

Soldiers without Guns:

Housewives and Club Women on the Home Front in World War II

Emily Leifer

Senior Honors Thesis

Advisors: Dr. Hilary Bernstein & Dr. Alice O'Connor

University of California, Santa Barbara

Acknowledgements

Participating in the Senior Honors Thesis in the History Department has been the most significant endeavor of my academic career at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I would like to thank the university and the entire History Department for supporting this program which has challenged me more than any other course I have taken while providing me with a creative outlet for research of my choosing.

Had it not been for my seventeen housemates, I would never have decided to embark on this journey. Their confidence in me and constant support has gotten me through severe cases of writer's block throughout the process. I would also like to thank my father for pushing me to critically review my own work and motivating me to push myself farther than I thought possible. Most importantly, I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Bernstein and Dr. O'Connor, for their constructive advice throughout every stage of writing. Their guidance encouraged me to reach new depths within my study while helping me remain focused. I would also like to express my appreciation for my colleagues in the Senior Honors Thesis class for their encouragement and for sharing this incredible process with me. Lastly, I would like to thank you for taking the time to delve into my research and look more critically at an otherwise underexplored subject.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Historiography.....	7
Part One: A Nation of Women at Work.....	12
Regulating the National Economy.....	12
Supporting the OPA.....	19
Involving the American Homemaker.....	24
Leading the Program.....	26
Part Two: The Local Perspective.....	34
Los Angeles, California.....	34
Anaheim, California.....	44
Conclusion.....	53
Bibliography.....	57

Introduction

U.S. entry into war in 1941 created a whole new set of demands on American life.

Wartime mobilization in defense of democracy took on an entirely new meaning as the conflict had implications on the national economy, institutions, organizations, and individuals. The need for young and able-bodied men to support the forces abroad left the United States with a severe shortage of manpower at home. This demographic shift called for a change in the role of every American who remained at home, particularly the female population. The absence of many fathers, husbands, and male workers left women with additional responsibilities and heightened society's expectations on them. This expansion of the female role altered the perspective of both the government and the nation with regard to women. While their male counterparts were serving their country abroad, women were expected to do their part in return by serving the home front.

What did this mean for the average American woman? For most, it meant the opportunity, and often necessity, to enter the labor force to make up for the significant loss of manpower and income. Women entering the workforce became a normal expectation of the wartime experience. Much of the public's attention was focused on this change in the work place as the need to make up for the absence of a large portion of the male population required women to take positions as factory workers. Images of Rosie the Riveter and other comparable advertisements encouraged American women to leave their households and take up jobs in factories and traditionally male-held jobs. These new women were and are still recognized for their wartime sacrifices and patriotism.¹ However, often overlooked are the women who

¹ Mike Wright, *What They Didn't Teach You About World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 52.

maintained their traditional roles as housewives. As the war turned many aspects of society upside down, these women facilitated a sense of normalcy while reaching new heights of civic engagement due to the increased opportunities emerging from the wartime state.

The war heightened anxieties at home and in turn fueled the desire to preserve the convention of the American housewife to comfort a distressed nation. The housewife represented the ideals and values that the United States hoped to protect in engaging in the worldwide conflict. Therefore, in reinforcing this role, the government reinvigorated the housewife by empowering her with new authority in her position. The typical American housewife was defined as a white, middle-class woman who could afford to stay outside of the newly mobilized female workforce. While minorities and lower classes of women were coerced into new factory jobs, white, middle-class housewives had the affluence necessary to maintain their lifestyles while committing to wartime activism in volunteer positions.

One way that this was made possible was through the long-established philanthropic activities of housewives. Both on the local and national level, women had participated in various organizations and clubs to serve individual communities and national chapters. This civic engagement had been particularly popular amongst housewives, as they often had the desire to improve their communities as mothers and wives. Though membership to such organizations was not limited to this particular demographic, middle-class housewives made a significant impact on the success of these groups. By participating in existing clubs and organizations and actively getting involved on a local and national level, these housewives were able to ensure that

the home front did not collapse under the immense wartime pressure while also becoming leaders in their own communities.²

The Second World War provided an even greater opportunity for club women to participate actively in the public sphere as many organizations expanded their normal activities to focus on the immediate needs of the nation. The national government capitalized on this shift in focus as it began to enlist the help of club women to address national issues. In this way, the government relied on the housewives of the nation to help regulate and implement new policies and programs.

In expanding on the arguments of various historians and adding my own archival findings, I have developed a unique perspective through which to view the role of housewives in the Second World War. The activities of women through various clubs and organizations, as well as on an individual level, were instrumental in the national effort to regulate inflation and preserve a healthy balance of consumerism that ensured an equitable distribution of goods. These female volunteers were actively involved, not only as volunteers for the national government, but also on a municipal level. To exemplify this phenomenon, I have used the larger city of Los Angeles and the nearby developing town of Anaheim. In my discussion of the nationwide issue and the municipal examples of Los Angeles and Anaheim, I argue that this period marks the first time the national government relied heavily on female citizens to regulate government policy on a voluntary basis. In turn, the war effort empowered homemakers to expand on their traditional role in becoming active publically outside of the household. The Second World War did not only impact American women, it also influenced the local voluntary organizations that they

² V.R. Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II: How the Government, Military and Industry Prepared for War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995) 165.

participated in. The women I am focusing on as well as the organizations they represented were just as much a part of the "Greatest Generation" as the veterans who returned home from war. Their experiences in the Second World War influenced their ideas of personal sacrifice for a national cause as well as unification on a community and national level. Though their male counterparts have received much of the scholarly attention regarding this generation of citizens, these homemakers and club women were just as significant to this society as their male counterparts.

Historiography

Much scholarly attention has been focused on the mobilization of the United States in World War II. However, James T. Sparrow points to the lack of discussion of the ways in which the expanded authority of the federal government legitimized a sense of national citizenship through the idea of wartime unification and sacrifice.³ Sparrow examines this subject in depth, though he largely leaves women out of the equation. In posing this same question within my own research, I have focused this issue down to a study of the expanded citizenship of a particularly unexplored group: housewives. Though various historians have examined the public mobilization of the American homemaker during World War II, I have examined the issue from both the local and national perspective while including a dimension of findings from my own research that provides a clarified understanding of the experience of this category of citizens.

For example, in *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, Meg Jacobs pays careful attention to the activities of women who remained at home for

³ James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the duration of the war and their impact on the politics of consumption throughout this period. Jacobs examines the ways in which existing volunteer organizations and groups paired with emerging wartime programs in order to implement and enforce federal policies within local communities. Jacobs credits the functionality of these programs to the women volunteering their hard work and time to carry out change in their communities from the direction of the government.⁴

In addition, Jacobs examines the role of government agencies in implementing change and the relationship between these agencies and homemakers in her article, "How About Some Meat?: The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946." This article provides further insight to the issue while developing a narrative of specific government policies and the timeline of such changes.⁵ In expanding on Jacobs' analysis, I contextualize the programs that dealt directly with the homemakers while also providing insight into the success of these programs.

John Bush Jones observes the subject of advertising and wartime propaganda that was shared with the American public in his work, *All Out for Victory: Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front*. Jones discusses the ways in which the national government used the media in order to communicate the message of patriotic sacrifice to the public. As much of this advertising was related to household consumption, Jones concludes that these messages had a direct interaction with the housewives of the nation.⁶ In including Jones's findings, I have

⁴ Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵ Meg Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?": The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946," *The Journal of American History*, 84, no. 3 (December 1997): 910-941.

⁶ John Bush Jones, *All Out for Victory: Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2009).

worked to establish a connection between the national government and housewives in their individual communities. This has enabled me to expand on this topic to address the ways in which homemakers were perceived by their government and the authority they were empowered with in their households and communities.

V.R. Cardozier also discusses the situation of many homemakers during the war in his work, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II: How the Government, Military and Industry Prepared for War*. Cardozier explores the type of female volunteer government agencies were looking for in order to bolster support for the national agenda in local communities.⁷ I use Cardozier's perspective to develop an image of the type of homemaker that had the opportunity participate in this voluntary role to help implement government programs. Cardozier's findings interact with the work of Jacobs, as they expand on the favorable attributes of homemakers that are historically overlooked which made them ideal volunteers.

The journal articles of both Martin Hart-Landsberg and Landon Storrs examine the timeline of the consumer movement throughout the war, with a clear focus on the responsibility of women in the issue of consumerism. Hart-Landsberg follows government policy in an effort to connect rationing and price stabilization programs to the female volunteers implementing such changes.⁸ Similarly, Storrs discusses the experience of the female consumer and the implications of this subject on the nation as a whole.⁹ Both articles expand on various details of the national program while also discussing the experience of individual leaders and volunteers. By examining

⁷ Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II*.

⁸ Martin Hart-Landsberg, "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making: Lessons from World War II Price Control Struggles in the United States," *Science & Society*, 67, no. 4 (Winter 2003-2004): 399-428.

⁹ Landon Storrs, "Left-Feminism, The Consumer Movement, and Red Scare Politics in the United States, 1935-1960," *Journal of Women's History*, 18 no. 3, (Fall 2006): 40-67.

the issue from a progressive perspective, Hart-Landsberg and Storrs provide another dimension to the political implications of the activities of housewives during the war that is not clearly stated in the work of other historians.

In understanding the local experience of women during World War II, I have learned from the studies of Becky M. Nicolaides and Lisa McGirr. Within the city of Los Angeles, Nicolaides examined the experience of women who were influenced by the rapid industrialization of the L.A. region during the Second World War.¹⁰ Though Nicolaides's findings helped inform my understanding of the region, I have focused on a group of middle-class women who had different wartimes experiences than the working-class population Nicolaides writes of. McGirr's work characterizes the region of Orange County and the implications wartime development had on it. However, my study captures an earlier time period not thoroughly explored by McGirr's research.¹¹ McGirr hypothesizes that the citizens of Orange County developed from their wartime experience into enemies of the liberal government regulation that had taken hold during the New Deal. In researching the female citizens of the region, the "suburban warriors" I have examined were not the origins of the anti-government crusaders that McGirr hypothesizes. They were instead very much behind Roosevelt's war effort to enlist civilians to assist in the war effort.

