POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE KU KLUX KLAN
IN THE 1925 INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCTION

Many historians have claimed that the Ku Klux Klan ruled the Hoosier state in the early 1920's. There has, however, been very little scholarly research into the subject. Numerous accounts of the more colorful aspects of Klan activity in the state have appeared, although in many instances these have been based on specious generalizations rather than on verifiable evidence. This is especially true of the alleged control by the Klan and D. C. Stephenson of the Indiana General Assembly of 1925.

Many questions are raised in the study of the Klan in relation to this legislative session. Did the Ku Klux Klan take over the Republican party of Indiana? Did the Klan elect a majority of the legislators in the election of 1924? Was there a split among Klan members with one faction controlling the Senate and the other the House? Did the Klan push through legislation favorable to its philosophies? In most writings on the Indiana Ku Klux Klan, the inference is made that the answer to some or all of these questions is affirmative. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more thoroughly documented answer to these questions by focusing upon the election of the 1925 Indiana General Assembly, its composition
and leadership, the bills introduced and legislation enacted.

Research for this paper has been limited to the election of 1924 and to the two-month period during which the 1925 Indiana General Assembly was in session. Special attention has been focused on the legislation that was introduced in both the House and Senate and the voting patterns which took shape relative to this legislation. Statements by state legislators and contemporary newspaper comment throw light upon the alleged and actual influence of the Ku Klux Klan.

Newspapers from throughout Indiana, the Senate and House Journals, contemporary articles and secondary works have been employed in the research. Also documents concerning the Indiana Klan from the Archives Division of the Indiana State Library and the personal papers of Harold C. Feightner, a prominent Indianapolis newspaperman of the 1920's, from the Manuscript Division have been consulted.

Special thanks go to Mr. Thomas K. Krasean, State Archivist, and to Mr. John Selch and Mrs. Helen Morrison of the Archives Division of the Indiana State Library for their suggestions, time and help.

Historians such as Frederick Lewis Allen, John Higham, William E. Leuchtenburg and Arthur S. Link have spread the belief that Indiana was under the domination of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920's. Allen states in Only Yesterday
that "it [Klan] came to wield great political power, dominating for a time . . . Indiana."\(^1\) Higham comments on the political power of the Klan and its one-time leader D. C. Stephenson in *Strangers in the Land*:

In a few states the political power of the Klan lasted intact through the fall elections /\(^{1924}\)/ . . . especially in Indiana, where D. C. Stephenson dominated the Republican party and a Klan ticket swept into office.\(^2\)

"The Klan reached its greatest power in Indiana where David Stephenson took over the Republican party and put in one of his henchmen, Ed Jackson, as Governor"\(^3\) is the deduction arrived at by Leuchtenburg in *The Perils of Prosperity*. In his *American Epoch*, Link reports:

In Indiana, the leading klansman, David C. Stephenson, captured control of the Republican state organization, cowed Indiana's two senators into submission, and installed his henchman, Ed Jackson, as governor in 1925.\(^4\)

Writers on the Ku Klux Klan make even stronger statements concerning the Indiana Klan. David H. Chalmers in *Hooded Americanism* states that "under D. C. Stephenson, Indiana Klansmen elected a senator, the governor and the


legislature." Chalmers further claims that

Klan-supported candidates were elected to office . . . a majority of the state legislators and the governor. In return for his money and support, they had promised him allegiance and power, or had compromised themselves to the point that they could refuse him nothing.5

Kenneth T. Jackson in his book, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, follows in the same vein:

Carleton McCulloch [Democratic candidate for Governor] was correct in his assessment of Klan dominance within the Indiana Republican party. . . . The Klan elected the governor and a majority of the state legislature.5

Charles C. Alexander in The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest asserts that "in 1924 the order enjoyed even greater success . . . winning almost complete control of the state of Indiana." Alexander also contends that Stephenson became the most powerful individual in the state of Indiana. His henchman was elected governor in 1924, and at the next legislative session Stephenson virtually controlled the state government.6

Writers of Hoosier history and politics have generally come to the same conclusion. John Bartlow Martin concludes that

the Klan had won political control of the state . . . it made the laws in Indiana, and it enforced them.


Its ruler was Stephenson, a man probably without precise counterpart in American history. 8

And Irving Leibowitz in *My Indiana* agrees:

The day Ed Jackson was sworn in as Governor on January 12, 1925, the invisible empire of the Klan controlled the State of Indiana. It made the laws and enforced them. Besides Governor Jackson, it had elected legislators, prosecutors, judges and mayors. 9

These are only a few of the numerous judgments of the Indiana Ku Klux Klan and its political power.

Many writers claim that David C. Stephenson, former Grand Dragon (state leader) of the Indiana Klan, held a virtual dictatorship over the entire state and that he dominated the 1925 Indiana General Assembly. 10 If this were true, the legislative record would seem to indicate that he was a very poor dictator inasmuch as his favorite bills failed whereas some that he opposed were passed.

If Stephenson and the Klan controlled the legislature, they did not take advantage of their power. Only two bills (flying the American flag by public schools and the teaching of the Constitution in the public schools), which reflect their philosophy of one-hundred per cent American-

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ism, were enacted. And these were bills which would probably have been passed by any Indiana legislature during the period in question.

Stephenson's boast, "I am the law," apparently has been taken literally by most writers, who have focused their attention upon his flamboyant personality and notorious escapades rather than upon a careful investigation of his alleged political control of the state. This thesis will hopefully be a start in the direction of the latter.
CHAPTER I

KU KLUX KLAN IN INDIANA

The Ku Klux Klan was active in every state of the Union during the 1920's, but only the "Hooded Knights" of Indiana became a national legend. Indiana—perhaps because it represented a cross section of the United States—was fertile ground for the Klan. World War I's backlash favored its growth but so did other conditions. Although ninety-five per cent of the state's inhabitants were native born and Negroes accounted for only 2.7 per cent, Roman Catholics made up ten per cent of the population.¹ This was enough to cause many Hoosiers to fear a "Roman takeover." Hoosiers were also sick of world problems; they were anxious for normalcy. The boredom of the long winter evenings in the small town was broken by Klan activities. The 1920's was an era of social and moral upheaval, and many farmers joined the Klan because of its moral crusading. Given the background of the twenties, any organization which swore to uphold Christian morals, law and order and "Americanism" was assured a wel-

The Klan in Indiana was built around one man—David Curtis Stephenson. Stephenson, an elementary school drop-out, wandered through Texas, Oklahoma and Iowa before settling in Evansville, Indiana in 1920. In this Ohio River city, he established a coal business and made a name as a salesman. A man with an infectious personality, he soon dabbled in politics. Possibly showing his true colors, Stephenson ran for Congress in 1920 as a "wet" Democrat. Being soundly defeated, he prudently switched to "dry" Republicanism.2

The Ku Klux Klan organized its first Indiana Klavern (Klan den or chapter) in Evansville in 1920 and thereafter struggled for several months without any appreciable increase in membership.3 At this time the Evansville Klavern had a "fall out" with Atlanta (central headquarters of the national Klan) over aims and methods and Stephenson took control of the group.4 Stephenson went to Atlanta to take a firsthand look into the affairs of the Invisible Empire and determined that it could be reformed from within. He soon brought the membership of the Evansville Klan from a few hundred to five thousand.5 Before his resignation

2Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, pp. 163-164.

