

**Western Kentucky University**

---

**From the Selected Works of Dorothea Browder**

---

Summer 2007

# A “Christian Solution of the Labor Situation”: How Workingwomen Reshaped the YWCA’s Religious Mission and Politics

Dorothea Browder, Dr



**SELECTEDWORKS™**

Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/dorothea\\_browder/1/](http://works.bepress.com/dorothea_browder/1/)

---

# A “CHRISTIAN SOLUTION OF THE LABOR SITUATION”

*How Workingwomen Reshaped the YWCA’s Religious Mission and Politics*

**Dorothea Browder**

*In 1920, the working-class members of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), numbering some thirty thousand, convinced the Association to endorse a workers’ rights platform at the height of the red scare. The YWCA’s original mission was to extend the protections of middle-class, Protestant virtue to young workingwomen. However, workingwomen reworked the association’s “Christian Purpose” into a tool to radically increase its commitment to labor issues. This article suggests how both social feminism and the Social Gospel were shaped by working-class women. It shows how workingwomen intervened in intra-Protestant debates to insist on equal citizenship within a purportedly democratic, cross-class women’s organization. Having begun by seeking to convert workingwomen to evangelical Protestantism, YWCA leaders had found themselves converted — by a mix of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish women — to political activism as an expression of faith.*

On an April morning in Cleveland, Ohio, on the fifth day of the 1920 Biennial Convention of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), Mrs. Finley Shepard arose full of feeling. A charter member of the association, for years she had been an enthusiastic member of the YWCA’s National Board, putting to good use part of her ten-million-dollar inheritance as the daughter of railroad magnate Jay Gould.<sup>1</sup> Committed to spreading the word of Jesus Christ, for thirteen years she had offered a free Bible to each YWCA member who could recite from memory certain passages in her Scripture Passage Memorizing Leaflet.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps she had once hoped that the YWCA Industrial Program would mirror one of her favorite charities, the Railroad Young Men’s Christian Association, which sought to create model, loyal workers by providing Bible instruction and wholesome entertainment, and remained adamantly anti-union.<sup>3</sup>

That day, however, Shepard was not rising to announce a new Bible giveaway to the more than two thousand gathered members. She was announcing her resignation from the YWCA Board of Directors. The organization was changing in ways that she found shocking and dangerous. For several days she had been fighting these changes, first protesting a proposal from student members to liberalize membership rules, then leading the op-

position to a set of recommendations from working-class members. Arguing against a proposal from industrial members that the YWCA take a political stand on labor issues, she had expressed her fears about "the trend in our time toward radical socialism, a trend which . . . I have found even in certain departments of our Association."<sup>4</sup> When the industrial recommendations nonetheless passed, she resigned in protest.<sup>5</sup>

Shepard was right in at least one respect: the association was headed for enormous change. In 1919, the YWCA's thirty thousand industrial members had flexed their collective muscle as a large constituency and had initiated an association-wide debate over the YWCA's political role in labor issues. They had sent the National Board a set of resolutions for all association members to consider at the 1920 Biennial Convention. These resolutions called for the YWCA to take a public stand on workers' rights, to lobby for labor laws, and to educate its own members. They asked the YWCA to support not only protective labor laws but also workingwomen's right to form and join labor unions—a controversial topic. A series of highly charged debates ensued in an organization whose members ranged from such elite board women as Shepard, whose families had made their fortunes in manufacturing, to women who glued felt to hats for a living. In the end, the 1920 YWCA National Convention passed a slightly altered version of the industrial members' resolutions, changing the direction of one of the largest women's groups in the nation.

Indeed, the YWCA struck out in new directions after 1920. It established a Public Affairs office, launched major lobbying efforts, increasingly cooperated with liberal and sometimes radical political groups, and frequently took unpopular stands in support of labor, civil rights, and peace.<sup>6</sup> Having begun by seeking to convert workingwomen to evangelical Protestantism, YWCA leaders had found themselves converted—by a mix of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish women—to political activism as an expression of faith.

This article illuminates complex and underexplored relationships between three areas usually treated separately: women's social reform, debates within Protestantism, and working-class social movements. Studies of cross-class cooperation among reformers and workers have largely discounted working-class women's agency, as women's historians have shifted from celebrating "sisterhood" to emphasizing its limits, concluding that, in Nancy Hewitt's words, middle-class white women "rejected the strategy of supporting [working-class] grassroots organizing efforts" in favor of a top-down approach.<sup>7</sup> Women's historians also have done little to explore religion's role for workingwomen, though for middle-class women they have established the religious foundations of nineteenth-century female authority and are beginning to explore them in twentieth-century activism.<sup>8</sup> Workingwomen's influence also has been neglected in treatments of the

early-twentieth-century Protestant debates over the place of political action, a debate that historians place mostly among religious leaders.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, most labor historians have regarded religion with suspicion if at all, despite the early urging of Herbert Gutman, an influential founding figure in U.S. labor history, for greater consideration of the topic.<sup>10</sup>

This study provides fresh insights in all these areas. Moving beyond the question of whether cross-class women's movements represent "sisterhood" or its limits, it mines the YWCA for insights into how differences played out in the process of political organization and politicization. Though initially aiming to uplift, industrial secretaries came to support workingwomen's claim to the right to represent themselves, and encouraged them to build the program through grassroots recruiting. Furthermore, workingwomen and these secretaries succeeded in building their program within a more conservative organization by intervening at the peak of debates over the place of politics in Protestantism, a struggle religious historian Ferenc Szasz has noted was "more than an intramural Protestant quarrel. . . . It had major social implications for the entire nation."<sup>11</sup> Neglected by labor unions, these workingwomen used the YWCA's discursive and institutional resources—meeting spaces, staff, and organizational religious purpose—to make claims for a greater share of power and autonomy, and for tangible workplace improvements. Too long neglected, the connections between working-class politics, women's activism, and religious faith, language, and institutions surely deserve closer scrutiny.