Though each historian I have included in my work provides specific information that is particular to their analysis of domestic activity during the Second World War, I have focused in on their distinct discussions of the ways American homemakers rose to new heights with the

¹⁰ Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 186-199.

¹¹ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 25-29.

challenges brought on by the conflict. Historians like Jacobs, Cardozier, and Sparrow provide a thorough examination of the situation of housewives, however they lack a discussion of the propaganda and communication from the government to individual homes that can be found in Jones's work. Furthermore, I have included a more in-depth approach to the specific experiences of women on a municipal level by expanding on the work of historians such as Nicolaides and McGirr. In addition, my perspective through my archival research in Anaheim, California provides a unique approach to an otherwise under-studied topic. In my close examination of the experience of housewives on both the national and local level, I hope to open up new avenues for continued research of this subject and add a distinct analysis to this particular historical issue.

citizens to do their part. As the national government worked to regulate national interests, female citizens provided a significant portion of volunteers who worked alongside the government to implement these regulations. The Roosevelt administration relied heavily on the volunteerism of the nation to run the war from a grassroots level, therefore providing these women with new opportunities at a national level.¹³

Regulating the National Economy

Following the precedent set by the First World War, President Roosevelt renewed the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense in order to support wartime changes in policy on the home front.¹⁴ Among the most important tasks of regulation for the Commission was the necessity to stabilize consumer prices to prevent sharp rises in inflation. Many feared that wartime changes in production and availability of goods could spark a rise in prices that

¹³ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 6.

¹⁴ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 69-70.

¹⁵ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report for the Period Ended April 30, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 2.

Part One – A Nation of Women at Work

As soon as the United States entered into the conflict abroad, an undeniable need for unification at home prevailed. For civilians, the conflict created a necessity to prioritize the national concern above all individual matters. This arrangement was spurred on by the enlargement of the federal government, as it expanded its scope and authority to account for wartime changes. To mobilize the Home Front, government agencies developed programs that surpassed the New Deal programs, which had seemed so radical to many Americans just a few years earlier.¹² The national ideology constructed to support the war required American citizens to accept the expansion of federal authority without question while mobilizing actively as citizens to do their part. As the national government worked to regulate national interests, female citizens provided a significant portion of volunteers who worked alongside the government to implement these regulations. The Roosevelt administration relied heavily on the voluntarism of the nation to run the war from a grassroots level, therefore providing these women with new opportunities at a national level.¹³

Regulating the National Economy

Following the precedent set by the First World War, President Roosevelt renewed the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense in order to support wartime changes in policy on the home front.¹⁴ Among the most important tasks of regulation for the Commission was the necessity to stabilize consumer prices to prevent sharp rises in inflation. Many feared that wartime changes in production and availability of goods could spark a rise in prices that

¹² Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 6.

¹³ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 69-70.

¹⁴ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report for the Period Ended April 30, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 2.

would alter the dynamics of the American economy. This included concerns about impacts to the necessary distribution of certain goods to the majority of Americans. In order to prevent prices from spiraling out of control, price stabilization was determined to be a necessary measure for wartime America.¹⁵

Within the president's appointed Advisory Commission members, Leon Henderson was named head of price stabilization for the nation.¹⁶ Henderson, a prominent economist in the Roosevelt administration, had extensive experience working in various New Deal programs, making him a logical fit for the position. However, his characteristically radical approach and distrust of big business from his experiences during the New Deal made him a controversial character for right-leaning entrepreneurs, businessmen, and conservative politicians.¹⁷ In his new role, Henderson was given the oversight of monitoring the markets and keeping prices at a stable, affordable level. In addition, due to the government's desire to maximize output for the war effort, prices needed to remain at an appropriate level to ensure consistent production. The price stabilization division, therefore, would also attempt to ensure that the supply of goods met the wartime demands as pressure on industry increased.

Initially, Henderson's efforts concerning regulating price stabilization were based upon a voluntary program of participation. However, the voluntary program could not adequately address the problem. Unsurprisingly, the inability to effectively penalize those who did not follow the guidelines of the voluntary plan made the program ineffective. Henderson recognized this issue from the start, though initially inducting a compulsory plan was recognized as a less

¹⁵ Hart-Landsberg, "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making," 399.

¹⁶ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 2.

¹⁷ Andrew H. Bartels, "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal, 1939-1946," *The Public Historian*, 5, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 7-8.

politically acceptable option due to its radical edge. President Roosevelt also recognized this issue of implementation. In January 1941, the Office of Production Management was established under Roosevelt's instruction to develop and implement a compulsory program of regulation to address the goals of consumer protection and support creation of military supply.¹⁸ This move towards stricter parameters for price stabilization was a step in the right direction for generating a compulsory plan of regulation.

However, under the requirements of the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941, it became clear that the current program was insufficient. Beginning in spring, the Lend-Lease Act initiated a massive program of aid to support Allied nations fighting the Axis powers.¹⁹ Under the Lend-Lease Act, the United States agreed to provide for and supply war materials regardless of the potential for insufficient payments for these goods during wartime.²⁰ The United States was then responsible, not only for sustaining itself, but also for provisioning many other nations in support of the defeat of the Axis. Taking this into consideration, President Roosevelt replaced the Price Stabilization Division with the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply (OPACS) on April 11, 1941, exactly one month after President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act.

Roosevelt gave the OPACS the directive to oversee that Americans were adequately supplied with vital goods and "to take all lawful steps necessary or appropriate in order to prevent price spiraling, rising cost of living, profiteering, and inflation."²¹ This new office had far more power to regulate the markets, delegated from the executive branch. Four months after Roosevelt issued the executive order for the creation of OPACS, he transferred the responsibility for overseeing

¹⁸ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 5.

¹⁹ Sparrow, *Wartime State*, 5. "Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making," 404.

²⁰ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 7.

²¹ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 7.

the supply of civilian goods to the Office of Production Management. This change converted the OPACS to the Office of Price Administration (OPA).²² Despite this new authority, the Office of Price Administration still lacked the power to penalize violators. Thus, from inception it did not have the means to be fully successful.

In addition to seeking to control the rate at which price levels rose, the OPA planned to address problems at the base level of production. To thwart prices of goods rising uncontrollably, the division decided to expand the means for supplying individual products.²³ The OPA hoped that amplified supply would counteract the price increases. Under this program, it would be necessary to convert many of the existing industries and manufacturers that had normally serviced the civilian sphere to proactively produce for military needs. This alteration called for the cooperation and participation of all factors of the economic sphere, as many avenues of production would be changed due to the new requirements and needs of the nation. On the home front, warfare replaced welfare as the central purpose of the national state.²⁴ This prioritized war above all other immediate national concerns, requiring all citizens to prioritize the war as the main national concern.

Despite these efforts and tactics of prevention, it soon became apparent that inflation could not be prevented simply by guidelines recommended by the OPA. By February 1941, the prices of 28 basic commodities that were monitored by the OPA Division of Research experienced a serious escalation on the general wholesale index of commodities. From

December of 1940 to June of 1941, the index jumped from 120 to 150, marking the sharpest

²² Hart-Landsberg, "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making," 404.

²³ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 8.

²⁴ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 4.

incline in wholesale prices since August of 1939.²⁵ More serious measures became necessary after this noticeable jump in order to hold the nation accountable for monitoring the markets.²⁶ President Roosevelt thus proposed the creation of legislation aimed at controlling prices and rents in order to strengthen the authority of the government to regulate the economy.²⁷ The jump from recommendations by an advisory committee to proposing legislation brought national attention to the threat of an inflationary economy during war. Mere days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the House of Representatives passed the Emergency Price Control Bill, allowing the Office of Price Administration to set price ceilings and control rent for the duration of the conflict.²⁸ The passage of this act helped solidify the authority of the OPA while also defining the length of time under which the program would be supported. In January 1942, Congress removed the OPA from its position under the National Defense Advisory Commission, endowing it with an independent status which reinforced its authority.²⁹

With this newly independent status, the OPA enjoyed increased authority in its regulatory role. However, this was still an inadequate solution to the problem of inflation. In the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the economic implications became even more serious as United States' soil was now engaged in the conflict. Inflation continued to worsen in 1942, encouraging Roosevelt and the OPA to reconsider their established tactics of inflation control.

Consumer prices experienced a fourteen percent rise annually and wholesale prices increased by

²⁵ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 6-7.

²⁶ The Office of Price Administration Division of Research created a graph monitoring the index at which prices rose from August of 1939 to April of 1942. This graph follows the trends of all commodities, 28 basic commodities, and food, clothing, and housefurnishings combined. The trend of the 28 basic commodities is particularly noteworthy because it excludes commodities which may be regarded as less vital or necessary for an average citizen's needs.

²⁷ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 11.

²⁸ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 12.

²⁹ Meg Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 914.

eighteen percent in the first quarter of the new year.³⁰ Due to this significant increase, the OPA and President Roosevelt took major steps to proactively approach different industries, especially those related to vital war supplies.

As the United States began intervening directly in the war after the Pearl Harbor attack, the OPA expressed its intentions to freeze the sale of many war commodities that were likely to experience shortages. In its first interaction with a major sector of the public, the OPA began the formation of local rationing boards located in each county of the nation.³¹ This action not only allowed for the administration of rationing on a local level, but also allowed for a program through which to monitor price stabilization. The final step in legitimizing the powers of the OPA came with the passage of the Emergency Price Control Act of May 1942 by Congress. Under this legislation, the OPA finally gained the legislative means to control prices and rents and the ability to penalize anyone who might have violated the policies of the program. Once in effect, May 1942, the act froze prices on numerous everyday goods and sixty percent of food products used by the average American.³²

Though the passage of this act finally gave Henderson the authority he had desired since the beginning of the conflict, it in turn led to his demise. Henderson was faced with heavy criticism, especially within Congress, and was forced to resign from his position on December 15th.³³ Though his leadership in the regulation of consumerism during the war met an abrupt end, Henderson had set in motion an active government body prepared to meet the economic needs of a nation at war. Prentiss Brown was quickly appointed the new head of the OPA in March 1943,

³⁰ Bartels, "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal," 13.