3Ibid., p. 163; Max Bentley in "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana," McClure's Magazine, 56 (May, 1924), 27 states that the Klan was organized in Evansville in September, 1921.

4Bentley, "Klan in Indiana," 27.

5Ibid., 29; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 164.
as Grand Dragon of Indiana in October, 1923. Stephenson had initiated approximately 240,000 into the Klan in Indiana and thousands more throughout the Midwest.

Stephenson left Evansville in 1922 and established offices in the Kresge Building in Indianapolis from where he directed Klan activities in twenty-three northern and midwestern states. He rose meteorically from his Evansville position to Grand Dragon of Indiana and then was made a King Kleagle, which included control over a sub-empire stretching from the Mississippi Valley to the Atlantic Coast. However, his urge for power and independence gradually got the better of him. Stephenson had ideas of his own. One was to buy Valparaiso University and make it into a Klan university. Hiram W. Evans, Imperial Wizard (national chief) of the Ku Klux Klan,

6On October 26, 1923 the Fiery Cross announced that Stephenson's resignation was due to "ill health." "Steve Pledges His All to the Klan in Future," Fiery Cross, October 26, 1923, p. 1. However, Stephenson had been forced to "resign" because of his conflict with Imperial Wizard Evans.

7Jackson, Klan in the City, p. 237; Powell A. Moore in The Calumet Region; Indiana's Last Frontier, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1959), p. 55; estimated Klan membership at 178,000; Max Bentley stated that it was nearly 400,000 in "Klan in Indiana," 29; The Fiery Cross stated that there were 500,000 chartered Klansmen in Indiana in October, 1923, Editorial, Fiery Cross, October 12, 1923, p. 4.

8Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 164.

9The salesmen of membership were given the title of Kleagles; the country was divided into Realms headed by King Kleagles. The King Kleagle was authorized to keep a portion of the ten dollar membership fee of each new Klansman.
refused to go along with the idea. This conflict, along with other differences of opinion and personal rivalries, forced a split between Evans and Stephenson.

This split between Evans and Stephenson and the subsequent resignation by D. C. Stephenson as Grand Dragon of Indiana brought to the forefront the other important Klan leader during the 1925 Indiana General Assembly—Walter F. Bossert. With Stephenson's resignation, Bossert was made Grand Dragon and represented the Evans faction in the state. Bossert also took over Stephenson's job of King Kleagle in the Midwest and was second in command of the Invisible Empire.10 Bossert, a lawyer-farmer from Liberty, Indiana, was a seasoned political strategist who was primarily interested in using the Klan for political purposes.11 He had been educated in the art of politics by Will Hays, the former Republican National Committee Chairman and Postmaster General, who is best remembered for his role as "czar" of the movie industry.12 Bossert's driving political desire was to force the closing of parochial schools, which he believed were deterrents to

10Samuel Taylor Moore, "A Klan Kingdom Collapses," The Independent, 113 (December 6, 1924), 473.

11Bossert thought that the Klan would become a political force and he wanted to become U. S. Senator. Harold C. Feightner, "Indianapolis Newspaperman during the 20' and Early 30's," Taped Interview, Indiana State Library, Manuscript Division.

12Stanley Frost, "Klan Shows Its Hand in Indiana," Outlook, 137 (June 4, 1924), 188.
true "Americanism." 13

The rift between D. C. Stephenson and Hiram H. Evans came at the zenith of Klan power in Indiana. The split started the Klan on its decline which continued until the final setback—Stephenson's conviction of the murder of Madge Oberholtzer. 14 After the breach, Stephenson took most of his Klan followers with him and separated from the Klan. In December, 1924, it was estimated that Stephenson had a following of more than 200,000 while Bossert as leader of the Evans faction had the support of only 25,000. 15 This was the status of the Indiana Klan as the 1924 election neared.


14For details of the crime and trial see Martin, Indiana; Martin's "Beauty and the Beast: The Downfall of D. C. Stephenson, Grand Dragon of Indiana," Harper's Magazine, 189 (September, 1924), 319-329 and Leibowitz, My Indiana, pp. 189-225.

CHAPTER II

THE 1924 ELECTION

Having established his organization, D. C. Stephenson led it into the political campaign of 1924. To insure success, he created the "Military Machine" whose job it was to get the vote out; to distribute slates; to distribute literature supporting the candidacy of individuals endorsed by the Klan; and for the purpose of reporting upon the probable strength of candidates supported by the Klan; and to do any and everything that would be done by a normal political organization in an effort to elect a slate. 1

In organization, the "Military Machine" was modeled after the Klan. The state leader was responsible for the Congressional districts throughout the state. Each district was headed by a "colonel," and "majors" administered county affairs. Within the county, each ward or township was directed by a "captain" and the title of "lieutenant" was given to those responsible for each precinct. The responsibilities were further divided by assigning a "sergeant" to every twenty precinct voters. "Kaviliers" or "corporals" were chosen to direct groups of five. 2

In theory, the "Military Machine" had great potential because

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2 Ibid. 12
of its well-defined organization and its personal touch. However, its record was largely one of ignored commands and outright opposition.\(^3\)

The slates to be endorsed by the Klan were chosen in a state convention made up of twenty delegates from each county. After pertinent information about each candidate on the state ticket was presented by Klan officials, the convention decided whether the organization would support the Democratic or Republican candidate.\(^4\) After the endorsement, all Klansmen were expected to support the decision.

It was a well known fact that Edward Jackson, Republican candidate for Governor, was endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan and Stephenson. Jackson, who stumped Indiana in Stephenson's car, had apparently made friends with the Indiana Klan when as Secretary of State in 1921 he granted

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 130.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 127. An example of the "pertinent information" supplied is a report on two candidates for the office of State Treasurer. "Republican--She is approximately 35 years of age. She is the wife of Ben Urbahns, deceased, having been appointed as Treasurer of State to fill out the unexpired term of her deceased husband. She is Protestant and is rather active in civic, political and club life. She is dry. Reports have been received that she is antagonistic; others that she is neutral. Democrat--He is 39 years of age. He has been connected with various mercantile institutions in Morgan County for a number of years. He and his family are Protestant and very active in church work. He is a Mason and is prominently identified in other fraternal organizations. He is regarded as a high grade, capable man. He is dry." State of Indiana vs. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Et al. The Deposition of Hugh F. Evans, p. 451, Indiana State Library, Archives Division.
the Klan its charter of incorporation in the face of criticism. But Jackson had another qualification which the Klan appreciated—he had been the leading vote-getter on the state ticket in the previous three elections.

Jackson. The Klan leader sent numerous letters in Jackson's behalf to those with political influence in the State. One such letter included the following:

I know you are interested in better Government and therefore will do everything you can to see that men best qualified to serve are placed in offices of public trust.

I am strongly inclined to the opinion that the Honorable Ed Jackson, Secretary of State, has the 'intestinal fortitude' to make a real Governor of Indiana. If you can possibly do so, I am going to ask you to bend your efforts to put him across with an overwhelming majority in the coming primaries.

Of course, we all want to pick a winner, and in this particular case we are extremely fortunate in having the most popular Republican who ever sought the gubernatorial nomination in Indiana. . . . (Italics mine)

These letters, when made public, were in part responsible for the Klan tag being forced on Jackson.