In 1919–1920, two broader currents of crisis intersected in the Young Women's Christian Association, an organization with Protestant roots, a Christian purpose, and a growing membership of working-class women. These women worked in factories and households, came from a range of immigrant and native-born backgrounds, and included Protestants, Jews, and Catholics. Thousands of African American workingwomen were also members, but following YWCA policy, they were segregated in separate clubs and do not appear to have been present at the 1919 conference that created working members' demands. Perhaps as a result, racial justice would be absent from those demands, though it was already being discussed at some regional conferences and would soon become a key part of the Industrial Program. Although the U.S. racial crisis of 1919–1920 was not reflected in industrial members' demands, other aspects of the period's massive political and cultural turmoil were. The red scare was in full swing, and state and federal governments and employers were cracking down on a perceived threat from the Left, targeting immigrants, labor organizers, and anyone who might be a dreaded Bolshevik. At the same time, the Protestant churches had emerged from the Gilded Age with profound questions about the relationship between faith and modernity. A

movement of theological liberals was precipitating debates over Christ's nature and the church's mission, in what a preeminent religious historian has called "the most fundamental controversy to wrack the churches since the age of the Reformation."<sup>12</sup>

This article explores how workingwomen's presence in the YWCA played a key role in reframing the association's religious purpose during a period of both national and organizational crisis. I argue that the YWCA's working-class members were able to formulate and push through changes because of two key factors. First, the YWCA's Industrial Program provided an institutional space that brought together workingwomen from a range of backgrounds, who were able to discuss their common problems regularly in local clubs, and to share issues and solutions in regional and national conferences. Second, a group of industrial secretaries, influenced by working-class women and by the Social Gospel and labor movements, provided key materials and intellectual resources to the industrial members and helped them to make their case to more conservative YWCA members. Working through both these factors was the YWCA's "Christian Purpose" itself. The "Purpose" both provided workingwomen a language through which to frame socioeconomic problems as moral and religious issues, and prompted industrial staff to reexamine their own initial views on labor questions. Together these elements enabled industrial members to create a new discourse in the YWCA during the crucial postwar period—a discourse that allowed them to harness, in an unfriendly national political climate, the significant resources and moral authority of a large and respected religious organization.<sup>13</sup>

Pushing the YWCA to formally support workers' rights, to educate its own members about workers' problems, and to embrace an overtly political role, workingwomen asserted their own needs and dignity to an organization that was more used to thinking of them as charity cases than as partners. Shepard warned at the convention that "the great currents leading away from Christianity . . . and the political movements for subversion of our government" emphasized "brotherhood instead of the atonement of Jesus Christ and his divinity," and therefore, should be rejected.<sup>14</sup> However, YWCA industrial members framed the situation differently, arguing that Jesus's life and message *demand*ed attention to "brotherhood" (or "sisterhood") and social justice. By presenting their demands as "The Christian Solution of the Labor Situation," they placed the political rights of working people within the framework of the YWCA's Christian Purpose, thus extending the religious mission of the YWCA from its focus on individual, personal progress to an emphasis on social change. Their ability to change the discourse about the YWCA's purpose is significant not only because it changed the direction of one of the nation's largest women's and religious

groups. It also shows how workingwomen drew on religion as a resource, how they intervened in the modernist/fundamentalist Protestant debates, and how they refused to be objects of reform, insisting on equal citizenship within a purportedly democratic, mixed-class women's organization.

When the YWCA's industrial staff began their work more than a decade earlier, labor laws and trade unions had held no place in their plans. Though the association had been concerned with female factory workers since its 1866 founding, its original mission was to extend the protections of middle-class, firmly Protestant virtue to vulnerable young workers. Founded as a Bible study group, the YWCA had sought to convert workingwomen to evangelical Christianity and to provide such resources as boardinghouses to keep them from the dreaded moral turpitude of "white slavery."<sup>15</sup> In 1908, the association created an Industrial Department to coordinate these efforts and appointed industrial "secretaries" to carry them out. "Secretary" was the YWCA term for the staff who planned and executed the association's various programs. Industrial secretaries initially visited factories to read Bibles aloud during lunch hours and organized wholesome activities for workingwomen who might come to local associations in the evening. Experience soon brought them up against the shortcomings of their approach.

Perhaps none felt their initial failures more deeply than Florence Simms, the YWCA secretary who founded and served as the first head of the Industrial Department. Simms had become involved with the YWCA as a college student, and after graduating in 1895 had held several positions with various YWCAs. She began codirecting industrial affairs in 1904, founded the national Industrial Department in 1908, and directed it until her death in 1923.<sup>16</sup> But when she began industrial work, Simms's years of association experience proved no preparation for her attempts to draw workingwomen to the YWCA.

Simms herself later described her initial efforts as a condescending desire to bring Christianity to workingwomen: "I went *down* to those girls. . . . I wanted to give them religion. . . . We had factory meetings at noon in which we presented our kind of religion. . . . I am ashamed to tell you this morning that I did not even know what wages they earned . . . what hours they worked. . . . I knew . . . what I was struggling for most was a religious life; and I supposed that that was also what they ought to be about; not seeing that they did not have . . . the foundation of all that had come to me. Absolutely looking over it!"<sup>17</sup>

For several years Simms and her colleagues found themselves largely unsuccessful in attracting industrial women to their programs. Offering lunchtime Bible readings and evening sewing classes alongside more Bible study, they were, for the most part, rebuffed. Most factory workers were not especially interested in being religiously converted and found little in

the YWCA message that addressed their prime concerns—low wages, long hours, and a lack of power to change conditions.<sup>18</sup> It became clear that the program was attracting only a certain type, whom Simms described with ambivalence. The only “kind of girl who would come in to us at all,” she noted with dismay, was the kind who studied her Bible at her machine and “had so much religion that she had nothing else, wanted nothing else.” Simms saw this attitude as “that kind of religion which is so narrow, so intolerant, so literal that there is no spirit in it. . . . [Such girls were] quite as bad as I was when I went in.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps workingwomen were suspicious of a program that, the Association’s own periodical reported in 1908, “gives the management an agency through which it can do its welfare work,” and “also increases in [workingwomen] the spirit of content and so puts them in the way of doing better work.”<sup>20</sup>

Once they began asking workingwomen why the YWCA did not appeal to them, secretaries began learning things that would change their approach. Workingwomen drew industrial secretaries’ attention to the pittance they earned, and the long hours they worked. In place of noontime Bible readings in factories, and evening lessons in sewing and cooking, and more Bible study, they pressed for more relevant courses and a role in club governance.<sup>21</sup>

Humbled by their initial failures, Simms and her colleagues understood that workingwomen should have a larger role in planning the industrial program. Simms became a highly vocal advocate of workingwomen’s right and ability to make their own decisions, instituting changes that played a crucial role in industrial program development. She refashioned the program into a set of industrial clubs that workingwomen ran themselves, providing key support for a movement that soon grew into the tens of thousands.<sup>22</sup> The self-governing institutional framework that emerged was one of several changes that allowed workingwomen to take advantage of increasingly sympathetic industrial secretaries and a contested YWCA religious purpose.

Evidence suggests that Simms’s Industrial Department became a haven for staff interested as much in union organizing and other political activism as in religious uplift. In 1913, Simms answered a letter from an industrial secretary asking whether she should stay in the YWCA in light of her growing socialist beliefs. Simms replied, “Just go right ahead being a Socialist . . . there is not the least difficulty in combining your secretarial work and Socialism,” and reassured her that a new secretary “upon whom I am counting for a great contribution, is an out-and-out Socialist.”<sup>23</sup> Simms’s acceptance of secretaries’ political leanings helped the Industrial Department attract a cadre of women committed to helping women workers organize themselves.

