunteer Office of Civilian Mobilization, the council began to release monthly bulletins in order to provide the community with important news and information about the county's war activities. From these reports one can gather the specific triumphs of and important roles played by the local council. By November, 1942 Schenectady County's salvage record was 167 pounds per capita putting it on the Government's "Honor Roll Performance."²⁵ Schenectady was also

²³ Mr. Campbell, "Letter to Mr. Grout," July 12, 1945, Folder 54, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thomas Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, November 30, 1942, Folder 50, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

recognized for “going over the top” in its war activities through the amount of war bonds purchased. It even received the United States Treasury flag as recognition for its efforts.²⁶ The County was also very successful in maintaining the efficiency of its volunteers. If volunteers were unable to be reached for service they were put on an “inactive list,” making it easier to determine which volunteers were still available for service. The Bulletin also included information about important events held by specific sub committees of the Schenectady County Council. For example, the Physical Fitness Committee housed one of the largest track and field events in 1943 at Union College. The event hosted 750 high schools that were invited to its campus in the northeast to highlight the importance of physical fitness of the youth in the county. The Bulletins demonstrated that Schenectady also had an impressive volunteer enrollment with 15,181 individuals enrolled within two years of the local council’s operation.²⁷ The county also received high praise for establishing a local Emergency Welfare Center. The plan was the first one to receive approval at the state level and copies of it were distributed to other communities as an example of a sufficient outline for providing welfare services during an emergency.²⁸

Schenectady County piloted the OCM’s Section for Citizen Morale (which eventually turned into the Section for Citizen Unity). Ryan Fox, Union College President, was named chairman of the New York State War Council for Citizen Morale on March 18, 1942.²⁹ Schenectady was the “principal demonstration center” that had been working to achieve three special objectives: bringing together the resources of the community (meaning the War Council, civic agencies, youth council), reaching everybody in the community through holding

²⁶ Thomas Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, April 5, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²⁷ Helen M. Hall and Carroll, R.D., “Annual Report 1943 Office of Civilian Mobilization Schenectady, N.Y.,” Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²⁸ Thomas Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, December 31, 1942, Folder 52, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

²⁹ “Section for Citizen Unity Report for 1942,” p.1, Folder 2, Box 1, A4327, NYSWC.

community discussions (64,000 people attended these meetings in Schenectady in 1942), and combining in one agency the task of educating and unifying the community.³⁰ That year Schenectady held 99 broadcasts, 941 meetings, and 564 speeches. The Speaker's Bureau of the Citizen Unity Committee in Schenectady was responsible for bringing in guest speakers, holding discussions and lectures, and showing war related motion pictures. According to the county's records, the Bureau worked with Polish, Italian, youth, and religious groups as well. Relying on the county's records, this process represented just one aspect of how well organized and effective the Citizen's Unity Committee was in carrying out its duty to the people of the county.

They types of discussions hosted by the Speaker's Bureau dealt with a wide range of areas such as home front defense, international problems, consumer information, and social problems. The strengths and weaknesses of discussion panels were also evaluated to ensure their technique was sufficient by analyzing the manner in which they proceeded.³¹ This was another example which demonstrated the thoroughness of the Schenectady War Council. In order to procure specific speakers, the bureau had to compile a list of specific topics to be discussed, such as youth delinquency in war time, and send out letters to organizations and groups asking for trained individuals to host the discussions. In one year the Speaker's Bureau provided 290 different organizations with trained speakers; this meant that the local agencies often had to work closely with the bureau.³² These organizations included Parent-Teacher Associations, religious groups, and the League of Women Voters.³³ In order to maintain an effective communication network with the local organizations, a contact group of 55 women was created that issued questionnaires to the groups. These questionnaires provided basic information about the

³⁰ "Section for Citizen Unity Report for 1942," p.1 Folder 2, Box 1, A4327, 1, NYSWC.

³¹ Joseph Czyzewski, "The Annual Report of the Citizen Unity Committee May 31, 1943," p.34, Folder 49, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC

³² Ibid, 5.

³³ Ibid, 8.

organizations, such as size and nature, and were used by the contact group to suggest war films, speakers, and panel discussions to the groups. This process represented another way in which the Council strove to be an effective and sufficient war council.