The Klan did not limit its political activity to the Governor's race. Jackson was chosen as the Republican candidate for Governor in the primary; the rest of the

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7Letter, D. C. Stephenson to various politicians, April 10, 1924, Indiana State Library, Manuscript Division, Feightner File, "Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1932."
state ticket was selected at the state convention. It was reported that Stephenson controlled all the important decisions at the Republican Convention and that all the nominees on the Republican ticket with the exception of three were members of the Indiana Klan. However, the "Klan Information Sheet" (Appendix C) reveals that at least four of the twelve candidates on the G. O. P. state ticket were openly opposed by the Klan.

The Republican State Chairman, Clyde Walb, had no sympathy for the Klan, thought that it had no place in politics and had "no use" for Stephenson. With such a man at the head of the Indiana Republican party, the contention that Stephenson had captured control of the Republican organization would seem to have been based on little factual information.

8At this time the nomination for Governor for each party was decided in the primary. There were six Republican candidates for Governor in the 1924 primary. However, the race was between Jackson and Lewis Shank, the anti-Klan mayor of Indianapolis. Jackson received 227,785 votes to Shank's 95,494. 143,333 Republican votes had been cast, giving Jackson a majority of 42,348. If Jackson had not received a majority the nomination would have been decided in the state convention.


10Klan Papers, Indiana State Library, Archives. The candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Van Orman, was opposed by the W. C. T. U. and the Anti-Saloon League. Both of these organizations had goals very similar to those of the Klan.

11"State Legislature a Battle Ground," Terre Haute Tribune, January 11, 1925, p. 3; Feightner, "Indianapolis Newspaperman."
Thus several questions can be raised regarding the alleged control of the Republican party in Indiana by Stephenson and the Klan prior to the election of 1924. However, the erroneous contemporary belief that the Republican ticket was a straight Klan slate and the fact that a majority of Klansmen were Republican led many to conclude hastily that the Klan had taken over the Republican party and that these two organizations were almost identical. While a few observers viewed Bossert as the Indiana Republican boss, most believed that Stephenson was the dominant figure in the party.

Although most attention was given to the alleged subordination of the Republican party to the Klan, the Democratic party also had its Klan "problem." The New York Times reported that at least 240 of the 1293 delegates to the Democratic State Convention were Klan members. Stephenson showed his bipartisanship by writing a letter to some of his Democratic friends asking their advice about how best to "manipulate" the delegates to the Demo-

12Dixon Merritt, "Klan and Anti-Klan in Indiana," Outlook, 114 (December 8, 1926), 466; Emma Lou Thornbrough, "Segregation in Indiana during the Klan Era of the 1920's," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 47 (March, 1961), 612, quoting Freeman, May 17, 1924, n. 44.


cratic State Convention.\textsuperscript{15} In the end, at least four members of the Democratic state ticket were endorsed by the Klan.

In addition to its active interest in the state tickets, the Klan also put forward local and county slates. Those whose backgrounds and views seemed most compatible with the Klan were endorsed. However, this did not necessarily mean that these candidates were Klansmen or that once elected they were obligated to the Klan and Stephenson. Stephenson's support was simply thrown their way and most did nothing to repudiate it.\textsuperscript{16} Imperial Wizard Hiram W. Evans was probably correct in his assumption that these politicians accepted Stephenson's support only for personal political gain. Many no doubt, felt that Stephenson's backing would insure their success at the polls, but cared little for his crusades.\textsuperscript{17}

Nevertheless, the oversimplified general assumption by many people that the Republican party had been taken over by the Ku Klux Klan is understandable. The Klan itself helped propagate the idea that its goals were identical with those of the Republican party. In a pro-

\textsuperscript{15}Letter, D. C. Stephenson to Democratic friends, Indiana State Library, Manuscript Division, Feightner File, "Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1932."


\textsuperscript{17}Hiram W. Evans, "The Ballots Behind the Ku Klux Klan," \textit{World's Work}, 55 (January, 1928), 244.
clamotion, signed by Grand Dragon Bossert, voters were urged to vote the Republican ticket.

Ever holding the best interests of the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in mind and heart, and having had committed unto me, one of the sacred trusts of this government, I, therefore, by virtue of the authority invested in me, decree and officially proclaim as follows:

For guidance of yourself and your friends, I herewith give you the following information:

The time is now when we must mobilize and perfect the necessary machinery for the purpose of influencing white Protestant voters to vote for the Republican ticket National, State and County, whom we know to be favorable to our cause, principle and program.

The Republican organization and practically all of its candidates have pledged themselves to the following:

1. Exclusion of foreign immigration.
2. The continuation of the Horse Thief Detective Association.
3. The compulsory teaching of the Bible in public schools.
4. The abolition of all private and sectarian schools and the conversion of their property into public schools.
5. That only native born white American citizens can be eligible to elective public office.
6. White supremacy and the segregating of negroes, especially in schools.
7. Most stringent blue laws and the repeal of the Sunday Baseball law, abolishing all Sunday Baseball, closing theaters, picture shows and billiard rooms on Sunday.
8. Appointment to various offices of only Klansmen, Klanswomen, or sympathizers.

We must eliminate partisanship, begin now to work for our cause and existence, as there is only one people that shall determine the destiny of Indiana, they are Klansmen and Klanswomen.

See that this information is gotten to Klansmen and sympathizers through your committees and captains, to the end that only Klansmen and sympathizers will be elected to office.

Was the Indiana Klan successful in achieving its goals in the political campaign of 1924? The general consensus has been that it was. A look at the voting statistics, however, raises some serious doubts as to the actual political influence of the organization. While most Republican candidates, including many with Klan endorsements, did defeat their Democratic opponents, they did not do so decisively. 1924 was a Republican year not only in Indiana but throughout the United States. General prosperity swept Calvin Coolidge into the Presidency and carried Republicans across the nation into office with him. In the presidential race, Coolidge won the Hoosier state with 703,042 votes to John W. Davis' 492,245 and Jackson's winning total in the governor's race was 654,784 compared with 572,303 for his Democratic opponent Carleton B. McCulloch. It is of some significance that while more votes were cast in the gubernatorial contest, Coolidge outpolled Jackson by almost 50,000 votes. It must be remembered that Jackson had previously been an extremely popular candidate. In 1920, when running for re-election as Secretary of State, Jackson led the state ticket with

a plurality of 176,735 votes. In 1924, this margin was drastically reduced in spite of the Republican landslide. Not only was Jackson's plurality smaller, but he failed to lead the state ticket in 1924. The Republican candidates for Secretary of State and State Superintendent of Public Instruction received 72,000 and 62,000 more votes respectively than Jackson.

Other comparisons can be made with the 1920 election. Carleton B. McCulloch, Jackson's gubernatorial opponent in 1924, had run against Warren T. McCray, the Republican candidate for Governor, in 1920. In 1920, McCulloch received only 43 per cent of the two-party vote compared to McCray's 57 per cent. In 1924, McCulloch increased his share of the vote to 46.6 per cent while Jackson received only 53.4 per cent. On the other hand, in the presidential contests in Indiana, Coolidge improved upon Harding's 1920 victorious percentage of 57.7 per cent by polling 58.8 per cent of the vote. Thus it can be seen that McCray and Harding, Republican gubernatorial and presidential candidates in 1920, received approximately the same percentage of the vote (57.0 and 57.7) while


21Indiana Election Returns, 1924, Box 2255, Indiana State Library, Archives.

22Pitchell, Indiana Votes, pp. 43, 45.

23Scammon, America at the Polls, p. 138.
Coolidge had a five percentage spread over Jackson (58.8 to 53.4) in 1924.