³¹ Office of Price Administration, *First Quarterly Report*, 18.

³² Wright, *What They Didn't Teach You About World War II*, 58.

³³ Bartels, "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal," 16.

replacing Henderson. Brown, a former U.S. Senator, experienced a short stint leading the agency, as he was increasingly unable to govern the agency.³⁴ During the brief period Brown served as administrator, he called for price panels to be established on every War Price and Rationing Board across the nation in addition to volunteer price assistants to assist these new panels. This step was the first taken by the OPA in inviting the active participation of women, not just for their consumerism, but for working within the price structure of the OPA.³⁵ In delving into this issue, it becomes clear that price stabilization was far-reaching and involved every participant in the national economy, including women. From then on, each American was held responsible for adhering to price ceilings and rationing plans. The national concern had transformed into one for each individual, as rations and price controls were brought to the doorstep of each American household.

With the involvement of every household, the OPA started to hone in on the sector of citizens who exerted the most authority on household consumption: the American housewife. The OPA "reached down into communities and households everywhere and enlisted thousands of shoppers as its main shock troops in the fight against inflation."³⁶ These shoppers were none other than the housewives of each community within the nation. In working together as "troops," these women served as the backbone of OPA's wartime activism in carrying out the traditional duty of shopping for the household. This war mobilization surrounding the cycle of consumption put every housewife in direct contact with a government agency, reinforcing their traditional role with new authority and responsibility.

³⁴ Bartels, "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal," 17.

³⁵ Hart-Landsberg, "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making," 415.

³⁶ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 911.

During Brown's term as head of the OPA, Chester Bowles rose as a prominent figure in the OPA administration. Originally the Connecticut OPA director, Bowles was recruited by the national OPA office to help train the new price panelists and develop effective procedures for the price panels. In observing the condition of the Connecticut office, Bowles recognized that out of all of the state's board members, housewives served as the largest individual section of participants.³⁷ Bowles's then worked to augment the roles of price panels on a national scale, in turn increasing the responsibilities of the housewives across the nation who worked for them. By November 1943, Bowles was appointed as the new administrator of the OPA after Brown resigned from the position.³⁸ Bowles also had a background working in advertising, which proved to make him very perceptive to public opinion and public relations. Bowles supported New Deal values like his predecessors, however he focused far more on public participation and developing a relationship between the national program and its constituency, making him noticeably more successful in OPA programs.³⁹ With Bowles heading the operation, the issue of national outreach was at the forefront of the OPA's activities. This new perspective enabled the OPA to fully capitalize on the housewives of the nation, providing them with more responsibility than ever before.

Supporting the OPA

Abnormally high inflation levels would have proved devastating to all consumers on the home front, but especially the housewife. Increases in inflation would guarantee that the distribution of goods would not have been equal, as wealthier citizens would have access to more

³⁷ Hart-Landsberg, "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making," 416.

³⁸ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 923.

³⁹ Bartels, "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal," 19.

goods and could also choose to accumulate and store as much food as they could afford, leaving far less for the middle and lower classes. Due to this disparity, housewives across the nation got on board with the idea that rationing would provide a system of equal sacrifice amongst all citizens. In *Women's Home Companion*, a popular publication for homemakers, a readers' poll found almost unanimous support in favor of rationing to create a system of equality within the distribution of goods.⁴⁰ Almost immediately, women's groups united to protect and support the lower and middle classes from the consequences of inflation.⁴¹ Inflation would invite unwanted changes to the standard of living for a great deal of American families, especially amongst the middle class. Serving as consumers for their households, it was imperative that homemakers get on board with the program to prevent inflation. Serving as the grassroots constituents of the consumer movement at large, housewives mobilized in response to the national call to action to defend the integrity of the OPA's policies.⁴²

To bolster the movement, the OPA launched a nationwide campaign. This campaign, known as the Home Front Pledge campaign, recognized that the success of rationing and price control rested mainly on women as the "principle purchasing agents" of the nation.⁴³ Home Front pledge takers posted placards in their windows recognizing their participation in the program. The campaign started with the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, as an example of patriotic duty and was intended to spread amongst the women of the nation. These placards featured a housewife in an apron pledging the following: "I pay no more than top legal prices. I accept no rationed goods

⁴⁰ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 201.

⁴¹ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 182.

⁴² Storrs, "Left-Feminism, the Consumer Movement, and Red Scare Politics in the United States," 41.

⁴³ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 921.

without giving up ration stamps.”⁴⁴ Posting these placards proudly in their households constantly reminded housewives of their duty but also to encourage their neighbors and communities to follow suit. Following the first lady’s lead, the pledge soon received the signatures of 20 million shoppers nationwide. For the first time in almost three years, the cost-of-living index dropped, paying tribute to the great success of the campaign.⁴⁵ Consumers had just as much responsibility in rationing as did merchants, and they were encouraged to hold one another accountable for upholding the regulations of the OPA. Publically displaying their participation enabled housewives to feel empowered in the way that they were doing their part on the home front.

In order to reach the masses, it was imperative that the OPA use established circulations of newspapers and magazines to spread important messages. The many existing newspapers and magazines gained readership from millions across the nation, providing the government with an inroad into American households. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the government began establishing guidelines for printed materials through the War Advertising Council, the Writers’ War Board, and the Magazine Bureau of the Office of War Information so that their publications could become channels for wartime propaganda.⁴⁶ Through popular newspapers and magazines, the national government could reach the homes of every homemaker and influence their decisions regarding their participation and support of the program. In doing so, the government could encourage certain behaviors amongst the female population and also provide advice for ways to serve the war effort from home. War advertising was very intentional, as certain influential individuals central to these organizations had a major hand in the way advertising

⁴⁴ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 202.

⁴⁵ Jacobs, “How About Some Meat?” 921.

⁴⁶ Nancy A. Walker, ed., *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960 Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998), 17.

played out on the home front.⁴⁷ This manipulation and control of wartime publications and advertising ultimately allowed the government to reinforce patriotic and positive images of one's duty to the nation, especially for women.

The OPA also used education as a means of enlisting the help of American housewives. The Information Department of the OPA held seminars such as "Economics on the Homefront" and "Home Makers' Course in Wartime Food Buying" to help refine the expertise of housewives, along with regular news bulletins and informational tips for local OPA boards.⁴⁸ This investment in the education of homemakers enabled the OPA to galvanize its biggest supporters to help ensure the success of its various policies.

One main concern at home was the rate at which all goods were used and the extent to which people maximized the efficiency of all parts and players in the market. The efficiency and overall morale of the home front proved to be the primary concern due to the sheer magnitude of advertisements relating to this issue. Reaching around 2,000 total war-related advertisements, 982 alone dealt with conserving food and vital materials and home front efficiency and morale.⁴⁹ Reaching almost half of all war-related advertisements, conservation of goods, efficiency, and morale were a main concern of the national government. With the many different forms of advertisements in all of the leading magazines, the government hoped to guarantee that each American would be exposed to wartime propaganda relating to efficiency and conservation. Heavily exposed to such advertisements were the civilian consumers of America, as almost all ads about conservation in the leading general-interest magazines were aimed towards this

⁴⁷ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 36.

⁴⁸ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 921.

⁴⁹ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 37.

demographic.⁵⁰ In turn, due to their high proportion of civilian consumption, women often were the recipients of such ads. Not only did leading magazines hope to encourage these women to conserve and consume mindfully, they also provided advice they could use to prolong product life. Advertisers informed many women of tips and strategies through which they could prolong the life of many products.⁵¹ Consumers were provided instructions from the purchase to the use of any individual product in order to efficiently save goods.

In addition to advice columns and articles, campaigns and drives for homemakers took hold of the nation, following the precedent set by the Home Front Pledge. A national campaign enabled women to unite for a specific war-related cause instead of making smaller, unrelated contributions. This idea of collectiveness reinforced the power that homemakers had as a demographic. One such campaign revolved around the necessity for fats and greases for the war effort. In order to assist the production of munitions, medicine, and other forms of manufacturing, the OPA continuously encouraged housewives to do their 'patriotic duty' by saving their wasted kitchen fats.⁵² In 1942, the War Advertising Council took this problem head on when it launched a campaign for 'educating the housewife to save fats and greases.' The campaign was sponsored by the trade association Glycerine and Associated Industries with an advertising budget of \$500,000.⁵³ This expensive endeavor was made possible through the War Advertising Council's desire to develop various movements amongst the housewife population in order to more efficiently mobilize their contributions to the war effort.

⁵⁰ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 117.

⁵¹ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 114.

⁵² Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 200.

⁵³ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 122.

Though saving fats and greases might appear to be an insignificant and exasperating contribution, an investigation made by an early hotel chain, the Statler Hotels, proves otherwise. Amongst the 42 different kitchens in the 8 different Statler hotels, in addition to contributions of other hotels, the fats and greases saved amounted to far less than the amount generated in American homes. As more women cooked from home than hotels cooked for guests, households created more fats and greases than all hotels combined, according to this study.⁵⁴ Advertisers in *Life* and the *Post* capitalized on this surprising disparity as a standout example of the significant contributions of homemakers in their daily routines.⁵⁵ As these two publications reached wide audiences, this campaign proved to be well worth the investment of the War Advertising Council.

