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The Voter vol. 7, no. 4 (July 1990)

Maine League of Women Voters Staff

Maine League of Women Voters

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THE VOTER

Vol. 7, No. 4

The League of Women Voters of MAINE

July 1990

NEWPORT REPORT

Fifteen state board members, local League presidents and delegates gathered in Newport, Rhode Island, for the second Quad-State meeting on May 5 and 6.

A number of the Maine delegation visited the Rhode Island recycling facility on the way to Newport to get a close look at a "state-of-the-art" program in operation. It was interesting to note that Rhode Island has an aggressive recycling program for all kinds of metals --including aluminum foil.

The real treat of the two-day session was the dinner speaker on Saturday night. Delegates were privileged to hear Arlene Violette, the first woman in the U.S. to be elected a state Attorney General. Ms. Violette recounted her involvement with the state's under-privileged citizens, an association which began when, as a young nun, she worked in a community center staffed by her order.

Emphasizing the necessity of taking risks, she closed with a quote from her mother. Ms. Violette recounted that at a circus performance she informed her mother she wanted to become a high-wire walker, to which Mrs. Violette replied, "Arlene, it isn't enough to learn to walk the high wire. What is important is that you learn to dance on it!"

Susan Shaer, LWVUS Board member, was the early morning speaker on Sunday. She also emphasized the importance of taking risks and deftly fielded questions that became increasingly hard-edged as delegates questioned her about rising PMPs (per member payments) to national. She did state, however, that beginning this year, LWVUS would give state and local Leagues one year's notice before raising the PMP.

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MAINE LEAGUE MAKES HISTORY...

...at National Convention in Washington, D.C., June 9-13. For the first time in the League's 70-year history, a man was nominated for a position on the LWVUS Board.

This precedent-breaker was our own Alvin Moss, LWVME's First Vice-President as well as president of the Ellsworth MAL Unit. Alvin was also a supportive "League husband" in the days before membership was opened to males.

Ruth Moss reports that she "stood the convention on its ear" when she nominated Alvin. Unfortunately, the delegates were not yet ready for this challenge.

For this biennium's program, delegates approved:

--A two-year study of the health care system.

--Emphasis on the following national issues:

- Right of privacy in reproductive choices
- Recycling, waste reduction and pollution control
- Increasing citizen participation in the electoral process
- Child care
- Federal deficit and budget

Jane Saxl, President LWVME, Carol Fritz, President LWV Portland, Alvin Moss and Ruth Moss, Election Process Director, State Board, were Maine's delegates.

CITIZEN BEE 1990

Newport Report

"Do you know the first and last names of the man recently released after more than twenty-five years in a South African prison?" "Do you know how to distinguish an executive agreement from an executive order or from a treaty?"

Questions such as these were among those asked the twenty-seven high school students who competed in the Maine Citizen Bee Final which was held on April 28 in the Gardiner Area High School. The first and second place winners, both girls, represented Maine at the national championship in Washington, D.C., in June.

Three members of the Brunswick Area League served as a judge, a registrar, and the timekeeper at these finals. This was the first year that Maine participated in the Citizen Bee contest. As a member of the Steering Committee, the League of Women Voters of Maine was involved in all stages of the competition.

The Secretary of State's office, which coordinated this year's Citizen Bee, plans to continue the competition next year as a way of recognizing and improving academic achievement in history, government, and current events.

--NAN AMSTUTZ
Brunswick Area LWV

Continued from Page 1

Much frustrated, the delegates responded by stating how difficult it is to raise local dues to meet these national costs (and have anything left over for the local League) and that, quite clearly, annual dues of \$50 were out of the question. The answer came back, clearly and unequivocally, sharpen your fund-raising skills and get to work.

Delegates to the National Convention were directed to reiterate our opposition to steadily increasing PMPs, coupled with the suggestion to National to take a leaf from its own book and FUND RAISE from places other than local and state Leagues.

While at Quad-State, LWVME approved the annual budget and acquired a new secretary of the State Board. Margaret Tragard, president of the York County League, has agreed to take that post. Barbara Bowler, former secretary, will move to Public Relations/Fund Raising.