The Citizen Unity Committee also had the responsibility of showing war films to Schenectady County. In one year 60 films were arranged for various organizations and the public as well where 11, 325 individuals attended.³⁴ A subcommittee was formed on war information films in the summer of 1942. The purpose of the committee was to organize as many showings as possible before organizations, schools, and the public in general. The films were provided by the New York State Office of War Information and were supposed to make things “more realistic to the average citizen and to make him more aware of what is involved in the war effort.”³⁵ The other essential purpose of the sub-committee was to encourage theater managers to show both short and full length films for the general public to attend depicting the progress of the war. The Citizen Unity Sub-committee on War Information Films also endorsed a new experiment in Schenectady that was a special series called “Film Forums.” These programs, sponsored by the Schenectady Public Library and local Y.M.C.A., consisted of a film being shown and then a discussion taking place afterwards under the direction of a trained leader. In order to inform the public when and where these occasions took place, the Committee also advertised on the radio and in the local newspapers.³⁶ The fact that the Committee had help from other local organizations, newspapers, and a local college demonstrated that a large effort was required on numerous parts of the community to effectively carry out mobilization programs. It also demonstrated how the Schenectady War Council put in the time and effort to make these programs a success.

³⁴ Ibid, 9.

³⁵ Ibid, 9..

³⁶ Ibid, 12.

The committee also worked with Union College to show films in the campus's Old Chapel building. Eleven programs were shown on the campus and were put on solely because of the efforts of the faculty who took care of many of the technical difficulties. Union's student newspaper, *The Concordiensis*, advertised for the series which took place on a weekly basis from February through April in 1943. The paper's coverage usually consisted of a small advertisement listing the films being shown and stating that they were being presented in compliance with the Citizen Unity Committee of the Schenectady County War Council.³⁷ For example, in publicizing the College's last showing of war information films, the advertisement gave a brief description of the film titled "Towards Unity" as showing people all over the world working and playing together, demonstrating that everyone shared similarities and that there was no need for racial prejudices in a time of war.³⁸ This specific showing also reiterated a main concern of the State War Council to try and bring the entire community together and rise above racial differences. The Schenectady Council had actually taken action to fulfill the OCM's initiative to create racial harmony among the localities. However, showing films did not necessarily mean they were effective or well received in unifying the community. There was never any evidence in the county's records that the films drew in a multi-racial audience or actually brought people together.

The Schenectady Citizen Unity Committee also attempted to bridge the gap between the ethnic divides through its radio programs. Many of these programs were more informational and provided important war information to the community instead of promoting patriotic zeal as a way to get people to volunteer. An example was a discussion series titled "Speaking of Slavs" and was initiated by the Poles, Czechs and Slovaks in Schenectady. The series aimed at boosting

³⁷ "College Films Listed on Tuesday Program," *The Concordiensis*, February 25, 1943.

³⁸ "Tuesday's Cinema Program Features Seven OWI Films: Schedule Includes Three New Releases; Series Ends with this Week's Showing," *The Concordiensis*, April 8, 1943.

the morale of 40,000 individuals of Slavic origin in the county and surrounding area during a time when their homeland was being attacked by the Nazis, and to educate everyone else about Slavic people and try to bring about “good-neighborliness.”³⁹ This discussion reinforced the fact that Schenectady was an exemplary council for trying to make immigrants feel like they were a part of the war effort as well and that their homeland was important to America.

Throughout 1942, the Schenectady Unity Committee endorsed numerous special events that catered to the specific groups of the community. For example, the committee sponsored the National Negro Youth Victory Day Program. On December 4, a Consumer Housewives’ Institute was held which included women from 527 women’s organizations. In April the Committee provided the speaker and publicized an all day institute on “Women on The Home Front” which was hosted by the Schenectady chapter of National Council of Jewish Women.⁴⁰ This institute reflected the views of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in her visit in February 1942. The First Lady had stressed the importance of women who were primarily homemakers in defense of the country. She discussed with the local council members how defense work provided an “outstanding opportunity for strengthening organized social service work.”⁴¹ The institute’s purpose was to make women feel that volunteering was important for the war effort and reinforced the ideology promoted by the War Council that women needed to focus on social services. In promoting volunteering as the avenue to serve the war, the OCM hoped to maintain conventional attitudes about women, and the Schenectady Council participated in that promotion.

³⁹ Joseph Czyzewski, *The Annual Report of the Citizen Unity Committee May 31, 1943*, p.33, Folder 49, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 18.

