

*Reform in Philadelphia:
Joseph S. Clark, Richardson Dilworth
and the Women Who Made
Reform Possible, 1947–1949*

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF PHILADELPHIA in the twentieth century has been well documented. From Lincoln Steffens's exposé of Republican corruption to the massive 300-year history of the Quaker City published in 1982, journalists, historians, and even a few politicians have described the long years of Republican rule and the momentous events of the postwar era that ushered in a new age of Democratic Party domination. Most chronicles of the period from 1947 to 1951—the years of revolution—are rather standard works that focus on the efforts of the two principal reformers, Joseph S. Clark and Richardson Dilworth, the work of the Democratic Party on their behalf, and the misdeeds of the GOP machine and its operatives. There is, however, more to the story. Far less attention has been given to the fact that while Clark and Dilworth ran on the Democratic ticket, they had fashioned an independent campaign organization that included representatives not only from the regular Democratic Party but also organized labor and independent Republicans. Above all, through a controversial organization, the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the reformers had built links to the city's fledgling liberal establishment.

Years later, when Clark sat down to write his memoirs, he took particular care to detail the contributions of thirteen individuals who formed the core of the 1949 campaign committee. Those thirteen, along with Clark and Dilworth, mapped strategy, delegated responsibility, coordinated efforts, and educated workers. They were the brain trust—the individuals most responsible for the success of the revolution. Six of these thirteen were women, a remarkable ratio at a time when women played almost no

role in the political life of the city. Despite the organization of “Women’s Divisions” in both major parties following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Philadelphia politics remained a 100 percent men’s game.¹

The story of the role women played in the public life of postwar America has undergone significant revision since Betty Freidan came to national attention in 1963 with her description of wives trapped in white, middle-class, suburban domesticity. Several scholars have identified large numbers of women who participated in the politics and social ferment of the era. Women assumed active roles in the peace movement, the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and in the liberal New Deal politics of the late 1940s and 1950s. Some, taking their lead from Eleanor Roosevelt, helped found or joined chapters of the CIO Political Action Committee (PAC) or the ADA. For the most part, they were middle-class, college-educated white women, ranging in age from their mid-thirties to late forties; many had held full-time jobs during the war.²

The women recruited by Clark and Dilworth—Elise Bailen, Emily Ehle Jones, Natalie Saxe, Dorothy Schoell Montgomery, Molly Yard, and Ada Lewis—all fit this profile. All held degrees from prestigious eastern colleges or universities where they had majored in one or another of the social sciences. Several had pursued graduate degrees. All eventually married. None, however, limited her activities to the roles of homemaker and mother. Some had established professional careers in the 1930s. During the war they had held responsible positions either in government or in private sector social service agencies. After the war they were determined to continue their careers in public service. All but Saxe were members of the Philadelphia chapter of the ADA. While the chapter

¹ In addition to Molly Yard, Emily Ehle, Natalie Saxe, Elise Bailen, Ada Lewis, and Dorothy Montgomery, the campaign committee included Harry Ferlager, Johannes Hoerber, John Patterson, L. M. C. Smith, Walter Phillips, Joseph Schwartz, and Joseph Burke. Joseph S. Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 4–10; Joseph S. Clark, “The Six Lives of Joseph S. Clark,” 37; both in the Joseph S. Clark Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. When Clark set about to write his memoir, he first called it “The Six Lives of Joseph S. Clark.” Later, one section of the “Six Lives” developed into a separate monograph titled “No Mean City.” Clark revised both numerous times. Several versions are included in the Clark Papers and nothing indicates which is the final one. All are in the unprocessed part of the collection. Roman numerals refer to chapters.

² The list of volumes dealing with the subject of women’s involvement in the various aspects of American public life is too vast to produce here. For an excellent summary of the state of the historiography of women in postwar America, see Joanne Meyerowitz’s introductory essay in Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia, 1994), 1–16.

counted a number of able male members, by 1946 these women had assumed positions of leadership in the uniquely mixed-gender organization. Clearly, they refused to accept the social imperative memorably phrased by Agnes Meyers in 1952, that a woman could have many careers but only one vocation—motherhood.³

In the late summer of 1949, Philadelphia was a city on the verge of revolution. For nearly one hundred years, the Quaker City had been totally dominated by the Republican Party. Throughout, it had been ruled by a succession of political bosses, who, save for an occasional upset by reform-minded Democrats and independents, had controlled virtually every aspect of Philadelphia politics since the Civil War. Reformers never made permanent inroads, however, and Republican rule remained widespread and durable. The Democratic Party was ineffective and lifeless. In many parts of the city, it was virtually nonexistent. In some cases, Democratic Party officials were on the payroll of Republican leaders. One could find few Democrats in the city's congressional or state legislative delegations and none on city council. The mayor, of course, was Republican, securely protecting the city's patronage. In every important respect, William Penn's "Greene Countrie Towne" continued to be the private preserve of the GOP, and Philadelphia remained, as Lincoln Steffens had described it at the turn of the century, "corrupt and contented."⁴

In the postwar years, new groups of reformers began to target the

³ Clark, "No Mean City," V, 28; Agnes Meyer, "Women Aren't Men," *Atlantic Monthly*, Aug. 1952, 32.

⁴ First Jim McManes and the "Ring Bosses" of the 1860s and 1870s, then the lackeys of Matthew Quay and Boies Penrose—Iz Durham and "Sunny" Jim McNichol, and finally the Brothers Vare and their successors had maintained a virtual death grip on every aspect of the city's political life. On a few occasions, outsiders had managed to upset the organization. Democrat Robert Pattinson won successive elections to the controller's office in 1877 and 1880. City Party candidates John Weaver and Rudolph Blankenburg won mayoral contests in 1905 and 1911 respectively. The 1933 general elections were a watershed for the Democratic Party throughout much of Pennsylvania. In 1933 and again in 1937, the Vares suffered shocking defeats as the Democrat-Independent coalition prevailed in consecutive row-office contests. Washington County—the home of state GOP chairman Edward Martin—elected one Democrat to the bench and another to the office of county controller. In Pittsburgh, William McNair became the first Democrat to capture the mayor's office since 1905. Lancaster witnessed a similar Democratic upset. Likewise, a Democratic resurgence in Scranton resulted in victory. Alexander Kendrick, "The End of Boss Vare," *The Nation*, Nov. 29, 1933, 621–22; John Rossi, "The Kelly-Wilson Mayoralty Election of 1935," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and*

shortcomings and excesses of the GOP leaders and the machine they controlled. Advocates of decent housing assailed politicians who ignored conditions in North Philadelphia that reformers described as worse than the displaced persons camps in Europe. Civil rights workers continued toward their dream of a totally desegregated, egalitarian community even as they celebrated the police department's all-black Special Squad, and the election of the commonwealth's first black judge, Herbert E. Millen, to the municipal court. Watchdogs of the public school system were taking steps to reconstitute the Citizen's Committee on Public Education in order to consider the latest crisis in the Philadelphia public schools.

Even as this ferment brewed, a determined group of liberal activists made plans to energize the Philadelphia Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), and two Ivy-League-educated Chestnut Hill patricians, fresh from the war in the Pacific, set their sights on destroying what Clinton Rogers Woodruff had described in 1906 as "the most thoroughly organized and uniformly successful incarnation of the spoils system in the entire country."⁵

Both Joseph S. Clark and Richardson Dilworth were old hands at opposing the Republican organization. Clark's schooling in the world of politics began in the mid-1920s when, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, he learned of the corruption of Bill Vare's city machine, as well as Vare's control over the Democratic Party. Motivated by a desire to get a legal drink, he campaigned for Democratic presidential nominee Al Smith in 1928, and became the Pennsylvania state commander of the Crusaders, a nationwide organization

Biography 107 (1983): 171-93; *Chester Times*, Nov. 9, 1933; Edwin B. Bronner, "The New Deal Comes to Pennsylvania: The Gubernatorial Election of 1934," *Pennsylvania History* 27 (1960): 44-68; Bruce M. Stave, *The New Deal and the Last Hurrah: Pittsburgh Machine Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1970); Peter McCaffery, *When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia* (University Park, Pa., 1993); Russell F. Weigley et al., eds., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982); Clark, "No Mean City"; Edward Cook and G. Edward Janosik, *Guide to Pennsylvania Politics* (New York, 1980); Roger Butterfield, "Revolt in Philadelphia," *Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 15, 22, 1952; Stephen B. Grove, "The Decline of the Republican Party in Philadelphia, 1936-1952" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1976); James Reichley, *The Art of Government: Reform and Organization Politics in Philadelphia* (New York, 1959); Joseph R. Fink, "Reform in Philadelphia, 1946-51" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers Univ., 1971); Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), 134.