Involving the American Homemaker

In dealing with the implementation of the programs, the OPA recognized the necessity to develop a coalition of support across the nation. Volunteers were needed to further the agenda of the OPA and ensure adherence on a community level. The OPA created 5,525 local War Price and Rationing boards that played an integral role in effectively implementing stabilization. Women volunteers made up the core of these boards, likely due both to their shopping expertise and familiarity and experience with established volunteer organizations.⁵⁶ Various women's volunteer associations that existed far before the onset of the war experienced success in many different philanthropic and goal-oriented endeavors. Therefore, the members of these groups already had the experience and passion required for the nationwide implementation of the OPA's

⁵⁴ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 122.

⁵⁵ Jones, *All Out for Victory*, 122.

⁵⁶ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 923.

new policies. In addition, their specialized skills in consumerism and running their individual households provided them with invaluable experience and knowledge. This development facilitated a legal institution through which the organization of consumers could be legitimized.⁵⁷ This process galvanized the culture of consumers, as homemakers engaged directly with the federal government to serve the war effort. This represented a change from the past, as homemakers had not yet experienced the responsibility of regulation on behalf of the federal government.

To gain a diverse support base, the OPA sought women from different types of organizations. As housewives across the nation hoped to maintain a certain standard of living for their households, it was in their best interest to get involved and support the program of rationing and price controlling to prevent inflation. However, it was not always necessary to get involved on an individual level, as many women's organizations created a united front in support of price controlling for the public. Millions of members within the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Home Economics Association, the League of Women Voters, and the AAUW had the opportunity to become involved due to the support within their organizations.⁵⁸ This group mentality of support facilitated the ways in which members could become involved. Instead of seeking opportunities for participation individually, these organizations mobilized alongside the members in support of one another for a common goal. As these organizations had previously experienced success at mobilizing large groups, it would be no different in their support of the OPA. Paired with the notion that many homemakers were already in favor of the

⁵⁷ Jacobs, "How About Some Meat?" 924.

⁵⁸ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 206.

programs of OPA, the involvement of these volunteer women was a perfect situation for all parties involved.

With the cooperation of so many different groups and women, a coalition formed in order to more effectively initiate change and maximize efficiency within the American market. The National Defense Advisory Commission, under President Roosevelt, worked to recruit and enlist not only middle-class women's groups, but also groups that experienced more radical reputations. In doing so, the division hoped to create a 'consumer front.' These groups included but are not limited to the League of Women Shoppers, trade-unions and their female counterparts, as well as different ethnic organizations.⁵⁹ The idea of a 'consumer front' provided a semblance of unification and cooperation that included women of all statuses and ethnicities in order to serve their patriotic duty. These women were united by the characteristic they all shared: their roles as consumers with a responsibility to monitor the wartime regulations set forth by the OPA.

Leading the Program

Though the majority of women served as volunteers at a local level, some were able to rise to new heights in the public sphere through their volunteer activities. President Roosevelt nominated Harriet Elliott, a consumer advocate from the New Deal and a prominent member of the American Association of University Women, to become head of the National Defense Advisory Commission.⁶⁰ Though Elliott had already held positions in the field of consumer advocacy, her nomination to head the NDAC was a significant step forward in her career. Her experience in the AAUW also provided her with the skills and the network necessary to

⁵⁹ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 187.

⁶⁰ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 182.

successfully carry out her new position. Elliott used this position of authority in order to instill responsibility amongst her peers as she encouraged women, as the “purchasing agents of the American family,” to conduct regular price checks to monitor whether or not goods were being overcharged.⁶¹ Elliott did not stop with a general call to women; however, she continued to reach out to women’s organizations due to her knowledge of the capabilities of such groups of women. Elliott encouraged women’s groups to initiate a program of price-recording projects so that their members and other American housewives could ensure the integrity of merchants and the price of goods.⁶² Elliott targeted housewives, and especially large organizations of them, in order to maximize the talents of many in the process of regulation. Their purchasing power was significant, not only to their own families, but to the whole nation as the largest demographic of civilian consumers. Elliott hoped to harness this power as a leader of the NDAC.

One example of a partnership between the NDAC and a women’s group can be seen through the relationship the division created with the League of Women Voters. The NDAC along with the League of Women Voters created a weekly radio show broadcasted throughout the nation called *The Consumer Wants to Know*.⁶³ This radio broadcast advised consumers on the best ways to navigate the market while keeping in mind the necessity to adhere to wartime changes in the availability of goods. The League of Women’s Voters in cooperation with the NDAC was able to reach a wide audience of consumers, especially women, and helped further the fight to ensure fair prices for all Americans. Utilizing all forms of media, including print and radio broadcast, many groups participated in comparable campaigns and programs in order to do the patriotic duty the government expected of them as women on the home front.

⁶¹ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 186.

⁶² Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 187.

⁶³ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 187. *You About World War II*, 62.

The League of Women's Voters proved to not only be active as an organization, but also through individual members. The NDAC hired Minnie Fisher Cunningham, one of the founders of the League of Women's Voters, based on her involvement and experience in the public sector. Cunningham had previously worked within the Agricultural Adjustment Act, providing her with the ability to connect with and mobilize many rural and working-class housewives.⁶⁴ Cunningham's specialized expertise helped the division connect to a certain demographic of women that were involved in the produce sector of the market by nature of their positions in the field of agriculture, making her an important asset to the organization. Such comprehensive staffing helped the division approach the issues at hand thoroughly and to ensure that all homemakers received the message. Women such as Elliott and Cunningham helped lead the 300,000 unpaid volunteers nationwide. Rationing and price controlling would have collapsed without the contributions of hundreds of thousands of volunteers, and these leaders within the movement made their work possible.⁶⁵

In addition, the government recognized a concern in the clothing industry as the quality of goods began to decline for every American household. Rationing changed fashion, especially for women, as slacks and blouses were adjusted to use less material. In many cases, these adjustments could save up to five yards of material, which made a large difference nationwide, however, not without a cost in product quality.⁶⁶ The Roosevelt administration established the Consumer Advisory Committee to address the concern over insufficient and inadequate merchandise for children and civilians across the nation. The members of this committee were predominantly female and were expected to have a background in the issue of shopping for

⁶⁴ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 187.

⁶⁵ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 69.

⁶⁶ Wright, *What They Didn't Teach You About World War II*, 62.

clothes.⁶⁷ Sharing this experience from their backgrounds as housewives, these women volunteers utilized their knowledge to benefit the nation and address a serious and extensive problem. Frustrations regarding the decline of clothing and lack of available options struck home for many women, as they typically were responsible for ensuring that their families, especially children, were clothed properly. The establishment of a committee dedicated to this cause allowed women to address a common problem and attempt to discover a solution. This national recognition allowed the issue to experience widespread attention. Furthermore, female members experienced a majority on the committee. This gender gap, which favored women, allowed them to experience new opportunities in the public sphere while avoiding the interference of male counterparts who were less experienced in shopping for the family. Putting power into the hands of those who benefited most from the success of certain programs and policies was a powerful strategy that departed from the traditional approach of predominantly male committees. This allowed the people with more interest and stake in the subject to have the power to participate through leadership opportunities.

Out of the various members within the committee, Caroline Ware stood out as an individual advocate for the consumer rights of all women at home. Ware took advantage of an opportunity for leadership within the Consumer Advisory Committee in order to make her voice heard and to address these concerns to the nation. After her activism in many agencies of the New Deal, Ware continued advocating for consumer protection, especially that of the housewife, just as Harriet Elliott had. Ware worked alongside Elliott in the Division of Consumer Protection to help lead changes, relying on their mutual past experience working in the American Association of University Women. Ware was ultimately appointed to direct the consumer

⁶⁷ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 205.

⁶⁷ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 210.

advisory committee, under which Ware, alongside the other representatives of the group, successfully recruited thousands of price-panel assistants. These volunteers actively investigated food suppliers and stores around the nation to monitor the prices charged through individual transactions.⁶⁸ The recruitment of a large number of price-panel assistants enabled housewives and volunteers to monitor price levels within their individual communities so that inflation did not set prices of food and commodities out of reach for the average family. With personal stake in the matter, these volunteers could be counted on to be both thorough and active throughout the nation and in each community they were stationed in. Furthermore, this volunteer opportunity provided women with the task of overseeing their communities and ensuring the cooperation of their neighbors within the issue of price controlling. This form of leadership gave agency to women in their own neighborhoods and allowed them to have a hand in the implementation and regulation of the federally-initiated regulations.

Many of the women who took advantage of this opportunity to act in the public sphere were able to do so based on their academic achievements. More often than not, the women who participated as volunteers were educated women who were able to think critically about the many issues that faced their community at wartime.⁶⁹ The high level of education was an important advantage to the success of their organizations and clubs, as they were more equipped to mobilize their members and develop creative solutions. Many women were enlisted by the Victory Speakers Bureau due to their ability to understand the complexities surrounding the rationing program, just as the Office of Price Administration sought out equally qualified women to administer its many regulations.⁷⁰ The need for intelligent female volunteers was vast, creating

⁶⁸ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 205.

⁶⁹ Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II*, 180-181.

⁷⁰ Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II*, 181.

various new opportunities for women at home to put their knowledge to use for the greater good. This type of activity helped prepare many women to become engaged further in the public sphere as some went on to stand for public office.”⁷¹ The experiences and skills these women acquired through their volunteering helped pave a clear path for the opportunity to participate in politics at a higher rate than ever before.

In taking these new opportunities, women began to make their voices heard outside of their own neighborhoods. Annie Stein had been a member of the Women’s Auxiliary of the CIO and ultimately became a price-panel assistant of Washington. Stein, however, began to go one step further in encouraging the involvement of the government. Stein called for the government to fund inspections in order to toughen price investigations. Instead of simply relying on homemakers to report instances of overcharging and filing an official complaint, Stein argued that money and authority should be provided to OPA volunteers in order to make ‘test purchases.’⁷² Women such as Stein exemplify the extent to which female citizens were getting involved and using their skill and experience to innovate and improve the program of the OPA outside of the task of regulation. Using her position as a price-panel assistant as a stepping stone and taking into account her experience as a member of a women’s organization, Stein was able to push herself to the forefront of the issue and rally for an increasingly innovative approach to the current changes with the reliance on initiation stemming from the national government. This agency and opportunity made possible by her new position in the war effort ultimately enabled Stein to develop her own agenda regarding price reform.