⁴¹ “Homemakers Place in Defense.”

That fall Schenectady also hosted a three day conference on civilian participation and war aims where 200 group leaders attended from the Capital Region. The conference's title was "War Goals and Local Responsibility" and was held at Union College. Its purpose was to train speakers and group leaders and to figure out the best ways to prevent disunity in the community. The conference allowed for general discussions about mobilizing civilians, building unity among the community, and conveying the country's war aims to the public.⁴² The conference was also held because the Committee believed that it had to improve its job of unifying the communities and wanted to find better vehicles for promoting unity. From the conference emerged two important recommendations: a resolution supporting a stronger citizen unity program and a resolution calling for the development of a commission on war goals. According to the reports, "labor, racial and nationality groups were strongly represented...the vitality of the discussion was in considerable part traceable to the able representation of many viewpoints and interest."⁴³ The fact that Schenectady hosted the conference demonstrated that it was a leader among the local councils in understanding its responsibility for the war effort and promoting unity in its own county.

A significant aspect of the Citizen Morale Committee in Schenectady was its close relationship with the Schenectady Civil Youth Council (SCYC). The Council was under the direction of Richard Hallahan and was composed of the young adults of the county.⁴⁴ The SCYC was unique in that it allowed for young people to get involved in the war effort through their own organization. The SCYC even published its own news bulletin for the community prior to America's entry into the War. The establishment of the SCYC demonstrated that the

⁴² Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Section for Citizen Unity, Report for September, 1942," Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC

⁴³ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Section for Citizen Unity, Report for October 1942," Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁴⁴ *Schenectady Civic Youth Council Bulletin*, October, 1941, p.1, Folder 50, Box 1, A3084, NYSWC.

youth in the county wanted to be involved in the community during a time when opportunities were developing for their active participation. Its first issue in October, 1941 outlined the council's objectives and aims, which were to train its members for "active citizenship." By this the council meant that it was going to get young adults involved in war activities and develop an interest in youth to serve their communities.⁴⁵ The bulletin was used to demonstrate that the youth of Schenectady wanted to be involved with their community. The two often worked closely together to promote discussions. The SCYC helped to organize salvage collections, held community war discussions, enlisted young adults to participate in the program, and "showed fine community spirit in uniting youth of all colors, faith, and nationality origins."⁴⁶ In order to promote inclusiveness, in May, 1942 the SCYC collaborated with the Morale Committee to carry out a program titled "I am an American Week." The young people were noted for their "imagination" during the month where an outdoor recreation block party was held downtown, hosting radio programs, and advertising program events effectively throughout the city.⁴⁷ The SCYC's efforts were greatly appreciated by the State War Council and well received by the community as a whole, according to the field notes. The city was praised for being a model example of good teamwork between the community, schools, SCYC, and the College.

The SCYC's civilian mobilization division was formed by June 1942 and was known as the Youth Service Council (YSC). The Council was composed of representatives of young adult organizations concerned with providing the youth for home front activities and preserving "morale through recreation."⁴⁸ The formation of the YSC was also a reflection of the state's concern over juvenile delinquency and was part of the campaign to prevent it. It appeared that

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁶ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Section for Citizen Unity, Report for 1942," p.46, Folder 2, Box 1, A4327, NYSWC

⁴⁷ Mrs. Winthrop Pennock, "Section for Citizen Morale Report for May 1942," Folder 1, Box 1, A4336, NYSWC.

⁴⁸ *Schenectady Civic Youth Council Bulletin*, June, 1942, Folder 50, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

the Schenectady Council was concerned with juvenile delinquency and took provisions to ensure that it had programs available for its youth as a way to prevent problems.⁴⁹ The YSC carried out numerous home front projects which dealt with recreation activities. The first of which was the “Farewell to Service Men” program which consisted of a farewell party for the men leaving for service. YSC members served as hostesses for the first USO dance, planned their own scrap campaign, and presented one act plays on live television entitled “The Voice of Youth.”⁵⁰ The YSC also worked with the Recreation Committee to prevent juvenile delinquency by opening the teen age canteen at the Schenectady Boys’ Club. This canteen was very popular among the young adults and provided dancing, games, and entertainment as a way to provide recreational activities for youth during the war.⁵¹ Schenectady continued to hold these canteens where anywhere from 110-250 young adults attended, demonstrating the “outstanding” success of the program. A committee of about twelve boys and girls was even formed to take over the responsibility of running the recreational dances.⁵² The YSC was also invited to aid the men returning home by helping to establish service centers that provided necessary information to returning veterans and writing to them as well, asking about their experiences so that the community could better prepare itself for their return.⁵³