⁵ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 31, 1947, July 3, 1949; *New York Times*, Nov. 1, Dec. 29, 1947; Emily Ehle Jones, interview by Walter Phillips, July 25, 1974, Walter Phillips Oral History Project, Urban Archives, Temple University; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, "Philadelphia's Revolution," *Yale Review* 15 (May 1906): 8-23.

dedicated to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. He also organized the Vigilantes' Committee, as it was known, to protect citizens from what Clark believed were unconstitutional liquor raids. Later, he served as a delegate to the state constitutional convention that ratified the Twenty-first Amendment. Following the 1928 election, Clark joined a Democratic reform club called the Warriors, which was a group of Philadelphia professionals interested in reorganizing the Democratic Party. During his days in the Warriors, Clark began his lifelong political alliance with Dilworth.⁶

A native of Pittsburgh and decorated World War I veteran, Richardson Dilworth arrived in Philadelphia following his graduation from Yale Law School in 1926. After establishing a reputation as a first-rate libel lawyer, he joined Clark in the Warriors in 1933. The reformers conducted voter registration drives and even dared to send poll watchers into GOP precincts, something considered personally dangerous at the time. Clark's political activities earned him the Democratic Party's endorsement for a councilmanic election in 1934; Dilworth worked as his campaign manager. Later that year their positions were reversed when Clark managed Dilworth's campaign for the state senate. Although they both lost, the two learned important lessons relating to the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of Philadelphia ward politics.⁷

By 1935, the city Democratic Party had been reorganized, and, in the midst of the Great Depression, it narrowly lost the 1935 mayoral election. Most observers believed that Jack B. Kelly, a wealthy brick contractor and a Catholic, won the popular vote but was counted out by the Republican election board. Clark and Dilworth campaigned hard for Kelly, and the campaign left Clark with an important conclusion: while Catholic members of the Republican machine like Austin Meehan and William Meade had

⁶ Clark, "No Mean City," I, II; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Mar. 19, 1931, Mar. 23, 1932; Propaganda Letter of the Crusaders, Dec. 1, 1933, Clark Papers; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Nov. 2, 1933.

⁷ Clark, "No Mean City," I, II. In the days immediately preceding the councilmanic election, Clark and Dilworth learned that the faction of the Democratic Party still controlled by the Republican machine was planning to "knife" Clark in favor of William Keough. They also claimed that thousands of Republicans were led to believe that, due to their registration, they were required to vote for Republican Sam Emlen. The Republicans responded that the New Dealers were using federal patronage to assist Clark's campaign. *Philadelphia Record*, May 7, 14, 15, 1934; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Apr. 28, 1934, May 15, 16, 17, 1934; Clark, "No Mean City," I, II.

enjoyed electoral success, anti-Catholicism had been a major factor in Kelly's defeat. Clark and Dilworth's subsequent rise in the Democratic Party, and their eventual acceptance by party leaders as candidates for major city office came in part because, unlike many Democratic leaders, both were Protestant. On the eve of the 1947 municipal elections, political conditions seemed ripe for reform, and Clark and Dilworth made up their minds to "throw the rascals out."⁸

Responsibility for guarding the Republican gates had passed at the end of World War II to a triumvirate of seasoned and opportunistic political operatives—Austin Meehan, William Meade, and Morton Witkin—whom Clark and Dilworth referred to as the "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod" of the GOP. Meehan was a contractor who did much of the street paving in the city. He was elected county sheriff in 1943 and, by the end of the war had solidified his position as a major power in the GOP. His power base lay in his absolute control over the northeast wards and the South Philadelphia wards of his top deputy, William Morrow. A corpulent man, Meehan's physical characteristics belied a shrewd native intelligence. As an Irish Catholic, he was close to Catholic leaders and a major contributor to the church. He also used his wealth liberally to retain political control over the precincts and wards within his suzerainty.⁹

William Meade's roots lay deep in Philadelphia ward politics. His father had been a committeeman in the second division of the Tenth Ward. The younger Meade became leader of the Tenth Ward in 1937 at age thirty-one; he was the youngest of the fifty-one Republican ward leaders in the city. Throughout his career he held an iron grip on the river wards. A ruthless political operative, Meade was in charge of distributing the cache of thousands of state jobs. He held a variety of court-related appointments until his big opportunity came when he was appointed a member of the Board of Revision of Taxes; he would later be named its chairman. In this position, he could manipulate tax rates and thus provide

⁸ Reichley, *Art of Government*, 6; Clark, "No Mean City," III, 3–16. The term "counting out" or "ringing up" refers to the practice of having a machine loyalist ring up votes on the voting machine after the polls are closed. In Philadelphia there was rarely any trouble with this clearly illegal activity because the Democratic poll watcher was usually in the pay of the Republican organization. Guy DeFuria, interview by John M. McLarnon, May 2, 1996.

⁹ Information on the three GOP bosses is culled from a variety of sources including Clark, "No Mean City"; Clark, "Six Lives"; ADA Research Committee fact sheets for Austin Meehan, William F. Meade, and Morton Witkin, all Aug. 1949, Clark Papers; Weigley et al., *Philadelphia*.

special tax relief to some of the city's leading business and real estate owners who, in turn, gave him sizable political contributions.

The third member of the triumvirate, Mort Witkin, was considered the brains of the city Republican organization. He was the leader of the Thirteenth Ward and by reputation a tough, single-minded political operator with close connections to several highly placed members of Philadelphia's criminal underworld. Clark described him as a "cartoonist's version of a sinister city politician" with the face of a "renaissance condottieri." A former state legislator, his power derived from his long tenure as a Philadelphia county commissioner. At one time he had been considered for the bench of the common pleas court. His reaction had been typically blunt: "Yes, I would like to be a judge. And what's more I would be an honest judge too, except in political cases."¹⁰

There were no outstanding personalities in the Democratic Party in 1947 and no one with high name recognition. The party was financially destitute and the prospect for immediate electoral victory seemed dismal at best. New city Democratic chairman Michael Bradley was convinced that only a "good governmental campaign" could help reverse the fortunes of the party, and that a reform candidate who could speak with conviction and sincerity had to be found. Consequently, he engineered the endorsement of Dilworth for mayor, one of four patrician Democratic reformers considered for the nomination. Bradley was not optimistic, however. Simply stated, he and the other Democratic bosses invited the reformers to play a major role in the election because they expected to suffer a crushing defeat, and running a reformer whom many Democrats considered an outsider would minimize any negative effect on the party.¹¹

Both Clark and Dilworth were convinced that only through an effort that recruited assistance from independent-minded voters could an effective campaign be waged. The Democratic leaders, while retaining control of the party, allowed the reformers to operate independently. Nothing the organization would later permit was more significant than this decision. Clark became chairman for independent activities, opened a headquarters, organized volunteers, and raised money. In every practical way, the Dilworth 1947 mayoral campaign was a product of the energy

¹⁰ Clark, "No Mean City," III, 12-13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 9.

and enthusiasm of thousands of newly recruited young and middle-aged white professionals. Clark brought into this effort a cadre of “new politics” types. Most were disgusted with the GOP’s record and were hopeful that the Democratic Party would be able to lead a movement to redeem Philadelphia’s political integrity. In short, it was the first stirrings of a reform that shortly would sweep away the power of the Republican Party.¹²

Dilworth’s mayoral opponent was Barney Samuel, the Republican incumbent. Samuel was personally popular, but Dilworth and Clark either ignored him or referred to him as the lackey of the bosses. From the start, it was Dilworth against the “evil machine,” and he promised to fight “with the gloves off.” True to his word, Dilworth toured the city in a sound truck, condemning the Republicans’ “blind leadership.” He attacked the machine’s failed policies in housing, police and fire protection, airport and port development, recreation, health care, sewage treatment, and water purification, emphasizing Republican corruption. Clark did likewise, castigating what he called the “pathetic group of little men . . . squabbling with each other over their petty cuts from the slot machines and vice.” By the end of September, the *Evening Bulletin* concluded, “any chance that Philadelphia would have a polite and apathetic campaign had disappeared.”¹³

The high point came in late October when Dilworth attacked Sheriff Meehan. Dilworth claimed that one third of the workers in the sheriff’s office were former convicts and that Meehan personally controlled gambling in the northeast part of the city. Policemen, he claimed, were not permitted to work in the Thirty-fifth Ward, Meehan’s home ward, unless they joined the Thirty-fifth Ward Republican Club and agreed to turn a blind eye to the gambling that went on there. Meehan offered to donate \$5,000 to charity if Dilworth could prove his charges. Dilworth countered, offering the same charitable contribution if Meehan could prove the charges false. Meehan then challenged Dilworth to a public debate to “compare personal reputations.” Dilworth accepted immediately.¹⁴

The prospect of a public spectacle “terrified wiser Republicans” who

¹² *Ibid.*, V.