⁷¹ Cardozier, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II*, 165.

⁷² Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 210.

Apart from the OPA's overt reliance on the power of housewives, many women made it their personal responsibility to engage actively in the public sphere in a way that they had not necessarily done before. Despite previous avenues for women to engage in politics, OPA's enlistment of a majority of female volunteers shows increased female inclusion and participation regardless of ideology and status in mutual support of the war effort. This attitude embracing the housewife enabled women to feel empowered in their traditional role as their own badge of citizenship. Taking advantage of Leon Henderson's influential position leading the administration of the OPA, some women reached out directly to him in order to initiate change. The Women's Auxiliary of the CIO, to which Annie Stein had been a member of, distributed letters to many local chapters with the intent to deliver them directly to Leon Henderson which requested an expanded price-control and rationing program.⁷³ With the help of their organization, these women were uninhibited in their desire to communicate directly with a government employee in order to initiate reform. One American housewife wrote in a letter, "I cannot do my part to keep up [my family's] health and morale if every day my cost of living rises... I therefore urge you, Mr. Henderson, to insure my family its fair share of goods by rationing all scarce goods and by setting prices above which my merchant may not charge me."⁷⁴ The individual arguments and experiences of housewives ultimately amassed to create one united and strong voice in favor of increased regulation in the market through the powers of the OPA. Serious concern over maintaining a standard of living for all families was shared by housewives around the nation, allowing this collaboration to exist and prosper.

⁷³ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 188.

⁷⁴ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 188.

This involvement, according to Caroline Ware, was the first experience in 'civic responsibility' for many women volunteers.⁷⁵ This 'civic responsibility' appealed to the domestic side of American tradition, therefore rejecting a radical connotation. In addition, this idea of responsibility represents the unprecedented extent to which the government relied on its citizens in order to regulate a program for the public. Never before had the responsibility of regulation lay mainly in the hands of the people, especially American homemakers. This unusual circumstance provided an ideal opportunity for homemakers and women across the nation to volunteer their time to make a difference for the entire nation, enabling them the power to get involved in something much bigger than themselves as active citizens. Due to this budding participation in the political realm, many believed that the OPA contained hints of a 'protofeminist culture' that exhibited progressivism and liberalism in both social and racial matters through the inclusion of all types of women.⁷⁶ This period marked a noticeable change in the way that women were both perceived and utilized by the national government agency, paving the way for future advances for women. Though it is impossible to say how much credit for future advances in women's roles emerged during World War II, it is reasonable to recognize the experiences of this period as accelerating factors in women's citizenship.⁷⁷ Despite many women remaining in their traditional domestic roles, their increased public participation enabled them to achieve new levels of civic authority.

⁷⁵ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 207.

⁷⁶ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 212.

⁷⁷ Cardozer, *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II*, 184.

Part Two – The Local Perspective

In order to understand the experience of the individual homemaker, it is necessary to examine the issue on a local level. As the federal government communicated to homemakers on a national scale, it is necessary to observe how the message of the government was received by local women in their communities. Sparrow poses the question in his own research, “how did citizens come to accept or reject the newfound authority the federal government exercised over their lives, and how did that cultural process of legitimation inform their sense of national citizenship?”⁷⁸ This issue can only be answered by looking at the particular experiences of women as they navigated their expanded roles within their individual communities. In delving into this issue, I have focused on the city of Los Angeles and the nearby town of Anaheim within the state of California to gain insight into the local experience of homemakers and club women during the Second World War.

Los Angeles, California

During the years of the Second World War, the city of Los Angeles experienced a period of marked industrial change. The process of industrialization accelerated at a fast clip, providing many with opportunities for social advancement and new positions to enter the workforce. Most scholarly attention has been focused on the increased influx of women into the workforce, as they entered fields which they had previously been denied from.⁷⁹ However, the housewives and club women of Los Angeles played a key role in the domestic war effort that can be explored through their individual actions and involvement in various clubs and organizations.

⁷⁸ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 9.

⁷⁹ Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 186.

Within the entire Southern California area, the *Los Angeles Times* captured much of the movements of female activists in their desire to fulfill the wartime duty thrust upon them by the OPA and nation at large. The articles within the *L.A. Times* often communicated the message of patriotic sacrifice, through which the national government hoped to engage female citizens. However, many articles took a different approach, focusing on the grassroots activism of many women and organizations. Volunteer organizations played a key role in this sort of civic engagement, as they took up wartime issues as a prime concern. In framing voluntarism as a civic duty for the women of Los Angeles, they increased public participation throughout the region by informing the public with the idea of wartime sacrifice. Both methods of wartime assistance made an impact domestically while also encouraging increased participation from those who had not yet become actively involved in the various national home front campaigns.

Within the frame of controlling the domestic affairs of the 1940s household, the rationing of foodstuffs became a top priority for the OPA. The nature of rationing influenced housewives directly in their daily lives as they struggled each week to carry out their grocery shopping in the face of changing prices and availability. However, many women developed creative solutions in order to circumvent various obstacles and food shortages surrounding their kitchens. These strategic activities were carefully recorded in the *L.A. Times* to inspire other women by encouraging them to behave in a similar fashion. Within the "Activities of Women" section of one article, a list of recommended books includes *Cooking without Cans* by Betty Watson as the number one recommended book for women out of the list. According to the book's summary, "this book has been written to cheer persons who are dismayed by wartime rationing of canned

¹⁰ "Activities of Women: Books for Women," *Los Angeles Times* (1923 - Current File), October 10, 1943; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. D5.

¹¹ "Activities of Women: Books for Women," pg. D5.

¹² "Rationing Facts Told to Women: Point System's Fate Declared to Lie in Their Hands," *Los Angeles Times* (1923 - Current File), January 18, 1943; ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Los Angeles Times, pg. A7.

foods.”⁸⁰ This attitude put a positive spin on the otherwise frustrating subject of patriotic sacrifice. The book acknowledged the severe changes occurring in the kitchen and the problem this presented to American housewives, but also provided a solution to this problem. The summary goes on to include, “emphasis is placed on end bits and unrationed items which many of us have ignored. It paves the way for creative imagination to take the place of the can opener.”⁸¹ In presenting the topic of rationing as an avenue for creativity and ingenuity, the book provided housewives with an optimistic approach to rationing. After reading this book, the average housewife was encouraged to remain patriotic but also use her cooking knowledge to be innovative in the face of adversity in the kitchen.

The OPA also used the *L.A. Times* to infiltrate local communities with the national program. One way of doing so was enlisting the help of local female leaders. These women informed the local populations through organized events and their membership in various organizations. Elsie Jensen, head of the consumer interest division of the local OPA, was one woman who held a position of authority in her community on behalf of the OPA. In an open meeting for the League of Women Voters in Southern California, Jensen encouraged tolerance and patience of the public to develop a positive attitude in asking for help from informed women’s groups of the area.⁸² Building a positive relationship between the local OPA boards and women’s organizations was integral to the enforcement of government policies. The OPA’s program was unenforceable without the help of local leaders such as Jensen who garnered

⁸⁰ “Activities of Women: Books for Women,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923 – Current File); October 10, 1943; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. D5.

⁸¹ “Activities of Women: Books for Women,” pg. D5.

⁸² “Rationing Facts Told to Women: Point System’s Fate Declared to Lie in Their Hands,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923 – Current File), January 18, 1943, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Los Angeles Times, pg. A7.

support on a local level. In requesting help of additional organizations, Jensen stressed the importance of public cooperation in the implementation of the OPA's policies. Another noteworthy aspect of this article is the title, which reads, "Rationing Facts Told to Women: Point System's Fate Declared to Lie in Their Hands."⁸³ This message implied that the outcome of an OPA program and its eventual success depended on women volunteers on the local level, not the government regulation of the program itself. This reinforced the idea not only that rationing not only depended on these women, but also that they were responsible for both implementing and fulfilling these policies. In emphasizing the duties of local women's organizations, the article recognized that no one woman was solely responsible, however, and that women should count on their peers to support the program together.

As women's organizations provided an outlet for this kind of mass participation as a part of their normal functions, active wartime participation of club members followed on previous experience. Rallying together in support of different causes was central to the success of these organizations since their inception, therefore an easy transition could be made in order to encourage women to fulfill the patriotic duties expected of them by their local societies and the nation at large. As women's organizations had been formed on public platforms of voluntarism and philanthropic activities, these causes were central to the goals of the groups. In her article, "These Club Women Have Gone to War," Cecile Hallingby wrote, "it isn't mere coincidence that a majority of Southern California's war projects are being carried out by women's organizations. This is the result of long years of training that these groups have given their

⁸³ "Rationing Facts Told to Women: Point System's Fate Declared to Lie in Their Hands," pg. A7.

members.”⁸⁴ Women’s organizations had consistently provided an outlet for women’s active participation in public affairs in the past, so skills such as cooperation and the ability to work with a large group were already incorporated into the membership practices. This translated directly to the war effort as the government enlisted the help of women’s groups. Instead of creating new associations to serve the home front, club women could participate through pre-existing organizations with already established and functional practices. The grassroots voluntarism that the Roosevelt administration constantly advocated for could then reach communities such as Los Angeles. This connection between the federal government and women was facilitated by these organizations, making them key players in the implementation of the federal agenda.