Some have suggested that Jackson's poorer showing in 1924 was in part the result of the conviction of Governor McCray for using the mail to defraud. McCray was removed from office and sent to the federal prison in Atlanta, Georgia. A national magazine considered this handicap and concluded:

The Republican organization had been weakened by the conviction of crime and removal from office of Governor McCray. The effect of this was less than might have been expected, however, as there was a general tendency to regard this case as personal rather than political, and there was little mention of it. It was nevertheless a weakness and will have an effect this fall.

It must be remembered that Coolidge was also running under the cloud of the Harding scandals. But few people held Coolidge responsible for Harding's misdoings. In fact, Coolidge fared better in Indiana than Harding had in 1920.

Another revealing statistic is that seventy-three of Indiana's ninety-two counties recorded fewer Republican votes for Governor in 1924 than in 1920. At the same time, sixty-one counties gave a higher percentage of their vote to Republican candidates for the State House of Representatives than to Jackson who was openly endorsed by the Klan, and all but ten counties gave more votes to Coolidge.

24 Frost, "Klan Shows Its Hand," 188.
than to Jackson. 25

In the populous counties of Allen (Fort Wayne), St. Joseph (South Bend), Lake (Gary) and Marion (Indianapolis) with their larger populations of Negroes and Catholics, Jackson ran far behind the rest of the Republican state ticket. In Allen County, Jackson was the only Republican candidate to be defeated. Even in Vanderburg County (Evansville), Stephenson's home county and the site of the first Indiana Klavern, the Republican candidates opposed by the Klan ran ahead of Jackson.

Indianapolis and surrounding Marion County has been described for the period 1922 to 1925 as the

unrivaled bastion of the Invisible Empire in Mid-America. Not only was it the base of operations of the legendary Stephenson, but it was also the headquarters of the powerful Realm of Indiana and the home of its largest Klan. 26

In this "bastion of Klan power," the Republican candidates opposed by the Klan had an average 25,000 vote plurality compared with Jackson's plurality of 11,000. 27


26 Jackson, Klan in the City, p. 144.

27 These statistics are based upon the official returns found in Indiana Election Returns, 1924, Box 2255, Indiana State Library, Archives.
Although recent secondary sources advance the thesis that the Ku Klux Klan swept the Indiana election in 1924 and elected Ed Jackson, contemporary opinion differed from this view. The South Bend Tribune reported that

It seems to be conceded generally that Jackson would have run almost on even terms with President Coolidge if it had not been charged that he was supported by the klan in the primary and in the general election. The fact that he ran approximately 150,000 behind the president is looked upon as one of the most surprising and most significant results of the election. It was a terrible wallop for Jackson. While it is not claimed that these 150,000 votes were all anti-klan it is maintained that probably four-fifths of them were cast by men and women who were determined to express their opposition to the support the klan was giving to Jackson.

The Indiana Catholic and Record, which had opposed Jackson and the entire Republican slate, felt impelled to correct an editorial in the national Catholic publication, Commonweal.

So after all, it is not quite correct of our New York contemporary to say that the Governor-elect of Indiana is 'an outspoken adherent of the Klan.' No matter what his affiliations may have been previous to the campaign, he never endorsed them or their program in public.

Mr. Jackson and his friends know that he ran far behind the President for one reason only, and that reason was the misfortune he had in having klan endorsement.

Thousands of Republicans bolted Mr. Jackson for that reason.

We are giving these facts for the benefit of our New York contemporary and its readers. Everybody knows these facts here, and no one knows them better than Mr. Jackson, the Governor-

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28"Indiana Republicans Uncertain of Future," South Bend Tribune, November 10, 1924, p. 2. The figure of a 150,000 spread between Coolidge and Jackson was an early estimate that was reduced to 50,000 when all the returns were in.
elect. He also knows that the only thing that saved him from defeat was the Coolidge 'landslide.' Our bright New York contemporary is simply mistaken in its calculations. It does not know the 'foxiness' of Indiana politicians, and does not understand the 'game' as played in the Hoosier state.29

The last sentence of this retort contains an important insight. In Indiana, politics is a game—a game in which winning is more important than how one plays the game. Jackson wanted to become Governor and, to that end, accepted any endorsement which he thought might be helpful. As it turned out, Klan support appears to have been a serious liability.

The Evansville Courier analyzed the election returns and came to the following conclusions:

The wide spread between President Coolidge, Schortemeir (Republican candidate for Secretary of State) and Jackson aroused much comment today. It appears that the president will lead Jackson at least 140,000 and that Schortemeir and practically all other candidates on the state ticket are fully 80,000 ahead of Jackson. The latter was supported by the Ku Klux Klan and opposed by the anti-Klan elements of his own party. Deductions made today on the analysis of the incomplete returns are:

FIRST, that the anti-Klan republicans are responsible for the spread between the Coolidge and Jackson vote.

SECOND, that the difference between Jackson and Schortemeir represents the anti-Klan republicans who desired the election of Schortemeir and the rest of the ticket except Jackson.

Third, that the spread between the president and Jackson seems greater than Jackson's plurality over McCulloch in spite of the active support the Klansmen of both parties gave Jackson.

Fourth, that the spread between the president, Schortemeir and Jackson is likely to be accepted as

a warning to the leaders of all parties in Indiana that the anti-Klan forces know how to organize to oppose any candidate.

There is much talk here, that the showing of the anti-Klan element as indicated tonight by the difference in the Coolidge, Jackson and Schortemeir vote is even more significant than the part played yesterday by the Klansmen. Both the Klan and anti-Klan it is believed are likely to claim a victory in Indiana under the circumstances.30

Many Indiana newspapers attributed Jackson's victory to the Coolidge landslide. The Indiana Jewish Chronicle reported that "the tide that swept President Coolidge to re-election undoubtedly carried Ed Jackson to victory in Indiana."31 And the South Bend Tribune contended that "he [Jackson] would never have been elected if the vote for the republican national ticket had not reached landslide proportions exceeding the Harding vote of 1920."32 Newspapers around the state generally concluded that the difference in the leads of the national candidate and the Republican candidate for Governor was the result of the bolting of party ranks in the fight over the Ku Klux Klan.33

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There was one notable exception to the general conclusion that the Klan label hindered Jackson in the election. The *Fiery Cross*, the state Klan newspaper, quite predictably claimed that Jackson's victory was the result of Klan support.

Major Jackson, an upright Christian gentleman, received the support of Klansmen throughout the entire state. His victory is ascribed in a large measure to their untiring efforts in behalf of his candidacy. 34

However, the *Fiery Cross* was almost alone in its assessment; the author found no other contemporary newspaper which agreed.

Seemingly, historians have given more substance to the Klan's claim than to the vast array of contemporary evaluations by Hoosier newspapers and political commentators. Contrary to most historical writing, voting statistics and contemporary opinion seem to indicate that the Klan label at the state level was a liability rather than an asset in the 1924 election. In view of Jackson's past political victories and the proportions of the Republican

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landslide, there is reason to believe that had he sought the office of Governor without the Klan label he would have fared at least as well as he did.