¹³ Richardson Dilworth, WFIL Radio Address, Sept. 15, 1947, Clark Papers; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 11, 1947; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 24, 1947; Clark, “No Mean City,” V.

¹⁴ Clark, “No Mean City,” V.

believed a debate with Dilworth, a skilled trial lawyer, would be disastrous for them and their ticket. Consequently, they immediately began trying to extricate their chief from the trap into which Dilworth had maneuvered him. Sensing that Meehan might renege on his commitment, Dilworth challenged his courage. "If he doesn't show up," Dilworth told the public, "he's the yellowest dog that has ever come into the City of Philadelphia." The *Bulletin*, by this time squarely in the reformer's camp, ran a half-page advertisement featuring an uncomplimentary image of the GOP boss with the headline, "Will you be there, Sheriff Meehan?"¹⁵

Despite the bullying, Meehan heeded the counsel of his lieutenants. Undeterred, Dilworth proceeded to stage "The Debate," as it was now called, on October 24, 1947. Four thousand people crowded into the Academy of Music. On the stage were two chairs. Dilworth sat in one; the other stood empty. Above it was a "not particularly flattering photograph of the Sheriff." When "The Debate" began, Dilworth "harangued the crowd" with a summary of his indictment of the Republican machine. He milked Meehan's absence even further by "parading his family, the Dilworth children, the Dilworth animals, and the like" onto the stage to make sport of the vaunted Republican boss. To make matters even worse, the spectacle was broadcast on television, the first use of the new medium in a Philadelphia political campaign.¹⁶

Despite the reformers' efforts, Samuel won reelection. Yet Dilworth won 321,319 votes, the largest number of votes ever cast for a Democrat in a Philadelphia mayoral election. Equally important, turnout reached nearly 75 percent of the city's registered voters, a testament to Dilworth and Clark's success in generating deep concern over corruption and graft in city hall, and to the hard work of the independent campaign. The 1947 results augured well for the reform movement.¹⁷

Between 1947 and 1949, a serendipitous confluence of events significantly improved the reformers' prospects. First, the Democratic Party went through a major reorganization. Jim Finnegan was selected to replace Bradley as city chairman. Many party regulars considered Clark and Dilworth, who had supported Finnegan's chairmanship, "silk-stockings

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V; Natalie Saxe, interview by Walter Phillips, July 23, 1974, Walter Phillips Oral History Project; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 20, 1947.

¹⁶ Clark, "No Mean City," V; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974.

¹⁷ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 5, 1947; Clark, "No Mean City," V.

and interlopers,” and resented Clark’s interference in the selection process. Finnegan himself considered Clark’s endorsement “almost a kiss of death” in party affairs. On the other hand, Finnegan realized that the party was still weak and that Clark and Dilworth brought an ability to attract thousands of independent volunteers and voters to the Democratic ticket. Over the next several years, Finnegan, Clark, and Dilworth developed an effective alliance that made future Democratic electoral successes possible.¹⁸

Second, a series of scandals came to light in 1948. After the 1947 election, the Philadelphia City Council appointed a Citizens Committee of Fifteen to find revenue sources to fund a wage increase promised to city employees by Mayor Samuels during the campaign. The committee uncovered serious problems with the city’s finances, prompted by spectacular revelations. On May 22, Robert C. Foss, chief of the Amusement Tax Division in the Office of Receiver of Taxes, hanged himself. He left behind a note, confessing to embezzlement and accusing seven others of similar illegal activity. Later that month, it was reported that the committee had learned that Michael Viola, an aide to the director of supplies and purchases, Charles Grakelow, had embezzled approximately \$15,000. The Viola revelations led to the resignation of Grakelow. He would later be indicted for forgery, embezzlement, and falsification of city records. In October, a grand jury charged Fire Marshall George Gallagher and John Judge, the mayor’s licensing clerk, with collecting license fees for the installation of oil burners without legal authority and in areas specifically exempted from such fees. The following January, the grand jury recommended the prosecution of Gallagher and seven assistants for 380 separate cases of extortion. Related investigations revealed more instances of corruption. City Water Bureau employee Thomas Mundell had taken nearly \$3,000 in bribes for ignoring the broken water meters of large industrial customers. Chief Magistrate John O’Malley was charged with 644 counts of illegally reducing the fines and jail terms of convicted gamblers. Overall, nearly \$40 million in city spending was unaccounted for. The committee’s investigation and the investigations it spawned revealed the systematic plundering of the city’s finances by a rapacious political gang on a scale unknown in the long sordid history of

¹⁸ Clark, “No Mean City,” VI, 2.

Republican rule.¹⁹

The work of the committee produced an even more significant result than the exposure of public scandal, at least as far as the reformers were concerned. Mayor Samuels had hoped that by appointing Republicans of impeccable reputation to the committee, he would be able to justify a tax increase to fund the pay raises he had promised. Instead, the revelations sparked the creation of a significant independent Republican reform movement. Led by committee chairman Arthur Binns, Republican businessmen formed the Greater Philadelphia Movement, and began lobbying for a new city charter. By the fall of 1949, a number of these Republican business leaders concluded that a charter change alone would not rid the city of the “entrenched Frankenstein” that the Republican machine had become.

[The machine] is now so deeply imbedded as to be utterly unable to serve our city's needs. We know the folly of supporting an incompetent and inefficient political organization on the theory that after the election, its leadership will pay heed to the good elements in it. This has never worked; it never will.²⁰

Led by Binns, these men formed the “Independent Republicans for the 1949 Democratic Ticket.” They threatened to “use the secret files of the Committee of Fifteen to blast the City Hall crowd,” and pledged to recruit 100,000 Republican voters to the cause of Clark and Dilworth.²¹

The fourth development was the political maturation of the ADA, and the manner in which it co-opted the liberal movement in the city from the communist-leaning PAC. Under the direction of John and Ada Lewis, seventeen members wrested control of the PAC, and voted to associate themselves with the ADA instead of the CIO. The ADA—as

¹⁹ Special Committee on City Finance, *Philadelphia Management* (n.p., Dec. 1948), 16, 46; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 10, June 10, Sept. 7, Oct. 28, Nov. 23, 1948, and Jan. 11, 1949; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 26, Sept. 28, 1948. The total of Viola's theft was later pegged at \$18,196.30. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 5, 1948; Weigley et al., *Philadelphia*, 652. For a succinct summary of the charges against the city Republicans, see ADA Research Committee, “File of the Facts No. 12: The Bill of Indictment, A Summary of the Charges Against the Republican Organization,” Nov. 1949, Clark Papers.

²⁰ Independent Republicans for the 1949 Democratic Ticket, “News Release,” Oct. 3, 1949, Clark Papers.

²¹ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 27, 1949; Independent Republicans for the 1949 Democratic Ticket, “News Release,” Oct. 3, 1949, Clark Papers.

the true heir of the New Deal liberal tradition—solidified its position in February 1948 with the arrival in Philadelphia of the ADA National Convention and its cast of nationally known figures including Walter Reuther and Eleanor Roosevelt.²²

Having displaced the PAC, the ADA proceeded to press its agenda and build its own political action organization, independent of any established party. According to founding member Emily Jones, “ADA’s role was to organize independent votes, from Republicans as well as Democrats. It really had nothing to do with the Democratic Party. As a matter of fact, most of us in this movement were very snorty [sic] about the old hands in the Democratic Party.”²³

By 1949, the ADA had a core of nearly six hundred volunteers who had been trained in its “School for Practical Politics.” It also had within its ranks a group of experienced researchers and public relations people. While maintaining its independence from the regular Democratic organization, the ADA produced dozens of political fact sheets and campaign analyses for use by the Democrats, conducted its own telephone and street-corner campaigns, and produced the city’s first-ever series of politically-oriented television programs.²⁴

The next development that augured well for the reformers, the collapse of the *Philadelphia Record*, actually occurred prior to the 1947 election. The full effect of its collapse did not become manifest until the fall of 1949. The *Record’s* owner, J. David Stern, was so staunchly pro-Democrat that some accused him of making “no serious effort to separate news from editorial policy.” Stern had exerted considerable influence in the affairs of the Democratic Party, and would have vigorously opposed the selection of Dilworth as the party’s mayoral nominee, because in private practice Dilworth represented the *Record’s* rival, the pro-Republican *Philadelphia Inquirer* and its publisher Walter Annenberg. On February 1, 1947, the *Record* suspended publication and Stern lost much of his influence in the Democratic Party councils. Consequently, in 1949 Annenberg’s *Inquirer*, the city’s most widely read morning daily, endorsed the Democratic ticket for the first time in its history, “something

²² Jones interview, July 25, 1974; *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 1948; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Feb. 21, 22, 1948.