The Maine delegation left Newport after making plans for a one-day Retreat to be held at Jane Saxl's residence later in May.

Representing Maine were: Jane Saxl, Alvin and Ruth Moss, Madeline Brown, Pat Cyphers, Nellik Doble, Margaret Tragard, Alice Conkey, Ruth Irwin, Barbara Durbin, Carol Fritz, Barbara Bowler, Nan Amstutz, Ann Knowles and Nancy Freeman.

--BARBARA BOWLER
State Board

PERSONALS

May was a month of sad news. We offer our sympathy and condolences to:

PAT CYPHERS, Hancock, on the death of her husband, Howard, in late May. Pat has served on the State Board for several years as Natural Resources Chair.

MARIE J. HALL, Bar Harbor, on the death of her husband, Benedict, on May 30. Marie served as state VOTER editor for 1987 and 1988.

PATTY LETCHER, president of the MDI League, who has been suffering from a painful malady. We hope it has been properly diagnosed at last and that she is recovered and free of pain.

THE LEAGUE --- THE ISSUES

(The following summary of issues the League has addressed in its 70-year history was the middle section of June Saxl's proposed article on the League's birthday--February 14. Space considerations prevented publication of her full text in the January 1990 VOTER. But it is always timely to review an organization's history---and perhaps the knowledge of how many public concerns continue to demand the attention of an organization that studies and analyzes before it speaks will make us a bit less reluctant to accept higher membership fees and PMPs (per member payments) if that is what is needed to continue the League's work.)

Born of the suffragette movement, the League has worked constantly throughout the years for the active and informed participation of citizens in a government which is both accessible and open. To that end we have promoted the citizen's right to know and citizen education at the public expense.

Constant themes for the League have been: The search for peace through cooperation with other nations; The preservation of our environment; Solving economic and social problems so as to enhance the general welfare. These principles upon which the League is built... have endured.

Each biennium we select issues for study or action which will further our mission. The history of our concerns is analogous to America's past. For example, in the twenties, among other items, we supported collective bargaining, child labor laws, compulsory education, and instituting the minimum wage.

In the thirties during the depth of the depression we worked for passage of the Social Security Act, the food and drug acts, Federal Old Age Assistance, and the establishment of Public Employment Offices. Promoting a system of merit rather than patronage, we worked for adoption of the Civil Service System. Outraged by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, we supported United States membership in the League of Nations and delivered truckloads of signed petitions to the disarmament conference in Geneva.

During World War II years the League supported price controls, rationing and higher income taxes to pay for the war effort. But soon League members were concerned with reconstruction and postwar organization; they urged joining the United Nations to sustain an enduring peace.

In the fifties the League's focus turned toward domestic issues such as public education, child welfare, housing, urban renewal, planning, zoning and police problems. In the midst of the "red scare" and loyalty oath period the League adopted a position protecting individual rights and civil liberties. Because of work done at the local level, Leagues across the country were able to speak out about poverty, discrimination and to support equal access to education, employment and housing.

The Equal Rights Amendment, Income Assistance Programs, protection of the environment (positions adopted on water, air, waste management, land use and energy issues), public transportation, siting of energy facilities, campaign finance, the D.C. Amendment were some of the topics covered during the seventies.

Through the eighties we influenced public policy in environmental and social areas and continued our emphasis on citizen rights and on disarmament.

A more detailed account of the League's origins and activity can be found in In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters 1920-1970 by Louise M. Young, published in 1989 to celebrate the Year of the League, or, in synopsis form, A Great Idea through the Years, available through the state office.

Political But Not Partisan

It is inevitable that many League members and officers, convinced of the importance of "active participation in the political process" become active in political parties and, sometimes, run for political office. It is also inevitable that the League's claim to being a non-partisan organization will continue to be questioned. (The VOTER editor has in hand a 1981 Toledo (Ohio) BLADE editorial which begins:

"A member of the Ohio House rose on the floor in 1977 and acidly described the League of Women Voters as 'the Democratic wives of Republican businessmen who should have their credit cards cut up.' ")