One Los Angeles woman, Anne Banning, recognized the need for increased philanthropic activity in her community following the First World War. In 1919, Banning organized the Assistance League of Southern California with the founding chapter located in Los Angeles. A similar need for aid was recognized in adjoining communities and Banning organized the National Assistance League in 1935 in partnership with Ada Laughlin.⁸⁵ Designed to promote education and training to boost volunteerism, the Assistance League encouraged members to tackle domestic problems that arose from the conflict abroad while providing them the training to do so. The First World War helped to set a precedent for what the organization could expect from the Second World War, as the Assistance League had already developed functional practices for educating volunteers. These volunteers were then well-equipped to address wartime

⁸⁴ “Women’s Activities + Clubs + Features Section: These Club Women Have Gone to War,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923 – Current File); Jan 31, 1943; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. D1.

⁸⁵ “History of Assistance League,” Assistance League, accessed February 28, 2017, <http://alcolumbus.org/history-of-assistance-league/>.

concerns within their community. A Los Angeles woman who joined this organization gained essential skills and training, preparing her to serve publically as a volunteer, as so many wartime issues effected the community. This idea of effective volunteerism persisted as Banning presided over the Founder Chapter throughout the duration of World War II. It is significant that a growing women's organization such as the Assistance League developed as a direct result of the participation of the United States in a worldwide conflict. Originating from the very issue that motivated its female members, the Assistance League functioned as a means for Los Angeles women to elevate their roles outside of the home and gain practical and professional skills. Not only did this voluntarism establish lasting activities for women in Los Angeles, it also helped cultivate a connection between the local community and the federal government. As the organizations structured volunteer activities around the wartime needs per request by the federal government, these groups brokered new connections to the government that strengthened their motivation for voluntarism. This change opened up the potential for these groups to establish lasting links to entities such as the federal government, expanding their roles significantly.

The call for women to join the political sphere was also a popular issue in Los Angeles. Bess M. Wilson, a prominent female writer for the *L.A. Times*, targeted her female audience in order to help encourage political participation. Wilson wrote, "if women want women in public office, women must put them there. Men aren't going to do it. That is the message of Lieut. Gov. Houser to women."⁸⁶ In using the voice of a prominent male politician to communicate her message, Wilson drew attention to the noticeable shortage of women in politics. Lieutenant Governor of California Houser occupied a position of great authority, which enabled him to

⁸⁶ "Politics Beckons Women: Lieut. Gov. Houser Urges Entrance into Public Life," Wilson, Bess M., *Los Angeles Times* (1923 – Current File); May 15, 1943; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. A5.

voice his message publically through newspapers such as the *L.A. Times*. Being a Republican male politician, his call to action had the potential to resonate with both the male and female population to stress the disparity in the field of politics, especially in response to the liberal policies of regulation during the war. Lieut. Gov. Houser encouraged these Californian women to take matters into their own hands in the election of public officials so that they could present effective options for wartime changes. With the many new public opportunities presented to women during wartime that had not been available before, women had the option to participate in political change from both the uppermost levels and through grassroots activism.

Lieut. Gov. Houser originally made this call to action through the *American Soroptimist*, a national publication of a women's service club, Soroptimist, which had many branches in California.⁸⁷ As subscribers of the *American Soroptimist* would have been both members and supporters of the organization, they were ideal contenders for political contributions on a local and national scale. This strategic publication indicated Houser's desire to engage with a concentrated group of involved and dedicated women who had the experience and skills necessary to serve in public office. It is reasonable to suggest that with the increased public awareness of women's power within the politics of consumption, their potential as contributors to the political world became increasingly apparent. As the federal government continued to encourage women to join the fold of volunteers in positions as price-panel assistants, local and municipal governments likely noticed the advantages of increased numbers of women in politics. As government officials such as Houser specifically targeted women's organizations, the role of these groups began to expand. Not only did these organizations prepare women to be more

⁸⁷ "Politics Beckons Women: Lieut. Gov. Houser Urges Entrance into Public Life," pg. A5.

actively engaged citizens, they also prepared them for potential careers in politics. This new role for women's organizations opened up vast possibilities for civically-minded women.

Bess Wilson expanded on Houser's call in the *L.A. Times* to stress the importance of his message, explaining why Houser believed women should elect each other for public office. She wrote, "Mr. Houser is convinced that women have a real place in politics and a real value to public life and he reveals his wonder that they have been so slow about taking places there."⁸⁸ Through Houser's original publication and Wilson's reiteration of his message, recognition was given to a group within society that had not normally been acknowledged for its ability to be active in politics. Receiving the support and encouragement from such a prominent political figure in the state of California provided women with the ammunition to enter the political sphere on a larger scale than before.

Another article in the *L.A. Times* suggests that Houser's message was heard by women around the nation through other male public figures. In his article, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote," George Gallup explained that, "as the 1944 campaign progresses, more attention will be focused on the vote of women than at any time in our history."⁸⁹ Although the decline in male voting due to service in the military had already caused a change in the voting demographic already, Gallup stated that "in the 1942 Congressional elections women actually cast more votes than men for the first time since woman's suffrage."⁹⁰ As the public became increasingly aware of the augmented power of women's votes during the war, more attention was focused on the political preferences of women in addition to their participation as

⁸⁸ "Politics Beckons Women: Lieut. Gov. Houser Urges Entrance into Public Life," pg. A5.

⁸⁹ George Gallup, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote: Women Seize Vote Interest," *Los Angeles Times* (1923 - Current File); January 16, 1944; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, 1.

⁹⁰ Gallup, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote: Women Seize Vote Interest," 1.

politicians. Much of this organized participation had roots within national and local women's organizations, but as a whole population, the average woman engaged in the public sphere far more than she had before. Published on the first page of this particular edition of the *L.A. Times* in 1944, this news reached a significant portion of the southern Californian population. Additionally, the well-known author commenting on this issue likely added to the buzz on the topic, encouraging further discussion about the issue of women in politics.

Gallup goes on to suggest that the ideological preferences of women voting differed from men at this time. According to his research, "all evidence to date shows that the political sentiments of women have closely paralleled those of the men in recent months, except that women voters are a little more inclined to lean toward President Roosevelt and the New Deal than men are."⁹¹ This alliance with Democratic ideology shows the connection many women began to develop with the Roosevelt administration. The expansion in their roles due to new opportunities and responsibilities opening up for them originated in the wartime changes initiated by the federal government. In receiving new authority and responsibility from this administration, women increasingly supported and aligned themselves with its ideology. In his article, Gallup included data from a poll on what party men and women wanted to see win the presidential election of 1944. Fifty three percent of women favored a Democratic win, while fifty one percent of men did.⁹² Though there was not a huge disparity between the sexes, women were more strongly in favor of a Democratic winner, while the men's vote was only a percent away from being a split vote in either direction.

⁹¹ Gallup, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote: Women Seize Vote Interest," 1.

⁹² Gallup, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote: Women Seize Vote Interest," 1.

Gallup also presented data from a poll measuring favor within candidate choices for both men and women. In the Democratic party, eighty-eight percent of women chose Roosevelt as their preferred Democratic candidate, while only eighty-two percent of men did. From this data, it is clear to see just how closely women aligned with Roosevelt as their chosen Democratic candidate, whereas Dewey, the Republican candidate that was most preferred by women, only received thirty-seven percent of female votes in the poll. This data measured by Gallup was extremely significant, as he points to the fact that, due to low voting rates among service men during the war, women will cast fifty-three percent of the votes, thereby casting majority of the votes in the presidential election.⁹³ Gallup's study points to the new power women across the nation had in the world of politics. Their unification within the Democratic party points to their connection to the Roosevelt administration as a contributor to their new authority through wartime opportunities under the president. This relationship was mutually beneficial, as Roosevelt was buoyed by female support through voting and also their participation in government policies and women in turn were provided with expanded roles. Sparrow also recognized this connection in his research, noting that white women with Democratic sympathies considered Roosevelt a father figure in their lives. In this role, Roosevelt embodied a patriarchal approach to national authority.⁹⁴

Adding to the messages of public figures such as Houser and Gallup, women's groups approached the topic of female political participation from a grassroots level. Bess Wilson expounds on the civic duty of women during wartime in one article concerning the happenings of a meeting of the Women's City Club of Los Angeles. Geraldine Hadsell, the first female minutes

⁹³ Gallup, "Women Assume Larger Role in National Vote: Women Seize Vote Interest," 2.

⁹⁴ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 52.

clerk of the California Assembly, spoke to the typical woman of the club, urging her to "recognize that her responsibilities as a voting, taxpaying citizen never were so great as at present, and she will urge her neighbors to become practicing citizens also."⁹⁵ This type of community enforcement fell directly in line with the message set forth by the OPA regarding female participation and regulation. By encouraging women to essentially spy on their neighbors, Hadsell hoped women would assume the responsibility for enforcing active participation amongst themselves in a broader sense of the political sphere. It was significant that a female leader within an organization such as Hadsell encouraged her peers to hold each other personally accountable for their actions or lack thereof, as this expectation had not been set upon women on such a large scale prior to the war. Away from their traditional roles inside the household, women were now expected to enforce publically not only the cooperation, but the participation of their peers. This break away from the traditional boundaries around the home enabled women to actively engage and play a significant role in the regulation of the war effort domestically.

Anaheim, California

The Second World War transformed the city of Los Angeles, and with it, nearby Orange County, California. This period marked a significant increase in development that continued after the end of the war as Orange County emerged as a metropolis of Southern California. The development of this area along with its strategic location on the coastline helped Los Angeles and Orange County grow into a regional power on the Western side of the United States. Orange County became an ideal place for entrepreneurs as well as the government to initiate a significant

⁹⁵ "Women Told Duty of Citizen: City Club Hears Minutes Clerk of Assembly," Wilson, Bess M, *Los Angeles Times* (1923 – Current File); November 11, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, C1.

boom in the defense industry.⁹⁶ This increased development on Orange County did not exist without political implications. Many historians have perceived Orange County as a seedbed of conservatism as many entrepreneurs capitalized on the expansive opportunities of the growing region. Lisa McGirr examines how the strong presence of the federal government during the war only served to deepen resentment for government regulators amongst regional entrepreneurs, and how this sentiment was consistent amongst the female population.⁹⁷ However, in observing the ways in which the women of Anaheim rallied to support government regulation that aligned most closely with New Deal politics, the conservatism of these women is put into question.

