

DES MOINES

The Des Moines League is a success story—that started out with a failure. The original local group had its charter taken away in 1943 for partisanship activity. So when the League was reborn in 1944, its earlier defeat became a lesson that was to be the basis of its later achievements. The strength of the local group now stems from its strict adherence to its non-partisan policy and a wide involvement of its members in total program.

The first outstanding victory of the revitalized League was adoption of the Council Manager form of government in 1948. This followed an active campaign in which Leaguers canvassed every home in the city. For this we won the Lane Bryant award and \$1000 in recognition of exceptional voluntary effort to advance the welfare of the American home and community.

A community analysis survey was conducted in 1951 to establish a file of all clubs, groups, and organizations in the city. All were interviewed to see how we could serve their members.

This was an asset to us in 1952 when we spearheaded the Ballot Battalion, a drive to obtain 100 percent registration in the county for that year's presidential election. Eighty organizations and 34,000 school children joined the campaign that saw Polk County registration rise from 86,250 to 107,021. Of that number 85 per cent actually voted which was the largest voter turnout in Des Moines history.

This success won for us the American Heritage Foundation award for outstanding performance in support of the national non-partisan register and vote campaign of 1952.

In 1957 we received the Freedom Agenda Award in competition with all local Leagues in the country. This citation, given by the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, was for success in stimulating the citizens of the community to a greater understanding of our American heritage, freedoms, rights, and responsibilities. The effort that gained us this recognition was initiating and teaching classes in Adult Education based on the seven Freedom Agenda booklets.

The Des Moines Adult Education Council commended the League with an award in 1959 for distinguished public service in planning and promoting programs of Adult Education in Des Moines. This was a result of our participation with Adult Education in presenting issues and candidates to the public by radio, TV and rallies. Our cooperation with Adult Education continues today.

Between 1959 and 1967 Des Moines faced two campaigns threatening the Council Manager government. Leaguers manned the local citizens' office, made speeches, and provided printed material which resulted in successful campaigns to retain this governmental form. In 1967 we launched a drive which helped establish the Council Manager ward system of government.

The Des Moines League continually provides publications for schools, libraries, the Drake Institute on State and Local Government, and individual students. Our booklet, "Guide to Government in Polk County", published in 1963, 1965, and 1967 is used as a textbook in Des Moines schools. We send general news releases to all newspapers, radio, and TV stations on significant program action, voting information, and newsworthy League activities.

The Des Moines League has also played a substantial role in state campaigns because of its location in the capital city and because the woman power is here.

In April 1923 the National Convention of the League of Women Voters was held in Des Moines. The late Ding Darling honored the organization and its delegates with this cartoon on that occasion. The original is in the state League office.