In this limited study, it is impossible to determine whether or not Klan endorsement had the same affect on local office seekers that it did on Jackson's candidacy. Much research needs to be done to determine which local candidates had Klan backing and how they fared in the election. It is difficult to ascertain which local candidates received Klan endorsement. Most newspapers did not report on this matter and very few Klan papers remain from which one could derive this information. For this reason, no attempt has been made in this paper to analyze the effect of Klan endorsement upon the election of state legislators. A general review of the voting statistics, however, suggests that the Klan was not entirely successful. In county elections, more Democrats were victorious in 1921 than in 1920, and Republican pluralities were reduced in many counties.

In 1921 Indiana ranked second in the nation with 71.5 per cent of those eligible voting.35 In many counties, especially the most heavily populated, the turnout for the election was far above that in 1920. However, in many rural counties, where presumably the Klan was strongest, the vote was less than in 1920. What affect this had on the election is not altogether clear. The Republicans

built up their total in the populous counties where the vote increase was largest, but it was in these very areas that Klan-endorsed Republicans fared most poorly. Thus a judicious sampling of election results would seem to indicate that the Klan issue brought out more anti-Klan than pro-Klan votes. However, much more research into this subject must be done before these generalizations can be fully authenticated.

The general consensus is that the Ku Klux Klan was successful in its political foray in 1924. However, a question should be raised. Did the Klan issue have a definite and decisive affect on the 1924 election in Indiana or did the Klan merely "hop on the bandwagon" and ride in on the tail of the Coolidge landslide? Klan leaders were realistic enough to work through the party in power. If 1924 had been a close election, with the same record of suppositious Klan victories, there might be more credence to the Klan claim of credit for the victory. However, it would appear that the Klan issue was only one of many during the campaign.

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36These facts are taken from the official Indiana Election Returns, 1920 and 1924.
CHAPTER III

KLAN AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

When the Indiana General Assembly convened on January 8, 1925, it was overwhelmingly Republican. Republicans had an eighty-four to sixteen majority in the House and a thirty-two to eighteen majority in the Senate. However, this imbalance was not unusual for the "Republican" twenties. In the 1921 Indiana General Assembly, Republicans had enjoyed an even more dominant position in both Houses.¹

From the beginning of the session, rumors were rampant that the House of Representatives was so thoroughly Klan-controlled that the Klan program would meet no obstacles in that chamber.² The Klan strength in the Senate was not known at the time, but a working majority was predicted. In recent studies, it has been claimed that most of the pro-Klan members of the House followed Grand Dragon Bossert and Imperial Wizard Evans while those in the Senate belonged to Stephenson. This rivalry resulted in a bitter

¹"C.O.F. Continues to Control Both Assembly Houses," Indianapolis Star, January 18, 1925, p. 6.

²The actual number of Klansmen in the Legislature was unknown. However, one paper estimated that there was a total of more than forty Klansmen in both Houses. "Indiana Republicans Uncertain of Future," South Bend Tribune, November 10, 1924, p. 2. 29
intra-Klan struggle which was acted out in the legislative halls and helps explain the Klan's lack of success during the session. However, this simplistic division of the legislators is proved inadequate when the legislative record is carefully investigated.

The Klan's intention to take a hand in legislative matters was first disclosed when leaders of the Invisible Empire gave a banquet in Indianapolis for specially invited members of the legislature. Imperial Wizard Evans was expected, but was unable to attend because of illness. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Walter Bossert's legislative program and the candidacy of Charles M. Clark of Indianapolis for the House Speakership.

That the Hotel Lincoln dinner was strictly a Bossert affair is revealed in a letter sent by Bossert in late December, 1924 to all Exalted Cyclops (heads of local Klaverns). The communication read:

The information has come to us that certain former Klansmen of this realm/political leaders agreed that this referred to Stephenson and his supporters/ are arranging to call a meeting of all


5"Legislators are Called by Klan," Indianapolis Times, January 2, 1925, p. 1.

State Senators and representatives within this State, who were recently elected, for the purpose of getting to such representatives and Senators a legislative program which these certain Klansmen desire and propose to launch in the coming session of the Indiana Legislature. We know that this action is taken by these Klansmen for selfish motive and for the purpose of interfering with the well known program of our organization.

We therefore urge you to immediately confer personally with all your Senators, Representatives, joint-senators and joint representatives whom you know to be Klansmen, or favorable to our cause, and advise them not to attend any called meeting of this character unless authorized and approved from this office. We of course will in due time call a meeting of such Senators and Representatives and will notify you of the meeting.7

Those present at the Hotel Lincoln dinner were thus presumably members of the Bossert-Evans faction rather than supporters of Stephenson. Republican House members who attended were Charles H. Clark (Indianapolis), George W. Freeman (Kokomo), Antoinette C. Hagenwald (Terre Haute), Charles V. Keller (Fowler), William A. McMinn (Elwood), Ira A. Hendenhall (Washington), William H. Kissinger (Columbia City), Frederick G. Lisius (Crown Point), and John C. Sherwood (Mitchell). Those from the Senate included John S. Allèredge (Anderson), Benjamin R. Inman (Danville), Leroy C. Leonard (Warsaw), Roscoe Martin (Logansport), Claude S. Steele (Knox), George W. Sims (Terre Haute), C. C. King (Sweetser), and Earl W. Payne (Bloomington). Only the last two were Democrats.8 The names of those who


attended soon became known, and members of the legislature who opposed the Klan kept them in mind for ready reference in the future.\textsuperscript{9} The voting patterns of these legislators will be studied later in this paper.

A great deal of interest was manifested in the fight for the Speakership of the House by followers of both Bosser and Stephenson. Charles Clark of Indianapolis was an early candidate for the office. But at the Hotel Lincoln dinner, where the Speakership was a principal topic of conversation, George Freeman of Kokomo received unexpected support over Clark. Following the dinner, Bosser conducted an elimination vote to determine whether his followers would support Clark or Freeman. Reportedly, Freeman received twenty-one votes to Clark's twelve.\textsuperscript{10} Shortly thereafter, Clark withdrew and threw his support to Harry Leslie of Lafayette, who was backed by Stephenson.\textsuperscript{11}

Before the legislators began assembling in Indianapolis, Stephenson had written to Lemuel A. Pittenger of Selma, another candidate for the Speakership, that he would

\textsuperscript{9}"State Legislature a Battle Ground," \textit{Terre Haute Tribune}, January 11, 1925, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{10}"Nejdl and Leslie Win as Presiding Officers," \textit{Indianapolis Star}, January 8, 1925, p. 9.

support Leslie. Later in a meeting prior to the Republican caucus, Stephenson reportedly secured for Leslie the support of all but one or two of the eleven Marion County representatives. Both Bossert and Stephenson were thus making every effort to get "their man" elected. Political observers were correct in viewing the Speakership fight as another indication of the continuing feud between Bossert and Stephenson.

In the House Republican caucus, Leslie was nominated on the third ballot by a vote of forty-two to thirty-nine. Immediately following the election, Stephenson claimed credit for saving the day for Leslie and personally congratulated the forty-two members who stood by him. Actually, the vote was not indicative of Stephenson's strength in the House. Some of Leslie's friends in that body claimed that he should not have to "assume the liability of Stephenson's friendship," concluding that

whatever support Stephenson might have given him, came because the ex-klan leader recognized him as


the leading candidate and because he wished to
ride in on the band wagon.16

It should also be pointed out that prior to the election
Leslie was listed as definitely anti-Han by the Indiana
Jewish Chronicle.17 Similarly, it would be an error to
conclude that all thirty-nine representatives who voted
against Leslie were following Bossert's orders.18 Clearly
Bossert could not control the votes of all of those who
voted for Freeman.