Official League non-partisan policies have always applied only to officers and others who might be in the public eye as League spokespersons. At its May meeting (and after the required two readings) the State Board approved a new Non-Partisan Policy which, it is hoped, finds a comfortable middle ground between officers' interest and involvement in the political fray and protection of the League's reputation for nonpartisanship. The Board has also adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy. *(In the texts which follow, the underscoring has been added by the editor.)*



NON-PARTISAN POLICY

1. ELECTED OFFICE --- Board members shall not be candidates for State partisan office and must resign when petitions are filed.
2. POLITICAL PARTY OFFICE --- The president and voter service chair shall not serve in any position in a political party. Board members shall not serve as officers of a political party at the state level and shall abide by the local League's non-partisan policy regarding holding local party positions.
3. CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS --- All board members may attend fundraising events and make campaign contributions.
4. POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS --- The president and voter service chair shall not chair or administer fundraising or political campaigns, chair a campaign event or work in a significant way in the campaign of a candidate for federal or state office. Other board members may undertake such activities for candidates for state or local office after consultation with the presidents and board of the local leagues involved.
5. ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION --- Board members shall present questions about specific situations to the state board where the foregoing policies do not resolve the question.

CONFLICT of INTEREST POLICY

1. SECURING APPOINTMENTS --- The board may encourage and assist League members to secure appointments to government boards, commissions and committees. Unless clearly designated, appointees are not official representatives of the League.

2. SERVING ON BOARDS --- Board members may serve on other boards. However, if a serious conflict arises between the two entities, it should be brought to the attention of the League board.

3. LOBBYING --- Board members shall not lobby for a position in opposition to or in conflict with a LWVUS or LWVME position, except that board members have the right as individuals to lobby their own members of Congress on any side of any issue. In doing so, they must make it clear they are not representing the League. Board members shall follow the current guidelines for determination of conflict of interest in lobbying.

4. EMPLOYMENT --- If a conflict of interest problem arises from employment, it should be brought to the attention of the board.

5. STIPENDS --- Board members may not accept stipends or grants for League projects while sitting on the policy-making board that is responsible for the administration of the grant.

6. HONORARIA --- Board members may accept honoraria.

Radioactive Waste in Your Local Landfill?

Just as most of us have become aware of "household hazardous waste" and are using things like baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, hot water, and vegetable oils instead of chemical cleaners and polishes, we learn that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a policy that will make it permissible to dispose of certain low-level radioactive waste materials in public landfills or incinerators--indeed, even to be recycled!

Issued on June 27, the new policy classifies materials such as gloves of laboratory and hospital workers, carcasses of laboratory animals in which radioactive tracer elements were used, and parts from decommissioned power plants as "below regulatory concern." No one is contending there is no risk from very low-level waste; the NRC's phrase is that the risk is "acceptably low." ("In an early draft of the new policy, the commission said that any activity that increased the risk of death by one in 100,000 would be 'of little concern' to most members of society." New York Times, June 26, 1990.)

Critics of the new policy point out that once regulation is removed from certain categories, it will be impossible to know what the waste generators are sending to public disposal facilities or recycling plants. There have already been protests from environmental groups and some scientists; and the Environmental Protection Agency says it plans to issue a new rule (in two years) that would override parts of the NRC policy and establish a lower millirem level on what could be recycled or disposed of without regulatory controls.

Meanwhile, keep using those safer household substitutes! (But don't throw out any chemical products you may have--use them up before disposing of the empty containers.)

LOOKING AHEAD → NOV. 6

Because the October VOTER will be issued later than usual (the Board voted a later deadline to allow inclusion of up-to-date information on potential legislative debates and other items relating to the November ballot), here is an advance look at the decisions we'll be asked to make on November 6.

NOTE THAT ITEM 9 is essentially the same constitutional amendment as the one defeated last year. Obviously, voters were not sufficiently well informed, for they approved the bond issue to capitalize a mortgage insurance fund. The constitutional amendment is a necessary legal prerequisite to actually establishing that fund. Perhaps the revised wording this year (eliminating the \$25,000,000 cap and spelling out the purpose in more detail) will help ensure the success of this important amendment. BUT ALL OF US HAVE WORK TO DO TO HELP INSURE THAT IT IS UNDERSTOOD.