²³ Jones interview, July 25, 1974.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974.

he would never have considered had Stern and the *Record* still been in business.”²⁵

The sixth development was the inclusion on the 1949 ballot of a non-binding referendum on the question of awarding bonuses to World War II veterans. Veterans’ organizations throughout the state waged a major get-out-the-vote drive on the bonus referendum, bringing thousands of veterans who might otherwise have ignored an off-year election out to the polls. Many of these veterans were young men who, along with their wives, were “interested in good government as represented by Clark and Dilworth.” Their turnout on election day contributed to the final vote that the reformers used to usher in the new era.²⁶

The final development was the effectiveness of the team that Clark and Dilworth assembled for the 1949 campaign. Once again, they put together a collection of autonomous organizations and committees that coordinated with, but remained independent of, the local Democratic organization. At the heart of the effort was the Clark-Dilworth Campaign Committee—six women and seven men—which mapped and managed the course of the campaign. Dilworth’s 1947 campaign team had included several women, and the strategy had included plans to “get some good Catholic women on line” and “emphasize women’s part in civic affairs.” By the end of 1947, Clark and the ADA were already planning a voter registration drive, considering means of assessing the electoral strength of the independents, and starting a list of Democratic “sell-outs” from the recent election. Within six months of the 1947 election, Finnegan was well on his way to replacing more than twenty of the old ward leaders, and at least eight hundred volunteers from the 1947 campaign had indicated they wanted to continue active work. “We are convinced,” Dilworth wrote, “that an independent organization conducting a year-round campaign can bring about decent government in this city.”²⁷

By April 1948, the reformers had mapped out their strategy. Clark planned to run for the city controller’s office in 1949. Dilworth said he

²⁵ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Feb. 1, 1947; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974; Weigley et al., *Philadelphia*, 690.

²⁶ Clark, “Six Lives,” editors notes on chap. 6. The veterans’ bonus met with resounding approval in Philadelphia by a vote of 340,758 to 89,919. *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 9, 1949.

²⁷ Memo from “Dave” to Joseph Clark, Dec. 21, 1947; Richardson Dilworth to the Contributors to the Dilworth for Mayor Committee, May 4, 1948; both in Clark Papers.

would not be a candidate. Responding to Dilworth's decision not to run, Sheriff Meehan called him a "political faker," but Dilworth insisted he was waiting for the 1950 gubernatorial race. The reformers planned a massive voter registration drive that would involve the coordinated efforts of the Democratic Party organization, the ADA, the Committee for Philadelphia, the CIO PAC, and a group of American Federation of Labor (AF of L) locals. Spearheading the drive would be Clark and Dilworth themselves, who planned to conduct fifty street-corner rallies in the two weeks prior to the registration deadline.²⁸

For 1949, however, women were more than just one of many elements in the Democrats' game plan. They were intimately involved in policy, strategy, and organization. While it may be an exaggeration to say that women made *the* critical difference, there were, according to Clark, six women "without whom the outcome of the election may have been significantly different." They "scheduled meetings, prepared literature, conducted telephone campaigns, prepared press releases, answered mail and solicited funds." But they were more than high-powered clerical workers. Most of the six already had made names for themselves in the public life of the city. A few of them, by 1949, enjoyed positions of power and influence within the Clark-Dilworth organization. Clearly the most influential of the six was Ada Lewis.

A member of the group that had engineered the takeover of the PAC and its affiliation with the ADA in 1947, Lewis was involved with little of the day-to-day campaign work in 1949. Clark, however, believed her to be the one who contributed the most to the success of the reform movement. She was married to John Frederick Lewis Jr., president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, co-owner of the Philadelphia Academy of Music, son of a president of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and father of another, member of the Philadelphia Board of Education, and scion of an old, blue-blood Philadelphia family. The Lewis home at Nineteenth and Spruce streets was the "scene of many large dinner parties" where the invited guests—reform-minded men and women for whom "no boundaries existed between their professional, political, and social lives"—engaged in both "social interaction and political

²⁸ "Comments on Tentative Suggestions for 1949 Municipal Campaign," Clark Papers; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 5, 1949.

plotting.” Thus Ada Lewis had the liberal pedigree as well as the social standing to make her an effective reform advocate. With her commitment to reform and her connections to the upper crust of Philadelphia society, she was of incalculable value to Clark and Dilworth in their efforts to forge a coalition of old-line Democratic regulars, radical left-wing activists, organized labor leaders, and reform-minded conservative Republicans. Her very identification with the campaign lent a patina of respectability to what might otherwise have appeared to be an ultra-radical collection of noisy zealots operating outside the walls of the traditional political arena. As Clark put it, “her complete integrity, her wise common sense, her tolerance, and her ability to get on with all kinds of people were of enormous help to all of the rest of us.”²⁹

Arguably the most politically savvy of the six was Elise Thompson Bailen.³⁰ A resident of Center City, Bailen had graduated from Connecticut College for Women with a B.A. in economics and political science. During the war she had worked in the foreign nationals division of the OSS and, from late 1945 until 1947, she functioned as the executive director of the United Nations Council in Philadelphia. She held membership in the League of Women Voters, the Philadelphia Housing Association, the Citizens’ Council on City Planning, and the ADA. Having chaired the Independent Women’s Campaign for Dilworth in 1947, Bailen’s political instincts told her that there had been three principal reasons for his defeat: (1) the powerful Republican machine; (2) a weak Democratic organization; and (3) the efforts of organized crime.³¹

In 1949, Bailen became one of the master strategists for Clark and Dilworth. In her estimation, the reformers would never succeed until they seized control of the Democratic Party, but they had to do so without alienating its old-guard leadership. More importantly, it was Bailen who recognized that, while Dilworth would make the most attractive candidate and the most effective campaigner, Clark was the man to lead the effort. Moreover, Dilworth, she wrote to Clark, “would be delighted to have

²⁹ Frank Hoeber to Sharon Ann Holt, Oct. 22, 2002, copy in possession of the authors; Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 6–7.

³⁰ 1947 Democratic Mayoralty Campaign, “Notes on Strategy,” 5, Clark Papers; Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 4–7; Clark, “Six Lives,” 38.

³¹ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Mar. 14, 1950; Elise Thompson Bailen to Joseph S. Clark, Nov. 12, 1947, Clark Papers.

someone else assume the central leadership.”

I believe very strongly that you should be the guy . . . [to] exert a more deliberate and firm type of leadership. . . . Leadership of our small bunch should rest in your hands so that Dick does not have to be burdened by those millions of smaller details which we will have to go into. . . . Now, sir, you may have my head on a silver platter.³²

In the spring of 1949, Bailen and fellow strategist Johannes Hoeber began developing demographic “fact sheets” on each of the city’s fifty-two wards. By August, the task was completed, so that when the campaign began in September, Clark and Dilworth had at their fingertips the most up to date intelligence. For each city ward the reformers knew “population 1940 and 1949 (White and Negro); foreign born by nationalities; economic status; educational level; number of new residential units (1947–1948); housing projects; Republican and Democratic registration (1942–1948); Republican and Democratic votes (1942 to 1948); and names of Republican and Democratic ward leaders.”³³

On 1 July 1949, the Democrats invaded Sheriff Meehan’s home ward, the Thirty-fifth, where Dilworth once again attacked the honesty of the “Fat Sultan.” “For every dollar the sheriff hands out,” Dilworth charged, “he’s robbing somebody of five. It would be interesting to hear from the Sheriff himself how much he shakes down from the Philadelphia Electric, the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Philadelphia Gas Works, and other various utilities.” In the middle of the harangue, a voice from the crowd asked when Dilworth wanted to debate the sheriff. “Who’s that,” Dilworth shot back, “a numbers writer?” The man claimed that Meehan had authorized him to arrange another Dilworth-Meehan debate. Before the night was over, the date had been set for July 12.³⁴

While the street-corner rallies proceeded, Bailen was working behind the scenes with her team in preparation for the fall effort. One of those workers was destined to have a long career in the political life of the city. In 1947, Natalie Saxe had been a twenty-four-year-old graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in psychology and no interest in

³² Elise Thompson Bailen to Joseph S. Clark, Nov. 12, 1947, Clark Papers.

