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SAVING SOCIETY THROUGH POLITICS: THE KU KLUX KLAN
IN DALLAS, TEXAS, IN THE 1920S.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Mark N. Morris, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

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This study analyzes the rise of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Dallas, Texas, in the context of the national Klan. It looks at the circumstances and people behind the revival of the Klan in 1915. It chronicles the aggressive marketing program that brought the Klan to Dallas and shows how the Dallas Klavern then changed the course of the national Klan with its emphasis on politics. Specifically, this was done through the person of Hiram Wesley Evans, Dallas dentist and aspiring intellectual, who engineered a coup and took over the national Klan operations in 1922. Evans, as did Dallas's local Klavern number 66, emphasized a strong anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic ideology to recruit, motivate, and justify the existence of the Ku Klux Klan.

The study finds that, on the local scene, the Dallas Klavern's leadership was composed of middle and upper-middle class businessmen. Under their leadership, the Klan engaged in a variety of fraternal and vigilante activities. Most remarkable, however, were its successful political efforts. Between 1922 and 1924, the Klan overthrew the old political hierarchy and controlled city and county politics to such a degree that only the Dallas school board escaped the Invisible Empire's domination. Klavern 66 also wielded significant control of state Klan operations and worked vigorously and with some success to elect Klan officials at the state level. As the

dissertation shows, all of this occurred in the face of heavy and organized opposition from political elites and those who opposed the Klan on principle.

Finally, the dissertation looks at the complex combination of factors that brought the Klan's influence to an end. National scandals, internal squabbles, political failures, and longsuffering opposition from the mainstream press chipped away at the public's favorable impression of the Klan. Successful immigration restriction, an improving economy, and a lessening of post-war social tensions reduced the Klan's attractiveness. As a result, national and local Dallas membership dropped precipitously after 1924, and the Klan's dominance in local politics faded as well.

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CHAPTER 1

THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE REVIVED

In the 1920s there arose a second rendition of the Ku Klux Klan. It was similar in some respects to the original, but a close inspection revealed significant differences. The new Klan emphasized white supremacy, as did the old Klan, but did so when white dominance was largely unchallenged. More pertinent to the new Klan was its stand against immigration at a time when public opinion believed immigration to be a dire threat to the country. By attacking the moral, political, ethnic, and religious aspects of the incoming immigrants, the new Klan was more the descendent of the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s and the American Protective Association of the 1880s than it was of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1860s and 1870s. Moreover, the new Klan found itself in the midst of a time of general insecurity that made society a fertile ground for its poisonous seed.

The Klan formed against the backdrop of the Great War, and in its aftermath members joined by the millions. The Red Scare, the rejection of the Versailles Treaty, and the short postwar depression all seemed to confirm that Wilson's attempts to reform corrupt Europe had been a mistake.¹ Now the question was, could the United States

¹ The idea that the U.S. entry into World War I was based on an extension of Wilson's progressivism may be found in Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1983).

avoid "catching" Europe's contagion? If the cities, teeming with immigrants, were any example, then the outlook was bleak. Many of the newer immigrants did not speak English and were inclined to drink more than was considered proper. Perhaps even worse, because they did not understand the democratic form of government, many were susceptible to foreign political ideas like socialism or foreign political control from such diabolical schemers as the pope. While these ideas might seem to border on the bizarre to the contemporary reader, they were taken seriously by many during the 1920s.²

The founder of the 1920s Klan, William Joseph Simmons, was not a social engineer who meticulously read the tenor of the people and then carefully crafted a message to address their fears. Rather, he was a simple southerner who grew up admiring the original Ku Klux Klan because of stories about the Invisible Empire he absorbed as a child. His personality and speaking ability made him a natural for the pulpit, but when his career as a Methodist preacher stalled, he turned to recruiting for fraternal organizations. Although he did well financially, Simmons was determined to make a bigger impression on the world, and in 1915 he combined his sense of nostalgia with his fraternal experience to create the revived Ku Klux Klan.

Simmons originally intended the Klan to be just a fraternal organization. Like most other such organizations it combined secrecy, ritual, and social networking to create a distinctly masculine environment that appealed to many men of that time. The

The classic description of the reaction to the changing immigration stream can be found in John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

Klan's early emphasis was on the ritual. Simmons took a special interest in creating costumes and ritualistic ceremonies and believed they were at the heart of a successful fraternal organization. His emphasis changed somewhat with the coming of World War I. Simmons became a member of the unofficial Citizen's Bureau of Investigation, charged with assisting the American Protective League in ferreting out spies. He also turned his fellow klansmen into unofficial spies by ordering them to be on the lookout for subversive activities.

After the war, the revived Klan, similar to its predecessor, became something that was not originally intended. Simmons, frustrated by the slow growth of the order, turned the recruiting efforts over to the Southern Publicity Association. The Association, composed of Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Y. Clarke, developed an entrepreneurially-driven system of recruitment that gave substantial rewards to field organizers. They also began playing down the fraternal aspects in favor of ideology. Recruiters, taking advantage of the postwar social instability, emphasized nativistic elements by suggesting that the country's problems should be blamed on outsiders.

The formula was so successful that the Klan began signing up new recruits by the tens of thousands and simultaneously drawing negative publicity. The publicity, which included a major expose by the *New York World* and a congressional investigation, seems to have been more of a boon to Klan growth than a bane. The success of the Southern Publicity Association led to a power-sharing arrangement that gave Clarke progressively more control over the Klan. It appeared that he would soon

have complete control until revelations came out about his behavior that made him ineligible to lead the organization. With Clarke out, control reverted to the reluctant Simmons, whose ability to handle the job was mediocre at best. The result was an unstable situation at the top of an organization that was supposed to be rigidly hierarchical. The instability allowed individual Klaverns to exercise considerable local autonomy and provided an opportunity for a strong or persuasive person or group once again to change the direction of the Klan.

I

Nativism was not a new phenomenon when the revived Klan came into existence. The development of such a phenomenon is not surprising in a world where nationalism was a dominant historical trend. When a group of people come to identify and promote themselves as a unit due to shared traits such as language, religion, cultural values, and political systems, it seems only natural to expect that any attempts from outsiders to influence the status quo would be seen as an attack. Like a biological entity invaded by external microbes, the dominant culture usually responds to threats (or perceived threats) from without with alacrity.³

In the United States there has always been an uneasy tension between the various religious and cultural groups that make up the polity. But it was not until the

For a succinct summary of American nativism see Emerson Loucks, *The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania: A Study in Nativism* (New York: The Telegraph Press, 1936), 1-12.

1850s, in the wake of massive immigration from Europe, and especially the Irish Catholics following the potato famines in Ireland, that nativism became a coordinated mass movement in America. Protestant citizens, concerned with the immigration formed the Order of the Star Spangled Banner in 1850, as a politically oriented society. While its rituals, degrees, and secret grips, caused it to resemble a fraternal organization, its political bent helped it evolve into the Know Nothing or American Party. The Know Nothings, who worked to exclude immigrants and particularly Catholics from participation in American political life, continued to grow in numbers and influence until 1856. Just when it appeared they were ready to have a profound impact on national politics, they split apart and disintegrated over the growing slavery issue.⁴

Nativism as expressed in a national movement reappeared in the late 1880s with the Formation of the American Protective Association (APA). Like the Know Nothings, the APA's nativism was strongly anti-Catholic in its tenor. It spread spurious stories of Catholic aggression and immorality, encouraged employers to avoid hiring Catholics, and became a vocal faction in the Republican Party. Ultimately, the APA faded when some of its dire predictions failed to come true, and it lost its political influence by refusing to back McKinley in the election of 1896.⁵

⁴A good source on the Know Nothings is William D. Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950).

⁵On the APA see, Donald L. Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

The third major nativist organization to arise was the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s. After 1920, the revived Klan gradually shifted from an organization that emphasized fraternalism to one that propounded a virulent nativist ideology. This ideology, based on the popular eugenics movement of the times labeled the newer immigrants as inferior and dangerous to the American Republic. Furthermore, the Klan also highlighted the newer immigrants religious differences. Jewish immigrants were maligned because they were "unassimilable," while Catholics were denigrated as the shock troops of a pope who was attempting to take over the Republic. The anti-Catholic component eventually became the dominant chord in the Klan's message as it summoned Protestants to halt the perceived downward spiral in American society. As Chapter 7 suggests, the clearest formulation of this nativist ideology emanated in Dallas and, after 1922, spread to Klaverns across the country.

The Klan, however, was considerably different from previous nativist groups. First, its original purpose was fraternal, not nativist, in orientation. The Klan contained the seeds of nativism from the beginning, but it was only years after its formation that this element became dominant. Second, even when nativism was dominant there were still a number of other important aspects that encouraged Klan membership. Local political fights, business solidarity, and to a lesser degree the fraternal aspects played an important role in the growing strength of the Klan. Thus, some people joined the Klan who did not have nativism as their primary draw. This

resulted in a considerably larger membership than the APA, and perhaps the Know Nothings as well.

In spite of the clear national importance of the revived Klan, recent revisions of Klan history have focused on the local rather than the national, and with good reason. It is clear that many local Klans had specific, local issues that enlivened their growth. The Klan in Salt Lake City was a response, in part, to the business and political dominance by members of the Mormon Church. The Klan in El Paso was partly a response to divisions between Hispanic and Anglo populations.⁶ The Dallas Klavern also focused on local issues as part of its mission. Yet, these local issues should be seen in the light of the shared values of the national Klan. Therefore, the Dallas Klavern must also be evaluated against the backdrop of its mother organization. With this in mind, Dallas Klan number 66 may, in a distant sense, be considered the product of an automobile accident. For if the testimony of the founder of the 1920s Klan is truthful, then it was an automobile accident that finally gave him the time to craft his version of the invisible empire.⁷

The man hospitalized by the accident and destined to be the founder of the revived Ku Klux Klan, William Joseph Simmons, was born on 6 May 1880 in Harpersville, Alabama. He was the son of Calvin Henry Simmons, a physician, and

⁶For the revisionist perspective see Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

⁷William G. Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Colliers*, 14 July 1928, 32, 34.

Lavonia David. A talent for oratory led Simmons into the ministry at an early age.

"When I was fourteen years old I was a regular leader of the mid-week evening prayer meetings in our Methodist Church," Simmons told a 1920s interviewer. At age eighteen, Simmons fought as a private in the Spanish-American War. After his return, the Methodist Church licensed him to preach. When he turned twenty-one, he was given a circuit of small churches in Florida to pastor. Finding it hard to support himself on his small salary, Simmons frequently held revival meetings to raise extra money.⁸

In 1912, Simmons and the Methodist church came to a parting of the ways. Simmons claimed the break came because of the church's failure to give him the promised pastorship of a big city church. Church officials reported that they denied Simmons a pastorship because of "inefficiency." Regardless of the reason, Simmons eventually turned to recruiting for fraternal organizations. While he later claimed to belong to more than a dozen fraternal organizations, he had his greatest success as a promotor for the Woodmen of the World. He moved to Atlanta, became the district manager for the order (where he obtained the rank of "Colonel"), and made a comfortable income in the process.⁹

⁸Ibid., 7; Charles O. Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career in Ku Kluxism," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50 (December 1966): 351-65.

⁹Ibid., 7, 32; Simmons's title did not come from his service in the Spanish-American war as he explained to a Congressional investigating committee. See U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, *Report on the Ku Klux Klan, 1921* (Washington: GPO, 1921, Reprinted in New York: Arno Press and the New York

In 1915, Simmons fulfilled what he claimed had been a goal of many years, the establishment of a new fraternal order of the Ku Klux Klan. The idea of forming the Klan grew out of childhood memories of descriptions of the original Klan. As an adult, these memories continued to fascinate him. He procrastinated for years until he experienced a serious automobile accident in 1915. During his three-month hospital stay, Simmons designed the Klan robes, masks, rituals, and terminology. The motto of the new organization was to be "non silba sed Anthar," which Simmons claimed to have crafted from Latin and Saxon. The meaning, according to the former Methodist preacher, was "not for self, but for others."¹⁰

Simmons found the charter members by recruiting in various fraternal lodges. World War I was already in progress, providing jobs for blacks in the North. This, according to Simmons, was the cause of the "Negroes . . . getting pretty uppity in the South along about that time."¹¹ Apparently, it was not hard to stir up interest in this new fraternal version of the Klan. The first group met, in October 1915, with thirty-four men, including two who had been members of the original Klan. It was not until Thanksgiving day that the first initiation took place on top of Stone Mountain, Georgia, under the light of the new Klan's "first fiery cross."¹²

Times, 1969), 67.

¹⁰As quoted in Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Colliers*, 32.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 34.

Simmons carefully used the opening of the film *Birth of a Nation* to attract new followers. David W. Griffith's classic included scenes that show the original Ku Klux Klan in a very sympathetic light. Although the movie had been out for some time, it opened in Atlanta the December following the formation of Simmons's new Klan. On the day of the opening, there were, of course, advertisements for the film's debut. Simmons apparently managed to get a large advertisement for the Klan put next to the ad for the movie. The ad showed a picture of a sheeted klansman on horseback and called the Klan "The world's greatest secret, social, patriotic, fraternal, beneficiary order."¹³

II

By 1916, Simmons had legally established the Klan by obtaining a corporate charter from the state of Georgia. In that same year he expanded, published, and copyrighted much of the Klan ritual and terminology. Each local Klan (or Klavern) was to have a complement of twelve titular positions. The exalted cyclops was the chief officer and was supreme in the Klavern. Next in line was the klaliff, who acted as a kind of vice-president. In addition, there was to be a secretary (kligrapp), treasurer (klabee), chaplain (kludd), and a variety of lesser officers who dealt mainly with the Klan ritual. There was, finally, a board of auditors (klokann) that had the responsibility to investigate people, problems, or complaints in the Klan and in the local

Ibid., 7

community. Although members of the kloran had significant investigative authority, they, with all other local officials, fell under the "military" control of the exalted cyclops.¹⁴

Several pamphlets published by the Simmons-led Klan a few years later clarified both the purposes and procedures of the organization. The emphasis of the Klan changed from time to time, but several goals remained constant. The first goal was "to unite white, male, native born, gentile citizens of the United States into a brotherhood of strict regulations." The wording of the qualifications needed was specific.

An applicant must be a white, male, Gentile person, a native-born citizen of the United States of America who owes no allegiance of any nature or degree whatsoever to any foreign government, nation, institution, sect, ruler, prince, potentate, people or person; he must have attained the age of eighteen years, be of sound mind, good character, of commendable reputation and respectable vocation, a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion, and one whose allegiance, loyalty and devotion to the government of the United States of America is in all things unquestionable. He must be a resident within the jurisdiction of the Klan to which he applies for at least twelve months immediately preceding the date of application for citizenship¹⁵

Secondly, this united brotherhood was then to commemorate the old Ku Klux Klan, not because the revived Klan had the same purpose but "as an expression of gratitude for the job they did." Finally, the new Klan was dedicated to producing an institution that

¹⁴Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, First Degree Character* (Atlanta, 1916), 1-4.

¹⁵Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta, 1921), 10-15; see also William Joseph Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta: Wm. E. Thompson Publishing Co., 1923), 22-25.

would promote chivalry, humanity, justice, and patriotism.¹⁶ Of course, the Klan's racial/ethnic worldview conditioned their implementation of the aforementioned virtues, which left significant portions of the U.S. population out of this benevolent picture.

In the early years, Simmons emphasized the fraternal nature of the Klan. He considered his pamphlet describing the ritual "a sacred book" that "must not be shown to 'aliens'." Despite this admonition, the book has survived for latter-day aliens to observe. The ritual described was for the induction of "aliens" into the new order. It included a complicated procedure that required a three-room setup. Candidates entered the outer room first. To progress into the inner room, they needed to know a certain password which they gave to a guard (klexter) at the door. Once in the inner room, the candidates would change into the appropriate costumes and prepare to enter the sanctuary. Again, a password was needed to get past the sanctuary guard (klarogo).¹⁷

Once inside the sanctuary, the new recruits would march slowly in a wide circle around the sacred altar. At pre-arranged points in the circle, the candidates would stop, and a catechism would be administered or a song would be sung. At one point, they would have to march through a double row of klansmen. Eventually, they would form in a square around the altar where the oath would be administered and a prayer given.

¹⁶William J. Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1921).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 5-8; see also Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *America For Americans* (Atlanta, 1922), back cover.

Then the exalted cyclops would welcome the new klansmen with the following message:

Worthy Immigrants: You are no longer strangers or aliens among us, but are citizens with us; and with confidence in your character that you have not sworn falsely or deceitfully in the assumption of your oath, I, on behalf of our Emperor and all klansmen welcome you to citizenship in the empire of chivalry, industry, honor, and love.¹⁸

This was the mysterious process of naturalization that all incoming klansmen were required to undergo. It was a process cloaked in secrecy, as was much of Klan life.

It is likely that the Great War intensified what was already a natural penchant for secrecy. This came about because of Imperial Wizard Simmons's membership in the shadowy Citizens Bureau of Investigation. As a Bureau member, Simmons worked under members of the American Protective League of Atlanta. The idea was to create a kind of secret service that sniffed out spies before they could do much damage. Since immigrants were among the first to fall under suspicion, this was a task that appealed to xenophobic klansmen. Simmons issued orders to all klansmen to keep their membership in the order completely secret so they would be better able to spot subversive activity without being themselves discovered.¹⁹

¹⁸Ku Klux Klan, *First Degree Character*, 21-40.

¹⁹The Citizens Bureau apparently was an unofficial group of zealots who assisted the elite members of the American Protective League. For a summary of Simmons's involvement and a copy of his official membership card, see William G. Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," *Colliers*, 21 July 1928, 8-9; for a brief summary of the APL, see David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 81-83; for a more in-depth view, see Joan M. Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968).

After the war, Simmons intended to keep the Klan espionage system operating. He hired Fred Savage, a New York detective, to coordinate the system. The plan called for Klan agents in every state to collect data on lawbreakers, immorality, and anti-American activities. "Whenever we decided that prosecutions were necessary," Simmons told a 1928 interviewer, "he would have turned his reports over to the secret service of the Department of Justice in Washington. We intended to help that department enforce the law."²⁰ Ultimately, Simmons was unable to sustain his secret service, and it faded away, but not before it injected a fanatical secrecy that would allow many deleterious acts to be committed under the cloak of the Invisible Empire.

Another part of the mystery of the Klan was its exotic and foreign sounding terminology. These words, almost all of which began with the kl prefix, were explained in the glossary of a 1916 pamphlet. A klavalkade, for example, was a Klan parade or procession. An imperial kloncilium was a meeting of the supreme executive committee of the national Klan. The terms in this glossary also made it manifest that Simmons had already thought out the various strata of the national Klan. A realm, for example, was one state or territory in the U.S. led by the grand dragon and his nine hydras (officers). A province was one or more counties within a realm led by a great titan and his seven furies. The klanton was the area or jurisdiction of the local klan and was led by the exalted cyclops and his eleven terrors. Finally, the imperial wizard led

²⁰Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," *Colliers*, 9.

the national Klan assisted by his thirteen genii. By 1916, a developed national structure was ready to be installed, given the appropriate growth.²¹

It is also in these early writings that one learns something about the finances of the Klan. Like most fraternal orders of the day, an initiation fee was required for membership. In Simmons-speak this fee was called a klecktoken. The minimum fee charged was ten dollars, some of which went to the national headquarters and some of which went to the local and regional recruiters. Local Klaverns, once organized and self operating, had the right to increase the fee to as much as twenty-five dollars and keep the rest for themselves, although there is little evidence that this often occurred. For the vast majority, the initiation fee was ten dollars. In addition, there was an imperial tax (monthly dues) levied on all members. The national Klan received fifteen cents per member per month (paid quarterly) from each active dues-paying member. Some of this money was rebated to local jurisdictions to cover expenses. In addition, local jurisdictions in need of excess funds could levy an additional surcharge on their own members. Typically, a klansman paid yearly dues of \$1.80, but could pay more if the local need was greater.²²

Finally, the Klan brought in money by selling costumes to its members. Several different vendors produced the robes for varying costs. Because of this, there is quite a

²¹Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran*, 51-54.

²²Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws*, 42; Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Delivery of Charter* (Atlanta, 1923), 1.

bit of conflicting evidence as to the wholesale cost to the Klan. In one case the Klan bought the robes for four dollars. Individual klansmen bought these robes from the national Klan headquarters and usually paid \$6.50. Thus, the per-unit income received by the Klan was around \$2.50. It is also important to note that not all klansmen bought the robes. Simmons estimated that only about 30 percent of the membership actually purchased the official costume.²³ Still, given the large number who joined the Invisible Empire, the income from regalia no doubt reached into the millions.

While the above financing scheme ultimately brought tens of millions of dollars into the Klan, Simmons had a plan to increase the money exponentially. His idea was a standard ploy of fraternal orders and involved playing on members' desire for social preeminence. While the ten dollar membership fee brought everyone into the first degree of membership, Simmons planned to add three more degrees, each more exclusive than the previous. The K-duo would have been offered to about 70 percent of the membership for a twenty dollar fee, the K-trio to about 50 percent for a forty dollar fee, and the K-kwad (fourth degree) was to be offered to about 30 percent of the membership for eighty dollars.²⁴ As the membership of the Klan reached into the millions, it is easy to see that, had Simmons carried out his plan successfully, the Klan (and Simmons) would have become incredibly rich with assets well into the hundreds of

²³Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 17-18, 29-30, 135; Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws*, 42.

²⁴Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," *Colliers*, 8.

millions. Whether klansmen would have paid for this social exclusivity never was tested because Simmons was ousted from the leadership of the Klan before he had a chance to put his plan into effect.

Simmons attempted to increase the size and strength of the Klan by creating auxiliary organizations. His first attempt was a pitiful effort to organize pilots and others interested in flying. He hired a man by the name of C. Anderson Wright to begin recruiting flyers into an organization to be called The Knights of the Air. Wright portrayed himself as a well-known expert in the aeronautical field who knew many influential persons in the industry. He presented Simmons with a stack of petitions, supposedly signed by airmen, asking that a special auxiliary order be organized for pilots. Wright, however, did not get along well with some of the personnel who worked under Simmons. In addition, Simmons lost faith in Wright when he realized that he had exaggerated some of his claims of influence. Wright was fired and the Knights of the Air never got off the ground. Wright became bitter over his treatment and later testified against the Klan.²⁵ This was not Simmons' only attempt to build an auxiliary organization. His later endeavor to build the women's auxiliary, however, was part of a strategy he employed when his position of leadership was under attack and is dealt with in Chapter 6.²⁶

²⁵Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 15-27, 170-4.

²⁶On women and the Klan, see Kathleen M. Blee, *Women and the Klan, Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

Simmons also tried to expand the Klan influence into the field of education. In 1921, the Klan received the opportunity to gain control of a small Baptist college on the northeast side of Atlanta. Lanier University, as it was called, had fallen into considerable debt and was looking for a buyer. Simmons had apparently taught Southern history at Lanier sometime in the past. Rather than buying the university, the Klan offered to infuse significant amounts of cash on three conditions. First, Colonel Simmons was to be elected president by the current board of trustees. Second, the board would vote to make the college non-denominational. Third, the board would elect new trustees named by Simmons and then resign, leaving the Klan trustees in control. The Klan ultimately took steps necessary to take over the university, including the naming of a board of trustees and sinking tens of thousands of dollars into the school. But progress was painstakingly slow because the level of funding necessary was significant higher than the Klan had immediately available. Before the money could be raised, dissension in the ranks of the Klan forced the project to be abandoned.²⁷ The reasons behind Simmons's acquisition of a university become a little clearer in the prospectus he submitted to the congressional subcommittee holding hearings on the Klan in 1921. In describing the features that would make Lanier unique, he included "the teaching and application of the principles of purest American

²⁷Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 29, 107-111; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 37; Frank Bohn, "The Ku Klux Klan Interpreted," *The American Journal of Sociology* 30 (January 1925): 395-96; Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962).

citizenship All of the subjects taught in the university have their bearing, either directly or indirectly, on the development of the purest citizenship."²⁸ If there is one thing that comes through clearly in the Klan's published pamphlets, it is that their view of citizenship was narrow. Blacks, Jews, foreign born, socialists, and Catholics were not eligible to be considered "true" citizens. Klan ideology, including its circumscribed ideas of citizenship, were certain to be mainstays of instruction at Lanier university.

Simmons's attempts to expand Klan influence and power show a man with considerable drive and creativity but few organizational skills. He had an ability to present his ideas in ways that appealed to many. His use of *Birth of a Nation* to gain interest in his fraternal order was clever, and his advertising showed a certain flare. He crafted the message of the Klan to address societal issues that concerned many Americans. Yet, his tendency to overemphasize Klan ritual and underemphasize Klan ideology seems to have hindered the growth of the movement, as later events were to show.²⁹

Perhaps most important to whatever success he had was his personal charisma and likability. In October 1921, inspired by negative newspaper coverage, Congress

²⁸Ibid., 107-111.

²⁹Once the emphasis switched from fraternal to nativist, membership soared. Simmons, however, never accepted this as the reason. After the Klan membership fell off precipitously in the mid-1920s, Simmons attributed the decline to the fact that he had been ousted and was no longer fashioning the ritual. For his views see William J. Simmons, *America's Menace or the Enemy Within* (Atlanta: Bureau of Patriotic Books, 1926).

held hearings on the Klan and summoned Simmons to testify. He acquitted himself very successfully at the hearings, although the committee often allowed him to speak unimpeded. Even when questions of the Klan's bigotry were raised, Simmons was eloquent in explaining his position. For example, the Klan, according to Simmons, was not anti-Catholic. Instead, the Klan was merely emulating the example shown by the Knights of Columbus. The Knights of Columbus, Simmons pointed out, did not allow anyone who was not Roman Catholic into their order. Moreover, Simmons suggested that he could produce evidence to show the Knights of Columbus committed more crimes such as whippings and tarring and feathering than the Klan was ever accused of. His claim was never put to the test.³⁰ Simmons was able to assert his arguments in a friendly, affable manner that clearly disarmed the congressmen and allowed his presentation to be very effective. A 1920s journalist related the story of a critic of Simmons who had just been to hear the Colonel give a speech. "He could have led that crowd anywhere," the critic told the reporter, "and I'm not sure I wouldn't have gone with the rest."³¹

As the foregoing suggests, Simmons was both an opportunist and a bit of an ideologue. He recognized ideas that played well in the public mind. His ideas of white supremacy, for example, were not radical for the time but part of the mainstream.

³⁰Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 73.

³¹Robert L. Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate: The Ku Klux Klan" *World's Work*, May 1923, 31.

Likewise, fraternalism, his chosen field, was amazingly popular at the time among many men.³² Yet, as Simmons worked to build his new invisible empire, he found himself struggling. As ideas of auxiliary organizations came and then faded, as plans to add second, third, and fourth degrees were postponed, and as the hoped-for establishment of Lanier University faded, it began to appear that the new Ku Klux Klan would not become all that Simmons had hoped for. What Simmons had in idea formation, opportunism, and charisma, he lacked in financial and organizational skills.

III

His lack of financial and organizational control was apparent almost from the beginning. The Klan started on a fast track, thanks to the publicity generated by *Birth of a Nation*. Problems developed, however, because Simmons was unable to control those working for him. One of the charter members of Atlanta Klan number 1 was Jonathan B. Frost. Frost gained Simmons's trust and was sent to Birmingham to organize a new Klavern. He soon developed a good-sized group of klansmen. Unfortunately for Simmons, Frost was dishonest and absconded with the money he had collected in initiation fees. Frost was caught and hauled into court where he was ordered to pay restitution. When Simmons asked his lawyer, a member of the Klan, for

³² This included African-American men, although they had separate organizations. Evidence of the popularity of fraternal organizations in the African-American community during the 1920s can be seen in black newspapers such as the *Dallas Express*.

the restitution money, the lawyer told him that his fees and expenses had absorbed the entire amount.³³

Simmons's inability to carefully manage his finances helped keep the Klan in dire straits for years. These straits were so bad, as Simmons himself testified, that he had to mortgage his house and subsist on an average of one meal a day for years. It is impossible to ascertain just how impoverished Simmons and the Klan organization really were in the early days because Simmons was such a poor record keeper. When questioned, by the 1921 congressional subcommittee investigating the Klan, about how much money he had taken in between 1915 and June 1920, Simmons said he simply did not know. He pointed out that he had lost a good portion of the records during a move and had been unable to reconstruct them. In addition, Simmons told the subcommittee, the membership fees had varied during the early days. As the Klan tried to recruit new members, they had temporarily lowered the fees as an incentive to join. The poor record keeping was confirmed both by the Klan bookkeeper and a post office inspector sent to investigate the Klan books.³⁴

Simmons's personnel selections hurt the organization more than his sloppy bookkeeping. Besides Frost, Simmons was betrayed by several Klan leaders who left the organization, either to set up their own rival groups or to expose the internal workings of the Klan to the outside world. C. Anderson Wright, the man Simmons originally put

³³Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Colliers*, 35.

³⁴Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 41, 148.

in charge of the ill-fated Knights of the Air, eventually turned on the organization and was a principal informer for a highly publicized expose of the Klan published by the *New York World*. Wright so angered Simmons by his betrayal that the imperial wizard asked the congressional subcommittee to recall the former member to answer a long and combative list of "suggested" questions provided by the imperial wizard.³⁵

Simmons attempted to use these frequent betrayals to accrue sympathy from the congressmen. "Julius Caesar had his Brutus, Jesus Christ had his Judas, and our great and illustrious Washington had his Benedict Arnold," Simmons preached. "I can state to you that I can enter the fellowship of all three of those because I have suffered in my soul as a result of the treasonous and treacherous conduct of traitors."³⁶ At times, however, the imperial wizard's comments seemed to acknowledge that he was lacking in certain leadership skills.

My disposition from boyhood up has been tinged with a distinctive streak of timidity, and I have never had any desire to rule or to govern. And I have never gone into the head chair of any fraternal order . . . to preside over the deliberations of their meetings without a vivid consciousness of my unworthiness for the place and my desire to be down the line sitting in the chairs with the other fellows.³⁷

Although this was undoubtedly an attempt to gain sympathy from the subcommittee members, it seems to have the ring of truth to it, given Simmons's failings at leading the Klan.

³⁵Ibid., 144-47.

³⁶Ibid., 136.

³⁷Ibid., 82.

In spite of these failings, Simmons made a few good moves that led to startling growth in the Klan. When Klan enemies called for a congressional inquiry, Simmons encouraged the investigation by sending telegrams to various officials advocating that Congress get involved.³⁸ Then he became the star witness and dominated the proceedings. His ability to make such a favorable impression at the hearings was due in part to his rhetorical skills and in part to the fact that there were few witnesses called to contradict his testimony. The Congressmen generally allowed Simmons to give long soliloquies eulogizing the Klan. When Philip Campbell, the committee chairman from Kansas, finally got around to questioning Simmons in a more rigorous fashion, it became obvious that he intended only to convince the imperial wizard that klansmen ought to take off their masks and operate in the light of day.³⁹ Ultimately, Simmons's testimony led Congress to take no further action toward the Klan. This gave the impression that Congress was denying the legitimacy of claims against the Klan and, by default, endorsing the organization.⁴⁰

Simmons's most important move came in June of 1920, when he decided to engage the Southern Publicity Association. By 1920, the imperial wizard had been struggling with the Klan for five years and had between four and five thousand

³⁸Ibid., 127-28.

³⁹Ibid., 160-8.

⁴⁰This interpretation can be found in what is still the best treatment of the 1920s Klan in the Southwest: Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 10.

members to show for his efforts. Perhaps realizing that he did not have the ability to create an effective recruiting organization, he turned to Edward Y. Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler to run the "propagation" department for the Klan. It was a risky move because the imperial wizard had to give up considerable control and cash to lure Clarke and Tyler into the venture.⁴¹

Clarke and Tyler both had backgrounds in public relations. Clarke had been a reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution*, and his brother, Francis, was managing editor of the paper. He also worked as a town booster and fraternal organizer. Tyler was interested in improving infant hygiene, and the two met at a "better babies" parade that was part of a town harvest festival. They hit it off and decided to go into business together with Mrs. Tyler financing the operation. Clarke and Tyler together formed the Southern Publicity Association, which specialized in fundraising for organizations like the Red Cross, the YMCA, and others. Mrs. Tyler's son-in-law had joined the Klan and brought the two in contact with Colonel Simmons. They looked the Klan over "from every angle," according to Mrs. Tyler, and decided that there was considerable potential for growth if they could achieve the proper publicity.⁴²

The result was a contract between Simmons and Clarke, signed 7 June 1920, that was very favorable to the Southern Publicity Association. The contract established

⁴¹Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 111, 177.

⁴²Robert L. Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate: The Ku Klux Klan" *World's Work*, May 1923, 34-35.

a quasi-independent "propagation department" which left the recruitment of new klansmen almost entirely in the hands of Clarke and Tyler. Although Clarke was legally subservient to Simmons and the Klan in theory, the practice would eventually be quite different. But the most important provision in the contract was the allocation of the fee. The ten dollar initiation fee or klecktoken had previously gone directly into the coffers of the Klan. Now the Southern Publicity Association was to receive eight of the ten dollars collected from each new klansman they recruited directly. Once there were enough klansmen in a town or city to form a Klavern, the propagation department moved on and left recruiting up to the locals. Nevertheless, Clarke and Tyler's Department continued to receive two dollars for every new klansman who joined for six months after the formation of a new Klavern.⁴³

Clarke and Tyler then proceeded to develop a very aggressive recruitment system. Since women could not officially be members of the Klan, Tyler was forced to work behind the scenes. Simmons named Clarke, on the other hand, to the position of imperial kleagle (or chief national recruiter) for the Klan. As the Klan moved into new regions and states, Clarke appointed a goblin (chief regional recruiter), king kleagle (or chief state recruiter), and as many kleagles (or chief district recruiters) as were necessary to cover the potential Klan recruits. For the most part, the kleagles recruited within already established fraternal orders such as the Masons. They appealed to community elites with a good reputation. Then they used these names to induce others

⁴³Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 32.

to join. They also appealed to businessmen with the idea of "klanishness". As it related to business, klanishness encouraged members to shop, where possible, only at businesses owned or run by other klansmen. They sold the new recruits on the idea of maintaining a traditional white, Protestant, native-born, Anglo-Saxon superiority at a time when the social order of the country seemed to be under attack from socialism, new immigrants, and internal black migration. Although local Klaverns might, and often were, motivated by local conditions and problems, they all shared the same racial, religious, and ethnic prejudices, as well as a similar moral viewpoint.⁴⁴

Following Simmons's idea of paying well, Clarke paid his recruiters and organizers a substantial commission. The goblin received fifty cents for every klecktoken collected in his region, the king kleagle received a dollar, and the kleagle, who actually did the work, received four dollars per recruit. This left \$2.50 for the propagation department. In addition, of course, there was the two dollars that still went to the national Klan under the control of the imperial wizard. By giving the largest commission to the men who actually worked in the field doing the recruiting, Clarke created a powerful incentive at the grass-roots level. There were undoubtedly thousands of men who would have jumped at the earnings potential the four dollars per head represented. As it was, there were probably at least 1,100 organizers working for

⁴⁴Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 38; Robert L. Duffus, "How the Ku Klux Klan Sells Hate," *Worlds Work*, June 1923, 181-83.

the Klan at its height. As Wizard Simmons later said, "They made things hum all over America."⁴⁵

Within a short period of time, this network of salesmen began to produce amazing results. Between June 1920 and September 1921, the Klan enrolled approximately 85,000 new members, and this was before the publicity from the *World* and congressional investigation began to show their effects. Since no national membership lists and few local lists have survived, estimating the general membership of the Klan remains problematical. While the Klan had an estimated active membership of around 5 million during the peak years of 1923-1925, it may have had a cumulative total of as many as 9 million.⁴⁶ Although the United States' population was around 105 million in 1920, those eligible to join were considerably fewer. Keeping in mind that the Klan did not allow women, children, blacks, Catholics, Jews, socialists, the immoral, and foreign-born individuals into the Invisible Empire, the pool of potential recruits was not as large as might be supposed. It is impossible to obtain an exact figure of potential Klan recruits because some groups involved were not counted appropriately or at all. Nevertheless, the 1920 U.S. Census gives an approximation of possible and likely recruits.

⁴⁵Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 17; Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," *Colliers*, 39.

⁴⁶Robert L. Duffus, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest," *World's Work* August 1923, 363; *Washington Post*, "Klan Membership Shows Big Decline," 2 November 1930, sect. 1, p. 4; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 160.

Out of a total population of 105,710,620 there were 22,200,310 native-born white men over the age of nineteen. These are the possible members of the Klan. One can reduce this figure even farther by considering the vehement anti-foreign bias that animated the Klan of the 1920s. It seems highly unlikely that the Klan would attract any significant numbers of native-born men whose parents had immigrated to the U.S. The Census reports 16,294,625 native white males of native parentage and over nineteen years of age.⁴⁷ These are the likely members of the Klan. One might reduce this figure even farther by determining how many in this "likely" group were Jewish or Catholic. Although we know there were about 10 million male Catholic and Jewish adherents in 1926, we have no accurate figures on their nativity.⁴⁸ Moreover, these figures are approximate at best and only intended to show the general extent to which the Klan infiltrated their possible or likely recruiting populations. Still, the results are interesting. When the Klan was at its peak of active membership (based on 5 Million), it had 22.5% of the possible Klan members and 30.7% of the likely members. If the cumulative figure (9 million members), including all those who joined and left for various reasons, is used, the Klan took in 40.5% percent of the possible and 55.2% of

⁴⁷U.S. Department of Commerce, *14th Census of the U.S. taken in the year 1920*, Vol. II, Population, General Report and Analytical Tables (Washington: GPO, 1922), 29,107,156; Men could join the Klan by the age of 18. The number of 18 and 19 year old native white males are simply unavailable. Those that joined at this young age were undoubtedly more than counterbalanced by native-born Catholic and Jewish white males whose numbers are equally unavailable.

⁴⁸U.S. Department of Commerce, *Census of Religious Bodies, 1926*, Vol. II, Separate Denominations (Washington: GPO, 1929), 645, 1255.

the likely members. Contemporary observers always point out that the real strength of the Klan at any given time was less than the actual membership because, as in any organization, there were people who joined but either withdrew out of protest or became inactive out of apathy.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the figures are significant enough to back up the claim of one top Klan leader who suggested that the Klan was not just a fraternal order but rather a mass movement.⁵⁰

Clarke's and Simmons's decision to let the bulk of the klecktokens go to lower officials eventually paid tremendous dividends for them. They employed economies of scale, thus making their money on volume. In the sixteen-month period between June 1920 and September 1921, new recruits donated over \$860,000 in initiation fees. Of this total, Simmons's Klan headquarters received over \$170,000 from their two dollar portion. Clarke's propagation department would have accrued 25 percent or around \$215,000 during the same period. Because the Klan claimed to be a benevolent organization and called its initiation fees "donations," it managed to avoid paying any income or excess profits tax on this money.⁵¹ This meant Simmons and Clarke suddenly had more money than they had ever seen before. Clarke, perhaps realizing that he had to stay on the good side of Simmons to keep this flow coming, worked hard

⁴⁹Robert L. Duffus, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Middle West" *World's Work*, August 1923, 362-64.

⁵⁰Hiram Wesley Evans, "Onward Christian Klansmen!," *The Kourier Magazine*, January 1926, 1.

⁵¹Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 33-35, 134-5.

to please the imperial wizard. He convinced the imperial kloncilium to vote Simmons a \$25,000 bonus for the previous years of hard work. In addition, Clarke also presented Simmons with a new car and a new house. It is apparently true, however, that Clarke kept the title of this house under the control of the Klan.⁵²

It is easy to see how these considerable sums must have grown exponentially in the next few years. In September of 1921, after this remarkable growth spurt, the Klan still had only about 125,000 members. Over the next two to three years, the Klan probably added several million new members to their rolls. This means the income to all Klan elements, during the years 1922-1924, was in the tens of millions just from klecktokens, not counting quarterly dues and the income from the sale of regalia. Unfortunately for Simmons and Clarke, they were both ousted from the Klan before a good portion of this income was received. Simmons's ability to maintain control over the organization he founded was limited to begin with, and compromised further by his hiring of Clarke. Since the main goal of the Klan was now growth, the imperial kleagle handled all major issues and policies rather than Simmons. At the same time, Simmons experienced some serious health problems that may have been alcohol related. With his superior organization skills, Clarke inevitably took charge of more and more of the operations of the Klan. One newspaperman wrote of the situation, "Mr. Simmons hangs around the office when Mr. Clarke has need of him, possesses the biggest

⁵²Ibid., 69,84; Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *Worlds Work*, 36.

sounding title, and draws a regular weekly paycheck -- as a stockholder of the ideas."⁵³

For Simmons, things only got worse. By June, 1922 Clarke had convinced Simmons to take a six-month "vacation" and leave him in charge as the imperial wizard pro tem.⁵⁴

While it appeared Clarke was on the verge of completely seizing control of the Klan, he had certain character flaws working against him. Rumors and newspaper stories began to circulate that Clarke, in October 1919, before he signed his contract with the Klan, had left his wife and moved in with Mrs. Tyler. What is certain is that in October, 1922, a federal grand jury indicted him for misuse of the mails.⁵⁵

Furthermore, some klansmen believed Clarke was simply a figurehead for a tyrannical Mrs. Tyler. Although women could not officially join the Klan, Mrs. Tyler had been the financier of the Southern Publicity Association and thus held considerable sway over the workings of the company. How much influence or control she really had probably will never be known, but one former klansman testified at the congressional hearings that Mrs. Tyler's influence was decisive.⁵⁶

Clarke and Tyler's baggage made them unacceptable to many members of an all male organization that prided itself on fighting immorality. Reportedly, thousands of klansmen resigned over the issue of Clarke's character. One disgruntled former

⁵³From the *Macon Telegraph* (June 5, 1922) as quoted in Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career in Ku Kluxism," 359.

⁵⁴Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *World's Work*, 38.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁵⁶Congress, *Report on the Klan*, 15-23.

member filed a suit against Clarke alleging he controlled Simmons through alcohol. Finally bowing to the internal pressure, Clarke resigned his position as imperial wizard pro tem on 4 October 1922. This still left him the director of the propagation department and put Simmons back in charge. Simmons would again abdicate his leadership position to a relative newcomer within two months. Since this part of the story involves the leadership of Dallas Klan 66, it will be told in chapter 6.⁵⁷

The change in Klan fortunes in a period of less than three years was dramatic. From a struggling southern fraternal lodge with a membership of four to five thousand that barely kept its leader in food and housing, the Klan grew into a national organization that merited considerable attention. First, a series of articles published by the *New York World* exposed the seamier aspects of the Klan.⁵⁸ By using dissident members who usually held some kind of grudge, the *World* discovered and presented a sensationalized view of the Klan that was not wholly accurate, but undoubtedly helped sell newspapers. Then, the Klan came under congressional scrutiny. But the hearings failed to turn up any significant abuses by the Klan and may have helped to give the Klan a stamp of approval. Similarly, some contemporary observers believed that, in spite of the negative coverage given by the *World*, the articles were actually more helpful to the Klan than hurtful. They alerted many people to the existence of an

⁵⁷Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *World's Work*, 38.

These articles ran in the *New York World* Sept. 6 - Sept 26, 1921 and were reprinted in many other major U.S. newspapers including the *Dallas Morning News*.

organization dedicated to upholding the values and social supremacy of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, Americans. It was even reported that the Klan began receiving numerous applications for membership on a sample application published in one of the *World* articles.⁵⁹

The increasing membership brought with it large amounts of cash that completely reversed the fortunes of Imperial Wizard Simmons and made Clarke a rich man. But success did not bring stability at the top, indeed it undermined the leadership of the Klan. Simmons was unable to handle the type and amount of work involved and he was soon overwhelmed. He allowed Clarke and his cohort Tyler to take over the day to day operations of the Klan. The rumors of his alcoholism, if true, would account for Simmons's strange behavior when the growth of the organization he had nursed to life should have been engaging his energy.⁶⁰ Clarke, his potential replacement, was unable to gain the trust of the Klan's rank and file because of rumored character flaws.

The combination of explosive growth and inconsistent leadership had significant organizational consequences. Each local Klavern had more autonomy than perhaps they might have had, given stronger or more stable national leadership. Klan 66 in Dallas, for example, became enmeshed in community politics in a way not originally

⁵⁹Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *Colliers*, 36-37; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 9-10.

⁶⁰Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *Worlds Work*, 38.

envisioned by Imperial Wizard Simmons. The fact that the Klan could grow so rapidly at a time when its leadership was struggling affirms its great appeal. It gave expression to the reaction against the social upheavals evident during and after World War I. The black migration that accompanied the growing industrial needs of the war was unsettling to an established and discriminatory southern labor system. On the West Coast and southern border, Asian and Hispanic immigrants threatened the jobs of the native-born Americans. Elsewhere, the southern European immigrants brought new and (it appeared to nativists) immoral practices involving alcohol, political corruption, and radical thinking. Few could forget the wave of strikes and bombings that struck the country shortly after the Great War ended. Minds that were quick to see conspiracies saw behind this turn of events the diabolical workings of the Catholic church. The strong allegiance of Catholics to a (non-American) pope had long troubled American Protestants.

Thus, the work of the Klan involved maintaining a society based on values shared by native-born, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men against the perceived threats of a turbulent and troubled society. Indeed, this was the general backdrop against which all local Klaverns were formed. Nevertheless, the local regions and Klaverns, once formed, were free to fight against the threat and against groups according to very individualistic patterns. Klans in the Southwest, Charles Alexander has pointed out, frequently used violence, intimidation, and peer pressure in an attempt to enforce moral codes. In Oregon, the Klan, along with other groups, succeeded in

passing a state law (later struck down by the Supreme Court) that made parochial schools illegal. Many Klans, including the Dallas Klavern, became involved in charity projects, undoubtedly in part to improve public relations, but also because of a desire to help those less fortunate.

The Klan emerged, then, as an organization having a powerful national appeal, but one with considerable local autonomy. The inconsistent nature of the national leadership meant that, at times, a strong local unit could influence the course of the national Klan's organizational life. Such was the case in Dallas, Texas and Klan number 66.

CHAPTER 2

THE KU KLUX KLAN AND DALLAS CONVERGE

In the years between 1921 and 1924, the resurgent Ku Klux Klan found a special resonance in Dallas. Since this new version of the Klan was making remarkable inroads in states as far north and west as Indiana, Utah, California, and Oregon, it does not seem unusual that a traditional southern city like Dallas would have been susceptible to the entreaties of the Klan. Both the Klan and the conditions that spawned it had existed before in Dallas. Still, upon close examination, both Dallas and this newer version of the Klan were considerably different from the older versions that existed in the 1860s and 1870s. Dallas, for example, had grown considerably both in size and importance by the 1920s, while the second Klan spent its energy on a much wider group of targets than did the first edition. This study is not intended to reveal new information about either old Dallas or the old Klan. Nevertheless, it does seem worthwhile to recount briefly the history of both, with special attention given to those groups targeted by the 1920s Klan, in an attempt to understand the conditions that spawned the Klan of the 1920s.

Dallas, which grew slowly at first, was destined to become the most dominant city in North Texas by the twentieth century. This came about largely because of significant transportation advantages. A natural crossing place along the Trinity river, Dallas was also the confluence of two important early roads. Eventually, these advantages began to show, and migrants began to populate the area. Included among these early migrations

were socialists who came to Dallas after their utopian community failed. Catholics and Jews also trickled in early, with Catholic church services beginning in 1859 and the first Jewish organization forming in 1872. Blacks in pre-Civil War days were nearly all slaves since Texans did not welcome free blacks into their territory.

During the Civil War, Dallas served as a supply center for the Confederate forces in the West. Dallas's population strongly approved of secession and its leaders chafed under the Reconstruction governments that ruled Texas after the war. As a result, Dallas saw the formation of the first Ku Klux Klan during these turbulent years. The original Klan, essentially a terrorist organization, dedicated its efforts to intimidating blacks and Republicans into not voting. The organization was eventually checked with the help of the federal government but continued to exist sporadically until the end of Reconstruction. Although freedom no doubt brought distinct improvements in the lives of African-Americans, race relations in Dallas continued to be poor after the Civil War with blacks segregated into separate enclaves. Attempts to disfranchise blacks continued after the demise of the Klan and were largely successful by the turn of the century.

The post-Civil War years were ones of significant growth in Dallas. This was particularly true after 1872. That was the year the Houston and Texas Central railroad came to Dallas. Farming communities had expanded after the Civil War as migrant farmers looked to North Texas as part of the southern wheat belt. The coming of the railroad assured that Dallas would be where these farmers came to sell their crops and buy their necessities. The result was exponential growth. From a population of around 3,000 in 1870, Dallas catapulted to over 38,000 in 1890 to become the largest city in

Texas. This trend slowed in the last decade as the depression beginning in 1893, hit Dallas hard, but it was only a temporary lull.

The twentieth century dawned with Dallas on the verge of immense growth and change. The transportation revolution, including first the interurban, and then the automobile, increased the geographical influence of Dallas as people and goods found it easier to access the city. As the city's influence grew, the Dallas population skyrocketed, doubling between 1900 and 1910 and almost doubling again in the next decade. Dallas leaders recognized the importance of bringing order to this situation by sponsoring and attempting to implement a city plan. Although the overall results were ambiguous, the attempt at planning did bring some improvements, such as the consolidation of various train depots into a single union station.

A survey of those groups the Klan most opposed suggests that they were in a significant minority. African-Americans were developing important institutions, including the NAACP and a newspaper, the *Dallas Express*. In spite of this there is no evidence of any significant threat to traditional white supremacy. The number of Catholics and Jews had increased with the population but still represented small minorities in Dallas. The foreign born had actually declined as a percentage of the population. The rising concern with immorality could already be seen in 1913, when religious leaders led a successful effort to break up Dallas's "red light" district. By 1920, many Dallasites considered lawlessness to be a serious problem. A significant part of this problem involved the pursuit of alcohol. Prohibition was unsuccessful in Dallas, as in most places, because there were too many people who would pay black-market prices

to get a drink. Also related to the concern over lawlessness was a distinct fear of bolshevism. Strikes and bombings across the country made Dallasites fear the social fabric of the country was breaking down and wondering when Dallas would be affected.

It was against this background of fear that the Klan was born in late 1920. Organized by Kleagle Bertram G. Christie, the Klan went rapidly through a series of like-minded leaders, including Hiram Evans, Z. E. (Zeke) Marvin, and A. C. Parker. The Klan, as many historians have noted, signed up some of the "best" people. This included several current or future city leaders such as Maury Hughes, Dan Harston, and R. L. Thornton. In fact, the leadership of the Klan was composed almost entirely of middle and upper-middle class men who worked in non-manual occupations. Many of these men were business owners, management professionals, or government officials. They were generally ambitious and successful men who were worried about the conditions of the country. With the little data available, the general membership appears similar but moderately less successful. The new Klan even demonstrated some reach into the non-manual occupations, but overall members fell firmly in the middle class.

The Klan in Dallas developed against the backdrop of a world war and unprecedented growth. The rapid growth created new constituencies that did not have an established voice among the city's political elite. The war stirred up fears that motivated these people to action. The Klan came aggressively selling its message of blame at just the right time and thousands eventually bought into the movement. These were upper-middle and middle-class men unconcerned about economic marginalization. They were

worried about social disintegration and determined to do what they could to fight the threat. The Klan offered them a vehicle.

I

Archaeological evidence makes it clear that the area that is now Dallas has been inhabited off and on for thousands of years. With the coming of European settlers to North America, began an inexorable and seemingly inevitable clash between European and Native American civilizations that would eventually result in the domination of the European and the suppression of Indian culture. To suggest that the clash was inevitable is merely to recognize the vast gulf between the two cultures and the history of human nature and practices when two such civilizations collide. It does not condone or predict specific behavior. The formation of Dallas took place with this clash as its background.¹

In 1841, when John Neely Bryan, the founder of Dallas, staked out his claim on the banks of the Trinity river, he chose his site well. A natural river crossing point, Dallas was soon to be the sight of two major roads. The Preston Road, which opened in 1841, ran from Austin to the border town of Preston on the Red River. It was part of the Republic of Texas' plan to improve communications with its neighbor to the North. For most travelers to South Texas, however, it was inconvenient to travel as far west as Preston before beginning their southern descent. The National Central Road, opened in 1845, began on the Red River a hundred miles or so east of Preston and hooked into the

¹A succinct summary of pre-European inhabitants of the Dallas area can be found in Roy H. Williams and Kevin J. Shay, *Time Change: An Alternative View of the History of Dallas* (Dallas: To Be Publishing Co., 1991), 22-28.

Preston Road a half-mile above Dallas.² Thus Dallas, following the pattern of many western cities that eventually grew large, was a natural transportation center.³

In spite of natural advantages, Dallas grew slowly at first.⁴ By 1848, Dallas could claim a population of only thirty-nine. This slow growth came despite both the best efforts of Bryan and the Republic of Texas through its Peters Colony settlement plans.⁵ Still, there were other signs of life in the region, including the beginning settlements of Hord's Ridge (a predecessor to Oak Cliff) just west across the Trinity and the first of two attempts to build Utopian communities made by French socialists. The first attempt in 1848, named Icarius by its founder Etienne Cabet, was located near present-day Denton and lasted only a year. The second, and more famous attempt, called La Reunion, was located in present day Oak Cliff. From 1855 to 1858, the colony struggled to create an agricultural ideal that included vineyards, orchards, and livestock. When the members abandoned the colony in 1858, well over 100 former inhabitants moved to Dallas, giving the early frontier city a cosmopolitan air.⁶

²For a brief synopsis of the Preston and National Central Roads see John William Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company Inc., 1951), 36-7.

³For some examples of other western cities that grew as a result of transportation advantages see Richard Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

⁴As late as 1870, Dallas provoked disappointment in its size and development. See John Milton McCoy, *When Dallas Became a City: Letters of John Milton McCoy, 1870-1881*, edited by Elizabeth York Enstam (Dallas: Dallas Historical Society, 1982), 2.

⁵On the Peters Colony see Seymour V. Conner, "A Statistical Review of the Settlement of the Peters Colony, 1841-1848," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 57 (July 1953): 38-54.

⁶Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas*, 80-85; Frank M. Cockrell, *History of Early Dallas* (Originally published serially in the *Dallas Morning News*, in 1932, typewritten copy can be

Like socialists, Catholics and Jews got an early start in Dallas. Although Catholic church services reportedly began as early as 1859, adherents organized the first parish in 1872 and built the first Catholic church in 1873. In 1892, Edward J. Dunne came to Dallas as bishop of the newly created Dallas diocese. The year 1906 saw the establishment of the Holy Trinity College in Oak Lawn, the beginning of Catholic sponsored higher education that continues today at the University of Dallas.⁷ In spite of this continuing Catholic energy and presence, Dallas, as John Rogers notes, "was traditionally Protestant rather than Catholic, and Catholics have been in the minority of its population since its beginnings."⁸ The first Jewish organization, meanwhile, was the Hebrew Benevolent Association formed in July, 1872, and included Alex Sanger, famous Dallas businessman, as vice-president. This led to the formation of Emmanu-El, the first reformed congregation, in 1874. In 1884, an orthodox congregation, Shearith Israel, was formed.⁹ Jews played notable roles in Dallas, although, like Catholics, they have never been large in number.¹⁰

Race relations in early Dallas mirrored the society in which the city existed.

White supremacy and slavery were assumed as can be seen in an 1840 Republic of Texas

found at DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University), 77-82.

⁷Lee Milazzo, ed., *Sam Acheson, Dallas Yesterday* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1977), 245-47.

⁸Rogers, *Lusty Texans*, 295.

⁹*Ibid.*, 297-98; Milazzo, *Dallas Yesterday*, 257-8.

¹⁰Marilynn Wood Hill, "A History of the Jewish Involvement in the Dallas Community," Master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1967.

law requiring free blacks to leave the country. Although this law did not last, there were few free blacks in Texas before the Civil War. Ugly incidents, such as the great Dallas fire, occurred from time to time to remind blacks that they lived a precarious existence. On 8 July 1860 much of downtown Dallas burned to the ground from a fire of unknown origin. A vigilante group hanged three slaves for starting the fire, apparently with little or no evidence to establish their guilt.¹¹

By 1861, Dallas, like the rest of the country, found itself in the midst of Civil War. Sentiment in Dallas was distinctly southern and secessionist. The city dutifully sent its eligible members off to fight, meanwhile becoming a supply center for Confederate forces of the trans-Mississippi. At war's end, Dallas so bristled under the control of the Reconstruction government that Mayor Henry Ervay, in 1872, went to jail rather than relinquish his post at the command of the Reconstruction governor. Although blacks received emancipation with the end of the Civil War, race relations, in some ways, became even more precarious, as white southern Democrats fought a desperate battle to regain control over the political institutions of the South.

It was in this social environment that the original Ku Klux Klan grew from a small club into a wide-ranging terrorist organization dedicated to maintaining white supremacy and restoring southern Democratic rule. Blacks and (Republican) whites were lynched, beaten, and intimidated in order to teach them "their place" in society. Eventually, the violence became so bad that Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Klan's imperial

¹¹Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 35-7; Donald E. Reynolds, "Vigilante Law During the Texas Slave Panic in 1860," *Locus* 2 (Spring 1990): 179-80.

wizard, ordered the organization to disband. This, combined with the Force Act of 1871, helped gain control over the insurgency, but not before southern Democrats had regained political control in many areas.¹² In Dallas, where the Klan enjoyed significant support in spite of strong condemnation from the *Dallas Herald*, the masked order faded away after 1874. It was that year that 100 klansmen from Dallas went to Austin to make sure the newly elected governor, Democrat Richard Coke, was sworn into office. Apparently there was some concern that the old "carpetbagger" governor would not relinquish the office. Once the carpetbaggers were out of power the need for the Klan diminished.¹³

Dallas in the postwar world was a part of the segregated South. African-Americans, no longer slaves, congregated in freedman's towns such as Deep Ellum and Little Egypt. Blacks made some progress in areas such as education and job mobility, but it was slow and painstaking. In politics there was considerable and consistent opposition to black participation. After the original Ku Klux Klan faded from the scene, a white supremacist political group called the Lily-Whites was organized. In 1892, the Lily-Whites broke off from the Republican party and held a separate convention in Dallas, where they put forward a Lily-White slate of candidates. This group was also a part of the effort to shut out black voters with a poll tax that was finally enacted in 1902. Although the poll tax affected poor voters of all races it was "so effective in shutting out black voters," Williams and Shay write, "that by 1906 the amount of African American

¹²David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965*. (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1965), 8-21.