INITIATED QUESTION

1. Do you favor the change in Maine law that would allow all stores a choice to open on Sunday and certain holidays, provided stores in excess of 5000 square feet of selling space do not require their employees to work on such days proposed by citizen petition?


BOND ISSUES *(Abbreviated wording)*

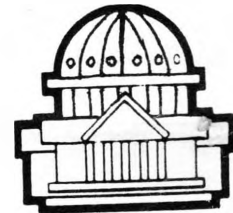
2. \$4,500,000 "for the acquisition of certain rail lines, rail trackage rights or easements or ancillary rights and interests for the establishment, preservation and operation of rail service in Maine."
3. \$5,000,000 "for the correction of major maintenance problems of an emergency nature in public schools."
4. \$3,000,000 "for the investigation, abatement, clean up and mitigation of uncontrolled hazardous substance sites that pose a hazard to public health, the environment and ground water quality."
5. \$19,000,000 "for the purchase of public lands to provide access for Maine's people and for construction to replace Churchill Dam."
6. \$20,250,000 "to build, purchase, plan and renovate correctional facilities and to study future operation needs."
7. \$9,000,000 "for construction of water pollution control facilities."
8. \$5,000,000 "for the restoration and preservation of historic buildings open to the public and needed improvements at state parks and historic sites needed to protect the public health and safety and to provide access for persons with disabilities."

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

9. "Shall the Constitution of Maine be amended as proposed by a resolution of the Legislature to insure payment of mortgage loans for the purpose of encouraging the acquisition, construction, repair or remodeling of housing for Maine citizens?"

1990-91 CALENDAR

June 30	VOTER deadline
July 11	Board Meeting, at Ruth/Alvin Moss' home, Sorrento*
August 22	Board Meeting, at Alice Conkey's home in Jefferson
August 26	Women's Equality Day
September 21-28	VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK
September 27	Board Meeting, Augusta**
October 1	VOTER deadline
October 1	Deadline for VOTERS' GUIDE
October (Tentative)	MMA/LWV State LEGISLATIVE DEBATES
November 6	ELECTION/REFERENDA DAY 
November 28	Board Meeting
December 10	VOTER deadline
January 9	Board Meeting
January 31	KEYS TO THE CAPITOL (No snow date)
February 20	Board Meeting
March	Action "Newsheet" to be mailed
March 10	VOTER deadline (Call to convention)
April 3	Board Meeting
May - 1st or 2nd Weekend	STATE CONVENTION Board Meeting Friday evening of that weekend
June 15	VOTER deadline



* All State Board meetings are open to interested Leaguers

**If we continue to have an office at 335 Water St., Sept. and subsequent board meetings will be held there. Status of office will not be known until autumn. Check with your local president or the MAL Coordinator (Nellick Doble, Brooklin, 04616) if you are interested in attending a meeting in Augusta.

PROGRAM PLANNERS! Marilyn Canavan, Administrative Assistant for the Commission on Government Ethics and Election Practices, has indicated an interest in talking to Leagues about the work of her commission. Her address is: State House Station 101, Office of the Secretary of State, Augusta, ME 04333. Telephone 289-4178.

Here is the current price list for York County's environment-friendly grocery/shopping bags. They are still a great idea for personal use or local League fund-raising.

NAVY with RED and WHITE silscreened imprint
10 oz, single fill duck, 16" x 18" x 5"

Quan.	Price per bag	
1 - 5	\$7.00	plus \$2.00 shipping each order
6 - 10	6.50	" 3.00 " " "
*11 - 50	6.00	Shipping cost will vary with quantity. LWV, York County
51 - 99	5.50	will advise before sending if you wish.

*For orders of 11 or more, if check is sent with order shipping will be paid by York County League. With orders of 100 or more, your location can be printed as:
League of Women Voters of _____

Min. Quan.	Price per bag	Min. Quan.	Price per bag	Shipping
100	\$5.43	1,000	\$4.10	See
200	4.81	5,000	3.35	note
500	4.37	10,000	3.25	above

ORDERS or QUESTIONS TO: LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, YORK COUNTY
P.O. Box 658, Cape Neddick, ME 03902

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