³³ Johannes U. Hoeber to Richardson Dilworth, Aug. 12, 1949, Clark Papers.

³⁴ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 12, 26, 1949; *Philadelphia Morning Post*, July 1, 8, 1949.

politics. Ten days before the November 1947 election, Bailen had called Saxe and suggested she help in a last-ditch attempt to mobilize the Democratic vote through a massive telephone campaign. Saxe agreed, and by election night she was hooked on politics for life. Immediately after the campaign, Clark and Bailen agreed they had just enough money left to retain one full-time staff person for the reform movement. At Bailen's insistence, Saxe was hired.³⁵

Saxe's new position led to her involvement in the 1948 congressional and presidential races. At the same time, she and Bailen conceived a plan to create a "School for Practical Politics." When Bailen left Philadelphia on a speaking tour to drum up public support for President Truman's Marshall Plan, implementation of the idea was left to Saxe and Molly Yard. As Saxe later described it:

The notion of the school was two-fold.... One was training volunteers that we had collected in the 1947 campaign . . . they were an extremely naïve bunch in terms of how one conducts an election, what a [poll] watcher is supposed to do to make sure an election isn't stolen and the like. The second reason [and] biggest part was building an even greater force of volunteers and keeping them active."³⁶

Saxe and Yard provided "instruction on how to become committeemen or women," briefed people on Philadelphia issues, and organized support for Clark and Dilworth's street-corner rallies. Saxe and Yard, as much as anyone in the reform movement, were responsible for forging the army of trained campaign workers who "took to the streets and telephones in the fall of 1949."³⁷

Of a completely different temperament from Bailen and Saxe, but perhaps even more dedicated to liberal causes, was Emily Ehle Jones. Her forte was not political organization but data collection, public relations, and what Clark called "psychological political warfare." A 1934 graduate of Smith College, Jones had been a member of the Philadelphia PAC. As she understood it, the PAC was meant to be "a rallying ground for liberals

³⁵ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 26, 1950; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974.

³⁶ Saxe interview, July 23, 1974.

³⁷ Clark, "No Mean City," V, 29; Natalie Saxe, interview, July 30, 1974, Walter Phillips Oral History Project.

of both major parties,” to “provide voters who previously stayed at home deploring the type of men elected to public office with an opportunity to remedy the situation.” What she found was a very well-trained, hard-core experienced group that advocated “the straight Russian Communist line.” Consequently, she helped engineer the ADA coup in 1947. She served as the ADA’s first executive director and later replaced Dilworth as its chairman. Her “hard work, enthusiasm, and boundless energy were infectious” and her leadership abilities “pushed others to address important issues of fairness and good government.”³⁸

Like many in the ADA, Jones maintained a healthy distrust of professional politicians. Clark and Dilworth were, in her estimation, reformers rather than politicians but the rest of the Democratic organization was “cynical, tired, and probably corrupt.” Thus, while she and her ADA associates were intimately involved in Clark and Dilworth’s 1949 campaign, she took care to maintain the ADA’s independence from the Democratic Party. Jones prepared biographical “fact sheets” on GOP bosses Meehan (a “tee totaling cigar smoker” who could serve ice cream to his political friends at home while hiring “as many gangsters” as necessary to turn an election into “bloody warfare”), Meade (a product of the old “Courthouse Combination” who, despite the scandals of 1948, insisted that there were more “paramount” issues in the city such as trolley fares), and Witkin (the “foremost hatchet man” of the GOP organization who controlled the “flopouse vote” in the “tenderloins of the 13th ward”).³⁹

On July 12, 1949, the Academy of Music was filled to capacity for the Dilworth–Meehan debate, just as it had been in 1947. In addition to the live audience, an estimated 160,000 homes had radios tuned to the debate and 52,000 families viewed the proceeding on television. It was billed as a debate, but it quickly degenerated into a name-calling contest. Meehan spoke first. The previous Friday, Nochem Winnet, one of Meehan’s advisors, had spoken with Saxe and revealed to her the sheriff’s strategy. Contrary to Winnet’s advice, he said, the sheriff was determined to appear this time and to launch a blistering personal attack against Dilworth. He proceeded to tell Saxe exactly what Meehan planned to say. Saxe spent the balance

³⁸ Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 5; Jones interview, July 25, 1974; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 19, 1946, Apr. 18, 1947, May 25, 1950; Frank Hoeber to Sharon Ann Holt, Oct. 22, 2002.

³⁹ Jones interview, July 25, 1974; ADA Research Committee fact sheets for Austin Meehan, William F. Meade, and Morton Witkin.

of the weekend with Dilworth in Atlantic City, preparing him for Meehan's assault. Thus, Dilworth was not surprised when Meehan spent thirty minutes accusing him of lying, adultery, desertion, and carpet bagging. "I have no interest in your personal life or morals," Meehan declaimed, "but the people of Philadelphia are entitled to know you are a liar, a cheat, and a perjurer. . . . Silly Clark introduces you as a great public benefactor and then he claps his hands. Then you introduce him as a big public benefactor, and you clap your hands. . . . Dilly and Silly to represent Philly. Wouldn't that be a great combination for the City?"⁴⁰

Dilworth, unmoved by Meehan's performance, took the floor with the confidence and demeanor of an experienced trial lawyer. Rather than assume his street-corner persona, he dispassionately addressed, point by point, the charges leveled by the sheriff, and "proceeded to cut the sheriff up into small pieces, artistically and with a very sharp knife." At the end of his performance, Dilworth dropped a bombshell on both camps: "I am offering myself as Clark's running mate for the position of Treasurer."⁴¹

There were "horror-struck looks" on the faces of the Democratic politicians in attendance. Dilworth had given no warning of his decision to run. Saxe was convinced he had "made it up as he was going along" on the academy's stage. Once the initial shock wore off, Finnegan conceded that a Clark-Dilworth ticket would be the strongest, and he convinced the Democratic ward leaders to support it. To round out the ticket, the organization slated Joseph Burke, an Irish-Catholic lawyer from Kensington, to run for register of wills. For coroner, they chose Joseph Ominsky, a Ukrainian-born Jewish lawyer and former state assemblyman. For city council, they slated Max Seidman, a South Philadelphia ward leader, and labor agent Harry Norwitch. "We were a balanced ticket," Clark later observed, "two Wasps, an Irishman, a Pole, and two Jews."⁴²

Both Meehan and Meade agreed that they needed to counter with a respectable ticket if they wished to avoid defeat. Thus they slated "four

⁴⁰ Saxe interview, July 30, 1974; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 13, 1949. While Dilworth, at the time of the debate, was not a candidate for office, it was Meehan's strategy to argue that a Democratic victory would mean control of the city would pass to the two silk-stocking Democrats, Clark and Dilworth.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Saxe interview, July 30, 1974; Clark, "No Mean City," VII, 13-14; Clark, "Six Lives," 37; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 2, 9, 1949.

eminently respectable and fairly young men.” To oppose Clark, they chose William Nelson, an investment specialist with an exemplary record of service in both world wars. Using the rationale that the coroner should be a medical doctor, they picked Henry Hopkins, a faculty member from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Another professor, Walter Seiler, was nominated to oppose Dilworth. A businessman from Meehan’s Thirty-fifth Ward, Seiler had taught economics for several years at Penn. Finally, a former chancellor of the bar association, Peter F. Hagan, was selected to run for the office of register of wills.⁴³

With the slates set and the elections only two months off, the reformers’ campaign switched into high gear. Saxe, by now a seasoned veteran of the political wars, was responsible for the army of volunteers who worked the phones and conducted door-to-door canvasses. She was also responsible for scheduling and coordinating the street-corner rallies that the Democrats had used so effectively in 1947. For eight straight weeks, each of the candidates held four rallies per night, six nights per week. Each rally required a sound truck, a string band to draw a crowd, and at least a dozen volunteers on hand to pass out literature. Saxe likened her efforts to “playing train dispatcher at the Pennsylvania Station in the height of the railroad era.”⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Jones’s team of women at the ADA pioneered the use of television in a local electoral contest. They wrote and produced a series of fifteen-minute programs featuring speeches by the Democratic candidates. The shows’ leitmotif was a broom, symbolizing the Democratic campaign slogan, “Sweep Philadelphia Clean.” At the end of each show, Jones’s job was to run the broom along underneath the stage curtain to hammer the message home.⁴⁵

Jones also did duty with her five-year-old daughter in the ADA’s own sound truck that toured the city, exhorting voters to support Clark and Dilworth.

I would sit with the record player on my lap and we would tour South Philadelphia, for example, playing the Marine National Anthem since Mr.