After his victory, Leslie commented upon his backing:

I have not solicited a vote for the speakership and
I have no obligation to repay. I am free and unfet-
tered and I hope to do my duty as I see it. I am
not unmindful of the honor that has been conferred
on me, in fact it is a signal honor which makes me
extremely grateful.19

Leslie's actions during the legislative session support
his statement. He was an outspoken critic of any and all
outside influence. In answer to the question did the Han
control the chief officer of the Indiana House of Represen-
tatives, the evidence indicates that it did not. Bossert's
man was defeated for the speakership, and the victorious
candidate, who was supposedly supported by Stephenson,

16Ibid., p. 3.
17"National and State Candidates in Review," Indiana
Jewish Chronicle, October 31, 1924, p. 2.
18"State Legislature a Battle Ground," Terre Haute
Tribune, January 11, 1925, p. 1; "Speck and Leslie Win
as Presiding Officers," Indianapolis Star, January 1, 1925.
p. 9.
19"Student, Athlete, Lawyer and Juror Is the Record
denied any obligation to the Klan leader.

From the beginning of the Seventy-fourth session of the Indiana General Assembly, the Klan maneuvered to control the important committees on education. But the struggle was again complicated by the intra-Klan feud between the Bossert and Stephenson forces. Regarding the House Committee on Education, which he as Speaker was authorized to appoint, Leslie said emphatically: "The schools of Indiana are not going to be made the football of any faction for any private aims. I believe I can select a committee of men big enough to be above the selfish motives of any organization or faction."20

Soon after the legislators arrived in Indianapolis, it was reported that Bossert was backing James M. Knapp, a Wayne County Republican from Hagerstown, for Chairman of the House Committee on Education.21 However, after Knapp denied that he was a member of the Klan and refused to support Freeman in the Speakership race, Bossert trans-

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ferred his support to Freeman. Leslie's choice as Chairman of the Committee on Education was Knapp, once supported by Bossert but in the end opposed by him.

During the days prior to the announcements of committee appointments, charges were made by each Klan faction concerning maneuvers of the other to secure positions on the House Committee on Education. It had been rumored that Bossert had offered the withdrawal of Freeman in the Speakership race if Leslie would favor the Klan in naming the House Committee on Education.

Joseph Huffington, Bossert's "right-hand man," counter-charged that Leslie was attempting to "stack" the committee in order to defeat the Klan educational program. Huffington also intimated that Leslie was completely under the domination of Stephenson, who was dictating the appointments to the committee.

In response, Leslie commented: "Nobody will dictate to me the personnel of the committees that are to be appointed.


23"Klan Backs County Unit School Bill," Richmond Palladium, January 9, 1925, p. 1.

by me. I will name my own committees."25 When presenting
his committee selections, Leslie stated that he had not
been under as much pressure as had been rumored.26 He
also noted that Governor Jackson had refused to make any
suggestions about committee appointments.27

James J. Nejdl, Republican from Whiting and a native
of Bohemia, was appointed Chairman of the Senate Committee
on Education by Lieutenant Governor Frederick Van Orman.28
Nejdl, outspokenly anti-Klan, had been opposed by the
Bossert forces in the 1924 election and in the race for
President pro tem of the Senate.29 Of all the members
appointed to the House and Senate Education Committees
only George W. Sims of Terre Haute was present at the
Hotel Lincoln dinner. The personnel of the two committees
was regarded by the press as anti-Klan and a setback for
the Klan's educational program.30 In view of the fact

25"No Dictation, Is Stand of Leslie," Indianapolis

26"Leslie Selects 59 Committees in Lower House,"

27"Leslie Stands Firm on House Committees,"
Indianapolis News, January 12, 1925, p. 11.

28"Jim! Nejdl, Lake County Senator, Has Had Remark-

29"Blow to Klan Seen in Nejdl and Knapp Appointments,
Gary Post-Tribune, January 11, 1925, p. 1; "Legislative
Hopper Open For New Bills," Gary Post-Tribune, January 14,
1925, p. 2.

30"Bossert Hopes Dim," Indianapolis Star, January 14,
1925, p. 1; "Jackson Is Inaugurated; Legislature Begins
Work," Jasper Herald, January 16, 1925, p. 1; "Legislative
that the Klan claimed control of the legislature, it seems strange that the organization was so completely shut out on the committees which were so vital to its legislative program.

Still another important legislative post was embroiled in the Klan feud. With the legislative session nearly two-thirds gone, no Caucus Chairman had been selected by the Republican majority. John Sherwood of Mitchell had been the choice of Leslie for Caucus Chairman until it was revealed that he had attended Bossert's Hotel Lincoln dinner. A delay developed when Leslie decided that a new man should be found.31

Followers of Walter Bossert were reportedly supporting Charles Clark for the position. When the election was finally held in the middle of February, Clark won over Representative Sherwood by a vote of forty to thirty-seven. Sherwood was considered the administration candidate even though he had attended the Hotel Lincoln dinner.32 Here again it is doubtful that Republican members of the Legislature divided strictly along Bossert-Stephenson lines. Sherwood was supposedly Stephenson's candidate, yet he

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32"G.O.P. Picks Clark as Caucus Chairman," Indianapolis News, February 17, 1925, p. 11.
attended the Hotel Lincoln dinner and helped plan Bossert's legislative program. Clark, the Bossert candidate for Caucus Chairman, had been forced out of his candidacy for the Speakership by Bossert and had thrown his support to Leslie who had Stephenson's backing. This confusing picture makes some sense only if one concludes that the principals were more committed to their own political fortunes than to Klan ideology. Rather than the Ku Klux Klan using the legislators, the legislators more often used the Klan.

In the Senate, the lines of division were as hard to distinguish as those in the House. James J. Nejdl of Whiting was elected President pro tem with considerable opposition from the Bossert forces. Being from Bohemia, Nejdl represented a natural enemy of the Klan. One of the Klan's primary goals was the "exclusion of foreign immigration" and this applied especially to immigration from southeastern Europe. Nejdl as President pro tem and as Chairman...

33 Even though Sherwood had the administration's support, Speaker Leslie did not support Sherwood. He apparently did not care for either candidate for the chairmanship as he and Lemuel A. Pittenger, the Majority Floor Leader, left the caucus and said that they had no interest in who was elected.

34 "Nejdl Education Committee Head," Indianapolis News, January 13, 1925, p. 1; "Nejdl is Chosen President Pro Tem of State Senate, Leslie is Victor in House," Indianapolis Star, January 8, 1925, pp. 1, 9. Thomas A. Daily, state senator from Indianapolis, said that he had been "double-crossed" by Stephenson in his attempt for President pro tem and that he considered "Stephenson a political mountebank" and that Stephenson "had organized the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, got their money and got out and now is attempting to break it up." "Senator Charges Double-Crossing," Indianapolis Times, January 14, 1925, p. 1.
of the Committee on Education was in a good position to
delay and perhaps defeat Klan measures. However, all but
one (Imman) of the Republican state senators who attended
the Hotel Lincoln dinner were considered supporters of
Mejdal.35 For example, George Sims of Terre Haute, who
sponsored all of Bosser's "Americanization and Education"
bills in the Senate and who was frequently seen in confer-
ence with D. C. Stephenson, was in the Mejdal camp.36
Again it seems that the legislators were more committed
to their own political fortunes than to Klan ideology.