By the mid-1910s, a number of national industrial secretaries were running up against a tension between the twin goals that had brought them there: organizing women workers and commitment to the association's "Christian Purpose." They found themselves competing with trade unions for women's loyalty, even while fending off accusations of political radicalism from both inside and outside the association. The secretaries began to feel, as one put it, "between two fires" over the extent to which the association's religious purpose allowed, or perhaps even required, political engagement. At a 1916 staff meeting, industrial secretaries found the need to "ask ourselves the question 'Where does the Association stand'" on the matter of labor unions? "Are there some questions on which the Association can take a definite stand . . . or have we got to remain inactive on the question? . . . We must face what we have got."<sup>24</sup> Although the YWCA industrial staff had ties to a larger group of labor and women reformers in such groups as the American Association for Labor Legislation, the National Consumers' League, and the National Women's Trade Union League, both labor leaders and female labor reformers remained suspicious, continuing to view the association as anti-labor, or lukewarm at best on labor rights.

Despite the national industrial staff's increasing sympathy for labor unions, outsiders' suspicions about the YWCA had grounds. The program had begun as assistance to company welfare plans. Many local association secretaries and much of the national leadership remained hostile to labor organizing, and already felt that the YWCA's industrial work was more politically engaged than befit a religious organization. Industrial secretary Mary Dingham noted, "From the national point of view it is practically impossible to commit the organization" to support strikes.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the secretaries had to tread carefully. Debating industrial members' demands for more appropriate education, Dingham proposed providing them a summary of state laws affecting women and girls "if we dare to do it."<sup>26</sup> Seeking incremental change in the association, they resolved at the 1916 meeting: "In the light of the great lack of knowledge of our local secretaries and committee women we all continue our method of education along lines of [t]rade unionism."<sup>27</sup>

Secretaries' growing commitment to labor organizing and improving labor laws was grounded in more than practicality or political commitment; the association's "Christian Purpose" was at work. Association leaders had defined this purpose as follows: "to seek to bring young women to such a knowledge of Jesus Christ as shall mean for the individual young woman fullness of life and development of character, and shall make the organization as a whole an effective agency in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God among young women."<sup>28</sup> Its meaning, however, was not static but contested, perhaps never more fiercely than by its industrial

membership. While avowing that its goal was to bring in "the Kingdom of God," in industry as elsewhere, the association had largely sought to do so through personal religious transformations. It had been focused on building individual "Christian" character, and to the extent that it had sought to ameliorate women's working conditions, it had done so to keep them from "immoral" situations. This would soon change, as their own changing interpretations of this mission shaped their politics. Again, Florence Simms's development provides a window.

Simms's changing approach represented a theological shift of major proportions, influenced by the workingwomen she tried to recruit. Describing the transformation, Simms's biographer, Richard Roberts, traced a "radical change in her Christian outlook which she described as her awakening," from what Roberts terms a "strict individualism," focused on saving souls, to a new emphasis on "the redemption of the social and economic conditions" under which industrial women lived. Not only did Simms begin to see the importance of developing leadership among workingwomen, but she also moved away from the individualistic focus on salvation that had characterized her earlier approach.<sup>29</sup>

Simms's experiences recruiting workingwomen dovetailed powerfully with her exposure to a growing liberal Protestant movement far removed from her conservative religious upbringing.<sup>30</sup> Simms was beginning to read and speak with members of the Social Gospel movement, which preached social improvement as a means to bring in God's kingdom. A number of religious bodies, including the Federal Council of Churches (an umbrella group of liberal Protestant churches, formed in 1908, with which the YWCA had close ties) were urging religious groups to embrace greater social engagement. In 1908, the Federal Council of Churches passed a "social creed" emphasizing Protestant churches' responsibility to improve social conditions.<sup>31</sup> An enormous debate was underway about what role religion should have in a modern society.

Although YWCA national policy continued to emphasize personal conversion, Social Gospel thinking was creeping in.<sup>32</sup> Simms began to believe that group action was the path to society's salvation; Richard Roberts has described her growing belief that, in his words, "the Young Women's Christian Association should openly declare itself for social righteousness and constitute itself one of the organs of social reclamation."<sup>33</sup> Faced with a conservative YWCA leadership, she pressed for change. In 1909, she chaired an international commission to study the YWCA's place in social and industrial life, whose results she termed the "charter" of the association's industrial work. This commission's report, presented at the 1910 World's YWCA conference in Berlin, led to passage of a resolution requiring the association to study social and industrial problems, and to educate work-

ingwomen about the "social measures and protective legislation enacted in their behalf." In 1911, the biennial YWCA National Convention passed resolutions to "educate public opinion regarding the need of establishing a minimum living wage and of regulating hours of labor compatible with the physical health and development of wage-earners," and to declare women's right to a living wage.<sup>34</sup>

These resolutions significantly advanced the association's commitment to improving workingwomen's material circumstances and gestured toward a more politically engaged role for the YWCA. Indeed, one resolution called for the YWCA to continue its work in factories but to establish "wherever possible" rented centers outside of factory walls while encouraging employers to contribute funds to the central association. This recommendation indicates that, while its drafters hoped that employers would continue to support YWCA work, they recognized the pitfalls of organizing workers right under employers' eyes.

Several 1911 convention members raised objections when the resolutions were introduced. Some feared that angry employers would bar the YWCA from factories. Others argued that such issues as wages were beyond the association's purview. Apparently they were not mollified by the inclusion of a cautious resolution that the association, while "endeavoring to improve" working conditions, "shall point steadfastly to a higher standard of faithful service and achievement for the worker, and of justice and consideration for the employer."<sup>35</sup>

In defense, Simms quoted the resolutions' observation that "the white slave traffic is admitted to be closely related to the lack of a living wage."<sup>36</sup> Simms argued that "a body of Christian women, knowing this fact, should not vote against this resolution and still pray . . . 'They will be done on earth.'"<sup>37</sup> Thus, even as she significantly expanded the association's commitment to improving labor conditions, Simms continued to frame its industrial work as a moral uplift project. She spoke of workingwomen as subjects for reform and salvation, rather than equals in a democratic organization.

Despite the passage of the 1911 "industrial charter," most YWCA leaders remained ambivalent about how far to take the Social Gospel message. The charter urged the study of social and industrial problems, but association leadership drew a strong line between study and action, believing that as a religious group, the YWCA should not interfere in "business" affairs. A lively debate developed about what a "Christian" society should look like, and what role the association should play.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the 1910s, the YWCA's Industrial Program staff continued to shift from their earlier evangelical focus, showing a marked change by the decade's end. Simms and other industrial secretaries grappled with how to explain their insights to the national leadership, which Simms urged "must

be made to see [the] relation between Industrial Study and a girl's soul."<sup>39</sup> In 1918, Simms participated in another joint commission, with representatives from the National Consumers' League, the American Association for Labor Legislation, and the Women's Trade Union League, that investigated workingwomen's conditions in Europe and supported "decent standards in industry." The conference report called the association's participation a "sanction of these industrial standards for women" and a signal of a "new beginning in broader cooperation among national women's organizations working for industrial standards."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, by 1919, workingwomen had in the Industrial Department staff a group of firm allies who supported workers' right to organize and even sought to create a strong workingwomen's social movement through the YWCA Industrial Program. They had access to a broader world of social and labor reform, through the networks that industrial staff had joined. They also had access to religious language that would help convince YWCA leaders of the need for a change of policy.