⁴³ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 1949; Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 19–20.

⁴⁴ Clark, “No Mean City,” V, 29; Saxe interview, July 30, 1974.

⁴⁵ Emily Ehle Jones, interview by John M. McLarnon, Dec. 16, 2000.

Dilworth came from the Marine Corps. This would be used to gather people to a meeting in a special neighborhood. Occasionally, I took my own Ellen . . . and let her pass out pamphlets to the crowd. I can guarantee that you get 100% acceptance of any kind of pamphlet when they are passed out by a little girl of five.⁴⁶

A third female member of the ADA, Molly Yard Garrett, played a significant role in the 1949 campaign. A resident of the Torresdale section on the city, Yard—she preferred that name in her public life—had spent the first thirteen years of her life in China. There her social activist conscience was forged as she witnessed the degrading treatment of women in Chinese society. She attended Swarthmore College where she engineered the abolition of fraternities from campus, joined Joseph Lash's Student League for Industrial Democracy, and campaigned for Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas.⁴⁷

Like Bailen, Yard relished the rough and tumble of electoral politics. "When she spoke, she had a commanding manner that brooked no contradiction." Yet she was, at the same time, "curious, inquisitive and willing to listen to diverse opinions." In 1948, she showed her worth when she organized the ADA campaign for Bill Green, an independent Democrat running for the congressional nomination in northeast Philadelphia against the organization's choice, John Byrne. Yard proved to be a brilliant organizer and Green won both the primary and general elections. She was, according to her friends, an "authentic agitator. No abuse [was] too well-established, no precedent too accepted, no majority too overwhelming to silence her." Thus, she enthusiastically got involved with Saxe in the creation of the "School for Practical Politics."⁴⁸

For 1949, Yard "played a key role" in organizing the "Independent Voters' Campaign to Elect the Clark, Dilworth, Burke, Ominsky Ticket,"

⁴⁶ Jones interview, July 25, 1974.

⁴⁷ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, 20, 1987, Sept. 1, 1987.

⁴⁸ Frank Hoeber to Sharon Ann Holt, Oct. 22, 2002; *Northeast Times*, Apr. 3, 1949; Clark, "No Mean City," V, 29; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974; Jones interview, Dec. 16, 2000; Molly Yard, "Molly Yard Autobiography" (1935) <<<http://newdeal.feri.org/students/slid21.htm>>> (from Joseph P. Lash Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library); Joseph Lash was a founder of the Student League for Industrial Democracy. This unpublished essay was written while attending the 1935 SLID Summer Leadership Institute; *Swarthmore Phoenix*, Mar. 7, 1933; *The Halcyon* (Swarthmore College yearbook), 1933.

as the ADA campaign effort was titled. She also organized the pro-Clark and Dilworth student support groups on the campuses of the University of Pennsylvania and Swarthmore College. During the campaign, the seemingly inexhaustible Yard concentrated on the “racket wards”—those wards, especially Witkin’s Thirteenth, where organized vice seemed to exist under the supervision and blessing of the Republican organization. “My life,” she wrote Clark years later, “in a very real sense went into the 1949 and 1951 campaigns.”⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Bailen targeted those districts where Democratic registration was especially low and, consequently, where “fraudulent election returns could be expected.” Working closely with Democratic city chairman Finnegan, both Bailen and Yard sharply increased Democratic turnout—Yard produced an increase in Democratic votes by nearly 50 percent in the infamous Thirteenth—and minimized electoral “irregularities” in those precincts.⁵⁰

To nobody’s surprise, the Democrats hammered away at the same issues they had emphasized in 1947. Both Clark and Dilworth expressed unqualified support for revising the city charter, even if the change meant the elimination of one or both of the offices they were seeking. Such a refreshing position, the *Bulletin* opined, was a “welcome change that offered a challenge to the opposition. What will the position of the Republicans be?” the editors wondered. Clark’s answer to the question was blunt: while the mayor had promised to cooperate with the newly-formed Charter Commission, he would not even allow its members the use of an office in City Hall. “Meantime, the Charter Commission, pledged to have its important work finished by June 1, remains homeless and unable to proceed properly with its task.”⁵¹

Another major campaign issue was the city’s housing situation. Clark took particular interest in this problem because, as controller, he would

⁴⁹ Clark, “No Mean City,” VII, 4–5; Saxe interview, July 23, 1974; Molly Yard to Joseph Clark, no date, Clark Papers.

⁵⁰ Johannes Hoerber to Richardson Dilworth, Aug. 12, 1949, Clark Papers; ADA Research Committee, “Fact Sheet: Congressional Districts Election Day Results, November 8, 1949,” Clark Papers.

⁵¹ Joseph S. Clark to Walter Phillips, Dec. 1, 1948, Clark Papers; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 15, 24, 30, Oct. 8, 1949; Democratic Campaign Committee, “Statement by Joseph S. Clark,” no date, Clark Papers.

audit the books of the Philadelphia Housing Authority. According to Clark, 100,000 Philadelphia families were living in substandard housing. Another 65,000 were living “doubled up” while they waited “patiently for years to get decent, safe, and sanitary homes in which to raise their children.” Because Clark considered the housing problem acute, he recruited the assistance of the ADA’s acknowledged expert in the field, Dorothy Schoell Montgomery.⁵²

Montgomery had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in sociology in 1926. She then traveled to England to do graduate work in economics at the University of London. Upon returning home, she began her lifelong work in the field of public housing policy. From 1933 to 1937, she worked for the Philadelphia Housing Association, a “fact-finding, policy-making organization urging, investigating, and coordinating home building in the city.” In 1937, she helped organize the Philadelphia Housing Authority. A staunch advocate of public housing, she led the fight for rent control and for limits on tenant eviction due to property sales.⁵³

In 1944, Montgomery returned to the Housing Association as its managing director; a few years later she became one of the founding members of the Philadelphia ADA. In Clark and Dilworth, she found potentially successful candidates who shared her contempt for the GOP leadership’s disinterest, incompetence, malfeasance, and, at times, criminal behavior with regard to the postwar housing situation in the city. Consequently, she became thoroughly schooled in housing research and studied the policies and activities of the city’s housing and redevelopment authorities, where she found “inaction and partisan politics . . . rampant.” Montgomery was a “powerful intellect and a resourceful lobbyist who conveyed no sense that she ever thought herself less than the equal of the men who were the public policy brokers of the day.” Her passion for her issues, combined with an “intelligent face, definite voice, and a ladylike—though sometimes imperious—graciousness” often “brought men in power around to her point of view.”⁵⁴

⁵² “Delay Endangers Philadelphia Housing Program,” Campaign statement of Joseph S. Clark, no date, Clark Papers.

⁵³ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 22, 1946; *Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin*, Jan. 28, 1951; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 28, 1980.

⁵⁴ Frank Hoeber to Sharon Ann Holt, Oct. 22, 2002; Joseph S. Clark to Raymond Rosen, Oct. 28, 1949, Clark Papers.

Using Montgomery's research and tutoring, Clark was able to cite specific examples of public housing residents who were told that only registered Republicans could live in public housing or who had been evicted for changing their registration from Republican to Democratic. In one case, a Republican committeeman told a "backsliding" Republican tenant "she could square herself by voting Republican and pushing aside the curtain on the machine so he could see."⁵⁵

More importantly, with access to Montgomery's wealth of experience and knowledge, Clark was able to identify and articulate, in words that best served his campaign, the three principal reasons for the lack of adequate housing in the city:

A deep-seated hostility on the part of Republican organization leaders to the whole idea of low rental public housing; disgraceful behind the scenes wrangling among Republican organization leaders about who is going to get how big a cut of the pie; and a battle between rival factions in the Republican organization over who will gain political control of the Housing Authority which may eventually operate housing for 75,000 persons.⁵⁶

In the final analysis, Clark argued that at the root of the housing issue were the incompetence, dishonesty, and corruption of the Republican administration.

At the outset of the campaign, the GOP's professed strategy was to stay positive, to "discuss the issues on a constructive basis," without, however, ignoring the "hatchet element of public speaking" that its opponents were sure to employ. Only when it was "deemed necessary" would the Republicans respond in kind to the personal attacks leveled by Dilworth and Clark. The commitment to the "high road," eschewing "negative campaigning," lasted only a few days. By October, the campaign had, as most observers expected, degenerated into a name-calling contest. The reformers hammered away, night after night, telling "the full story of the City Hall scandals with names, dates, and places." Clark charged that the city had lost \$1.5 million in traffic fines because of GOP corruption, and

⁵⁵ Joseph S. Clark to Raymond Rosen, Oct. 28, 1949, Clark Papers.