Within the region of Orange County, the city of Anaheim serves as a remarkable example of female unification during the war effort. Founded as a colony in the mid-1800s, Anaheim was a budding town at the onset of the Second World War. Located just south of Los Angeles, Anaheim experienced the benefits of a newly prosperous area, especially with the increased focus on wartime industry in Orange County, California. In order to entice the military to locate new bases in Orange County, Santa Ana, a neighboring town of Anaheim, secured a 412 acre ranch in order to subcontract the property to the War Department for a symbolic price of one dollar each year.⁹⁸ The close proximity of military bases such as the one in Anaheim effected all citizens within Orange County, but this area in particular. On the eve of the town's centennial anniversary, the town capitalized on its existing organizations to support this all-encompassing patriotic duty.

⁹⁶ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 25.

⁹⁷ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 29.

⁹⁸ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 25.

Just under a month after the start of U.S. involvement in the war, the Anaheim Gazette noted the creation of the first War Rationing Board under federal authority.⁹⁹ From this moment on, rationing appeared as a top priority of the town through various newspaper articles and messages to the public. The rationing of sugar was one part of the program that reached every citizen, as told by one article in the Anaheim Gazette. With the start of sugar rationing, a "four-day registration period [was] to be conducted through public schools, and the issuance of registration books to every man, woman and child in the United States."¹⁰⁰ In using local schools to distribute rationing books, the OPA largely relied on the help of volunteers of the local Rationing Boards in order to carry out the registration. As the majority of the War Rationing Board volunteers were female across the nation, the board in Anaheim was no different. Each member of the family was to receive a rationing book for sugar, but a parent could register for each member of their family.¹⁰¹ This streamlined the process and allowed a parent to control the consumption of their family. As the majority of the household consumption of groceries, including sugar, was controlled by housewives, it was important to include them throughout the entire process. From administration to rationing, the women of Anaheim immersed themselves in the OPA's rationing of sugar.

As sugar rationing was implemented nationwide, additional articles were published viewing the program in an in-depth and comprehensive way. In the April 16th, 1942 edition, the Anaheim Gazette communicated the message from Washington D.C. down to the local level. The article explains the mechanics of the war ration book, which was to be administered to each

⁹⁹ "First War Rationing Board Created Here by Federal Authority," *Anaheim Gazette*, January 1, 1942, pg. 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Long Planned Rationing of Sugar Scheduled for Last of This Month," *Anaheim Gazette*, March 5, 1942.

¹⁰¹ "Long Planned Rationing of Sugar Scheduled for Last of This Month," *Anaheim Gazette*.

member of the family.¹⁰² This emphasis on the family unit was a traditional idea centered around the role of the homemaker. The Anaheim housewife not only carried out much of the grocery shopping, she also was responsible for the food needs of her entire family. As sugar was an important ingredient for many meals, it was important for her to understand the guidelines being set forth by the nation in order to make do with the limited availability. A few weeks later, another article about sugar rationing educated local women that the program was to continue. The bulletin noted "the end of the sugar rationing sign-up for two whole months and [that] these 'War Ration Books One' will have to last the American homemaker until July."¹⁰³ Along with providing alternatives to and tips for avoiding the overuse of sugar, the article was designed to catch the attention of local housewives above all other demographics. This emphasis showed the immense responsibility and duty of homemakers to carry out and fulfill the plans of the OPA in the rationing of sugar, amongst many other products.

Apart from sugar, many spices were monitored due to their limited supply. In the "Fashions n Food" section of the Anaheim Gazette, one weekly bulletin explained the significance of saving spices that were deemed dangerously close to depletion by the OPA. Apart from a few everyday spices, the majority of spices used for cooking in the American household were facing the possibility of future shortages. In "Fashions in Food," the idea of "stretching" spices out to their maximum usage was recommended to every housewife.¹⁰⁴ Associating rationing with the idea of a trending fashion also helped appeal to the traditional role of homemakers, making the idea of going without more attractive. The newspaper portrayed the

¹⁰² "Sugar to be Rationed Here for Civilian Use At Rate of Half Pound Per Person Weekly," *Anaheim Gazette*, April 16, 1942.

¹⁰³ "Ration Books Must Last Until July," *Anaheim Gazette*, May 14, 1942.

¹⁰⁴ "Fashions in Food," *Anaheim Gazette*, March 12, 1942.

idea of rationing in the language of the housewife by insinuating that, like a trend, it was the popular thing to do. This message stressed the idea of making do without in a socially acceptable way. Navigating around the changes and challenges in the kitchen was no small feat, however this local newspaper assisted the Anaheim housewife by providing her with suggestions in following the national changes.

As the city of Anaheim grew more involved with the war effort, there was an increased need for volunteers. This opened up the opportunity for many women's groups to stand out in their transition to support war-related issues. One example of club activity is reflected in the efforts of the Ebell Club during the Second World War. Though already a national organization, the Ebell Club expanded to include an Anaheim chapter in 1907 under the leadership of Mrs. Harry Dyer to promote the cultural education of women in the city.¹⁰⁵ The activities of this organization continued to promote education, growth, and philanthropy within the community while also growing in size. As Anaheim began to adapt and promote the home front agenda, so too did the Ebell Club. One of the first recorded events the group hosted in relation to the war effort was a dance for the sailors of Los Alamitos.¹⁰⁶ In sponsoring a dance for the Los Alamitos sailors, the Ebell Club showed support for a national cause on a local level. A female organization by definition, the Ebell Club had the opportunity to facilitate such a dance and ensure that female attendance could help show solidarity and support to the male sailors away from home. Giving the soldiers a night of normality and balancing the gender proportions for a night was a way for the women volunteers to do their part within their community. A dance also

¹⁰⁵ "History," *The Ebell Club of Anaheim*, <http://www.ebellclubofanaheim.org/historyofebell.htm> accessed 14 February, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Junior Ebell Club, "Record Books, 1933-1949" (Meeting Minutes, Anaheim Heritage Center, 1942), 117.

allowed women the experience in organizing, planning and executing an event with many in attendance. This event planning experience and socialization was both exciting and helpful in engaging the volunteers as active citizens in their community.

Falling in line with the mission statement of the group, the Ebell Club also focused on the education of its members to make them better suited for the public environment. With the war, the topics of these seminars changed in nature. In February 1943, Dorothy Cook, the program chairman, invited Dr. Walker to speak on the topic, "What the Gestapo Taught Me About Democracy."¹⁰⁷ As club women, the audience members were likely very interested in furthering their education in both politics and current events to better assist them in their goal to improve the community as a whole, especially with regards to the severity of world events. In inviting political conversation into the activities of the organization, the women developed a deeper understanding of the conflict as well as an increased desire to support it. Strengthening their own ideas and values as a group ensured that the collective activities were much stronger than any individual participation.

Ebell Club members also recognized the importance of supporting their fellow women in the services. In their December 1943 meeting, the women voted to allocate money to buy books for women in the service.¹⁰⁸ As the majority of the nation was focused on the men serving abroad, women in the services were often overlooked. This gift from the club showed support but also comradery with the women in the services, as they both had experienced change and growth in their roles due to new wartime opportunities. As mentioned earlier by Lieut. Gov.

¹⁰⁷ Junior Ebell Club, "Record Books, 1933-1949" (Meeting Minutes, Anaheim Heritage Center, 1943), 139.

¹⁰⁸ Junior Ebell Club, "Record Books, 1933-1949" (Meeting Minutes, Anaheim Heritage Center, 1943), 9.

Houser, the idea of women supporting women was necessary in the effort to elevate their power as women through their support of wartime causes. Through this unity, women could fully embrace their roles as active citizens.

The Ebell Club of Anaheim also worked with humanitarian organizations to achieve greater success and contribute in a larger way. In another seminar hosted by the Ebell Club, program chairman Mrs. J.J. Schneider brought in a speaker from the Red Cross. Mrs. Ray Beard spoke to the club on behalf of the Red Cross to promote a relationship between the two organizations and to spread awareness of the activities of the Red Cross.¹⁰⁹ Promoting interactions between smaller women's club chapters and national organizations helped to create a diverse group of women supporting the same issue. The Red Cross provided a perfect partnership for many organizations to work with through its long-established humanitarian activities. The Ebell Club was not the only women's club within Anaheim to take advantage of this opportunity. The Assistance League of Anaheim also worked alongside the Red Cross in contributing to the war effort.

The Assistance League of Anaheim was a local chapter of the Assistance League organization that saw the benefit in orienting much of its activities during the early 1940s to war-specific needs. Throughout this period, the local women's group kept close record of their activities as they were publicized in local newspapers or received letters and documentation by using a scrapbook.¹¹⁰ This specific women's club worked frequently with the Red Cross, shown through various newspaper clippings of their work and letters from the Red Cross itself. One part

¹⁰⁹ Junior Ebell Club, "Record Books, 1933-1949" (Meeting Minutes, Anaheim Heritage Center, 1943), 17.