According to reports, another important OCM objective carried out effectively in Schenectady was the Section of Civilian War Services and the Block Leader program. By the end of June 1942 Schenectady County had been one of 29 local councils to establish a Civilian

⁴⁹ Esther Ladd, “Executive Board Meeting-Division of Civilian War Services,” December 15, 1943, p.2, Folder 55, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁵⁰ *Schenectady Civic Youth Council Bulletin*, August, 1942, Folder 50, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁵¹ Thomas Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, November 15, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084.

⁵² Esther Ladd, *Executive Board Meeting-Division of Civilian War Services*, December 15, 1943, Folder 55, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁵³ Thomas Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, June 5, 1944, Folder 55, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

War Services Section and by January of the following year the organization of the Block Plan was complete.⁵⁴ Schenectady also created its own Block Service Leader's Kit in the spring of 1943. It was mimeographed by the Citizen Unity Committee and distributed to all Block Leaders in Schenectady County. The Kit began with a message by Mrs. Winthrop Pennock that highlighted the important role the Block Leaders played in carrying out the war effort at home. The Block Leaders were given the responsibility of helping their neighbors, a job that had a "close relationship" with winning the war.⁵⁵ It was these volunteers' job to combine the strength of their neighborhood to support the men on the war front. The individual campaigns carried out by a Block Leader included a number of home front activities and ongoing programs such as child care, nutrition, consumer education, recreation, and war savings.⁵⁶ The Kit was important for outlining the purpose of the Block Leader Service, which was to efficiently execute the war programs of the Schenectady Civilian War Services Committee. These volunteers had to cover all the homes in their neighborhoods in providing each of them with the necessary war information and instructions required by the local council. They also had to collect information from their communities while and promote cooperation among their community in neighborhood projects such as rallies, meetings, and parades.⁵⁷ The instructional kit also provided suggestions for the Block leaders on the procedures they were to follow in carrying out their responsibilities and projects. Lastly, the kit detailed things the Block Leaders were not supposed to do and tips on how to work with their neighbors. For example, block leaders were not to gossip or spread rumors throughout their communities nor force anyone to participate in programs.⁵⁸ Leaflets

⁵⁴ Thomas E. Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, December 31, 1942, Folder 52, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁵⁵ *Block Service Leader's Kit prepared by New York State Office of War Training and Schenectady War Training Committee*, p.1, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 3-4.

were also distributed to citizens in order to help them understand the purpose of a Block Leader and asking them to cooperate with her. Schenectady took the time and effort to make sure that their Block Leaders were the best kind of leaders for their communities. This service was seen as vital by the State Council for home front mobilization and it was therefore important that the volunteers did their job and carried out the Civilian War Services programs.

Within five months of its establishment, 1359 volunteer women served as Block Leaders in Schenectady. These women took on various projects as volunteers to fulfill their duties as neighborhood leaders. They often canvassed their neighborhoods promoting war aims and acted as “instructors” to their neighbors.⁵⁹ For example, in September 1943, Block Leaders canvassed homes for contributions to the Blood Donor Center which brought 963 pledges. They also gathered data about juvenile delinquency and how it could be solved using the available recreational activities.⁶⁰ Due to the fact that the Schenectady Council perceived juvenile delinquency as a large problem facing the community, it enlisted the Block Leaders to work with the Recreation Committee to “study the teenage problem” and come up with activities to promote solutions. The Block program also worked to distribute leaflets with important war information such as war bonds, stamps, and garden campaigns. Union College also hosted one of the largest Block Leader Training Institutes where 700 volunteers attended. Within its first year, 4005 women signed up for war activity classes, 672 women signed up to become nurses, and 5500 people enlisted to receive Victory Garden Literature.⁶¹

The Block Leaders also helped with the planning to determine public opinion on certain war time activities. For example, at the request of the Recreation Committee, Block Leaders