⁵⁶ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 28, 1980; Democratic City Committee, "Campaign Statement of Joseph S. Clark," Sept. 29, 1949, Clark Papers; Joseph S. Clark, "Playing Politics with Public Housing," WFIL Radio Address, Nov. 23 1949, Clark Papers; Clark, "No Mean City," VII, 7.

“bookkeeping practices that made stealing easy.” Just one more example, he said, of the “bungling incompetents” who owed their jobs to patronage and whose incompetence or dishonesty would result in a city deficit of \$10 million. According to the information supplied by Bailen and Jones, three thousand GOP committeemen or their close relatives and forty GOP ward leaders were drawing a total of \$9 million a year in wages and salaries from the city treasury. “It is general knowledge,” Clark stated, “that most of these political employees have no qualifications for their jobs, do not do a fair day’s work, and should be fired.” Binns’s Independent Republicans agreed that if the Republicans were reelected, the voters would “pay huge tax increases to keep an army of political employees in City Hall.”⁵⁷

Dilworth claimed that Republican politicians had made “outrageous profits” in the sale of land to the city for use as playgrounds. Playgrounds had been built not where they were needed, but where the land acquisition, according to Dilworth, “would benefit the boys in City Hall.” In one instance, there were three playgrounds within a quarter mile of Tenth and Federal streets. He broadened his corruption theme to include the charge that the Republican machine allowed vice to flourish in certain parts of the city. When Meade called the charges wild and delusional, Dilworth provided the press with the names of two vice spots, the Hawthorne Club and the Minerva Hotel, which he claimed were operating in the shadows of City Hall protected by Mort Witkin. “For a man like Meade,” Dilworth claimed, “to tell Philadelphians that in a city of over two million there is not a single house of prostitution is, in itself, a patent lie.” Dilworth also repeatedly charged that the police department was among the most corrupt in the nation. His claims were based on the revelations of the Committee of Fifteen, and on secret reports from David J. Malone and Thomas Gibbons, two members of the force who risked their careers to provide the reformers with specific information on corrupt police officials and practices.⁵⁸

Under this constant barrage from the Democratic challengers, the Republican organization turned to the one issue they believed would

⁵⁷ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 25, 29, Oct. 4, 7, 11, 1949; Joseph S. Clark to Frank J. Tiemann, Oct. 13, 1949, Clark Papers.

⁵⁸ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 10, 21, 1949, Saxe interview, July 30, 1974.

resonate with the voters: communism. In mid-September, Meade charged that, as he and other critics had long suspected, the ADA was little more than a communist front organization. Moreover, he claimed, Dilworth knew this fact, and had chosen to enlist its support anyhow. Dilworth demanded that Meade prove his charges. Meade responded with his own demand that Dilworth reveal the names of all ADA members so the public could see for itself that the ADA was “infiltrated with Communist party-liners and pinks.” Dilworth refused, claiming that the GOP wanted the membership list in order to exert “economic pressure” on ADA members who operated small businesses in the city. The newspapers could see the list, he allowed, but it would not be made available to “Mr. Meade and his gang for the kind of . . . skullduggery for which City Hall has become infamous.” Meade, of course, denied that charge.⁵⁹

The campaign had been reduced to two issues: Republican corruption vs. Democratic communism. For much of October, Meade continued to insist that he receive a copy of the ADA membership list while Dilworth steadfastly refused, and repeatedly challenged Meade to prove his claims. Bailen, Jones, and the ADA filed a \$100,000 libel suit against Meade and the Republicans. Meade dismissed the suit with one word—“piffle”—and demanded that Dilworth repudiate “Red support.” “This is like asking a man if he is for or against sin,” Dilworth responded. “I was fighting Communism before men like Meade even knew what the word meant. I hate Communism as a matter of principle [and] I don’t want any Communist to support me or vote for me.”⁶⁰

In late October, Meade finally acquiesced to Dilworth’s demand. In a Monday night radio address, Meade began his exposé by identifying four Clark-Dilworth intimates having “communist leanings.” Of the four, it was Molly Yard who came under the harshest attack from the GOP leader. “Let’s take a look at the ADA Board of Directors,” Meade suggested to his WCAU radio audience on October 24:

There is Molly Yard . . . a member of the American League for Peace and Democracy. . . . A special congressional Committee on Un-American Activities cites the American League as the largest of the Communist front movements in the U.S. . . . In 1938 Molly Yard was made Chairman of the

⁵⁹ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 25, 26, 1949.

⁶⁰ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 29, 1949; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 10, 1949.

American Students Union [which] . . . the Un-American Affairs Committee cited as a Communist front. . . . That not only clinches Molly Yard as a member of more than one communist organization, but also dates her as an old hand in the racket; remember Molly Yard was one of the organizing Board of Directors of Dilworth's ADA—his own pet hothouse of Reds. But that's not all; Molly Yard was a bustling little Communist worker who got around. She also appears in the files of the Congressional Committee as a member of the Washington Book Shop . . . [also] cited as a Communist front organization. . . . So what does that make Molly Yard?⁶¹

The attack on Yard sparked a minor firestorm. "If she is a Communist," one citizen wrote the *Bulletin*, "so is Billy Penn." "The fact that Dilworth and Clark are members of an erratic organization," wrote another, "does not make them Communists." Another voter called Meade's charge a "malevolent attack" and wondered if he should "tell Mr. Meade that Charles M. Lafollette, a national director of the ADA is a former Republican Congressman from Indiana?" "Was there ever," yet another writer asked, "a more thoroughly asinine political campaign than the fiasco now offending Philadelphia?" Meanwhile Yard, refusing to accept the Meade attack as simply inflated campaign rhetoric, filed her own libel suit.⁶²

On November 8 the voters went to the polls after one of the most bitterly contested campaigns in the city's history. In what some considered a harbinger of the future, two of the city's three leading newspapers had endorsed the reformers, the *Bulletin* and, to the surprise of many, the *Inquirer*. Only the *Daily News* persisted in its loyalty to the GOP.

⁶¹ William F. Meade, WCAU Radio Address, Oct. 24, 1949, Walter Phillips Oral History Project.

⁶² *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 29, 1949; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 29, Oct. 27, 1949. Meade was not the first to question the Garret family's political sentiments. In July 1949, Philadelphia GOP boss Austin Meehan labeled Sylvester Garret, Yard's husband, a communist. Garret "categorically denied" the charge, calling it a "desperate effort of a crooked politician to throw up a smoke screen to divert public attention from the corruption for which he is responsible in Philadelphia." *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 13, 1949. Even as the vicious verbal battles between Meehan and Dilworth became more strident, the two men knew that it was all part of the game. In an interview with Dilworth after he was elected to office, he admitted that, "the only guy in the Republican Party that the people have any respect for is Austin Meehan [so] we had to knock him down." According to Meehan's son William, while Austin was always suspicious of Dilworth's "tendency not to always tell the truth," the two men became friends and got along especially well when Dilworth was head of the Board of Education. William Austin Meehan, interview by Walter Phillips, Mar. 23, 1977, Walter Phillips Oral History Project.

“Effectiveness in government is found in results,” the *News* opined, “and in Philadelphia, for more than 60 years, the Republican Party has been producing those results . . . [it] has made Philadelphia a World famous city.” Hence, according to the paper, it was simply the intelligent business decision to leave in charge those who have “proven competent to perform the tasks assigned them.”⁶³

The election results exceeded the fondest expectation of the reformers. The total number of votes cast was the third highest in the city’s history, and the Democratic row-office ticket won by the largest plurality of either party since the municipal election of 1931. Each of the four won by more than 100,000 votes. Even Sheriff Meehan’s home ward returned a majority for the challengers. The entire GOP slate, the *Inquirer* reported, was beaten “by a tidal wave of protest.” Dilworth quickly emphasized the nature of the victory. “This is a victory for the people of Philadelphia, a victory for the *Bulletin*, for the *Inquirer*, a victory for labor, a victory for all the people.” “A great victory due to teamwork,” Clark added. “We had the united support of labor, a strong group of independent Republicans, the ADA, the independent voters and last but not least, a strong Democratic organization.” “We have given the other party something to think about,” state Democratic chairman Philip Mathews warned, “decency in government!”⁶⁴

Once the polls were closed, Jones, Bailen, and their researchers immediately went to work analyzing the returns. A remarkable thirty-one of fifty-two wards had returned Democratic majorities. The Democrats carried sixteen of them by more than 60 percent. Meade and Witkin held their home wards, the Eighth and Thirteenth respectively, but the Democrats captured 60 percent of the vote in Meehan’s Thirty-fifth Ward. Winning the Thirty-fifth had historic significance. Franklin D. Roosevelt had carried the Thirty-fifth only once in four presidential elections, in 1936, and then with only a 55 percent majority. Dilworth had lost the Thirty-fifth in the 1947 election by more than 6,000 votes.⁶⁵

The victory of the reformers had several essential components. Perhaps the most important was the overall voter turnout. More than 79

⁶³ *Philadelphia Daily News*, Nov. 1, 1949.