¹³Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 39-40; Rogers, *The Lusty Texans*, 166-67.

voters in Texas dwindled from 100,000 in the 1890s to 5,000 out of a black population of almost 700,000."¹⁴

In spite of discrimination against blacks, Dallas finally began to experience significant growth in the post-Civil War years. It was during these postwar years that a steady stream of migration began to filter into Dallas and vicinity. Many of these migrants were southerners fearful of intensive agriculture (cotton) without slaves. They viewed North Texas as the center of the Texas wheat belt, which offered a viable alternative to farmers in the post-slave economy. Dallas was, in the post-Civil War years, growing into a center of commerce and farm products.¹⁵

An event in 1872 gave Dallas the boost it needed to become the pre-eminent town in the region: the coming of the railroad. Transportation had become a growing concern for Dallas as it became a center of commerce. The solution to the problem seemed to lie in the Trinity River. Dallas leaders since its founding dreamed of navigating the Trinity all the way to the Gulf.¹⁶ Although the dream remained alive for some time to come, geographical difficulties meant that there was little possibility of this coming to fruition. The coming of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad brought an immediate transportation revolution and relegated attempts to navigate the Trinity into the hands of

¹⁴Williams and Shay, *Time Change*, 40-43.

¹⁵Rogers, *Lusty Texans*, 96-101; A.C. Greene, *Dallas: The Deciding Years -- A Historical Portrait* (Austin: The Encino Press, 1973), 10-17; also see Homer L. Derr, "Migration into Texas, 1860-1880," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 70 (October 1966): 184-216.

¹⁶Jackie McElhaney, "Navigating the Trinity: A Dream that Endured for 130 Years," *Legacies* 3 (Spring 1991): 4-13.

the impractical dreamers. In 1873, Dallas compounded its advantage by securing, through a bit of legislative trickery, the Texas and Pacific Railroad. The Texas and Pacific was part of an East -- West transcontinental railroad across the southern part of the U.S. Now Dallas was not only a railroad town but a major crossroads as well.¹⁷

Dallas soon changed from a small southern center of commerce to a boomtown. In 1860, the population of Dallas was 775, and by 1870, it was pushing 3,000. In the railroad decade of the 1870s, Dallas's population soared beyond the 10,000 mark. By the early 1880s, town boosters began to think of Dallas in terms greater than the city limits. The *Dallas Morning News*, telephones, the first automobile, and even professional baseball all came to Dallas in the fast paced 1880s. The city ended the decade with an astounding 38,000 residents, making it the largest city in Texas.¹⁸

The new decade of the 1890s opened with geographical expansion as Dallas absorbed its former neighbor East Dallas.¹⁹ But the Panic of 1893 hit the city hard, causing the failure of several banks and a general business slowdown. In spite of the slowdown, the city continued to see some growth. The Oriental Hotel, complete with electricity and elevators, opened at the corner of Akard and Commerce. Parkland Hospital opened in 1894 and St. Paul's in 1898. An anti-pollution movement gripped the city in the closing years of the nineteenth century, as the United States was beginning to

¹⁷Rogers, *Lusty Texans*, 111-29; see also Janice Lancaster, "Dallas and the Early Railroads," Masters thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1971.

¹⁸Greene, *Dallas, The Deciding Years*, 15, 20-31.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 31.

come under the influence of that energetic yet often contradictory time known as the Progressive Era.²⁰

II

The first few decades of the twentieth century brought immense changes to Dallas, as well as the rest of the nation. The interurban, growth of suburbs, and the implementation of the mass production techniques, leading to the ascendancy of the automobile, all occurred in rapid succession. Dallas, at the turn of the century, had slipped to third place in Texas in population with just under 43,000, a disappointing figure given its pre-eminent position in 1890. This trend turned around in the first decade of the twentieth century as technology assisted North Texas toward becoming a more coherent region. Like other growing cities at this time, Dallas and its suburbs began to network together through the technology of the interurban. A line from Dallas to Fort Worth was running by 1902, and one from Dallas to Sherman/Denison was in by 1908. Eventually, lines would run to Corsicana, Denton, Waco, and Terrell. The transportation revolution helped solidify Dallas's role as a center of commerce by connecting it more closely to the outlying areas. Dallas became the hub, and the interurban the spokes that funneled in the growing numbers of people, business, and commerce. But, the interurban

²⁰Milazzo, *Dallas Yesterday*, 302; on Progressivism see John D. Buenker, John C. Burnham, and Robert M. Crunden, *Progressivism* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., 1977); and Edward A. Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism: Herbert Croly and Progressive Thought* (Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

was not destined to last. Within a decade, the efficiency, flexibility, privacy, and comfort of the automobile helped make it the transportation mode of choice.²¹

Dallas's second decade of the twentieth century opened with a population of over 92,000 and high expectations for the future. In 1914, the United States government recognized the increasing importance and status of Dallas by awarding the city the 11th District Federal Reserve Bank. Politically, Dallas had been operating under the progressive commission system since 1907. Through their Citizens Association, the major businessmen dominated politics throughout the second decade of the century.²² Recognizing that the city's growth warranted some kind of planning, city leaders hired George E. Kessler to prepare a city plan. The "Kessler Plan" after much delay followed and by 1914, one of Kessler's recommendations, that of consolidating the various train depots into one "Union Station," was under way. Dallas, too caught up in its exponential growth, was unable to fulfill the plan in its entirety. Although the City Beautiful movement sputtered in Dallas, the city planning impetus did bring significant improvements to the city.²³

The Dallas of the 1920s, where the reborn Ku Klux Klan was to have so much success, was a vibrant, growing city. A *Dallas Morning News* Trade Survey in the early

²¹Greene, *Dallas: The Deciding Years*, 34-38; Rogers, *The Lusty Texans*, 203-304.

²²Greene, *Dallas: The Deciding Years*, 39-43; Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 8-16.

²³William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 261-78.

twenties found that Dallas was the "principal market for products of nearly all places within this 'magic circle' [150 mile radius]." Included within the trading circle was a population of approximately 2,500,000, although the population of Dallas proper was considerably smaller at around 160,000.²⁴ The Trade Survey found that there were 457 manufacturing establishments employing more than 10,000 workers and producing over \$93 million worth of goods.²⁵ Moreover, white supremacy, Protestantism, capitalism, and a dominant Anglo-Saxon culture were the norms of the day. On the other hand, many white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Dallasites believed their society and culture was under severe attack, and they did not perceive that the political leadership was combating the cultural deterioration. Those who believed this way often responded by joining the only organization that was addressing these fears in a serious manner.

Whether the fears of social and cultural deterioration had any basis in fact is problematical. What is clear is that the groups which the Klan blamed for the perceived deterioration were not proportionally increasing in size or influence. It is true that the second decade of the century saw the emergence of an organized socialism in Dallas for the first time. The earlier utopian communities apparently did not contribute to any significant socialist movement in North Texas. Thus, it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that a small Socialist party formed in Dallas. In the 1913 mayoral election, the socialist candidate, George Clifton Edwards, made somewhat of a splash

²⁴The specific population of Dallas was 158,976 see *14th Census of the United States*, Vol. II, 51.

²⁵*Morning News*, "Statistics on Dallas," (Dallas, 1922), np.

when he carried nine precincts. This, however, was not a harbinger of the future, and when the Klan was forming in the early 1920s, socialism was not threatening the hegemony of the capitalist viewpoint in Dallas.²⁶

The Klan of the 1920s concerned itself with far more than socialism. While the mission of the original Ku Klux Klan centered on restoring white supremacy and local Democratic party control to the South in the Reconstruction era, the new Klan perceived the danger to be far more comprehensive. Thus, it refocused its animus on the foreign-born, socialists, Catholics, Jews, and those it considered immoral. Blacks, of course, were still considered a general threat to white supremacy, while nationally the Klan embraced Republicans as long as they accepted its ideology.

In fact, a survey of all the groups that the Klan fought so hard against suggests that there was more to the existence of the Invisible Empire than surface explanations can account for. It is true that the Dallas County Catholic population had almost doubled between 1916 and 1926, from just over 7,000 to just under 14,000, but the increase was simply a reflection of the overall Dallas population growth and does not represent a percentage increase. Nothing illustrates this position more clearly than the 1926 *Census of Religious Bodies*, which found that out of 150 white church congregations only eleven were Catholic.²⁷ In that same *Census*, Jewish congregations numbered only five. Also by

²⁶Payne, *Big D*, 38-40; see also Patricia Everidge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 85-87.

²⁷Compare U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Religious Bodies, 1916* Vol. I, Report on Religious Bodies (Washington: GPO, 1920), 315 with *Census of Religious Bodies, 1926*, Vol. I, Report on Religious Bodies (Washington: GPO, 1929), 402, 688.

1926, there were 7,500 Jews living in Dallas or just under 5 percent of the total population. This was actually a dramatic tenfold increase since the 1916 *Census* found only 750 Jews in all of Dallas County. In spite of this increase, Dallas's Jewish population was comparable to other cities its size during the 1920s.²⁸ Although Jewish leaders have played notable roles in religious, business, and benevolent causes in Dallas, they have never been extraordinarily large in number.

The foreign born were also a relatively small number of the Dallas population in 1920. The percentage of foreign born in the population had actually decreased during the twentieth century. In 1900, almost 8 percent of the population was made up of foreign born whites. By the time of the 1920 census, only 5.5 percent of the Dallas population was foreign born compared to 79.3 percent native whites. Although Dallas Klan number 66 showed considerable concern about foreign immigration into the United States, Dallas itself was largely unaffected by the stream of immigrants that entered during the early part of the century.²⁹

Moral issues, as historians Stanley Cobin and Charles Alexander have pointed out, also concerned klansmen.³⁰ Perhaps chief among these was prohibition. By the

²⁸Compare *Census of Religious Bodies, 1926*, Volume I, 401 with *Census of Religious Bodies, 1916*, Volume I, 312.

²⁹U.S. Bureau of the Census, *14th Census of the United States taken in the Year 1920*, Vol. II, Population, General Report and Analytical Tables (Washington: GOP, 1922), 51.

³⁰See Stanley Cobin, *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 136-56; and Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1962), 7.

1920s, law enforcement officers were spending inordinate amounts of their time fighting the illegal trade in alcohol. The trade was so widespread that, in spite of frequent raids, one national investigative journalist reported it was essentially unchallenged.³¹ Some believed that certain businessmen used the Klan to reduce competition in the liquor trade. In particular, these rumors were referring to the large numbers of drugstore owners who joined the Klan. Only drugstores could legally dispense alcoholic products and only for "medicinal" purposes requiring a prescription. Whether true or not, klansmen like drugstore magnate Zeke Marvin came under frequent criticism for their purported sale of thousands of gallons per year of "legal" alcohol.³² Regardless of these rumors, Dallas klansmen generally viewed alcohol as a major contributing factor to crime and the growing moral decadence that they perceived in postwar America. Thus, they often rated law enforcement officials by their ability to catch bootleggers.³³

The other moral issue of the day was prostitution. On the one hand, religious elements frowned on prostitution, while on the other hand it was such an accepted part of Dallas life that there was a designated "red light" district where prostitutes plied their trade. In 1913, this all changed when a minister named J. T. Upchurch began a crusade to eliminate the red light district. By publicizing some of the (respectable) landlords who

³¹Payne, *Big D*, 229-31.

³²Martin M. Crane to M. S. Duffie, 18 August 1924, 3N106, Martin M. Crane Papers; J. B. Cranfill to J. D. Sandefer, 29 April 1922, 3K448, J. B. Cranfill Papers, both at The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³³See the letter to the editor in *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*, "Let Texas Remain Dry," 13 October 1922, 4.

owned property in the district, and with the help of other ministers, Upchurch's crusade was successful in eliminating the red light district. Of course, prostitution did not disappear, although it might have been lessened by the break up.³⁴ Nevertheless, how to get rid of moral problems such as alcohol and prostitution were a part of the mission of the 1920s Klan and the presence of these activities played a role in its resurgence.

Concern over lawlessness in Dallas was not limited to prohibition and prostitution. Although the socialist movement in Dallas had receded since the 1913 mayoral race by George Clifton Edwards, Dallasites were also caught up in the post-war fear that bolshevism was infecting the country. Bombings, strikes, and race riots in various parts of the country followed the end of World War I, leading the public to see radicalism as a serious threat. As David M. Kennedy has summarized:

A general strike in Seattle in February, a police strike in Boston a few months later, countless smaller strikes in every region, a threatened walk-out from the coal mines, now the massive work stoppage in steel -- all these, combined with whiffs of revolutionary ferment coming from across the Atlantic, spun the public mind, raising febrile anxieties about the very integrity of the social fabric.³⁵

These anxieties were still evident in Dallas in 1921, when a full page advertisement ran in the *Dallas Morning News*. The ad questioned who was behind a recent bombing on Wall Street. Organized bolshevism with its "roots in moral illiteracy" was its answer. The solution to the problem, the ad averred, lay in christian (Protestant) education. Christian

³⁴Payne, *Big D*, 40-48.

³⁵David M. Kennedy, *Over Here, The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 275.

education would "put an end to the bomb-throwing business and . . . banish the bomb-throwers -- anarchists, Bolshevists and red revolutionaries."³⁶

Ultimately, it was fear, particularly of foreigners, that united the myriad threads which inspired growth of the 1920s Klan. Lawlessness, including radicalism, lax morals, and drinking could be traced (many believed) to the new immigrants flooding the land. It was through these immigrants that radical ideas were being transmitted to the United States. Since most of these immigrants were Catholic or Jewish, these religions came under attack. Some southerners worried, as well, because the radical influence of these groups had led to Negro strikebreaking and race riots. This use of blacks in such a volatile situation, they believed, might destroy the delicate balance in race relations upon which white supremacy was based.³⁷

It is true that, although maintaining white supremacy was not the sole, or even the main mission of the 1920s Klan, it was an important part of its rhetoric. As indicated previously, blacks were effectively disfranchised by the time of the revived Klan. In spite of political discrimination, Dallas had a vigorous African-American community as the decade of the 1920s dawned. The Dallas chapter of the NAACP opened its doors in 1919, while the *Dallas Express* provided a highly successful and widely recognized voice that spoke on many important issues.³⁸ The Dyer anti-lynching bill, Liberia, and Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association are examples of issues discussed at

³⁶*Dallas Morning News*, 24 May 1921, 9.

³⁷Kennedy, *Over Here*, 280-84.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 50-54.

length in the pages of the *Express*.³⁹ In spite of this growing vigor, and similar to the other groups that drew the ire of the revived Klan, there seems to have been no major or dramatic changes in the status of blacks that can provide sufficient catalyst for a Klan revival. Indeed, the *Morning News*, in its first editorial condemning the Klan, pointed out that white supremacy in Dallas remained unthreatened.⁴⁰

With two exceptions the ethnic and demographic survey of 1920s Dallas does not suggest any dramatic group shifts that might have led to the rise of the Klan. Since Jews were a lesser target of the Klan, the rather dramatic increase in the Jewish population does not seem to have been a major catalyst. Perhaps more influential was the dramatic overall rise in population in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the first decade of the century, Dallas had more than doubled its population from 43,000 to 92,000. In terms of raw numbers, however, Dallas grew even faster between 1910 and 1920, adding 58,000 more citizens. Although this growth did not see a disproportionate rise in foreign-born immigrants or African-Americans, such frenetic growth can be destabilizing to a community and create dynamics that the political elites have a hard time controlling or even understanding.

Even more telling were the general postwar social conditions that were prevalent throughout the nation. The fear of radicalism, immorality and lawlessness, problematical race relations, and concern over non-Anglo-Saxon immigration, all these were serious

³⁹Copies of the *Dallas Express* for the years 1921-1924, can be found at the Dallas Public Library.

⁴⁰ *Morning News*, "Dallas Slandered," 24 May 1922, 14.

concerns in post-war America. Dallas was no exception to this trend. Although there is little to suggest that society was in any immediate danger of disintegration, many in Dallas were convinced the threat was real. To some degree, then, the founding of the Klan in Dallas was simply a matter of fortuitous timing combined with aggressive salesmanship. The Klan offered its message of protecting accepted norms in a very aggressive manner at just the right time and Dallasites bought into the message by the thousands.

III

The formation of the Klan in Dallas occurred behind a veil of secrecy that is still difficult to peer behind. Dallas Klan 66 was apparently organized in the latter part of 1920 or the early days of 1921, for the African-American newspaper *Dallas Express* published an editorial in January expressing its distaste for the reborn national Klan. Four days later they received a letter, signed "Ku Klux Klan" that the *Express* published in February.

We are rapidly organizing the famous Ku Klux Klan in this city to keep forever inviolate the Constitution and make this a white mans (sic) Country. . . . We are convinced that Negroes like yourself & staff are Enemies of the Poor ignerant (sic) Negroes trying to incite them to Rebellion We are here to keep Order, and much better to hang Coons like you than kill thousands of ignorant Coons.⁴¹

Although there is no corroboration that this letter came from an authentic klansman, the tone of the letter suggests that it did. The reference to keeping the Constitution inviolate

⁴¹*Dallas Express*, "As to the Ku Klux Klan," 22 January 1921, 4; and "In the name of Law and Order, 5 February 1921, 4.

matches closely with the goals and patriotic rhetoric of the Klan, while the blatant attempt at racial intimidation falls in line with the Klan's dogma on white supremacy.

In May of 1921, the Klan eliminated any doubt about its status. The organization announced its existence in dramatic fashion by parading down Main Street in full regalia almost one thousand strong. The parade was quite a spectacle with the silent klansmen walking single file, spaced about ten feet apart, and holding signs with messages such as "100 Per Cent American," "Pure Womanhood," "White Supremacy," and "The Guilty Must Pay." The parade took place on a Saturday night, thereby assuring a crowd. To make the effect more dramatic all the streetlights were turned off as the klansmen walked the route, an indication that the Klan had support in the management of the Dallas Power and Light Company. The parade was generally well received as the crowds occasionally engaged in cheering and handclapping. The following Sunday morning found red posters proclaiming the Klan's existence tacked up in various places throughout Dallas.⁴²

The *Dallas Dispatch* interviewed several clergymen and local officials to gauge local reaction to the Klan's appearance. They found most people to be generally favorable or non-committal. "So long as the Ku Klux Klan keeps within the law, this body can do much good to suppress crime," was how Rev. W. H. Wynne, pastor of the Forest Avenue Baptist Church viewed the Klan. The closest thing to a critical comment came from W. D. Bradfield, pastor of Grace Methodist Church, who warned that "there is a great possibility of using the wrong means to bring about a good end No one ever did any

⁴²*Dallas Express*, "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Parade the Streets of Dallas," 28 May 1921, 1; *Morning News*, "Klan Marches in Awesome Parade," 22 May 1921, sec. 1, pp. 1-2.

good to take the law into his own hands." Maury Hughes, Dallas County District Attorney (a charter member of Klan 66), showed his sympathy toward the Klan when he commented "no doubt but that the effect of Saturday night's parade will have a salutary effect on law breakers." Mayor Aldredge, following the most tactful political course, refused to comment on the public appearance of the Klan.⁴³

By the time the Klan was organized enough to hold this public coming-out ceremony, its leadership had already been established. Although Dallas businessman Bertram Christie organized Klan 66, he did not stay in Dallas for long. Lured by the potential profits of organizing new Klaverns, Christie took an assignment to organize the Klan in Illinois. After considerable success as a kleagle in Chicago and Illinois, he accepted a job at imperial headquarters in Atlanta. The man who quickly rose to the local leadership (and ultimately to national leadership) was one of Christie's first recruits, a Dallas dentist named Hiram Wesley Evans.⁴⁴ Although Evans was undoubtedly the exalted cyclops (local leader) during the Saturday night parade, his rapid rise up the ranks meant that his time as exalted cyclops was limited. Moreover, his greatest impact on the Dallas Klan 66 ultimately came as he exercised control from above.⁴⁵

⁴³The *Dispatch* article is quoted in *Dallas Express*, "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Parade the Streets of Dallas," 28 May 1921, 1.

⁴⁴*Texas American*, "Bertram G. Christie," 29 June 1923, 1.

⁴⁵Information of the local leadership of the Klan must be pieced together by combining isolated information found in such sources as the *Texas American* and U.S. Congress, Senate, *Senator from Texas, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 68th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1924).

When Evans was promoted out of the local Klan, his choice to succeed him was a local businessman named Zebina E. (Zeke) Marvin. Marvin, who originally came to Dallas from Illinois in 1901, married the former Louise Van Dyke the same year. By 1920, the year the Klan was formed, the Marvins were well established in Dallas, with two children and a house they owned outright.⁴⁶ Marvin exercised control over Klan 66 from late 1921 until the decline of the Klan began in 1924. Eventually he became the most important Klan official in the state of Texas and was instrumental in setting the direction and policy decisions of the Texas Klan during its most popular years.

Marvin, the prosperous owner of a successful chain of Dallas area drugstores, was driven by an unusual mixture of ambition tempered by charity. Working behind the scenes, he was the driving force behind Klan 66's decision to enter politics in an organized manner. It was his decision to hold a Klan "primary" that resulted in the coalescing of Klan support behind Earle B. Mayfield in his successful 1922 race for the U.S. Senate. Later, in 1924, it was Marvin who tapped Felix Robertson to run as the Klan candidate for governor of Texas. When Robertson lost the governor's race to Miriam Ferguson, it was Marvin who resigned his position as the leader of the Texas Klan. He does not seem to have harbored public political ambitions for himself. Instead, Marvin was content to limit his political aspirations to within the Klan itself. As long as the Klan was popular, Marvin controlled significant power and was able to play the role of kingmaker behind the scenes.

⁴⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census, *14th Census of the United States, Manuscript Edition of 1920* (Microfilm, University of North Texas).

Marvin had a softer, more charitable side to him as well. Indeed, he was heavily involved in charitable activities throughout his adult life. He used his Klan influence, for example, to convince the Dallas Klan to build an orphanage. The Klan built Hope Cottage almost entirely with money raised from its own members. Besides Hope Cottage, Marvin used his position as chairman of the Klan steering committee to engage the Klan in a variety of charitable events sponsored through the Dallas Welfare Council. Working for charities was an important part of his life both before and after his involvement in the Klan. There is little in what we know of Marvin to suggest that he was a fervent disciple of the Klan's ideology. It appears that he joined for less decipherable reasons. Nevertheless, he clearly accepted the white supremacist, anti-immigrant bias to the degree necessary to lead a Klan dedicated to these ideals. That a man could be heavily involved in two activities so divergent from one another serves as a disconcerting reminder that most people contain within them a mix of good and evil impulses.⁴⁷

If Marvin was no fervent idealist, his successor clearly was deserving of the title. In May 1922, Marvin became the acting great titan of Texas Province number 2 (including Dallas). Chosen to succeed Marvin as the exalted cyclops of Dallas 66 was a Baptist minister by the name of A.C. Parker.⁴⁸ Parker's background is less well known

⁴⁷*Texas American*, "Chairman Z. E. Marvin Stresses Urgent Need of Charity Now," 9 March 1922, 1; *Morning News*, "Z.E. Marvins Planning Golden Wedding Fete," 28 October 1951, article in possession of author.

⁴⁸*Dallas Dispatch*, "Klan initiates 65 members of Pigpen Session," found at the Dallas Historical Society under, "K. K. K.," vol. 1, in the E. Paul Jones Collection, Dealey Library. Editions of the *Dallas Dispatch* from the 1920s no longer exist. Fortunately, Jeff G. Jones

than Marvin's, but it appears his career was a mixture of business and ministry. He worked at various times in the oil industry and other businesses while holding down a pastorate at various churches.⁴⁹ By the time of the Klan's formation he was the Pastor at the Belmont Baptist Church.

Parker brought a new leadership style to Klan 66, one that adopted the natural demagoguery of the national Klan. In a sermon preached at Vickery Baptist Church in August 1922, for example, he attacked the Catholic Church with a typical list of charges. Catholicism was, according to Parker, filled with priests who would not preach funerals of poor parishioners without excess compensation, hatred of the public school system, and men who desired to take control of the political system for the benefit of the pope.⁵⁰ As might be expected, Parker filled his rhetoric with appeals to morality and ideology. In a speech to klansmen published in the *Texas 100 Per Cent American*, Parker suggested that any klansmen "who have joined our organization with any thought of business gain or in the belief that you may wreak personal revenge upon some actual or imagined enemy through our association with us, then in that case we say to you this is no place for you"⁵¹

made an extensive collection of articles on the Klan which are preserved in scrapbook form in the Jones Collection.

⁴⁹*Texas American*, "Christian Gentleman Replies to Mr. Hughes," 18 August 1922, 4.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, " 25 August 1922, 8.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, "Food for the Simon Pure Brand of Americans," 4 August 1922, 2.

It is possible, even likely, that Parker was chosen to head Klan 66 because he shared many of the goals and views of Zeke Marvin. Under Parker's leadership Klan 66 continued its efforts to build Hope Cottage. In addition, Parker made clear his fealty to Marvin's desire to make the Klan a politically active organization. One of the six purposes Parker ascribed to the Klan's existence was "a strong determination to use our utmost influence and strength to the end that the public offices of our county, state, and nation shall be filled as nearly as possible with and by 100 per cent Americans."⁵² In many ways Parker was a perfect choice for Marvin. He was a man who accepted and pushed Marvin's agenda while adding an element of religious zealotry that could energize the rank and file in a way Marvin might have found difficult.

If Parker was the inspirational speaker, the chief organizer of Klan 66 was its kligrapp or secretary, George K. Butcher. Butcher combined moderate political ambitions with activist segregationist views. In pre-Klan days, Butcher had worked for segregation ordinances that forbade intra-block integration. Active in schoolboard elections, he had himself run unsuccessfully for Dallas County Tax Assessor in 1918. When the Klan was formed in late 1920, Butcher was the manager of the Soda Fountain Company.⁵³

Klansman Butcher soon made a name for himself because of his organizational ability. As the membership of Dallas Klan 66 soared into the thousands, Butcher became known as the man to put in charge of an event. In an article announcing a "monster" Klan

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³"K. K. K.," vol. 1, Jones Collection.

barbecue (where 25,000 were expected) Butcher was praised for his organizing skills. "As the whole of Texas Knows," the article eulogized, "when George Butcher makes up his mind to pull off something really worth while, then it truly can be said the big pot will be put in the little one."⁵⁴ Besides barbecues and naturalization ceremonies, Butcher's resume soon included helping to run Klan 66's political wing and organizing Klan Day at the Dallas County State Fair on 24 October 1923.⁵⁵

There were, of course, many more individuals who were part of the Klan leadership, but none left much evidence of the specific roles they played. There were, however, several current or future city leaders who were members of the Klan. Included in this list were Lewis Turley, Dan C. Harston, and R. L. Thornton. Turley and Harston were the foremost representatives of law-enforcement in Dallas. Turley was the Dallas Police and Fire Commissioner while Harston was Dallas County Sheriff. Both were popular officials who won their positions before the Klan came along. It is not clear if they joined the Invisible Empire out of true sympathy for the organization or were perceptive enough to see the following the Klan would soon command, although the Klan did bill itself as an assistant to law enforcement. It is also true that the police had their hands full trying to enforce the prohibition laws and welcomed community support for

⁵⁴*Texas American*, "Klan Barbecue Aug. 18," 4 August 1922, 1.

⁵⁵*Senator From Texas*, 540-47; Nancy Wiley, *The Great State Fair of Texas: An Illustrated History* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1985), 91.

their efforts. Whatever the case, it is certain that the Dallas police were heavily involved in the Klan from the top down.⁵⁶

R. L. Thornton is a different case and deserves a closer look. Thornton, in the post-Klan years, served Dallas in so many roles, including four terms as Mayor, that he gained the title of Mr. Dallas.⁵⁷ His name appears on a list of Klan businesses that can be found in the G. B. Dealey papers at the Dallas Historical Society. After the publication of Darwin Payne's *Big D* (1994), in which he publicized some prominent names associated with the Klan, a few descendants have stepped forward protesting that their family members were falsely accused. Thornton's grandson, Robert L. Thornton III, wrote a letter to the *Morning News* castigating Payne for using the list containing his grandfather's name. First, he attacked the validity of the list by pointing out that its origin is unknown. Second, he suggested that the list should be disregarded because G. B. Dealey, *Morning News* editor and the one that placed it in his papers, also made some unusual remarks about the list. Specifically, Dealey commented that the list reminded him that "there is no such thing as really correct history." In addition, he said in referring to the businesses on the list that they "are said to be Ku Klux Klan 100%. Of course, that is an impossibility." Thornton correctly pointed out that his grandfather's name only appeared on the business section of the list. Finally, Thornton referred to his grandfather's record and history

⁵⁶See the list of Dallas police klansmen in box 1 of the Earle Cabell Collection, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University.

⁵⁷Payne, *Big D*, 277.

toward African-Americans and Jews as evidence that he could not have been in the Klan.⁵⁸

Thornton's protestations about his grandfather's inclusion in the list are natural. With that single mention as the only evidence of Thornton Sr.'s membership, it is likely that he was not a very active member. Perhaps he was one of those, like Ted Dealey, who joined without really realizing what the Klan was about and dropped out without any real participation. G. B. Dealey's comment notwithstanding, there is overwhelming evidence that the list is authentic. Actually, Thornton III has made a bit too much of the Dealey comments. His comment about "really correct history" is too vague to fathom, and his comment about the "impossibility" of the stores mentioned on the list being "100% Ku Klux Klan" surely refers to the fact that not everyone who worked at all the businesses could have been members of the Klan. The list makes no such claim, of course, but rather suggests that there was at least someone at the business who was a member or favorable to the Klan. In the case of the Dallas County State Bank, it was its President R. L. Thornton.

Internal evidence also suggests that the list is legitimate. First, the list is divided into an executive committee, a steering committee, and those businesses that favored the Klan. It is known, without doubt, that the Klan formed two such committees for conducting its business, especially for the purpose of selecting "Klan" representatives in the election of 1922. It is known that written lists of members of the executive and

⁵⁸For the Klan list see the Dealey Papers, G. B. Dealey Library, Dallas Historical Society; R.L. Thornton III's letter to the editor, *Morning News*, 5 March 1995, sec J, p. 4; Dealey's letter regarding the list can be found in the Dealey Papers.

steering committees were compiled, if for no other reason than to facilitate the senate investigation of the 1922 Mayfield election.⁵⁹ Moreover, since an important part of the Klan doctrine was "klanishness" (using only business establishments with Klan connections), publishing a list of Klan businesses seems sensible.⁶⁰

Second, it is known by other means of corroboration that a number of those listed were actually klansmen. The executive committee of ten, for example, includes J. D. Van Winkle and F. G. Van Falkenburgh, both of whom testified about their Klan involvement before the senate investigating committee. It is also possible to prove that some of those listed held the positions attributed to them. Zeke Marvin, A. C. Parker, and George Butcher, for example, are listed as great titan, cyclops, and secretary, respectively. Clearly, these men did hold these positions by summer of 1922.⁶¹ The presence of political and civic leaders such as Lewis Turley and Shelby Cox bolsters the list's authenticity given their unquestioned membership in the Klan.

Third, it is possible to verify that many of the businesses listed were supporters of the Klan due to advertisements placed in the *Texas American*, the local paper sponsored by Klan 66. Had the *Texas American* printed general news that all citizens might be interested in, it might not be so obvious that its advertisers were either Klan supporters or sympathizers. The paper's main purpose appears to have been as an alternative and counterbalance to the distinctly unfavorable coverage given the Klan by the *Morning*

⁵⁹*Senator From Texas Hearings*, 372, 471-72.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 130.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 247, 381, 419, 461-64, 530.

News and the *Dispatch* (see Chapter 3). In addition, it was a vehicle for indoctrinating members in the ideas and positions sponsored by Klan leadership while keeping them up to date on the internal happenings of the local Klavern. Many advertisers expressly recognized the readership of the paper by putting little quotations in their ads appealing to 100% Americans, the code words of the Klan for white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant customers. Out of almost 300 businesses on the Klan list, at least 50 advertised in the *Texas American* in 1922. More than a third of the businesses that put ads in the *Texas American* were on the list.⁶²

It is clear from the list that the Klan recruited successful men from the local business community. None of the Klan leaders, for example, were engaged in manual labor. Topping the list were twenty-three members who worked in company management. Many of these managers were in relatively high positions, including fourteen listed as president, vice-president, manager, superintendent, or treasurer of their respective companies. In addition, the list includes fourteen members who were city, county, or state officials, including the Dallas Police Commissioner, a district judge, a state legislator, and four officials of the Dallas Power and Light Company. Finally, the list includes thirteen small business owners, thirteen attorneys, eleven clerks/employees, ten salesmen/brokers, eight doctors, two ministers, and one farmer.

Robert Goldberg's *The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* provides what has become the standard matrix for analyzing the occupational status of klansmen. Working from a membership list of the Denver Klan, he divided the occupations listed into six categories.

⁶²*Texas American*, 1922; Klan list, Dealey Papers.

Three categories covered the non-manual jobs (high, middle, low), and the other three covered the manual (high, middle, low) occupations.⁶³ In applying Goldberg's matrix to the Dallas Klavern's leadership, as table 2.1 shows, there were no non-manual workers. Moreover, almost 80 percent of the leadership fell into the top two categories, with the middle holding a slight statistical lead over the highest category. This suggests that the Klan leadership was not a struggling class, somehow left behind when the economy recovered shortly after the war ended.

OCCUPATION	KLAN LEADERSHIP	GENERAL KLAN
HIGH NON-MANUAL	36.47%	10.97%
MIDDLE NON-MANUAL	42.35%	37.80%
LOW NON-MANUAL	21.17%	31.70%
HIGH MANUAL	0	9.75%
MIDDLE MANUAL	0	8.53%
LOW MANUAL	0	1.21%

Table 2.1

Confirming this impression of an economically successful Klan leadership is the high level of home ownership. As Table 2.2 shows, over 70 percent of the leadership owned their homes. More than half of those who owned their homes did so without a mortgage. This is considerably above the average for the state. In Texas in 1920, 40 percent of Texas families owned their homes and just over 28 percent owned their homes

⁶³For a listing of what occupations fall into which categories see Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 183-6.

free of a mortgage.⁶⁴ The large number of homeowners is especially significant when the Klan leaders' relatively young age is taken into consideration. An emerging picture the average Klan leader thus emerges. He was a successful businessman or professional who was less than forty years old on average, yet he already owned his home. He was very likely married and probably had children as well. About half were born outside Texas and migrated in sometime during their lives. Clearly these were not marginal men and owners of second-hand Fords who were driving the Klan.

VARIABLES	KLAN LEADERSHIP	GENERAL KLAN
AVERAGE AGE	39.27	37.4
HOME: OWNS (FREE)	38.18%	25.42%
OWNS (MORTGAGE)	32.72%	35.59%
RENTS/OTHER	29.08%	38.97%
BIRTHPLACE: TEXAS	48.15%	41.93%
NON-TEXAS	51.85%	58.07%

Table 2.2

Klan businesses included on the commercial section of the list ranged over a wide spectrum. It does seem true that the businesses represented on the list are more of the small business variety than might be expected given the men in top leadership. Only one bank is listed as a Klan business, for example, in spite of the fact that there are a number of bankers among the Klan leaders. And although there were thirteen attorneys listed,

⁶⁴U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract for the United States, 1930* (Washington: GPO, 1930), 35.

there is only one law firm that makes the list. Instead, the top five types of businesses represented are auto related (41), drugstores (29), grocers (28), construction related (23), and medical (21). There seems to be a special affinity for the Klan among dentists. Of the medical businesses listed, almost all are dentists. It seems only fitting that a dentist from Dallas would emerge to lead the revived Klan after the ouster of William Simmons.⁶⁵

The Dealey list suggests that the leadership of Dallas Klan 66 was made up of influential businessmen and civic leaders. Unfortunately, the general membership list has never surfaced. This is probably attributable to the extreme secrecy that Dallas 66 preferred to maintain. Even when non-Klan political leaders and national Klan leaders exerted pressure to relax secrecy, Dallas 66 maintained that anonymity was its only protection. Therefore, the general membership is a bit more difficult to analyze. Nevertheless, certain facts and information have surfaced over the years that allow for a partial picture to be assembled.

The absence of a comprehensive, official membership list forces one to rely on incomplete lists that have been compiled. The best source available comes from *The Dallas Dispatch*. On 5 May 1922, while the Klan engaged in its regular Friday night meeting, reporters from the *Dispatch* took down license plate numbers of cars parked around the livestock arena (the Klan's meeting place). The *Dispatch* reported that "the list of automobile license numbers, checked and rechecked by several trusty men, was taken while the cars stood in the roadway, alongside of the arena, or in the parkways back

⁶⁵Ibid.

around the livestock pens." The *Dispatch* then took the numbers and compared them to the city register and published the names, occupations, and addresses of those present at the meeting.⁶⁶

The results of the tally are quite revealing. Altogether 195 names were published. When the article first ran, the *Dispatch* invited anyone whose name appeared who was not at the meeting to write them with an explanation how their car got there. Eventually, fifteen of those listed wrote in claiming they were not there. Most said they had sold their cars earlier, and the paperwork changing ownership must not have been completed. In addition, sixteen more were company owned vehicles, thus reenforcing the view of a strong business presence in the Klan, but also making it impossible to know specifically who drove the vehicle to the Klan meeting. Of those cars remaining, fifty-seven came from out of Dallas, some from as far away as Houston and San Antonio. The large number of out of town guests suggests that Dallas was an important center for statewide Klan activities. Finally, a few more names were eliminated because they had such untraceable addresses as general delivery.⁶⁷

The net result of this paring down process was ninety-eight names and addresses, most of which included an occupation as well. Comparing these addresses to those found in the *Manuscript Census of 1920* allows for an analysis of a limited, yet assumedly representative, sample of the Klan in general. Of the 98 addresses searched for, 83 were

⁶⁶*Dallas Dispatch*, 12 May 1922, found in "K. K. K.," vol. 1, Jones Collection.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

found, but only 62 had the correct person living there in 1920. The information compiled from these 62 klansmen gives the best knowledge on the Dallas Klan in the 1920s.

The analysis, as might be expected, suggests a flattening out of the economic position of klansmen.⁶⁸ As table 2.1 shows, about 20 percent of klansmen on the general list fell into the manual category, thus suggesting that the Klan did have some attraction to the laboring class. By far the majority, however, still fell into the non-manual areas, but in this case a considerably larger percentage fell into the middle and low non-manual categories. Only about 11 percent of the general membership had a high non-manual occupation. Home ownership also flattens out somewhat, as table 2.2 shows, with about 60 percent owning compared with 70 percent among Klan leadership. This is still significantly higher than normal. Age and birthplace do not change significantly between the Klan leadership and the general membership. From this analysis it appears the average klansman was less well-off than the average leader, but not by a large margin. On the other hand, it is also clear from this assessment, that the Klan appealed, at least to some degree, to all economic levels. From Dave Bolton, who listed his job as laborer, to Harry Olmstead, who said he was the president of an oil company, the Klan included people from across a spectrum. It must be conceded that this is a tenuous appraisal of the Klan's general membership from a less than ideal source and with a less than sufficient sample, but barring any new discovery of a Klan membership list, it is the best that exists.

There is one other partial Klan list that has surfaced in the years since the Invisible Empire faded away. This list, which purports to include all Dallas policemen who were

⁶⁸*14th Census of the United States, Manuscript Edition.*

Klan members, helps answer the troubling question about how Klan activities could take place with such little interference. It contains the names of 106 police officers including the police commissioner, chief, assistant chief, three captains, and ten sergeants. If accurate, this list means that the majority of the Dallas Police officers were klansmen. Since it is undated, it is unknown if these names were compiled over a period of time or at one specific time only. Anyhow, the recruitment of large numbers of Dallas police officers would explain the ability of the Klan to operate without substantial interference from the authorities.⁶⁹

What does appear to be true about the Klan is that it successfully recruited men from across a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups. Still, the majority of klansmen fell solidly into the middle class. Yet, this is similar to the demographic breakdown of the organization opposed to the Klan (see Chapter 3). Thus, except for businessmen trying to avoid boycotts, there does not appear to be a strong economic incentive behind the growth of the Klan. This conclusion is backed up by the fact that the economy is a non-issue among klansmen. It is almost never mentioned in the pages of the *Texas American*, nor does it come up as a major issue in any of the public comments made by known klansmen.

The most convincing interpretation of the growth of the Dallas Klan has to do with an aggressive campaign promising social and cultural stability at a time when society seemed to be crumbling. Nothing about klansmen either suggests a better alternative or negates the idea that perceived social decay allowed the Klan to grow. A later chapter

⁶⁹Box 1, Cabell Collection.

shows a political component to the growth of the Klan. The Klan seemed to gather in those who felt they did not have a place in the Dallas political scene. Yet, the Klan could never have been used as a political vehicle were not conditions ripe for its appearance. The postwar world provided the social instability needed for the growth of the Invisible Empire.

The Klan came to Dallas aggressively promising to fight these cultural destroyers and many, but certainly not all, Dallasites bought into the package. As the Klan became a major power in the Dallas area, there was a concomitant growth of opposition. There were many who saw the Klan as an unnecessary outgrowth of vigilantism or "mob rule." The result was a steadily growing movement that sought to discredit and destroy the Klan.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISING OPPOSITION

Just as the Klan of the 1920s was considerably different from the Klan of the 1860s, the social milieu in which it formed was different as well. The Klan of the 1860s was exclusively a southern phenomenon and enjoyed near unanimous support among the populations (southern, white, Democrats) that it purported to help. The Klan of the 1920s was a national movement that for a few years enjoyed significant but nothing close to unanimous support, even amongst the populations (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) that it purported to help. Moreover, its overall goals were far less concrete than the earlier Invisible Empire. Where the first tried to reestablish political and social dominance clearly lost in a devastating Civil War, the second attempted to maintain social and political stability that some perceived to be threatened in the aftermath of a Great War fought overseas. Where the first Klan seemed to form almost spontaneously from the small spark of a college fraternity joke, the second Klan foundered until it found a skillful advertising team that created an aggressive and highly effective marketing scheme.¹

One result of this different beginning was an early opposition to the Klan that paralleled the growth of the latter Invisible Empire. Ironically, and to some degree

¹For a description of the founding of the original Klan see David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1965), 8-9.

necessarily, this opposition was not centered in the segments of society that were under attack. Instead, the opposition came from those in the very populations (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) that the Klan tried to recruit. Of course, there were prominent Jews, Catholics, and African-Americans involved in the fight against the Klan. It was inevitable that these groups would defend themselves against unprovoked attack, but given the numerical dominance of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant populations in Dallas, it was crucial that a significant portion of these populations turn against the Klan if it was to be defeated.

In Dallas the newspapers spear-headed the opposition. The *Dallas Morning News*, the *Dallas Journal*, and the *Dallas Dispatch*, were implacable foes of the Klan. The *Morning News*, the most influential daily, carried a good deal of the load. It gave no quarter to the Invisible Empire. Anti-Klan editorials, exposes, and critical stories on the Klan that eventually reached into the thousands poured forth from the newspaper's pages. For this it earned the title of "nigger daily" from the Klan. The paper also earned a boycott that, while it did not endanger the paper's existence, was certainly troubling to its management.

The newspapers were not the only organized opposition. Foes of the Invisible Empire formed an organization called the Dallas County Citizens League (DCCL) specifically to combat the Klan. Using overt methods like questionnaires, pamphlets, and speaking campaigns, the DCCL attacked the Klan vigorously. Organized principally by the existing political hierarchy, the DCCL sought to nullify the impact of the Klan in the political realm. Many of those who joined the DCCL shared the same ethnicity, race,

religion, and class status as klansmen. Different views over the health of society as well as age, ambition, and political outlook, explains why some individuals chose one path while similar people chose another.

The main Klan response to these attacks was the formation of its own newspaper, *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*. Sold by subscription and directly to the public, the paper defended Klan actions, viewpoints, and plans to the Dallas community. If the circulation of 18,000 claimed by the Klan is correct, the paper was certainly a potent influence on public opinion. The Klan used the paper to respond directly to attacks by the *Morning News*, *Dispatch*, DCCL, and other enemies. It also became a propaganda sheet spreading the fears of social decay to anyone who would listen. It seems a lot of people were listening because for a few years the Klan and its newspaper would be remarkably successful at fending off the attacks of its foes.

I

The opposition to the Klan in Dallas began with the newspapers. There were four newspapers with large enough followings that their positions on the Klan were sure to have an impact on the community. The *Dallas Morning News* (and its late edition the *Dallas Journal*), *Dallas Express*, and *Dallas Dispatch* all took strong positions against the Klan. The fourth, the *Dallas Daily Times Herald* took a non-committal position, sometimes critical while at other times treating the Klan as an accepted part of the community. Ultimately, the newspapers played an important role in motivating public opinion against the local version of the Klan.

The *Morning News* was the most influential newspaper and one of the first to come out against the Klan. Two days after the Klan announced its presence by marching down Main Street in an eerie parade, the *Morning News* published an editorial, the first of many barrages, attacking the existence of the organization. Written from a booster point of view, the article suggested that the very presence of the Klan "slandered" Dallas by making it appear to outsiders that the city had serious unresolved problems. This was simply untrue the *Morning News* argued:

This exhibition bore false-witness against Dallas to every one who has heard of it. White supremacy is not imperiled. Vice is not rampant. The constituted agencies of government are still regnant. And if freedom is endangered, it is by the redivivus of the mob spirit in the disguising garb of the Ku Klux Klan.²

If the Klan parade was intended to garner support, it certainly awakened its enemies at the same time. From this point on the popular paper was diligent in publishing almost any Klan activity that came to its attention.

The *Morning News* followed up the editorial with a campaign designed to make it appear the citizenry was on its side in fighting the Klan. This was done principally through the letters to the editor section. In the month after the anti-Klan editorial appeared, the paper published no less than twelve letters to the editor denouncing the growth of the vigilante organization. In the same period there was only one letter defending the Klan. It is doubtful that this was a true representation of the mail received on the issue. Dozens of letters supporting the Klan that are preserved in the Dealey

²*Dallas Morning News*, "Dallas Slandered," 24 May 1921, 14.

Papers suggest that the paper was trying to mould public opinion rather than simply reflect it.³

The lone dissenting letter in the chorus of support for the *Morning News*' editorial position was written by James T. Stacey. Stacey suggested that the laws as implemented were at times ineffective. Thus, a little girl could be assaulted, the assailant captured, and then released the next day on a \$750 bond. It was in these types of cases, where the law fell short, that the Klan could step in and rid the community of undesirables before they could do more harm.⁴ J. B. Cranfill responded most convincingly to this reasoning when he suggested that the answer was to "appeal to the governor to submit such legislation at the forthcoming special session of our legislature as will remedy the defects of which they complain."⁵

As the membership of the Klan rapidly increased in Texas, there came also an increase in violence by masked men (whitecapping), often dressing like or calling themselves klansmen. Throughout the summer months of 1921, the *Morning News* published articles chronicling these events and the reactions to them. Articles such as the one entitled "Waco Man Makes Escape From Party of Five Wearing Masks," and "Edward Engers Given Severe Drubbing by Masked Men" became more frequent.⁶ The *Morning News*, like Cranfill, hoped that government officials would intervene to control

³Various Letters, G. B. Dealey Papers, Dallas Historical Society.

⁴*Morning News*, "Defends Ku Klux Klan," 31 May 1921, 14.

⁵*Ibid.*, "The Ku Klux Klan," 12 June 1921, sec. 3, p. 6.

⁶*Ibid.*, 8 June 1921, 1 and 15 June 1921, 13.

the increasing violence. When the governor made an oblique mention of the Klan, it made the headlines. When the legislature attempted to pass a resolution condemning the Klan, it made page one. When Austin Judge James R. Hamilton began a one-man crusade against the Klan, the paper carefully covered his every move. Recognizing that the old 1860s Klan still garnered significant support, the *Morning News* began printing (generally favorable) histories of the post-Civil War phenomenon that compared the new Klan to the old in an unfavorable light.⁷

To these attacks both the national and local Klan responded by denying responsibility for the violent acts and trying to defend the necessity of the Klan. William Simmons of the national Klan published a full page advertisement in the *Morning News* trying to improve the fraternal organization's image. The ad suggested that there was "a concerted effort to discredit the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the eyes of the public." This nation-wide attempt came about "through public statements in the press, and conduct of lawless citizens and traitors within our ranks" Simmons admitted that some isolated klansmen might have been involved, but he decried the violence and declared that any klansman who engaged in such acts would be automatically banished from the organization. The illegal acts of a few scattered members, he suggested, should not serve to discredit the whole organization.⁸

⁷Ibid., "Governor Refers to Ku Klux Klan," 18 June 1921, 1; "Legislature Not to Molest Klan," 28 July 1921, 1; For examples of Judges Hamilton's anti-Klan activities see, 28 June 1921, 1 and 16 July 1921, 14; for a history of the old Klan see "Original K.K.K. Worked for Order," 3 July 1921, 10.

⁸Ibid., 12 August 1921, 9.

Klan 66 was also anxious to correct its failing image. In a statement sent to the *Morning News* and subsequently published, the local Klan, similar to the national leadership, strongly condemned violence done in its name. Their goals, the statement suggested, were to work through the legislature for improved law enforcement. They supported laws against spousal desertion, black and white intermarriage, and forbidding the reversal of convictions based on technicalities. The statement ended by asserting that the Klan values of Christianity, white supremacy, and a closer relationship between capital and labor were its "cardinal thoughts."⁹

Underlying this public relations campaign was a less benevolent struggle against the *Morning News*. Klansmen, upset by what they perceived as a distorted bias against them, turned to the tool of a boycott. They began to encourage members and even, apparently, non-members where they had influence to cancel their subscriptions to the paper. In addition, Klan pressure caused a barrage of letters to descend upon the *Morning News* demanding to know the religious affiliation of the board of directors and the editorial board. Finally, the Klan conducted a concerted attempt to convince Klan-friendly merchants to stop selling or providing space for the paper.

Anger toward the *Morning News* over what klansmen perceived as biased coverage expressed itself in letters that usually requested the termination of the letter-writer's subscription. W. M. Works of Sherman captured the attitude in a letter to the editor:

⁹Ibid., 30 July 1921, 11.

Instead of printing the news without any embellishment [sic], your editors use the front page rather as an editorial page, instead of reserving this right for the regular editorial page. Every one [sic] knows that the Dallas News is opposed to the Ku Klux Klan, and as a Klansman myself, I say you have a very perfect right to believe this way . . . I believe the Dallas News has been guilty of "headlining" the public with such headlines as "Klansmen Flog another man" . . . [but] the News has purposely left out news articles that might in some way reflect credit on the Klan.¹⁰

Besides relatively articulate criticisms such as this, the *Morning News* also received a large number of letters demanding to know the religious affiliation of various members of the ownership and staff. Most of these letters also asked to have their subscription canceled due to the "Catholic" control over the paper. So many of these letters came in that Dealey's staff wrote a form letter stating the church affiliation of the major stockholders and emphasizing that they were entirely Protestant. Ironically, included in the list of major stockholders was Louis Blaylock, an important Dallas politician and open supporter of the Klan. The Dealeys became very aggressive in answering these letters, firing back rejoinders and frequently asking for proof and specifics showing what they meant by "Catholic" influence.¹¹

In addition to putting pressure on individual subscribers, the Klan also attempted to boycott the *Morning News* by intimidating retailers into refusing to sell the paper. In Greenville, for example, the drugstore operator who rented space to the *Morning News* was pressured to throw the paper out. Dealey responded to such attacks by looking into

¹⁰W. M. Works to W. A. Dealey, 8 July 1924, Dealey Papers.

¹¹For examples of the correspondence that occurred between disgruntled subscribers and officials of the *Morning News* see Jno. S. White to Dallas News, 29 March 1922, W. A. Dealey to E. V. Godley, 3 August, 1922, and W. A. Dealey to George H. Evans, 8 March 1922, Dealey Papers.

his legal options. He asked attorney E. D. Cavin of Galveston to investigate "whether or not such acts were in violation of the laws of the State of Texas and actionable both criminally and civilly." Cavin responded with a short brief that suggested prosecution would be difficult but not impossible.¹² Dealey apparently decided that a legal remedy was not the best solution. Instead he used the paper itself to combat the Klan's efforts. Advertisements were inserted in the paper asking that if anyone had trouble getting the paper at their home or normal place of purchase to please contact the *Morning News* management. The *Morning News* obviously intended to gather evidence of Klan mischief and to warn off clandestine Klan activities directed against the paper.¹³

The most important move made by Dealey was to sensationalize the growth of the Klan, perhaps partly in hope of regaining lost subscriptions. In September, the *Morning News* began running a serialized expose of the Klan that the *New York World* wrote. The sensational articles received front page exposure throughout the month of September 1921 and gave Dallasites their first view of the growth of the Klan as a national organization. Clearly unfavorable toward the Invisible Empire, the coverage described the Klan alternatively as an outlaw organization that spawned violence and anarchy and a highly organized paramilitary group that threatened the hegemony of the U.S. government.¹⁴

¹²G. B. Dealey to E. D. Cavin, 30 June 1922 and E. D. Cavin to G. B. Dealey, 11 July 1922, Dealey Papers.

¹³*Morning News*, 14 August 1921, sec. 4, p.4.

¹⁴The series began on 6 September 1921 and ran sensational front page headlines every day through 25 September 1921. The series eventually won the Pulitzer Prize for

The *Morning News's* coverage of the national Klan began on 6 September with an article "tabulating" the effects of the group. On the negative side of the ledger were a reported sixty-four violations of individual rights by masked mobs. Included in this were twenty-one tar-and-feather parties, twenty-five beaten individuals, and two stripped and beaten white women. Mitigating against this violence, the imperial wizard had revoked or suspended the charters of three local Klans for their parts in the outbreak of violence. The legally constituted authorities also proved weak in opposing Klan violence with only three governors and five city mayors willing to take a public stand against the group. The *World* and the *Morning News* made it clear that no such timidity could be expected from the pages of their newspapers.¹⁵

First, they attacked the Klan because of the violence it had spawned. Articles with such titles as "Terrorism is a K.K.K. Corollary" and "Tar and Feather Parties of K.K.K." detailed the cases of individual violence attributed to the Klan.¹⁶ In addition, the articles attacked the credibility of the Klan and its leadership. They pointed out, for example, that a poem allegedly written by Imperial Wizard Simmons, and included in one of his copyrighted booklets, had actually been plagiarized from Josiah Gilbert Holland. Moreover, they reported that Simmons's rigid oath required klansmen to be obedient to the Klan first and the constituted authorities second.¹⁷

distinguished public service for 1921, see *Morning News*, 22 May 1922, 1.

¹⁵Ibid., "Klan Strong in Many States," 6 September 1921, 1.

¹⁶Ibid., 19 September 1921, 1; and 18 September 1921, 1.

¹⁷Ibid., "Ritual Of Klan Runs to Poetry," 11 September 1921, 3.

The idea of loyalty to the constituted authorities proved to be a key battleground for both opponents and proponents of the Klan. The articles accused the Klan of making up a false oath that was then attributed by Klan kleagles as the initiation oath of the Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus. This falsified oath, wherein Knights of Columbus initiates supposedly renounced their United States citizenship, was apparently devised and used as a tool for recruiting members into the Klan.¹⁸ It was, the *World/Morning News* articles asserted, actually the oath administered by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan that tended to impinge on citizen's duties. When the Klan initiated new members, the story pointed out, they were "naturalized," thus suggesting a change in national loyalties. The words spoken at the ceremony tend to back this interpretation:

Have you assumed without mental reservation your oath of allegiance to the Invisible Empire? Mortal man cannot assume a more binding oath; character and courage alone will enable you to keep it. Always remember that to keep this oath means to you honor, happiness, and life; but to violate it means disgrace, dishonor, and death. May honor, happiness and life be yours.¹⁹

The paper, in effect, was asking if Americans could trust an organization with an oath more binding than U.S. citizenship.

The *Morning News* also hoped to increase its circulation and thus combat the Klan boycott through its sensationalized coverage of the Klan. This fact is evident by the advertisement boxes that ran with every major story. "Ku Klux Klan" appeared in large bold type at the top of the box. "Articles will run for in the *Morning News* for several

¹⁸Ibid., "Ku Klux Kleagle Uses Bogus Oath, 14 September 1921, 1-2.

¹⁹Ibid., "Baptism Ceremony in the Kloran is Here," 12 September 1921, 2.

weeks," the ad continued and then went on to solicit new subscribers.²⁰ The results were apparently favorable, allowing the paper to counteract sufficiently the negative effects of the Klan boycott. It remains unclear just how much circulation the paper lost due to the Klan boycott and how much it regained by the *World* articles, but in letters sent to the Greenville circulation manager, Dealey suggested that the two balanced out each other:

Unquestionably, certain editorials have caused some persons to quit *The News*. On the other hand, however, we know positively that a good many other people subscribe to the *News* and stay with the *News* just because we have the backbone and stamina every time and on every occasion to say just what we believe and what our conscience dictates.²¹

Dealey's clear determination not to cave in to the Klan boycott, no matter what the consequences, meant the *Morning News* would maintain a steady opposition against the Klan that eventually had a profound influence on public opinion.