⁵⁹ Thomas E. Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, May 1, 1943, Folder 52, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁶⁰ Thomas E. Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, September 1, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁶¹ Mrs. Ernest E. George, “Letter to Block Leader,” December 1, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

surveyed the community asking about individual's thoughts with regards to recreational needs. These volunteers were therefore important for evaluating the needs of the community during the war time as well. An important project the leaders participated in was a postwar planning campaign towards the end of the War. 1050 leaders participated in a complete house-to-house canvas that was augmented by Air Raid Wardens and OCM volunteers. Known as the Work Pile Campaign, a survey was given to and filled out by families in the county. The survey contained 70 questions about purchases made by families during the four years of war. The purpose of the survey was to secure information in order to help create jobs for veterans upon their return.⁶² Commending the work of the Block Leaders, the Schenectady War Council Bulletin wrote, "A lot of hard work has been expended in this campaign, which has brought out a new value of this volunteer agency of the War Council."⁶³ The Work-Pile survey took place at a national level and was vital for helping the veterans when they returned home. The women therefore played an important role in determining jobs these men could do after the war. The Schenectady Council therefore attempted to help solve the problem of employing veterans and planned ahead before they returned to their homes, demonstrating another way in which the county worked hard to fulfill wartime needs. The fact that Schenectady Block Leader representatives were also asked to go to Albany at one point to discuss their program with other localities revealed how it was a success.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most important OCM program carried out by the Schenectady County War Council was through the Child Care, Development, and Protection Committee. In 1942 G.E. and A.L.C.O. combined employed 48,000 employees and were instrumental in manufacturing tanks,

⁶² The Chamber of Commerce, *Work Pile Survey*, Folder 53, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁶³ Thomas E. Hanigan, *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, June 5, 1944, Folder 52, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

⁶⁴ "Executive Committee Meeting," June 1, 1943, p.4, Box 2, Folder 16, A4324, NYSWC.

cannons, and radar/radio equipment. This number represented an increase of about 23,000 jobs since the year leading up to America's entry into the war, which was also accompanied with finding replacements for about 10,000 employees who had entered the armed forces.

Schenectady therefore had one of the most important defense industries in the state.⁶⁵

Difficulties were soon encountered when trying to meet the demands of the war because the available supply of experienced laborers was not sufficient enough. Women and many residents from areas outside of Schenectady were therefore recruited to fill in these positions and child care programs would prove to be an issue. This was evident in the extensive child care program that developed in order to meet the needs of working mothers employed by G.E. and A.L.C.O. By 1944, 40% of those employed by these war production companies were women.⁶⁶ By November 1942 it was evident that Schenectady would need more child care facilities. At the time there were only four nursery school programs available to the children of the county with 120 children already in attendance. A third of the employees of G.E. were women and it was predicted that soon that number would change to 50%. A.L.C.O. was also predicted to hire more female employees because so many men were leaving for service and the company wanted to have stable, long-term workers.

With Schenectady playing such a large role in producing war materials, it needed to have child care centers for the number of mothers who were either already working or were going to start very soon.⁶⁷ The Council therefore requested funds through the Federal Lanham Act beginning for the fiscal year in 1943. In the county's application, the Council discussed how there would be many more women taking on employment and needing child care facilities.

⁶⁵ Hartzell, *Empire State at War*, 358.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 360

⁶⁷ H. Kerr, "Schenectady Report of the Child Care Committee to the Division of Civilian War Services," November 21, 1942, Folder 309, Box 6, A4279, NYSWC.

Schenectady requested enough funds to open up twelve child care and development centers. The county identified itself as a “war impacted community” due to the war production plants located there, making it the busiest war production center in the Capital Region.⁶⁸ The application discussed the effects the war had on the community, specifically how more women were leaving their homes and taking the place of men joining the services. This information, when combined with the hours worked by the women, required that more child care facilities be opened. The plan was to establish full day care for toddlers and before and after school programs for all children. The facilities were to be open twelve hours a day to accommodate working mothers.⁶⁹

According to the reports, once the funds were granted and the facilities were established, the program itself was met with great appreciation and enthusiasm. In order to build up registration of the centers, the Child Care Council publicized in the newspapers, distributed leaflets at war production plants, and directly interviewed mothers at the volunteer registration office. According to one newspaper report, the Committee made posters and set up sign up tables in the factories themselves; the purpose of the program was to allow women to work for the war industries that needed their labor.⁷⁰ During the period from April to December in 1943, the available child care centers made it possible for 410 families, 374 of whom had working mothers, to work. A total of 521 children were taken care of by these centers. These figures demonstrated that “a real war need has been met by Child Care Programs.”⁷¹ As stated in *The New York Times* in August 1943,

Schenectady Citizens have been active in the care of children ever since we entered the war and have set up eleven child care centers...to keep the city’s children healthy, happy and occupied educationally while their mothers put in full shifts to war work or essential

⁶⁸ *The Schenectady Request for Lanham Act Funds*, February, 1943, p.2, Folder 311, Box 7, A4329, NYSWC.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁷⁰ “To Further Plans for Child Care Centers,” *Schenectady Union Star*, December 7, 1942, Folder DC Council Clippings Schenectady, Box 2, A4329, NYSWC.