If D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan were not
successful in their attempt to control the legislators of
the 1925 Indiana General Assembly, it was not because
they did not try. Near the end of the legislative session,
the peddling of outside influence became so pronounced
that Speaker Leslie was prompted to make a public state-
ment concerning it.

These outside influences at work on the members
of this house must be stopped. You members are
being pulled and hauled and harangued until the
work of this house is being seriously impeded.
I know these outside influences better than you
think. The influence is not for the good of the
state and I shall have no hesitancy in naming these
influences from this stand if the pulling and
hauling does not stop.
I do not want any more of this business of
giving out orders to pass some measures because
somebody else is against it.

35"Sharp Division in Senate C.C.I. Promises Fight,"
Indianapolis Times, January 10, 1925, p. 1.
36"Four School Bills Prepared by Sims," Terre Haute
Tribune, January 10, 1925, p. 3.
Somebody has got to stop handing out orders here. I've had the pressure brought to bear on me and I'd just as leave tell 'em to go to hades as to consider their orders.

I know these influences better than they think. I know this lobby better than it thinks and if I have to I'll name the lobby publicly.

I know there's plenty of money hanging around these halls. But with the help of the Lord I'm going to assist you to pass it by. If necessary to stop these influences I'll lock the doors. We are going to work next week, as we have worked in the past, and without the influence.37

This statement was issued when intra-Klan feuds became "detrimental to legislation." It was reported that Leslie was forced to take action because the bitter fight between the Bossert and Stephenson forces had reached a threatening stage and was interfering with House action.38

Leslie further pointed out that some of the legislators who were trying to do the right thing were frequently hampered by "outside influences." However, he went on to say that the "radicals and special interests" would find out in the end that a lot of their efforts toward certain kinds of legislation had been wasted.39

Historians have asserted that either Stephenson, Bossert or both controlled the 1925 Indiana General Assembly. If this contention were true, it seems that the Klan should have been more successful in obtaining positions of leadership. In actuality, none of the leadership positions

37 "Leslie Denounces 'Outside Influences'," Indianapolis News, February 26, 1925, p. 3.

38 Ibid.

were held by men with pro-Klan tendencies. The only possible exception was the position of Republican Caucus Chairman. However, this office was largely an honorary one with little authority. The Speaker of the House was a man recognized as being anti-Klan before the election. The Speaker of the House was a man recognized as being anti-Klan before the election. The President pro tem of the Senate was an immigrant who found the Klan reprehensible and was opposed by the Klan at every turn. Both chairmen of the committees on education, which were so important to the Klan legislative program, were opposed by the Klan. In essence, every office that was vital to Klan success in the Legislature was filled by men whom the Klan opposed. This does not suggest a situation in which the General Assembly was dominated by the Ku Klux Klan.
CHAPTER IV

KLAN AND LEGISLATION

The legislative program of Walter Bossert was generally labeled "Americanization and Education." The various bills which bore this label required that teachers be public school graduates, excluded religious garb for teachers in the public schools, required Bible reading in the public schools, abolished parochial and private schools and required schools to fly American flags and teach the state and national Constitutions.

It was reported that D. C. Stephenson had no legislative program but was merely waiting to see what Bossert and Evans wanted before throwing his "monkey wrench." 1 Stephenson had been forced out of the Klan by Evans and Bossert and in revenge was prepared to do almost anything to kill Bossert's program. It mattered little to Stephenson that he might agree with some of Bossert's ideological program. Stephenson was in the Klan for two reasons--money and power. Any plans he might have for the Legislature were purely financial and self-serving in nature.

Religious Garb Bill

Perhaps the most discussed of the "Americanization and Education" bills was the religious garb bill. It proposed to bar from the public schools any teacher who wore a "distinctive religious dress" or any "symbol, token or emblem" which was "distinctly" sectarian or which was characteristic of any religious order, sect or church. It was introduced in the Senate by George W. Sims and in the House by Clyde F. Cooper, both pro-Klan Republicans from Terre Haute. The obvious intent of the bill was to prevent Catholic nuns from teaching in public schools—a favorite aim of the Indiana Klan since World War I. The Klan insisted that in schools across the nation Catholic and Jewish-trained teachers were undermining American values through their teaching and demanded the removal of these teachers from the public schools.

The religious garb bill was not new to Indiana. Immediately following World War I, the Indiana Attorney General ruled that it was illegal for public school teachers to wear religious garb. This ruling was not directed at


any one religious group, but it did force the removal of nuns from the public schools in twenty-five counties. Later, a new Attorney General reversed the decision.5

When the Sims bill was brought to the floor of the Senate, a lively debate ensued. The vote was forty to six in favor of the majority report of the Committee on Education, which had recommended that the bill be indefinitely postponed.6 (For a tabulation of the voting see Appendix A.) Of those voting against the majority report—Alldredge, Leonard, Martin, Payne, Pell and Sims—all but Pell had been at the Hotel Lincoln dinner. Sims was the only member of the Committee on Education to sign the minority report which recommended passage of the bill.7 The vote on the bill was regarded as a test of strength of President pro tem Nejdl and also of anti-Klan legislators in the Senate.8

The debate before the Senate vote was the only one of the session during which the Klan was discussed publically. David L. Chambers, a Democrat from Newcastle, demanded that the bill be discussed without "hiding behind

5Ibid., pp. 252-253.
6Indiana, Journal of the Senate, 74th Sess., p. 84.
7Ibid., pp. 82-84.
bushes or sheets." During the heated controversy, leaders from both sides of the aisle denounced the measure. Joseph M. Cravens, a Democrat from Madison, summed up the sentiment of the majority when he stated:

Of course, it has been touted all over the state as one of the Ku Klux Klan measures, and we all learned something of the power of the Klan a few months ago. Now if this bill is directed toward any particular creed, as its contents intimate, then it is wrong. It seems to me there is no question that it is directed against the Catholic church. Now I have nothing to say in defense of this church, but I do think that this bill should not become law because there is no reason for it.

At the same time George L. Saunders, a Democrat from Bluffton, raised an interesting hypothetical question:

If you had been nominated by a certain organization, had gone through the campaign with support of that organization and then had been elected to office by reason of that support, and after you came down here to the legislature and attended the caucuses, and later you read in the newspapers where the selection of some of the men chosen as officers of the legislature was regarded as a repudiation of that organization, would you then feel bound, in view of the reported repudiation to support the organization's legislative measures?

His implied answer was "no."

The House was not so quick to take action on the religious garb bill. When the Committee on Education brought the measure to the floor for action, the majority report recommended that the bill be indefinitely postponed.

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10Ibid., p. 26; "First 'Klan' Bill Killed in Senate," Indianapolis Times, January 21, 1925, pp. 1, 12.

11Ibid.
The minority report, signed by only two members of the committee (Knepper and Carney), recommended that the bill be passed. On a vote of sixty-four to twenty-seven the minority report was substituted for the majority report. Even though this was one of Bossert's "Americanization and Education" bills, a number of the members of the House who were generally reported to be opposed to the Bossert faction voted for the adoption of the minority report. When the Cooper bill came up for the third and final reading in the House it was passed by a vote of sixty-seven to twenty-two. (For a tabulation of the voting see Appendix B.) Three members of the Committee on Education, Committee Chairman Knapp, Majority Floor Leader Pittenger and Max Murray, changed their votes on the final roll call. The vote did not follow party lines as half of the fourteen Democrats voted for the bill and fifteen Republicans voted against it. However, all of the so-called Bossert forces supported the measure.