More than a half century after the 1911 industrial charter passed, a former leader in the YWCA's public affairs works described it as the beginning of "a new day" of "Fifty Years of Social Action in the YWCA."<sup>41</sup> However, the charter guaranteed no such future: without changes that workingwomen demanded and enacted, the industrial program might have continued as a pet project of its staff, lacking the full support from the national association. Workingwomen drew on and expanded on the resources the YWCA offered them, including independent meeting spaces, an organizational structure that allowed them leadership positions, and the moral language of its Christian purpose.

The YWCA Industrial Program offered, at the most basic level, rare places where workingwomen could gather together to discuss work problems and to socialize, in hundreds of city associations nationwide. Such women did not have the same access men did to public meeting spaces, and the few women who were in unions faced significant barriers to participation.<sup>42</sup> The YWCA program's shift from workplaces to association facilities not only shielded workers from employer intimidation and control, but also brought together women from different lines of work, giving them a sense of being part of a larger movement. Local clubs began forming ties with one another, making city federations, which in turn formed regional federations. These ties gave industrial members contact with a large cohort, in a program they had a large part in planning and running. As a result, in the 1910s, industrial women began to forge a semi-independent movement within the association and to challenge the National Board's right to set the agenda on labor issues.

Perhaps emboldened by their freedom from employers' scrutiny,

YWCA industrial members soon claimed another type of independent meeting place. In the early 1910s, industrial delegates complained that their issues were not being addressed at the general "city" conferences that they attended along with other members.<sup>43</sup> They began demanding their own conferences, whose agenda and guest speakers they would plan along with industrial secretaries. The first Industrial Council, made up of club representatives from the mid-Atlantic region, planned a 1912 conference at Camp Nepahwin in Canton, Pennsylvania. The following year, councils organized two summer industrial camps, at Nepahwin and in Altamont, New York. By 1917, six regional councils gathered hundreds of workingwomen for summer conferences across the eastern seaboard and the Midwest; industrial conferences eventually took place all over the country.<sup>44</sup> At Camp Councils, delegates discussed the year's activities and planned the following year's, providing workingwomen a chance to develop leadership skills, to more deeply discuss industrial issues, and to shape the association's industrial program.

These councils pushed through developments in both program structure and content that would dramatically change the tenor of the program. At the 1913 summer conference at Nepahwin, with the support of industrial secretary Ernestine Friedmann, council leaders decided that the YWCA's industrial members "must no longer meet as little detached groups of box factory girls, department store girls . . . etc. We must unite into one big country-wide federation."<sup>45</sup> Council leaders at the summer camps also pushed for courses about labor laws, social movements, and other topics that moved beyond those that industrial secretaries reflexively continued to offer.<sup>46</sup> A friend recalled Florence Simms being "very sensitive" to the fact that industrial members were making new demands: At the 1913 Northeastern summer conference in Altamont, workingwomen "began to be dissatisfied with opportunities which the movement offered to them." They wanted to be more than "members of gymnasium classes, painting classes, dressmaking classes, and so forth."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Simms later noted that these regional councils signaled a shift in the movement's "center of gravity," from "the idea of constructive service for community betterment to the need of change in the industrial system and the social conditions it had brought."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, while the 1915 industrial staff handbook emphasized teaching good citizenship and domestic skills, workingwomen planning the regional summer conferences began advancing a different interpretation of community improvement—one that put their rights at the center. Putting their civics classes to good use, they launched local projects to educate themselves and increase their own political participation. Some of these activities included cleaning up public spaces for civic improvement, but others focused on

workingwomen's needs, for instance, establishing lunchrooms in factories and providing seating for factory workers.<sup>49</sup>

YWCA industrial members became increasingly well organized and increasingly clear about what they wanted the program to be. Along with such personal development activities as Bible discussions, cooking contests, and homemaking classes, they began to articulate the need for political action. In response, in 1918, Friedmann designed a program that emphasized leadership training and included classes on women in industry, the Industrial Revolution, "The New Place of Women in Labor," and "Politics and Economics."<sup>50</sup> Workingwomen also took advantage of another program benefit—industrial secretaries' relationships with sympathetic reformers in other organizations, such as the National Consumers' League and the National Women's Trade Union League. By 1916, industrial members were recommending cooperation with the Consumers' League and other organizations concerned with protective labor legislation. The summer conferences and regional federations also played a crucial role in spreading new program ideas to local clubs.<sup>51</sup>

The composition of those conferences and the local industrial clubs was just as remarkable as the programs. The growing federation brought together women previously divided by occupation—the 1913 summer councils included women from "a wide variety of industries including soap factories, shoe factories, textile industries, candy factories, bleacheries, laundries, department stores, and telephone exchanges." They also brought together women of different religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds.<sup>52</sup> Although the YWCA was nominally Protestant, its industrial clubs welcomed women of other religions; Catholic women predominated in much of the Upper Midwest, and three of St. Paul's industrial club presidents were Catholic, as were most of its members.<sup>53</sup> This diversity made the YWCA's industrial clubs and conferences significantly different from the other places workingwomen might gather, such as workplace-based unions or social groups, church meetings, and ethnic organizations. Yet the industrial program initially followed the racial segregation of the rest of the YWCA. Early organizing efforts took place in factories, where very few African Americans could find work, and then in so-called "Central" associations, from which African Americans were segregated into their own "Branch" associations.

The labor shortages of World War I wrought dramatic changes. African American women applicants for war jobs so exceeded expectations that the federal government sought the help of the YWCA's War Work Council. A cohort of African American YWCA staff took advantage of this increased visibility and an influx of federal funding to gain national association support for organizing black workingwomen. In 1917, Mary Jackson was ap-

pointed the first National Industrial Secretary for Colored Work. By war's end, thousands of black workingwomen had passed through the wartime centers, and three thousand had joined industrial clubs. However, they joined separate clubs from the other industrial members.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, at the time of the first National Industrial Conference in 1919, which appears not to have included African Americans, few of the white industrial members had met with African American counterparts. Some had begun exploring the need for racial justice.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the previous summer's Northeastern regional industrial conference had concluded a discussion of Christian principles in the industrial world by passing a remarkable platform recommending both collective bargaining and "that Colored Girls should be given the same opportunity in industry as the White Girls."<sup>56</sup> The growth of African American industrial clubs would raise a challenge to the Industrial Program's rhetoric about a common place for all workingwomen; industrial members would design a national governing structure in 1922 that guaranteed representation to African American members and desegregated all their summer conferences except the Southern soon thereafter.<sup>57</sup> However, in 1919, the segregated character of the Industrial Program, and likely the Social Gospel movement's neglect of race, shaped members' recommendations about the "Christian Solution of the Labor Situation." The national recommendations, like the conference agenda to which they were responding, made no mention of racial inequalities in the workplace.