⁷¹ Mrs. Anthony Hoadley, December 29, 1943, Folder 311, Box 7, A4329, NYSWC.

civilian jobs.⁷²

The Child Care Committee also initiated a hot lunch and milk program and sponsored a “healthy and safety” rally to prepare children for the summer months.⁷³ From these numbers and the available reports it appeared that Schenectady Committee met the needs of working mothers and their children during the war successfully. The biggest problem that Schenectady’s Child Care Committee faced was the city’s inability to meet its share of the operating costs of the child care programs. The city received funds from the state on the basis of number of child care days instead of an outright percentage. The Committee was apparently not very willing to try and raise additional money. After negotiations the School Superintendant requested that a new contract with the Federal Government be developed where the Federal Works Agency (which absorbed the WPA) would pay the rest of the operating costs that were not raised by fees, local contributions, and State aid.⁷⁴ The request was granted and the County would only have to be responsible for supplementing fees during “hardship cases.”⁷⁵

The controversy over the establishment of child care facilities at the national level was not reflected in Schenectady. Due to the fact that the city played such an important role in New York’s production, child care programs were in high demand and supported by many who understood mothers needed to work. Schenectady was the first in the state to provide the necessary amount of child care facilities proportional to the number of working mothers within its first year of operation.⁷⁶ By 1944, Schenectady County had requested more Lanham Act

⁷² “Schenectady Centers Care for the Children While the Mothers are Working in War Plants,” (special to the New York Times) *The New York Times*, August 27, 1943.

⁷³ Mrs. Anthony Hoadley, “Statement of the Child Care Committee of the Schenectady War Council,” Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

⁷⁴ “Analysis of Child Care Facilities in Schenectady-2,” November 13-14, 1944, Folder 309, Box 6, A4279, NYSWC.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *Schenectady County War Council News Bulletin*, December 22, 1943, Folder 51, Box 9, A3084, NYSWC.

grants to support the funding of more child care facilities, trying to translate the plan into a postwar program. In March 1944 the War Council was concerned because G.E. (which was the largest industrial employer in Schenectady) showed a “projected decline” in factory employment for the first time in the war.⁷⁷ According to the records, 2,500 workers were transferred to the plant and resulted in 100s of women losing their jobs. With the war coming to a close and veterans returning home, it was estimated that 1,300 more women would lose their jobs by July 1944. The peak of employed women had also already been reached in the summer of 1943. Although the number of working mothers had decreased as the war was winding down, child care enrolment was expected to rise again in the upcoming months.

As the war was coming to a close, allocation of state funds for child care centers became questionable. Requests were sent in to extend the program through May 1946. The Schenectady Child Care Committee justified the extension because its programs had the largest child enrollment in New York State, which was more than 400 by January 1944.⁷⁸ The Committee argued that “homes have actually been held together because of Child Care Center Facilities.”⁷⁹ Letters were sent to the Chairman of the Child Care Committee by the plants and industries as proof of the importance of the facilities in the daily lives of the working parents and therefore the war plants productivity. For example, the assistant supervisor of personnel at G.E. described how women were still needed for employment at the plant and that the child care centers had to stay open. In a letter sent by the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce, the Vice President of the Chamber described how the war workers depended on the services provided by the child care facilities and that this need would only increase because more and more women workers were

⁷⁷ Anna W. Rosenberg, “Letter to Miss. Bond,” March 28, 1944, Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