The *Morning News* was not the only Dallas paper to come down strongly against the Klan. The *Dallas Dispatch* also presented the Klan as a subverter of social stability. The *Dispatch* was just as adamant as the *Morning News* in its opposition to the Klan. It was the *Dispatch* that did yeoman work in keeping track of which public officials aligned themselves with the Klan and which did not.²² In addition, the *Dispatch*, through its

²⁰Ibid.

²¹G. B. Dealey to P. L. Sherrill, 3 March 1922, Dealey Papers.

²²For examples of the *Dispatch*'s attempts to keep track of which officials were klansmen, see the following stories: "Only One City Hall Official Has Answered," 17 April 1922; "Maury Hughes and H. Tanner Send Answers," 18 April 1922; "Mayor Says He Will Answer Questionnaire," 20 April 1922; and "Judge Seay Is Not a Klansman," 22 April 1922, all in K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, E. Paul Jones Collection, Dallas Historical Society.

continuing coverage of stories like the Rothblum beating, helped to pressure a reluctant district attorney into pressing charges against a Dallas police officer. When Maury Hughes, the district attorney in question, decided to abandon the Klan and fight against it instead, the *Dispatch* made it a major story. The *Dispatch* also attempted to unmask the Klan by having its reporters record license plate numbers of klansmen while they were holding their regular Friday night meetings.²³

Like the *Morning News*, the *Dispatch* used editorials, descriptive articles, and policies to make it clear it considered the Klan a "corrupting influence" in Dallas. On 11 April 1922, the paper agreed with the mayor's call for all city employees to leave the Klan or quit their jobs. Then, just over a week later, it published an editorial encouraging the Dallas County Citizen's League to keep up its fight against the Klan.²⁴ One of the clearest indications of the paper's position was the frequent coverage it gave to extreme Klan violence that occurred out of state. When a marshal in Inglewood, California, risked his life to break up a Klan flogging, the *Dispatch* brought the hero to Dallas and awarded him a gold watch fob with an inscription that read "From Citizens of Dallas, Texas, for Valor in the Face of Odds Beyond the Call of Duty."²⁵

The *Dispatch* was also the only paper to perceive the significant parallel between the modern Klan and the Know Nothing party of the nineteenth century. They saw three

²³*Dallas Dispatch*, "Get List of Cars Parked at Fair Pk Ku Klux Meeting," date unclear, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection.

²⁴*Ibid.*, "The Klan in Politics," 17 April 1922; "The Mayor's Cue," 11 April 1922; "Unswerving in Purpose," 18 April 22, all in K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones collection.

²⁵*Ibid.*, "Medal Presented to Marshal Who Resisted Klan," Date Unknown, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection.

essential similarities that were startling. First was the element of secrecy that both groups shared. Of course, it was the very practice of keeping their organization secret that earned the earlier group the title of Know Nothing. That was the response members were reputed to have given when asked what they knew about the party. The modern Klan, like the Know Nothing party, also was very politically active. Finally, the strong anti-immigrant, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic bias that had animated the Know Nothings was reborn with a vengeance in the modern Klan. Surprisingly, the obvious comparison rarely, if ever, came up in the other major Dallas newspapers.²⁶

While the *Dispatch* and the *Morning News* clearly opposed the Klan, the *Dallas Daily Times Herald* tried to take a more objective position. The stories in the *Times Herald* were more matter-of-fact in their style and far fewer in number. Only when Klan sponsored (or allegedly Klan sponsored) violence erupted did the *Times Herald* publish negative articles on the Klan. The *Times Herald's* coverage was driven by a recognition that there were many prominent citizens that were members of the Klan. Thus, editor and publisher E. J. Kiest instructed his staff to "go right down the middle," on the Klan issue.²⁷ The *Times Herald* may also have been influenced by the fact that some of its own employees had ties to the Klan. For example, one of its reporters, Emmett Hambrick, was a member of the Klan's steering committee. More important was Philip E. Fox, the *Times*

²⁶Ibid., "Ku Klux is Parallel of Know-Nothing Party of the 50's," 11 April 1922, K. K. Scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection; some national magazines caught the parallel. See Robert L. Duffas, "Ancestry and End of the Ku Klux Klan," *World's Work* 46 (September 1923): 527-36.

²⁷Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 85.

Herald's managing editor, who resigned his position in 1923 to become the Klan's national public relations director in Atlanta.²⁸

What the *Times Herald's* publisher seemed most concerned about was the rise of factionalism in the Dallas polity. In a series of editorials, the publisher made it clear that, while it would not take sides on the Klan issue, the paper also did not appreciate the rift in the community that had emerged concerning the Klan issue. "All of us are working toward the same end," Kiest wrote, "some of us are employing different methods. We have been one big Dallas clan for many, many years. That clan built a great city. It reared a wonderful citizenship. It developed tolerance for religion and integrity in business." Now to the great chagrin of the *Times Herald*, this longstanding community cohesion was falling apart. To Kiest, the condemnation that the *Morning News* and *Dispatch* engaged in was only hardening the hearts of Klan members and thus widening the split. "To hell with factional strife," Kiest retorted in an emotional ending to his editorial, "I'm for Dallas!"²⁹

While the *Times Herald* tried to take a middle-of-the-road approach to the Klan, one newspaper tended to ignore the Klan, at least on the local level. At first glance, one of the more surprising facets in the newspaper coverage of the Klan came from the local African-American newspaper, the *Dallas Express*. Since the Klan's historical mission involved the repression of black voting rights, and since the new Klan proclaimed white

²⁸Ibid., 77.

²⁹*Dallas Daily Times Herald*, "For Dallas First, Last and All the Time," date unknown, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection.

supremacy as one of its main doctrines, the *Express* was naturally antagonistic toward the new Klan. No doubt it was, but it was also very circumspect in its coverage of Klavern 66. A perusal of the *Express* between the years 1921-1924 found remarkably few articles dealing specifically with the local Dallas Klan. There were a number of articles that hinted at its opposition. For example, the question of what really defined a 100 percent American came up from time to time in articles and editorials. The *Express* frequently dealt with the problems of vigilantism, lynching, and beatings but in a general rather than specific context. There was a scattering of articles that dealt specifically with the resurgent Klan but almost always in a national context or in other localities.³⁰

A couple of possibilities explained this reluctance to speak out against the local Klan. The first, of course, was a well-developed sense of self-preservation. In the South of Jim Crow, frequent lynchings, beatings, tar and featherings, and white dominance, it did not pay to agitate too strongly. But perhaps even more important was a sense that the revived Klan was not a specific threat against African-Americans.

This latter idea was illustrated by an event that occurred in October of 1922. The headline in the *Express*, "Klansmen Visit Negro Church," seemed surprising enough, but the fact that the pastor received the visitors respectfully (against the wishes of some of his flock) and even accepted their contribution suggests that racial animosity was not the primary goal of the Klan.³¹ This is not to suggest that the Klan did not mount attacks on

³⁰For specific examples of the *Express's* position, see *Dallas Express* "Pure Americanism," 1 July 1922, 2; and "Real Citizenship," 21 October 1922, 4.

³¹*Ibid.*, "Klansmen Visit Negro Church" 14 October 1922, 1.

blacks during its resurgence. Nor is it an attempt to obscure the clear white supremacist views of the Klan. Indeed, the Klan was only friendly to blacks who "knew their place." It does suggest, however, that these attacks and conditions had been part of the burden blacks had to bear before the revived Klan and after it faded from sight. There is little evidence to suggest that friction in black - white relations sparked the revival. Given this realization, and because the *Morning News* and *Dispatch* were already vigorously combating Klan 66, along with the dangers fraught in a sustained attack on the Klan, the *Express* wisely decided to keep a low profile until the Klan faded away.

In spite of minimal coverage by the *Express* and the ambiguous position taken by the *Times Herald*, Dallas newspapers played a major role in developing opposition to the Klan. This opposition may be viewed statistically in the *Morning News's* saturation coverage of the Klan. During the years when the revived Klan was a dynamic organization (May 1921 - November 1924), the paper published over 1,000 articles, letters, and editorials about the Klan or Klan-related activities. This means the *Morning News* averaged almost one item per day for three and one-half years. Moreover, the coverage was even heavier during the year and one-half when the Klan was first active (June 1921-1922), with about 600 Klan-related items making their way into the *Morning News*. Many of these articles were short blurbs about attacks by masked men or a letter supporting or condemning the Klan, but a fair number were page one articles analyzing the impact of the Klan on the Dallas community and chronicling efforts to defeat the

Invisible Empire. No other specific topic during the early twenties commanded such an enormous coverage for such a long period.³²

II

While the newspapers staked out their positions on the Klan and fought vigorously to win public opinion, the Klan also evoked a split in the local Dallas political scene. Dallas politics had been dominated, since the introduction of the Commission system in 1907, by a business elite that called themselves the Citizens Association (CA). The CA, through its progressive emphasis on efficiency, reform, and boosterism, had managed to gain the support of the majority of Dallas voters. Despite occasional splits and divisions, each election the CA would put up its slate of candidates and, with a few rare exceptions, would carry the entire ticket.³³

As Klan membership mushroomed in late 1921 and early 1922, it naturally became a force to be considered on the political scene. It seems clear from the results that soon followed that many businessmen who joined the Klan did not believe the CA effectively represented their interests. By 1923, the Klan was powerful enough to take on the CA in the municipal elections. Originally, the Klan, through its control of the Dallas City Democrats had endorsed three of the same candidates as the Citizens Association. When the three overlapping candidates abandoned the CA ticket and supported the City Democrats, the CA angrily pulled its support from its disloyal members and brought new

³²For a good overview of the paper's coverage see *Dallas Morning News*, "Index," roll 3-B, Microfilm, University of North Texas.

³³For a short summary of the Citizen's Association see Payne, *Big D*, 12-19.

candidates in to run against them. Ultimately, the Democratic (and Klan supported) candidates would prevail but not before a new activist anti-Klan organization came into being.³⁴

The new anti-Klan organization, named the Dallas County Citizens League (DCCL), was originally organized after a series of high-profile beatings occurred during March of 1922. The catalyst for the organization's genesis was the acquittal of J. J. Crawford, the police officer accused of beating Philip Rothblum. Rothblum was a Jewish picture framer abducted from his home and severely beaten by a group of klansmen. During his beating he recognized one of his assailants as a Dallas police officer. Nevertheless, Rothblum sold his belongings and, following his assailants' warnings, fled to Little Rock the next day. Public pressure over the beating, stirred up by heavy coverage in area newspapers, caused District Attorney Maury Hughes to indict Crawford and bring back Rothblum to testify. In spite of Rothblum's testimony, the jury found Crawford innocent on the first ballot. A group of citizens enraged by the verdict pledged to organize and put an end to Klan violence and influence.³⁵

Led by such city luminaries as former Texas Governor Oscar Colquitt, former Texas Attorney General Martin Crane, famed businessman Alex Sanger, and prominent attorney and former judge C. M. Smithdeal, the Dallas County Citizens League came into

³⁴Ibid., 90-94.

³⁵Ibid., 80-82; The story can also be followed through the voluminous newspaper accounts. See for example, *Dallas Journal*, "Rothblums to Tell Story to Jury Tuesday," 11 March 1922, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection; *Morning News*, "One Officer Arrested and Two Suspended in Dallas Whipping Case," 24 March 1922, 1.

being in April of 1922. After getting over 400 names on an anti-Klan petition, the DCCL planned a mass meeting for 4 April. The meeting, which was held in the city hall auditorium, attracted a startling 5,000 people. Since the hall only held 2,000, the rest had to wait outside in the rain until the speakers could come out and address them. Apparently, there was some concern over the safety of the anti-klansmen, since a contingent of Texas Rangers conspicuously mingled in the crowd outside. Nevertheless, the papers reported that "it was probably the most enthusiastic mass meeting ever held in Dallas."³⁶

The mass meeting featured a series of denunciations and formal resolutions designed to attack and discredit the Klan. Speakers talked of how the presence of the Klan "shamed this city all over the U.S." and suggested that men who had taken an oath to obey an out of state wizard were not fit for public office. This was a clear recognition of the growing strength and influence of the Klan in the public realm of Dallas. The specific resolution declared that "a public officer, be he legislator, judge, prosecuting attorney, sheriff, constable or policeman, who swears loyalty and fidelity to the Ku Klux Klan or to its head, or to its officers, is unworthy to hold official position" The Klan had members in all the positions listed in the resolution. In tacit recognition of this fact and in an attempt to pry members out of the Invisible Empire, the DCCL suggested that many "good men" had been taken in by the high sounding ideals of the Klan. The time

³⁶*Dallas Dispatch*, "Anti-Klan Body Begins," 5 April 1922, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection; *Morning News*, "Call is Signed by Over 400 People," 2 March 1922, 1 and "5000 Attend Anti-Klan Mass Meeting," 5 March 1922, 1.

for such men to repent and leave the Klan was now, since it was now clear the practice of the Klan fell far short of its ideals.³⁷

The mass meeting also marked the beginning of a permanent and powerful anti-Klan organization whose sole purpose was the destruction of the Invisible Empire. The DCCL set up its headquarters in the St. George Hotel and soon included an executive committee of eleven and an advisory committee of seventy-five. These leaders' addresses were traced through the city directories and then data was compiled on them using the *1920 Manuscript Census*.³⁸ The results make it clear that these were the upper class of Dallas. Similar to the Klan leaders, as Table 3.1 shows, there were no manual workers in the DCCL leadership. Of the DCCL leaders, however, nearly 70 percent worked in high non-manual jobs, compared to just under 40 percent for Klan leaders (see Chapter 2).

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	DCCL LEADERSHIP	GENERAL DCCL
HIGH NON-MANUAL	68.49%	39.27%
MIDDLE NON-MANUAL	23.30%	27.97%
LOW NON-MANUAL	8.21%	23.31%
HIGH MANUAL	0	7.25%
MIDDLE MANUAL	0	2.07%
LOW MANUAL	0	0

Table 3.1

³⁷The text of the speeches and resolutions can be found in the *Dallas Dispatch*, 5 March 1922, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection; *Morning News*, "Resolutions Adopted at Mass Meeting," 5 April 1922, 1.

³⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, *14th Census of the United States, Manuscript Edition of 1920* (Microfilm: University of North Texas).

Besides the difference in job status, DCCL leaders owned their homes outright in a significantly higher percentage. Nearly 60 percent of the DCCL leadership owned their homes free of a mortgage compared to only about 38 percent of Klan leaders. Still, it is important to note that there is not a significant difference in overall home ownership. Seventy-one percent of Klan leaders owned their homes compared to about 73 percent of the DCCL leaders. This suggests that the differences in job status and home ownership are more likely related to the age difference than to class. The eleven years average age difference gives the DCCL leaders a considerable head start in their occupations and in purchasing their homes.

One final difference of note is the number of attorneys present among the DCCL leadership. Nearly 45 percent were lawyers compared to only about 15 percent in the Klan leadership. This suggests that the DCCL leaders were more interested and involved in civic and government leadership, whereas Klan leaders were distinctly more small-business oriented. This perspective is also confirmed by the lack of banks and law firms on the list of Klan businesses. Actually, it does not seem unusual for the political elite to dominate the banking and legal institutions.

VARIABLES	DCCL LEADERSHIP	GENERAL DCCL
AVERAGE AGE	50.17	43.78
HOME: OWNS (FREE)	57.14%	38.28%
OWNS (MORTGAGE)	16.07%	18.74%
RENTS/OTHER	26.78%	42.95%
BIRTHPLACE: TEXAS	38.60%	37.60%
NON-TEXAS	61.39%	62.40%

Table 3.2

As in the Klan, general members of the DCCL were not as well off as their leadership. It is also true that the sample for general DCCL membership is not ideal. The names came from a petition circulated when the organization was first formed. The familiar process of tracing names and addresses through the city directories and the *1920 Manuscript Census* was used. The occupational levels drop considerably although DCCL members maintained a slightly higher status than the Klan membership. On the other hand, Klan members had a slight advantage in overall home ownership with a lead of 61 percent compared to 57 percent. The age differential between the general membership narrows considerably compared with the leadership. While the leadership had about an eleven years difference, the DCCL general membership had only about a six-year lead on klansmen. Part of this can be explained by a large number of men in their twenties and early thirties who signed the petition. Some but not all of these young men were offspring of the DCCL leadership.³⁹

Only two major differences emerge from the comparison between klansmen and DCCL members. One is the large age gap, which explains some of the differences in job status and home ownership. The other is the large number of lawyers among the DCCL leadership, which is a corollary to the absence of Klan-approved law firms and banks. All of this supports the idea that the opposition to the Klan was led by the established civic and urban leadership. These leaders came under attack from an insurgent group of business-oriented citizens who were unhappy with their political influence and concerned with social changes.

³⁹*Morning News*, 22 April 1922, "Call is Signed by Over 400 People," 1.

The DCCL leadership made several aggressive moves to counteract the growing power of the Klan. Perhaps its most aggressive gambit was the attempt to limit Klan involvement in local politics. This was not surprising, given that most of the DCCL leadership were also part of the Dallas elite leadership and had long supported the Citizens Association. They developed a questionnaire for candidates that asked a series of questions designed to ascertain whether the candidate was a member of the Klan, Klan friendly, or opposed to the Klan. These questionnaires were then mailed to all candidates for public office. Newspapers such as the *Dispatch* kept a running tally of the responses received. For the most part, candidates who were Klan friendly or members simply ignored the questionnaires and the many barbs they received because of their failure to respond.⁴⁰ A few candidates such as Earle B. Mayfield, who was running for the U.S. Senate, responded publicly. Mayfield (who was a klansman) suggested that he would not fill out the questionnaire because he believed it was a politically motivated attempt to divide the people of Texas over a minor question.⁴¹ For the most part, the questionnaires combined with newspaper coverage appear to have been successful in exposing who the Klan friendly candidates were. Whether this actually hurt or helped the candidates on election day is another question.

⁴⁰Text of the questionnaire can be found in *Morning News*, "Questionnaire on Klan is Sent Out," 13 April 1922, 13; Running tallys of the various responses to the questionnaire can be found in *Dallas Dispatch*, "For Law and Order," 29 April 1922, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection.

⁴¹*Morning News*, "Mayfield Calls Ku Klux Issue 'Trap'," 16 April 1922, 2.

The DCCL also responded to the Klan through an informational campaign that attempted to illuminate Klan ideals and beliefs. One hope was that individual klansmen had been attracted to the Klan for specific reasons (such as picking up business from their fellow members) while not really realizing all the various ideas that the Klan stood for. Another hope was, of course, to appeal to those who were undecided by exposing beliefs that would be unacceptable to potential members. Moreover, the DCCL hoped to use the campaign to present Klan views and then counteract them with their own arguments.

The DCCL had, of course, two of the three major press organs on their side, but decided that these were not enough to present its side of the issue. It therefore wrote and published a pamphlet in June of 1922, entitled *The Case Against the Ku Klux Klan*. The pamphlet suggested that the oath required of klansmen was not compatible with the Texas constitution. To emphasize this fact, the pamphlet began with the Texas Bill of Rights. It then reproduced the portion of the Klan oath that dealt with obedience:

I _____, in the presence of God and man, pledge, promise and swear unconditionally that I will faithfully obey the constitution and laws, and will willingly conform to all regulations, usages and requirements of the Ku Klux Klan . . . and will render at all times loyal and steadfast support to the imperial authority of same

The fealty required in taking this oath, the DCCL maintained, was at odds with the Texas Bill of Rights and the individual's ability to "be the citizen of a free and independent state." The attempt to drive a wedge between klansmen and Texas was a well-devised plan. This was because it was true that the national Klan was not careful to show

deference to state and local control. Rather, the Klan emphasized the individual's fealty to the United States (including the U.S. constitution) while ignoring local political units.⁴²

In addition, the DCCL attempted to suggest that the Klan was unable to live up even to its positive ideals. The pamphlet cited situations where women were forced to strip in front of men thus suggesting that the Klan's treatment of women was dishonorable. This went against the express intent of "protecting pure womanhood." Klan propaganda also came under attack. By asserting and citing examples showing that Klan newspapers and other published material were not entirely honest in some of their statements, the pamphlet was able to imply that klansmen were, by and large, a dishonest lot. This, of course, contradicted the high moral standards the Klan claimed to enforce. The pamphlet also tried to discredit the practice of klanishness or boycotting. A standard procedure of the Klan was to encourage its members to use only other "Klan" businesses. Since membership in the Klan was kept secret, this amounted to a secret guerrilla war against any business not included. The practice was roundly attacked as "unfair, unmanly, unamerican."⁴³

The worst aspect of the Klan, according to the DCCL, was its propensity toward lawlessness and violence. The pamphlet listed several violations to prove its point but centered its criticism on an event that took place in Inglewood, California. Apparently

⁴²Dallas County Citizens League, *The Case Against the Ku Klux Klan* (Dallas: The Venney Company, June 1922).

⁴³Ibid.

the Los Angeles Klan was attempting to stop a bootlegging operation when its members raided the house of a recent immigrant family in Inglewood. Unfortunately for the klansmen, just as they were attempting to force their way into the home, a police officer arrived on the scene and ordered them to stop. The klansmen opened fire on the officer, wounding him in the process. He returned fire, killing one and wounding two others. Most of the men then fled in their masks making it hard to know who the local district attorney should go after. To facilitate the investigation, the district attorney raided the headquarters of the Los Angeles Klan and confiscated its books. The DCCL pointed out that the klansman killed and one of those injured were police officers who had honored their Klan oaths to the detriment of their public safety obligations. The Inglewood incident was one in a series of high profile Klan incidents that helped undermine the legitimacy of the fraternal organization. The fact that the DCCL had to go outside Dallas to cite such an example does indicate, however, that the local Klan was able to avoid such dramatic and damning blunders.⁴⁴

A second part of the informational campaign against the Klan included sending speakers to local communities in the Dallas area to warn against the dangers of the Invisible Empire. These efforts, however, ran into stiff opposition, especially from the businessmen in the areas affected. The DCCL scheduled public meetings in a number of Dallas suburbs, including Mesquite, Richardson, Seagoville, Carrollton, Garland, and

⁴⁴Ibid.; see also *Dallas Dispatch*, "Stirring Story of Unmasking of Klansmen in California Raid," date unknown, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection.

Lancaster. When local residents became aware of the upcoming events, they often protested against the meetings, suggesting that they would only stir up trouble and controversy.⁴⁵ The situation in Lancaster was the best example of how the DCCL's attempts to organize opposition to the Klan were stifled.

The DCCL sent a speaker to Lancaster in the middle of May 1922 to gather support for its cause. Prior to the speaker's arrival, citizens of Lancaster had sent a request to the DCCL to cancel the speech in order to maintain "peace and order." Nevertheless, the speaker came and apparently had to endure considerable heckling. The DCCL promptly scheduled another speaking event in Lancaster for the following week. This time, before the second speaker could come, a group of Lancaster citizens reacted by holding a "mass meeting" (with almost 300 attendees) on 18 May, designed to make a formal protest. The group circulated a petition that was signed by "practically every business firm in Lancaster and many the citizens." This petition asked the DCCL to refrain from sending any more speakers to Lancaster and condemned the *Dispatch* for a story that, according to the petitioners, misrepresented the treatment received by the earlier DCCL speaker.⁴⁶

The *Morning News*, covering the events in Lancaster closely, was not impressed with the actions of the Lancaster citizens. In an editorial published on 22 May, the paper

⁴⁵*Morning News*, "Give Schedule of Anti-Klan Meets," 18 May 1922, 9.

⁴⁶*Texas 100 Per Cent American*, "The 'Cits' Insult Lancaster Citizenship," 26 May 1922, 1-4; *Morning News*, "League Asked to Abandon Meetings," 13 May 1922, 18; and "Give Schedule of Anti-Klan Meets," 18 May 1922, 9.

condemned the situation. Since some petitioners had declared that they were not klansmen and not particularly enamored of the group, and yet opposed the anti-Klan meeting to keep the peace, the *Morning News* suggested that intimidation was at work. The Klan had "imposed a censorship in Lancaster and set up a kind of terrorism in the community to enforce it." This proved that the Klan, contrary to its avowals of 100 percent Americanism, actually stood against one of the key principles of the country:

For if there is anything more significant to the spirit of Americanism than another, it is the custom of resorting to the hustling to debate such matters as may be of public concern. That ancient and democratic custom . . . is evidently obnoxious to the Ku Klux Klan of Lancaster; so obnoxious, apparently, as to provoke it into threatening with personal enmity or violence all who may not defer to its pleasure.⁴⁷

Ultimately, the DCCL succumbed to the pressure and canceled its second meeting in Lancaster. This, of course, only encouraged the opposition and similar "mass meetings" took place in Richardson, Garland, and other targeted communities.⁴⁸

Like the Klan, the DCCL tried its hand at less overt tactics. It tried, for example, to keep the Klan from using Fair Park as its primary meeting place. Crane sent a letter directly to Mayor Aldredge asking him to kick out the Klan.⁴⁹ The most interesting action taken was to employ a spy who attended meetings and sent back reports outlining what was said and decisions made. His reports throw a little light on the happenings at a Klan

⁴⁷*Morning News*, "Klan Censorship at Lancaster," 22 May 1922, sect. 2, p. 2.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "And Yet There was No Riot," 23 May 1922, sec. 2, p. 2.

⁴⁹M. M. Crane to Mayor Sawnie Aldredge, 6 April 1922, 3N104, Crane Papers, The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

meeting and include some important names, including Hiram Evans, A. C. Parker, and Louis Turley. The spy, one Frank Dobbs, originally came from Atlanta where he joined the Invisible Empire. Apparently he came to disagree with the Klan's purposes and decided to become a spy. How the DCCL came across him and whether it paid him for his services is not clear.⁵⁰

What is clear is that the Klan caught him at his subterfuge before he handed in very many reports. Klan 66 took him prisoner sent him to Oklahoma City, then to Kansas City, and finally back to Atlanta, where he was released and went into hiding. How he was treated and why he was shipped around so much is not known, but Crane, who clearly feared for Dobb's personal safety, hired a team of private detectives to find the missing man.⁵¹ The capture of the DCCL spy turned out to be a boon for the Klan, which then wrote a front page article on it in its newspaper. The spy gave the Klan a "complete confession," the *Texas American* bragged. It showed that the political elite were afraid of the Klan and how far they would go to defeat the Klavern.

The old political-hierarchy which has trotted so serenely down the years, arm in arm with Big Papatism and hand-in-hand with predatory interests is now seeing the day of its nemesis and is "rolled" up as never before.⁵²

Overall, the attempt at covert tactics was a failure. The mayor refused to kick the Klan out of Fair Park and the spy situation turned into a debacle.

⁵⁰Report of Meeting for 19 May 1922 and 22 May 1922, 3N105, Crane Papers.

⁵¹See M. M. Crane to Mrs. H. L. Dobbs (unmailed), 14 June 1922; Crane to Harold Hirsch, 28 June 1922; and H. Chalmers to Crane, 27 July 1922, 3N105, Crane Papers.

⁵²*Texas American*, "Dirty Anti-Klan Spy Caught in Dallas Hall," 9 June 1922, 1.

Still, the DCCL put together a strong case against the Klan in a short period of time. The public relations campaign waged by the DCCL and supported by most of the traditional Dallas political leadership played an important role in organizing those citizens opposed to the Ku Klux Klan. The mass meetings, the public speaking opportunities, the pamphlet writing, and other activities served to give Klan opponents an active outlet for their obvious dislike of the organization. And, as it turned out, there were plenty of opponents. While the mass meeting in April brought in about 5,000 supporters, one newspaper estimated that, by the Fall of 1922, membership in the DCCL was closer to the 10,000 mark. The *Morning News* (and probably the *Dispatch* as well) aided the DCCL's membership drive by publishing clip-out membership applications. Nevertheless, it was clear that the DCCL had tapped into a large source of discontent.⁵³

III

The Klan responded to these attacks in the best way that they knew how. There was a concerted letter writing campaign at critical newspapers like the *Morning News*, accompanied by boycotts. But these efforts were largely ineffective. The Klan needed some method of directly counteracting the potential effects of poor publicity, so it decided to confront its newspaper antagonists directly by starting its own newspaper. The Klan newspaper *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*, edited by J. W. Hutt and Archie Goodwin, was the Klavern's attempt to present its own view of the social and political scene in Dallas. Frequently sarcastic in tone, sometimes dishonest in its presentation, always

⁵³*Dallas Dispatch*, "Enroll 10,000 in League to Oppose Klan," 12 June 1922, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection; *Morning News*, 24 April 1922, 2.

controversial in its positions, the *Texas American* fought back against the barrage of negative publicity by aggressively attacking its perceived enemies.

Begun in winter 1922, the *Texas American* was a weekly newspaper that continued its run as an organ for the local Klavern until the end of 1924. The first issue of the paper came out on 4 February 1922, costing five cents per copy on newsstands and fifty cents for a year's subscription. Whether the paper ever was able to pay its own costs is unclear, but it is known that the Klan gave substantial subsidies at the beginning. The newspaper focused a good bit of its time attacking Catholicism, including long-running series on the evils of "Romanism" and sponsoring lectures by supposed ex-nuns who purported to expose the diabolical doings inside Roman Catholic convents. Much of the newspaper's content, however, involved direct responses to attacks and situations within the jurisdiction of its sponsoring Klavern.⁵⁴ Indeed, it was almost certainly the unfavorable newspaper coverage that was the catalyst for creating the *Texas American*. The headline on the issue of 31 March was typical of the defensive tone of the early editions. Responding to attacks on the Klan invoked by the Rothblum beating case, the *Texas American* blared: PUBLIC OPINION FAVORABLE TO KLAN; ATTACK PROVES BIG BOOMERANG. The articles that followed, first carefully disavowed any knowledge of Klan involvement in the beatings, perfunctorily condemning them as well, and then turned to a critique on the mainstream press coverage:

Does it suffice to publish column after column telling us that Tom, Dick, and Harry have been taken out and given a coat of sticky fluid and possibly the

⁵⁴Most copies of the *Texas American* are preserved on microfilm at Fondren Library, Southern Methodist University.

lash? Not a single line has been printed telling the interested public, whom the energetic officials serve, the "Why" of the whippings.⁵⁵

To the Klan, the articles condemning it in the public press missed the crucial issues completely. If it could center the public's attention on why the floggings had taken place, if the public could only understand the kind of immorality that had preceded these attacks, then surely they would agree that the beatings were the lesser of two evils.

The *Texas American* never proved more valuable as a defensive propaganda tool than during the formation of the DCCL. The paper, anticipating the mass meeting that firmly established the anti-Klan League, suggested some topics that might be addressed at the meeting. The beatings, this article suggested, were the result of "outraged fathers and mothers . . . resenting the use of their beloved flesh and blood as toys and novelties . . . and too heartbroken and desperate to drag their daughters into courts . . . have stepped out boldly and taken the matter into their own hands." Therefore, discovering ways to curb the lawlessness that spawned such violence should be the top priority of the meeting.⁵⁶

After the meeting was over and it became clear that the purpose of the DCCL was to destroy the Klan, the paper voiced its displeasure with a front page headline declaring that the meeting was "a big fizzle." It ridiculed the DCCL by calling it the cccc clan (after Colquitt, Crane, Cranfill, and Cochran, four of the DCCL's prominent leaders) and suggesting that its leadership was in love with Catholics, Jews, and Negroes. It attacked the logic of the DCCL, which said that klansmen stood for mob rule instead of relying on

⁵⁵*Texas American*, "The Public Asks Why the Whippings," 31 March 1922, 1.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, "Mass Meeting is Proposed Soon," 4.

the constituted authorities, and then organized an extra-constitutional organization of its own to deal with Klan violence. Finally, it tried to rectify the impression given at the DCCL meeting that the Klan was a lawless organization by printing a list of principles that emphasized that klansmen were not to "violate any moral or civil law, either openly or otherwise."⁵⁷

Frequently the *Texas American* appealed to emotion by using extreme sarcasm and name calling to convince its readers of its righteousness. Thus, it could assail the DCCL's questionnaire by advising that those running for public office to "THROW THE DIRTY FISH-SMELLING questionnaire in the trash barrel, or send it back unsigned to the agents of Big Papa." The *Texas American* then presented its own questionnaire, which suggested that there was a need to weed out public officials whose allegiance was to the Catholic Church. Naturally, the newspapers that opposed the Klan also came in for constant verbal harassment. The *Dispatch* became the "disgrace" and the *Morning News* became the "nigger daily," as the *Texas American* labored to counteract the continuous anti-Klan bombardment lobbed at it by the mainstream press.⁵⁸

Just how successful the *Texas American* was at counteracting the mainstream press is unclear, but at times the Klan paper claimed a circulation of 18,000 copies per weekly issue. It is difficult to take such reports at face value since it was in the Klan's interest to exaggerate, but, if accurate, this total suggests that the paper at least had a wide

⁵⁷Ibid., various articles, 7 April 1922, 1-4.

⁵⁸Ibid., "Citizens Political League Got its Head in a Noose," 21 April 1922, 1; "Questionnaire," 7 April 1922, 3.

readership in the Dallas metropolitan area. What the *Texas American* did provide was a place for Klan sympathizers and true believers to marshal their arguments against their opponents. It allowed them both a forum to express their views and ideas and a place to find solace and comfort for the daily attacks they read in the other Dallas papers.

On the surface it appeared as if the *Texas American* and the Klan were badly outnumbered and overmatched. The *Morning News*, *Journal*, and *Dispatch* lambasted the Invisible Empire daily. The DCCL was growing by the thousands and was sending out speakers and tens of thousands of their pamphlets to the populace of Dallas and vicinity. The old established leadership of Dallas had spoken, and the Klan was not approved. As public opinion against the Klan seemed to grow, the courts became more hostile to the group as well. The Klan's feeble attempts at boycotts, letter-writing, and even the formation of a newspaper did not appear as if it could combat the massive forces arrayed against it. Nevertheless, the Klan was not so easily defeated. It had found a niche in the population of Dallas who were concerned with the cultural changes facing the nation and perceived that some of these problems existed in Dallas. It was probably no coincidence that many of these people were not part of the Dallas establishment (although a few were). Klansmen were determined to fight against the pernicious influence of the immigrant and the spirit of lawlessness and immorality that came with him, even if it meant vigilante action to do so. It would take time before the anti-Klan elements would gain the upper hand.

CHAPTER 4

THE KLAN GOES ABOUT ITS BUSINESS

The *Dallas Morning News* fervently believed that its constant negative coverage combined with the efforts of other newspapers and the Dallas County Citizens League was weakening the support base for the Klan.¹ Their optimism, however, was a bit premature. Instead of fading, Klan 66 was gaining strength throughout the early parts of the newspaper barrage and the League's efforts. In fact, the newspaper publicity may have inadvertently enhanced the membership of the Klan. This irony points out the depth of the schism developing in Dallas. The unparalleled growth of the city in the previous two generations undoubtedly had something to do with this schism. Many newcomers found an established political hierarchy that was reluctant to share power with the interlopers. These newcomers looked for an alternative way to have their voices heard. For some the Klan became that voice.

But the Klan was not originally founded on the premise of providing political amelioratives, but rather cultural and social solutions. A retrospective view allows the modern reader to realize that the cultural fears generated by the influx of the less easily assimilated southeastern European immigrants were overblown. But this should not blind one to the powerful impact these fears had on 1920s America. America was looking for

¹For an example of the *Dallas Morning News*' optimism, see the editorial "Regulation of Invisible Government," 24 April 1922, 8.

solutions to many problems, with prohibition enforcement at the top of the list. The explosion of bootleg alcohol that occurred after the imposition of prohibition created a crime wave that was despicable to those opposed to drinking.

The Klan led the effort to curb this lawlessness, using techniques that ranged from peer pressure, to vigilantism, to entering the political fray. Yet, the Klan of the 1920s did not limit its definition of lawlessness to bootlegging. The organization was also concerned with the growing tendency toward moral decay. Sexual promiscuity was part of the problem perceived by the Klan, and it was not averse to using corporal punishment on those whose behavior was offensive. Race relations also had a moral component and cases of miscegenation particularly outraged the Klan. Ultimately, the Klan found a unifying thread for all these societal problems by blaming the Catholic immigrant. It was, it believed, the cultural and religious differences of the newer immigrant, primarily Catholic in orientation, that were the cause of these maladies.

If Catholicism was the cause, a Protestant revival was the answer. The Klan thus believed that another Great Awakening was necessary if the country was to be saved from moral rot. To this end the Klan, especially through the pages of the *Texas 100 Per Cent American*, sought to be the catalyst in a religious revival. The paper consistently published articles on various Protestant doctrines, always encouraging Christians to awaken from their slumber. It also sought to maintain the primacy of the Bible in the life of Christians and urged public schools to make scripture reading a regular part of their curriculum.

Until such a revival could be effected, Klan 66 engaged in vigilante activity to achieve its ends. This included a reported sixty-three floggings of individuals who had transgressed the behavior norms of the Invisible Empire. Although violence was officially forbidden, the Klan believed the legal system, particularly the judiciary, was broken, thus allowing criminals to walk the streets. In their declarations of innocence, klansmen made it clear they thought violence against "immoral" people was the lesser of two evils. Moreover, they used their significant influence in the police department and sheriff's office to stymie investigations into the whippings. Klan violence eventually abated but only after serious harm had been done to both the individuals involved and the Klan's reputation.

The Klan tried to improve its reputation and stabilize its membership through numerous social and charitable activities. The social activities were designed to create a cohesive Klan community through mutual experiences. They included carnivals, barbecues, dances, ice cream socials, and the famed Klan day at the state fair. The Klan worked to increase its membership by sponsoring auxiliary organizations that included women, children, and even foreign-born citizens. There were also attempts to benefit Klan businesses through the practice of klanishness, or patronizing only those businesses run by klansmen. Included in this was the formation of a local insurance company that catered exclusively to klansmen. The company did so well that the national Klan took it over and expanded its operations.

The charitable functions of Klan 66 were quite impressive. They helped the Dallas Welfare Council in a general way by sponsoring athletic events and giving the

proceeds to the Council. An orphanage sponsored by the Council became the pet project of the Klavern and klansmen eventually raised \$85,000 for its support. The Klan frequently helped individuals, especially widows of klansmen, by sending cash and food donations. The most unusual charity involved donations to friendly churches. Klansmen would interrupt services in full regalia, hand a check to the pastor, and then leave just as they had come. These charitable operations no doubt served a practical public relations function, but required sacrifice and dedication nonetheless.

I

Crime is a continuing part of any society and yet difficult to measure. It was no doubt even more difficult for the public to assess without the aid of modern scientific measuring techniques. In any case, the public rarely waits for such assessments to make its own determinations about crime.² If the effects of prohibition are removed from the equation, crime does not seem to have been making significant headway in 1920s Dallas. But, of course, prohibition cannot be removed from the equation and the simple truth was that Dallas, like many western cities, had sizable numbers in its population enamored of the distilled spirits.

The result was that Dallas, like many other parts of the country during prohibition, underwent a crime wave as bootleggers began to take advantage of the new market opening to them. In Dallas the market was rather large, for the coming of prohibition had put over two hundred saloons out of business. Prohibition era sheriffs had their hands

²For some anecdotal views on lawlessness in Texas, see Edward T. Devine, "The Klan in Texas," *The Survey* 48 (April 1922): 10-11.

full trying to cope with the natural increase in illegal liquor. Sheriff Dan Harston, as Darwin Payne relates, "arrested in one sixteen-month period more than 250 men and confiscated 150 stills."³ It is no wonder Dallasites perceived a growing crime wave in the early 1920s.

Klansmen and those like-minded on the issue did not see prohibition as the problem. Instead, they saw drinking as the inherently immoral vice. Indeed, for J. W. Hutt, the editor of the *Texas American*, the fight against drinking was a kind of metaphor for the Klan itself. Before prohibition, he suggested in an article on the subject, drinking was legal but immoral. Individuals and temperance societies who recognized the immorality of alcohol worked to limit its usage. Eventually their efforts paid off in that the law came to reflect their views of morality. The Klan was doing something very similar; enforcing moral laws (including prohibition) that whether legal or illegal simply were the right ways to behave.⁴

One method used in the continuing moral battle was an attempt to convince bootleggers to give up their lucrative trade through the use of shame. The *Texas American* published a "Questionnaire for Farmers," which raises serious doubts about the "rural mindset" interpretation of the Klan. "Do you believe it right to make "hooch" out of your corn?," the questionnaire asked. It then went several steps farther by suggesting that farmers who even grew corn that might later be made into hooch were encouraging

³Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 59-60.

⁴*Texas American*, "Put None But Pure Americans on Guard," 5 May 1922, 1.

others to violate the law. Playing on any guilt created, the document asked for the names of neighbors involved in making bootleg liquor. The questionnaire finished by stating that "upon your answers to this, you will be classed as a worthy or an unworthy citizen."⁵ Clearly this was a determined attempt to arouse peer pressure against bootleggers. This was also an example of an urban Klan newspaper printing an article suggesting farmers were complicit in the alcohol problem. Thus, the idea of an urban Klan dominated by a rural mindset is obviously too simplistic an explanation for the complex issues and social conditions that spawned the Invisible Empire.

The Klan continued to push the prohibition theme in its campaigns against Jim Ferguson. Ferguson was one of those colorful characters who appear in politics often enough to keep the field interesting. He first came to the governorship of Texas in 1915, but was then impeached in 1917 for accepting bribes. Undeterred by his fall from power, Ferguson ran for U.S. Senator in 1922. Politically shrewd, he liked to adapt the dialect of an uneducated man as a ploy to help enlist the support of Texas farmers. Apparently this was a productive technique, since Ferguson tended to receive a large percentage of the rural vote during his campaigns.⁶ He was also against prohibition, which made him a mortal enemy of the Klan.

In the senate election of 1922, Ferguson and Earle B. Mayfield, the Klan candidate and a defender of prohibition, ended up in a primary run-off. The *Texas*

⁵Ibid., 12 May 1922, 4.

⁶Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984), 88-128.

American published numerous articles attacking Ferguson and praising Mayfield. One issue that always seemed to come up in these articles was the issue of prohibition.⁷

Prohibition was often a focal point of Klan attacks because of its fierce opposition to drinking, but there was also a more indeterminate opposition to "lawlessness." The proliferation of bootlegging aside, there was the feeling of a more general societal breakdown that accompanied the end of the Great War which caused distress among some members of society. Almost every Klan tract, article, or speech that tried to identify the mission or reason for the existence of the secret organization alluded to the rise of lawlessness and the coincident need for a vigilante group to help the constituted authorities enforce the law.⁸ In an article published in the *Texas American*, an anonymous author bragged on the efficacy of Klan efforts. "Look about you and see that where the Klan is strongest the officers of the law have the greatest support and crime has decreased."⁹

Klan 66 did not perceive the "lawlessness" problem to be in the law enforcement agencies. Indeed, the sheriff of Dallas County, Dallas's chief of police, and the Dallas County district attorney were all klansmen by 1923. Rather, the problem lay, as klansmen began to see it, with improper laws and in the courts, particularly in a skewed interpretation of the rights accorded to accused individuals. The result was a constipated

⁷See various articles on both Mayfield and Ferguson in the *Texas American*, 11 August, 1-8; 18 August, 2, 7; and 25 August, 1922, 1, 4, 8.

⁸H. W. Evans, "Our Alien Crime-Plague and its Cure," *The Kourier Magazine* 11 (March 1926): 1-7.

⁹*Texas American*, "Some More About That Terrible Klan," 3 November 1922, 3.

judicial system that was unable to mete out justice in any timely fashion. Men like James Stacey, who had complained to the *Morning News* about an apparent pedophile released on \$750 bond, were drawn to an organization that had the power to mete out speedy justice or at least drive undesirables out of town. D. E. Hirschfield of Waco presented the most lucid description of this problem in a letter to the editor of the *Morning News*:

As a matter of fact, the acts of the clan [sic] have stirred up the people to a realization that there is something the trouble with the proper enforcement of the laws of the country. So many violators . . . escape punishment that it is becoming a by-word that all a lawbreaker has to do now to get out of trouble is to employ the right kind of a lawyer¹⁰

Since it was manifest that it was wrong for lawbreakers to go free, and since there was an abundance of laws, the problem had to lie with the way the law was administered.

Besides the perception that the courts were not doing their job properly, the Klan also disliked judges because the judiciary more than any other branch of government was willing to attack the Klan directly. Undoubtedly judges at all levels perceived the administration of the law to be their proprietary responsibility and did not appreciate interference from a vigilante group like the Klan. Whatever the reason, the Klan found itself fighting one judge after another. Judge William Street, for example, sitting at Beaumont, earned the enmity of the Texas Klan in June 1922, when he urged a jury to remove local Sheriff Tom H. Garner from his duties because of his Klan affiliation. The *Texas American* responded to Street's instructions by printing a front page editorial and cartoon labeling him "Kaiser Bill of Texas."¹¹

¹⁰*Morning News*, "Stirring the Pot," 25 July 1921, 6.

¹¹*Texas American*, 16 June 1922, 1.

Far more damaging than any judge's instructions were the judges who decided to investigate the Klan. While there were several investigations launched by judicial mandate, Travis County Judge James R. Hamilton instigated the most publicized venture. Hamilton gave instructions to at least two separate grand juries to investigate the Klan, making it clear in the process that such organizations should not exist. "The Court is of the opinion, from the lights before it," Judge Hamilton wrote the Grand Jurors, "that . . . the 'Invisible Empire, K.K.K. Inc.' is against the Constitution and statutory laws of this state, 100 per cent un-American, and an insult to the flag of this country." The judge's comments were so strongly worded that even the anti-Klan *Morning News* found his instructions "bordered on the sensational."¹²

Sensational or not, the grand jury took Judge Hamilton at his word and seriously investigated the activities of the Klan. Along the way, the jury sent a letter to the district attorney asking for clarifications on aspects of the law relating to specific acts of the local (Austin) Klan. Ultimately, the grand jury found, as Judge Hamilton hoped and expected, that the Klan was a misguided effort to correct certain problems accumulating in society. In a surprising twist, the grand jury did show considerable sympathy for the Klan's suggestion that there was a problem with lax enforcement of the law. It admitted that the Klan had been successful in driving out certain undesirables from Austin but questioned the long term efficacy of such attempts given the widespread nature of the problem. Austin, the grand jury argued, may have driven out its undesirables only to have had them

¹²*Morning News*, "Grand Jury is Told to Investigate Activities of Ku Klux," 4 October 1921, 1-2.

show up in Dallas or vice versa. Moreover, the grand jury was disturbed by the threat to stable government that vigilantism represented. Its final and major suggestion was to pass laws requiring the public identification of all officers and members who joined the Klan or any other such organization.¹³

These attacks from the constituted authorities only proved the deep influence of Catholicism. For the Klan, Catholicism was a symbol of all that was going wrong with America (see Chapter 7). The lawlessness the Klan was trying to rectify was directly traceable, in its mind, to the influx of foreign Catholic immigrants and the cultural practices they brought with them. Even the judiciary was not immune from this "popish influence." This, in part, explained the attacks by unfriendly judges. Because of these judicial attacks, the Klan viewed some members of the judiciary as enemies of the Invisible Empire. The *Texas American* tried to warn its readers whenever it discovered an anti-Klan judge or grand jury. The Klan paper assured its readers, for example, that the grand jury empaneled in Austin was made up of members of the Knights of Columbus, and thus represented the Pope.¹⁴ In another instant it criticized President Harding for appointing a Catholic, John F. McGee, to the federal bench in Minnesota. Previous presidents, the *Texas American* suggested, had made the mistake of appointing Catholics to the federal judiciary and came to regret their decision. The paper warned that "pursuit of the same policy by Mr. Harding will make popery the paramount issue in

¹³*Morning News*, "Status of Klan Interests Travis County Grand Jury," 11 October, 1921, 2; "Grand Jury Has No Use for Klan," 2 November 1921, 3.

¹⁴*Texas American*, "The 'By Coincidence' in the City of Austin," 7 April 1922, 1.

the coming election."¹⁵ Of course, the enmity between the Klan and the judiciary can be overdrawn. The Klan found fault at times with many different institutions, including the legislature and governor. Moreover, it also had supporters among the judiciary, one of whom, Felix Robertson, would run as the Klan candidate for governor in 1924. But the judiciary did seem to draw a considerable amount of fire from the Klan because of the willingness of judges such as Hamilton to attack the organization directly.

The Klan perceived that the cultural decay and lawlessness it fought against also involved a decadent immorality filtering into society. Both Stanley Cobin and Charles Alexander have described the Klan as a defender of Victorian moral values. Alexander saw this as the primary aspect of the Klan in the Southwest. In Klan 66, fighting immorality ultimately took second place to attacks on Catholicism and local political involvement. But this does not mean members of the Klavern were unconcerned about immorality. When klansmen took citizens off to the Trinity River bottoms for a whipping, they often cited sexual immorality by the victims as their excuse.¹⁶

The Klan feared and hated one type of sexual behavior above all others: miscegenation. Generally, issues of sexual immorality were not important enough to rate space in the *Texas American*. Mixing race with sex, however, was a potent enough combination to bring the topic regularly into the Klan newspaper. Predictably, the newspaper tied the problem of miscegenation to Catholicism. In an article entitled "Black Priests of Rome," the *Texas American* warned that the Catholic church was heavily

¹⁵Ibid., "Another Papist on the Federal Bench," 20 April 1923, 5.

¹⁶*Dallas Daily Times Herald*, 2 April 1921, as cited in Payne, *Big D*, 74.

recruiting blacks to become priests. It only cited one instance, a training school in Mississippi, to back up its claim. Numbers, however, were unimportant because even one black priest meant white women confessing their deepest sins to these black men. "My God, what a crop of miscegenation in sin will come from this thing if America does not rise in its might and put a stop to this devil-designed movement!," the paper exclaimed.¹⁷

Klansmen viewed race relations in general as a moral issue because they perceived a Godly instituted hierarchy of the races. They clearly believed in the so-called Hamitic view of the black race. In this supposedly biblical viewpoint, blacks were the descendants of Ham, one of the grandsons of Noah. In the scriptural account, Ham and his progeny were cursed to be servants of all. Thus, African Americans' "place" was as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Anyone who tried to subvert that order was breaking a moral code.¹⁸ Violence, anarchy, and death were the sure results if society failed to maintain a clear hierarchical relationship.

For this reason, W. E. B. Dubois and his message of racial equality were anathema to the Klan. The *Texas American* published a letter written by Dubois wherein he asserted that "The white race is not superior to the black race. There are some white men who are superior in some things to some black men and there are some black men who are superior in some things to some white men"¹⁹ It was just this type of

¹⁷*Texas American*, "Black Priests of Rome," 23 June 1922, 1, 4.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, "The Real Black Menace," 5 January 1923, 1.

"incitement" that encouraged crime by blacks against whites, according to the Klan. In an accompanying article condemning Dubois the *American* wrote:

As long as any white man or black or mixed African can feed the fires of passion by touting the negro up and teaching him he is the equal of the white in any sense, so long will outrages grow . . . and so long will the crimes for which the black brutes are burned increase. . . . But we should be able as the superior race to silence such black menaces . . . by legislation placing the Afro-American in his place and seeing that he is kept there.²⁰

Thus, the Klan saw the "black menace" as one in which "uppity" blacks stirred up their lesser brothers in such a way that they encouraged brutish behavior. This reasoning both justified white supremacy and attempted to put the blame for beatings and lynchings back on the heads of black community leaders.

For the Klan, the root of many societal problems, social dislocation, and general lawlessness could be traced to a growing lack of religious fervency. It recognized that the war was a catalyst for some of the changing conditions. E. C. Bramlett, a Klan thinker and frequent contributor to the *Texas American*, warned against the lax morality in the postwar world. It was common, according to Bramlett, for a general societal breakdown to occur after a war, but that did not make it right. Bramlett, however, was optimistic that things were improving. He believed that "a star of hope is seen through the rift in the clouds. The honest and religious people are being aroused to the conditions in the country and they [are] 'contending for the faith as it was once for all delivered' by Jesus Christ" ²¹ Thus, the answer to the pressing problems of society was a religious

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., "Reformation --- the Task of Christian Americans," 12 January 1923, 1.

revival reenergizing Protestant Christians and restoring the social order that had prevailed before the corrupting influences of the Great War.

To this extent, the *Texas American* certainly did its part to spark such a revival. Almost every issue of the paper included an article or articles on "true" christianity. These articles covered a surprisingly broad spectrum of Christian doctrine, including articles on prophecy, the correct day of worship, and the fall of man, among others.²² The teachings were generally ecumenical within the Protestant community and tied into the Klan worldview so that they backed up their perspective. In particular the articles emphasized differences between Protestant and Catholic doctrines. Moreover, the settlers of the country, the paper declared, were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, informed by the Bible who therefore formed a Christian nation.²³

To this end, the Klan paper also championed the use of the Bible in the public schools. In an article entitled "Shall the Bible be Read Without Comment in Our Public Schools?" the paper traced the history of the use of scripture in public schools and gave it much credit for what the country had become: "It is the religion of a people which moulds their thoughts, creates their ideals, controls their institutions, their government and their national customs; shapes their national life and activities." Why then, the Klan asked, was the Bible not being read in some public schools? Even at that early date there was some question of the constitutionality this practice, so the article went through a

²²On prophecy see *Texas American*, "Our Flag in Prophecy," 9 February 1923, 3; on the fall of man see "The Fall of Man," 23 March 1923, 2; on the Sabbath see "Gentile Churches Adopted 'Sunday' in Honor of Resurrection," 18 January 1924, 1.

²³*Ibid.*, "Who Founded Republic; Catholics or Masons?," 11 August 1922, 7.

litany of federal and state cases. It emphasized those that favored its positions and decried those that disallowed Bible reading. In the end, the article, not surprisingly, came to the conclusion that it was constitutional (and indeed necessary) to read the Bible without comment. Only the evil forces of secularism and romanism were fighting to keep the Bible out and, to the degree that they succeeded, the country's morals would suffer as a result.²⁴

The Klan believed the United States was in a period of cultural and moral decay. For a variety of reasons the citizens of the country had become lax in upholding the traditions and values that the Klan perceived had built the nation. Now these traditions and values were under severe attack from without as the new waves of immigrants poured into the country with different views, traditions, and values. The very life of the country was at stake and the Klan was the warning messenger sent to wake the citizens out of their slumber.

II

The Klan's view that lawlessness and cultural decay had to be stopped at all costs led it to the conclusion that vigilantism was a necessary part of the cure. Action advocacy, including violence, was a justified means when the end was social and cultural stability. The Klan never openly admitted to any violence and indeed, always made a point of decrying violence as a long-term solution. Nevertheless, Klan denials about specific instances of violence were so carefully worded as to give the impression of

²⁴Ibid., 16 March 1923, 1.

acceptance. Moreover, even the top Klan leadership was implicated in at least some acts of violence. As the Klan became more politicized and thus more sensitive to public criticism, these same leaders attempted to quash Klan violence. To some degree they were successful, but once the pattern had been set klansmen inclined to engage in violent vigilantism were difficult to control.²⁵

Sometimes klansmen gave warnings to individuals to cease a particular behavior or leave town before they took any vigilante action. When that failed, or when they perceived the behavior to be too offensive, klansmen turned to direct violence. Often, the first attempt at intimidation was through a written warning. Since often the victims quietly heeded these warnings, and they never became public knowledge, it is impossible to know just how much of this activity occurred.²⁶ Some Klan warnings did, however, make it into the public record. In March 1922, a story ran in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* telling of an unidentified woman who was warned by telephone to leave town or face a possible beating. The story did not reveal why the callers wanted her to leave town but did mention that the police put her under special protection. Just how effective police protection was, given the number of Dallas officers in the Klan, is unclear.²⁷

²⁵U.S. Congress, Senate, *Senator From Texas Hearings, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 68th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1924), 116.

²⁶*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, "Assault and Death Threat Told Police by Wife of Victim," 25 March 1922, 1; *Morning News*, "Text of Mass Meeting Call," 2 April 1922, 1.

²⁷*Star-Telegram*, "Woman Ordered to Leave City Under Pain of Thrashing," 23 March 1922, 1.

It was the actual beatings that received the headlines rather than mere warnings. On 1 April 1921, klansmen abducted a black hotel elevator operator named Alex Johnson and took him to an unknown location where they beat him and burned the letters KKK into his forehead with acid. Apparently, the Klan believed that Johnson was involved in illicit relations with a white woman or women. This was perhaps the worst crime a black man could commit in the litany of Klan racial do's and don'ts. Since the klansmen went to great lengths to make sure that a *Times Herald* newspaper reporter was present, they obviously intended that Johnson's beating and disfigurement be a stern warning to others of his race.²⁸ The event received considerable coverage in the paper the next day. This particular incident has received much attention from Klan investigators over the years because of the apparent involvement of eventual national Klan leader Hiram Wesley Evans.²⁹

The violence came to a head in the spring of 1922, when a series of beatings awakened the community to the seriousness of the situation. The high profile beatings began sometime in early March when a tailor named W. J. Gilbert was beaten near Oak Cliff and told to leave town, which he did.³⁰ A few days later, a masked group beat Jewish picture frame maker Philip Rothblum (see Chapter 3) in an incident that

²⁸Ibid., "Bellhop Accused of Insult to Women," 2 April 1921, 1; Payne, *Big D*, 73-74.

²⁹*Senator From Texas Hearings*, 116.