World War I set the stage for the events of 1920 and beyond, by increasing industrial members' numbers, diversity, and role in program planning. Home-front production needs drew huge numbers of women into the workforce. The U.S. government called upon the YWCA, an organization with expertise about workingwomen, to help create and run Industrial War Service Centers with federal funding. These centers provided safe places where workingwomen could avail themselves of cafeterias, victrolas, reading materials, exercise classes, and social activities. These were open to all, not just members, and served around three hundred thousand women during the war. After the war, the YWCA set up fourteen large Industrial Service Centers, managed by committees composed half of "representative women of the community" and half of workingwomen. The service centers "belonged to the industrial girls through direct representation and responsibility to a degree that they have never known before as theirs," a 1920 Industrial Program publication proclaimed; not only did they develop leadership within their own group, but they also enjoyed the opportunity "to meet on equal terms with the rest of the leadership of the Association."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the number of local industrial clubs skyrocketed from 375 in 1915 to 823 by the end of 1918. Industrial staff also increased dramatically: in 1917, the number of local industrial secretaries grew from 97 to 365,

field industrial secretaries from 4 to 13, and national staff from 1 (Florence Simms) to 30.

Thus, World War I significantly strengthened the YWCA's industrial program and created conditions for greater assertiveness by working-women, who gained leadership experience in the Industrial Service Centers.<sup>59</sup> The result was that at war's end, women in the YWCA industrial program had developed leadership skills and confidence, at the same time that they had spent years in a climate that encouraged sacrifices for the national good. When the war ended and employers began rescinding wartime advances in wages and working conditions, those women turned to the YWCA for help.

By 1919, then, three key developments had taken place. First, the YWCA's industrial staff had become convinced that the association's religious purpose demanded political engagement. Second, the entire YWCA, though conflicted on the details, had begun acknowledging that its Christian mission included improving workingwomen's lives. Third, the Industrial Program had become a self-governed movement of thirty thousand increasingly vocal and politicized workingwomen. At a 1919 summer conference in the Northeast, after a discussion of how "the only solution of the industrial world lies in the application of the principles of Jesus Christ," working-women passed a recommendation "that working girls should accept and apply the principles of collective bargaining."<sup>60</sup>

Such thinking became solidified nationally the following fall at the Industrial Program's first national conference for workingwomen. This conference itself combined the three key elements: a space in which workingwomen could meet and discuss; a group of committed industrial secretaries; and the opportunity—indeed, the appointed task—to consider the links between the association's Christian purpose and industrial problems. Sixty-five workingwomen, elected by their local clubs, met in Washington DC, to discuss the conference theme, "The Christian Solution of the Labor Situation and the Opportunity Afforded Christian Women." Delegates gathered from all over the country and from thirty-five different industries, including the needle trades, shoes, housework, telephone, telegraph, dental supplies, electrical goods, and canneries. Episcopalians, Baptists, Lutherans, and other Protestants were joined by three Catholic and two Jewish women.<sup>61</sup> At last gathered as a national body, the conference delegates could articulate their own views of the YWCA's mission.

The YWCA conference took its agenda from two other labor conferences, the First International Congress of Working Women (organized by secular groups concerned with workingwomen) and the International Labor Congress (convened by President Woodrow Wilson under the League of Nations).<sup>62</sup> The three took place in immediate sequence to allow attendance

at each. The YWCA conference drew its topics from the International Congress of Working Women's agenda, which offered women's perspectives on the International Labor Conference agenda. The topics included women's employment before and after childbirth; women's night work; child labor; the eight-hour day and forty-eight-hour week; and how to prevent or provide for unemployment. The YWCA conference asked its delegates to consider: "What should be the Christian Attitude toward these problems and what is the Christian Solution to Them?"<sup>63</sup> An industrial delegate from each field reported on the problems in her field "of which she had personal knowledge." Then a series of speakers addressed "Some Contributing Factors Toward the Solution of Our Industrial Problems": the cooperative movement; "A Christian Employer's Ideals"; and the labor movement.

YWCA industrial delegates heard from two guest speakers who encouraged labor organizing. Mrs. Raymond Robins of the National Women's Trade Union League gave a rousing report of recent trade union successes among women. She emphasized that "the Trade Union organization places back responsibility for action upon the workers," and referenced the Bible's Esther, who resolved to "go unto the King" in the service of her people and said "if I perish, I perish." Mary Anderson, chief of the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Women in Industry, reported that the bureau had formulated a set of standards for the federal government to follow in industries "over which it had control." These included hours limitations; rest periods; "an adequate wage"; and "equal pay for equal work." Asked by the workingwomen how best to improve working conditions, Anderson gave two answers: state labor laws and "trade unions for collective bargaining."<sup>64</sup>

The final remarks of the conference, from the working-class delegates, ranged from generalizations about the need for employer-employee cooperation, to testimonies about labor unions' ability to improve conditions and wages. Throughout the conference, they had exchanged stories about their experiences with unions. For instance, one reported her union membership with pride and lamented the difficulty of recruiting fellow workers; another reported having been fired for having joined a strike but having no regrets; and a third reported that as a union member, she made good wages, but the lack of labor laws in her state meant others did not. The conference closed with one delegate urging the rest: "Ours is not a religion of 'Do this and do not do that' to get into heaven. We must come together. I am a union girl. . . . I went home from our [YWCA] Field Conference determined to stand for the Christian principles I learned in my union."<sup>65</sup> The conference findings urged "Christian women" to "join trade unions and take their responsibility for promoting Christian Standards and Spirit."<sup>66</sup>

These women, then, were describing labor union membership as a route through which they might bring a "Christian solution" to labor strife.