⁶⁴ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Nov. 9, 1949; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 9, 1949.

⁶⁵ ADA Research Committee, “1949 Election Result Analysis,” Clark Papers.

percent of the city's voters cast a ballot, an astonishing increase on average of 221,674 votes, or 37 percent, over what had been cast four years earlier for the same row offices. In the 1945 campaign, Republicans had won all four row offices with vote totals ranging between 330,000 and 360,000. Their Democratic challengers' vote totals ranged from 258,000 to 263,000. Four years later, all four Republican candidates lost, yet each collected more votes than did his 1945 counterpart. For example, William Nelson polled 352,072 votes but lost to Clark while the 1945 GOP candidate for controller, Frank Tiemann, won with only 333,684. Similar patterns held for the other three row-office contests.⁶⁶

The dramatic difference, of course, was in the Democratic vote totals. The four Democratic row-office candidates polled between 457,157 and 464,947 votes, an average increase of 201,903 votes, or 77 percent, over the party's 1945 performance. Part of the Democratic vote increase could be explained by the more than 100,000 registered Republicans who voted Democratic. But according to the ADA's post-election analysis, the increase in overall turnout that helped produce the Democratic victory was based on several factors beyond that of disillusioned Republican voters.⁶⁷

Bailen, Jones, and their ADA staff in their post-election analysis focused on reconciling vote returns with the amounts of money spent and numbers of workers assigned to each ward. They concluded that at least three principal reasons explained the Democratic reformers' success: (1) the city hall scandals; (2) the colorful, articulate personalities of Clark and Dilworth; and (3) the campaign strategy of the reformers, especially the street-corner rallies of Clark and Dilworth and the house-to-house canvassing by hundreds of graduates of Saxe's and Yard's "School for Practical Politics." Elhe's own analysis also indicated that, while the reformers had won, their work was far from over. The GOP still held a significant registration advantage. The city's elite was still staunchly Republican and could not be counted on to regularly support reform-minded opponents. Likewise, the Veterans' Bonus Referendum had attracted thousands of young veterans and their wives to the polls. The majority of them, Jones concluded, had supported fellow veterans Clark

⁶⁶ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 7, 1945, Nov. 9, 1949.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; ADA Research Committee, "1949 Election Result Analysis."

and Dilworth. Without the bonus question, however, many would have sat out the election, and their continued support for the Democratic Party was, at best, problematic. Finally, the reformers' showing in the city's black wards was not as strong as had been expected. In conclusion, Jones warned, while "Democratic victory on November 8, 1949, was extraordinary not only in its overall result, but also in many of its details and in comparison with other elections," there was still much work to be done, especially in the "wards with large concentrations of Negro voters."⁶⁸

Two years after the 1949 revolution, Clark was elected mayor of the city and Dilworth its district attorney. Their campaign team for that effort was virtually the same, but as success forced the two leaders to prioritize party and politics ahead of reform, they gradually lost the services, and in some instances the support, of the women who had contributed so much to their success. Bailen was the first to leave. In the wake of the 1949 effort, Democratic ward leaders in the Second Senatorial District broke with tradition in 1950, and, for the first time, endorsed a woman—Bailen—for the state senate. Using the same tactics that had proven successful the year before, she sent volunteers door-to-door to increase Democratic registration and verify the legitimacy of GOP registrants. Despite her efforts, Bailen was unable to unseat Republican incumbent Evans Kephart, who received more than 60 percent of the votes cast. Within a year, Bailen had retired from public life. She moved back to her native New York where her husband Elliot established his own tax law firm.⁶⁹

Upon completion of the Germantown home designed by Dorothy Schoell Montgomery's husband, Newcomb, her family moved back into the city from Huntington Valley. In 1952, the newly elected Mayor Clark named her to the board of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority. She served on the authority until 1958, when, in a public show of dissatisfaction, she criticized its "lack of progress toward the goal of redevelopment" and resigned. She continued with the Housing Association, setting its agenda of support for federally-funded low-rent public housing and opposition to the high-rise public housing projects that came into vogue

⁶⁸ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 9, 1949; ADA Research Committee, "1949 Election Result Analysis."

⁶⁹ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Mar. 14, 28, Nov. 8, 1950, Sept. 7, 1951.

in the 1950s. "Scattered site housing," Montgomery argued presciently, "in which residents could become part of a neighborhood" was far preferable. Montgomery also became the foremost critic not only of the Redevelopment Authority but also of the city's banking fraternity which, she charged, by 1960 had "drawn an Iron Curtain" around predominantly black North Philadelphia.⁷⁰

Emily Ehle Jones withdrew from political activity shortly after the 1949 election and accepted a position as a researcher with the State Department. During the next twenty-five years, she spent most of her time outside the United States. She was in Indo-China in the years immediately preceding the build-up of U.S. military forces in Vietnam. She spent several years in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and, in 1972, she witnessed first-hand the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile.⁷¹

Natalie Saxe, on the other hand, continued with the Clark-Dilworth team. By the end of the 1949 campaign, she was coordinating the efforts of the various independent reform groups and operating as Dilworth's principal advisor. She would remain his most trusted lieutenant for the balance of his career. Despite being identified as "one of Philadelphia's 50 most eligible bachelor girls" in 1955, she did not marry until 1981. Her association with Dilworth would lead to positions as coordinator of the 1952 Leader-for-Governor Campaign in Philadelphia, executive assistant to Mayor Dilworth, campaign manager for Dilworth's 1962 gubernatorial bid, special assistant to the Philadelphia School Board, and public relations manager for the Delaware River Port Authority. After Dilworth retired in 1972, she started her own consulting firm, representing various universities, museums, and non-profit organizations in Harrisburg.⁷²

Molly Yard refused to drop her lawsuit against William Meade. Eventually she agreed to a \$1,000 out-of-court settlement. Mayor Clark appointed her to the Philadelphia Zoning Board in 1952, but she gradually moved away from traditional partisan politics and became more involved in civil rights and women's issues. The Yard-Garrett family left Philadelphia for the Pittsburgh area, where she ran unsuccessfully for

⁷⁰ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 24, 1958, Mar. 28, 1980; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Apr. 25, 1948, Jan. 26, 1960; *Philadelphia Post*, Apr. 8, 1952.

⁷¹ Jones interview, Dec. 16, 2000.

⁷² *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Feb. 2, 1953, Dec. 23, 1955, Dec. 6, 1965, Feb. 13, 1974, May 5, 1976; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 10, 1999.

Congress in the 1960s, and led picketers protesting the lack of minority employment at Three Rivers Stadium in the 1970s. In Pittsburgh, she developed a close friendship with Eleanor Smeal and began concentrating her energies on the women's movement. By 1986, she was the political director for the National Organization for Women (NOW); the following year she succeeded Smeal as NOW's national president.⁷³

Ada Lewis continued to support an assortment of charitable and reform causes, but her priority became the improvement of public education. She served as vice president of the Philadelphia Board of Education for more than ten years, lending her support to a number of reform initiatives including the elimination of racial segregation throughout the school system. She also supported the 1965 "Educational Home Rule Supplement" to the city charter that reconstituted the board, changed the method of selection of its members, and resulted in the selection of Richardson Dilworth as school board president and Natalie Saxe as his special assistant. In an ironic twist, it also resulted in Lewis losing her seat on the board.⁷⁴

In 1955, Dilworth replaced Clark as mayor; the following year the voters of Pennsylvania elected Clark to the U.S. Senate. The two had, indeed, led a revolution, ending ninety years of Republican rule and relegating the GOP to the role of the minority party. No Republican has occupied the office of mayor since Samuels turned over the reigns of power to Clark in January 1952. And not once since the 1949 revolution has the GOP held a majority in City Council. Through the efforts of Clark, Dilworth, and the women of the ADA, the Democratic Party became the city's majority party, finally effecting the political realignment that many large cities in Pennsylvania and elsewhere had undergone during the New Deal years.

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⁷³ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 13, 1949; Joseph S. Clark, interview by Walter Phillips, Mar. 20, 1975, Clark Papers; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, Sept. 1, 1987; *Time*, Aug. 3, 1987.

⁷⁴ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 2, 12, Dec. 6, 1965.