³⁰*Star-Telegram*, "Assault and Death Threat Told Police by Wife of Victim," 25 March 1922, 1.

ultimately led to the trial and acquittal of Dallas police officer J. J. Crawford.³¹ Two weeks later the owner of a Dallas lumberyard named Frank Etheridge found himself under attack from an unmasked mob. The mob took him out to a wooded area, tied him to a "torture tree," and flogged him. The local papers gave considerable play to these beatings, particularly after Rothblum reported that one of his assailants had told him, "You're not so bad off. Sixty-three other men have been whipped in the last few months."³²

The *Morning News* decided to investigate the claim and came up with a site where it believed the beatings had taken place. The location was in a small grove of trees near the New Zion Colored Baptist Church, about six miles south of Dallas and about a half mile south of the bridge across the Trinity. Not only was this spot identified by Etheridge as the location of his "torture tree," but his description also matched closely those given by Gilbert and Rothblum. Also, several African Americans who lived in the area gave corroborating testimony. Church members suggested that they had, from time to time, heard shouts from the grove, while one family that lived closest to the grove was too afraid even to talk about it. "When dark comes I take my family in the house and shut the doors and my husband and my children and I don't go out very often. . . . Although we

³¹*Morning News*, "One Officer Arrested and Two Suspended in Dallas Whipping Case," 24 March 1922, 1; "Former Policeman is Acquitted of Assault in Flogging Case," 1 April 1922, 1; *Star-Telegram*, "Order to Quit City Obeyed by Victim; Goes to Little Rock," 1.

³²*Morning News*, "Possibly Many Floggings South of Dallas in Last Few Months," 28 March 1922, 2; *Star-Telegram*, "Home of Mob Victim Guarded While Police Comb Dallas for Gang," 21 March 1922, 1.

hear a lot . . . we don't pay any attention to them I'm not going to tell anything because I don't know anything to tell." It was the common location that linked the beatings and caused the papers and public to assume the Klan was behind the outbreak of violence.³³

Whether this was the actual spot of the whippings, and whether there were actually sixty-three instances, the cases stirred up a considerable amount of controversy in Dallas. District Attorney Maury Hughes, a charter member of Klan 66, became disgusted by the violence and quit the Invisible Empire. He determined to fight the Klan and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the beatings. The problem, however, was that the detective in charge of the investigation was not getting much cooperation. Police Captain Moffet told the *Morning News* that "every imaginable obstacle is being thrown in the way of investigators." In the end the only arrest was of officer Crawford, and no convictions were obtained.³⁴

The *Morning News* responded to the possibility that police officers were involved in these beatings by publishing an editorial on the topic. Regardless of the outcome of the Crawford trial, if the community were to have its faith restored in law enforcement, "they must sever any connection they may have with the Ku Klux Klan."³⁵ Mayor Aldredge, who until this time had been careful not to offend the Klan, now suggested that the Klan

³³*Morning News*, "Possibly Many Floggings South of Dallas in Last Few Months," 28 March 1922, 2.

³⁴*Morning News*, "Many Combating Whipping Inquiry," 29 March 1922, 2.

³⁵*Ibid.*, "Police Forces on Trial," 29 March 1922, 10.

should disband "for the good of Dallas." He took his suggestion a step farther by calling on any city employee who was a member of the Klan to resign from the Invisible Empire. To the opponents of the Klan, he suggested that they "be charitable enough to state that if the Ku Klux Klan in Dallas will disband, or if the members of will resign, that those men will not be branded as unworthy men, or as men who have violated the law; but as men who have made a mistake" ³⁶ The beatings also were the catalyst for the birth of the aforementioned Dallas County Citizen's League.

The public response to the beatings clearly put Klan 66 on the defensive. Nevertheless, it fought back with vigor. In early April, the Klavern issued a press release that the *Morning News* published on 10 April. The press release began on a note of defiance by pointing out that the Klan had just initiated 2,342 new members into its ranks. It then struck a conciliatory stance by emphasizing the common ground shared by Mayor Aldredge and the Klan, that both wanted a peaceful Dallas. The document endorsed the local police organizations and suggested that the Klan might be part of the reason for the recent decline in crime.

Next, the press release dealt with the more controversial aspects of the organization, suggesting that attacks by the local newspapers were to blame for its falling reputation. One natural result of these "dishonest" attacks was the tendency to blame the Klan for the unresolved beatings. Klansmen therefore declared their innocence and announced a permanent \$1,500 reward for the arrest of the real villains. Moreover,

³⁶Ibid., "Mayor Urges That Klan Disband and That City Employees Renounce it," 7 April 1922, 1.

because Klan rituals had come under attack in the public press, the release invited a "nonpartisan committee" to be made up of specifically named members of the Dallas community (including Jews, Catholics, and members of the local anti-Klan newspapers) to visit a Klan meeting and evaluate the Klan ritual. A good faith example of the true intentions of the Klan, the press release suggested, could be seen in the recent \$40,000 donation made to help build Hope Cottage for the care of orphaned children.

Finally, the Klan made concessions to the community in areas where it accrued the most suspicion. While it was impossible under the current laws of the incorporated Klan to reveal publicly the names of the membership, Klan 66, the release intimated, was not unalterably opposed to such a revelation and agreed to work toward "securing such a change" as would allow full disclosure. In addition, the organization agreed to stop holding parades with klansmen marching in the full regalia of the Klan. Nevertheless, it did reserve the right to march unmasked. This was a remarkable document that showed a high level of confidence, apparently inspired by the Klan's growing numbers, and yet a willingness to make some concessions to appear reasonable.³⁷

The public and strenuous reaction to the "riverbottom beatings" apparently succeeded in convincing members of the Klan to curtail their vigilante activities. Officially, the national leadership never sanctioned these activities. It is also true that as Klan leaders became interested in pursuing political goals, public relations priorities convinced them to tone down vigilante violence. Still, congressional testimony clearly indicated that Klan 66 leadership, Hiram Evans in particular, was involved in some of

³⁷Ibid., "Statement by Klan," 10 April 1922, 3.

these affairs. At any rate, the beatings stopped suddenly after the adverse news coverage of early 1922. The *Morning News* editorialized that:

The suspiciously sudden cessation of floggings in Texas may or may not mean anything. But the suspicions weigh, for whatever they may be worth, on the side of accomplishment for the campaign which has brought irresponsible klansmen under the influence of caution, if not of respect for law and constituted forms of liberty.³⁸

In spite of these sensationalized beatings, however, Klan 66 managed to avoid the extreme violence, such as lynchings, that occurred in other parts of Texas and the U.S. One reason for this was the Dallas Klan's growing awareness of public opinion due to their increasing political ambitions.

III

While the vigilante activities grabbed the headlines, the Klan also sponsored a dizzying array of activities to increase its membership base and create a unified internal culture. It must not be forgotten that the Klan, as envisioned by its modern founder, William Simmons, was an eleemosynary, fraternal organization. In many instances, it evolved into something quite different but always, at least in Klan 66, there was a continuous backdrop of social activities designed to make klansmen and their families feel they were a part of something larger and nobler than themselves.

Not unlike other fraternal organizations, the center of a klansman's active life was the weekly Friday night meetings at the local hall. At first these meetings took place at the smaller Davis Hall or Blaylock Hall, but as Klan 66 grew, they moved over to Fair

³⁸Ibid., "Judgement Divided," 24 May 1922, Sect. 2, pg. 2.

Park, sometimes at the Coliseum and sometimes at the livestock arena. The agenda controlled the location. At times there would be urgent issues to discuss, especially if some community crisis or important election loomed. Other times there were initiations to conduct or some type of entertainment scheduled. By late 1922, the Klan used the *Texas American* to announce each upcoming meeting and give any pertinent information. These announcements typically were written in the military-sounding klanspeak that was popular on official documents. The word NOTICE in large type and all capital letters appeared at the top, and then an announcement followed, such as the one on 1 April 1923:

To the Members of Dallas Klan No. 66:

You are hereby summoned to appear at the Coliseum, Fair Grounds, Friday, April 6th. It is imperative that all Klansmen be present at 7:30 sharp. Matters of importance to Klansmen will be discussed.³⁹

The more zealous members of the Klan considered these meetings extremely important, so there was a constant emphasis on attending the Friday night gatherings.

The Klan also endeavored to sponsor events that would allow families or at least wives to attend. Typically, this was a barbecue or picnic or sometimes a concert or even a dance. Such was the case in June of 1923, when a large advertisement appeared in the *Texas American* proclaiming a "Dance for Klansmen and Their Ladies." The event was to include a full orchestra and cost seventy-five cents per couple.⁴⁰ Also typical was the "Klan Parade and Barbecue" held on the Dealey farm in Oak Cliff. The event began with a massive parade of klansmen and women which then dissolved into a barbecue social

³⁹*Texas American*, 1 April 1923, 4.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 8 June 1923, 2.

that included music and speech-making. The exalted cyclops, A. C. Parker, gave the keynote speech wherein he ridiculed the idea that the Klan was dying. The 20,000 who showed up for the event evidenced the fact that the Klan did not appear to be in danger.⁴¹

Sometimes the Klan sponsored events more elaborate than a barbecue or dance. In March 1924, for example, Klan 66 sponsored a "Kollosoal Karnival and Indoor Circus" to raise enough money to build itself a new building. Typically, the Klan used the committee system to handle the details of large events such as this. Its goal was to "build the biggest Klan Klavern for the biggest Klan, out of funds that have been made from the biggest Klan Karnival that was ever held." Along the way it hoped to add members to the Klavern as well. When it finally came, the Karnival, held at Gardner Park Auditorium, lasted from 15 March through 22 March and included vaudeville acts such as "Mysterious McDan, the Clever Manipulator of Magic," as well as musical groups, comedy routines, and "Many Other Features too Numerous to Mention." The Karnival also included dancing and "Industrial Displays by the Leading Merchants of Dallas," and cost ten cents admission.⁴²

By far the most talked about and publicized social event sponsored by Klan 66 during its existence was Klan Day at the Texas State Fair on 24 October 1923. The idea was floated out to klansmen at the beginning of August in the *Texas American*. By the middle of the month, the date was officially arranged, and George K. Butcher took charge of coordinating the event. Preliminary plans called for the largest parade of klansmen and

⁴¹Ibid., "Klan Parade and Barbecue," 20 June 1924, 1.

⁴²Ibid., "Old King Klan 66 to Hold Karnival," 25 January 1924, 1; 14 March 1924, 8.

women anywhere and speeches by a series of well-known individuals, including Hiram Evans, now imperial wizard for the nation.⁴³ When the day arrived, it proved to be a rousing success as klansmen came from around the Southwest. The official tally was around 150,000 attendees (klansmen, families, and friends), but the *Texas American* estimated the total between 250,000 and 300,000. Regardless of the actual figures, the event saw the initiation of almost 10,000 new members (including women), a speech by Imperial Wizard Evans on the dangers of immigration, and the presentation of the completed Hope Cottage to the city of Dallas.⁴⁴

The increasing role of women in Klan activities was the result of a complex set of circumstances. From the time the revived Klan began to expand, women had shown a significant amount of interest in joining the Invisible Empire. At first the Klan would not let women join, either as members or as an officially sanctioned auxiliary group. Eventually, it took a split in the national Klan leadership before a women's auxiliary was finally formed (see Chapter 6). Dallas women responded with alacrity to the opportunity to join the ranks of the Invisible Empire. Former Imperial Wizard William Simmons formed the first women's auxiliary, called the Knights Kamelia, as part of his effort to regain control over the Klan. When it became clear that Simmons organized the Kamelia against the wishes of Imperial Wizard Evans, Dallas klanswomen changed the name of

⁴³Ibid., "Texans for Big Demonstration," 3 August 1923, 1; "Klan Day at the State Fair of Texas, Oct. 24," 17 August 1923, 1.

⁴⁴Ibid., "Record Breaking Crowd at State Fair," 26 October 1923, 1; "Breaking the Fair Record," 2 November 1923, 1; Nancy Wiley, *The Great State Fair of Texas: An Illustrated History* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1985), 91; There is a more complete description of Klan Day at the Fair in Darwin Payne, *Big D*, 93-5.

their group to the Order of American Women.⁴⁵ Finally, in August 1923, the national Klan began sanctioning an official Klan auxiliary called Women of the Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁶

Although the Women of the Ku Klux Klan left considerably less record of their existence than did the men's group, some of their activities are documented. These women were active in helping the men's Klan organize many of the socials, especially picnics and barbecues. They also organized a few events of their own, particularly fundraisers.⁴⁷ They formed a band that played as a regular part of Klan events and must have been a featured attraction because it is frequently mentioned in advertisements. The women occasionally scheduled parades for themselves without the men, including one in Garland in August 1923, and one in Fort Worth that claimed to have involved 5,000 klanswomen.⁴⁸ The large number of women who attended such events, along with the prominence in the national organization of Dallas klanswomen such as A. B. Cloud, suggests the Dallas auxiliary was quite popular, although the actual membership figures are not known.

⁴⁵For an explanation of the confusing circumstances surrounding the formation of the women's auxiliary compare *Texas American*, "Proclamation Creating Kamelia," 30 March 1923, 3; with "The Women of the Ku Klux Klan, 23 May 1923, 3; and "Women, Where Do You Stand?," 6 July 1923, 2.

⁴⁶*Texas American*, "The Women of the Ku Klux Klan," 3 August 1923, 3.

⁴⁷For examples of Women's Klan activities see *Texas American*, "Women of the K.K.K.," 30 November 1923, 3; and "The Awakening," 5 September 1923, 3.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "Garland Sees Women Parade," 17 August 1923, 4; "The American Women Parade at Fort Worth," 15 June 1923, 1.

The Dallas chapter of the women's Klan was a leader in both the state and even at the national level. In May 1924, the chapter was host to a statewide "klorero" designed to solidify the organization. The convention included over three hundred delegates representing two hundred local women's Klaverns in Texas. A. B. Cloud, Realm Commander of Texas and the leader of the Dallas chapter, was the official hostess. The conference drew a number of imperial officers from around the country, including Robbie Gill, Imperial Commander for the national organization, as well as state officials from Michigan, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Louisiana.⁴⁹

By July 1924, the Dallas chapter was flourishing enough that it bought its own meeting hall. The building, located on North Harwood street, was home to the "largest Women's Klavern in America," the *Texas American* boasted.⁵⁰ The Dallas women's Klavern also had enough financial backing to become involved in charity operations. Following in the footsteps of the men, the women decided to set up a home for orphaned children. In February 1924, they purchased for \$25,000 the Powell University Training School adjoining the Southern Methodist University campus. The women remodeled the building to house orphans and took in sixteen children in October. In December Klanhaven, as they called the new facility, was dedicated in an elaborate ceremony that brought both the imperial wizard (men) and the imperial commander (women) to Dallas.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., "Women of the Ku Klux Klan Hold Great Convention," 9 May 1924, 1.

⁵⁰Ibid., "Dallas W. of K.K.K.," 18 July 1924, 2.

⁵¹On the evolution of Klanhaven see the *Texas American*, "Women of the Klan Purchase Home," 29 February 1924, 1; and "Leave it to the Women," 24 October 1924, 3.

The Klan also attempted to expand its base by creating a Junior Ku Klux Klan. The reason for the formation of the Junior Klan, the *Texas American* suggested, was because the adult membership was reaching a saturation point. Therefore a new recruiting ground needed to be found. "If the Klan is to carry on the great work that has been set out for it to accomplish it must have its recruiting ground from those who have not yet attained their majority," the Klan paper wrote. The Junior Order also acted as a "training place where Klansmen can earn their spurs before they are admitted to full membership" ⁵² In this area the Dallas Klan seems to have been a bit behind the rest of the state. The state Junior Klan was operational by May of 1924, but the Dallas version was not up and running until August. The Junior Klan was limited to boys ages twelve to eighteen, with the major activities involving parades, initiation ceremonies, and "instructive talks." ⁵³

Klan 66 even made a weak attempt to expand its social network outside its regular recruiting grounds. Normally, foreign born citizens could not join the Klan. In September of 1923, however, there appeared an advertisement in the *Texas American* recruiting for members of a new Klan auxiliary called the Royal Riders of the Red Robe. These auxiliary members had to be like-minded with klansmen and undoubtedly of the correct race and religion. They were to be considered, the advertisement averred, "real Klansmen in every way Except Name and Birth." A few foreigners must have been

⁵²Ibid., "Junior Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," 9 May 1924, 1.

⁵³Ibid., "The Junior K.K.K. Now Being Formed," 13 June 1924, 1; Junior Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 5 September 1924, 1.

accepted because the Klan list taken from license plates at Fair Park (see Chapter 2) does include three men who were born in Canada or Great Britain. But apparently, this attempt to gain adherents outside the normal pool of recruits had limited success as there was no other mention of the Royal Riders of the Red Robe in any local Klan literature.⁵⁴

One manifest purpose of the Klan social network was the propagation of business opportunities. Many klansmen seem to have joined to increase their business through this network. This usually took the form of word-of-mouth or circulars with names of Klan businessmen or an advertisement in the *Texas American*. Occasionally, however, there was an attempt to exploit the network in a more formal manner. Such was the case with the Empire Mutual Insurance Company, founded by exalted cyclops and later great titan and grand dragon, Zeke Marvin. In late 1923, Marvin, with his managing agent W. M. Laidlaw, began advertising in the Klan paper for customers to buy insurance from him.⁵⁵ The scheme was to sell insurance only to klansmen thus, it was, in effect, a mutual benefit society for the Klan. Marvin and Laidlaw also used the *Texas American* to advertise for agents. The cut-out coupon suggested that if the reader were not personally interested, he could cut it out anyway and mail in the names of men whom he might "suggest" as agents.⁵⁶

By the middle of 1924, Empire Mutual's composition had changed considerably. The company was now under the control of the national Klan and headquartered in

⁵⁴Ibid., 28 September 1923, 2.

⁵⁵Ibid., 2 November 1923, 5; "Empire Mutual in Good Shape," 14 March 1924, 4.

⁵⁶Ibid., 20 June 1924, 2; and 15 August 1924, 7.

Kansas City. It was licensed to sell insurance in Texas, Kansas, and Missouri with five agents listed for Texas. The company officers and board of directors had eighteen members and included powerful national Klan leaders like Paul Etheridge, who was general counsel for the Invisible Empire.⁵⁷ Since selling insurance was an original goal of William Simmons when he founded the revived Klan, it is no surprise that the practice continued. What is unusual is that it took a local Klan leader's initiative before the national organization realized the lucrative possibilities. The probable explanation for this is the inconsistent nature of the early national leadership and the political emphasis once the leadership stabilized.

The Klan also used its social network to do good deeds in the community. Again it was Zeke Marvin, who led the way by encouraging klansmen to become involved in charitable activities. In an early issue of the *Texas American*, an article appeared chronicling Marvin's attempt to raise money for the Welfare Council of Dallas. The article described the ten separate organizations financed by the Welfare Council and their functions. Marvin's plans called for a "monster athletic event" to raise money for the agency.⁵⁸

Much of the charity efforts of klansmen were on an individual basis, as reported occasionally in the *Texas American*. Sometimes the Klan would give to a group such as the Welfare Council mentioned above or a church. But more frequently it meant helping

⁵⁷Ibid., 4 July 1924, 2.

⁵⁸Ibid., "Chairman Z. E. Marvin Stresses Urgent Need of Charity Now," 9 March 1922, 1.

a widow or family in distress. Sometimes it was something as simple as having a gallon of milk delivered or as large as donating \$1,000 to a recent widow.⁵⁹ Of course, the charity efforts were self-serving since they appeared in the Klan paper. Besides the publicity, these self-enhancing testimonials also showed that the Klan looked after its own. In other words, most of those who received the largesse of the Klan were in some way, either through a deceased husband or another designation, connected to the Klan.

An exception to the individual charity efforts was the practice of supporting churches that agreed with their viewpoints. This usually involved a dramatic and very public presentation of funds to a pastor or church. Typically, upwards of a dozen robed and covered klansmen would burst into church services unannounced, interrupting the proceedings, and march ceremoniously up to the pulpit. Once there, they would present the pastor with an envelope containing a sum of cash and suggest that the donation came because of the good works being done by the pastor or the church. Sometimes a klansmen would say a few words, or perhaps a letter would be given with the donation, to be read by the pastor, while the klansmen remained silent. After the transaction was complete, the group would withdraw from the church allowing the services to resume.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Ibid., 31 March 1922, 3.

⁶⁰This practice of public charity at churches was so widespread that it was almost certainly practiced by Klan 66. Yet, perhaps to their credit, they did not publicize their own charity visits. They were not reticent, however, about publicizing other Klavern's efforts in this regard. For examples, see *Texas American*, "Ku Klux Klan visits San Marcos Church," 2 February 1923, 4; and "Ku Klux Klan Visits Both Edgewood Churches," 9 March 1922, 4.

The apparent purpose behind these dramatic church displays was to encourage the pastor and church in their general direction. This meant that the pastors (and probably most of the church members) agreed with Klan perspectives. In one case, publicized in the pages of the *Texas American*, the Klan gave recognition to a church pastor who was moving on to take up duties in a different location. "In appreciation of your service as a pastor and a citizen in our community, we hand you herewith the small sum of \$65.00 to assist you in moving to your new field of labor," the Klan letter stated.⁶¹ This was the Klan's way of giving positive reinforcement to those that supported their way of life. It also must be supposed, however, that the Klan used these dramatic little episodes to publicize its cause in front of an audience that it believed to be relatively friendly.

The most ambitious charity undertaking was the Klan's adoption of Hope Cottage, which was introduced to klansmen in the same issue of the *Texas American* that Marvin suggested working for the Dallas Welfare Council. In an article entitled "And Above All Things Have Fervent Charity," Mrs. V. J. Jackson described the operation. Hope Cottage was a small, old, two-story brown house with a leaky roof. It was located on the North side of town amongst a group of similar cottages "in a neighborhood of factories and railroad tracks." Funded by the Dallas Welfare Council, Hope Cottage acted as a temporary home and adoption agency for abandoned children. According to the article, five hundred and seven children had been taken in to date.⁶²

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 9 March 1922, 1-2.

The Klan's plan was to transform Hope Cottage from a small, struggling, operation in a weatherbeaten house, into a professional undertaking in a modern building where abandoned babies could come and live in relative comfort. The *Texas American* waxed poetic in its description of the change:

As the sun is slowly sinking behind the hill . . . the old Hope Cottage, with its many memories of a hard struggle against prejudice for openly caring for the unfortunate little ones born out of wedlock, and the bitter sting of poverty . . . fades into yesterday, and the new Hope Cottage rises on another hill top, sheltered by the friendly arms of many sturdy (sic) oak trees.⁶³

For the next year or so, almost every edition of the *Texas American* contained a short update on the status of Hope Cottage, usually including some heartwrenching story of an abandoned waif who, thanks to the generosity of the Klan, had a place to call home.

Sometimes having Hope Cottage as an example to hold up turned out to be an excellent public relations bonanza. Such was the case in early April 1922, when the Klan was under immense public pressure because of the beatings that were getting so much play in the newspapers. As part of its campaign to combat this negative publicity, the Klan announced the donation of \$40,000 to Hope Cottage.⁶⁴ Ultimately, the Klan put an approximate total of \$85,000 into the orphanage before they turned it over to the city during the festivities at Klan Day at the State Fair. As was fitting, Zeke Marvin gave the official speech turning over the Cottage. He, along with the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, were the driving force behind the charity efforts of the Klan.⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., "Hope Cottage," 7 April 1922, 4.

⁶⁴*Morning News*, 10 April 1922, 3.

⁶⁵*Texas American*, "\$85,000 Hope Cottage Presented to City," 26 October 1923, 1.

The wide-ranging activities of the Klan suggest that the Invisible Empire had at least three faces that it presented, depending on who was looking. To those considered its enemies -- bootleggers, other "lawless" elements, Jews, Catholics, African Americans who believed in social equality, or anyone that threatened their view of a stable society -- the Klan presented an intimidating visage. This included the use of parades, threats, warnings, kidnappings, beatings, and mutilation to intimidate people into obeying its edicts and pronouncements. These activities were accomplished with the sympathy, indeed, perhaps even the assistance of, the local police authorities.

To the general public, the Klan attempted to present a more accommodating and friendly image. It officially denied any involvement in illegal vigilante activity while carefully arguing that the activity produced positive results. Nevertheless, the Klan offered substantial sums (perhaps it knew it would never have to pay them) for the conviction of whomever was responsible for the wave of floggings that took place in the spring of 1922. Klansmen explained that their organization was in favor of assisting, in legal ways, the constituted authorities. As evidence of their benign nature, they pointed to the large number of members who were joining the Klan. In addition, they suggested that the \$40,000 donation to Hope Cottage was evidence of their social value and benevolence.

To the members of the official Klan family, it offered still a third face. The Klan was the organization that would maintain Anglo-Saxon values and hegemony against the onslaught of the immigrants and the lawlessness and false cultural assumptions they brought. Of course, one way it did this was through intimidation and vigilantism. In

addition, the Klan attempted to build a cocoon of activity around its members. Once a person joined the Klan, there were enough scheduled activities and events to keep him as busy as he wanted to be. Theoretically, if a klansman read the Klan newspaper, went to all scheduled events, and kept up with all Klan programs, he or she would hear sermons, go to numerous social activities, be steered in the right direction as to how to vote and where to shop, be given an outlet for their charitable impulses, have special opportunities scheduled for their family members, and possibly even take part in a vigilante action. No doubt there were few klansmen and women who took advantage of every activity, but it was not for a lack opportunity.

The 1920s Klan involved itself in a complex mixture of activities and actions. The violence and bigotry it sponsored was the ugly side and one of the reasons for the growing opposition. Still, a fair appraisal must include the charitable side as well. In between were the barbecues, picnics, and dances. For those opposed to the Klan, the charity was not enough to overcome the Klan's negative elements. But another reason for the opposition existed: political rivalry. The Dallas Klavern was a pioneer in the Klan's involvement in politics.

CHAPTER 5

THE KLAN ENTERS POLITICS

Ultimately and perhaps predictably, the Klan influence in the lives of its members began to include politics. Although, one of the original, explicit goals of the Klan was to stay out of politics, an organization so ubiquitous in the lives of its members could hardly avoid having something to say about how they should vote.¹ Klan 66's involvement in politics, like its involvement in the lives of its members, became pervasive for a few years. It became so pervasive that the organization developed by the Klavern closely resembled a political machine. The Klavern set up its own campaign headquarters, organized committees, engaged in fundraising, created Klan sample ballots, and urged its members to get out and vote. The results were astonishing, especially to those who were fighting against the Invisible Empire, as the Klan candidates swept into almost every local political office in 1922 and 1923, leaving the old Dallas political hierarchy in ruins.

The Klan ultimately was not satisfied with local victories. It was also very much interested in its impact at the state and national levels. The opportunity to send a Klan senator to Washington, or perhaps put a klansman in the governor's mansion, encouraged Klan 66's participation in state and national politics. The one prospect that might have

¹They repeated this claim selectively and when it seemed to be to their advantage to be an apolitical organization. See, for example, *Texas 100 Per Cent American*, "Announcement," 12 September 1924, 1.

dampened such an opportunity was division in the ranks, to which the Klan was susceptible. To overcome this problem, Klan 66, under the leadership of Zeke Marvin, the acting great titan for the province, organized a series of Klan primaries or eliminations to decide whom the Klan membership should support. Although they provoked quite a bit of bitterness from the losers, these eliminations did have the effect of unifying the Klan vote on a single candidate and contributed significantly to the election of the first Klan Senator, Earle B. Mayfield, in 1922.

By the time the Klan was ready to make a concerted effort for the governor's mansion, the lessons on unity had been partially learned. The nomination of Felix D. Robertson, the somewhat unknown Dallas judge, although not without controversy, eventually came through the Klan process of elimination. Robertson, a faithful klansman, received the backing of the Dallas Klan in his election bid. He led in the primary but was nevertheless forced into a run-off election with Miriam ("Ma") Ferguson. In spite of the best efforts of the Klan, including continuous and bitter attacks by the *Texas American*, Ma Ferguson overwhelmed Robertson in the run-off (although Dallas County strongly supported Robertson), so the Klan attempt to take control of the governorship was over. The loss of the governor's race was to be both a symptom and a cause of declining Klan power.

I

The Klan assault on the local Dallas political scene began in earnest in 1922. Although the Dallas Klavern existed in the Fall of 1921, it was not yet organized well

enough to conduct a successful political campaign. Such was not the case in 1922. By July, Klan 66 had close to 6,000 members and was adding several hundred more every month, heading for a claimed total around 13,000.² Moreover, it had begun to increase its initiation fees and dues to collect additional funds for local use. For example, it raised the initiation fees from the normal ten to fifteen dollars. Dallas 66 kept the difference between the two.³ One result of this accumulation of income was the ability to subsidize the publication of the *Texas 100 Per Cent American*.⁴ Although the Klan sold its newspaper by subscription as well as on the streets of Dallas, and although it claimed a circulation of 18,000 weekly, its existence was dependent on the financial assistance of the Klan.⁵ In later years, when the Klan became too small to support the paper, it ceased to exist.

With the money and members rolling in and its newspaper spreading propaganda, Dallas 66 was ready to begin its foray into politics. It began its organization with an executive committee of ten, who represented the top leadership of Klan 66 and oversaw

²The *Texas American* claimed that Dallas County had upwards of 30,000 members in 1924. See "Mr. V. A. Collins," 18 April 1924, 1; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Senator From Texas, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Privileges and Elections*, 68th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess., 1924, 200-204.

³*Senator From Texas*, 202, 414.

⁴*Ibid.*, 399.

⁵The paper regularly advertised that it had 18,000 subscriptions but in at least one article it claimed to go into 20,500 homes in Dallas County and 50,000 homes in outlying areas. See *Texas American*, 11 August 1922, 7; and "What's the Big Deal," 23 May 1924, 1.

the Klan election campaign.⁶ Under the committee of ten was a steering committee of one hundred, which handled much of the fieldwork. In May 1922, the Klan set up its headquarter's operation, from which it continued to operate until the primary run-offs were concluded, after which it went out of business.⁷

Beginning in June the Klan ran its campaign out of three rooms in the Adolphus Hotel. Organized by R. C. Lowry, a prominent klansman and senior partner at the Lowry and Lowry accounting firm, Klan headquarters was separate from the regular Democratic headquarters. The Klan attempted to keep this shadow organization a secret; thus it changed locations several times before ending up at the Adolphus. Headquarters included a manager, a clerical staff of ten or so, typewriters, special telephone lines, and a mysterious detective who received \$50 a week for unknown services. The office contracted for advertising, printed circulars, and organized mass meetings. In the process, it spent between \$8,000 and \$10,000 during the Democratic primary, all of which came in the form of cash and checks collected from the Ku Klux Klan hall by the office manager.⁸

Those on the steering committee were leaders in their local communities and acted as the equivalent of precinct captains in the Klan shadow organization. Each was expected to raise \$100 or more for the 1922 campaign. More important, each was expected to work in their local precinct to encourage voters to endorse Klan (or Klan

⁶*Senator from Texas*, 461.

⁷*Ibid.*, 455.

⁸*Ibid.*, 452-72.

friendly) candidates. D. C. McCord, vice president (klaliff) of Klan 66, testifying before a congressional subcommittee, explained the role of those on the steering committee:

Mr. McCord. Each committeeman was a precinct chairman, and he was to assemble around him such assistance as he might deem necessary in his precinct, in order to get out all the voters, and to stimulate interest in the election.

The Chairman. Assistants [sic] from what source?

Mr. McCord. The voters in the precinct.

The Chairman. Irrespective of whether they were klansmen or not?

Mr. McCord. No, he did not take any except those that belonged.

Senator King. You said that you were chairman of the precinct?

Mr. McCord. Yes, sir.

Senator King. Was there a Democratic organization in Texas at that time?

Mr. McCord. Yes, sir.

Senator King. And did that organization, ranging from the state chairman to through the county to the precinct, exist?

Mr. McCord. Yes, sir.

Senator King. And was there a Democratic precinct chairman in the precinct in which you lived?

Mr. McCord. Yes, sir.

Senator King. Did you cooperate with him or act independently of him?

Mr. McCord. He cooperated with me.⁹

Since some Democrats opposed the Klan, this cooperation was probably not the same everywhere, but no doubt it occurred often enough to explain the electoral success the Klan experienced in the early 1920s.

Just how detailed and organized the Klan organization became was revealed in further testimony by H. M. Keeling, a paid campaign worker, who joined the Klan specifically for the opportunity of keeping his job. Under Keeling's direction, the committee obtained a copy of the poll tax list and used it to organize the electioneering effort. Workers created index cards of every registered voter and sorted them according to race and gender. Cross-checking the poll tax list with Klavern 66's membership list,

⁹Ibid., 372-82.

Keeling and his staff put a special identifying mark on cards belonging to klansmen. Assumedly they then distributed the cards to the appropriate precinct chairmen for their use in getting out the vote. To avoid confusion about whom klansmen were supposed to vote for, the committee created a sample ballot (listing all the Klan approved candidates) and distributed it widely throughout Dallas.¹⁰

Once it was clear which men would support the Klan, a machine organization was created in each precinct with a chairman, vice chairman, and a secretary. Each of these men recruited assistants and divided the precinct among the various members with the instructions to "beat the bushes -- spread propaganda." In addition, Klan adherents were drafted to help solicit campaign funds. Each member of the team was to contribute one dollar, the net result being roughly several thousand dollars. The Klan also used the organization to determine where it was strong and where it was weak. Part of the job of the Klan campaign headquarters was to call in klansmen and get their assessment of the situation in their local area. Office manager Keeling, in evaluating how well his people did in this regard, suggested that "there are 104 voting precincts in Dallas County, and I would say that we called into headquarters about 80 of those precincts; that is, all the klansmen in those 80 precincts that we could get hold of."¹¹

The campaign did not rely entirely on its ability to organize at the grass roots level. As Keeling mentioned in his testimony, the Klan spent significant amounts of money on advertising in local newspapers. This included anti-Klan newspapers such as

¹⁰Ibid., 452-57.

¹¹Ibid., 464-67.

the *Dallas Dispatch* but was particularly pronounced in the Klan sponsored *Texas American*. The irony of this intense Klan electioneering effort was the Klan's stated position (and one they periodically renewed) that it was not a political organization. Its justification for entering the political field was the bitter opposition of the Dallas County Citizens League (DCCL).¹² Thus, the first "advertising" that appeared in the *Texas American* came in the form of combating DCCL attacks on the Klan. Many of the earliest articles published in the Klan paper were defensive attempts to explain why it were not as evil as the DCCL propaganda portrayed it. In addition, the paper attempted to counteract the most devastating tactic used by the DCCL, the questionnaires sent to political candidates asking for each candidate's position on the Klan. The *Texas American* did so by publishing a questionnaire of its own. The Klan interrogatory quizzed candidates on their nativity, their fealty to the U.S. Constitution, and their relationship to the Catholic Church or any of its affiliated organizations, particularly the Knights of Columbus.¹³

By May 1922, the *Texas American* began running ads for its candidates in the upcoming Democratic primary, scheduled for 22 July. The ads usually took the form of a picture of the candidate with a small statement at the bottom of the picture giving his name and the office for which he was running. In the 26 May issue, for example, ads for Dan Harston (Dallas County sheriff), Murray Fisher (constable), Wiley Bell (county

¹²Ibid., 533.

¹³*Texas American*, "Questionnaire," 7 April 1922, 3.

judge), and Felix D. Robertson (Dallas County criminal district judge) appeared.¹⁴

Sometimes, apparently in particularly close races, the paper ran short articles giving the background and "positive" points about a candidate it wanted to win. Such was the case in the 16 June edition, where Shelby S. Cox, candidate for Dallas County district attorney, received a favorable biographical article. The article quoted Cox as saying, "I have not answered and will not answer any questionnaire. I have not asked and will not ask the permission of the Dallas County Citizen's League to run or hold the office of Criminal District Attorney."¹⁵ In both the 30 June and 7 July issues, the *Texas American* published a long list of candidates endorsed by the Klan. Also in the 30 June edition, a large advertisement ran asking for volunteers to distribute the pre-election issue so that voters would be fully informed as to the correct candidates. The paper planned to distribute 50,000 copies of this edition, in contrast to its normal claimed run of 18,000.¹⁶

The reason Shelby Cox managed to receive such a plum space of advertising in the *Texas American* was because the district attorney's race was the most bitterly contended fight in the local Dallas election. The race featured current district attorney and former klansman, Maury Hughes, against the Klan's Cox. Hughes's decision to quit the Klan and prosecute members for floggings during the spring of 1922 made him the bitterest kind of enemy to the Klan. "THE PLAIN FACTS OF THE BUSINESS IS [sic]," the *Texas American* trumpeted in all capital letters, "WITHOUT ANY FURTHER

¹⁴Ibid., 26 May 1922, 2.

¹⁵Ibid., 16 June 1922, 2.

¹⁶Ibid., 30 June 1922, 8; 7 July 1922, 2.

EQUIVOCATION THAT MAURY HUGHES SOLD OUT TO THE CROWD WHICH HE THOUGHT COULD POLL THE MOST VOTES WITH UTTER DISREGARD TO TRUTH TO HIS OATH OR TO HIS REPUTATION." The article taunted Hughes by calling him a "turncoat" and suggesting that "there was not another man, who declared himself on the floor [of Klan meetings], who was more ardent as a supporter of the principles which he had sworn to have espoused. . . ." It also suggested that Hughes had tried to get back into the Klan after leaving because he felt his leaving was a mistake (Hughes vehemently denied this). The article ended by admitting that "it is a good thing he kicked out."¹⁷

Hughes found himself in a difficult position, having lost the support of the Klan yet suspect to anti-klansmen because of his earlier affiliation. He tried to fight back by challenging Cox to a series of debates around the county. Cox, smelling blood in the water, declined the invitation to debate, saying that "I cannot agree with your assumption that a debate between you and me would be a test of the fitness and qualifications of either of us for the high office of District Attorney."¹⁸ Cox's intuition proved correct as he received a 1649-vote lead over Hughes in the 22 July primary. Unfortunately for Cox, due to a third candidate, he did not receive a majority and was forced into the run-off election scheduled for 26 August. The argument favoring Cox now changed somewhat with the emphasis becoming cooperation. Dan Harston (a klansman) had won the race for sheriff, and Louis Turley (a klansman) had won the race for police and fire commissioner.

¹⁷Ibid., "Maury Hughes Sees Red," 7 July 1922, 1.

¹⁸Ibid., "The Facts About the Debate Defi in Attorneys Race," 11 August 1922, 5.

Someone as opposed to the Klan as Hughes could not be expected to cooperate with these "100 per cent Americans." Thus, the only consistent course was to give the victory to Cox.¹⁹ Dallas voters duly heeded the advice of the Klan newspaper, and Cox defeated Hughes by a 13,767 to 10,173 margin.²⁰

Cox's success at the polls was representative of the Klan's triumph in the 1922 elections. At the county level, Klan (or Klan endorsed) candidates won every race in which they ran. They included six representatives to the Texas House, one to the state Senate, six local or county judgeships, four county commissioners, and an assortment of clerks, constables, and justices of the peace. The most important victories went to Felix D. Robertson (criminal district court), Dan Harston (sheriff), Louis Turley (police and fire commissioner), and Shelby Cox (district attorney). With these victories and those in the county commissioner's office, the Klan now had a firm grip over Dallas County and particularly its law enforcement operations.²¹

The Klan was ecstatic over its victories. All the hard work of organizing the precincts had paid off handsomely in an overwhelming sweep. The euphoria was so strong that it resulted in an impromptu parade through downtown, complete with speech-making. The parade went past the headquarters of the hated *Dallas Morning News* and stopped in front of the more friendly *Dallas Daily Times Herald* building where

¹⁹Ibid., "Christian Gentleman Replies to Mr. Hughes," 18 August 1922, 4.

²⁰*Morning News*, "All Klan Candidates Win in Dallas County Races," 27 August 1922, 1.

²¹Ibid., 23 July 1922, 10.

prominent klansmen gave speeches. A. C. Parker, Zeke Marvin, Felix D. Robertson, Shelby S. Cox, and George K. Butcher all addressed the large crowd. Perhaps the most unusual aspect to this celebration was the lack of masks and robes. Apparently, due to the spontaneous nature of the parade, there were few, if any, klansmen in regalia. The result was that A. C. Parker, the exalted cyclops of Klan 66, had to introduce himself and tell the crowd his position. Throwing caution to the wind, Parker announced that "for the sake of those who do not [know his position], I will tell them. I am the cyclops of the Dallas Klan No. 66." Butcher, also filled with the spirit of temerity, announced to the crowd that "the *Dallas News*, *The Dispatch* and others have been asking for an unmasked parade . . . Well, I have staged one tonight."²²

The *Texas American* exulted over the growing strength of the Klan show. In an editorial the paper declared that "the *News* is intolerant. It believes only in the fair deal for itself. It is selfish and unsympathetic." This lack of sympathy was leading to the paper's demise, the editorial suggested. After the *Morning News* began a subscription drive that offered free automobiles as prizes to those who could sign up the most subscribers, the *Texas American* crowed that "all the automobile bait that could be offered by the *News* can never regain its lost prestige, and it is pretty certain that it can never regain for them its lost subscribers."²³ Indeed, the *Morning News* dampened its criticism of the Klan without fully abandoning it. In an editorial following the elections, the paper looked for some sort of bright spot:

²²Ibid., 23 July 1923, sect. 1, p. 1.

²³*Texas American*, "The Dallas News has Lost," 23 May 1923, 6.

The authorities of the courthouse are now the undivided power of the Ku Klux Klan. That fact centralizes responsibility, and there is some satisfaction to be got out of that by those who can find in philosophy an emolient [sic] for disappointment.²⁴

The paper's criticism now usually took the form of pointing out Klan-related violence in other parts of the state or country. Fewer articles on the local Klan 66 appeared in the paper after the elections of 1922.²⁵

Although the elections of 1922 showed the Klan to be a major power, and certainly gave the Dallas County Citizens League a mortal blow, they did not represent the height of Klan power in Dallas. For those dismayed over the power and influence of the Klan, the Dallas city elections of 1923 represented a further setback. By 1923, the Klan was powerful and confident that it represented a revival of "Americanism" that could not be stopped. Moreover, its political machine was already in place ready to spring into action for the elections held in April 1923.

The Klan did have a formidable opponent in the Citizens Association (not to be confused with the Dallas County Citizens League). The Citizens Association (CA) was a supposedly non-partisan organization dedicated to improving municipal affairs. Formed in 1907, and generally dominated by the city's larger business interests, the CA-endorsed candidates usually won in the municipal elections.²⁶ In the 1923 elections the CA, as

²⁴*Morning News*, "The Message of the Ballot Box," 29 August 1922, sect. 2, p. 12.

²⁵See the Ku Klux Klan entries in the *Dallas Morning News*, "Index," microfilm, roll 3-B, University of North Texas.

²⁶The story of the Citizens Association can be found in Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 12-19.

usual, put forward a slate of candidates that included Louis Blaylock (mayor), Louis Turley (fire and police commissioner), and John C. Harris (finance commissioner), among others. The Dallas city Democrats (now thoroughly dominated by the Klan), put forward their own slate of candidates that also included the three mentioned above. Otherwise, the CA and the Democratic slates were dissimilar. Unfortunately for the CA, Blaylock, Turley, and Harris decided to endorse and support the Democratic slate of candidates.²⁷

The CA reacted to what it perceived as traitorous activity by withdrawing its endorsement of the three wayward candidates and replacing them with Marvin E. Martin (mayor), Arthur J. Reinhart (police and fire commissioner), and T. Walter Scollard (finance commissioner). In describing the new CA ticket, campaign manager T. E. Monroe claimed that:

The Citizens Association has always represented all the people regardless of race, creed . . . , or color and we oppose religious hatred and racial prejudice and persecution. Neither of the candidates of the Citizens Association belongs to the Ku Klux Klan or owes allegiance to it.²⁸

The CA essentially turned the campaign into a referendum on the Ku Klux Klan. Its candidates continually stressed the Ku Klux allegiance of the Democrats and their freedom from such an allegiance. The *Texas American* responded to this effort by listing the important issues that the Democrats stood for and questioning why the CA would try to run a divisive campaign over the Klan rather than dealing with the important issues of

²⁷Ibid., 91.

²⁸*Texas American*, "Citizens Association, 'Mud Dobbers'," 16 March 1923.

the day. The answer, the paper suggested, in answering its own question was that "they cannot find argument and are too narrow minded to know that . . . mud slinging no longer is taken for argument by the average man."²⁹

If the 1923 elections were a referendum on the Klan, then the results show just how dominant the Klan was. The five Democratic candidates demolished the CA candidates in a landslide. Blaylock won the mayoral race with 13,560 votes compared to CA candidate Marvin's tally of 5,205. The rest of the candidates won with similar margins that averaged close to 3 to 1.³⁰ The anti-Klan *Morning News* issued a conciliatory editorial the day following the elections which pointed out that "sensible men will not doubt, now that the excitement of the campaign had passed, that Mr. Blaylock and his associates are ambitious to serve Dallas with the same high degree of fidelity and efficiency that has characterized the service of their predecessors" They also pointed out that the circumstances for the new officials were very favorable. They had been elected by large majorities and a sizable number of bond issues had passed in the same election.³¹ Nevertheless, the *Morning News* could not have been very happy at the election results. Its long campaign against the Klan had been utterly repudiated at the polls, and its circulation had fallen to the point where it had to tone down attacks on the

²⁹Ibid., "Personalities Popping Like Corn Over 'Citizens' Campaign Fire," 23 March 1923, 1; "Citizens Association 'Mud Dobbers'," 16 March 1923, 1.

³⁰*Morning News*, "Citizens Are Beaten," 4 April 1923, 1.

³¹Ibid., "An Invitation That is a Duty to Accept," 5 April 1923, 12.

Klan and institute the aforementioned circulation drive.³² For the next year and a half the Klan would dominate the county and local governments while its enemies bided their time waiting for another chance to strike back at the not so Invisible Empire.

II

Dallas Klan 66, along with many other local Klaverns, also took a fervent interest in candidates who were running for state and national offices. The Klan organization at the state level was not as well developed as at the local level. This was because the grass roots nature of the Klan recruitment system. Organized in a highly entrepreneurial fashion, it allowed indeed encouraged recruiters (kleagles) to work first at the local level. Once there were enough individual Klaverns to make it worthwhile, a state organization was put in place. In Texas, one of the first states to be so developed, the state organization included five provinces, with each province led by a great titan, and the entire state or realm overseen by a grand dragon. The Klan organized the San Antonio province first and called it Province number 1 while Dallas was the headquarters for Province number 2 (Fort Worth was the headquarters of a completely separate province, number 6).³³ By the time the 1922 primary season was at hand, the organization was functioning well enough to try its hand at influencing the election.

Specifically, the 1922 elections saw the Invisible Empire work to make Texas the first state to elect a klansman as U.S. Senator. The incumbent and senior senator from

³²Ibid., 4 April 1923, sec. 1, p. 9.

³³*Senator From Texas*, 60-62, 424.

Texas, Charles Culberson, had spent four terms in the Senate and was interested in reelection in 1922. Culberson had a significant liability; he was in particularly poor health. A muscular disease made it very difficult for him to speak and impossible for any type of vigorous campaign. The 1922 campaign, however, required more than its share of vigorous campaigning because of the bitterness of the Klan issue and the number of viable candidates involved. The list of candidates included several relatively well-known non-Klan and anti-Klan candidates. In addition, three klansmen announced for the senate position, including former U.S. Congressman R. L. Henry, Dallas attorney Sterling P. Strong, and former state senator and current railroad commissioner Earle B. Mayfield.³⁴

By the time of the primary, Hiram Wesley Evans, formerly exalted cyclops of Dallas 66 and great titan of Province number 2, was now second in command at the national headquarters in Atlanta. Evans, who was anxious to make Texas the model for other states in electing klansmen to national office, made several trips to Texas to help insure the best chance for the election of a Klan senator. Simultaneously, however, he was cautious about making too overt an intervention into the race, lest he offend too many Klan constituents through his actions. The result of this caution was a disingenuous practice of pretending to support a multi-candidate race while actually maneuvering to make Mayfield the sole Klan candidate.

³⁴For the most in depth coverage of the 1922 Senate race see Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1984), 88-128; Gwen Ellen Brown, "The Election of Earle B. Mayfield: A Case Study of Ku Klux Klan Methods in Politics in the 1920s (Master's thesis: Midwestern University, 1974).

The process all started with the so-called "Waco Conference" held at the Raleigh Hotel in Waco on 17 April 1922. The Texas leadership called the conference at the request of Evans and included all but one of the great titans of the state. Even at this time, Evans wanted to turn the race into a one-man affair as seen in his comment to Titan Erwin J. Clark:

"Erwin, I have a dead one in Dallas" -- referring to Mr. Sterling P. Strong -- "and you have a dead one here in Waco" -- referring to Mr. Henry. "Mayfield is the man." He says, "Now they are all three Klansmen, and Strong and Henry are both good fellows, and we do not want to hurt their feelings," and, he said, "let them ride for awhile and at the proper time we will ditch them and concentrate on Mayfield."³⁵

Clark, a good friend of Henry's, became indignant at this suggestion and made his feelings known. The atmosphere became so heated that Clark felt obliged at one point to get his gun out and set it on the table.³⁶ Finally, under pressure from the others, Evans agreed to allow a letter to be sent out to Texas klansmen that there would be no favoritism shown to any Klan candidate. Even in this letter, however, there was a vaguely worded escape clause that gave the leadership enough of an excuse to change their position at a later date.³⁷

One of the candidates, R. L. Henry, complicated the situation even further by asking to run as an openly avowed klansmen and defend the organization in the process. Henry believed that the attacks by anti-Klan groups such as the *Dallas Morning News* had

³⁵*Senator From Texas*, 65.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷S. L. Ricketts to R. L. Henry, 17 June 1922, Files of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, Record Group 46, National Archives.

to be answered. Henry also declared, moreover, that he could not run for office with a "lie on his lips" and thus prevailed upon his friend Erwin Clark to call national headquarters (against Clark's better judgement) and request permission to announce his membership publicly (normally a secret). Clark made the call on 5 April and received a telegram the following day that stated "YOUR REQUEST REGARDING HENRY GRANTED GOOD LUCK AND BEST WISHES TO YOU," and was signed by E. Y. Clarke and H. W. Evans.³⁸ From that point on Henry made his Klan membership known and became known as the Klan candidate. This, of course, tended to make his campaign more controversial, for it made him a target for anti-Klan groups.

The idea of a known klansman running for the senate was a significant problem for the Klan because, although its position in the state was strong and growing in 1922, it did not have enough of a following to overcome a concerted anti-Klan campaign, nor was it strong enough to allow its votes to be divided. The natural result would have been the election of a non-Klan candidate like Culberson. Evans and his successor as great titan, Zeke Marvin, were well aware of the consequences of a split vote. It is not entirely clear whether Marvin was acting on his own or under Evans's orders, but at any rate he began championing the idea of a Klan elimination to help unify the Klan vote behind one candidate.

Marvin began pushing his idea in earnest at another conference held in June at the Driskell Hotel in Austin. He claimed to be the acting great titan of Province 2 (as authorized by Evans) and that he had later instructions which superseded the Waco

³⁸R. L. Henry to Dudley M. Kent, 15 June 1922, RG 46, National Archives.

agreement. Erwin Clark, who was again representing Henry at the conference, produced recent letters from Evans and Brown Harwood (formerly exalted cyclops of the Fort Worth Klavern and now in charge of the whole realm of Texas) suggesting that the Waco agreement was still in effect. At this point Marvin "jumped up from his chair and came over to me, and he said, I am going back home tonight to Dallas, and I propose to call a meeting of the klan as soon as I get there, and it will be a dead shot for Earle Mayfield."³⁹ Marvin turned out to be correct in his prognostication. He did indeed hold an elimination at the Dallas Klavern shortly after the Austin conference. The results of the tally showed that Mayfield was the most popular of the three candidates with 1,400 votes, Henry was second with 700, and Strong came in third with 400.⁴⁰

Under Marvin's prodding, the elimination soon expanded to an unknown number of Klaverns throughout the state and exposed some considerable fault lines in the Klan organization. Marvin sent a request that apparently circulated throughout Texas to hold an internal election on 22 June.⁴¹ Strong evidently saw what was happening and left the race shortly after the eliminations began. R. L. Henry refused to leave so easily and instead fought back by refusing to allow eliminations in areas where his influence was strong. Moreover, the issue was fought out in a letter-writing battle that Henry was destined to lose. He complained in his letters of a whispering campaign being waged

³⁹*Senator from Texas*, 76-79.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 377.

⁴¹Marvin to W. A. Parker (Exalted Cyclops of Waco Klan 33), date unknown, Box 5, Folder 5, Mayfield papers, Georgetown University; see also a copy of the memo requesting the internal election on 22 June, Box 5, folder 5.

against him in defiance of the Waco agreement. He had spent thousands of dollars and tremendous energy because he had believed in the honesty of the men who had agreed to avoid favoritism. Now he stood to lose his entire investment and would not go down without a fight. S. L. Ricketts, kligrapp of Sherman Klan 105, admonished Henry to look at the bigger picture:

The things [sic] that we want to bring about, is the election of a Klansman for the United States Senate We do know, and so do you, that if the three of you stay in the race, that there is not much chance of sending either of you there, and that our noble order that you are willing to fight and bleed and die for, will go down in inglorious defeat and everlasting discredit to you within the organization.⁴²

No doubt this reasoning made sense to the majority of klansmen who opted to support Mayfield. Henry stayed in the race until the end, but after finishing dead last in the July 22 primary, he left the Klan organization a bitter and disappointed man.⁴³

The real surprise in the primary was the strength of Jim Ferguson. Because of his impeachment as governor in 1917, many assumed that he would not do well in the race for senator. Ferguson, however, had worked hard to keep his base intact since the days of his impeachment. His main vehicle was a weekly newsletter he published called the *Ferguson Forum*, which he used to present his positions to the faithful. In the first primary, Mayfield led Ferguson by about 30,000 votes but did not receive a majority, thus setting up a run-off on August 26. Once he realized that Mayfield was his competition,

⁴²S. L. Ricketts to R. L. Henry, 17 June 1922, RG 46, National Archives.

⁴³Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 110.

Ferguson determined to make the race a Klan vs. anti-Klan affair. This was not to Mayfield's liking since he had steadfastly refused to admit publicly to Klan membership.⁴⁴

Ferguson accused Mayfield of hypocrisy, claiming that the Klan supported candidate was circulating handbills written in Spanish in South Texas trying to get the Hispanic vote. Since the Klan (and hence Mayfield) were virulently anti-immigrant, this would have been a serious breach of Klan ideology. Mayfield denied the allegation, but that did not stop Ferguson's attacks. "Oh, he's a lovely feller to go around bawling about white supremacy!," Ferguson exclaimed.⁴⁵ His hypocrisy was not the worst of it, according to Ferguson. If the Klan were to get a foothold in the federal government, he suggested, there would be a great internal revolution in the United States. The situation would be worse than that inside Russia. Ferguson attacked on other fronts as well. Mayfield was, according to Ferguson, a gambler, sexually immoral, and a drinker to boot.⁴⁶ At one point in the campaign, Ferguson, who liked to take his rhetoric to the edge, declared that Mayfield was "a low-down, stinking, contemptible, pusillanimous, gambling little [sic], upstart hypocrite. And that's not bad language I am using either. It is the only phrase that will describe Earle Mayfield in his true color."⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ibid., 108-115.

⁴⁵Ibid., 115; *Morning News*, "Denies He Seeks Mexican Vote," 25 August 1922, 1.

⁴⁶*Morning News*, 13 August 1922, 1.

⁴⁷Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 116; *Morning News*, 25 August, 1922, 1, 8.

Mayfield and the Klan struck back against Ferguson on many different fronts. First, they attacked his record. They reminded the people of his impeachment in 1917, by publishing a complete transcript of the articles of impeachment. The 17 articles had included a number of cases of financial impropriety, including apparent theft and bribery. One of the reasons for impeachment, the *Texas American* suggested, was because Ferguson had accepted bribes from the brewery industry. This, of course, brought out what was probably the key issue of the campaign: prohibition. Ferguson was anti-prohibition to the degree that he publicly favored legalizing wine and beer. Knowing the broad-ranging support that existed in Texas for prohibition, the Dallas Klan newspaper attacked Ferguson mercilessly on this issue. It derided his weekly newsletter by calling it the *Ferguson For Rum*.⁴⁸ As far as Ferguson was concerned, the *Texas American* assured its readers, drinking was the real issue:

Don't let him obscure the issue. It's the SALOON he wants, and if he didn't Busch wouldn't part with a crooked nickle [sic] to elect him President. Don't let him send out a smoke screen to hide the real and only issue for which he fights and has always fought. It's the saloon with all the sins and slime they always represented that your [sic] are voting for which you cast a ballot for Ferguson.⁴⁹

The Klan and its candidate also questioned Ferguson's loyalty, both to the Democratic Party and to the United States. In 1920, Ferguson had left the Democratic fold and began the American Party under whose auspices he ran for president. He made the mistake of courting the Republican vote by suggesting that if Republicans combined

⁴⁸*Texas American*, "The Kind of Man Who Opposes the Klan and Thinks for One Minute That He's Going to the Senate Maybe -- Its Jim the Jumper," 18 August 1922, 2.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, "Why the Women Will Swat Ferguson Aug 26," 18 August 1922, 7.

with his followers, the Republican nominee (Harding) would have a better chance to win the presidency since the Democrats would then lose an otherwise secure state.⁵⁰ By the 1922 election, Ferguson was back in the Democratic fold and asking for forgiveness for his sins. This was too much for the Klan paper, which called him an "Arch Turn Coat," and reprinted many of his earlier quotes disparaging the Democratic party.⁵¹ Ferguson's questioned loyalty to the U.S. had to do with the financial dealings that resulted in his impeachment. One article of impeachment indicated that the governor diverted funds designated for fighting the war (World War I) and used them to purchase materials for Texas at a time when the state could have done without. For the *Texas American* this meant that Ferguson "was and is, progerman [sic] to the core and a side partner of Anheiser [sic] Busch and the other baby killers."⁵²

In Dallas, meanwhile, Mayfield was the beneficiary of the developing Klan machinery. Although Mayfield had separate headquarters set up in the Oriental Hotel and had a separate campaign organization, there was considerable overlap in personnel. Ben Richards, Mayfield's campaign manager, was an important member of the Klan. In addition, Mayfield's personal list of Dallas supporters included many important members of Klan 66 such as Zeke Marvin, George Butcher, Felix Robertson, Louis Turley, and

⁵⁰Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 97-100.