At the end of the conference, the industrial delegates passed the following resolution, which they urged the YWCA's National Board to bring before members at the next National Convention:

Because we feel that the Young Women's Christian Association has the power to interpret the abundant life to women in industry through the application of the *principles of Jesus Christ in industrial life*, and because the welfare of all women is bound up in the welfare of each group,

We recommend that the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations consider and present to the [YWCA] convention . . . the following standards: The eight-hour day and forty-four-hour week; prohibition of night work for women; one day's rest in seven; a minimum wage . . . regulated by law . . . ; women given an equal opportunity with men and paid by occupation and not by sex; prohibition of child labor; *collective bargaining, and the right of employees to organize in whatever forms best suit their interests and their right to select whomsoever they will as their representatives.*

Since the upholding of these standards depends largely upon legislation, we recommend that the whole Association *work for the proper laws and their enforcement and for granting women the power to work for these laws through the ballot.*

We recommend the promotion of education throughout *the entire membership* of the Young Women's Christian Associations (being understood to include boards of directors, committees, business women's clubs, students, etc.) that shall prepare for citizenship and for our part as a *Christian organization* in helping solve the industrial problems.<sup>67</sup>

The industrial membership's recommendations are significant for several reasons. First, while many middle-class YWCA leaders still viewed it as their task to educate workingwomen, the final recommendation asserted that *other YWCA women*, all the way up to the Board of Directors itself, needed educating about workingwomen's problems. This assertion of authority significantly reversed the dynamic that had guided early YWCA industrial work. It also suggests that working-class members anticipated resistance or believed that their concerns were not shared by the whole YWCA. Second, by claiming the right to organize as they saw fit and to choose their own representatives, they asserted their own competence to protect their interests (which might include choosing non-YWCA representatives) and the association's obligation to support their choice. And to a group of YWCA board members linked to America's leading industrialists, it introduced an idea—collective bargaining—that was political tinder in

1919. Industrial members knew this; in a list of "Our Common Problems" in the 1919 conference findings, they had included "Financial backing of the Y.W.C.A. from those who do not uphold its Industrial Standards or who might wish to limit its freedom in upholding those standards."<sup>68</sup> The resolution caused significant turmoil within the YWCA board. Association leaders discovered that their working-class members had their own idea of what "the Christian solution" was—and were insisting that the association adopt it. Accustomed to congratulating themselves on how well *they* were leading workingwomen toward Christian solutions, many board members were taken aback by the recommendations. The 1919 proposal signaled a crisis within the YWCA.

A number of board members expressed shock at the recommendations. Theresa Wilbur Paist, a former YWCA secretary who was presiding over her first convention as YWCA President, later recalled that "even the word 'labor' was practically a dirty word, and people avoided using it." "Instead they talked about social justice and how working hours and wages were a threat to workers' health and happiness. [Many board members] were caught in a terrible spot. Their husbands, especially those in business, were almost all violently opposed to yielding to any demand of working people and looked upon it as gross disloyalty that their wives should be mixed up with such an organization that would take such action as we were proposing then to take. [Some] bravely took a stand on what they believed was right even though . . . they were scared to go home afterward!"<sup>69</sup>

The nation's tense political situation heightened tensions over the YWCA's position on labor issues. The postwar period ushered in high levels of unrest among workers whose expectations had been raised, then dashed at war's end. Labor shortages during World War I had temporarily allowed workers to demand improved conditions, and federal war labor policies had boosted unionization levels in war industries. Despite these gains, rising consumer prices outpaced wartime wage increases, leaving the worst-paid workers particularly strapped.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, while the War Labor Board had endorsed collective bargaining and union standards, the postwar federal government dismantled the board and ceased to support workers' rights. As soon as the war ended, American employers sought to undermine workers' wartime advances. In the great strike waves that broke out in 1919, the press remarked on women's militancy.<sup>71</sup>

In this climate, the YWCA industrial members' resolutions prompted much discussion in anticipation of the 1920 Convention. Some YWCA leaders believed the association should take a stand. National Board member Abby Rockefeller argued that in a political climate in which a "Bolshevist is anyone from an anarchist to a man who wears a straw hat in September," the YWCA must stand for strong labor legislation. Writing in the March

*Association Monthly*, the last before the convention, Rockefeller outlined the fears she saw at play: Certain board members and staff "are filled with fear that we may be thought to be entering politics. . . . may be thought to be socialistic. . . . may antagonize our financial support." But the "most serious fear" was that of "women to whom we have given our moral support [who] fear that we may withdraw that support where they need it the most, that is in their struggle for better laws and their right to protection through laws. . . . It is our Christian duty," Rockefeller proclaimed. Likewise, Vice President Mary Shipman Penrose noted that the women reached during the war effort "are still with us, asking that the vision of the more abundant life once shown to them be not withdrawn again."<sup>72</sup>

Yet clearly most association leaders, even those supportive of the resolution, remained more comfortable "uplifting" degraded workingwomen than sharing power with them as equals. The March *Association Monthly* published tales of suffering workingwomen, calling them "eloquent evidence of the helplessness of the individual worker to remedy conditions for herself and of the need for the State to intervene." The stories included heart-wrenching tales of fragile girls working twelve-hour days: "I'm speaking of the health of the girl who will be the mother of the next generation," was quoted a workingwoman testifying in favor of an eight-hour-day bill. The last line of the article asked, "Do we need to study industrial democracy?" However, no story included any reference to labor unions.

The Board of Directors debated the October 1919 industrial proposal fiercely among themselves. They charged a committee with providing them weeks of special classes on industrial problems, then debated further. Despite some board members' opposition, they finally decided to propose to the 1920 Convention that the YWCA adopt the "Social Ideals of the Churches," the Federal Council of Churches' social creed. These Social Ideals were a set of principles passed in 1908 (revised in 1912 and reaffirmed in May 1919) by the Federal Council of Churches, an umbrella group of Protestant churches that had embraced the liberal Social Gospel movement and sought to ameliorate social injustices. They included minimum wages and maximum hours, and a broad set of antipovertry measures.

These Social Ideals overlapped with the industrial members' proposals, but differed in important ways. While calling collective bargaining an inevitable step toward industrial democracy, they took care to "deplore class struggle and declare against class domination, whether of capital or of labor," and to support the "right of employees and employers alike to organize." They called for workplace regulations in order to "safeguard the physical and moral health of the community," and emphasized protecting "the moral as well as the physical health of the mothers and children of the race."<sup>73</sup> In contrast, the industrial women's proposal emphasized their own

dignity and right to self-determination. These differences suggest the limits of YWCA leaders' comfort level with workingwomen's political agency. More broadly, they illustrate a persistent gap between most Protestant reformers' views of social justice and those of workingwomen. The industrial secretaries, in their support for workingwomen's self-organization, demonstrate how Protestants' views of social justice were mutable—and had changed.

Even given these aspects of the Social Ideals, the YWCA had until now not endorsed them, because taking stands on public policies would represent a sea change. Now the association was facing the possible loss of thirty thousand members, who had suggested that if the YWCA refused to publicly support the measures they wanted, they would judge its view of Christianity as different from their own and would disaffiliate. Perhaps with this threat in mind, the National Board committee recommended the association pass not only the Social Ideals, but also the last two paragraphs of the industrial women's proposal, committing the YWCA to educate all its members and leaders, and to work for political change.