⁷⁸ W. H. Pillsbury, “Letter to Mr. L. A. Gillette,” February 19, 1945, Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

demanding during a time of war.⁸⁰ Perhaps one of the most important industries aided by the child care facilities was Ellis Hospital. For those nurses who were mothers, “it has meant peace of mind and better service in meeting the needs of the sick wherever women have been able to make satisfactory plans for the care of children during working hours.” The need for nurses and hospital workers would only increase when the war ended; meaning that the child care facilities would still be very important and needed to remain open.⁸¹ Reports also indicated how the community itself showed an interest in the Schenectady County Child Care Program. For example, the Schenectady War Chest contributed funds to the child care programs, radio stations helped to publicize openings in the centers, and three churches contributed space for nursery schools.⁸² Due to the combined efforts of the community that made it clear the child care programs were still a necessity, grants were extended through the end of May, 1946, and working mothers were given the help they needed to fulfill their duties at work. From the number of children and mothers provided service by the programs when combined with the fact that the facilities continued to stay open demonstrated that Child Care in Schenectady was successful.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Wilson, February 13, 1945, Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

⁸¹ Mary G. McPherson, February 17, 1945, Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

⁸² Mrs. Anthony Hoadley, “Statement of the Child Care Committee of the Schenectady War Council,” p.4-5, Folder 311, Box 7, A4279, NYSWC.

Every student of American history has been taught the importance of World War II for its impact on countries both directly and indirectly involved in the conflict. This monumental event shaped the future course of many nations and also taught the world an important lesson about the repercussions of unchecked aggression and evil intentions in the 20th century. A significant aspect of the war was its impact on the Americans of the home front. Wars have typically been catalysts of social and economic changes in the countries involved, whether negative or positive, and World War II was no exception. On a national level, the War helped America leave the Great Depression in its wake, led to the internment of 1000s of Japanese Americans, and was instrumental in developing new war technologies never before imagined. World War II changed the lives of not only those fighting on the front but the individuals who remained at home combating the war in their own way. An important effort at both the national and state level during the war became mobilizing civilians to serve the home front.

One of the states that put a tremendous amount of effort into home front mobilization was New York. With the establishment of its Defense Council prior to the war and the War Council after the attack on Pearl Harbor, stimulating individuals to volunteer became a primary concern of the state. The War Council therefore established the Office of Civilian Mobilization (OCM) to organize and implement the state's volunteer programs. Did the state's efforts prove successful in rousing citizens to engage in a grass roots mobilization to build a strong home front? A popular belief about World War II was that it was the "best war ever" because it was supported by a unified home front devoted to patriotic efforts. By evaluating the records of the New York State War Council and the OCM, a different story is told.

The greatest conclusion to be drawn from the documents is that the OCM worked hard to try and get individuals to volunteer. After accomplishing their main task of setting up volunteer

offices, the OCM's primary focus became implementing the programs and ensuring they were effectively carried out. A consistent theme demonstrated throughout the Office's reports and accounts is that it was continuously frustrated by the local councils' inefficiency and lack of commitment to community services. The OCM proved to be unrelenting in its efforts to get the localities to perform up to its standards and stimulate volunteer activities. It was apparent that many local councils did not live up to the expectations of the state-planners. Some councils did fulfill their duties and revealed that the Office's efforts did not go to waste. One of these was the Schenectady County War Council, which served as an example to many other localities because it had started many of its own programs and took initiatives throughout the war. For the most part, the OCM's records demonstrated that civilian mobilization was not a natural disposition for many citizens and that a large effort on the state official's parts was required for local councils to be successful. Participation in volunteer efforts was therefore quite irregular and World War II did not galvanize patriotic activity to the extent popularized by many early historical sources.

The efforts of the OCM also revealed the significant role played by women in the state's volunteer efforts. Reflecting the concerns on a national level about the effects of the war on American society, the Office and state wanted to preserve the moral ideals and attitudes of a prewar nation that was in the midst of significant changes. The OCM therefore set out to try and maintain the traditional American values by establishing ways to derail youth from engaging in illicit behavior and providing help to mothers and families facing problems caused by the war. This included appealing to women to sacrifice their time for volunteer efforts. The OCM created programs and positions, such as the Block Leader Program, targeted towards women that allowed them to directly serve their communities. The majority of Block Leaders were women in New York (and across the nation) and provided opportunities for them to hold leadership roles

in their communities. This evidence disputed the argument made by many earlier scholars that the war was “good” because it was a turning point for American women that changed people’s perception of their capabilities and place in society. The OCM revealed that large numbers of women volunteered and therefore took the “traditional” route to serving the war effort at home, allowing for prewar conventional attitudes to persist.

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