⁵¹*Texas American*, "Arch Turn Coat Wants Your Vote Now Please," 11 August 1922, 1.

⁵²*Ibid.*, "Why the Women Will Swat Ferguson Aug 26," 18 August 1922, 7.

many more.⁵³ A guest list register kept by the Mayfield campaign, which visitors signed, included a similar parade of important Dallas klansmen.⁵⁴ By the time of the second primary, moreover, Mayfield's name was on the list of who to vote for put out by Klan 66's political organization.⁵⁵ There was also some possibility that local Klan 66 money filtered into the Mayfield campaign. Ultimately, this question was going to cause significant problems for Mayfield and his quest to be seated in the senate.

In the run-off, Mayfield overcame Ferguson's attacks on the Klan and his personal morality and won by more than 50,000 votes. The victory for the Klan was tempered because none of the other state candidates endorsed by the Invisible Empire won. The *Morning News* was no doubt correct when it suggested that the real factor in the state races was prohibition, for all the winning candidates were supporters of prohibition. Thus, the reason Mayfield won was that he came down on the right side of the drinking issue. This interpretation, however, is not sufficient to explain the results in Dallas County. There, Mayfield defeated Ferguson by over 10,000 votes and received almost 70 percent of the tally, compared to a statewide victory of only 52 percent. In Dallas, the issue was Klan vs. anti-Klan, and as the dominance of the Klan in the other local elections became apparent, it also explained why Mayfield had won such an overwhelming victory in North Texas.

⁵³Box 4, folder 22, Mayfield Papers.

⁵⁴Box 10, Mayfield papers.

⁵⁵A copy of the sample ticket can be found in the *Texas American*, 25 August 1922, 2; and RG 46, National Archives.

Normally in Texas a victory in the Democratic primary meant an automatic victory in the November general election. But, as in many other respects, the election of 1922 was different. After the Texas Democratic Convention had certified Mayfield as the official nominee in early September, an anti-Klan faction broke off from the Party, held a separate conference at Dallas on 9 September, and nominated a young district attorney from Harris County named George E. B. Peddy as an alternate nominee. The problem for Peddy was getting his name on the ballot. He considered running as both an Independent and as a Republican, but legal rulings by the Texas attorney general and backed up by court decisions ultimately kept his name off, forcing him into a write-in campaign.

To even out the odds, Peddy's handlers, led by former Texas assistant attorney general, Luther Nickels, went to court to have Mayfield's name removed from the ballot. They alleged that over \$10,000 of Klan money had made its way into Mayfield's campaign. Since Mayfield's reported campaign expenditures were already near the legal limit of \$10,000, the Klan money would have put him over the limit and broken a state law. This infraction would have disqualified Mayfield as the official Democratic nominee. A Corsicana jury, with the prodding of an anti-Klan judge, found that Mayfield had indeed violated the law. Judge Hawkins Scarborough ordered the jury, under threat of contempt charges, to find Mayfield had overspent, then signed an injunction removing Mayfield's name from the ballot. On 6 November, however, the day before the general election, the Texas Supreme Court overruled Judge Scarborough and restored Mayfield as

the official nominee. The result was that Mayfield's name was on the ballots of thirty-two counties while Peddy's was on none.⁵⁶

Klansmen and other supporters of Mayfield were outraged by this attempt to overthrow the normal processes of the Democratic Party. The *Texas American* called the convention that nominated Peddy an "Ant-Klan (sic) convention of 300 self seeking politicians representing nobody else on earth but themselves" As for the candidate himself, the Klan paper refused to call him by his real name, substituting instead such derivatives as "Gebby" and "Sister Geddy." The paper asked and answered its own rhetorical question of "Why do we call her a girl?" by stating that "a real man would not lend himself to a fusion in violation of his own pledge, and for that matter, we want to stop right now and apologize to every woman on earth" ⁵⁷ Thomas Love, member of the Democratic National Committee and prominent Dallas Democrat, suggested that Mayfield had won the nomination fair and square and appealed to all Texas Democrats to support the nominee.⁵⁸ "I am avowedly anti-Klan," he wrote to a friend, "but whole heartedly supporting Mayfield."⁵⁹

Ultimately, the impediments for Peddy were too overwhelming for him to win. The prohibition issue, the traditional inclination to distrust anything Republican, and the

⁵⁶Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 118-25.

⁵⁷*Texas American*, "Sister' Geddy Starts on 'Dem-Rep' Trip Up Salt River on Republican Raft," 22 September 1922, 1.

⁵⁸*Morning News*, 12 October 1922, 1.

⁵⁹Thomas Love to R. W. Wooley, Box 16, Love Papers, Dallas Historical Society.

necessity to conduct a write-in campaign all worked against the anti-Klan candidate.⁶⁰

Even the *Dallas Express*, the African-American paper would not endorse Peddy. "Mr. Peddy," the paper editorialized, "was nominated by the lily white Republicans -- pseudo Republicans we call them -- a body which believes in the 'no Negro' doctrine." In a case like this, the paper suggested, "there can be only one way of choosing . . . the voter must think purely and simply in terms of the welfare of his state No party considerations can enter into his deliberations" ⁶¹ Nevertheless, Peddy did manage to poll over 130,000 votes, considerably more than any other non-Democratic candidates did in statewide elections, thus manifesting the growing strength of the anti-Klan coalition.⁶²

The anti-Klan forces were not yet finished in their attempt to keep Mayfield from sitting in the U.S. senate. In February 1923, they filed a petition protesting the election to the senate itself and asking for an investigation. The senate referred the matter to a subcommittee of the Committee on Privileges and Elections. Once again, Luther Nickels represented the Peddy forces, who tried to prove that the Mayfield campaign had been inundated with Klan money. In addition, Nickels asserted, the Klan itself was an anti-Constitutional and illegal organization, membership in which should automatically disqualify Mayfield from the senate seat. The hearings that followed failed to prove (or for that matter to disprove) that Mayfield's campaign had received illegal funds, but the

⁶⁰For an example of the distrust of anything Republican from a fervent anti-Klansman, see Thomas B. Love to Mark Sullivan, 7 August 1922, Box 16, Love Papers, Dallas Historical Society.

⁶¹*Dallas Express*, "Politics and Ourselves," 28 October 1922, 4.

⁶²Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 126.

1,200 plus pages of documentation that came out of the hearings have proven to be a treasure trove of information on the operations of the Klan in Texas, including the operations of the Dallas Klavern. The subcommittee ultimately rejected the petition but not before delaying Mayfield's swearing in until December of 1923, and limiting his role until the Senate took the final vote in February of 1925.⁶³ After the swearing in took place, the *Texas American* advised its followers, with a certain weariness over the issue, to "suffer this thing, that patience might have its perfect work in us."⁶⁴

III

By 1924, the Klan organization in the State of Texas was a large and powerful minority with hundreds of individual Klaverns and over 100,000 members. Although few, if any, were as successful and thorough as the Dallas Klan, many Klaverns had successfully dominated local politics. The junior Senator from Texas was a klansman, and the state House of Representatives included a significant number, possibly a majority of klansmen. The 1924 elections brought another big political office to the forefront; the governorship. The only question was not whether there would be a Klan candidate but who that candidate would be. It is a measure of the power Klan 66 wielded in the state that the bitter fight for the Klan's endorsement was between two members of the Dallas Klavern.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴*Texas American*, "Earle B. Mayfield, Texas' Junior Senator," 7 December 1923, 3.

V. A. Collins was a charter member of Klan 66 and a former state senator. Collins announced for the governor's race in the latter part of 1923, and prominent Houston klansmen and editor of Houston's Klan newspaper, Billie Mayfield (no relation to Earle Mayfield), through his support behind him. Felix D. Robertson was the judge of the Dallas criminal district court, who also had the unusual fortune of being both the son and grandson of confederate generals. This bloodline no doubt gave Robertson a certain prestige in the South in general and the Klan in particular. Robertson was noted, moreover, as a good orator and had a solid "law and order" reputation as a judge. Perhaps most important was the fact that Zeke Marvin supported Robertson in his bid for the governor's mansion. Marvin had been one of the most influential members of Klan 66 for years.⁶⁵ By 1924, he was the grand dragon of the realm of Texas and exerted enormous influence in state affairs.⁶⁶

As in the 1922 senatorial election, the existence of two candidates threatened the unity of the Klan and the opportunity to get its man elected. For a while the bitterness and invective that was injected into the dispute brought the real possibility of a split in the Klan ranks, especially between the Houston Klan, which supported Collins, and most of the Dallas Klan, which supported Robertson. The lessons of 1922, however, were not lost on the klansmen, and they decided to hold a statewide elimination to choose between the two erstwhile candidates. Ironically, Marvin, who had championed the elimination

⁶⁵The best summary of this election is once again in Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 210-52.

⁶⁶*Texas American*, "From Your Grand Dragon," 15 February 1924, 1.

process so forcefully in 1922, at first resisted the effort in this election. Eventually he capitulated, and the elimination was held in March of 1924. After Robertson claimed an overwhelming victory in the Klan elimination, even Billie Mayfield and the Houston Klan mended their fences and stood behind the judge from Dallas.⁶⁷

The most serious competition that Robertson faced in the Democratic primary was the perennial Klan antagonist, Jim Ferguson. Ferguson, the politician who just would not go away, as far as the Klan was concerned, was technically ineligible to run for the governorship because of his impeachment in 1917. Undaunted by such obstacles, Ferguson went to court over the issue, claiming that the impeachment proceedings were invalid because he had resigned before being impeached. Unfortunately for Ferguson, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against his petition, and he was barred from making the race. Unshaken by this ruling, Ferguson sent his wife's, Miriam ("Ma") Ferguson's, name in for nomination instead. As one of his friends told Ferguson when he was contemplating the move, "if a man can run a grocery store in his wife's name I don't see why he couldn't run a state that way."⁶⁸ It was widely understood that a vote for "Ma" meant that her husband would be running the state.

Meanwhile, in Dallas, as all this was playing out, the *Texas American* fought hard for Robertson and spewed invective against the Collins and Ferguson camps. Articles and advertisements began running as early as January supporting Robertson and attacking his opponents and continued to run until the election campaign ended in November.

⁶⁷Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 210-12.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 217 as quoted from the *Houston Press*, 15 October 1924.

Concerning klansman Billie Mayfield, who was supporting Collins, the Dallas paper correctly predicted that "if he is made to come to time by the officials of the Klan he will do in this case, as he has in all others, **RIGHT ABOUT FACE AND SWALLOW HIS OWN WORDS.**' He will swallow rather than lose his meal ticket, the chance to run a Klan paper."⁶⁹ To Ferguson the paper exclaimed that "it is unbelievable that a sorry specimen, who had been honored by Texas, as you have Jim Ferguson, only to betray the State, has any sincere belief that he can be elected governor or anything else in State of Texas."⁷⁰ Of Ferguson's decision to run his wife for governor after the courts ruled he could not be a candidate, the paper declared that "what Jim Ferguson wants, for he will be the Warwick, he will be the real governor if his wife is elected, is to hide behind the skirts of a woman, and get that office at any cost, so that he can further drag the state in the mire."⁷¹

Robertson, on the other hand, received great praise and his political positions detailed attention. The criminal district judge was a "level headed man," who simultaneously would be able to please the laboring man and the businessman.⁷² The paper published a summary of his platform that suggested he wanted to improve education, reform the prisons, introduce honesty and efficiency in the building of state

⁶⁹*Texas American*, "Billie' Mayfield is a Mishandler of the Truth," 15 February 1924, 1.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, "Ha! Ha!!!," 1.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, "Get Out From Behind Those Skirts, Jimmie," 8 August 1924, 4.

⁷²*Ibid.*, "Stand Up Judge' The Next Governor of Texas," 1 February 1924, 1.

roads, and improve the working relationship between business and capital.⁷³ The continued attempts to appeal to the "laboring man" suggest that the Klan leadership feared losing him to the other side.⁷⁴ In the 1922 elections the farm vote had gone for Ferguson, but the urban vote had gone for Mayfield to such an extent as to overcome the farm vote. If Ferguson could make inroads into the labor support of the Klan, he could overcome this problem in 1924. Rarely did an issue of the Klan paper go to press in the pre-election days of 1924 without an article on Robertson, the man with "uncommon common sense."⁷⁵

When election day, 26 July, finally came it seemed that all the encomiums and advertisements had paid off. Robertson led Ferguson by almost 50,000 votes. The *Texas American* crowed over its role in the victory:

When one recalls that with the exception of one big newspaper in the State, the *Dallas Times Herald*, all were arrayed against Judge Robertson, it is a significant happening. The *Times Herald* was not for or against the Judge. It was neutral. . . . the *Texas American* went out of its way to advance his candidacy.⁷⁶

It now appeared as if a repeat of the senate election of 1922 was in the works. In that election, Mayfield had led Ferguson in the first primary by around 30,000 votes and went on to win the run-off by just over 50,000. Some of the same issues were at also

⁷³Ibid., "Why we are Supporting Felix D. Robertson," 29 February 1924, 1.

⁷⁴Labor leaders worked hard to convince their followers to vote against the Klan candidate. See Patricia Everidge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 103-04.

⁷⁵Ibid., "Uncommon Common Sense," 13 June 1924, 1.

⁷⁶Ibid., "Texans Approve Robertson," 1 August 1924, 1.

stake in this election, the Klan and Prohibition, for example. There were differences, however, that made an impact on this election. In the earlier race, many people found the choice between Jim Ferguson and Earle Mayfield to be an excruciating one. No one exemplified this situation better than Martin M. Crane, the attorney general at the time of the Ferguson impeachment and the one who prosecuted the case against him. Thus, to vote Ferguson for senator was seemingly unthinkable. On the other hand, Crane was also the leading and most public voice of the Dallas County Citizens League formed to oppose and eliminate the Klan. Thus, to vote for the Klan candidate was also unthinkable. Crane solved his dilemma by not voting in the senate race of 1922.⁷⁷

But the situation was somewhat different in 1924. Two years had passed, and the anti-Klan forces had gained needed time to improve their organization, at least in the state as a whole. In addition, the mediating presence of "Ma" Ferguson may have swayed some who could never have voted for Jim. It is true that few people could have doubted that Jim would be the power behind the throne, especially given that he made almost all the campaign speeches after a few introductory comments from his wife. But clearly some people like Martin Crane, who threw his support to Ferguson in this election, were influenced by having Miriam Ferguson as the candidate.⁷⁸ Nobody will know how many others who, like Martin Crane, were torn between a former corrupt governor and a Klan candidate, pulled the lever for "Ma."

⁷⁷Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 112.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 229.

In the election, enough people pulled the lever for Mrs. Ferguson to give her and the Fergusons a shocking upset victory in the run-off. The campaign had been a nasty one with Jim Ferguson attacking the leader of the Klan, Hiram Evans, as a "nigger lover," because he traveled with a black bodyguard and assistant. Robertson, who did not have the same ability to rile up a crowd with his rhetoric, led a lower-key campaign and relied on his supporters in the Klan to round up the vote.⁷⁹ The interest in the campaign can be seen in the 729,770 voters who came to the polls, a Texas election record. Mrs. Ferguson got the lion's share of the tally and won by over 97,000 votes.⁸⁰ The headlines in the edition of the *Texas American* which came out shortly after the run-off, tell the story of how many klansmen must have felt. "HAIL JIM FERGUSON, A GAME GUY," the headlines screamed, and "PREPARE FOR WAR," shouted another. The lead story contained a warning for the Fergusons when it said that "just as Republicans voted in the 23 August primary to get even with the Ku Klux Klan, and thus throw a majority to you, Klansmen have a perfect right to vote for the Republican nominee in November."⁸¹

And so they did. Even in this election, the biggest blow against Klan political pretensions in the state of Texas in several years, Dallas County voted solidly for its favorite son, giving Robertson a majority of almost 8,000 votes. Had the other urban centers such as Harris County (which favored Robertson by only about 800 votes) given majorities similar to Dallas, the election would have been very close and could have gone

⁷⁹Ibid., 234.

⁸⁰Ibid., 238.

⁸¹*Texas American*, "Hail Jim Ferguson, A Game Guy," 29 August 1924, 1.

in the Klan's favor.⁸² One has to wonder if geographical divisions in the Klan, Houston vs. Dallas especially, did not account to some degree for Robertson's failure to get out the Klan vote. At any rate, it should come as no surprise that Klan 66 would accept almost any alternative in the general election than its arch-rival Ferguson.

Nominally the *Texas American* did not take sides in the election, but the announcement by the paper's editor suggested his sentiment. "Therefore," J. W. Hutt wrote, "we have two Republicans running for the office of Governor of Texas, one on the Democratic ticket and the other on the regular Republican ticket. That being the case, then in God's name let your conscience be your guide. Vote for none but honest men."⁸³ This along with letters to the editor praising Dr. Butte (the Republican candidate) and specific instructions on how to vote a split ticket made it clear what the leaders of Klan 66 hoped their constituents would do.⁸⁴ In the election, because klansmen (as well as others who could not stand Ferguson) split their tickets, a much closer race for governor ensued than was normal in the general election. Although Mrs. Ferguson prevailed by over 100,000 votes, the nearly 300,000 votes tallied by Butte represented almost three times as many votes as any previous Republican candidate for governor and 165,000 votes more than the national Coolidge-Dawes ticket. Klansmen, with diminished political clout in 1924, still could make a significant dent on Texas politics.⁸⁵

⁸²Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 238-9.

⁸³*Texas American*, "Let Your Conscience by Your Guide," 12 September 1924, 1.

⁸⁴For an example of a letter endorsing Dr. Butte see *Texas American*, "An Honest Admission," 26 September 1924, 3; the instructions on voting can be found under "How to Vote," 31 October 1924, 2.

⁸⁵Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 250.

Klan 66's involvement in politics stands out as an example of dominance at the local level in a state that had a significant but not overwhelming Klan organization. The sympathy for the Klan positions, combined with a well-organized political machine, allowed the Invisible Empire to control Dallas politics for at least three years. During these years there was enough fervency for the Klan that the Dallas Klavern's membership rolls expanded to the 13,000 mark. There were, moreover, undoubtedly large numbers of people like James Stacey, who defended the Klan in letters to the editor of the *Morning News*, but never officially joined. The Klan made the most of its membership and its widespread support by creating an efficient and successful political system that reached into every precinct.

The result was complete dominance of the local political scene. The only exception was the school board, which the Klan failed to control.⁸⁶ Beginning with the county and U.S. Senate elections in 1922, including the municipal elections in 1923, and ending with the gubernatorial election of 1924, Dallas Klan 66 was highly successful in getting out the vote in favor of its candidates. Sometimes its majorities ran as high as three to one. Along the way the Citizens Association, which previously had a near-perfect record in municipal elections, was destroyed, major Dallas newspapers such as the *Morning News* and the *Dallas Dispatch* were shown to be out of touch with the people they served, and the Dallas County Citizens League, formed for the express purpose of destroying the Klan and led by a cadre of highly respected Dallas and Texas state leaders,

⁸⁶The paper blamed the loss on the lack of interest among its constituents. See *Texas American*, "The Old School Board is Re-elected," 4 April 1924, 1.

was almost completely ineffective. It was a remarkable record. No wonder that the Klavern was to have such a dramatic impact on both the state and the national Klan organization.

CHAPTER 6

KLAN 66's GROWING IMPACT

The Dallas Klavern's emphasis on politics was a contagion that soon spread beyond the boundaries of Dallas. As the previous chapter suggested, klansmen from the Dallas area soon influenced policy decisions at the realm (state) level to a significant degree. In fact, by 1924 their influence was decisive at both province and at the realm levels. The province, led by such Klan 66 firebrands as Hiram Evans, Zeke Marvin, and George Butcher was the proving ground for many of the Klan's political techniques. The foremost example was the elimination, which originated in Klan 66, then spread to Province number 2 and ultimately to the state as a whole.

With Dallas klansman Zeke Marvin elevated to grand dragon of the realm in 1924, the Dallas Klavern's domination of the Texas Invisible Empire seemed complete. In the 1922 elections, it was the Dallas Klavern that successfully pushed for Earle B. Mayfield to be the sole Klan candidate. In 1924, Marvin was instrumental in choosing Felix Robertson as the gubernatorial candidate for that year's election. Moreover, the Texas Klan also had considerable influence in the Democratic state conventions in both 1922 and 1924. Although the Democratic state convention proved to be disastrous for the Klan in 1924, the Invisible Empire still managed to control about 80 percent of the Texas delegates to that year's Democratic national convention.

Klan 66, through a combination of intellect, political skill, personality, and good timing, pushed its political agenda beyond the state level to make a dramatic impact on the national Klan. Hiram Wesley Evans led the metamorphosis at all three levels. Evans was a local Dallas dentist who was a charter member of Klan 66 and one of its earliest leaders. While serving as the Klavern's first exalted cyclops, he caught the eye of imperial wizard pro tem, Edward Young Clarke. Clarke assigned Evans to perfect the Texas state organization, the first state to be so organized, which he completed in 1922. Then, after serving a brief stint as the great titan of Province number 2 (headquartered at Dallas), Evans was tapped to become the imperial dragon (later imperial kligrapp). As dragon, it was Evans's job to organize the states following the pattern he had set in Texas.

Evans was more machiavellian than either Clarke or Klan founder William Joseph Simmons knew when they hired him. As Clarke's position in the Klan eroded due to moral problems, and Simmons's leadership ability came under serious doubt, Evans maneuvered for the top position. The possibility for advancement existed because the Klan was so large by 1922 that regional fiefdoms had developed, and the leaders of these fiefdoms began to organize themselves into one powerful self-aware group. Evans and his followers made their move at the imperial klonvocation (national convention) held in November 1922 at Atlanta. When the conference was over, Clarke was reduced to his former role as chief organizer, although given the face-saving title of imperial giant, Simmons received the largely ceremonial position of emperor, and Evans was the new imperial wizard in complete charge of the Klan nationwide. Simmons and Clarke did not

go away without a fuss, but ultimately they did go away, and Evans was destined to lead the Klan into the 1930s when it was a mere shadow of its former size and strength.

Evans's legacy at the national level was not unlike his effect on Klan 66; politics became the overriding concern. Where Simmons had emphasized Klan ritual and fraternal brotherhood, and Clarke had emphasized growth, Evans was a true believer in the "100 Per Cent Americanism" espoused by the Klan from its foundations. His pro-white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and anti-Catholic, Jewish, black, immigrant ideals and his belief that the Klan represented a mass movement affirming these ideals, led him into the political arena. As the Klan entered national politics in a more energetic and organized manner, the organization became an issue unto itself. The result was a bitterly contested nomination process at the 1924 Democratic national convention and even an attempt to influence the outcome at the Republican national convention of the same year. Overall, the Klan had a few successes at the national level, but these were far outweighed by its failures. And the failures ultimately played a role in the rapid diminution of Klan fortunes after 1924.

I

Hiram Evans liked to work in the background. This may seem unusual for a man who rose to the position that he occupied, but an investigation into his past reveals that he was not anxious to make a spectacle of himself. Indeed, such was the secrecy with which Evans surrounded himself that historians know almost nothing of his formative years. Much about his adult years, when he was leading the national Klan, also remains obscure. No personal papers, no diary, no autobiography that such figures often seem unable to

resist has surfaced in the years since Evans passed from the scene. Even when the Klan magazine, *The Kourier*, ran a whole edition dedicated to Evans, his ideological viewpoints dominated the articles. The only biographical material that made it into this issue was his state of birth, his father's name and occupation, and a picture of the house in which he was born.¹

He was born on 26 September 1881 in Ashland, Alabama. His father, Hiram Martin, was a judge, and his mother, the former Georgia Striplin, was a homemaker. If any siblings existed, they remain unknown. Sometime in his formative years the family moved to Texas, where he graduated from the Hubbard, Texas, high school. After high school, he attended Vanderbilt University and studied dentistry, although the University did not confer a degree. In 1900, he moved to Dallas, opened up his own dentist's office, and began practicing while still a teenager. Reportedly he conducted his practice, for the most part, in the African-American community and was quite successful. Advertisements for his practice ran in the major Dallas newspapers.² He married the former Bam Hill of Royce, Texas, in 1903 and eventually had three children, Cecil Roy, Martha Virginia, and Ellen Bam. Evans, like many men of the 1920s, was a joiner. When the Klan came calling, he was a 32nd degree Mason, a Maccabee, and a member of the Order of the

¹*The Kourier Magazine*, "The Man Every American Should Know," 2 (September 1926): 2-4.

²*Dallas Daily Times Herald*, 10 May 1907; and *Dallas Dispatch*, 30 October 1913, as cited in Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 434; Lois E. Torrence, "The Ku Klux Klan in Dallas (1915-1928): An American Paradox," Master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1948, 55.

Eastern Star. When he moved to Atlanta, he joined the Atlanta City Club, and in Washington he was a member of the Congressional Country Club. A life-long Democrat, Evans also considered himself a devout Christian and was a member of the Disciples of Christ.³

By 1920, when Klan Kleagle Bertram Christie began canvassing the Dallas Masonic lodges in search of recruits for the new local Klavern, Evans was a successful professional with a pleasant, outgoing personality whom everyone seemed to like. Under the pleasant exterior, however, was the mind of an ideologue who was troubled by the culture of the newer immigrant stream and the social destabilization that afflicted America in the postwar years. Christie's message of 100 percent Americanism seemed to answer the question of destabilization by blaming it on the newer immigrants and their vastly different cultural backgrounds. The message fell on fertile ground when it reached Evans. Soon he signed up as a charter member of Klan 66. The zeal ignited in Evans's mind over finding an answer to troubling societal problems, combined with a certain latent intellectual streak, made him a formidable force in the world of klansmen.⁴ His view of himself as "the most average man in America" hid a certain charisma as well as

³Biographical material on Evans can be pieced together by combining information found in Payne, *Big D.*, 77; *Who Was Who In America, 1974-1976*, Volume VI, (Chicago: Marquis' Who's Who, Inc.), 131; Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 79; and Winfield Jones, *Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Tocsin Publishers, 1941), 246.

⁴For an excellent sampling of Evans's views on the critical Klan issues, see *Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Papers Read at the Meeting of the Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at their First Annual Meeting, Held at Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923* (Atlanta, 1923; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977).

the zeal of a true believer. In 1920, these attributes played in his favor as he became the first exalted cyclops of Dallas Klan 66.⁵

As the membership grew and the exalted cyclops became a paid employee of the local Klavern, Evans's interest in dentistry faded, and he left the business. He was then free to devote his full energies to the Klan, its ideals, and its mission. From the earliest days, Klan 66 was aggressive in pursuing its goals and ambitions. Beginning with its inaugural parade in 1921, continuing with its growing propensity for violence in the Spring of 1922, and including its social activities and its charitable causes, the Dallas Klavern was an energetic and active group under the leadership of Evans. Of course, it was his interest in politics that played the principal role in shaping the Dallas Klan. Certainly it was with his blessing and consent that Klan 66 created the political machinery which helped them to such overwhelming victories in the elections between 1922 and 1924.

Evans's interest in politics led him to seek an ever-ascending role in Klan affairs. Evans was not shy about becoming involved in the violent vigilantism practiced by the Klan.⁶ As political ambitions flourished and public relations became more critical, such vigilante atrocities became liabilities and were toned down. The Klan under Evans's leadership began repudiating violent tactics and went so far as to offer rewards for the capture of whoever was committing such acts. Not surprisingly, Klan-dominated police

⁵*The Kourier Magazine*, "The Man Every American Should Know," 4.

⁶Congress, Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Senator From Texas, Hearings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections* 68th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess., 1924, 117-18.

forces apprehended few perpetrators. The Klan may have been willing to change its tactics and tone down the violence, but it could hardly be expected to turn in its own members when people as high up the leadership structure as the exalted cyclops had been involved in heading up the vigilante efforts.⁷

Evans's zeal, personality, and leadership capabilities soon landed him a larger opportunity when he received the assignment of organizing the Klan at the state level. It is not entirely clear just where his responsibilities began and ended in this organizational effort, but he began establishing the friendships and relationships that would serve him so well when his opportunity to gain control of the national Klan came along. In addition, he emerged from the task as a great titan of one of the newly organized provinces and with a reputation among the national Klan hierarchy as a capable organizer.⁸

The evidence of his ability is most clearly seen in the success the Klan had at the state level. In addition to the success at the U.S. senate position, the Texas Klan also strongly influenced the state Democratic conventions for at least two political cycles. At the 1922 convention in San Antonio, when Earle Mayfield was the senate nominee, klansmen silenced criticism of their organization to such a degree that a group of frustrated anti-klansmen broke off from the main party and ran an independent candidate.⁹

⁷In all of Texas only three convictions were obtained for Klan violence out of hundreds of instances, see Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1962), 23.

⁸On Evans' status as Great Titan of Province Number 2, see E. J. Clark to Z. E. Marvin, 3 July 1922, Files of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, Record Group 46, National Archives.

⁹Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station: Texas A & M University press, 1984), 119-23.

At the 1924 convention, held in Austin, the Klan controlled about 450 of the 1100 delegates. Non-klansmen feared their potential power and many believed they would employ questionable tactics in an effort to effect a coup. Jim Ferguson, whose wife was the putative nominee, tried to mollify the Klan by denying his wife's assertion that she would force klansmen out of state jobs if she became governor. It turned out the Klan was still shell-shocked by their loss in the gubernatorial races. As a result they failed to assert their power at the convention and the anti-Klan forces won some significant victories that foreshadowed the decline of the Invisible Empire in Texas.¹⁰ In spite of this setback at the state convention, the Texas delegation to the Democratic national convention was about eighty percent klansmen and included prominent Dallas klansman W. L. (Jack) Thornton as well as Earle Mayfield.¹¹

In the summer of 1922, the imperial wizard pro tem decided to hire Evans as his assistant so that he could direct the formation of state organizations throughout the country. Thus, in less than a year, Evans went from a relatively obscure Klan leader in Dallas to a national figure in the organization. Along the way he occupied the office of exalted cyclops of Klan 66 and great titan of Province no. 2, where he continued to serve for a short period after he had ascended to national office.¹² A combination of intellect, political ability, and apparently, to a large degree, a friendly, non-threatening personality had helped Evans to maneuver himself into a position near the top of the Klan pyramid.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 242-45.

¹¹Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in Texas*, 55-57.

¹²*Senator From Texas*, 426.

II

By 1922, circumstances were ripe for Evans to push himself the final step into the imperial wizardship. Chapter 1 revealed how Simmons allowed Clarke to assume control of the workings of the Klan during the latter part of 1921 and through most of 1922. By October, however, rumors suggesting that Clarke led a promiscuous lifestyle brought Simmons back to the fore, although Clarke continued to exercise considerable influence behind the scenes.¹³ Since Evans was a protege of Clarke, this was also a demotion for the dentist from Dallas. Evans, however, did not see it that way. Instead, he saw it as a chance to increase his power by taking over the role Clarke once occupied. Evans, who did not have the kind of skeletons in his closet that Clarke had tried to keep hidden, was a fervent advocate of Klan ideology. This genuine belief no doubt was an important part of his motivation in driving for the top Klan position. Possibly it also appealed to many of his fellow klansmen and gave them a confidence in him that other leaders motivated more by power and financial concerns did not have.¹⁴

Evans could afford to be sanguine over his chances of ousting Simmons from the premier leadership position. Simmons had already shown himself to be inept at the sometimes bruising game of power politics. He had, after all, allowed Clarke to oust him from his position with very little fight. There had developed, moreover, a cadre of

¹³Robert L. Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate," *World's Work* 46 (May, 1923): 38.

¹⁴The Dallas Klavern never wavered in its support of Evans. The Dallas Klan paper frequently took opportunity to discuss Evans's positive qualities. See, for example, *Texas American*, "The Imperial Wizard," 29 June 1923, 1.

regional Klan leaders, many of whom were not confident in having Simmons as the top klansman. This group included men like H. C. McCall, the grand dragon of Texas, and Brown Harwood of the Fort Worth Klavern, both of whom would become important at the national level. Both men owed a good deal of their growing influence to the friendship and assistance of Evans. The Texas contingent was not limited to local Klavern leaders. Philip E. Fox, managing editor of Klan-neutral *Dallas Daily Times Herald* also left his post and followed Evans to Atlanta, where he became the public relations director for the Klan.¹⁵

Just as important was the growth of the Klan in other areas of the country. In Indiana, D. C. Stephenson proved his ability to recruit new klansmen by the thousands. Like Evans, Stephenson had a friendly and outgoing personality that allowed him to make acquaintances with ease. Stephenson began his political career as a socialist organizer at the tender age of sixteen. Recruited into the Klan in 1921, he made a strong impression on Clarke when the two met to iron out differences between the national and local approaches. Stephenson soon abandoned his most recent profession, selling coal, to become a full-time Klan organizer. By 1923, he had ascended to the highest position in the Indiana Klan, the grand dragon, and oversaw an organization made up of around 250,000 klansmen.¹⁶

¹⁵Payne, *Big D*, 77.

¹⁶The story of Stephenson and the Indiana Klan can be found in M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1991); and Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

On the West Coast, the Klan made significant headway in several states, most noticeably in Oregon. Led by Fred Gifford, who had ties to many large corporations and utility companies on the West Coast, and who was by 1922 the exalted cyclops of Portland, the Oregon Klan was a mirror image of the Texas version. By playing on anti-Catholic fears, the Klan managed to recruit between 25,000 and 50,000 members in a state that had very few Catholics or anyone else, for that matter, who fit the "anti-American" profile reviled by the Invisible Empire.¹⁷

Gifford, by gaining control of the Good Government League, consolidated his power base in Portland. Although not one of the plotters who helped overthrow Simmons, the leading klansman West of the Rockies did support Evans in the battle for control of the Invisible Empire. The Klan in Oregon, while numerically smaller than states like Texas and Indiana, still managed to defeat an antagonistic governor in the 1922 elections. But the big issue in Oregon was the fight over the private schools. The Klan wanted to outlaw private (ie. Catholic) education and force everyone into the public schools. In 1922, it temporarily succeeded in its goal by passing an initiative that outlawed parochial schools to the great chagrin of (besides Catholics) Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Seventh Day Adventists. The law, however, did not last because the U.S. Supreme Court struck it down in 1924. Then, in a situation similar to

¹⁷The story of the Klan in Oregon can be found in David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism, The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1965), 85-91; and Lawrence J. Saalfeld, *Forces of Prejudice in Oregon, 1920-1925* (Portland: University of Oregon Press, 1984); and Eckard V. Toy, "The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon; its Program and Character" (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1959).

that in Texas, the Oregon Klan attempted and failed to elect a U.S. senator in the 1924 elections. This failure along with waning interest in the Klan's message hastened its demise.¹⁸

Colorado was another state that had an active Klan.¹⁹ As in Texas, Oregon, and most other regions where the Klan became strong, an urban area, Denver, was the locus of Klan political activity. The Denver and Colorado Klans were led by an unusual character named Dr. John Galen Locke. Locke was an enigmatic leader who, though apparently not a true believer in the ideology of the Klan, still managed to construct an efficient and effective political machine. Somewhat behind the Texas Klan in its organization, the Colorado Klan's big electoral triumph came in 1924, when it managed to help elect candidates who for a time held nearly every state position from governor to both U.S. Senate positions "to the offices of lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, superintendent of public instruction, and state supreme court justice."²⁰

John Galen Locke and the Colorado Klan did not vigorously oppose the overthrow of Simmons. This, despite the fact that the genesis of the Denver Klavern was in part the result of a recruiting trip made to Colorado by the founding imperial wizard himself. The Denver Klan, however, did not really gain a significant size until after the

¹⁸Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 87-88; Donald L. Zelman, "Oregon's Compulsory Education Bill of 1922" (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1964); Lem Dever, *Masks Off!: Confessions of an Imperial Klansman* (Portland, 1925), 1-2.

¹⁹The story of the Colorado Klan can be found in Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

²⁰*Ibid.*, 81.

takeover by Evans. Thus, it was under Evans's national leadership that most of the 16,000 or so Denver knights signed up for their stint in the Invisible Empire. Locke did ultimately break with the Evans-led Klan in 1925, but this was only after Evans had asked for his resignation due to financial and legal irregularities. Moreover, this Denver leadership crisis led to the dissolution of the Klan movement in both Denver and the rest of the state as well.²¹

The Klan also made heavy inroads in southern states besides Texas. In Oklahoma an aggressive governor took on the Invisible Empire by declaring martial law where Klan violence occurred. Unfortunately for him, he did not have popular support in his quest and soon found himself impeached.²² John C. (Jack) Walton, newly elected governor, was at the center of the storm. Walton, originally elected with the help of a farmer-laborer coalition, surreptitiously joined the Invisible Empire to gain support in the Klan-dominated legislature. This move backfired when Walton's bumbling political moves cost him support on all sides. Desperate for an issue to regain his popularity, Walton seized on the Klan issue; this time he would be its avowed enemy. As occasional reports of floggings became public, he used his gubernatorial powers to declare martial law in the effected areas. As opposition to his heavy-handed maneuvers began to grow, Walton placed the whole state under martial law and refused to allow the state legislature to meet. A special election was called to allow the legislature to meet and was backed up with enough petitions to make it a legal election under Oklahoma law. The governor

²¹Ibid., 103-117.

²²Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 129-58.

threatened to have the state guard shoot anyone who came out to vote, but fortunately the soldiers refused to fire on their fellow citizens, and the election proceeded. The result was overwhelmingly in favor of allowing the legislature to meet in special session. When he realized the direction of the vote, Walton ordered the legislature into session with instructions to deal with other issues. Once in session, it proceeded to ignore his instructions and, instead, impeached and convicted the anti-Klan governor in about five weeks.²³

Besides Oklahoma, Arkansas and Georgia developed politically powerful Klan organizations. In Arkansas, under the leadership of Grand Dragon James A. Comer, the Razorback Klan dominated the political life of Pulaski County and Little Rock. Eventually, the Arkansas Klan had an ambiguous effect on state politics. Rather than put up its own candidates, as other states did, the Klan tended to back those candidates that most closely mirrored its views, whether or not they gave open support for the Invisible Empire. This made Arkansas klansmen appear more politically influential than they really were.²⁴

Such was not the case in Georgia, the home of the revived Klan. As might be expected, there was significant support for the Invisible Empire in the Peach State. The result was a governor elected with Klan support and representatives, including well-known agrarian populist, now U.S. Senator, Tom Watson, who defended the organization in the halls of the U.S. Congress. Georgia as a center of Klan power also became the

²³Ibid., 152-54.

²⁴Ibid., 118.

center of controversy when internecine disputes broke out. This controversy hit new heights when the headquarters Klavern made the mistake of supporting the loser in the Simmons - Evans battle.²⁵ Elsewhere, in Florida, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Mississippi, the Klan developed and grew in size and strength.²⁶

To a smaller degree, the Klan flourished in some Middle Atlantic and northeastern states. In New York City, the national center of anti-Klan activity, the Long Island Klan grew into the thousands. In western New York, Buffalo became a center of Klan activity where the Klan operated illegally by refusing to publish its membership lists or the minutes to its meetings. Although never numerous enough to dominate local politics, as occurred in Dallas, the Buffalo Klan did provide a outlet for social dissension by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who chafed under the Catholic and non-Anglo dominance that existed in the city.²⁷ While it never dominated the state, or even local politics, the way it had in other states, the Klan in New York enlisted members by the thousands who were looking for answers to the country's social problems.²⁸

In Pennsylvania the Klan attempted to provide answers but instead found itself surrounded by enemies. With a large concentration of Catholic and foreign-born immigrants, Klan parades and other activities often turned into uncontrolled donnybrooks

²⁵Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 70-77.

²⁶Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* is the only source I have found that has a short summary of Klan efforts in nearly every state.

²⁷Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

²⁸Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 254-65.

as opponents showed up to harass the klansmen. This brought the authorities in to bring peace and the press in to condemn the Klan for its violent tendencies. Eventually, unable to overcome the local opposition, the Pennsylvania klansmen and women began squabbling over strategies, tactics, and leadership. This led to a break with Evans and the national organization. In 1926, Evans disbanded several local Klaverns because of alleged disloyalty. By then the approximately 200,000 klansmen that Pennsylvania once claimed had faded down to a few thousand, but not before a nasty and fruitless court battle erupted between the local and national Klan organizations.²⁹ What the appearance of Klans in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania suggests is that no state in the Union escaped some recruitment and growth of the Klan.

As these developments took place throughout the country, the Dallas Klan watched and reacted sometimes with great enthusiasm and sometimes with anger. Articles with such titles as "Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, Cal., Hills," "Klan Grows Fast Above Mason & Dixon Line," and "Evansville Hears K. K. K. Ideals," showed the enthusiasm the local Klan felt for the nationwide growth of its organization.³⁰ In one such article it boasted of the growth of the Invisible Empire on the East Coast:

White robed and peak cowed members of the Klan from Boston and eastern Massachusetts, Connecticut (sic), Rhode Island, New York and perhaps

²⁹The story of the Klan in Pennsylvania can be found succinctly and incompletely in Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 236-42; or more completely in Emerson H. Loucks, *The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania: A Study in Nativism* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Telegraph Press, 1936).

³⁰*Texas American*, "Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, Cal., Hills," 7 April 1922; "Klan Grows Fast Above Mason & Dixon Line," and "Evansville Hears K. K. K. Ideals," 30 June 1922, 1.

New Hampshire and Vermont, were said to be present on the smooth dome of that hidden Massachusetts hill which in times past had served as a meadow for the deserted farm.³¹

As part of its "Let's Pull for Ten Million" campaign, Klan 66 also kept its members updated on the Klan's growth by running a section on Klan news. There were updates on local parades, initiations, and various other events in cities around the country. One such update, typical in its breadth, included Klan happenings in Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Alabama, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Washington.³²

Sometimes the coverage was not so benevolent as the situation in Oklahoma demonstrated. With the Klan under attack from Oklahoma's chief executive, the *Texas American* ran a sensationalized series of articles condemning Walton and blaming the whole mess on a Catholic plot. Yet, even the Klan newspaper realized that the Oklahoma situation had less to do with Catholicism than it did with an ill-advised executive unilateralism. "Up in Oklahoma they raise a lot of things," the paper raged, "they raised a fellow up there by the name of J. C. Walton. It appears they made a mistake and inserted a C. in his name where they should have put an A. for that fellow, if he is not absolutely a mad-dog, is the biggest jackass ever turned loose in any pasture."³³ Walton's actions were too drastic to be accepted by most Oklahomans but, in any case, his stand had little chance of success against an organization as large and generally accepted as the Klan was in Oklahoma.

³¹Ibid., "Ku Klux Klan Initiates Klan in Massachusetts," 4 August 1922, 6.

³²Ibid., "Klan is Growing in Every State," 24 August 1923, 4.

³³Ibid., "'Take Down Your Shot Gun and Kill -- I Will Pardon' -- Walton," 14 September 1923, 1.

The unprecedented growth of the Klan throughout the nation attracted and developed an elite cadre. Since the Klan emphasized a hierarchical form of government, it tended to attract those with an aptitude for power. Hiram Evans's ability to take control of the Klan rested to a very large degree on his ability to convince these men to support his quest for leadership. The exact dynamics of these relationships were not recorded, but some things can be inferred. Evans, as the chief state organizer, would have played a role in bringing some of these people to their positions of power. Evans's idealism may have had the effect of validating the feelings of some whose real goal was power. Finally, potential rivals might have viewed Evans as a weak and, thus, controllable leader. From all accounts he possessed such an easygoing temperament, on the surface at least, that some might have believed it possible to become the power behind the throne if Evans were in charge. Perhaps he even encouraged this kind of thinking.

Speculations aside, the dentist from Dallas definitely managed to gather around him a strong and influential group of supporters. This group included Fred Savage, the closest person the Klan had to a security chief, a somewhat reluctant D. C. Stephenson, H. C. McCall of Texas, Kyle Ramsey, leader of the Louisiana delegation, and James Comer, grand dragon of the realm of Arkansas. No doubt there were others, but these few turned out to be enough to unseat the incumbent with relative ease.³⁴

The supporters of Evans found their chance to overthrow Simmons in the imperial klonvocation of November, 1922. Ironically, Simmons was not required to call the national convention. In fact, the way the Klan was set up, Simmons held absolute power

³⁴Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon*, 51.

in his hands as both the emperor and imperial wizard until a klonvocation was called. Simmons claimed, however, that it had been his intention all along to make the Klan more inclusive by holding regular klonvocations. Constitutionally, the imperial klonvocation was very powerful. It had the authority to elect all Klan officials (including imperial wizard and emperor) and to amend the constitution.³⁵ The klonvocation of 1922 was the first time the local leaders had an opportunity to influence the Klan at the national level, and this situation created a lot of excitement. Evans's supporters also realized that Simmons's call for the first ever klonvocation was a unique opportunity.

Simmons was the major roadblock to Evans's control of the Klan. As the founder of the order, he had tremendous support among the rank and file and the local leadership. Some story or trick would have to be devised that would convince Simmons to give up power voluntarily. A story was duly concocted and the plan put into place. Early on 27 November, the morning before the klonvocation, D. C. Stephenson and Fred Savage drove out to Klancrest, Simmons's home on Peachtree Street, and woke him from his sleep. They asked Simmons about the upcoming meetings and specifically the elections that would be held. Simmons made it clear he believed that his election to the two offices he already held was a foregone conclusion, that indeed he would be confirmed "without any opposition."³⁶

³⁵Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta 1921), 18; William G. Shepherd, "The Fiery Double Cross," *Colliers* 82 (28 July 1928): 8-9, 47-49.

³⁶*Ibid*; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 100-108; and Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon*, 47-54.

The two Evans supporters then related their story. There was a plot afoot, they informed the imperial wizard, to discredit and oust Simmons from his positions of power. The plotters were going to attack the character of Simmons on the floor of the convention, the Evans supporters averred, but they were going to be ready for them. "We've just come to tell you that the first man who insults your name will be killed by a sharpshooter right on the spot as he speaks," Savage told Simmons, "there'll be enough of us with firearms to take care of the whole convention, if necessary." There was only one way that they could see to avoid bloodshed. That was to have Hiram Evans elected as imperial wizard, apparently as a temporary measure, until the plotters could be eliminated.³⁷

Simmons then showed just how miserable he was at dealing with this sort of crisis. He could not sleep due to his fear of bloodshed. The next morning he called a breakfast prayer meeting of top Klan officials wherein he discussed the problem and announced that he was going to nominate Evans as the new imperial wizard. Not everyone agreed with this decision, but enough of those present were members of the insurgent group that no real opposition to the idea was voiced. Thus, the simplistic little plot worked to perfection. Simmons believed, even as he was nominating Evans, that the emperor still had the ultimate authority over the imperial wizard, but this was no longer the case. As part of the klonvocation proceedings, the Evans forces had rewritten the constitution to make the emperor a ceremonial position.³⁸

³⁷Shepherd, "Fiery Double Cross," *Colliers*, 8.

³⁸*Ibid.*; Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon*, 54.

Simmons's first inkling of his loss of power came about several days after the klonvocation ended. He began noticing that the office staff was paying considerably less respect to him than in the past. Evans no longer got up from Simmons's desk when he came into the office, and he began talking to him like a sidekick. Only then did Simmons check the constitution and find the changes that indeed did make him a ceremonial sidekick. He soon discovered that other changes were occurring without his approval. Evans voided Clarke's contract, canceled the Lamar University project, and sold off assorted Klan properties, all without informing the emperor. "Right then and there I saw what was happening," Simmons later told an interviewer, "a money-making gang had seized my child."³⁹ Of course, a shrewder man would have seen what was going on long before then, but at least Simmons, once he saw what was happening, decided to put up the best fight of which he was capable.

Back home in Dallas, the locals were proud of their former exalted cyclops who had made good. "The Imperial Klonocation [sic] has made no mistake in selecting Dr. H. W. Evans as its Imperial Wizard," the *Texas American* gushed, "and Dallas Klan No. 66 will rejoice in that its former beloved cyclops has been so signally honored, and that sixty-six's banner was carried in the front ranks at the Imperial Klonokation [sic]."⁴⁰ Evans returned to Dallas and a scene of great rejoicing on 9 December 1922, where he was the guest of honor at a celebration party thrown at Fair Park. The party was complete

³⁹Shepherd, "Fiery Double-Cross," *Colliers*, 47.

⁴⁰*Texas American*, "Dr. H. W. Evans, Imperial Wizard," 1 December 1922, 1.

with a drum and bugle corps and a jazz band. The new imperial wizard gave the keynote speech wherein he gave a state of the Klan message:

Propogation [sic] under the present administration will be directed along high levels. We shall undertake to build our empire in the thought of men. We shall direct our message to the realm where the loyalties of men are kept. We shall undertake to bring both will and affection, both the mind and the heart, into an unwavering allegiance to the principles of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. In this way we shall build an everlasting empire.⁴¹

Before Evans could build his everlasting empire, he had to fight one last battle with his predecessor. Simmons decided that the weak point in the Klan organization was its failure to include women. Thus, in March 1923, while continuing in his post as emperor, he organized a women's auxiliary to the Klan. Beginning in Oklahoma and spreading elsewhere, the women's auxiliary or Kamelia, as Simmons called it, immediately became popular, reflecting the longstanding desire of the women to take an official role in the Invisible Empire. Within a short period Kamelia had chapters in twenty states.⁴²

Evans fought back by issuing a decree forbidding klansmen to have anything to do with Kamelia. He began seriously considering starting an official women's auxiliary. The klonvocation of 1922 had appointed a committee to study the idea and came back with a positive recommendation, although Evans decided that women could not be

⁴¹Ibid., "Large Crowd Hears Imperial Wizard Evans at Coliseum," 15 December 1922, 4; for more of the post-Simmons Klan's views on propagation, see Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Klan Building: An Outline of Proven Klan Methods for Successfully Applying the Art of Klankraft in Building and Operating Local Klans* (Atlanta, 1923).

⁴²Kathleen M. Blee, *Women and the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 25-34.

klansmen; auxiliary membership was the most the imperial wizard would concede.⁴³ In June 1923, the official women's auxiliary, The Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), was legally chartered and headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. Within six months the organization had chapters in thirty-six states and 250,000 members.⁴⁴ At first the WKKK proposed to be only associated with the men's Klan organization, but within a year the WKKK was under the control of James Comer, an Evans intimate. This move was accomplished through Comer's wife, Robbie Gill, who became Imperial Commander in 1924. Ironically, the elevation of Robbie Gill Comer came at the expense of Dallas WKKK leader Alice Cloud. In the struggle, Evans backed the Comers, whose leadership he perceived would give him more influence. Cloud soon initiated a lawsuit that failed to give her the position she wanted but did expose the Comer's profligate personal spending of WKKK monies.⁴⁵

Checked in his bid to reestablish his power, Simmons decided to mediate the growing feud in court. In April 1923, he convinced a Georgia court to give him at least partial control of the Empire. The court put control of the Klan into the hands of a commission made up of Simmons, Evans, and a state marshal, until it could be determined who was the legitimate imperial wizard.⁴⁶ The decision turned the issue into

⁴³Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Minutes of the Imperial Kloucilium, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Meetings of May 1 and 2, 1923 Which Ratified W. J. Simmons Agreement with the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta, 1923).

⁴⁴Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 27-29.

⁴⁵Ibid., 60-62.

⁴⁶*The Literary Digest*, "The Clash in the Klan," 77 (21 April 1923): 13.

a national affair when the nation's newspapers picked up the story. Magazines and newspapers around the country began running highly critical stories accusing the top klansmen of fighting over the high dollar stakes involved in Klan recruiting.⁴⁷

Dallas klansmen, caught somewhat unaware by the burgeoning feud, first approved of Simmons's establishment of Kamelia but very quickly fell into line in support of Evans. The *Texas American* assured its readers that Dr. Evans was the official imperial wizard, duly elected by the klonvocation. It suggested that Simmons was trying to maintain "one man rule" for "private financial gain" while Evans was the people's choice. The publication took the extraordinary step of printing a letter signed by George K. Butcher and Z. E. Marvin (very few articles were signed and then usually with a pseudonym) affirming that both Klan 66 and the Texas realm officials had unanimously endorsed Evans. It also published an endorsement of Evans by the Order of American Women and suggested that the Klan might fall apart if Simmons were to regain his position. Finally, the paper vigorously attacked *The Searchlight*, a national Klan magazine that backed Simmons in the fight. Evans could not have asked for or received a more solid or loyal reaction than he got from his home Klan.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, lawyers and judges sorted out the mess. The judge determined that the dictatorial nature previously exercised by the imperial wizard did not

⁴⁷See *Literary Digest*, "London's View of the Klan Row," 77 (May 19, 1923): 20; and Robert L. Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate: The Ku Klux Klan," *World's Work*, 46 (May, 1923), 31-38.

⁴⁸*Texas American*, "Dr. Evans Acting on Authority of Klonvocation," 7 April 1923, 1; Various articles, 13 April 1923, 1.

conform to the Klan's charter. He devolved considerable power onto a body called the kloncilium, which was similar to a cabinet, and made it clear that the klonvocation was the supreme law-making body in the Klan. Most importantly, though, he determined that the klonvocation of 1922 had acted legally in electing Hiram Evans as imperial wizard. This meant that Evans would retain control of the most powerful post. He still had to deal with the kloncilium, but this did not prove to be a problem. The first kloncilium was split between nominees of Simmons and Evans. But once the court confirmed Evans as the wizard, some of Simmons's men decided to back the newcomer. Because several kloncilium members were from out of state and could not attend regular meetings, the Klan formed an executive committee to do much of the kloncilium's work. Evans made sure the members of the kloncilium were loyal to him.⁴⁹

Simmons, however, did not go away empty handed. The judge determined that Simmons owned the copyrights to all the regalia, ritual, and official names which the Klan used daily and in its proceedings. The adversaries struck an agreement in which Simmons received \$1,000 a month for life, to be paid to his wife if he preceded her in death. Simmons retained his position as emperor and continued working on the rituals of the organization at a salary (apparently beyond his monthly \$1,000) to be determined by the Klan. He could also continue in his work with the Kamelia, but it was to be considered a personal venture and in no way connected with the Klan.⁵⁰

⁴⁹The complicated court proceedings along with the agreements can be found in Ku Klux Klan, *Minutes of the Imperial Kloncilium, Meetings of May 1 and 2, 1923*.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

This agreement was not the end of the bitter dispute. Simmons could never be happy watching someone else control his "child," so he continued to make public utterances against the way Evans was handling the Klan. Eventually, Evans tired of these attacks and sued the former wizard for libel. Then the story took a bizarre and deadly turn. Philip Fox, friend of Evans and former editor of the *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, apparently had enough of the feud and went on a rampage, attempting but failing to kill Simmons while succeeding in fatally shooting his lawyer, William S. Coburn. Fox was arrested and tried for murder. Evans stood by his friend and brought in Klan 66's kligrapp, George K. Butcher, to coordinate Fox's defense. Butcher spent \$35,000 hiring lawyers, rounding up witnesses, and convincing several Dallasites to testify as character witnesses.⁵¹ In spite of this effort, the jury convicted Fox for the murder, and he only escaped the death penalty by pleading insanity. Instead the judge sentenced him to life in prison, but he received a governor's pardon after serving only ten years. After the murder, Clarke, the former organizer and imperial wizard pro tem, wrote a public letter to President Coolidge suggesting that the Klan be dissolved by presidential decree.⁵² Simmons publicly agreed with Clarke's call. This was too much for Evans, who banned the emperor from the organization.⁵³

⁵¹Information concerning Butcher's involvement can be found in the document entitled "Substance of Testimony of George K. Butcher," 3N109, Martin M. Crane Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁵²A copy of this letter can be found in box 3N109, Crane Papers.

⁵³Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 105-07.

After an attempt on his life and the murder of his friend and attorney, the founder of the new Klan was ready to get out. In March 1924, he struck a deal with Evans in which he agreed to the termination of his \$1,000 per month in favor of \$146,000 in cash. In return Simmons may have agreed to give up Kamelia (this was later disputed), sever his connections with the Klan, and not take part in any organization that was in competition with the Klan. This arrangement did not stop Simmons from immediately beginning a rival organization called the Knights of the Flaming Sword, which he claimed was not in competition with the Klan, but manifestly was.⁵⁴ Unfortunately for Simmons, the times were not propitious for starting a Klan-like organization. Even the Klan itself would soon find the enthusiasm for its 100 percent Americanism on the wane. His Knights of the Flaming Sword faded away, and Simmons never got involved in Klan affairs again. He died in 1945 in LuVerne, Alabama, with his Klan adventure merely a bad memory.⁵⁵

Evans, on the other hand, now had what he had been working for years to obtain: complete control over the Invisible Empire. To be sure, there was still some clean up work to be done. Atlanta's founding Klavern, Nathan Bedford Forrest Klan number 1, backed Simmons in the feud and was suspended and reorganized. Other local and regional leaders who chose the wrong side were eased out carefully. Although Evans won the battle for the Empire, it was an Empire that had lost some of its luster due to the

⁵⁴*Literary Digest* "Colonel Simmons, and \$146,000, from K. K. K. to K. F. S.," 80 (8 March 1924), 36, 38, 40.