An extensive debate followed the Social Ideals' introduction at the 1920 convention, illustrating the significant level of discomfort they evoked. A number of women agonized about what it would mean to a Christian group to start taking a stand on public policy. Some sought to substitute the phrase "collective agreement" for "collective bargaining," arguing, in one opponent's words, that it "is the same idea, but it has a psychology that means 'both and' rather than 'either or.' Bargaining implies getting the better of the other fellow. Agreement implies getting the best for every dollar."<sup>74</sup>

Both Industrial Program staff and working-class industrial club members argued against these objections. Industrial secretaries and other staff advanced several arguments in favor of the resolutions. National staff member Edith Bremer pointed out that the term "collective bargaining" was extraordinarily widely used and replacing it would "create a confusion . . . instead of adding the spirit of good will which we all understand is the reason which has prompted this amendment." Florence Simms emphasized that the resolutions would "make us stand with forward-looking employers" and with workers who wanted to express "themselves without revolution." Industrial members advanced a range of arguments: some evoked the YWCA's religious purpose; others echoed the ongoing concern with workingwomen's morality; and still others raised the risk of losing industrial members to more radical forces.<sup>75</sup>

Frieda Keeler, a munitions worker from Philadelphia, emphasized the religious imperative. She argued that resolutions "are the principles of Jesus, and they are the only solution to the labor situation." "Christ was

the greatest leader . . . a carpenter, an industrial worker, and . . . because He viewed the situation from the inside out . . . we can pretty well believe that his principles are sound. We want these industrial leaders to teach the principles of love and brotherhood that Christ taught."<sup>76</sup> Marie B. Pfeiffer, a silk worker from Allentown, Pennsylvania, argued that the Social Ideals could protect both employers and the future of "the race." Positioning herself as a patriot, Pfeiffer evoked concerns over class warfare and morality. Noting her seventeen years of work, she expressed pride that her mill held the U.S. government contract to make ribbons for "every medal given to a soldier boy who served in our great World War." Then she reported that in her mill, "we have practiced social ideals, and as a result we have stood by . . . our manager when other mills . . . have been out on strike and had various other troubles. Such a manager, I think, should be protected from unfair competitors who have no regard for the social ideals."<sup>77</sup> Having pointed out the potential to enhance workers' loyalty, Pfeiffer raised a point that spoke to the very reasons for the YWCA's founding: "Weak women will mean a weak race unless we give them some help." "The girls in industry today, I feel, are the mothers of the next generation, and . . . as a Christian organization, we should adopt these social ideals to make working conditions better, so that our next generation will be strong."

The National Industrial Conference's recommendation that the YWCA take a stand on legislation was at least as controversial as endorsing the Social Ideals. One "very rich, powerful, generous" board member arose to protest that, in Paist's paraphrasing, "we were losing our religion and were in danger of Communism."<sup>78</sup> Despite these dire warnings, the convention ultimately passed not only the Social Ideals—including collective bargaining—but also the recommendations committing the YWCA to educate its membership and embrace an advocacy role.

The 1920 Convention developments remained controversial. According to Mary Sims, a YWCA executive who later published historical studies of the association, the "principles involved in the statements in regard to the right of workers to organize and the desirability of collective bargaining were at the time of [their] adoption . . . and have been later, the center of the greatest discussion and of the most serious problems that the Association has faced in endeavoring to uphold its action." For many women at that convention, Sims reported, aspects of the proposal "were at least strange, if not distasteful, and only recognition of the fact that the large group of industrial women and girls in the Association membership considered such action essential if the Association purpose was to have any meaning for them, brought their endorsement."<sup>79</sup> As we saw at the start of this article, for one board member, Mrs. Finley Shepard, they were simply too much. It is no exaggeration, then, to term these events "revolutionary," as Grace

Wilson did in her early study of the YWCA's religious philosophy.<sup>80</sup>

These developments have implications far beyond the history of the YWCA. They suggest how both social feminism and the Social Gospel were shaped not just by social elites, but also by working-class women with a different moral standard for judging a just society. They also illuminate the history of cross-class women's organizing, showing how a sense of common religious purpose could facilitate discussion even among women with very different political views and economic positions. In a nation that was rife with suspicion of foreigners, a group that included significant numbers of immigrant women pressed through changes to give themselves more power. In a climate of right-wing suppression of labor organizing, workingwomen convinced one of the nation's largest women's groups to take a public stand for the first time on government policies that affected workers, and to support their right to form labor unions. And in a nation riven by internal Protestant struggle, they intervened to articulate their own version of what a Christian society should look like.

#### NOTES

The people at the Sophia Smith Collection, especially Maida Goodwin, Amy Hague, Sherrill Redmon, and Kate Weigand, deserve first thanks; without their archival work and assistance, this project could not have existed. I wish to thank the Social Science Research Council, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the Coordinating Council on Women in History, the Louisville Institute, the Sophia Smith Collection, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison History Department for materially supporting the larger project from which this article is drawn. Nan Enstad has offered irreplaceable insight and encouragement throughout, as has my peerless dissertation group. Steve Kantrowitz's writing workshop, and Pamela Walker and the audience at the 2005 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women provided timely feedback on early drafts of this article. Two anonymous readers for the *Journal of Women's History* offered astute suggestions. And Nancy Robertson deserves special mention for many lively discussions and research tips about YWCA history.

<sup>1</sup>"Mrs. Shepard Quits the Board of the Y.W.C.A.: Disapproves of Progressive Platform of the National Convention at Cleveland," *New York Times*, 18 April 1920; "Mrs. Finley J. Shepard Dies of a Stroke," *New York Times*, 21 December 1938. Thanks to Nancy Robertson for leads on biographical information.

<sup>2</sup>Industrial Committee, "Some Recommendations and Experiments in the Industrial Program" (New York: Industrial Committee, National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1920), 16.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>*Proceedings of the Sixth National Convention of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, Cleveland, Ohio, April 12–20, 1920* (New York: National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1920), 112.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 117–18.

<sup>6</sup>“Selected National Convention Actions on Economic and Social Welfare of the Y.W.C.A.'s of the U.S.A., Together With Historical Episodes in the Growth of the Business, Industrial, and Agricultural Movements in the Y.W.C.A. Emphasizing Group Thinking and Social Responsibility,” 17 September 1943, Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA, hereafter YWCA, SSC; “A Brief History of the YWCA and Its Work With Employed Women,” YWCA Community Division, 7 June 1951, YWCA, SSC; Elsie D. Harper, *Fifty Years of Social Action in the YWCA* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A., 1963).

<sup>7</sup>Nancy A. Hewitt, “Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1990s,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3rd ed., ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–19, quote from 12. Essays in Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, eds., *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 1997) suggest that workingwomen had more influence than workingmen in same-sex, cross-class situations, but that it remained limited.