¹¹⁰ The Assistance League of Anaheim kept a scrapbook from 1940-1950 detailing their activities. This scrapbook contains various newspaper clippings, photos, and other paraphernalia from the period. From this point on, this will be referred to as "Assistance League Scrapbook."

of being a well-equipped volunteer involved adequate training and education for carrying out the various roles required of women at home. The Assistance League members noticed this necessary component for success and immediately "approved of sponsoring a Red Cross First Aid class... [as] the chapter unanimously indicated their intention of stressing Red Cross work for the coming year."¹¹¹ Educating the Assistance League members on the significance of first aid knowledge was not only practical, as many of the members were mothers or would eventually be mothers, it also served a more strategic purpose. In pairing up with the Red Cross, the organization could maximize its ability to help serve the war. In December 1941, increased interaction between the Red Cross and the Assistance League is reported by a local news clipping. In addition to other relief projects, the group approved a payment of \$50 to the local Red Cross Unit in addition to providing \$5 for Christmas kit materials. This donation precedes the announcement of ten first aid workers who had completed the necessary classes sponsored by the Red Cross.¹¹² These two activities went hand in hand in the Assistance League's effort to tie itself to the war relief efforts of the Red Cross.

Beginning in March 1943, the Assistance League began to receive recognition directly from the Red Cross verifying its partnership. The Assistance League of Anaheim received a placard denoting a War Fund Contribution of \$150 for the year of 1943, recognizing its large contribution.¹¹³ In addition, the Anaheim Chapter of the Red Cross sent a letter to Mrs. H.E. Barnes, the chairman of the Assistance League of Anaheim, thanking them for their

¹¹¹ "Assistance League Formulates Plans for Active Season," Assistance League Scrapbook, Anaheim Heritage Center, October 9, 1941.

¹¹² "Assistance League Makes Donations to Various Forms of Relief Causes," Assistance League Scrapbook, Anaheim Heritage Center, December 12, 1941.

¹¹³ The American National Red Cross Member Certification, Assistance League Scrapbook, Anaheim Heritage Center, March, 1943.

contributions to a local camp and hospital for servicemen.¹¹⁴ This collaboration is extremely notable in the interactions of women in both leadership positions in the Assistance League as well as ordinary members, as they contributed materials and time away from their household duties to assist the war effort to the best of their ability. This time, however, did not go unnoticed by the community. One newspaper clipping drew attention to their relentless war support and noted that "insufficient tribute has been paid to members of Assistance Leagues for their war work... League members contributed more than 1,000,000 hours to war work during the years of fighting."¹¹⁵ This participation meant one million hours spent away from the expected duties of Assistance Leaguers as homemakers and mothers. Despite serving on a more local scale than many women volunteering for the nation through government agencies, Anaheim homemakers contributed a comparable amount of time and effort, making a difference through their contributions.

¹¹⁴ Letter from the American Red Cross to the Assistance League, Assistance League Scrapbook, Anaheim Heritage Center, March 25, 1943.

¹¹⁵ "One Million Hours," Assistance League Scrapbook, Anaheim Heritage Center, March, 1944.

Conclusion

The work of American housewives during the Second World War marked the first time that the government relied on a group of women to voluntarily regulate a national program ensuring the economic stability of the nation. This time of crisis enabled a change in the demographic of the country to such a great extent that women experienced far greater authority in their traditional role than ever before. This moment in history not only validated homemakers, but empowered them as citizens in their own right. The role of housewife, therefore, became their badge of citizenship.

In addition, the economic power of women as key actors in the cycle of consumption was finally recognized. As the majority of the nation's purchasing agents were women, and especially housewives, during this time, their contributions to and regulation of the market were vital to the successful stalling of inflation. Had it not been for the efforts of women organized both in individual organizations and as a whole demographic, the OPA would not have successfully carried out its programs of rationing and price controlling. Serving as both physical volunteers and as individual actors in their own communities, women served as the force that made these government policies possible. This cause also had the ability to unify housewives and their organizations across the nation. Many groups altered their normal activities in order to fit the needs of the nation as part of their patriotic duty at wartime. As shown by both the Ebell Club and the Assistance League of Anaheim, even on the local level organizations adjusted to accommodate the changing needs of the nation.

The war had the ability to unite women as a whole, however I have focused on an elite network of housewives in my study. Though working-class voluntarism existed in various forms, I have concentrated on an identified group of middle-class women and their voluntarism through

war-related activities. Women's organizations consisted mostly of homemakers who had the time and affluence to afford to donate their time and efforts to the group. This category of women was almost completely white and middle-class. Some exceptions can be seen in junior organizations, which consisted of younger women, but many of these volunteers still needed the time and money to support their decision to spend their time working without compensation. This was the experience for women across the nation, as volunteers for the OPA required the means to support themselves so they could devote their efforts to the cause. Furthermore, these philanthropic organizations likely had an air of exclusivity, including only women in the community with the affluence and social standing to support the organization. A woman of such standing would also have been educated and prepared for the public opportunity to serve the community and the nation that the OPA offered.

This issue separated these housewives from their female counterparts in minorities or lower classes. The OPA volunteer, therefore, served her patriotic duty in a far different way from "Rosie the Riveter." Women in the workplace likely had neither the means nor the time to actively engage in the campaigns and programs set forth by the OPA. Though their consumption was also very important in the regulation of the national economy, they were unable to participate publicly in the same way that homemakers were.

The Second World War, therefore, provided the perfect opportunity to capitalize on the power within the traditional role of the housewife as the nation was rocked by the conflict abroad. Empowered by the authority designated to them by the government and the power of their purses in the cycle of consumption, these housewives paved the way for the roots of future feminist movements. Never before had homemakers experienced such influence in the regulation of national policy, some even reaching positions of leadership inside the government and in other

organizations. This period enabled the possibility of expanded female involvement as active citizens in all spheres of the public: through the government, in large cities, and within smaller towns.

The political activity during this period also marked a time of increased authority for the female vote. This in turn spurred the nation to pay greater attention to their political preferences, as they held the majority vote with the lack of political activity of service men measured in this period. Though many historians have recognized suburban areas as seedbeds for conservatism, as McGirr hypothesized in her research, women were increasingly in support of the Roosevelt administration and the Democratic ideals that had branched off of New Deal politics from just a few years prior. Women not only supported the Roosevelt administration for having provided them with increased opportunities for civic engagement outside of the home, they began to identify with the wartime ideology that was communicated to the entire nation.

This activism can also be seen through the activities of women's organizations. Not only were club women changed by the war, but the organizations they were involved in completely expanded during this period. Though these organizations had always existed as civic institutions, this traditional role was maximized as these groups were swept up in the national war effort. Local voluntarism did not only become part of the national mission to adjust to the war, but organizations also became invested in protecting, saving, and furthering democracy. The women who served as members of these organizations, therefore, became agents on behalf of this mission. The bigger picture these organizations served was not only to assist a nation in conflict, but also to fight in the war to defend democracy. Involvement as a club woman in these organizations meant something very different than it had in the past, as the nature and scope of the role of a club woman was expanded as these organizations were drawn into the war effort.

In this way, the homemakers and club women are just as much a part of the "Greatest Generation" as the veterans who returned home from war. Their expanded roles in civic engagement, voluntarism, politics, and economic regulation played an undeniably significant role on the home front throughout the war, thereby enabling the United States to support the conflict abroad. Their contributions during this period suggest that the "Greatest Generation" of veterans who returned home from war were not alone in their increased civic engagement. The women who make up the historically neglected half of the population after the Second World War made great strides in their traditional roles that has yet to be thoroughly examined by historians.

To understand if this expansion in female citizenship had a permanent impact is beyond the scope of this study, however it raises an important question regarding the fate of these women. Whether or not they suffered the same experience as the many women who were encouraged to give up their new jobs in the workplace for the veterans is not clear through recent historiography. Further research into this issue could provide insight into the experiences of homemakers and club women after the war in order to understand if they found themselves in a similar dilemma of returning to more contained civic duties or if they enjoyed a different role leading in political civic leadership from this point on. Whatever the case may be, homemakers and club women engaged in increased political and civic participation across the nation as a whole and in individual communities which elevated their identities as American citizens during the Second World War. This period of involvement greatly expanded their roles as citizens and opens up a discussion about whether or not the wartime activities of these women had lasting impacts for future generations.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival Sources, Anaheim Heritage Center, Anaheim, California

Anaheim Gazette. January 1, 1942 – June 25, 1942.

Assistance League Scrapbook. 1940-1950.

Junior Ebell Club. "Record Books, 1933-1949." D313-D316. Anaheim Heritage Center.

Newspapers

Los Angeles Times. ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1923 – Current File).

Printed Primary Sources and Websites

Assistance League. "History of Assistance League." Accessed February 28, 2017.

<http://alcolumbus.org/history-of-assistance-league/>

Office of Price Administration. *First Quarterly Report for the Period Ended April 30,*

1942. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1942.

The Ebell Club of Anaheim. "History." Accessed February 28, 2017.

<http://www.ebellclubofanaheim.org/historyofebell.htm>.

Walker, Nancy A., ed. *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular*

Press. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998.

Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Nichols, Becky M. *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1960*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Sparrow, James T. *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Storrs, London. "Left-Feminism, The Consumer Movement, and Red Scare Politics in the United

Secondary Sources

- Bartels, Andrew H. "The Office of Price Administration and the Legacy of the New Deal, 1939-1946." *The Public Historian* 5 no. 3 (Summer 1983): 5-29.
- Bush Jones, John. *All Out for Victory: Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front*. Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2009.
- Cardozier, V.R. *The Mobilization of the United States in World War II: How the Government, Military and Industry Prepared for War*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995.
- Hart-Landsberg, Martin. "Popular Mobilization and Progressive Policy Making: Lessons from World War II Price Control Struggles in the United States." *Science & Society* 67 no.4 (Winter 2003-2004): 399-428.
- Jacobs, Meg. "How About Some Meat?: The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946." *The Journal of American History* 84 no. 3 (December 1997): 910-941.
- Jacobs, Meg. *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Nicolaides, Becky M. *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Sparrow, James T. *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Storrs, Landon. "Left-Feminism, The Consumer Movement, and Red Scare Politics in the United

States, 1935-1960." *Journal of Women's History* 18 no.3 (Fall 2006): 40-67.

Wright, Mike. *What They Didn't Teach You About World War II*. Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1998.