⁵⁵Charles C. Alexander, *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 709.

infighting.⁵⁶ When the *New York World* came out with its Pulitzer Prize winning expose on the Klan in 1921, it had actually helped the Klan grow by working as free advertising. Ward Greene, writing in the 1920s, suggested that the reason for this phenomenon was the iconoclasm of southerners. "The bull-headed Southerners," Green wrote, "running true to form, first woke up to the fact that there was a Klan, then smiled upon it because the *World* spat on it, and then ended by embracing it ecstatically."⁵⁷ This theory hardly accounts for the great growth of the northern Klan, but it does illustrate the point of how little the external criticism of the Klan actually impeded its growth.

The struggle for power in the Klan was different altogether precisely because it came from within and not from without. Here were the forces of 100 percent Americanism, the great leaders who were going to save the country from social disintegration, fighting furiously over who was the real imperial wizard. It was probably no coincidence that the growth of the Klan peaked in late 1923 and early 1924 and then soon began to fall dramatically. This is also the time when the feud was making headlines around the country. Thus, Evans had his work cut out for him as the new imperial wizard. If he was going to rejuvenate the Klan, it was going to take an ability to rally a discouraged bunch of troops.

In the event, Evans followed the blueprint that he first developed in the Dallas Klavern. First, he consolidated his power by placing loyal supporters in the important

⁵⁶For the Evans' perspective on the battle for control over the Invisible Empire, see Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *The Whole Truth About the Effort to Destroy the Klan* (Atlanta, 1923).

⁵⁷Ward Greene, "Notes for a History of the Klan," *American Mercury* 5 (1925), 240-43.

positions. D. C. Stephenson, for example, took charge of a huge realm that extended from his home territory of Indiana all the way to the Atlantic coast. Kyle Ramsey of Louisiana became his chief of staff. Brown Harwood, former exalted cyclops of the Fort Worth Klavern, got Evans's old job as the organizer of state operations. And so it went until Evans was convinced that it was his operation run by his people. Perhaps one of Evans's worst mistakes was his decision to reorganize the propagation department. Clarke, as mentioned before, was out, and the kleagles or field organizers received salary instead of commission. This removed the entrepreneurial drive from the recruiters. Instead of the possibility of getting rich (at four dollars a recruit) if they happened to stumble across a fertile field for recruiting, they got the same amount no matter how much work they did.⁵⁸

Just as he had done in Dallas, Evans also cracked down on violence throughout the realms of the Klan. Like Klan 66, other Klaverns began offering rewards for the capture and conviction of the "real" perpetrators of the floggings and assorted other crimes. Evans went so far as to pull the charter of a Klavern if the violence was traced back to local klansmen. In short, the Klan was undergoing a makeover. But the makeover was designed not just to overcome the black eye received due to the Klan feud. Evans had a more ambitious plan in mind.⁵⁹

III

⁵⁸Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 104-05.

⁵⁹Stanley Frost, "When the Klan Rules the Giant Clears for Action," *The Outlook* 135 (26 December 1923): 716-18.

The imperial wizard geared his attempts to clean up the image of the Klan toward one goal: making the Klan a force in national politics. Under Evans's influence, the Dallas Klan was involved in politics as early as the 1922 county and state elections. The Klan in Oregon, also inclined toward politics, helped elect a sympathetic governor that same year. This was only the beginning. As Klaverns around the country got a whiff of the new attitude, they became more active than ever in the political sphere. Eventually, the Klan was responsible for electing or giving significant help in electing 14 U.S. senators, 11 state governors, an unknown number (but possibly as many as 75) of U.S. Representatives, and a wide array of state and local officials that no doubt numbered into the thousands.⁶⁰

Nineteen twenty-four was clearly the highwater mark for the Klan in politics. Although Texas was failing to elect the Klan's Felix Robertson to the governor's office, and the Oregon Klan was also having its problems, state Klans in the East and Midwest were successful in their political pursuits. In Maine, Klan favorite Ralph Owen Brewster defeated his opponent in the race for governor in what was a Klan versus anti-Klan affair. Colorado saw a Klan governor and two Klan-friendly senators come into power. In Oklahoma, Klan-backed oil millionaire W. B. Pine won the U.S. Senate seat against impeached former governor Jack Walton. In Indiana, klansman Ed Jackson was winning

⁶⁰For the best general description of the Klan in politics see Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965).

the governor's race with ease. In total, it was an impressive electoral outing for an organization that assured everyone it was not involved in politics.⁶¹

Evans was so pleased with the success the Klan was having nationally that he decided to take a post-election tour of the western United States. From Chicago to Denver and into Montana, and from Spokane to Seattle and down the West Coast Evans, always staying in first class accommodations, carried a large supply of whiskey and spent his leisure time playing poker.⁶² At stops along the way he delighted in Klan growth and the adulation poured out by tens of thousands of his loyal followers. No doubt Klan operatives stage-managed his receptions to give the appearance of an Invisible Empire on the rise. In some areas, like Colorado, this was true. In other places, as in Oregon and California, the Klan had already passed its prime and was on its way to the irrelevancy that was soon to overtake the organization nationwide.⁶³

In the presidential race of 1924, the Klan did not suffer from irrelevancy. If the political success that the Klan was to have in the various states was pleasing to Evans, success at the presidential level would have been much more satisfying. Unlike the state and local levels, however, the Klan ran into a significant problem in the field of presidential politics. Ironically, this dilemma was leftover from the Civil War and Reconstruction days. The "Solid South" worked almost exclusively in the Democratic realm. The idea of voting for a Republican in a place like Texas was so repulsive that no

⁶¹Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 54, 170-174, 274-78; Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 81.

⁶²See "Substance of Testimony of George K. Butcher," 3N109, Crane Papers.

⁶³Coverage of the tour can be found in *The Texas Kourier* (formerly the *Texas American*), "Long Trip of Dr. Evans Ends December 2nd," 8 December 1924, 1.

Republican presidential candidate had carried the state since Reconstruction. In the North and West, however, voters tended to prefer the Republican party. To make matters worse, border states often split between the two parties. Local and state Klans tended to work in the party that was dominant in their area. In a border state like Oklahoma, it was not uncommon to have significant numbers of klansmen in both parties.⁶⁴

The problem for Evans at the presidential level was how to decide which candidate to back without alienating a whole section of voters. Unlike at the state level, where he could simply mandate that Earle B. Mayfield was going to be the Klan candidate (because all his rivals, and almost all klansmen, were also Democrats), Evans could not dictate that all klansmen should vote for a particular candidate, unless, of course, as happened in the 1928 election, one of the candidates was a Catholic, in which case Evans could and did strongly urge all klansmen to vote Republican. Of course, by 1928, the Klan no longer carried the kind of political clout that it did in 1924, when Evans and the Klan did not have such a stark and fortuitous contrast. The result was southerners were going to vote for a Democrat, and many northerners and westerners were going to vote for a Republican. Thus, the Klan was split politically in a way that mirrored the rest of the country. This split is, perhaps more than anything else, the best evidence of the national scope of the Klan.

⁶⁴In Oklahoma, the grand dragon, N. Clay Jewett, was a Republican and used his authority to try and convince rank and file klansmen, many of whom were Democrats, to vote for GOP candidates. See Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 130, 171-72.

Evans was determined that the Klan would have an impact on the presidential race, but to avoid the appearance of partisanship, he had to work both sides of the political aisle. Thus, when the Republican national convention convened in June 1924, Evans and an entourage of sixty prominent klansmen were present to try to influence the decisions being made. The Klan delegation set up headquarters in Cleveland's Hotel Statler. The selection of Coolidge was a foregone conclusion, so the Knights had no chance to influence that choice. They did, however, attempt to influence the vice-presidential nominee by making public statements that Senator James E. Watson from Indiana was their man. Watson promptly repudiated the Klan, whereupon Evans then denied that the endorsement of Watson came from official sources (namely himself). But it was too late to save any slight chance Watson may have had at the vice-presidency.⁶⁵

The other major issue that the Klan dealt with at the Republican convention had to do with a plank condemning the Ku Klux Klan. Ironically enough, it was one of Evans's fellow Texans, state Republican boss Rene Creager, who was causing the problem. Creager, who had played a role in the attempt by G. E. B. Peddy to defeat klansman Earle Mayfield in the 1922 senate election, tried to insert a plank in the platform that specifically condemned the Klan. Evans and his group were just as determined to avoid this embarrassment. Creager's plank never made it out of the resolutions committee. Instead, the platform contained a generic comment affirming its belief in civil, political,

⁶⁵*New York Times*, " 10 June 1924, 3; Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 74-75; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 202-203.

and religious liberty. The Klan had successfully and quietly suppressed an attempt to embarrass it in a national forum.⁶⁶

Unfortunately for the Klan and the Democratic Party, they were not so quietly successful at the Democratic convention. As he did at the Republican convention, Evans brought a large contingent of klansmen to New York City for the Democratic national convention, where they ensconced themselves in the McAlpin and Great Northern hotels. As in the Republican convention there were several issues at stake. First was the presidential candidate. The three main possibilities were Oscar Underwood of Alabama, Al Smith of New York, and William McAdoo of California. None of the three were advocates of the Klan, but Underwood was an avowed enemy, and Smith was Catholic, which, in the Klan's eyes, made him ineligible for political leadership. Thus, by default, McAdoo was the man for the Klan.⁶⁷

The idea of a plank in the platform specifically condemning the Klan also came up at the Democratic convention. Here the Smith and Underwood forces were so determined to include a condemnation that they shouted down the venerable William Jennings Bryan when he suggested they would split the party by so doing. Meanwhile, Evans and his klansmen successfully worked behind the scenes to have the offensive article removed from the platform committee's majority report. Those on the committee favoring the condemnation decided to issue a minority report. Under the leadership of the

⁶⁶Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 203.

⁶⁷*New York Times*, 22 June 1924, 3; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 205; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 162-63.

permanent chair, the Catholic and anti-Klan Senator from Massachusetts, Thomas J. Walsh, the minority report became the focus of the convention. A rowdy debate went on for hours before the roll was finally called on whether to accept the minority report. The vote was so close that at first it appeared the condemnatory plank had won, but after a recount the plank lost by less than one vote.⁶⁸

The choice of a presidential candidate was no less difficult. McAdoo led in the early balloting over Smith but could never get the two-thirds required for nomination. Again and again the delegates cast their ballots. Again and again the major candidates failed to gain the necessary majority. Finally, after ninety-nine ballots, Smith and McAdoo simultaneously withdrew and released their delegates. On the 103d ballot the convention nominated the dark-horse candidate, John W. Davis of West Virginia. Davis's position on the Klan was unknown and therefore was acceptable to both sides.⁶⁹

Thus, the Klan, in its first real attempt to have a voice in presidential politics, made quite an impression. The Democratic Party did not come out unscathed after its fight over the Klan. It was apparent to anyone who followed the news that the party was split between its eastern and southern wings. Both sides continued to blame the other after the convention ended, with the Klan claiming it was defending Americanism and the

⁶⁸Democratic National Committee, *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Madison Square Garden, New York City, June 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, July 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9, 1924, Resulting in the Nomination of John W. Davis (of West Virginia) for President and Charles W. Bryan (of Nebraska) for Vice-President* (Indianapolis: Bookwalter-Ball-Greathouse Printing Co., 1924), 279-334; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 165-68.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 338-979; Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 79-80; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 169-70.

anti-Klan forces adamant that they were fighting for the true American principles. In any event, Davis had little chance of winning against Republican prosperity but the Klan fight certainly did not help the slight Democratic chances. In the general election, the Klan, for the most part, played an unobtrusive role because it was not prudent for Klan leaders to choose between the Democratic candidate and the Republican. The one target that did come under significant Klan attack was Robert La Follette, the third party Progressive candidate. Evans considered La Follette to be an enemy of the nation because of his pacifist stand in World War I.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, Klan 66 closely followed the issues being fought out on the national stage. The *Texas American*, probably because of the southern bias toward the Democratic party, expressed surprise that the Klan would involve itself so heavily in the Republican convention. Nevertheless, the paper pointed out that "Klansmen have a perfect right to go where they please." The Klan 66 mouthpiece was not too pleased with the press reports of the Klan orchestrating its influence at the Democratic convention. When the *World* reported that Z. E. Marvin was playing a big role in the Klan's efforts, the paper called the report a lie and insisted that Marvin was still at home.⁷¹ But mostly the *Texas American* was displeased because McAdoo did not get the nomination. About John W. Davis, the paper wrote, "he is the nominee of democracy today, and Democrats will find that there is plenty of time to give careful sober thought to all that will be published between now and

⁷⁰Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 83.

⁷¹*Texas American*, "Democrats Nominate Davis," 11 July 1924, 1.

election respecting its candidate."⁷² Surprisingly, the newspaper had very little to say about the incredible and divisive fight over the anti-Klan plank.

Neither the debacle created at the Democratic convention, nor the Klan's declining numbers after 1924, discouraged Evans from continuing to pursue a strong political voice for the Klan. Symbolic of Evans's preoccupation with politics was his decision to move to Washington, D. C., in 1925. Technically, the Klan headquarters remained in Georgia where it was incorporated, but Evans, with most of his staff, moved to the nation's capital so they could have a greater influence on legislation. The headquarters established at Seventh and I streets was apparently intended to help the Klan exercise more direct influence on the centers of power in Washington.⁷³ As part of his drive for a political voice, Evans did something he had promised Klan 66 he would never do: unmask the Invisible Empire. By the time this occurred, shortly before the presidential election of 1928, the Klan's membership had dwindled significantly and perhaps Evans hoped to stem the tide or even excite new interest in the Invisible Empire by making it more visible. At any rate, klansmen officially took off their masks on 23 February 1928.⁷⁴

Although their numbers were limited, those klansmen left were more determined than ever to influence the election of 1928. This was because an arch enemy of the Klan, Al Smith, captured the Democratic nomination that year. Smith's nomination allowed the hierarchy to concentrate its fire on a major candidate. The Klan, as in 1924, had set up its

⁷²Ibid., "Believe it or Not," 1.

⁷³Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 233.

⁷⁴*Literary Digest*, "The Klan Goes in for a Face-Lifting," 96 (March 10, 1928): 15-16.

own headquarters at the Democratic convention, this year in Houston. There it worked for the inclusion of a plank in the platform calling for complete enforcement of the eighteenth amendment. Successful in this endeavor, it next tried unsuccessfully to block the nomination of Smith. Once Smith had the nomination, Evans promised that the entire power of the Klan would be brought to bear to keep the Democratic (and Catholic) candidate from capturing the presidency.⁷⁵

This the Klan proceeded to do by sponsoring anti-Smith rallies, and publishing extensive literature attacking the candidate from New York. They widely distributed the anti-Smith writings of Alma White, New Jersey preacher and lecturer, who warned that President Smith would be a tool in the hands of the pope to destroy American institutions.⁷⁶ Perhaps the most vitriolic anti-Smith spokesman was Alabama Senator J. Thomas Heflin. Heflin, a klansman himself, spoke before Klan audiences throughout the Midwest and Eastern states denouncing Smith for his position on prohibition, his religion, and for his connections to Tammany Hall.⁷⁷

There is some question about how much effect the Klan had on the election results. With its membership numbers down below 200,000 nationally, it is difficult to credit the Klan with much of an effect on the election. Yet, it is also true that the Republicans breached the solid South for the first time since Reconstruction. But politics

⁷⁵Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 87.

⁷⁶Alma White, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty* (Zarephath, New Jersey: The Good Citizen, 1926).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 87-89.

is a continuing series of coalitions, and this tendency, as the cliché suggests, sometimes makes for strange bedfellows. This may be seen by looking at two of the leading members of the Dallas County Citizens League. Martin M. Crane, who was the Executive Director of the DCCL, held his nose in 1928 and voted for Smith, while J. B. Cranfill, also on the Executive Board of the DCCL, became a leader of the Hoovercrats and helped Texas bolt the solid South.⁷⁸

Perhaps the biggest lesson coming out of the Klan political involvement in 1928, was that most Americans, or at least most southerners, were in general agreement with the ideas of the Klan. Anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, and pro-prohibition attitudes were the general views of the day. Even a strong anti-Klan leader like Cranfill, a lifelong Democrat, who had fundamental disagreements with the Klan position, could not bring himself to vote for Al Smith.⁷⁹ One of the reasons for the Klan's success was its ability to tap into these biases.

The move into national politics, on the other hand, seems to have been a downfall of the modern Klan. As long as it was conducted in local areas, such as Dallas, or Denver, or Indianapolis, or Portland, the Klan often showed remarkable success. In Dallas, the Klan controlled the county and city politics for almost four years. The Dallas experience convinced Hiram Evans that the Klan could be successful at higher levels as well. In some ways he was correct as states around the country followed the Texas lead,

⁷⁸Biographical files of Martin M. Crane and J. B. Cranfill, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷⁹Ibid.

by electing Klan or Klan-friendly senators and governors of their own. But in other respects he was mistaken, because the Klan's efforts awakened diverse groups who perceived the Invisible Empire as a threat.

These groups included Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and probably would have included blacks had they been allowed a political voice in the 1920s. But just as important, they included significant numbers of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Many, in fact most, of those who led the fight against the Klan (at least in Dallas) were in this category. Some who opposed the Klan did so because of the Invisible Empire's racial and religious bigotry, but as the election of 1928 demonstrates many had other reasons. Those reasons often involved the Klan's unconstitutional methodology. Local communities might accept mob rule at times to scare off criminals that the system seemed unable to deal with, especially when those conducting the vigilantism were known and trusted. Extended to the state and national levels, however, and conducted by remote figures, vigilantism raised the specter of chaos and anarchy. In Dallas, moreover, the growth of the Klan also reflected a rivalry between the established political hierarchy and the newcomers and other ambitious Dallasites who had been unable to break into the political establishment. In a city, where there was essentially only one political party, the Klan provided an excellent vehicle for breaking up the status quo and bringing outsiders into power. But Klan strength at the national level was diluted because it was split between two parties. Until 1928, Klan strategists could not reasonably sell its members on concentrating all their voting power on one presidential candidate, and by then it was too late.

Evans tried to deal with fears of Klan vigilantism by instituting a public relations effort to make the Klan look less dangerous. He issued orders to avoid any controversial vigilante behavior and cracked down on rogue klansmen and Klaverns that refused to obey his orders. But too many people could not come to grips with the idea of an organization that hid behind masks as a dominant force in politics. In a secret fraternal organization, the masks seemed harmless. In the local political scene, specific issues often overrode the concern of thoughtful citizens. At the state level, the Klan was vulnerable to public campaigns that emphasized its violent tendencies. In national politics, a masked vigilante organization was simply unacceptable. Evans showed he was willing to deal with this problem in a most radical way when he unmasked the Klan in 1928. By then it was too late to reverse the order's decline. The Klan's reputation was that of a secret and violent vigilante group. Internal corruption and several high profile murder trials magnified this negative image. These aspects, combined with its seemingly continuous internecine squabbles, ruined any chance that the Klan could play a role in national politics.

Thus, the legacy of Klan 66 was large in that it transmitted a pattern of political primacy to the Klan as a whole. Just how politically involved the Klan would have become without Evans's leadership is questionable. If the Simmons-Clarke regime had remained in power, it seems likely that political involvement at the national level would have been considerably less. With less national negative attention focused on the Klan, the Invisible Empire might have remained a political force longer at the local level. Instead, the national publicity hastened the demise of the Klan at all levels. Therefore, it

also must be recognized that the Dallas Klavern helped set the Klan on a controversial road that may have diminished the Invisible Empire's influence in an unforeseen way.

CHAPTER 7

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE KLAN

It is fashionable in the revised histories of the Klan to minimize the ideology of the Invisible Empire. Revisionists suggest that local issues account for the rise of the various Klaverns across the country. As a group of recent Klan revisionists writes, "the Klan demonstrated a multifaceted appeal, but discontent over local issues primarily fueled the organization's spectacular rise."¹ There is no doubt that this historiographical trend has led to a rich mining of explanations for the ways in which local Klaverns acted and reacted. Because of the various narratives constructed by such writers as Shawn Lay, Larry Gerlach, and Christopher Cocoltchos, scholars now know that the Klan fight in El Paso centered on control of the public school system, in Utah around an anti-Mormon agenda, and in Anaheim around a dispute between the commercial-civic elite and those on the outside.² This emphasis on localism has served historians well in their ability to understand the 1920s Klan.

But the analysis of local issues has obscured the Klan's powerful ideology. It is remarkable, for example, just how consistent the various Klan publications were in their

¹Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 220.

²Ibid., 67-96, 97-120, 121-52.

continual propagandizing of Klan beliefs. Whether in Oregon, Colorado, Buffalo, or Dallas, the drumbeat of criticism against certain elements of society was non-stop. In some places the immigrant was the chief enemy, and in most places alcohol and the lawlessness that accompanied prohibition were important issues. In nearly every place a virulent anti-Catholicism was a driving force behind the Klan. In Dallas, blacks and Jews also figured into the Klan ideology. The negro problem, as klansmen saw things, was typically a southern one, because most blacks lived in the South. At the root of the problem, the Klan believed, was slavery, which had brought an inferior race to America. Blacks could never hope to match white Anglo-Saxons in their abilities, industry, and intelligence. Although a racial status quo existed, the ever-present dangers inherent with two peoples on such different planes trying to live in close proximity was a warning to Americans about ever allowing such a situation to occur again.

Americans were not learning the lesson, according to the Klan, because the immigrant problem was also a racial one. Accepting the prevalent ideas on eugenics, the Klan believed that southeastern Europeans constituted a separate race or races. Many of these southeastern immigrants were more likely to commit crimes, be less intelligent, transplant socialist ideas, and generally contribute less to society than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Moreover, klansmen were convinced that the evil scourge of alcohol was traceable directly to the immigrant and his lifestyle. The immigrant, having less respect for law and the constituted authorities, engaged in the illegal manufacturing and distribution of distilled spirits and therefore contributed greatly to the growing crime wave of the 1920s. Thus, Americans were in danger of not learning the lessons of

slavery. The Klan was determined to do what it could to help the country avoid another such racial and social disaster.

The problem with the Jewish people, according to the Klan, had less to do with a natural inferiority and more to do with rapaciousness and, ironically, clannishness. As did some Christians, some klansmen may have blamed Jews for the death of Christ. But the *Texas American*, when it dealt with the Jewish issue, tended to refer to Abraham's descendants as the "sharp" Jew. Thus, the Klan had imbibed the long-held view of Jews as greedy materialist businessmen who would cheat gentiles any way they could.

Klansmen also pointed out that Jews would not inter-marry with others and therefore managed to maintain their racial identity over a long period of U.S. history. This was not pleasing to the Klan, because they believed Jewish racial identity tended to create a nation within a nation. A homogenous population was the Klan ideal and anything, such as Jewish clannishness, that interfered with this ideal was anathema.

In spite of this criticism, the Klan sometimes gave back-handed compliments to Jews, apparently to gain their support on important issues and in critical elections. As the Dallas Klan entered politics, it made a concerted effort to woo Jews, both in a general sense and during specific elections such as the Mayfield/Ferguson and Robertson/Ferguson elections of 1922 and 1924. At first the Klan tactic seemed to be working, for the Jewish community failed to coalesce in its opposition to Mayfield. By the time of the 1924 gubernatorial election, however, Jews had clearly joined the anti-Klan coalition.

The Klan reserved its strongest criticism for Catholicism. There is little doubt that the Klan viewed the battle between itself and Catholicism as a culture war in which the future of the Republic was at stake. Unwilling to believe that the pope eschewed temporal powers, the Klan saw a covert worldwide plot to bring popish absolutism to America. Such a prospect heralded the destruction of the Republic. The Klan's most telling evidence was the continuing authoritarian nature of Catholic life and culture and, in particular, the Catholic parochial school system. The public school system, in the minds of klansmen and many Americans, was the safeguard of republicanism. It was the place where democratic ideals were taught and thus the linchpin of assimilation. Why then were Catholics unwilling to send their children to this pristine institution? The answer lay in the nature of Catholic authoritarianism. If they believed in authoritarianism, then they would naturally look to the church figure of absolute authority: the pope.

The Klan believed the only way to fight fire was with fire. Thus a covert authoritarian attempt to do away with the American Republic called for a covert authoritarian organization to fight the interloper. This was why it was so important to get someone such as Hiram Evans into the national leadership. A man like Simmons could never accomplish the job and probably did not fully understand the threat to the country. Given the covert nature of the threat, Catholic influence might be found anywhere and might be disguised in any form, including Protestantism. Indeed, the Klan believed, there were many "useful idiots" in the Protestant world. This view, with the early turbulence in the leadership of the Klan, helps explain why local Klaverns had their own agendas. In

Dallas, for example, the established political hierarchy became the enemy. Though many of the people the Klan was fighting were Protestants, the Klan had no problem labeling them Catholic, thus, Martin Crane, a Mason and life-long Protestant, became "Father" Crane to the *Texas American* and juries almost entirely composed of Protestants became 100 percent Catholic when they rendered judgements opposed to Klan viewpoints.³ Catholicism became a symbolic enemy that did not require actual Catholics to exist and justified the existence of a super-secret, masked, and authoritarian organization, using whatever means necessary to combat the growing menace.

I

The Klan believed that anything that threatened its idea of homogeneity was a threat to the United States itself. Specifically, racial differences concerned the Klan. One of Hiram Evans's chief contributions to the Klan was a stronger emphasis on racial awareness. His carefully formulated viewpoints and policies on race relations and immigration were a continuing theme in his leadership of the Klan in the 1920s. Of course, not everyone in the Klan accepted all of his formulations, but as the imperial wizard, his viewpoints, expressed in speeches, pamphlets, and books, were official Klan dogma. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that there was any widespread disagreement with the imperial wizard.⁴

³See the letter from a Grand Jury foreman to the editor of the *Texas American* protesting the paper's portrayal of the Grand Jury as Catholic, and giving the specific religious make-up of the Jury, D. A. Gregg to J. W. Hutt, 17 April 1922, 3N104, Martin M. Crane Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁴Evans took every opportunity to spread his views. For a few examples, see Edward Bell, ed., *Creed of the Klansmen; Interviews with Dr. H. W. Evans, Imperial Wizard of*

The primary focus of the KKK's fear was on the southeastern European immigrants, but this does not mean the Klan had nothing to say about black-white race relations. Although black-white issues do not appear to be the motivating factor in the rebirth of the Klan, it is important to note the Empire's position on the African American. This is true not only to avoid confusion over its ideology but also because it was the Klan's racist viewpoints developed to deal with blacks that became the basis for the immigrant as well. As such, both the newer immigration and the older black population, according to the Klan, were problems that had to be dealt with very carefully.

In particular, the Klan believed it important to discourage the idea of social equality. This meant that black leaders like W. E. B. DuBois were a serious problem for klansmen. As long as blacks "knew their place" in society as "drawers of water and hewers of wood," then the two races could get along. But when the more intelligent blacks, such as DuBois, began filling the heads of the black race with ideas of equality, this somehow turned the average black into a raving maniac who acted "uppity" around whites, refused to work, and ravaged women. DuBois, therefore, was a dangerous man and had to be stopped. "Any man that puts such 'equality' propoganda [sic] to work is more dangerous than the most rabid red in America," the *Texas American* screamed,

the Ku Klux Klan; Israel Zangwill, the Eminent Jewish Author; One of the Legal Advisors of the Klan; Mayor Ora D. Davis of Terre Haute; Edward H. Morris, a Leading Colored Member of the Chicago Bar; and Frank Johnston, Jr., Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Co., 1924); Hiram Evans, *The Klan of Tomorrow and the Klan Spiritual* (Kansas City: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1924); and Hiram Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration: An Address Delivered on the Occasion of Klan Day at the State Fair of Texas at Dallas, October 24, 1923* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923).

"DuBois, the arrogant ebony-head, thick-lipped, kinky-haired negro 'educator' must be put in his place and made to stay there." The way to do this was through legislation. The Klan did not spell out the exact nature of the intended legislation, but it should "forever define the status of the African so in another generation or so unmentionable crimes would pass away."⁵

The Klan believed that, instead of improving, the condition of the black race may well have been deteriorating. This was because of the recent large migrations of blacks from rural to urban centers. Since the opportunities for moral and physical degradation were greater in the city, the natural result would be a worsening of behavior and health. "In fact," Evans declared, "with the present ever increasing exodus from country to city, it is an undoubted fact that another generation will be marked by retrogression." Actually, the Klan believed that blacks would remain inferior wherever they lived, and no change in environment could improve what "biology and anthropology" had wrought.⁶

One of the greatest dangers that existed because of the two races living in proximity, the Klan believed, was that of miscegenation. When black and white married, Klan writers averred, their offspring naturally had the worst elements of both races. Because Anglo-Saxons were the superior race, according to Klan ideology, to inter-marry with blacks could only be harmful to whites.⁷ As far as klansmen were concerned, each race needed to stay to itself except where necessary interactions had to occur. Thus, the

⁵*Texas American*, "The Real Black Menace," 5 January 1923, 1.

⁶Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 7.

⁷*Texas American*, "Shall Marriage of Whites and Blacks be Legalized?," 26 January 1923, 1.

KKK tended to agree with the positions of black separatist Marcus Garvey. A man of "uncommon good sense" is the way the *Texas American* characterized the black leader. "Garvey is out fighting for the negro on right lines, and the negro will go a long way if he hews to a line of demarcation, and tries his best to improve along negro lines, and not along the lines of admixture of blood," the paper lectured.⁸

Avoiding an admixture of blood was also part of the Klan agenda regarding southeastern European immigrants. Beginning in the 1880s the immigration stream to the United States began to undergo significant changes. Rather than most immigrants coming from the northern part of Europe, a preponderance began to come from the southern and eastern European countries. These new immigrants were different. Physically, southern Europeans tend toward darker skin, different skull shape, and a smaller body size. More important were the cultural differences. Language, religion, diet, personal habits, and political beliefs were considerably different from the existing populations in the United States.⁹ These different peoples did not receive a warm

⁸Ibid., "Marcus Garvey, Negro, Goes after DuBois, Colored," 20 April 1923, 6; for in-depth assessment on the rapprochement between Garvey and the Klan, see Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), 344-58; and Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 153-61.

⁹The standard work on this topic still seems to be John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955); see also Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 149-62; Frank B. Bean, George Vernicz, and Charles B. Keely, *Opening and Closing Door, Evaluating Immigration Reform and Control* (Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1989); and E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Free Press, 1981).

welcome from many Americans, who felt that the newcomers presented a definite threat to the existing culture. To deal with this threat, the melting pot theory was developed, with the public schools assigned a major role in the process. The hope was that through education the newer generations of immigrants would assimilate into the dominant culture and at least some level of homogeneity could be maintained.¹⁰

During World War I many Americans perceived the newer immigrants, along with some older immigrant stocks (German and Irish), as dangerous to the Republic since they held loyalties to countries against which the United States was fighting. There was considerable tightening of controls on these hyphenate-Americans both legally and informally. Legally, Congress passed a new Sedition Act that made it illegal to say or do anything considered detrimental to the war effort. Informally, the emergence of vigilante organizations such as the American Protective League and the Citizen's Bureau of Investigation, to which Imperial Wizard Simmons belonged, often led to violence against recent immigrants. The xenophobia did not end with the Armistice of 1919, as the Red Scare soon reagravated peoples fears of foreign influence; this time it was bolshevism. It was widely perceived that many newer immigrants came from countries where this type of political contagion flourished.¹¹

¹⁰For an historiographical view of the melting pot theory, see Edward N. Saveth, *American Historians and European Immigrants, 1875-1925* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1965), 122-49.

¹¹Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 209-33; Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions, 1917-1933* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 48-52; and Stanley Coben, "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-1920," *Political Science Quarterly* 79 (1964): 52-75.

The Red Scare eventually died down, but the fear of culturally diverse immigration did not. The Klan, although by no means alone in its desire to curb immigration, was one of the most vocal and powerful groups advocating the policy. As E. C. Bramlett wrote in the *Texas American*:

But when our country was mobilizing her armies she found a chain of spies and men, and organizations in the land, who were not Americans in heart, but were loyal to our enemies The riff raff of foreign countries coupled with the native degenerates are a menace to decent society as well as to observance and enforcement [sic] of law. These need to be Americanized or our ports of egress opened so wide and promptly that true men can rejoice over the happy loss of such inhabitants. One other thing is needed and has been needed badly and that is a law against all immigration.¹²

Thus, those foreigners who did not uphold the principles of the Klan were spies, riff raff, and lawbreakers.

One class of "lawbreaker" that the Klan could not contenance was the anti-prohibitionist. For generations, many Protestants had fought against the evil scourge of alcohol.¹³ Now, at last, the amended Constitution affirmed the evil nature of spirits.¹⁴ Yet there were still those who attempted to turn back the clock to a time when alcohol was legal. These forces took two forms. The first were the lawbreakers or bootleggers.

¹²*Texas 100 Per Cent American*, "The Journal Refuses to Print, and For What?," 26 May 1922, 4.

¹³To gain an understanding of the prohibitionist viewpoint see Atticus Webb, *Face the Facts Relating to the Wet and Dry Issues* (Dallas: The Anti-Saloon League of Texas, 1927).

¹⁴On prohibition see Norman H. Clark, *Deliver us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: Norton Press, 1976); Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking In America: A History* (New York: Free Press, 1982); and *Law, Alcohol, and Order: Perspectives on National Prohibition* edited by David E. Kyvig, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Bootleggers, the Klan believed, were some of the most evil people around, taking advantage of people's general weakness to satiate their material greed. Secondly, those who worked in a legal way to overturn the constitutional amendment were not much better. Most of those involved in this type of scandalous behavior, the Klan suspected, were foreigners. To illustrate this fact, the *Texas American* reprinted an article from the *Christian Science Monitor* describing a "wet" convention in Chicago. "Chicago's great population of foreign extraction was conspicuous by its representation," the article reported, "prominent German-Americans and Bohemians made up a good share of those on the speakers platform, while a popular Italian judge delivered one of the addresses." To the Klan this was proof of the degeneracy of foreigners. The Klan paper tacked a comment onto the end of the article that suggested these same foreigners were "sending money into Texas to fight prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan."¹⁵

Alcohol was not the only foreign-imported menace to America. Although the hysteria of the Red Scare died down after 1920, fear of radicalism did not disappear. The Klan thought it had discovered a radical plot to destroy America in the fall of 1922. In a front page story, the Dallas Klan published a proclamation by E. Y. Clarke, imperial wizard pro tem, suggesting that Klan investigators had discovered a plot to "disrupt national unity." He did not mention the perpetrators but attributed the plot to "the hairy claw of Bolshevism, Socialism, Syndicalism, I.W.W.'ism and other isms" According to Clarke, evidence existed proving these isms were infiltrating almost every

¹⁵*Texas American*, "Hyphenates in Van at Chicago's Rally to Boost Beer Plot," 22 September 1922, 2.

American institution, from political bodies, to the press, to American homes. Lest anyone think this was a mindless attack on foreigners, he suggested that the enemies of the Republic received "much comfort and encouragement from a great number of silly, hair-brained Americans." Nevertheless, it was clear, the article asserted, that foreigners were directing the subversive activities.¹⁶

The Klan suggested three steps to stop this insidious attack on Americanism. First, it declared war on all those seeking "to undermine the very fundamentals of the Nation." Second, it planned to publish a series of articles explaining bolshevism and identifying its principal American proponents. Third, klansmen were urged to prepare themselves to do whatever part they were called upon in this fight. "Klansmen must gird themselves for battle," Clarke declared, "for the enemy is at our very gate."¹⁷ True to his word, Clarke did begin a series of articles entitled "Awakening America." In this series, Clarke evaluated what the founding fathers meant by the phrase "all men are created equal." They could not have meant what they said literally because most of them were, themselves, slaveowners. He concluded that they really meant that "Englishmen in America were as good as Englishmen in England." The broad interpretation sometimes applied to "all men are created equal" was, according to Clarke, foolishness and the very reason for the immigration problem.

The Klansman is an uncompromising advocate of selective immigration. He demands that the gateways to his country be closed to those people who have

¹⁶Ibid., "PROCLAMATION," 6 October 1922, 1; and "Klan Discovers Effort to Destroy American Unity," 6 October 1922, 2.

¹⁷Ibid., PROCLAMATION, 1.

proven that they cannot appreciate the ideals and traditions of an Anglo-Saxon civilization, and who are temperamentally [sic] antagonistic toward us. He abhors the sickening sentimentality which actuates a portion of the native stock of this country to encourage unlimited immigration and thereby provoke certain racial suicide.¹⁸

Thus, Clarke and the Klan viewed unrestricted immigration as a great threat to American society, its institutions, and perhaps even to its very existence.

Clarke's articles did not continue after Evans gained control of the Klan and forced him out of the Klan. Xenophobic viewpoints, however, did continue to dominate in the Evans-led Klan and, in fact, became considerably more refined. What Clarke hinted at, and what Evans was willing to put a bit more bluntly, was that non-Anglo-Saxon foreigners were racially inferior. He laid out his position in a comprehensive manner in a speech (later published) given at the Klan day at the Texas State Fairgrounds in Dallas on 24 October 1923. What was good for the U.S., he suggested, was good for the world. This was born out by the early years of America's history when "the best the earth had to offer" came to our shores.¹⁹

But in the latter years of the nineteenth century, the immigration stream began to change, and in a way that was not pleasing to the imperial wizard:

Then, suddenly, the character of our immigration changed. The sources of our citizenship became radically different. There was a fundamental inferiority of racial and national strains. The Anglo-Saxon, the Scandinavian and the Teuton began to recede, with an overwhelming preponderance of peoples like the Slav, the Latin, and the Greek.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., "Awakening America," 10 November 1922, 3.

¹⁹Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 7.

²⁰Ibid., 8.

This new flow of immigration did not, however, spread evenly in the United States. The South, for example, received very few of the newer immigrants, while the North and Midwest were inundated. The South, Evans suggested, had its own problem with the negro race. The urban areas of the New York-New England section had received the greatest influx of inferior immigrants. "Together," Evans averred, "the South with its negro problem, and the New York-New England section with its hordes of inferior immigrants, are largely responsible for much of the political prostitution that is now a curse to our country."²¹

How did he know that the immigrants were inferior? First, he looked at the literacy of incoming immigrants, suggesting that the older European immigrants had an illiteracy rate of 2.7 percent as compared to 26.7 percent of the immigrants that came between 1899 and 1909. In 1917, the literacy test was added, but all those illiterates who came in before 1917 would "remain a life-long drag upon Americanism." In addition, Evans relied chiefly on famed eugenics "expert," Dr. Harry Laughlin, to suggest that the newer immigrants were far more likely to suffer from insanity or to commit crimes. Finally, he looked at tests conducted by the army as part of its recruitment efforts for World War I. These tests showed, Evans suggested, that the foreign born were more prone to both inheritable diseases and venereal disease.²²

This inferior immigration, according to Evans, was doing substantial harm to the composition of American citizenry. The specifics of this harm, as usual in anti-

²¹Ibid., 9.

²²Ibid., 10-17.

immigration tirades, were not made manifest, but it was assumed that they were obvious. He indicted the large manufacturers for lowering national standards in their pursuit of cheap labor. "Is profit more important than the sum total of American Citizenship?" he asked rhetorically. Moreover, the new immigrant stream was leading to the development of dangerous polyglot cities. "You cannot read history," Evans pontificated, "without the discovery that every national calamity outside nature's cataclysms has been born and bred in city environment." With urban centers filling up with unassimilable and inferior immigrants, the Klan believed, and with the internal black migrations, American cities were a catastrophe waiting to happen.²³

What was to be done about these problems? The government, Evans believed, had begun to take the steps necessary to correct the situation, but still had a ways to go. First, Congress should put a stop to all immigration, on an emergency basis, except where immediate families were separated. Next, standards should be developed for determining which immigrants were acceptable. Immigrants should be admitted based on their ability, fitness, and potential, and these factors should be evaluated before they left for America's shores. Finally, the quota system instituted in 1921 should be retained and expanded to include western hemisphere countries, but should use 1880 as its base year instead of 1910. This would insure that the vast majority of those who did get in would be "of the Nordic types, the kindred, desirable, easily assimilable kind."²⁴

²³Ibid., 18-21.

²⁴Ibid., 24-30.

Klan 66, always faithful to the ideas and dreams of Dr. Evans, continued to push for an immigration law that fit these biases. The nation was "biting off more than it could chew," the *Texas American* asserted. The paper implored its readers that if they "would keep America American, and prevent its becoming polyglot, alien, and finally Roman Catholic, to write to your Senators and Representatives, and tell them you stand for the measures which would restrict immigration for the next five years."²⁵ In April, it urged Congress to "Hurry the Immigration Bill" before it could be strangled by alien influences. After the bill finally passed, the *Texas American* published a list of those Senators who had voted against it and urged Coolidge not to use his veto pen.²⁶ No doubt there was great rejoicing when the bill was signed into law (the issues of the *Texas American* around the day he signed the bill have not survived), but even after the bill was law, the paper continued to sound warnings about the malevolence of foreign influence in America.²⁷

Klansmen had much to be happy about in the final immigration restriction that came about. The final bill included quota restrictions based on the 1890 census. It included provision for approving immigrants before they started their trip overseas. It barred Asians in total from emigrating to the United States, a provision that West Coast klansmen had pushed for. Most amazing was the debate on the floor of Congress over

²⁵*Texas American*, "Immigration and Civilization," 1 February 1924, 7; and "What Say You, Americans?," 8 February 1924, 1.

²⁶*Ibid.*, "Will Coolidge, Veto Immigration Bill?," 2 May 1924, 3.

²⁷*Ibid.*, "Facing the Facts," 18 July 1924, 1; and "Militant America is on Trial," 1 August 1924, 1.

immigration. At times, it sounded remarkably like the speech Hiram Evans gave at Dallas in 1923. There was talk of the inferiority of the current immigration stream.²⁸ Eugenics played an important part in the discussion, and Dr. Laughlin testified as an expert witness before a sub-committee.²⁹ There were a few lonely souls like Adolph Sabbath of Chicago, who fought in vain against the eugenic assumptions of inferiority contained in the bill:

The obvious purpose of this discrimination, however much it may now be disavowed, is the adoption of an unfounded anthropological theory that the nations which are favored are the progeny of fictitious and hitherto unsuspected Nordic ancestors, while those discriminated against are not classified as belonging to that mythical ancestral stock. No scientific evidence worthy of consideration was introduced to substantiate this pseudo-scientific proposition.³⁰

In spite of such protest, the bill passed by a five to one margin.³¹ The only aspect of the immigration act that klansmen would have objected to was that Hispanic immigrants remained unrestricted, otherwise it was just what they hoped for. Of course, the Klan had numerous representatives serving in Congress, and no doubt even those who were not klansmen were aware of the growing political power exercised by the members of the Invisible Empire back home.

²⁸*Congressional Record*, House, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, Vol. 65, pt 7:6544.

²⁹US. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *The Immigration Act of 1924: Hearings on H.R. 6540*, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1924, 541-51.

³⁰*Congressional Record*, House, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1924, Vol. 65, pt. 6:5578.

³¹Even those who opposed the Klan sometimes supported immigration restriction with eugenics-based arguments. See French Strother, "The Immigration Peril," *World's Work* 46 (October 1923): 633-37.

II

The growing Jewish immigration also concerned the Klan. Anti-Semitism, already having enjoyed a long history, grew as a worldwide trend in the inter-war years.³² Although the United States typically experienced less overt anti-Semitism than other countries, there have been three related periods of anti-Semitic upheaval in America. The first, from the 1890s to 1914, was associated with agrarian dissatisfaction. The last, during the 1930s, was part of the fascist-like attempt to blame Jews for the Great Depression. In between was the period from 1920-1927, characterized by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and Henry Ford's anti-Semitic newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*.³³

It is true, however, that the Klan's view of the Jew was different than it was of the "inferior" races streaming in from southern Europe. Rather, they adopted a curious ambiguity about Jews. On the one hand, klansmen admired many of the Jews' characteristics. The Klan perceived that Jews' willingness to work together, deal as exclusively with one another as they could, and avoid inter-marrying whenever possible, was a kind of clannishness that could be admired. If only klansmen could learn to work together as effectively, it would mean a great improvement in ability of the Invisible Empire to improve American life. Moreover, the reasons for the Jew's clannishness, his long centuries of persecution, and the lack of a homeland were lamentable.³⁴

³²Emil J. Long, *2,000 Years: A History of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Exposition Press, 1953).

³³David A. Gerber, ed., *Anti-Semitism in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 29.

³⁴Evans, *Menace of Modern Immigration*, 22-23; Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at their First*

On the other hand, because the Jew was so clannish, the Klan averred, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to assimilate him into 100 percent Americanism. Here there also was ambiguity. In a speech in North Carolina in July 1923, Imperial Wizard Evans suggested that Jewish assimilation might be possible, if the Klan were to grow large enough, by simply overwhelming them with numbers. "We are organizing a Klan so large," he suggested, "so much bigger than their Klan, and if we will just do to them what I am talking to you about -- if we can fix it so the Jew will boast of being an American instead of a Jew he will be gone."³⁵ At his speech in Dallas, however, Evans had evidently changed his mind. "By every patriotic test, he is an alien and unassimilable," the wizard declared, "not in a thousand years of continuous residence would he form basic attachments comparable to those the older type of immigrant would form within a year."³⁶

In the less favorable view, the negative traits of the Jewish population, as interpreted by Evans, were more pronounced. The Jew would not tie himself to the land, or rarely even get involved in constructive labor, so great was his need to be ready to flee persecution. He never contributed to the formation of wealth in the economy but instead engaged in finance as the "money lender, the pawn broker, who, from the emergencies and tragedies of the poor, derived his gains." The wealth he thus accumulated he would not invest in any permanent enterprise but sought to store it in "some tangible, quickly

Annual Meeting Held at Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923 (Atlanta, 1923, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 117-23.

³⁵Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, 12.

³⁶Evans, *Menace of Modern Immigration*, 23.

convertible, easily movable, kind of wealth which is in no vital way related to and dependent upon social and national values."³⁷ The Jew, according to Evans, could claim little of the credit for doing the work of carving out the great American civilization. He had not helped to conquer the land, overthrow tyranny, or develop American institutions to any significant degree. Instead, he came after these tasks were accomplished and was welcomed with open arms by Americans. In no country in recent history had Jews been treated so amicably, Evans asserted. Yet, he repaid this benevolent treatment with an exclusiveness that was insulting to "true" Americans.³⁸

The ambivalent position of the Klan reflected a desire to have Jewish support for its positions and candidates. Evans stated the Klan position best when he reflected that it was "passing strange that the Jew in America should be mobilized with the hostile forces against the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan."³⁹ The *Texas American* seemed to deal with the Jewish "problem" only when it was soliciting their support or condemning their stand on political or social issues. Depending on the advantages or disadvantages to be gained, the paper might invoke praise or criticism for Jews. Such was the case in August 1922, when the paper warned Jews against colluding with Catholics. Such a collusion seemed possible, according to the *Texas American*, because the Catholic press had been making friendly overtures toward Jews in recent publications. "The intelligent Jew," the paper

³⁷Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, 121.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 120; for an alternative view of both the role of Jewish immigrants and the economic value of "middlemen," see Thomas Sowell, *Migrations and Cultures: A World View* (New York: BasicBooks, 1996), 27-35.

³⁹Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, 118.

lectured, "can ascribe honestly to the American when the American forms a coalition with himself." The clear implication of the paper's position was that Jews needed to be wary of any attempt by Catholics to form a similar coalition against "Americans."⁴⁰

As the Klan issue heated up, both sides attempted to bring Jews in on their coalition. After the 1922 senatorial election, longtime Dallas businessman and former mayor Henry D. Lindsley wrote a letter to a prominent Jewish leader in New York, subsequently published in the *Texas American*. The letter suggested that Texas Jews had failed to do their part in defeating the Klan candidate. His suggested reason for this failure was fear of a promised Klan boycott if Jews vigorously opposed Mayfield. Like Evans, Lindsley attempted to shame Jews into supporting his position by claiming that:

In this country, for the first time in the history of the modern world, the Jews have enjoyed the full privileges of citizenship. . . . And yet when an organization which you rightly denounce as un-American, and which is particularly anti-Jewish, comes into American political life, the Jew abstains from even registering a protest by his vote if there be put over his head the fear of loss in business through the business boycott.⁴¹

Not to be outdone, *Texas American* editor, J. W. Hutt, sent an open letter to New York's well known Rabbi John W. Wise. Wise had recently come out very decidedly against the Ku Klux Klan, and Hutt wanted to take him to task for his position. He suggested that the Catholic church was the long-time enemy of the Jew and wondered why Wise would align himself with such an enemy. He urged Wise to reconsider his position, but if he

⁴⁰*Texas American*, "To the Jew Citizens," 25 August 1922, 4; "The Knight of the Ku Klux Klan and the Jew," 20 October 1922, 3.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, "Lindsley Says Jews Hold Business Above Principle," 8 December 1922, 1.

would not then Hutt hoped Wise's followers would "refuse to follow a blind leader back into bondage."⁴²

In 1923, it appeared that the Klan was having its way in the Jewish community. James Ferguson, the anti-Klan candidate, had moved the headquarters of his *Ferguson Forum* to Dallas in 1922, and had solicited Jewish support both for his magazine and for his candidacy against Earle Mayfield. Having failed to gain much support in the Dallas Jewish community, Ferguson wrote a scathing editorial in his magazine attacking Jews. "Nineteen hundred years ago the Jews formed themselves into a mob and lynched the Savior of men on the Cross of Calvary," he declared, "by the eternal that reigns above, they shall not again be allowed to hook up with another mob and lynch religious and political liberty on the Cross of Greed and Gain."⁴³ The *Texas American*, meanwhile, reported that "all over the United States the Jewish people have had a change of heart regarding the Ku Klux Klan."⁴⁴

By the gubernatorial election of 1924, things had changed. The Jewish leadership had responded to the challenge laid down by Henry Lindsley and rallied their community against the Klan. In Dallas, a consortium of Jewish business and religious leaders led the anti-Klan effort including, Rabbi David Lefkowitz, Julius Schepps, and the Sanger brothers. Alex Sanger and Rabbi Lefkowitz were both members of the Dallas County

⁴²Ibid., "An Open Letter to Rabbi Wise, of New York," 8 December 1922, 1.

⁴³*Ferguson Forum*, "The Cloven Foot of the Dallas Jew'," as reprinted in the *Texas American*, 8 August 1924, 1.

⁴⁴*Texas American*, "The Jewish People are Having a Change of Heart," 23 March 1923, 1.

Citizens League Advisory Board. Regardless of Jewish opposition, Dallas county still went solidly for the Klan candidate, Felix Robertson, in the election.⁴⁵

As in past elections, the Klan tried to enlist Jewish support for its candidate. In 1924, it reprinted Jim Ferguson's rabid anti-Jewish editorial from 1923, in an attempt to discourage Jews from voting for Mrs. Ferguson.⁴⁶ Although Jewish opposition did not stop Robertson from carrying Dallas County, post election comments from the Klan suggest a statewide impact. The *Texas American* in its first issue after the election railed against the influence of B'nai B'rith and B'nai Abraham: "There is not a more perniciously active bunch of politicians in the world, not including the Knights of Columbus, than those same Hebrew organizations."⁴⁷ In a later editorial the paper questioned what kind of people would vote for a man who had verbally attacked and abused them the way Ferguson had. "Such conduct on the part of a people, who claim to have pride of race, and to be the seed of Abraham is really unbelievable," the paper railed, "but it is true, and every Jew in Texas has been herded like sheep to vote for that dirty, disreputable crook . . ."⁴⁸

III

Although the Klan had plenty to say about blacks, Jews, and immigrants, all this pales in comparison to the explosion of invective thrown against Catholics. The battle

⁴⁵Marilyn Wood Hill, "A History of the Jewish Involvement in the Dallas Community" (Master's Thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1967), 52-3.

⁴⁶*Texas American*, "'The Cloven Foot of the Dallas Jew'," 8 August 1924, 1.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, "Klan owes no Man Anything," 29 August 1924, 1.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "Jews Must Have Liked It," 11 November 1924, 1.

between Protestants and Catholics has roots that extend all the way back to 1517 and the beginning of the Reformation. In the United States, significant Protestant/Catholic animosities date from the large Irish immigrations that poured into the U.S. during the 1830s and 1840s. The Know Nothing Party was the major political result of this friction, and the party grew significantly in the late 1850s. Some believe that, had not the issue of slavery intervened, the Know Nothings would have elected a President in 1856 or 1860.⁴⁹ The American Protective Association was another organization that grew partially because of the increased Catholic immigration beginning in the 1880s. The APA, foreshadowing the Klan of the 1920s, worked mostly behind the scenes to encourage employers, landlords, and others to discriminate against Catholics.⁵⁰ The Klan of the 1920s, which consciously and publicly identified itself with the Know Nothings, was the third great anti-Catholic movement in U.S. history.⁵¹

Behind this ages-long animosity lay a set of different assumptions that essentially reveals a continuing culture war. Although this "war" had a religious basis, the lifestyles that accompanied the adherents were so different that it naturally expanded into society and culture. Essentially, the Roman culture emphasized an authoritarian belief system that spilled over from churches into the private community and especially into the schools. Because Roman Catholics were in the minority, they set up separate social

⁴⁹William D. Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950).

⁵⁰Donald L. Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

⁵¹*Texas American*, "History of Know-Nothing Party," 21 December 1923, 1.

institutions like the parochial school system to keep their social and cultural communities intact. Moreover, Catholic adherents tended to band together in their own neighborhoods, where they established their own churches, businesses, lodges, and charities. This exclusiveness was often viewed with a jaundiced eye by their Protestant neighbors, many of whom still harbored long-held fears of Catholic attempts to dominate Protestants in other countries.⁵²

Many Protestants, on the other hand, had adopted the ideas of republicanism and democracy, not only as a part of their civic virtue but in their religious institutions as well. Since the people were the wellspring of virtue that had overturned the authoritarianism of George III and instituted the Republic, it only followed that they would be the wellspring of virtue in their churches. Any trend away from the ideas of republicanism and democracy toward authoritarianism was considered not only regressive but dangerous to the American form of government. Naturally, it was easier for Protestants to take this position since their numerical superiority assured that their votes would rule the day in any important issue.⁵³

This was the case, of course, only if Protestants maintained their numerical superiority. But the rising tide of immigration from southern and eastern Europe added considerably to the number of Catholic adherents in the country. The Klan was fond of

⁵²A good attempt to look at some of these issues in a rational light is found in, Philip Scharper, ed., *American Catholics: A Protestant-Jewish View* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959).

⁵³Lerond Curry, *Protestant-Catholic Relations in American, World War I through Vatican II* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 1-35.

pointing out that if the number of Catholics coming into the country in the early part of the twentieth century continued, the U.S. would not long remain a Protestant country.⁵⁴ A further problem was that the inefficiency of a democratic form did not measure up to the efficiency of an authoritarian one. The maintenance of American democratic ideals required a significant majority of Protestants, because there would always be a portion who did not recognize the danger. The "saving few," according to the Klan position, were those Protestants who saw the threat represented by the authoritarian system of Catholicism and acted to overcome it.⁵⁵

The core issue that animated the Klan's anti-Catholicism was the fervent belief that there was a Catholic plot to make America Catholic, hence authoritarian, and thus destroy the American Republic. Silly as it sounds in the post Vatican II world, these men, falling into the traditional American tendency toward conspiracy theories, saw the pope as a great threat to the United States. Speaking of popish plots, the *Texas American* warned that "It is necessary that we be reminded that these same 'cords of connivances' stretch across the Atlantic and are firmly fastened to almost everything of interest to the American people and to the nation." This threat was not limited to religion and culture, the paper warned, "remember that political and territorial control is the goal." A simple but ingenious formula made the threat real:

It is sad but true, that every real Catholic receives his orders from his priest, the priest from the bishops, the bishops from the archbishop, the archbishop from the cardinal, and the cardinal from the Pope . . . really it is pitiable, that these

⁵⁴*Texas American*, "Toleration," 21 April 1922, 2.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, "The Saving Few," 23 November 1923, 1.

"troubles" and upheavals seem to nearly all emanate from the insatiable desire of the Pope to rule the world.⁵⁶

This attempt to rule the world, and particularly to rule America, took both overt and covert forms. Perhaps the most overt form of Catholic attack on American institutions, according to klansmen, was in the realm of education. The American school system was the finest in the world. It was "the corner stone and triumphant arch of our national existence, and without it we would swiftly drift into anarchy and back into the stygian pool of first century darkness."⁵⁷ The Klan believed the Bible was the fount of American ideals. Therefore, it followed that scripture should be read and taught in school. This teaching should not be sectarian in nature, but "from the broad viewpoint of its divine origin and inspiration."⁵⁸ The public schools, therefore, and particularly scripture reading in the schools, were the only way to insure that all Americans would be imbued with the spirit and ideals of a true American.

This meant that the school system must be protected and continually improved. Klansmen, ahead of their time, advocated a cabinet-level Department of Education. Sympathetic congressmen sponsored the Towner-Sterling education bill in 1923, designed to fulfill this wish. The bill was strongly supported by the Klan. The bill, however, ran into trouble both in Congress and with President Harding, who refused to support it. Harding's lack of support was puzzling to the Klan, but the real culprit

⁵⁶Ibid., "How Catholics Control," 6 July 1923, 3.

⁵⁷Ibid., "Catholicism an Enemy to Public Schools," 12 May 1922, 1.