<sup>8</sup>Sara Evans, ed., *Journeys That Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955–1975* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

<sup>9</sup>Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880–1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially 141–70.

<sup>10</sup>Herbert Gutman, “Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age,” *American Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (1966): 74–101. A rare exception is Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865–1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). Also, see William Sutton, “Tied to the Whipping Post: New Labor History and Evangelical Artisans in the Early Republic,” *Labor History* 36, no. 2 (1995): 251–80.

<sup>11</sup>Szasz, *The Divided Mind*, xi.

<sup>12</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 783.

<sup>13</sup>I am grateful to Mary Frederickson for first drawing my attention to the Industrial Program in her study of its significance for workers' education, “Citizens

for Democracy: The Industrial Programs of the YWCA," in *Sisterhood and Solidarity: Workers' Education for Women, 1914–1984*, ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh and Mary Frederickson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 75–106.

<sup>14</sup>*Proceedings, Sixth National Convention*, 45.

<sup>15</sup>Grace H. Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Young Women's Christian Association* (New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1933), 16; Richard Roberts, *Florence Simms: A Biography* (New York: The Womans Press, 1926), 281.

<sup>16</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 150–59.

<sup>17</sup>Simms, quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 183.

<sup>18</sup>Grace L. Coyle, "A Historical Outline of the Work of the Industrial Department," November 1923, p. 2, unpublished typescript, YWCA, SSC.

<sup>19</sup>Simms, quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 184.

<sup>20</sup>*The Association Monthly*, June 1908, 239; Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy*, 29.

<sup>21</sup>Genevieve Fox, *The Industrial Awakening and the Young Women's Christian Association* (New York: Industrial Committee, National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1920); Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 203–8.

<sup>22</sup>Fox, *The Industrial Awakening*, 8–12; Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 181–85.

<sup>23</sup>Letter dated 24 December 1913, quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 56–57.

<sup>24</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 164; "Field Industrial Secretaries' Conference, January 3–9, 1916," YWCA, SSC.

<sup>25</sup>"Field Industrial Secretaries' Conference, January 3–9, 1916," YWCA, SSC.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>"Report and Recommendations from the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations of the United States of America, Presented at the Second National Convention, St. Paul, Minn. April 22–26, 1909" (New York: Young Women's Christian Associations, 1909), quoted in Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy*, 16.

<sup>29</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 186–87.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>31</sup>Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

<sup>32</sup>Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy*, 26–30.

<sup>33</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 187.

<sup>34</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 191–92; “Resolutions Passed By the Y.W.C.A. of the United States in Convention in Indianapolis, April 1911,” quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 281–82.

<sup>35</sup>“Resolutions Passed . . . April 1911,” quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 281–82.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy*, 33.

<sup>38</sup>Mary S. Sims, *The Natural History of a Social Institution: The Y.W.C.A.* (New York: J. J. Little and Ives Company, 1935), 105–8.

<sup>39</sup>“Field Industrial Secretaries’ Conference, January 3–9, 1916,” YWCA, SSC.

<sup>40</sup>Quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 221–22.

<sup>41</sup>Harper, *Fifty Years of Social Action in the YWCA*, 5, 13.

<sup>42</sup>Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1933), 166; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 152–59; Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 272–90.

<sup>43</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 203.

<sup>44</sup>“The 1917 Conferences,” *Association Monthly*, April 1917, 144.

<sup>45</sup>Fox, *The Industrial Awakening*, 19.

<sup>46</sup>Florence Simms and Helen L. Thomas, *Federation of Industrial and Extension Clubs* (New York: National Board of the Young Women’s Christian Associations, 1915).

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 205–6.

<sup>48</sup>Simms, quoted in Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 205.

<sup>49</sup>Fox, *The Industrial Awakening*, 20.

<sup>50</sup>Frederickson, “Citizens for Democracy,” 84.

<sup>51</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 206.

<sup>52</sup>Fox, *The Industrial Awakening*, 18–20.

<sup>53</sup>“Field Industrial Secretaries’ Conference, January 3–9, 1916,” YWCA, SSC.

<sup>54</sup>Jane Olcott, *The Work of Colored Women* (New York: Colored Work Committee, War Work Council, National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1919).

<sup>55</sup>"Report of the Industrial Girls' Council, Camp Nepahwin, 1918" (Philadelphia: East Central Field Committee of the National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations), 15–18, YWCA, SSC.

<sup>56</sup>"Annual Report, Altamont Industrial Council, June 28 to July 12, 1919" (Northeastern Field Committee), YWCA, SSC.

<sup>57</sup>"Records of the 1924 Camp Nepahwin Industrial Conference," YWCA, SSC; *Proceedings of the Seventh National Convention, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1922* (New York: National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations, 1922), 301. The extraordinary story of race in the Industrial Program is far too complex to do justice to here; I treat it in depth in my dissertation, "Working Women, Race, and Coalition in the Young Women's Christian Association, 1908–1950" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2007).

<sup>58</sup>Sims, *The Natural History of a Social Institution*, 65–66.

<sup>59</sup>Roberts, *Florence Simms*, 210–17.

<sup>60</sup>"Annual Report, Altamont Industrial Council, June 28 to July 12, 1919" (Northeastern Field Committee), YWCA, SSC.

<sup>61</sup>Mrs. Burdette Lewis for Industrial Committee, "Statement from Industrial Committee, November 12, 1919," unpublished typescript, and other records of the 1919 National Industrial Conference, YWCA, SSC.

<sup>62</sup>See Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 130.

<sup>63</sup>Ruth Chivvis and Lucy R. Somerville, *A Handbook for Delegates, National Industrial Conference, Washington, D.C., October 20–21–22, 1919* (Industrial Committee, War Work Council, National Board, Young Women's Christian Associations, 1919), YWCA, SSC.

<sup>64</sup>"National Conference of Industrial Clubs of the Young Women's Christian Association called by the National Industrial Committee in Washington, D.C., October 24 to 28, 1919," YWCA, SSC.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>69</sup>Marion O. Robinson, *Eight Women of the Y.W.C.A.* (New York: National Board, Young Women's Christian Association, 1966), 113–14.

---

<sup>70</sup>Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol. 7: Labor and World War I, 1914–1918* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 338–40.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 110–11.

<sup>72</sup>Abby A. Rockefeller, "The Young Women's Christian Association and Legislation," *The Association Monthly*, March 1920, 121; and Mary Shipman Penrose, "When Shall Convention Convene?" *The Association Monthly*, March 1920, 127–28.

<sup>73</sup>*Proceedings, Sixth National Convention*, 102.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 105–6.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 106–7.

<sup>78</sup>Robinson, *Eight Women*, 114.

<sup>79</sup>Sims, *The Natural History of a Social Institution*, 168–69.

<sup>80</sup>Wilson, *The Religious and Educational Philosophy*, 183.

---