⁵⁸Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, 128; *Texas American*, "Shall the Bible be Read Without Comment in Our Public Schools?," 16 March 1923, 1.

responsible for scuttling the bill was clear to members of the Empire. "The Towner-Sterling Educational Bill must be taken from the pigeon-hole where it has been kept for months by order of an Italian Pope," the *Texas American* complained. Any congressman who refused to vote for the bill or president who refused to support it should not be reelected.⁵⁹

Catholics opposed the public school system, klansmen believed, because it undermined the pope's ability and opportunity to gain control of the American political system. Opposition to the school system did not merely mean the running of a parochial school system for Catholic children; rather, it meant the desire to destroy the public schools as well. This was necessary because "it is the policy of the Catholic Church to keep her subjects ignorant of literature, science and the Bible." In other countries the Church did this by suppressing education in general. This was evident by looking at the level of illiteracy in Catholic countries in Europe and Latin America. In the U.S., however, the Catholic Church could not afford to do so because of the already-established public school system, so it set up a rival parochial school system which indoctrinated its students into authoritarianism and undermined American ideals.⁶⁰

The Klan rarely specified just how Rome was directly attacking the public school system. Occasionally, it presented some specifics, albeit without proof. Such was the case in August 1922, when the Klan was pushing one of its own, Ed Bentley, for the State

⁵⁹*Texas American*, "President Harding's Dangerous Endorsement," 16 March 1923, 1.

⁶⁰Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, 116; Evans, *Menace of Modern Immigration*, 24; *Texas American*, "Romanism," 4 August 1922, 6.

Superintendent of Public Instruction. The *Texas American* published a front page article that accused Catholic landlords in Alma (Kaufman County), Texas, with shutting down the public school. According to the article, there were sixty-eight children ready to attend the Alma public school when the Catholic landlords told their tenants that if they did not transfer their children to the school at the Catholic convent at Irish Ridge, they would evict them from their houses. Within a short time the public school had to close for lack of students. Here was the proof of a Catholic plot, the *Texas American* suggested. The landlords who forced the closing of the school should be sent to prison, and even if only one child could attend, the public school should remain open.⁶¹

The parochial school system was utilized, the Klan believed, to indoctrinate children in the ways of Roman culture. Freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion were all subverted in the minds of these innocent youth and replaced by an unthinking desire to give unquestioning obedience to authority figures, in particular the pope. Moreover, if the child was not Catholic, the Church made an intense effort to convert him to the dogmas of the Universal Church. Evidence suggests that, before the changes of Vatican II, there was some truth to the Klan claims of an overwhelming authoritarianism. The best evidence is the tendency of Catholic-schooled children to rebel from the teachings of their youth and author scathing comments on the treatment they received at parochial schools.⁶² The irony is that Catholic authoritarianism seems to

⁶¹*Texas American*, "Hand of Rome at Throat of School," 18 August 1922, 1.

⁶²Catholic rebels continued to break away from their training in order to condemn the parochial school system into the 1960s. See, for example, Emmett McLoughlin, *American Culture and Catholic Schools* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1960); for an excellent narrative of "priestly tyranny" see, Alan Ehrenhalt, *Lost City: Discovering the Forgotten*

have alienated some Catholic children rather than, as the Klan feared, indoctrinated them into unquestioning obedience.

The parochial school problem was not the only danger or even the most pressing one perceived by the Klan. The real threat lay in the growing numbers of Catholics immigrating into the country. If their numbers became large enough, it would mean the end of the public school system as well as the American Republic. Such a threat was real even before Catholics became a majority, the Klan believed, because of their ability to marshal votes in an organized manner. The Catholic Church was, in the Klan ideology, a political machine whose mission was to destroy Protestant America. It was out to do away with "free conscience, free speech, free press, public schools, and the right of worship according to the dictations of conscience." Its power was already so strong that it controlled "70 per cent of the political appointments of our country." Other patently false "facts" were asserted to prove the Catholic Church's strength. In the major cities, three-quarters of all public school teachers were Catholic, 62 percent of all office holders (including both elective and appointive) were Catholic, all American cities with populations over 10,000 had an average of over 90 percent Catholic officers on their police forces, and the ludicrous list droned on.⁶³ To show how close Catholicism was to achieving its goals, klansmen asserted that the Church had already purchased land near

Virtues of Community in the Chicago of the 1950s (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), 125-35.

⁶³This list can be found in a pamphlet entitled "Facts For Patriotic Americans," 3N105, Crane Papers.

Washington, D. C., to build its new capitol, something that the *Texas American* claimed Catholics had been boasting about doing for years.⁶⁴

Using Catholic votes was not the only method of controlling the country, according to the Klan. One of the most effective covert methods employed by the Church was the advancement of its agenda through deceived, pliable Protestants. This view was particularly handy for klansmen because it allowed them to dismiss the anti-Klan arguments put forward by their fellow Protestants. A. C. Parker, the exalted cyclops of Klan 66, made this charge to Martin Crane during the fight between the Klan and the Dallas County Citizens League.

You as a Protestant and a Mason, (and in this connection I recall the fact that I helped raise you through the Scottish Rite Order to the Thirty-second Degree) know that the favorite policy of the Roman Catholic hierarchy is to work, if possible through Protestant forces which are pliable. You know that since this government was established this has been their principle method of activity, and you know also that Rome has never stopped at anything, nor has she ever quibbled at the cost of millions to accomplish her purpose in controlling governmental affairs and the free institutions of this country. If you do not believe these things then you do not believe the things that are taught by Masonry.

For Parker, Crane's opposition to the Klan, "the one great united Protestant organization which if firmly set for the preservation and exaltation of those ideals and institutions that every American holds dear," was proof that he was one of those flexible Protestants being used by the pope to destroy the country.⁶⁵

The authoritarian and covert threat of Catholicism was the chief justification for organizing an authoritarian and covert Ku Klux Klan. Indeed, the authoritarian nature of

⁶⁴*Texas American*, "The Political Aspirations of the Roman Hierarchy," 16 June 1922, 3.

⁶⁵A. C. Parker to M. M. Crane, 3N105, Crane Papers.

the Klan was at times somewhat of an embarrassment. It was one of the main points of opposition used by enemies of the Klan. Coming under particular criticism was the Klan oath. Anti-Klanners pointed out that non-klansmen were "aliens" until they went through the initiation process and were "naturalized." Thus, even the wording used by the Klan suggested they were preemptive of American citizenship. One specific clause in the klansman's oath was troublesome as well. "I swear that I will keep secure to myself a secret of a Klansman when same is committed to me in the sacred bond of Klansmanship . . . treason against the United States of America, rape, and malicious murder, alone accepted," the oath read.⁶⁶

This clause was justification for some to dissemble regarding membership in the Klan. Many Klaverns believed, Klan 66 chief among them, that secret membership was a crucial factor in the success of the Klan. Of course, as public pressure mounted against the Invisible Empire, it was crucial to avoid being a known klansman. What position should a klansman take, when under oath in a court of law, for example, regarding the naming of fellow klansmen or admitting personal membership in the organization? For some, unless the crime involved treason, rape, or murder, they were not free to discuss membership, even under oath. In Beaumont, Austin, and Wichita Falls, klansmen went to jail or accepted large fines rather than answer questions under oath regarding their Klan affiliations.⁶⁷ J. B. Cranfill, prominent Dallas physician and Christian author, brought up

⁶⁶Winfield Jones, *Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: The Tocsin Publishers, 1941), 237.

⁶⁷Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930* (Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1962), 18-21.

this unwillingness to obey the law when he was trying to convince a good friend of his to leave the Klan.

You know as well as I do that in Texas now we have some outstanding instances of Klan insubordination and absolute contempt of the law. The case at Austin is notorious. The same is the case at Wichita Falls. In other words, the Klansman's oath to a Klansman is superior to any oath he may take either to defend and uphold the Constitution or in a court of law when inquiry is sought to be made into the crimes of a fellow-Klansman.⁶⁸

Sandefers answer was essentially that, although the Klan was not perfect, things had become considerably better than before its revival.⁶⁹

Other Klan opponents directly refuted the Klan's claim of a popish plot to overthrow the American Republic. San Antonio lawyer and Klan opponent William B. Teagarden wrote a letter to the San Antonio Klan attacking the KKK's conspiratorial view.

The ghost of the temporal power of the Pope, which you parade before the people in your wide-spread propaganda, may influence credulous people who want to be deceived, but intelligent people know the truth of history to be that the Pope has been stripped of all pretensions to temporal power, save in Spain, where but a shadow of it remains, and this was accomplished by and with the assistance of the Catholic people.⁷⁰

Former Texas Governor Oscar B. Colquitt appeared genuinely puzzled about the resurgent anti-Catholicism when he wrote his platform for the 1922 senate race. "Why

⁶⁸J. B. Cranfill to J. D. Sandefers, 29 April 1922, 3K448, J. B. Cranfill Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁶⁹Sandefers to Cranfill, 5 May 1922, 3K448, Cranfill Papers.

⁷⁰William B. Teagarden to Ku Klux Klan, 28 October 1923, 2G514, William B. Teagarden Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

should there be in our country, at this time, a feeling of religious intolerance?," Colquitt asked rhetorically.⁷¹

The Klan attempted to deflect such criticism by aiming similar barbs at the Knights of Columbus. To obfuscate the issue, the Klan began publishing a bogus oath, which it claimed was the official Knights of Columbus oath. This oath, which included lines like "by virtue of the keys of binding and loosing given his Holiness by my savior, Jesus Christ, he hath power to depose heretical kings, princes, States, Commonwealths, and Governments and to the utmost of my power I will defend this doctrine . . .," was published in the *Texas American* alongside the objectionable parts of the Klan oath. The paper asked the readers to peruse carefully the two oaths and come to their own conclusions.⁷²

Klansmen charged that the "K of Cs" or "Caseys," as they derogatorily called them, were a militant arm of the pope specifically designed to help in the overthrow of American democracy. The Knights of Columbus were rewriting American history to reflect a Catholic perspective, the *Texas American* declared.⁷³ A few weeks later it published a short piece about George Washington that allegedly came from a Catholic magazine. Essentially, the piece painted Washington as a profane, immoral, drunk, who loved money, but not much else. "There was BUT ONE PURPOSE in this scurrilous

⁷¹Platform of Oscar B. Colquitt, 2E170, Oscar B. Colquitt Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷²*Texas American*, "Which Oath is Strongest," 7 April 1922, 3; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 111.

⁷³*Ibid.*, "Knights of Columbus Rewrite U.S. History," 28 April 1922, 1.

attack on Washington," the paper thundered, "and it was . . . so that when the Knights of Cerebus come around to take the capital for the dago pup on the Tiber, he will not have so much opposition."⁷⁴

The authoritarian threat represented by the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic political machine was not the Klan's only objection to the Universal Church. They also believed it was a morally deficient body, because the Church's attempt to control political entities precluded it from concentrating on the improvement of human morality. Moreover, the Church's organization and doctrine, especially including celibacy, convents, monasteries, and the confessional, tended to tempt people beyond their ability to resist. Specifically, the Klan tried to illustrate these problems by publicizing Maria Monk-like stories of unwilling imprisonment, sexual promiscuity, and other salacious behavior.

The *Texas American* spattered its pages with stories of ex-nuns and children of Catholic/Protestant mixed marriages who allegedly experienced untoward or illegal behavior at the hands of a priest or some other Catholic official. Nearly every issue of the paper included an advertisement for a book called *Convent Cruelties: A True Story* supposedly by ex-nun H. S. Jackson, for fifty cents a copy. The ad also suggested that, for those interested, a lecture describing these conditions could be arranged. Also typical was an article by E. C. Bramlett, accusing 48 percent of priests of having illicit sexual relations. The paper cited examples of a priest who drugged a nun to force his unwanted attentions upon her, and of two priests who had seduced fifteen-year-old girls. The

⁷⁴Ibid., "Now the Catholic Press Attacks George Washington," 2 June 1922, 1.

stories never seem to end. In this case, the writer did not lay the fault with the priests themselves, but with the policy of celibacy. He quoted a Catholic publication that extolled celibacy saying that priests could live in such a state of purity only through the "interposition of God." "The finger of God and the interposition of God' has been making some great failures," Bramlett concluded, "since the Catholic system introduced priestly celibacy in the priests."⁷⁵

The confessional was another part of Catholic practice to which the Klan objected. The confessional, according to the Klan, was born of the heretical idea that men could forgive sin. It was part of a "devilish desire to be Lord, God and King over man." It put priests in a position where they heard salacious details and thus were tempted beyond their ability. But the worst part was the tendency toward license that the confessional wrought. Catholics could ignore the law of God, the Klan suggested, throughout the year as long as they occasionally went to confession and had their sins forgiven. The confessional had neither a scriptural nor a moral basis for its existence.⁷⁶

Wherever they could, the Klan liked to tie two or more of its prejudices together in hopes of elevating the level of emotion. Such was the case when the *Texas American* protested the Catholic recruitment of blacks into the Church. A training school for black priests, the paper reported, had opened in Greenville, Mississippi. Already, white women were being forced to wait on these apprentice priests as they went about their training. What would happen when they became full-fledged priests? "If you don't believe there

⁷⁵Ibid., "Double Lives of Some Priests Exposed by Nuns," 13 April 1923, 6.

⁷⁶Ibid., "The Nasty, Crime-Breeding Confessional Must Go," 26 May 1922, 1.

will be a wholesale ravishing of honor, chastity, purity and womanly virtue by these black-robed sons of Ham, you have another think coming," the paper fumed. The very idea of "bachelor Negro Buck Priests" in the confessional rather than "in their place" was so appalling to the writer that he exclaimed, "the greatest crime ever practiced against the Negro was to teach him that he is on a par with the white man."⁷⁷

The ultimate moral problem with Catholicism, according to the Klan, was that it was just too power hungry to obey the dictates of conscience and moral law. Because Catholic authorities were sworn to obey their superiors, no matter what the request, and because these same authorities could forgive sin, it was a lesser sin for a Catholic to break a moral law in the furtherance of an order from a superior. This, the Klan believed, was the rule rather than the exception, which meant Catholic subversives (the two terms were almost synonymous to klansmen) were incredibly hard to ferret out because they hid behind a mask of religion. The only way to deal with such a secret, insidious threat to the country was to build a similar, yet opposing, organization that would stand up for true American values: the Ku Klux Klan.⁷⁸

It is difficult to convey the volume and breadth of the anti-Catholicism that poured forth from the pages of the *Texas American*. For 1923, as an example, there are forty-five surviving issues of the weekly. Thirty-one of those issues are four pages, while fourteen are eight pages in length. In this relatively small amount of space were at least 150 articles with headlines that included Rome, priest, Catholic, or pope, or contained

⁷⁷Ibid., "Black Priests of Rome," 23 June 1923, 1.

⁷⁸Ibid., "Tolerance --- Can Roman Catholics be Honest?," 2 February 1923, 3.

substantive discussion of Catholic issues, an average of more than three per issue. But even this obscures the volume of anti-Catholic rhetoric, for nearly every article in the paper, even those that did not deal specifically with Catholicism or include a Catholic derivative in their title, made some mention of Rome. Only when some dramatic political development unfolded did anti-Catholicism fade from the pages of the *Texas American*. When Oklahoma's Governor Walton used martial law to attack the Klan, for example, anti-Catholic articles took a back seat to anti-Walton harangues for a few issues. Even in this situation, Walton was tied into the pernicious influence of Catholicism in a few articles.

Indeed, the fact is that almost everything the Klan opposed, whether in world affairs, domestic politics, business, or society, was demonized by attaching to it the hated label of Rome. Whether or not the object of attack was actually or visually associated with Rome in any manner was of little importance to klansmen, or at least to those Klan writers who attempted to influence their associates. Well before the atomic bi-polar world came into existence in the post-World War II era, klansmen believed in a bi-polar world of their own. It was the Klan versus Catholicism; the imperial wizard versus the pope; Protestant ministers versus priests; and loyal Americans versus pseudo and anti-Americans. Some refused to understand these dichotomies. Spies, fence sitters, and useful idiots helped to undermine the cause of true Americanism. The newer immigrants were the shock troops of the pope, blacks were a potential subversive force vulnerable to recruitment, and Jews were mercenaries who would choose the side which paid the most.

All Americans had to choose a side, because neutrals were worse than enemies.

Therefore, in the Klan's view, those who were not for them, were against them.

It was the ability of the Klan to convince people of the reality of this world struggle that enabled it to hold the loyalty of millions of people for several years. It is not particularly surprising that the Klan could play on the fears of Americans at that time. World War I had come as a shock to the world. Just when social Darwinists were proclaiming that society had evolved to a higher state where the wars and carnage of the past would exist no more, along came the bloodiest, most barbaric war in human history. Bolshevism appeared to be a modern curse that resulted from the war. Socialist ideas, rarely distinguished from bolshevism, were antithetical to the American ideas of private property and individual responsibility. Socialism had already shown its subversive and violent tendencies in such events as Chicago's Haymarket affair in 1887. Now a European country had gone red and appeared willing to export these ideas into America. Labor unrest at the beginning of the decade led to the impression, among many, that the Bolsheviks were having just a little too much success in their efforts. Immorality and lawlessness, often combined in the dark and illegal recesses of a speakeasy, were also signs of the times. The ideas of Freud began to combine with the newfound ability to find seclusion provided by the automobile. The result was an increasing sexual promiscuity.

Something or someone had to be responsible for this sudden deterioration. On the surface the newer, morally and physically inferior immigrant (as the Klan saw them) appeared as the most logical culprit. But as klansmen looked closer at the immigrant,

they found something even more disturbing, his Catholicism. It was not important to Klan leaders that there was a dissonance between Catholic dogma and such problems as sexual immorality, for example. What was important was that anti-Catholicism was a widely-enough shared prejudice that it could become the rallying cry for the Klan in its effort to stem the tide against political, moral, and social decay. Moreover, it is clear from the nature of their attacks on Catholics, that Klan leaders did see the Universal Church as a pernicious influence, responsible for many of society's problems.

This view of Klan ideology has significant import for the recent historiographical trend which emphasizes localism as the driving force of the 1920s Klan. This trend was a welcome corrective that has illuminated the goals and programs of local Klaverns around the country. Historians know now that the specific paths taken by local groups were often different. One of the strong points of the Klan was its ability to adapt to unique situations. Nevertheless, in every known local instance, the ideology of the Klan was remarkably similar. It included an anti-black, anti-immigrant, and anti-Jewish sentiment, all centered on a virulent anti-Catholic ideology. The similarity of viewpoint and the consistent use of anti-Catholicism to demonize its opponents, no matter what the local situation might have been, suggests that this ideology bound the organization together into a cohesive unit. Without the handy enemy of Catholicism, the Klan could never have grown to the significant proportions that it did, and all those local people trying to deal with local issues would have needed a different vehicle to get the job done.

That is why it was so important to replace William Simmons with a more intellectually capable person like Hiram Evans. Evans' development of the Klan ideology

into a formidable worldview, using the then accepted science of eugenics and including the emphasis on Catholic plots, helped unify the Klan in a way that Simmons could never have managed. This does not mean that anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic rhetoric was not used to sell the Klan before Evans ascended to the top leadership position. Indeed, these biases were undoubtedly key selling points in convincing Evans to join the Klan in 1920.

What this all means is that localism must be balanced with a conception of the Invisible Empire's national ideology when trying to explain the existence of the 1920s Klan. It is not enough to say that local issues explain the Klan, just as it was insufficient to straitjacket the Klan into a somewhat dubious national concept such as the urban-rural conflict. Local klansmen knew they were in a national organization, and they knew (or believed they knew) what it stood for. They understood that the Klan was an authoritarian organization that looked to the imperial wizard as its maximal leader. As the Dallas Klan fought its political war with the Citizen's Association and the Dallas County Citizen's League, they looked across the battle lines and saw the pernicious influence of Rome on the other side. A few of the enemies the Klan perceived were open advocates of Romanism, some were mercenaries, but most were useful idiots, who had not yet awakened to the great dangers that Rome presented to true Americanism. Nevertheless, they were all enemies of the Klan and thus, enemies of America.

CHAPTER 8

THE DEMISE OF THE KLAN

The Dallas Klavern's domination of Dallas politics began with the county elections of 1922, and continued through the 1924 elections. The 1924 elections, although disastrous for the Klan at the state level, showed the continuing strength of the Invisible Empire in Dallas. Shelby Cox won reelection as District Attorney, defeating the ardently anti-Klan candidate, Cavin Muse, by over six thousand votes. At the state level all the anti-Klan candidates were successful, no thanks to Dallas County, which went for Felix Robertson by over seven thousand votes, and against anti-Klan candidates Dan Moody and Dallasite Joe Bailey, who captured the nominations for attorney general and lieutenant governor, respectively.

By 1924 the tide had turned against the Invisible Empire, and even Klan 66, by the end of the year, watched its membership melt away like a freak spring snow under the sun. In part, Klan 66 was the victim of internal dissension and factionalization that could not be controlled. Although the Klan was careful to keep its internal matters as secret as possible, hints of turmoil in the ranks began surfacing during the 1924 election cycle. The fight over who would be the Klan gubernatorial candidate did not leave the Klavern unscarred and coincided with a fight over who would be the Klan candidate for county sheriff. Once the Klan lost the governor's race to Mrs. Ferguson, the former Dallas cyclops, Zeke Marvin, resigned as grand dragon of the realm and came home to Dallas to

campaign for his former position in Klan 66. He found a divided Klavern, with one camp hostile to his advances and resentful of the high-handed moves he had made as grand dragon. The strength of this hostile faction became evident when Marvin found himself banned from the Invisible Empire. As Klan 66 fell into squabbling factions, its members melted away, thus diminishing the Klavern to such a degree that it was no longer a force in local elections.

Just as local, state, and national considerations played a part in the growth and activities of the Klan, they must be considered in Klan 66's demise. That national issues played a role in the process seems undeniable given the simultaneous and dramatic nature of the Klan's reduction. Beginning in about November 1924, and continuing through 1925, Klaverns across the country underwent a rapid diminution in their numbers. From a high of five to eight million in the spring of 1924, to less than a million by the end of 1925, the Klan lost 80 percent of its membership in a year and a half. It does not seem reasonable to believe that all the local Klan issues simply dried up at the same time. The idea that Klavern's across the country became simultaneously ineffective because of differing local circumstances is not credible.

Rather, there are national trends that must be considered in order to understand the demise of the Klan. One explanation for this rapid rate of attrition was the continuing saga of bad publicity that dogged the Klan throughout its existence. Negative publicity began early in the Klan's existence as Klaverns around the country engaged in violent vigilante activities. One of the most widely reported incidents came out of Inglewood,

California, in April 1922, where a local marshal challenged a group of masked Klansmen, in the process of kidnapping two immigrant "bootleggers." The confrontation resulted in a shootout that left two dead and the local Klavern under a legal cloud. Other incidents that drew national headlines included murders in Louisiana and Indiana, the latter by D. C. Stephenson, the state's grand dragon, and parades that turned deadly in Pennsylvania.

Also adding to the Klan's woes were internal squabbles that tended to factionalize the Invisible Empire at the same time they gave the organization a negative image. Of course, the most famous squabble was the Evans-Simmons dispute that left many Klaverns confused and gave the national press a field day. But there were also lesser disputes worth noting. In Pennsylvania, local klansmen became so disenchanted with the national organization that they sued in court. In Colorado, Dr. John Galen Locke left the Klan and formed a splinter group called the Minute Men of America, which divided the Colorado Klan in two. Meanwhile, Dallas's A. B. Cloud sued Robbie Gill Comer of Arkansas when she attempted to become the imperial commander of the Women's Ku Klux Klan. For those klansmen who cared about the public relations image of the Klan, the indictment and conviction for murder of the Indiana grand dragon, D. C. Stephenson, was the final straw. Thus, the cumulative effect of the continuing stream of negative publicity finally helped lead to a mass exodus of klansmen, particularly the "better type," by the end of 1925.

Another explanation is that the national nervousness, which was a symptom of the postwar world, had eased with the passage of time. By November 1924, five years had

passed since the armistice and people had adjusted to the new world. The spirit of pessimism so prevalent immediately after the war was replaced with a confidence driven by the newly booming economy. The Klan, moreover, had been successful in pursuing some of its goals. The greatest success was in the area of immigration restriction. The Immigration Act of 1924 was just what the Klan wanted in 1923, and it ended any chance that the large influx of southeastern European and Catholic immigrants would resume. This gave xenophobic members of the Klan a chance to reevaluate the nature of the Catholic threat. With the Catholic percentage of the population frozen at about 17 percent, it was unlikely that the pope could prevail in his attempts to take over America. Without the common enemy of Catholicism to bind klansmen together, the tendency toward factionalism and splintering became harder to resist.

Intrastate rivalry must also be considered in the dissolution of the Dallas Klavern. Dallas was a relative newcomer to urban Texas, having only become a major player in the early years of the twentieth century. Its explosive growth made other more established urban centers such as Houston and San Antonio wary of the newcomer. Dallas, on the other hand, was ambitious and hungry. As the Klan gained power in Texas, Klan 66 gained the ascendancy in the Klan. The result was not a happy one for klansmen in San Antonio, and particularly Houston, as they realized the Invisible Empire had become a vehicle for shifting political power to the north. The failure of Dallas's Felix Robertson against Miriam Ferguson signaled the end of the Dallas Klavern's dominance in state politics. This meant the Klan would not be the vehicle to make Dallas dominant in state

politics. This failure was an embarrassment and disappointment to some Dallas klansmen who then left the organization.

Recent revisions of Klan history suggest that local Klaverns tended to fall apart when they could no longer effectively address the local issues that sustained them. In Dallas, local events also played a partial role in the collapse. By 1923, the Dallas Klan had successfully broken up the old political hierarchy. Lacking a local enemy to keep it focused, the Dallas Klavern splintered into two bitterly opposed factions in 1924. But the elections of 1924 showed that the Dallas Klan was still the dominant political force in the county. After the elections, however, the Klavern began to dissipate. It is true that in the municipal elections of 1925, the Dallas electorate overwhelmingly reelected the Klan-backed candidates from 1923. That the incumbents succeeded by emphasizing their records and avoiding any mention of the Klan is a good reflection of just how precipitous the decline of the Klan was. It also suggests that while the Klan was no longer perceived as an effective political vehicle in Dallas, voters did not hold past association with the Invisible Empire against a candidate.

Finally, credit must be given to the continuing criticism against the Dallas Klan, led by the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Dallas Dispatch*, and the Dallas County Citizens League. For years this criticism had done little to limit the growth of the Klan, but after the Klan came to power in 1922, the *Morning News* changed its tactics, no longer aiming for the decisive blow. Rather, the daily chipped away at the image of the Klan by a continuing barrage of stories about Klan violence around the country. The East Coast provided a rich supply of such stories, since the Klan's enemies there were numerous

enough to confront the Knights directly every time they showed their masks in public. When the Klan began to lose its luster in 1924, the wisdom espoused by anti-Klan sources became more evident to a growing body of citizens. The Dallas newspaper's coverage was not the primary reason for the Klan's demise, but with their relentlessly negative barrage over the years, they proved a powerful ally to the foes of the Invisible Empire.

I

The scandals and squabbles that plagued the Klan throughout its existence earned the Invisible Empire a reputation for violence that was not entirely undeserved. Beginning with the serialized stories by the *New York World*, the public associated violence with the Klan. The congressional investigation that soon followed also suggested that klansmen sometimes engaged in violence. Perhaps because of the general nature of the charges, these investigations apparently did not harm the Klan and, in fact, may have stimulated growth in the Klan as some commentators have suggested. When the stories became more specific, and readers could see the impact on individuals, Klan violence became less acceptable.

Such was the case in April 1922, when a Los Angeles County marshal opened fire on klansmen attacking a family of immigrants in suburban Inglewood. Two of the klansmen died and the marshal was injured. The resultant uproar made the papers around the country as the Los Angeles District Attorney raided Klan headquarters, seized the

membership rolls, and published them in the *Los Angeles Times*.¹ There was a Dallas connection to the story, because the *Dallas Dispatch* brought Frank Woerner, the law officer involved, to Dallas to receive a medal for his deed. The Klan newspaper naturally did not appreciate the spirit in which the *Dispatch* acted, pointing out that the marshal had lost his job over the issue and asking why the *Dispatch* would honor a murderer like Woerner.²

In Louisiana the Klan got itself involved in murder in a rather different way. Morehouse Parish was the site of one of the most famous murder cases of the 1920s. The case originated in the friction between two towns, Bastrop and Mer Rouge, which were longstanding rivals. When the Klan came to Morehouse Parish in 1921, many men in Bastrop joined the Invisible Empire while most of those in Mer Rouge refrained. Two men, in particular, Filmore Watt Daniel, son of a wealthy planter, and his friend Thomas L. Richards, an auto mechanic, were highly critical of the Klan. Apparently their antagonism reached the level of threatening the life of a prominent local klansmen. The Morehouse Klavern, led by an elderly Civil War veteran named J. K. Skipwith, began to harass the two young men.³

¹*Los Angeles Times*, "Klansmen Held by Grand Jury," 8 June 1922, 1, 5.

²*Dallas Dispatch*, "Medal Presented to Marshal Who Resisted Klan," date unknown, K. K. K. scrapbook, vol. 2, Jones Collection, Dallas Historical Society; *Texas American*, "Wins Dallas Gold Medal but Loses His Job," 16 June 1922, 1.

³Robert L. Duffas, "Salesmen of Hate: The Ku Klux Klan," *Worlds Work* 46 (May 1923): 31-38; *Literary Digest*, "Murders of Mer Rouge," 76 (January 13, 1923): 10-12; Charles Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 68-75.

On 24 August 1922, the harassment apparently turned into murder. On the way home from a good roads rally, black-robed klansmen stopped the car in which Daniel and Richards were riding. They forced the five occupants out of the car and took them away. The klansmen roughed up the three other occupants but eventually released them. Richards and Daniel, however, were never seen again. Witnesses reported seeing a group of black-hooded men driving down to the local Lake La Fourche. Nevertheless, when the grand jury met the following September, it refused to indict, citing a lack of evidence. No doubt some on the jury were klansmen and this had an impact on their decision.⁴

After the grand jury refused to indict, Mrs. Richards, now an apparent widow with two young children, appealed to Louisiana governor John M. Parker, who became heavily involved. First, he offered a large reward for the arrest and conviction of the kidnapers. Then he asked the Federal government to send help, which they soon did in the form of federal investigators. Next, he put Morehouse Parish under martial law when the Klan reacted to his initiatives with a symbolic attack on the governor's mansion. Eventually, two badly decomposed bodies were found in Lake La Fourche and identified as the two missing men. The state held an open hearing in its attempt to identify the guilty klansmen. During the hearing, witnesses identified four klansmen responsible for the abduction of Daniel and Richards, but no evidence surfaced actually tying them to the murder. The Klan claimed that the two men were still alive, and the bodies were cadavers planted by the state to implicate the Klan.⁵

⁴Duffas, "Salesmen of Hate," 31-33.

⁵Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 70-75.

Ultimately, the state was unable to bring in murder indictments. After holding the open hearing, law enforcement officials convened a new grand jury and presented their evidence, but again the jury declined to file formal charges. Whether this grand jury was dominated by klansmen or not is unclear. Apparently there were problems with the forensic evidence relating to the bodies that tended to back the Klan's claims and would have made conviction difficult. The state continued to prosecute the case by bringing a variety of charges, including kidnapping and assault, against eighteen Morehouse klansmen, but the best it could do was a misdemeanor conviction regarding the illegal use of firearms. The penalty was a ten dollar fine. Officially, the Mer Rouge murders have never been solved.⁶

Back in Texas, the Dallas Klavern paid close attention to the proceedings in its neighboring state. The *Texas American* devoted nearly the entire front page in its 19 January 1923 edition to the situation with the headline in very large type asking, "Is Mer Rouge Affair a 'Frameup?'" Of course, the paper believed it was just that. "It is now generally known throughout Louisiana," the paper suggested, "that the bodies that have been produced are not the bodies of the alleged missing men at all, but are bodies imported into Morehouse Parish for the sole purpose of establishing the corpus delecti [sic]" They also recognized the damage being done to the Klan as an organization by the affair.

Ninety-five per cent of the witnesses so far that have testified in this affair, having the appearance of a court proceeding, with only those testifying who are BITTERLY opposed to the Klan -- they carry the message to the Nation through

⁶Ibid.

the columns of a yellow press that the Klan is a body of outlaws, guilty of monstrous deeds.⁷

The next week its coverage of the case continued with an article reporting that the "Frameup" was falling apart. It suggested that the two men were still alive and possibly hiding out in Oklahoma. It also attempted to elicit sympathy for the Klan by reporting a threat on the life of local Klan leader Skipwith and the near-fatal injuries suffered by Mrs. McCain (the wife of a Klan leader implicated in the murders) in a mysterious automobile accident.⁸

The real significance of this case is the widespread press coverage it received around the country. Magazines and newspapers ran sensationalized headlines tying the Klan to the murders. Ironically, the Mer Rouge investigation was nearly simultaneous with the Evans-Simmons feud in Atlanta. Some newspapers were quick to link the two events. Cyclops Skipwith showed Simmons how much he appreciated the wizard's support in his fight with the state of Louisiana by personally leading a contingent of Simmons's supporters to Atlanta to rally on behalf of the founding father of the revived Klan.⁹

More Klan-related deaths were soon to occur in Pennsylvania. The Klan in the Keystone State, because of the large numbers of immigrants and Catholics who lived there, was more prone to run into vocal and active opposition than in other places. Thus,

⁷*Texas American*, "Is Mer Rouge Affair a Frameup?," 19 January 1923, 1.

⁸*Ibid.*, "Louisiana Frameup Is Breaking Up," "Are Missing Men in Oklahoma?," and "Skipwith Threatened with Death," 26 January 1923, 1.

⁹Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 106.

when the Klan attempted to parade in its official regalia, violence, not always of the Klan's making, often broke out. Such was the case in the summer of 1923, when ten thousand klansmen attempted to parade through the town of Carnegie. The mayor of the town refused to issue the requisite permits, but the Knights, with their national leader Hiram Evans present, decided to march through the town anyway. The klansmen soon ran into a hostile anti-Klan crowd that jostled them, threw rocks, and physically attacked the robed Knights. When klansman Thomas Abbot was shot to death, the Klan retreated and the parade fizzled.¹⁰

Eight months later violence erupted again, this time in the town of Lilly. The Invisible Empire scheduled a rally at Lilly, apparently just to defy the local anti-Klan forces who had successfully kept the Invisible Empire under control. When klansmen marched through the town in their robes, however, a mob met them and drove them back to the train station whence they came. As the klansmen retreated to the station, the mob attacked the rearguard with assorted objects including a firehose. When the last of the klansmen reached the train with the mob on his heels, those already on the train opened fire on the crowd, precipitating a gun battle that resulted in the deaths of four people. A higher death toll was averted only because the engineer moved the train out of the station as fast as possible.¹¹

¹⁰*Morning News*, "Klansman Slain in Battle," 26 August 1923," 1; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 238.

¹¹*Morning News*, "25 Klansmen Held for Investigation," 6 April 1924, Sec. 1, p. 1; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 240-41.

Again, the story made the national news. The press flayed the klansmen so badly that the *Texas American* complained bitterly about the biased coverage. The Dallas paper reproduced headlines of the Lilly gun battle from two San Antonio newspapers, one Klan-friendly and the other opposed. The *San Antonio Light's* headline supposedly read "Two Die When Klan Meeting is Fired On," while the *San Antonio Express* allegedly reported "Four Dead, 13 Hurt When Klan Fires on Pennsylvania Town." Citing the above discrepancies, the *Texas American* suggested that the "average newspaper [was a] vindictive enemy of the Klan, and willing to go to any false ends to betray American patriots." This was all the evidence it required to show that the Catholic hierarchy controlled most newspapers.¹²

Meanwhile, the Klan also experienced several internal battles that became so heated that they became newsworthy. In Arkansas, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan became embroiled in a series of lawsuits charging illegal assumption of power by Imperial Commander Robbie Gill Comer and the illegal use of WKKK funds by both Mrs. Comer and her husband, Judge James Comer. Evidence presented in court suggests that the plaintiffs, A. B. Cloud, D. B. George, and Flora Alexander, all of Dallas, were correct in their charges of financial malfeasance. As the historian of the Women's Klan writes, "for 1925, these accounts showed that the WKKK took in an impressive \$321,809.03 in income from dues and sales and spent all but \$18,000. Much of that money, according to the plaintiffs, went to the Comers, who amassed a fortune The

¹²*Texas American*, "Compare These Headlines," 18 April 1924, 4.

plaintiffs documented how in seven months the Comers squandered \$70,000 of WKKK funds"¹³

In Colorado in 1925, the Denver Klan split apart over an internal fight sparked by a federal investigation. John Galen Locke, the erstwhile leader of the Denver and Colorado Klans, came under federal investigation for failure to pay any income tax between 1913 and 1924. Locke's refusal to cooperate with the investigation led to his imprisonment, which was a blow to his prestige with some members of the Invisible Empire. A dissenting faction of the Colorado Klan asked national leader Hiram Evans to remove Locke from his position. Evans, who had sensed that Locke did not like being under his authority, asked the grand dragon to resign. Instead, Locke formed a new fraternal order called the Minute Men of America and led several thousand members of the Denver Klan into his organization. Of the 17,000 or so Denver knights, approximately 5,000 went with the Minutemen, 1,000 stayed with the Invisible Empire, and the rest got out of the movement altogether.¹⁴

Finally, back in Pennsylvania, klansmen had gone from fighting "aliens" to fighting each other. The infighting stemmed over alleged sexual affairs by several Klan

¹³Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 62; *Morning News*, "Head of Woman Klan Enjoined," 1 September 1925, 18; the women's order survived the split, see *Women of the Ku Klux Klan, Constitution and Laws of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, Adopted by the first Imperial Klonvocation at St. Louis, Missouri, on the Sixth Day of January, 1927* (Little Rock: H. G. Pugh and Comp., 1934).

¹⁴Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 104-108.

leaders selected by Hiram Evans. The klansmen revolted against these leaders and demanded new leadership. Evans sent in Herbert C. Shaw as the next grand dragon, but he also proved unpopular. In 1926, Pennsylvania klansmen sent a delegation to the imperial klonvocation to let the imperial wizard know that they were unhappy with Shaw. Evans responded by banishing the delegation's spokesman and revoking the charters of eight of the most troublesome Klaverns.¹⁵

When the ousted Klaverns decided to continue functioning independent from the national Klan, Evans sued them in federal court to stop them from using the Klan name and asked for \$100,000 in damages. The court decided that the defendants had the right to air Klan misdeeds in the proceedings. The result was a whole series of witnesses, from former Imperial Wizard Simmons to recently ousted D. C. Stephenson, testifying about all the wrongdoings they knew about the organization. The testimony included stories about "kidnapings, floggings, torture, and stories about men ceremonially burned alive in Texas," and quite a bit more. The judge ruled against the national Klan but not before the press published a good deal of damaging material about the Invisible Empire.¹⁶

One of those who gave evidence in the Pennsylvania lawsuit was D. C. Stephenson. Stephenson, however, had to send his evidence by way of a deposition because by 1926 he was languishing in prison, convicted of murder and condemned to

¹⁵Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 236-41.

¹⁶Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 242; *Morning News*, "Testify Klan Riots Wanted," 10 April 1928, 2; "Charges Men Burned Alive," 11 April 1928, 5; "Anti-Klan Suit Is Thrown Out," 12 April 1928, 3.

spend the rest of his life behind bars. Stephenson once was arguably the second most powerful man in all klandom. His ability to recruit white male Protestants into the Invisible Empire was unrivaled, making Indiana the state with the largest Klan population. Eventually, Stephenson ruled over a sub-empire that stretched from Indiana to the East coast and included more than a million klansmen.¹⁷

Perhaps it was inevitable that the two most powerful klansmen would clash. The split came in the October 1923, shortly after Stephenson had been named the official grand dragon. There had already been disagreements over a variety of issues, including national policy and the creation of a Klan college in Indiana. The exact details of the split have not survived but in October, only a few months after his ascension to the office of grand dragon, the *Fiery Cross* announced that Stephenson was retiring from the position. A new grand dragon more loyal to Evans, named Walter Bossert, was installed. In January 1924, Evans made the split final by officially banishing Stephenson from the Invisible Empire. This did not mean Stephenson was completely out of power because a loyal core of Indiana klansmen still looked to him as their leader. Eventually, the dispute became extremely bitter and cantankerous. In one letter sent to Indiana klansmen trying to defend his position, Stephenson attacked Evans.

The present national head is an ignorant, uneducated, uncouth individual who picks his nose at the table and eats peas with his knife. He has neither courage nor culture. He cannot talk intelligently, and he cannot keep a coherent conversation going on any subject for five minutes. His speeches are written by hired

¹⁷Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 46-47; *Washington Post*, "Klan Membership Shows Big Decline," 2 November 1930, 4.

intelligence. The only thing he has ever been known to do was to launch an attack upon the character and integrity of men eminent in talent and virtue.¹⁸

Publication of this letter in the papers only served to make the insult more serious.

In spite of losing his official position, Stephenson continued to dominate the Indiana Klan and became a political powerhouse in the Hoosier State; helping to elect a governor and wielding considerable influence in the legislature. Evans no doubt wished something would happen to eliminate this troublesome rival. In April 1925, something did happen. Prosecutors charged Stephenson with the murder of a twenty-eight year old state employee named Madge Oberholtzer. Allegedly Stephenson, who had a history of rape, had forced Oberholtzer onto a train where she was raped, bitten, and beaten.¹⁹ Distressed by the disgrace the episode would bring on her and her family, Oberholtzer committed suicide by ingesting mercury bichloride tablets, but not before telling her story in a kind of deathbed confession.²⁰

Stephenson, one of the most powerful men in Indiana, had by this time made some strong enemies. This included an anti-Klan Indianapolis police department and prosecuting attorney. They gathered the evidence, prosecuted the case, and obtained a conviction of murder in the second degree. All the while, Stephenson maintained his innocence, claiming that he was framed by the Bossert-led faction of the Klan, perhaps under orders from Hiram Evans. He claimed that he had only allowed Oberholtzer to ride with him on the train because she was going to Chicago to obtain an abortion. Whether

¹⁸M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan of Indiana* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1991), 135.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 98-102.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 178, 187.

his claims were true or not, the judge sentenced the former grand dragon to life in prison, and, in spite of filing more than forty petitions requesting a new trial, Stephenson spent thirty-one years behind bars.²¹

The Stephenson murder trial, along with the Mer Rouge murders in Louisiana were two of the most telling blows to Klan prestige. Both received massive national coverage, and both made the Klan appear to be a terrorist organization. In essence they destroyed all the work Hiram Evans had done to change the image of the Klan from a violent vigilante group to a mass movement encapsulating the ideas of most white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. This was true of the Stephenson case even more than the Mer Rouge murders both because prosecutors obtained a conviction and because the person involved in the murder was so powerful.

What all this information suggests is that the Klan was under considerable attack both from without and fraught with dissension from within. A review of the important crises in the history of the Klan gives an idea of the continual lambasting by the press to which the Invisible Empire was subjected. In April of 1922, the nation learned of the attempted Klan raid in Inglewood resulting in the death of two klansmen. Several klansmen went on trial for the raid in August of that year. Also in August, Daniel and Richards disappeared in Mer Rouge, although major headlines did not come until December 1922, through January 1923, when governor Parker put Morehouse Parish under marshal law. Beginning in November 1922, and lasting until March 1924, the Klan periodically treated the nation to various episodes of the Evans-Simmons dispute,

²¹Ibid., 315-24.

highlighted by the murder of William S. Coburn, Simmons' attorney, in September of 1923. In June of the same year, Jack Walton, the anti-Klan governor of Oklahoma, began his public war on the Invisible Empire. This unusual affair generated national publicity until the legislature impeached Walton and removed him from office in November. Meanwhile, in August, the first of the Pennsylvania riots broke out resulting in the death of Thomas Abbot, followed about nine months later by the more serious violence at Lilly. The second incident resulted in four deaths and twenty-eight people convicted of crimes, including eighteen klansmen. In June and July 1924, the country was witness to the most divided and cantankerous Democratic national convention ever, as the battle between Klan and anti-Klan delegates raged over candidates and condemnations. In April of 1925, the man who had been the second most powerful klansman in the country, D. C. Stephenson, was arrested and later convicted of the murder of Madge Oberholtzer. Meanwhile, in August of that year, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan were subject to public allegations, thanks to an embarrassing suit by three Dallas members over leadership and money matters. Finally, beginning in September 1926, the men's Klan experienced a similar fate when a court in Pennsylvania allowed a raft of damaging and embarrassing testimony from former and usually disgruntled members of the Klan.

This is not a comprehensive list of all the fights, squabbles, and lawsuits that were extant during this period, but it does include most of those that made a national news impact. The point should be clear from these cases that the controversy and negative publicity surrounding the Klan was almost constant after 1922. None of this includes the local floggings and other vigilante activities that frequently made the papers where

klansmen existed in significant numbers. Even the most brilliant public relations director in the world would have had a difficult time making the Klan look respectable while dealing with these negative factors. As it happened, the Klan's publicity director was too busy killing off Simmons's attorney and standing trial to formulate and implement much of a program.

Coinciding and assisting with the diminishing power of Klan ideology and credibility was the improving self-confidence of the country. The ideas of bolshevism had failed to produce any widespread sympathy. Law enforcement was still a serious problem and would continue to be as long as prohibition was in effect, but even Klan law officers and prosecutors had proven they could not solve the problem. Most importantly, the economy, and along with it America's confidence, was on an upswing. In Dallas things were going so well that the *Morning News* pronounced 1924 as the best business year in the history of the city.²² Such enthusiasm was contagious and tended to make groups like the Klan, whose principal mission was negative, look ridiculous.

Given this set of circumstances, it is remarkable that the Klan could hold together as long as it did. The only explanation for its ability to survive damning publicity and internal conflict lies in the "common enemy" theory. As long as Rome and the shock troops represented by the Catholic immigrants were a viable threat, the Klan could overcome most negative publicity by blaming it on the insidious forces of the pope. But as time passed and the immigration bill became law, the threat lessened and the Klan

²²*Morning News*, "Greatest Business Year in History of Dallas Closes; Still Greater Period Looms," 3 January 1924, 10.

began to split apart on the shoals of its own internal dissension. Strong and successful as they were, the state Klan and Klavern 66 could not escape these national trends.

II

The state organization began to show its signs of dissension shortly after Zeke Marvin became Grand Dragon of the Realm in January 1924. The decision to push Felix Robertson as the Klan candidate for governor over fellow Dallasite V. A. Collins opened a rift in the state organization that never fully healed. A few months before the political season opened, the state Klan quietly held a meeting in Dallas of sixty klansmen nominated by the provincial leaders. This committee met to determine who the Klan would support as its gubernatorial candidate. Because the grand dragon (Marvin) had absolute control over the provincial leaders, they were bound to nominate his candidate, Felix Robertson. Unbeknownst to the top Klan leadership, Collins, a state senator and Dallas attorney, had already decided to throw his hat in the ring. Collins, who claimed not to have known about the decision to back Robertson, beat the Dallas judge to the punch and announced his candidacy first.²³

When Collins found out about the leadership's decision to back Robertson, he refused to back down from his decision to stand for election. At first, Collins refused to comment publicly on his situation, but after the Klan suspended him from the Invisible Empire, he issued a statement complaining that "I never understood my obligation and oath as a klansman to take away from me my right of franchise and a vast number of good klansmen today will resent any attempt of the higher officers to vote them like sheep."

²³*Morning News*, "Collins Tells of Klan Suspension," 10 March 1924, 2.

His complaint did him no good, however, as many klansmen grudgingly accepted the decision of the leadership to back Robertson.²⁴

Collins was not the only klansman to speak out. Billie Mayfield, editor of the Houston Klan newspaper, also rejected what he perceived as high-handed behavior by Marvin, writing several articles attacking the policy. This initiated a Klan newspaper war of sorts between the *Texas American* and *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly* that grew excruciatingly blunt and cantankerous. "I am not ready, and the Klan is not ready, to accept as its governor the call boy of an individual man in Texas no matter what exalted position he holds within the Klan," Mayfield complained.²⁵ Eventually, Marvin agreed to another elimination or "Klan primary" to calm the waters. Even here Marvin held the upper hand since he controlled the levers of power. In the Dallas Klavern, for example, when the elimination vote was scheduled, Collins's attempt to speak on his own behalf precipitated a disorderly break-up of the meeting. With the Marvin forces in complete control, Robertson received a significant majority while the Klan banned Collins for causing dissension.²⁶

On the surface, Mayfield and the Houston Klan accepted the victory of the Marvin forces on the issue, but their coolness to the process and the candidate forced on them can be surmised in the lackluster support the city gave to Robertson in the primary run-off.

²⁴Ibid; "Klan Suspends Two in Political Fight," 17 February 1924, Sec. 1, p. 8.

²⁵*Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, 2 February 1924, as quoted in Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1962), 58.

²⁶*Morning News*, "Klan Suspends Two in Political Fight," 17 February 1924, Sec. 1, p. 8.

While Dallas was supporting Robertson by over 7,000 votes, Houston gave him its cautious endorsement by a mere 866 votes.²⁷ It is impossible to prove, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the resentment over having a candidate forced on them alienated enough klansmen to hurt Robertson's chances in the run-off. That both the candidate and the controlling power came from the upstart Dallas only made it harder to swallow.²⁸ What is clear is that Robertson lost the second primary to Mrs. Ferguson by almost 100,000 votes. The changing fortunes of the Klan in Texas can be seen by comparing this loss to the more than 50,000 vote victory Earle Mayfield gained only two years earlier.²⁹ Of course, there were other issues involved in both elections, but both men were known as klansmen, and their performance in the elections was widely viewed as a statement on the popularity of the Klan in Texas.

Some observers began to note before the 1924 election that there were signs that the fervor for klanishness was cooling. No less a klansman than Felix Robertson, in answering his many critics during the campaign, suggested that "personally, I do not believe there was ever any need for the organization of the present klan." The *Morning News* also seemed to catch a hint that Klan fortunes were on the decline and pushed very hard to encourage Texans to vote for Ferguson, a position that would have been

²⁷Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1984), 238.

²⁸See the comments made by ex-klansmen in interviews with Charles Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in Texas*, 65-66.

²⁹Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 116, 238.

unthinkable before the Klan came along to make Fergusonism the lesser evil.³⁰ In a pre-election editorial the *Morning News* asked for an overwhelming defeat of the Klan candidate.

If we are to get that further and perhaps even larger benefit out of the election of Mrs. Ferguson, we must pile up a majority in her favor big enough to convince the leaders of the klan that they are wasting their energies and financial resources in trying to get control of the State Government, and a majority big enough to make it plain to every office seeker of the future that the indorsement [sic] of the klan is a liability and not an asset.³¹

After the large Ferguson victory, the *Morning News* could not help gloating a little, suggesting that the victory signaled the end of Klan political dominance and was a "vindication of popular government."³²

The Klan must have felt similar concerns about its own future because it soon made wide-ranging changes that completely altered the structure of the state organization. When the loss first occurred, Marvin blamed it on the alleged fact that 100,000 Republicans crossed party lines and voted for Ferguson. He suggested that with an anti-prohibition governor in office, Texans would soon find out how serious a mistake they had made, and when they did the fortunes of the Klan would rebound. Marvin said he was proud of the 275,000 Texans who voted for Robertson in spite of the fact that he had "the daily press of Texas almost unanimously fighting him." Finally, he averred that he had done all he could to keep the Klan out of politics, but in each election an anti-Klan

³⁰Everest Sharpe, *G. B. Dealey of the Dallas News* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 202.

³¹*Morning News*, "A Big Majority Needed," 23 August 1924, 12.

³²*Ibid.*, "The Vindication of Popular Government," 25 August 1924, 8.

candidate had made such an issue of the Invisible Empire that the Klan had to "defend its principles through support of a candidate who had not attacked the principles of the klan."³³

In spite of Marvin's feisty attempt to put a more positive spin on the events of the fall, the post-election Klan was a considerably meeker organization than before. Marvin continued to insist that the Klan was not a political organization and emphatically denied that Klan delegates to the Texas state convention would be caucusing to stake out their positions. Klansmen, moreover, put up very little fight as anti-Klan forces seized control of the key positions in the convention. The direction of the convention could not have been clearer when anti-Klan leaders Martin Crane and Joseph Bailey were nominated and confirmed for the positions of temporary and permanent chairman, respectively. Rumors abounded that the Klan had a secret plan up its sleeve to seize control, but in truth the Klan, although still numerically strong, was in disarray.³⁴ So burned was the Klan by the election loss that Klaverns across the state began announcing that they were staying out of politics.³⁵ Even Imperial Wizard Evans felt the need to reassure Texans that the Klan was apolitical, expressly promising that the Klan would not field a candidate in the 1926 gubernatorial election.³⁶

³³Ibid., "Grand Dragon Says Klan Not Defeated," 27 August 1924, 1, 12.

³⁴Ibid., "Nothing to Caucus About, Says Marvin," 2 September 1924, 7; "Looks Like Move to Get on the Band Wagon," 2 September 1924, 1.

³⁵Ibid., "Says Houston Klan to Eschew Politics," 7 September 1924, Sec. 1, p. 1; "Klan at Amarillo Eschews Politics," 12 September 1924, 24.

³⁶Ibid., "Evans Answers Mrs. Ferguson," 27 November 1925, 24.

In October, Marvin succumbed to pressure from all sides and announced his pending resignation as the grand dragon. Marvin Childers, great titan of the San Antonio province, became the new dragon of Texas. Originally Childers was reportedly going to move to Dallas and take up his responsibilities; instead he followed tradition and moved the headquarters of the realm to San Antonio. Furthermore, he dismantled the provincial system, thus giving himself more direct control over the whole operation. Dallasites like George K. Butcher, titan of the Dallas province, were now out of a job. In Butcher's case, rumors circulated that he was going to Washington D. C. to work directly for Hiram Evans, but Marvin would not fare so well.³⁷

Childers' assumption marked the end of the Dallas Klavern's dominance in the state Klan organization. It also marked the beginning of the end of the Klan as a large and powerful state organization. Given the rivalry of the Houston Klan with Dallas and the disappointment over their influence in state Klan decisions, it is perhaps no surprise that the Houston Klan would be the first to disintegrate. In March 1924, the Klan sued former Texas Grand Goblin George B. Kimbro for \$25,000 in klecktoken fees that the organization believed he owed it. Kimbro counter-sued for several hundred thousand damages for libel, alleging a Klan plot to discredit him and ban him from the organization, as well as \$50,000 for unpaid expenses during his kleagling days. The case, tried in Houston, was very revealing and embarrassing for the city. Witnesses testified that the city police department was totally under the sway of the Klan with "Chief Gordon Murphy taking orders from H. C. McCall [exalted cyclops of Sam Houston Klan number

³⁷Ibid., "Marvin to Retire as State Klan Head," 14 October 1924, 1.

1]. It tapped telephone wires, intercepted wires at the telephone office, and even had spies in the post office who reported to Klan headquarters."³⁸ The Kimbro affair eventually ended in the equivalent of a legal draw with the court awarding both sides a similar amount of money. Chiefly it served to discredit the Klan through the airing of the Houston Klavern's dirty laundry, thus painting it as a corrupt political machine heavily influencing the affairs of the city.³⁹ Dallas was to have its own internal turmoil although it was not such a public affair.

Accompanying this turbulence in Klan affairs was a rapid diminution in numbers. By the middle of 1925, the reported numbers of Texas klansmen had been more than cut in half, from about 170,000 members to 80,000.⁴⁰ The Klan continued to hold barbecues and kloreros (state meetings) throughout 1925 and 1926, but it stayed conspicuously out of the political realm. Those interested in political office realized that the Klan was becoming more of a hindrance than a help and carefully extricated themselves from the Invisible Empire. Klansmen who followed those leaders left soon thereafter. Those who remained were the members firmly committed to the ideological goals of the Klan or interested in its fraternal and vigilante aspects. As the Klan lost its more respectable members, it lost whatever influence it had in the Texas community. It soon became a

³⁸Ibid., "Ex-Klansmen Come to Aid of Kimbro," 25 March 1925, 21.

³⁹On the Houston Klavern, see Ahlfield, Danny Lee, "Fraternalism Gone Awry: The Ku Klux Klan in Houston, 1920-1925," (Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1984).

⁴⁰*Washington Post*, "Klan Membership Shows Big Decline," 2 November 1930, 4; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in Texas*, 77.

target of attack and ridicule on all sides. The 39th Texas legislature showed the remarkable turnaround in Klan popularity by overwhelmingly passing an anti-mask ordinance just one session after klansmen had dominated the assembly.⁴¹ Politicians all over the state began to be questioned on their Klan credentials. Were they sufficiently anti-Klan now and had they always been that way? If not, it might prove a weakness that could be exploited by their political opponents.⁴²

By 1926, the Klan had become a cipher in Texas. With less than 18,000 dues-paying members, it was a mere shadow of its former self. The last known klorero was held that year where Shelby Cox, former Dallas district attorney, became the grand dragon. By 1927, however, the state machinery had dissolved and the local chapters apparently reported directly to a national or regional figure.⁴³ In 1928, the few remaining klansmen organized to fight against Al Smith, but in Texas they had plenty of help, even from those that opposed the Klan as an organization. Although Texans voted Republican for the first time since Reconstruction, the Klan did not have much of an effect on the 1928 presidential election.

III

Naturally, these state and national situations affected the Dallas Klavern. The election cycle of 1924 brought the first serious dissension in Klan 66. The Collins affair

⁴¹*Morning News*, "Anti-Klan Measure Gets Passage," 6 March 1925, 1.

⁴²Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in Texas*, 74.

⁴³Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 227.

and dissatisfaction caused by the Klan primaries did not immediately threaten the Klavern's local political dominance, but they were harbingers of bad times ahead. Discontent with local Klan leaders became so intense in the spring of that year that it spilled over into the Dallas papers. "It is said that the proposed selection of a ticket for all precinct officers on Friday night, March 7, may result in the crystallizing of opposition, heretofore quiescent, to the faction said to be in control of klan affairs in Dallas," the *Morning News* reported.⁴⁴ No doubt the Collins affair had angered those who supported the former state senator, but that was not the only disputed political race in the Dallas Klavern.

In 1924, two klansmen, Schuyler Marshall, Jr., and three-time incumbent Dan Harston battled it out for the office of Dallas County sheriff. Marshall, an expert sharpshooter with a college education from Kansas State University and a veteran of the Pershing expedition into Mexico, joined the Klan in 1922 with the idea of running for sheriff. Unfortunately, the position was already claimed by klansman Harston who had been sheriff since 1918.⁴⁵ The two contenders struck a compromise that year wherein Marshall agreed to support Harston in 1922 in return for an agreement that Harston would bow out and support Marshall in 1924.⁴⁶ Marshall kept up his end of the bargain, but

⁴⁴*Morning News*, "Klan Primaries May Start Revolt," 3 February 1924, Sec. 2, p. 1.

⁴⁵Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 97-98.

⁴⁶Spy minutes of 2 May 1922 Klan meeting, 3N105, Martin M. Crane Papers, The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

when 1924 came around, Harston decided that he wanted to run again and backed out of the agreement.

This led to a crisis and split in the leadership of Klan 66 and probably among the general members as well. Squared off against each other were two of the top leaders of Klan 66, Francis G. Van Falkenburgh and J. D. Van Winkle. Van Falkenburgh was a prominent and successful real estate broker who had been a member of the Klan executive committee that oversaw the successful implementation of the political machinery in 1922. Van Winkle was a bookstore owner who had recently been elevated to the top position in the local Klan and was undoubtedly a protege of the Texas grand dragon, Zeke Marvin. Reportedly, Marvin was backing Harston in the fight and ordered Van Falkenburgh suspended because he supported Marshall. Thus, in 1924, the Dallas Klan split into two factions: the standpatters, who generally supported Harston and the decisions of Marvin, and those led by Marshall and Van Falkenburgh, who were looking to new leadership.⁴⁷

An attempt to restore continuity occurred in May, when the former exalted cyclops, A. C. Parker, who combined oil speculation with his role as pastor of the Rosemont Baptist Church, was elected by the Dallas membership to step in once again as cyclops and stabilize the conflict.⁴⁸ Parker was unable to resolve the situation between Harston and Marshall, and the two of them remained in the race until the end. Harston

⁴⁷*Morning News*, "Klan Suspends Two in Political Fight," 17 February 1924, Sec. 1, p. 8.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "Rev. Parker Heads Dallas Klansmen," 4 May 1924, Sec. 1, p. 10.

led in the first primary without receiving a majority, but in a big surprise Marshall defeated the incumbent by almost 3,000 votes in the run-off election.⁴⁹ No doubt those klansmen who opposed the Marvin faction played a critical role in the defeat of Harston. This internal squabble does as much to highlight the continuing strength of the Klan in 1924 as it does to show its demise. It is not uncommon for a successful political coalition to experience internal dissension in the nominating process, since winning the nomination often means victory at the polls. What is more amazing in this case is that, with the Klan vote divided, no anti-Klan candidate entered the race to take advantage of this split. This is suggestive of the perceived power the Klan still wielded in 1924.

The Dallas County elections bear out this conclusion. In the county commissioner races, the Klan had endorsed J. W. Gill and George Ledbetter, both of whom won their races.⁵⁰ The most significant reelection of 1924 was that of Shelby Cox for district attorney. Because of the contentious nature of the 1922 campaign when he defeated the anti-Klan Maury Hughes, Cox was probably the most recognized Klan official in Dallas. Indeed, Cox would prove himself loyal to the Klan for years after the organization had shrunk to a small remnant. In 1924, he was up against the fervently anti-Klan Cavin Muse. The Muse law firm was strongly anti-Klan with J. C. Muse serving on the Executive Committee of the DCCL and Cavin himself on the Advisory Council. In both the regular primary and the run-off election on 23 August, Cox defeated Muse by about

⁴⁹Ibid., "Complete Returns of Dallas County," 25 August 1924, 1.

⁵⁰Ibid., 6.

6,000 votes.⁵¹ Thus, while the rest of Texas was repudiating the Klan, Dallas was reconfirming the Klan as its primary vehicle for political power.

In spite of the reconfirmation, or perhaps even because of it, the Dallas Klavern continued to squabble. Zeke Marvin, having divested himself of the office of grand dragon by early 1925, apparently tried to reassert his control at the local level. Unfortunately for Marvin, he had amassed too many enemies, especially among the leaders of the Dallas Klavern, because of his divisive tactics as grand dragon. The local split opened up during his term of state leadership was not easily healed. In the end, Cyclops Parker solved the problem by ousting Marvin from the Klan. The official charge was failing to obey the commands of the exalted cyclops to return "certain records of Dallas Klan No. 66" Marvin responded by sending a letter to the local newspapers that ridiculed both the charges and the Klan itself. Claiming that the charges were trumped up, Marvin also pointed out that he had already removed himself from the organization "as so many others have done . . . by letting my dues lapse." Marvin suggested that he no longer felt comfortable in the Klan and that he could not "subscribe to its present methods and policies."⁵²

There is no evidence to support the suggestion that the Klan had made any major changes in its policies or methods. More likely, Marvin was troubled by the diminishing power and influence of the Klan. He and Hiram Evans were the chief architects of the political Klan. For Evans it meant national leadership. For Marvin it meant state

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., "Marvin Gives Out Letter," 10 October 1925, 6.

leadership and, had the Klan been more successful at state politics, perhaps even the sort of political power exercised by D. C. Stephenson for a short period in Indiana. Now the dream was falling apart, and even his home Klavern would not accept his leadership. No wonder Marvin was happy to sever his relationship with the Invisible Empire.

Although the ouster of Marvin appeared to solve the major internal divisions in the Klavern, it likely resulted in the estrangement of many of his followers as well. Without specific evidence it is impossible to know just how many this included, but it should be noted that Marvin was a popular leader during his time as the local exalted cyclops. It is unclear how much of that popularity remained when he left the Invisible Empire. One other popular klansman who left over Marvin's ouster, or at least became alienated about the same time, was George K. Butcher. When the state Klan was reorganized in 1925, rumor had it that Butcher was going to work directly for Hiram Evans in Washington D. C. Any plans to promote Butcher fell through, and he found himself without a leadership position. A good friend of Marvin, Butcher was unhappy with the state of affairs in Klan 66. For whatever reason, Butcher began to stir up trouble for the Klan in general and Klavern 66 in particular. First, he urged Evans to investigate the finances of the Dallas Klavern. It turned out that the finances were a mess. In addition, number 66 owed a significant amount of money to national headquarters. An angry Evans sent a national representative to supervise the affairs of Klan 66.⁵³

⁵³*Morning News*, 29 November 1925, as quoted in Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in Texas*, 74-75.

No longer a part of the Invisible Empire, both Marvin and Butcher were more than happy to do what they could to destroy their former organization. This became evident in a libel suit initiated in 1925 by Hiram Evans against Martin M. Crane, the Austin *American-Statesman*, and the *Dallas Morning News*. Although Crane denied it, Evans charged Crane with suggesting in a speech at the 1924 state Democratic convention that the wizard had stolen \$75,000 of Klan money. The case dragged on for over a decade before the court finally dismissed it in 1938. Meanwhile, Marvin collaborated with Crane in helping him find something with which to discredit Evans. Primarily, they investigated the old Empire Mutual Insurance Company, which was begun by Marvin but later taken over by national headquarters.⁵⁴ Butcher also added his testimony to the Crane forces. He claimed that the Klan had sent \$30,000 into Texas to elect Felix Robertson and defeat the Fergusons in the 1924 gubernatorial election. He also stated that Evans was a frequent imbiber of whiskey who played cards and squandered Klan funds on his trips around the country.⁵⁵

While Klan 66 was self-destructing, the Dallas newspapers bombarded the Klan from without. This was especially true of the *Dallas Morning News* which continued to oppose the Klan throughout its tenure. When it became obvious in 1922 that the Klan was going to be a political powerhouse in Dallas, the *Morning News* changed its tactics and began fighting a kind of guerrilla war. Instead of the dramatic frontal assaults, such

⁵⁴See Marvin to Crane, 12 July 1926, and J. C. Muse to Marvin, 25 June 1926, 3N108, Crane Papers.

⁵⁵"Substance of Testimony of George K. Butcher's," undated, 3N109, Crane Papers.

as the expose reprinted from the *World* in 1921, the Dallas daily began publishing small articles detailing Klan violence wherever it occurred throughout the nation. Occasionally, the stories would make the front page when the violence was dramatic or deadly, as in Lilly, Pennsylvania, in 1924. For the most part, however, they were small stories printed farther back in the paper. But the stories kept showing up in the *Morning News's* pages, reaching into the hundreds over the years. It is difficult to imagine how a regular reader of the *Morning News* who was not ideologically blinded could have avoided coming to the conclusion that the Klan brought violence wherever it appeared.⁵⁶

By 1924, the *Morning News* assistant editor, Ted Dealey, himself a onetime klansman, realized that the power of the Invisible Empire was weakening and decided to make another frontal attack on the Klan in the gubernatorial race.⁵⁷ To do so the *Morning News* had to endorse Mrs. Ferguson as the lesser of two evils. This was surely one of the more distasteful assignments the paper ever had to carry out, since it was widely perceived that her despised husband Jim would actually run the state. This time the *Morning News's* offensive against the Klan was well-timed. Its long-running guerrilla style of journalistic warfare had surely helped limit the size and scope of the Invisible Empire in Dallas. But until the gubernatorial election of 1924, the Klan's appeal was too strong for the anti-Klan forces to overcome. By late 1924, however, a combination of

⁵⁶*Dallas Morning News*, "Index," roll 3-B, Microfilm, University of North Texas.

⁵⁷Darwin Payne, "The Dallas Morning News and the Ku Klux Klan" *Legacies* 10 (Spring 1997): 26; Dealey was a charter member of Klan 66 but resigned after attending two meetings, see Ted Dealey to Earle Mayfield, 31 May 1948, box 5, Mayfield Papers, Georgetown University Library.

national, state, and local factors reduced the appeal of the Invisible Empire and made it vulnerable to attack. The *Morning News's* continuing struggle against the organization was an important local element that helped diminish the Klan as a credible political force.

In many places the Klan went out due to a major devastating event, but not in Dallas. In Houston, Denver, Indianapolis, Atlanta, and other metropolitan areas that came under strong Klan influence, major scandals, often political in nature, brought an end to the Klan's prominent role. In Dallas, arguably the most influential Klan center after 1922, no such scandal occurred. Rather, the Klan issue seemed to fade out of sight like a well-coordinated lighting change in a theatrical production. One of the most remarkable aspects of this change involved the municipal elections of 1925. By then, the *Texas American* was no longer being published, and the Klan seems to have stopped holding its famed primaries. Thus, any endorsements the Klan was making were private and word of mouth only. Nevertheless, the entire Klan council as well as the Klan-endorsed mayor, Louis Blaylock, were running for reelection. In what must have seemed a bizarre twist for some political observers, the 1925 campaign was conducted almost entirely without mention of the Klan issue. Instead, the candidates ran on their records, emphasizing their commitment to urban improvement and business boosterism.⁵⁸ This, of course, was little different from their Citizens Association predecessors and suggests that the Klan - anti-Klan fight was more over who would rule the city than it was on differing visions of urban development. In the event, the Blaylock ticket won an overwhelming

⁵⁸See for example, *Morning News*, "Lively Keynoter at Blaylock Rally," 7 April 1925, 1; and "Wilson Defends Blaylock Ticket," 29 March 1925, Sec. 1, p. 2.

victory at the polls proving that in Dallas, unlike many other areas of the country and state, being an ex-klansman was no hindrance to public office.⁵⁹

Just as the Klan issue faded from the scene quietly, so klansmen also removed themselves from the organization without fanfare. Once the largest Klan in the nation, with 13,000 members in the spring of 1924, the Dallas Klavern was down to about 1,200 dues-paying members by the beginning of 1926. Thus, within a year and a half, the Klavern lost over 90 percent of its membership.⁶⁰ Many observers have noted that during this time the Klan lost many of its "better" members, leaving only the ruffians and riff-raff. If they mean that the politically and socially ambitious quickly left, then they are certainly correct. Politically ambitious men like Louis Blaylock and R. L. Thornton were always careful to avoid becoming too identified with the Klan while simultaneously using the organization to further their goals. They also knew when to cut their losses and leave. Even a man like Zeke Marvin, who was very ambitious in a behind-the-scenes manner, knew when to get out. The belief that those left were ruffians is more difficult to substantiate. Some ambitious men, like Shelby Cox, stayed with the organization throughout most of the twenties. Moreover, although there continued to be isolated instances of Klan-inspired violence, there was no great increase of vigilantism, at least not in Dallas.⁶¹ For the most part, the Dallas Klavern seems to have faded back into a small fraternal organization whose members liked the barbecues, picnics, and occasional

⁵⁹*Morning News*, "Vote by Precincts for Mayor and Commissioners," 8 April 1925, 1.

⁶⁰*New York Times*, "The Klan's Invisible Empire is Fading," 21 February 1926, Sec. 8, p. 1.

⁶¹Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 225-26.

parades, not unlike the organization originally constructed by William Simmons in 1915. The Klan continued on in this way until 1939 when Hiram Evans, after seventeen years as imperial wizard, finally resigned to work full-time as an asphalt dealer in Georgia.⁶²

Ultimately, the Klavern in Dallas died because the conditions that spawned the Invisible Empire no longer existed. For a few years in the postwar world, the Invisible Empire thrived as a bulwark against perceived threats to the Republic and the American way of life. The Klan blamed recent immigrants for the lawlessness, immorality, and degeneracy it perceived. But the most insidious threat perceived by klansmen was an organized attempt by Catholic forces to gain control of the American Republic. The Klan successfully presented itself as the sole organization capable of fighting this well-organized threat, through its covert and militaristic nature.

The way individual Klaverns responded to the threat depended partly on local conditions. In Dallas, a frustrated group of businessmen, attorneys, and health professionals used the Klan as a vehicle to sunder the elite, closed political hierarchy known as the Citizens Association. On the state level, Dallas klansmen attempted to use the Invisible Empire to make Big D the center of state politics. The Dallas Klan impacted the national organization through the person of Hiram Evans. Evans pursued the Klan 66 model of political involvement at the national level, albeit without as much success. Evans convinced klansmen that political action was a crucial part of their mission to save the American Republic.

⁶²Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962), 105-106.

By the end of 1924 it was becoming obvious that the American Republic was not seriously threatened. The economy was humming along at a healthy rate. Successful immigration restriction had alleviated the danger of unassimilable immigrants swamping Anglo-Saxon society. More importantly, the law stopped the proportionate growth of the Catholic population. The pope's attempt to seize control of the Republic was stymied. Bolshevists were so rare that there was little threat of a revolution. Postwar pessimism was replaced by a growing optimism about America's future. Social Darwinists may have been wrong about a progressively improving society, but the United States was still a land filled with economic and social opportunities. As the threat receded, the Klan began to fall apart. The national scandals, the internal squabbles, the negative publicity, all worked to stop the organization's momentum and reverse its fortunes. Scandals, squabbles, and bad publicity had existed throughout the life of the Klan but as long as enough people perceived a social crisis the order flourished.

In Texas, the 1924 gubernatorial election was the turning point that stemmed the Klan tide. The loss plunged the state Klan into a crisis from which they never recovered. It resulted in the resignation of the grand dragon and a complete revamping of the state organization. The Klan's weak showing at the 1924 state Democratic convention was pathetic compared to its aggressive dominance in 1922, and the KKK's enemies in the Democratic party quickly perceived the Empire's weakened condition and ousted klansmen from key party positions. By the spring of 1925, Klan fortunes had sunk so low that the state legislature, dominated by klansmen the previous session, overwhelmingly passed an anti-mask ordinance.

The Dallas Klavern maintained its local dominance in the 1924 elections. But success in breaking the CA's local political dominance, disappointments at the state level, and the growing sense that the national danger had passed began to take their toll shortly thereafter. By the beginning of 1925, Klan 66 divided into two major camps. The local newspapers encouraged the split by publishing any news it could about internal divisions. Meanwhile, the two camps continued to fight. When one side excommunicated the other's leader, the membership rolls began to fade significantly, and by 1926 the Klavern had lost over 90 percent of its membership. In the end, Dallasites came around to the *Morning News's* point of view. The Klan was no longer the appropriate vehicle for controlling the politics of the city.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

The Dallas Klan, as with every other Klavern, had its unique history. This was necessarily so because each Klavern confronted different circumstances and issues that energized its operations. Dallas klansmen, for example, were primarily concerned with gaining a voice in the local political scene to protect against what they perceived as a threat to the American way of life. On the other hand, the Dallas Klan and other Klaverns around the country did not operate in a vacuum, nor did they operate in total isolation from one another. Perhaps as many as forty Klan newspapers, similar to the *Texas American*, operated at the peak of Klan growth. It is clear that these newspapers shared considerable knowledge about the efforts and agendas of other Klans. Moreover, they all had a common ideology that was an important part of their motivation. No doubt some Klans emphasized one aspect of the ideology over another, but they all seemed to include a virulent anti-Catholicism. This provided the enemy that kept the various Klaverns focused on their multifaceted agendas and enemies and also served to tie klansmen to one another. They were all fighting the same perceived foe, albeit on different battlefields and with somewhat different methods.

Within Klan historiography, there is a growing debate about whether to explain the Klan from a national perspective or from its local imperatives. The more recent studies suggest that the local view has been sadly neglected while the national perspective

has skewed the real meaning of the Klan. In his excellent historiographical article on the Klan, Leonard J. Moore notes that many monographs on the Invisible Empire suffer from a presentist bias. Written in the 1960s and inspired by the rise of the terrorist Klan opposed to the Civil Rights movement, these studies often saw the earlier version in the light of the latter. What the field needs, he suggests, is a renewed study of the Klan, focusing on the local Klavern.¹ Ultimately, of course, even the localists want to come to some general conclusions, but they believe this is not possible until historians complete a sufficient number of local studies.

This study seeks to help fulfill the mission suggested by Moore and his fellow revisionists. One of the most important Klaverns in the nation, Dallas Klan number 66 has received sporadic coverage over the years. Historians Kenneth T. Jackson and Charles C. Alexander provided an overview in their broader state, regional, and national studies. More recently, Darwin Payne, journalism professor at Southern Methodist University, included a chapter about Klan 66 in his book on 20th century Dallas history. But Payne's study, while covering the facts competently, offers few interpretations beyond the traditional views. Moreover, he conducted his study solely within the context of

¹Anyone unfamiliar with Klan historiography should read this article for a good understanding on the general trends in the field. See, Leonard J. Moore, "Historical Interpretations of the 1920s Klan: The Traditional View and Recent Revisions," in Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 17-38.

Dallas history, and the Dallas Klavern was never put into the context of its national organization.²

Any study of the Dallas Klan presents problems because of the secrecy of the Klavern. Probably as a result of its almost fanatical desire for anonymity, no membership list has survived. Thus, some conclusions must be tentative because they are based on fragmented lists collected by non-official and often hostile forces. Local leadership, on the other hand, of both the Klan and its nemesis, the Dallas County Citizens League, became quite well known. This knowledge offers a unique view into a divided community. The best resource for this study was the *Texas 100 Per Cent American*. The Klan published this newspaper for three years between 1922 and 1924, and all but a handful of these issues survive in microfilm at Southern Methodist University. Except for revealing personal identities, the local Klavern was willing to discuss almost every issue that it found important and pertinent in the pages of its newspaper. No doubt there was frequent dissension, disagreements, and factions behind the scenes that one will never know about, but the record of success that the Klavern had in electing its candidates, as advertised and endorsed in the *Texas American*, suggests that the paper spoke for most klansmen in its chapter.

The research shows that contemporary historiography effectively mirrors the historical reality. In other words, the national/local tension existed in the life a klansman and in the writings of historians. At times the Klavern focused its attention on local and

²Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1994), 67-96.

state issues, usually political in nature. The Dallas Klavern, however, soon controlled the city and county governments. Thus, it had to be careful about how they addressed some typical Klan issues. It would not do, for example, for the Klan to criticize the law enforcement efforts of Dallas too harshly, given that the district attorney, police commissioner, police chief, sheriff, and a large percentage of officers and deputies had joined the Invisible Empire. Therefore, when local political elections were not carrying the news, Klan 66 tended to focus on the national level. No doubt this tendency was exaggerated because the former exalted cyclops became the imperial wizard. The Klavern then had a personal stake in the success or failure of the national organization.

Thus, the record of the Dallas Klavern to some degree justifies, but also sets the limits on the new local emphasis in the historiography of the Ku Klux Klan. Klan 66 was not only unique in its local features, such as its complete dominance in local politics, but it was probably exceptional even in its emphasis on national affairs. The rise of Hiram Evans turned Klavern 66 into the de facto headquarters Klan. Evans detested the Atlanta Klavern because it remained loyal to Simmons in the fight for control. His move to Washington, D.C., was partly a response to his discomfiture with Atlanta. Washington did not have a large indigenous Klan population but was chosen because it was the center of national political power. The place where he felt most at home was in Dallas. Here the Klan was in control, and his friends and devotees ran the city and county. Until the failed gubernatorial election in 1924, and the Klavern's diminishing strength shortly thereafter, Klan 66 supported Evans with wholehearted devotion. Perhaps all this assisted the Klavern in focusing on national issues more than did other Klaverns.

The uniqueness of the Dallas Klavern should not be allowed to overshadow its similarities with other Klaverns. These similarities are related to the social conditions that spawned the Invisible Empire. If other Klan historians want to understand the remarkable timing of the rise and fall of the Klan, they may also find it profitable to delve into Klan ideology. They may find that, as in Dallas, the Klan used the ideology as a form of mind control. The Klan repeated its stories about Catholic conspiracies so often and in such detail that they became a type of institutional mantra. This created a kind of social attraction that held klansmen in the organization behind a wall of fear. Fear that America as they knew it would soon disappear if someone did not stand up against the insidious forces attacking the country.

I

The local/national dichotomy has proven to be of major interest in the historiography of the Klan. The earliest writers, those viewing the Klan while it was still in existence, began the trend of analyzing the Invisible Empire based on national characteristics. This was especially true of magazine and newspaper stories like those filed by the *New York World* and *Literary Digest*. At least one writer, John Moffat Mecklin, a Dartmouth sociologist, took a different view. "The facts seem to indicate that the Klan of Emperor Simmons is a pure idealization and to all intents and purposes non-existent. The real Klan is the *local* organization [emphasis his], which, owing primarily to its secrecy, is a law unto itself," professor Mecklin wrote in his 1924 book on the

subject.³ In spite of this viewpoint, Mecklin still attempted to find some kind of unifying theme and finally settled on the idea that the Klan represented a small town mindset.

Most other writers ignored Mecklin's point on the local nature of the Klan and focused on the small town thesis. The Klan, they believed, was part of the urban/rural conflict that could be traced back almost to the foundations of the country. Kenneth T. Jackson began to change this viewpoint in 1967 with his acclaimed *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*. This showed beyond doubt that the Klan was an urban phenomenon. He did not, however, do away with the idea that the Klan was sparked by a small-town mindset. Rather, the recent migrations from farm and small town to the city had provided the populations that were susceptible to the Klan message. The Klan was still a small-town phenomenon that just happened to be taking place in the cities.⁴ Most historians accepted this view, and it remained the dominant interpretation for years. Even into the 1980s respected historians were publishing variations on the small-town theme.⁵

Almost from the beginning, however, there have been a few historians who at least questioned the small-town interpretation. Historians such as Emerson Loucks in Pennsylvania and Norman F. Weaver in the Midwest looked more to the local conditions to explain the Klan, although they also included elements of the Mecklin small-town

³John Moffat Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1924), 30.

⁴Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁵See, for example, Craig Wyn Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

interpretation.⁶ The Mecklin viewpoint continued to hold sway until the early 1990s. By then a series of investigations into local Klaverns had begun to make a significant and dramatic change in the historiographical landscape. Led by Christopher Cocoltchos's massive dissertation analyzing the Klan in Orange County, California, and including works on the Invisible Empire in Colorado, Utah, El Paso, and Indiana by Robert Goldberg, Larry Gerlach, Shawn Lay, and Leonard Moore respectively, the new Klan historians have turned the historiographical focus upside down.

Rather than looking for a national interpretation, they insist that the focus should be local. The national interpretations that have dominated the field in the past "would be more properly described as an assumption, one based on a transparent cosmopolitan bias as on anything else." Besides attacking the small-town interpretation they also suggested that historians put too much weight in the ideology of the Klan. "The idea that the Klan existed primarily to suppress ethnic minorities," Moore writes, "fails to explain why the Klan became most popular in states where members of these groups lived in the smallest numbers, and why, when the Klan gained political power in these states, it all but ignored the local populations of ethnic minorities that did exist."⁷

Ultimately, the new Klan historians see the old interpretations as a method of marginalizing what was actually a mainstream movement. Many influential works on the

⁶Emerson H. Loucks, *The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania: A Study in Nativism* (New York: Telegraph Press, 1936); and Norman F. Weaver, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1955).

⁷Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West*, 24.

Klan were spawned because of the resurgent 1950s Klan, which employed terrorist tactics to frustrate attempts to bring civil rights to African Americans. Confronted by these deviant elements, historians were only too glad to view the 1920s Klan in the same light. To suggest, in the 1960s or 1970s, that the Klan was a mainstream movement would have taken a considerable amount of courage. Even in the 1990s the group of historians who put forward the notion felt obliged to emphasize that they included "two Roman Catholics, two Jews, a Greek American, and two ardent proponents of liberal causes" Nevertheless, 1920s klansmen, according to this group, were not only part of the mainstream, they were a respectable and honorable part. "It should never be forgotten," they maintain, "that beneath the threatening white robes and hoods walked millions of otherwise respectable Americans, many of them earnestly striving to forge a better life for themselves and their families."⁸

As might be expected, there are dissenting views to this position. The historiographical turn is too recent to expect organized opposition, but Nancy MacLean in her book, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, has felt the need to "part company with the trend in recent historical writing about the Klan"

⁹ While she does part company with recent trends in Klan historiography, she is slavishly conformist to historical writing in general by invoking a class, gender, race, and internationalist based analysis. Of course, these are not defective interpretive

⁸Ibid., 12.

⁹Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xiii.

frameworks, but they are not always the most effective for viewing the Invisible Empire. They tend to blind her from seeing certain aspects of the 1920s Klan. Her use, however, of Klan ideology as an important tool in assessing and understanding Klan actions exposes a flaw in the new historiographical scheme. She points out correctly, for example, that just because there are few Catholics in a geographical region does not mean the Klan's anti-Catholic ideology was unimportant. "Such reasoning," she writes, "misconstrues the dynamics of prejudice -- which often runs deepest where contacts are fewest" ¹⁰

Nevertheless, the benefits in the new historiographical trend far outweigh the flaws. The concentration on local Klaverns has yielded a far greater understanding of the activities and motives of the revived Klan than the earlier generalist approaches. No doubt moving from the specific to the general has its own pitfalls which must be overcome. But the effectiveness of the new direction is so evident that even MacLean, bowing to current realities, felt it necessary to ground her study in a single Klavern located in Athens, Georgia. The result of these local studies is a view of the Klan far more rooted in empirical evidence and includes some beginning points for new generalizations. Historians are more aware of who joined the Klan and why. They have also begun to realize that, on the local level at least, the Klan was frequently, if not always, involved in a fight to overthrow the urban elites. Two examples serve to illustrate the point.

¹⁰Ibid., xvi.

Salt Lake City was an unlikely city for the growth of a significant Klavern. As Larry Gerlach points out in his study of the Utah Klan, the vast majority were native born whites. In addition, Mormons had a long-standing dislike of the Ku Klux Klan from Reconstruction days when klansmen had harassed Mormon missionaries who dared to proselyte in the South. Mormons, who were not accepted Protestants, were thus technically ineligible for the Invisible Empire, though in practice those few who wanted to were allowed to join. Salt Lake City, however, was as Gerlach calls it the "least Mormon place in Mormondom," with 56 percent of its population non-members.¹¹

It was apparently this rare example of Utah diversity that allowed the Klan to flourish, admittedly for only a short period. At the root of the Klan's ability to grow was the attempt by the Mormon leadership to dominate Salt Lake City politics. This fostered animosity and anger toward the church and led to the formation of at least one non-Klan organization aimed at curbing ecclesiastical influence. In 1924, the Klan became the primary benefactor of this anti-Mormon antipathy, as several thousand Salt Lakers joined the Invisible Empire and engaged in a series of public demonstrations, initiations, and parades. Inadvertently, the Klan also became involved in politics in 1925, when someone plastered posters around town on the eve of municipal elections. The posters urged citizens to vote for two candidates for the city council because the local Klan backed them. There is considerable doubt that the Klan inspired the posters because the two candidates endorsed opposed each other. One was part of the Mormon "political

¹¹Larry R. Gerlach, "A Battle of Empires: The Klan in Salt Lake City," in *The Invisible Empire in the West*, 127.

machine," while the other opposed Mormon control. Regardless of the origination of the posters, the effects seem to show the strength of the Invisible Empire in Salt Lake since the two candidates won by large margins.¹²

As in other places the rise of the Klan also coincided with significant opposition to the Invisible Empire. Attacked consistently by the local *Deseret News*, the Klan soon had to deal with an anti-mask ordinance passed by the city council in the summer of 1925. The Salt Lake City Klan, like other Klaverns around the country, began to suffer from internal dissension. In a break-up that was organizationally related to the Denver Klan's demise, the Salt Lake City Klavern split in two in January 1926. Although it continued to function until late 1927, the Klavern was in serious decline after the split.¹³ The Salt Lake City story suggests how adaptable the Klan was. Even in an environment as unique as the Utah capital was, the Klan found a way to operate. It also shows that some of the same issues (albeit in a different context) animated the Klan. Elite versus anti-elite, religion, and political control were all tied up in the growth of the Invisible Empire in Utah.

A second example, similar in some respects to that of Dallas, was the Klan in Anaheim California. Anaheim, like Dallas, experienced a doubling of its population in the decade leading up to the 1920s. The newcomers were distinguished from the old in several ways. White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, they were sons and daughters of the Midwest. Anaheim was originally founded as a German community and continued to be

¹²Ibid., 136-42.

¹³Ibid., 144-47.

dominated by German stock families while these newer immigrants were arriving. Soon there was conflict between the controlling elite and the immigrants over a number of issues. Prohibition was a hotly contested issue as the newcomers tried to do away with the "wet" status enjoyed by the town.

Just as important were the issues of boosterism and civic decision-making. The elite leaders were highly concerned with the town's image and resented criticisms by the newcomers aimed at their policies. One issue in particular became contentious as the faction war heated up. The insurgents strongly contested an attempt by the elite to build a new city hall. Civic leaders argued that the town needed a new city hall to keep their image consonant with the surrounding and competing towns and cities. Those opposed to the new city hall preferred to concentrate on the war effort instead of civic improvement. The elite leadership eventually built the new city hall but not before it resulted in a legal challenge and brought the factional split to an intensity that allowed the Ku Klux Klan to thrive.¹⁴

By the end of 1923, the Klan had recruited over 900 members in a town of just over 10,000. The insurgent forces now had a leader, Leon Myers, pastor of the First Christian Church, and exalted cyclops of the local Klavern. The Klan also had found a media voice in the *Orange County Plain Dealer*. As the Klan grew in size and confidence, it became more aggressive in pursuing its goals. It instituted business boycotts, forced a local judge to resign, and began making political plans. In the Spring

¹⁴Christopher N. Cocoltchos, "The Invisible Empire and the Search for the Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California," in *The Invisible Empire in the West*, 97-104.

of 1924, these plans blossomed as the Klan swept four of its men on to the city council, displacing the former elite leadership in the process. It was not long before the Klan-dominated city leadership was acting like a political machine by replacing city employees and officials with members of the Invisible Empire.¹⁵

Ultimately, these actions and a giant Klan rally, which brought in as many klansmen from around the state as there were residents in Anaheim, frightened residents of the town and lost the Klan its support among the non-Klan population. The anti-Klan forces sensed the change and went on the offensive, attacking the Klan in newspaper articles, holding educational meetings denouncing the Klan, and ultimately sponsoring a petition to recall the four klansmen on the city council. In February 1925, their actions bore fruit as the townspeople turned out in record numbers to oust the Klan council and restore the previous elite. This was the beginning of the end for the Anaheim Klavern. Like Klaverns across the country, the members of the Anaheim Klan melted away. Although the Klan was active in Orange County into the 1930s, never again did it dominate the politics of Anaheim the way it had for a short period in 1924.¹⁶

What the examples of Salt Lake City and Anaheim suggest is that there are significant differences and similarities between distinct Klaverns. The historiographical turn toward local studies thus has unearthed gems of understanding about the growth of the Klan in the 1920s. It has allowed scholars to view the Klan in sparkling detail never before seen; and it has certainly destroyed many myths about the Klan that lived for years

¹⁵Ibid., 107-112.

¹⁶Ibid., 113-17.

as historians tried to paint the Klan as an extremist group outside the mainstream of civilization. But in the process it has also obscured certain aspects of the Invisible Empire. By devaluing the Klan's ideology, the new historians have lost an opportunity to find the single most important common link between the differentiated Klaverns across the country. Klaverns may have been responding to different issues and challenges but they did so in a way that was remarkably similar. They complained vehemently about the lack of law and order and made prohibition a top priority. They fought established politicians to gain a place at the table in community relations. They deplored the newer immigrant and worked diligently and successfully to limit immigration. All this they accomplished as a part of a holy war against Catholicism. Historians spent too many years creating one-sided national interpretations of the Klan to now become mired in a one-sided localism. Local aspects are important but they cannot explain a national organization that grew, thrived, and collapsed in a way that clearly transcends local manifestations.

II

The Ku Klux Klan that burst onto the American scene was neither predestined nor its course foreordained. It was the direct result of individuals acting in concert, but also acting on their own personal ideas and initiatives. Colonel Simmons, when he revived the Klan in 1915, seemed to have little more in mind than another one of those fraternal organizations that dotted the social landscape in the 1920s. Had not the world war intervened, the Klan would probably have become another line on Simmons's mediocre

resume. But the war did intervene, and as major wars have a habit of doing, it changed the nation's course irrevocably. Simmons's Klan, dying from a distinct lack of direction, gained a reprieve when he used klansmen to spy on other Americans to make sure they were behaving properly.

This reprieve gave Simmons the time needed to turn around the organization's fortunes. Actually, the Klan's fortunes improved dramatically when Simmons got out of the way and allowed the well-organized team of Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler under the guise of the Southern Publicity Association to handle national affairs. Their most important step, sometimes underrated in Klan histories, was to implement a highly entrepreneurial recruiting system that allowed the local organizers or kleagles to keep significant portions of the individual's initiation fee. Kleagles, who now saw the possibility of financial independence in their future, aggressively sold the Klan as an antidote to the social problems bedeviling the country in the postwar years. Americans, looking for solutions to these problems, bought into this scapegoating by the millions and paid their ten dollar klecktoken. If the *Washington Post's* "official" numbers are accurate, then almost nine million American men paid their ten dollar klecktoken and joined the Invisible Empire. This is an astonishing 54.64 percent of the those likely to join the Klan and 40.11 percent of those who were eligible for membership.

Dallas was no exception to the national trend. Like many urban areas in the first two decades of the new century, Dallas underwent explosive growth, almost quadrupling its population in twenty years. This tremendous growth seems to have outstripped the ability of the urban elites to represent what should have been their natural constituency.

The growing dissatisfaction with local politics, postwar nervousness over the nation's social state, and the aggressive marketing of the Ku Klux Klan, merged in late 1920 to form Dallas Klavern number 66. Dallas businessmen who felt frozen out of the local political scene entered the Klan in droves, encouraged their employees to do so as well, and generally gave the Invisible Empire a respectable aura for a few years. By 1923, the Klan had entered politics in a big way, sweeping both the county and city elections and in the process creating a highly organized and effective political machine.

The growth of the Klan also resulted in significant opposition, particularly from entrenched interests. The commercial-civic elite, which had organized itself into a quasi-political organization called the Citizens Association (CA), and included members of the local press like G. B. Dealey, rightly saw the Klan as a direct threat to its political hegemony and thus fought the upstart organization vigorously. The CA, however, was not properly organized to fight a foe such as the Klan. Therefore, a distinct organization, the Dallas County Citizens League (DCCL) was formed for the specific purpose of annihilating the competition. The DCCL fought the Klan in several different ways, including questionnaires to candidates, public lectures, pamphlets, and soliciting as much negative publicity on the Klan as possible. The *Dallas Morning News* and *Dallas Dispatch* were happy to oblige and inundated the public with anti-Klan stories, concentrating on the violent acts attributed to the organization.

As table 9.1 suggests, the leadership of the two opposing organizations contained some significant similarities and differences. The almost eleven-year difference in average age between leaders of the DCCL and Klan leaders is almost generational in

scope and suggests that klansmen tended to represent the young up-and-comers. This is also confirmed by the nearly identical rates of home ownership. The fact that a higher percentage of DCCL members owned their homes free of a mortgage was surely related to their greater age and occupation status. Switching to job status, we see that no one among the leadership of either side was involved in a manual occupation. Within the context of non-manual work, the DCCL leadership ranks very high, with almost 70 percent of its members falling into the highest non-manual category. The Klan leadership divided more evenly over the three non-manual sub-sections with a slight majority falling into the middle category. At least part of this may be explained by the difference in age, but it must be pointed out that the heavy concentration of lawyers (almost 45 percent of the DCCL leadership were attorneys) was important in skewing the DCCL into the higher category. This is not surprising because a high incidence of lawyers conforms to the expectations of an elite ruling group.

VARIABLES	KLAN	DCCL
AVERAGE AGE	39.27	50.17
HOME OWNERSHIP (F)	38.18%	57.14%
HOME OWNERSHIP (M)	32.72%	16.07%
OCCUPATION: HIGH NON-MANUAL	36.47%	68.49%
MIDDLE NON-MANUAL	42.35%	23.38%
LOW NON-MANUAL	21.17%	8.21%

Table 9.1

The data suggest that the insurgent, Klan-led businessmen were not fighting a class war. Considering their age, home ownership, and occupational status, they were doing quite well. The much smaller percentage of lawyers present in the Klan leadership (15.29 percent) suggests that this was not a group that had been preparing itself for civic leadership, at least not to the degree the DCCL members had. Something had occurred to create a spark of dissatisfaction with the current leadership. It does not appear to be matters of urban planning and policy such as occurred in the formation of the Anaheim, California, Klan. One can search in vain for a Klan - anti-Klan fight over such concrete issues. In fact, the Klan itself, and whether there was a need for such an organization, was the issue that dominated the Dallas election cycles of the early 1920s.

Since the Klan's growth does not appear to be based on class warfare, and it does not appear to be based on disagreements over urban policies, we are left in the awkward position of at least partially accepting the Klan's own reasons for its existence. Of course, even the Klan's view of itself differed somewhat depending on local conditions and local leaders. But at its essence, the Klan viewed itself as a bulwark against what it perceived to be disastrous social changes in the postwar world. Lawlessness, bolshevism, moral decay, immigrants, and particularly Catholicism were the evils that threatened to destroy the American system. It seemed to matter little that Dallas was relatively unaffected by the newer immigrant stream, the growth in Catholicism, and the labor problems of cities such as Seattle and Boston. Unless something was done, it was only a matter of time until the trends on the coasts reached the middle. Why were the county and city leaders not speaking out on these crucial issues, preparing the polity to weather the coming

storms? Whatever the reason, the Klan determined to remedy the situation by attempting to elect public officials that were sympathetic to its fears.

Of course, not everyone was a true believer in the Klan ideology. Some men surely joined the Klan as a matter of political expediency when they saw the support the Klan received. Men like Sheriff Dan Harston and District Attorney Maury Hughes were already elected officials when the Klan came calling, and they soon signed up. Hughes, who did not have the stomach for some of the Klan's violent activities, decided to leave and fight against the Invisible Empire. The move cost him his job when a young, single, relatively unknown lawyer and klansman named Shelby Cox defeated him for the Attorney General job in the next election. Hughes's example probably served as a lesson for many politically ambitious men who may not have held a dogmatic view of Klan ideology. But it must also be pointed out that many top Klan leaders in Klan 66 never attempted to enter politics. Men like Hiram Evans, Zeke Marvin, George Butcher, A. C. Parker, Francis Van Falkenburgh, and J. D. Van Winkle, who represented the heart of the Klavern's leadership, seemed to be uninterested in public leadership positions. This suggests a core of true believers ran the Klavern and looked to sponsor politically ambitious men who shared or at least would mouth the ideas, fears, and hopes that motivated klansmen. These they found in the Coxes, Harstons, Turleys, and Blaylocks at the local level, and the Mayfields and Robertsons at the state level.

Judging from the political results, the Klan's message found strong support among the general electorate as well. In spite of the best efforts of the CA and the DCCL, the Klan candidates swept the elections beginning in 1922 and continuing through 1925. In

the 1925 elections, however, they were running on their records rather than as Klan candidates. The fight also generated a cantankerous newspaper war as the *Dallas Morning News* and *Dallas Dispatch* fought the Klan and its upstart newspaper, the *Texas 100 Per Cent American*. The *Morning News* and probably the *Dispatch* as well (whose records have not survived) came under overt and covert attack from the Klan. Overt attacks came in the form of direct accusations by the *Texas American* ranging from partial news coverage to downright dishonesty. Ultimately, the fight became so heated that the *Morning News* fired any of its newsboys that it caught moonlighting by selling the *Texas American*. Covertly the Klan attacked the *Morning News* by instituting a boycott against the paper. In general, Klan boycotts were not that effective although in this case, Jeanette Peabody, daughter of the late Colonel A. H. Belo and primary owner of the *Morning News*, became alarmed at the financial effects of the boycott. The result was the *Morning News* backed off on its provocative attacks on the Klan and began printing small blurbs about Klan violence wherever it could be found.

For several years the Dallas Klan withstood and even thrived under the public pressure brought to bear by its enemies. By mid-1924, the Klavern could boast a membership of around 13,000. Moreover, its activities were not limited to the political. Vigilantism had been curtailed by 1923, but the Klan had stepped up its recruiting activities by forming a women's auxiliary, beginning a Junior Klan for children, and attempting to lure foreign-born Anglo-Saxons into an association with them by creating an auxiliary called the Riders of the Red Robe. The Dallas Klavern was also very active in sponsoring social activities, reflecting its fraternal roots. Monster barbecues, Klan

karnivals, and the famed Klan Day at the State Fair all featured bands, Klan regalia, and grandiose initiation ceremonies. Where it could the Klan tried to counteract the newspaper-generated negative publicity by engaging in public charity. Chief among these efforts was the building of Hope Cottage, which ultimately cost the Klan around \$85,000.

It was politics, however, that was the main feature of the Dallas Klan. It is safe to say that no other local Klavern, at least among those studied, was as politically successful for so long a period of time as Klan 66. A major key to their electoral success was their grass-roots organization. They organized every precinct with a captain, secretary, and several assistants. The precinct captains made up a steering committee that in turn reported to an executive committee. Thus organized, the Klan began its political assault in the county elections of 1922 and swept every position. Candidates did not necessarily have to be official klansmen (the Klavern endorsed at least one woman), but they did have to give lip service to the issues that threatened the country and avoid criticizing the Invisible Empire. The 1922 victory, combined with overwhelming majorities in the municipal elections of 1923, destroyed the Citizens Association and demoralized the DCCL to the point that it became, for all practical purposes, a defunct organization.

Klavern 66 was also heavily involved in Klan attempts to influence state politics. Perhaps it was the overwhelming success at the local level that propelled the leaders of the Klavern to become politically involved at higher levels. Hiram Evans and Zeke Marvin were the two leaders who pushed hardest for Klan political involvement. Evans, who organized the state machinery and then accepted a position at national headquarters, kept a strong interest in Texas politics. Marvin, a disciple of Evans, instituted the Klan

primaries that allowed the Klan to unite its vote behind a single candidate. The 1922 elections were the first state-wide races where they tested this practice. The results were ambiguous. Although Earle Mayfield won the senate race over former governor Jim Ferguson, the rest of the state-wide Klan candidates failed in their candidacies. Nevertheless, the results thrilled klansmen because they realized that the senate position was the biggest plum on the political tree in 1922.

By 1924, the Klan seemed to have grown in strength at the state level. In this election cycle, the biggest political plum was the governorship. Again the Klan put forward a candidate, local Dallas judge Felix Robertson. Once again the Klan opponent was a Ferguson, this time Jim's wife, Miriam Ferguson. On the surface it looked like a replay of the 1922 senate election. The Fergusons stomped around Texas condemning Robertson for being the call-boy of a "grand gizzard" from out of state, and Robertson and his Klan allies diligently attacked Jim on his record as a "wet" and his 1917 impeachment. In the first primary, Robertson led Ferguson by 50,000 votes, but by the time of the run-off the Ferguson forces had gained the momentum and ran away with the election by almost 100,000 votes. Klansmen claimed the loss resulted from 100,000 Republicans crossing over and voting in the Democratic primary. More likely, it was a combination of waning support for the Klan and the interposition of Mrs. Ferguson between voters, who despised both her husband, and the Klan, but could just barely bring themselves to give her their vote as the lesser of two evils.

Meanwhile Klan 66's propensity for politics had spread to the national level. In November of 1922, Dallas's own Hiram Evans engineered a coup that overthrew the

Clarke-Simmons regime and brought a new style of leadership to the Klan. Evans tried to gain tighter control over the Klan by placing men he could trust in important leadership positions and aggressively ousting those who might dissent from his leadership. He tried to prop up the image of the Klan by instituting strict rules against vigilante activity, even ruling that Klan regalia had to stay locked up in local Klaverns except for officially sponsored activities. All this was important because he was determined to make the Klan a force in national politics. He encouraged Klans at the local and state level to work together to send Klan or Klan-friendly candidates to the U.S. Congress. He sent national Klan money into close races in an attempt to swing elections in favor of the Invisible Empire. He had some success, as the Klan had a hand in electing eleven governors, senators from ten states, and possibly as many as seventy-five members of the House of Representatives.¹⁷

Not content with the results in Congress, Evans also worked to influence presidential politics. He personally attended both major parties' 1924 national conventions and worked behind the scenes to influence choices and policies. At the Republican convention the Klan quashed an attempt by prominent Texas Republican, Rene Creager, to condemn the Klan by name but fell into a public relations disaster when it tried to exert its influence in choosing the vice-presidential candidate. The Klan issue generated considerably more friction at the Democratic convention. Evans and his minions originally hoped to lead the convention into accepting William MacAdoo as the

¹⁷Chalmers, David M., "The Hooded Knights Revive Rule by Terror in the 1920s," *American History Illustrated* 10 (1980): 34.

presidential candidate. Instead the Klan itself became the issue as the delegates became almost unreconciledly divided over the Invisible Empire. Supporters of Oscar Underwood and Al Smith, the other two likely candidates, strongly opposed the Klan and decided to make it an issue. They tried to force the convention to endorse a plank in the platform specifically condemning the Klan by name. The pro-Klan forces barely prevailed in a ferociously fought battle that set the stage for the nomination process. The fight for the nomination came to such an impasse that after 99 ballots MacAdoo and Smith bowed out and the convention selected a compromise candidate, John W. Davis.

The Klan's problems at the national level were the product of the Invisible Empire's widespread growth and the country's existing two-party divisions. As long as the Klan was working in a one-party state or region, such as Texas, it could concentrate all its voting strength in a single party. But at the national level the Klan had significant membership in both traditionally Democratic regions and those traditionally Republican. This meant Evans's forces were inevitably divided and could never hope to pack the kind of voting punch that they did at state and local levels. This did not mean that they would stop trying and the Klan under Evans's leadership continued to exert their waning influence in political circles for years to come.

Ideology, not partisan politics, tied the Klan together into a cohesive national organization. This was because the Klan's ideology represented its response to what it perceived as the national problems of the day. Problems of law and order, radicalism, prohibition, and morality, were apparent to the men and women who joined or sympathized with the Klan. When they looked around to find the source of these

problems, they discovered the fault lay with those different from themselves. Specifically, this meant Jews who refused to assimilate, inferior immigrants, and, potentially, African Americans, who could cause problems if they were not "kept in their place." Hence the Klan's opposition to the Dyer anti-lynching bill and its support for the immigration restriction of 1924.

The Klan saved its strongest condemnation for Catholicism. Besides the well-known theological differences between Protestants and Catholics, the Klan viewed the Catholic church as an authoritarian organization that desired to gain control over political entities, much as it had attempted to do in the Middle Ages. This meant that the pope was at the center of a conspiracy to take over the United States. Perhaps for some in the Invisible Empire this Catholic conspiracy theory did not inspire real belief but was merely a tool for gaining power and control. But the evidence in Dallas suggests that many actually believed. The volume, depth, and excruciating detail of the anti-Catholic coverage afforded in the *Texas American* makes it clear that klansmen saw the world in an "us versus them" mentality. The letters that poured into the *Dallas Morning News* accusing the paper of Catholic control, and refusing to accept the editors sincere and honest refutation of such claims, reveal the depths of the anti-Catholic fears tapped by the Klan.

Part of the development of the Klan's ideology can be traced back to Klan 66 and specifically to its leader, Evans. It is not that many of the ideological threads were missing when Evans came into power. Indeed, it was probably the ideology that most attracted him to the Invisible Empire. Evans, however, had a superior ability to marshal

the evidence and present the Klan view in a powerful and compelling manner. His anti-immigrant speech at Klan Day at the Texas State Fair in October 1924, contains one of the most thorough compilations of eugenics-based evidence marshaled against immigration that can be found. Moreover, as the imperial wizard, and thus absolute ruler of the Klan, Evans was the source for official ideology for the entire order. Like the pope speaking *ex cathedra*, the wizard's official declarations on a particular matter were absolute.

The problem with having an organization whose mission is based on fears is what happens to the organization when those fears begin to fade in intensity. This was precisely what began to happen to the Klan in 1924. While the country was dealing with its postwar hangover and was immersed in fears over bolshevism, lawlessness, and immorality, the Klan did not appear so outlandish. As long as a significant portion of the country could be sold on the idea of a Catholic plot, the Klan could justify its existence and its covert and hierarchical nature as a necessary antidote to this danger. The fact that the Klan with its continuous internal dissension and external scandals survived and thrived for as long as it did suggests the depths of the discouragement and fear that gripped the U.S. in the immediate postwar years.

In the election cycle of 1924, the whole Klan apparatus began to unravel. Although it took about a year and a half before it was evident that the Klan decline was permanent, the process began in 1924 in the place where the Klan had scored its first big election victory: Texas. In the gubernatorial race of that year, Texas Klaverns fought first over who the candidate should be and then over why he lost. The result, besides

much finger-pointing, was a complete reorganization of the Klan in Texas, and the breaking out of any number of internecine squabbles. As these internal fights, usually among Klavern leaders, became more heated the membership melted away, devastating the Klan in the process. In some areas the Klavern's demise was also associated with scandal. Such was the case in Houston where a court fight exposed the corruption and power of Houston Klan leaders at the height of that Klavern's power.

Dallas Klan 66 experienced no such public scandal. It did, however, experience factionalism. The split began when a Dallas charter member, V. A. Collins, made an unapproved run for the governor's mansion in 1924. Grand Dragon Marvin tried to get Collins to back out, but when he would not Marvin forced in his own candidate, Felix Robertson. When Robertson failed to win the nomination, Marvin took most of the blame and resigned his position as grand dragon. Apparently Marvin next tried to regain control over Klavern 66, but his actions as grand dragon had alienated too many locals, and he lost his bid for power. His attempt to regain control further split the Klavern and resulted in the reelection of the former exalted cyclops, A. C. Parker, to handle the emergency. The snub was enough to convince Marvin to drop his membership through inactivity. Parker made it permanent by banning the former grand dragon, whereupon Marvin sent a letter to the *Morning News* announcing his withdrawal and heaping disdain upon the Klan.

These Klan schisms occurred as societal optimism returned and the need for scapegoats faded. The result was a wholesale departure of members from Klan 66, a pattern that soon repeated itself in Klaverns around the country. The national Klan

membership plummeted from a high of 5-8 million in 1924-1925, to 2 million by 1926, and down to a few hundred thousand in 1927. In Dallas the drop was equally dramatic, going from 13,000 to 1200 between 1924 and 1926. Rather than going out with a bang as happened in many places, the Dallas Klavern faded away quietly. After the gubernatorial defeat in 1924, the *Morning News* sharply curtailed its coverage of the Klan, and by the late 1920s hardly a mention of the Invisible Empire can be found. The politicians who rode the Klan into power did not immediately disappear. Klansmen like State Senator George Purl could still be found in Austin fighting for Klan ideals when the rest of the legislature was passing an anti-mask ordinance. Mayor Blaylock and his council won overwhelming reelection in 1925 by emphasizing their civic accomplishments and avoiding mention of the Klan.

Thus, the dissolution of Klan 66 was due to an aggregate of national and local causes. National scandals and negative publicity combined with internal dissension to stigmatize the Klan as a radical and divisive organization. Local opposition by the DCCL and especially by the *Morning News* was forceful and consistent over a period of several years. The shutting off of southeastern European immigrants diminished perceived threats from Catholicism and bolshevism, as well as threats to Anglo-Saxon hegemony. Optimism, partly a result of these diminished threats and partly a result of a resurgent economy, dampened the need for an organization dedicated to fighting perceived threats. By 1927, the Invisible Empire in Texas and other parts of the nation became an object of loathing. Many state and local areas passed anti-mask ordinances, while candidates who

could be linked to the Klan instantly became un-electable. If Dallas abandoned the Klan a little less dramatically, it nevertheless abandoned it just as completely.

III

This study of the Dallas Klan has affirmed many of the conclusions of the new historiography. Most importantly, it is supportive of the idea that local investigations are critical to understanding the Klan movement of the 1920s. The Dallas Klavern had many similarities to other Klaverns. Like many, probably most, other influential Klaverns, its growth took place in an urban environment, with a recent history of exponential growth. This population increase seems to have been the impetus for the frequent existence of elite vs. anti-elite contests with the Klan usually serving as a vehicle for the insurgent forces. The growth of the Klan in Dallas, as elsewhere, stirred up tremendous opposition among entrenched interests which usually included the established press. This study also agrees with the conclusions of recent historians that the Klan was a mass movement, albeit a short-lived one. Although the lack of a general membership list makes overall conclusions tenuous, it is clear from the list of Klan leaders that the Invisible Empire recruited successfully throughout the community and was led by a group of businessmen that included some very successful and wealthy individuals. These findings are consonant with other local Klan studies.

There are unique features of the Dallas Klan as well. Statistical analysis, using 1920 census data, suggests that there was a strong age component in the battle between the Klan and its arch-enemy the DCCL. DCCL leaders' average age was nearly eleven

years older than that of the Klan leadership. This is not necessarily unusual since it might be expected that the elite would be older than an insurgent group. Nevertheless, this is the first study to document such a large age gap. The gap becomes less significant when comparing the general membership of both organizations, but this does not affect the importance of the age difference among the leadership.

This difference is important because it gives some answer to the puzzling question of why the Klan appeared in Dallas. In Salt Lake City, the Klan played upon the anti-Mormon feelings present in the state's largest city. In Anaheim, the Klan organized around the frustrations felt by incoming Midwest immigrants directed against the old German-stock ruling elite. Neither of these conditions existed in Dallas. Rather, the Dallas Klan was led by a group of younger ambitious, businessmen, frustrated by their inability to have a voice in Dallas politics. The Klan came along and provided them with the perfect vehicle for breaking up the dominant Citizens Association and gaining a place at the table. Indeed, for a few years they controlled the whole table.

This may explain the leadership's motivation in joining the Klan, but what about the rank and file? It was this question that forced a further investigation into the ideology of the Klan. Here the present researcher must part ways with the tendency in the newer historiography to downplay the importance of the Klan's ideology. The Klan rank and file seems to have joined less over a feeling of being left out but more over concern about national deterioration. The Klavern's leadership continually pounded away at its anti-immigrant, anti-Socialist, and anti-Catholic themes, especially in the pages of the *Texas American*, but also in the regular meetings, special events, and wherever an opportunity

afforded itself. The coverage was so ubiquitous that it acted as a form of mind control playing on and expanding the fears of the members. Only when a more optimistic attitude began to prevail in society as a whole was the spell broken and the Klavern began to break apart.

This does not mean that all Klavern's had as strong an emphasis on ideology, but it does call into question the trend toward its devaluation. The secondary material makes it abundantly clear that Klan ideology was present to some degree in all areas so far studied. It may be that the ideological emphasis adapted itself in subtle ways depending on the agendas of local Klaverns. It would be interesting to know, for example, if any Klaverns other than Dallas tried to woo the Jewish population into giving their support to the Klan. So far, most other Klan historians seem to have found only a strident anti-Semitism. If Dallas is unique in this particular, then it suggests the power of using ideology as a tool for dissecting the motives behind local Klan activities.

Finally, Klan historians must seek to explain the rise and fall of the Klan on a national basis. Local explanations cannot entirely suffice because of the timing involved. A movement that exploded onto the national historical landscape, lasted a few years, and then disappeared just as quickly and simultaneously, cannot be accounted for by a hunter's hodge-podge of local issues. Here also Klan ideology, which addressed the social conditions of the time, seems to lead to the best explanation. Klan ideology, as recorded in the pages of Klan newspapers, pamphlets, and speeches, embodied the fears and concerns of Anglo-Saxon Americans in the postwar world in a way that no other historical source does. The rise of the Klan in places like Dallas makes it clear that these

fears can be present without the perceived enemies being close at hand. Klan ideology thus provides a fertile field for historians trying to understand post-war America. As long as historians fail to listen to what the Klan was trying to tell people, they will have an incomplete understanding of the 1920s Klan and indeed the 1920s altogether.

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