Consistent with its determined stand at the first of the session, the Senate killed the Cooper House bill. However, it was reported that pressure was being brought to bear on every member of the Senate who was elected with

Klan support to vote for the bill.15 This might account for the fact that only thirty-six senators voted on the question—seventeen for and nineteen against.16 A motion to have the absentees recalled was defeated, meaning the absolute death of the measure. Even though the Senate stood steadfast in its opposition to the bill, several senators changed their opinions. The vote on the first bill had been six ayes and forty noes. On the second vote, the large number not voting and the eleven who changed their votes seems to indicate that a great deal of pressure had been applied. One newspaper reported that those not voting on the Klan bills were "afraid of the Klan and they conveniently absented themselves."17

The voting patterns on the two religious garb bills reveal that House members in general approved of the measure. Even many who were opposed to Bossert voted for the bill. On the other hand, Senate members voiced general disapproval of the measure, but a few were apparently influenced by outside pressure. The second vote in the Senate seems to indicate that Bossert may have had some influence there. Eleven senators changed their vote in favor of the bill and several others were "conveniently"


absent during the vote. Although historians have claimed that Bossert's bills were killed in the Senate because Stephenson controlled the Upper House, there is no evidence that Stephenson attempted to influence the vote on this bill. Rather, the Senate seemed to be composed of men who were disinclined to do the Klan's bidding.

**Public School Graduate Bill**

Another bill aimed at eliminating Catholic and Jewish teachers from the public schools required that all teachers be graduates of and receive all schooling in public schools. This bill was to take effect in September, 1925 and would not affect those already employed. The public school graduate bill, introduced only in the Senate, was defeated by a vote of forty-one to five after limited debate. The voting pattern on this "Klan bill" was the same as the original vote on the Senate religious garb bill with the exception of Leonard who joined the opposition. On both the religious garb bill and the public school graduate bill, senators who were allegedly in the Bossert faction voted against Bossert's program.

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Bible Reading Bills

The third Sims bill to be introduced in the Senate was designed to direct the state Board of Education to provide for reading of the Bible by or to the pupils attending all elementary or high schools in Indiana. The measure also provided that no pupil should be required to read the Bible against the wishes of his parent or guardian and that the teacher in reading the Bible should do so without comment. Although the Senate killed this bill by a vote of twenty-six to twenty, it had wider support than the two previously-mentioned bills. Seven Democrats joined in voting for the measure. The only Democrat voting for the other bills was Earl W. Payne of Bloomington who had attended the Hotel Lincoln dinner.

The facts seem to indicate that the Senate might have passed the Bible reading bill had it not been associated with the Klan. Senator Denver Harlan, a Republican from Richmond, candidly expressed the reason for his negative vote.

I am just as much in favor of religious instruction in its proper place as anybody. This is not a question of whether the Bible should be read or not. It is a question of stamping out the insidious

22Ibid., p. 60.
influence that is back of this bill and showing the people of Indiana where we stand. In this instance, it seems that the Klan label might have been more detrimental than helpful.

The Fiery Cross was, of course, critical of those senators who voted against the religious garb and Bible reading bills. The voice of the Indiana Klan stated that the Senate had "chosen to vote against anything which is particularly dear to the hearts of the Protestants." The paper was especially critical of the reasoning of these senators. "The church and school should be kept separate," was the argument against Bible reading in the school. The Klan contended that if the statement were correct the same reasoning should have applied to the religious garb bill, which was an attempt to keep church and school separate by excluding Catholic nuns from the classroom.

The Bible reading bill was introduced in the House by Charles Clark, Republican Caucus Chairman and passed by a seventy-five to eleven margin. Even though both the religious garb bill and the Bible reading bill were a part of Bossert's "Americanization and Education" program, the latter had much stronger support among legisla-


tors and the public. Reading of the Bible was common practice in most schools, and most people saw little reason not to make it a state law. There was little discussion of the bill's constitutionality. It was popular in spite of the Klan label.

After passing the House, the Clark bill was sent to the Senate where it failed to come up for third reading before the legislative session ended. The bill was sent up so late that the Senate did not have time to send it through the required three readings before the session ended. By not suspending the rules the Senate in effect killed this bill and several others supported by Bossert and/or Stephenson. Not only was one of Bossert's "Americanization and Education" bills defeated, but Stephenson's highway commission bill also succumbed in the same manner. The Senate's refusal to suspend the rules, which would have benefited both factions of the Indiana Klan, indicates once again that the Klan did not control the Upper House of the Legislature.

Released Time Bills

At the same time that the Bible reading bill was being discussed, Fred H. Dickerman, a Republican from Indianapolis, introduced a bill in the Senate which provided that public school authorities could release pupils

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two hours a week for the purpose of receiving religious instruction. The *Fiery Cross* reported that the bill was sponsored by the *Indiana Catholic and Record* in an effort to defeat the Bible reading bill by creating confusion.

The backing of the 'rival Bible bill' by the Roman Catholics carries out their usual line of procedure, that of creating confusion among those whom they oppose and attempting to create friction or factions on the other side. Had not the Sims bill [Bible reading bill], or one like it, been introduced in the legislature, it is ridiculous, as one backer of the Sims bill declared, to imagine the Roman Catholic taking an interest in religious training in the public schools.

In spite of opposition from the Bossert forces, the bill passed the Senate by a twenty-six to nineteen vote.

The Dickerman bill was sent to the House and was reported favorably out of the Committee on Education. However, it did not come up for a third reading or vote. A similar proposal was presented in the House, but did not get beyond the second reading.

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30 "Papists-Jews Join in Deceitful Scheme Against Holy Book," *Fiery Cross*, January 30, 1925, p. 1. The views expressed in the *Fiery Cross* were the same as Bossert's as he was listed as one of the owners of the paper.

31 "Romans Agree to Try and Bar Bible from all Schools," *Fiery Cross*, January 30, 1925, p. 7.


A third bill, introduced by Claremont Smith and Charles Clark, Republicans of Marion County, would excuse pupils for two hours of religious study on petition of forty per cent of the parents. This compromise proposal successfully passed the House by a vote of seventy-six to six and met Senate approval, twenty-eight to sixteen.35

It is interesting to note that the sixteen senators opposing the released time bill can be divided into two groups. One group voted against everything proposed by the Bossert faction and anything related to it. The other group was made up of loyal Bossert followers who supported the Bible reading bill but opposed the released time bill because they considered it a ruse designed to defeat the Bible reading bill. Ironically, in the House, the Bossert forces voted unanimously for the released time bill (see Appendix B). It was introduced by Charles Clark, who had been at the Hotel Lincoln dinner and had Bossert's support for the office of Republican Caucus Chairman. It appears that either some of the Bossert forces got their signals crossed or they paid little attention to their "leader" and voted as they pleased.

Even though the released time bill passed both Houses it did not become law, encountering a pocket veto by Governor Jackson. Attorney General Arthur Gillion, who was opposed by the Klan in the 1924 election, advised

Jackson that the bill was "violative of several provisions of the constitution of Indiana," including those in the bill of rights guaranteeing religious freedom.36 Thus another "Klan bill" failed.

Parochial and Private School Bill

A bill that would result in the abolition of parochial schools and nonmilitary private schools in Indiana was introduced in the Indiana House of Representatives by William A. McMinn, a Republican from Madison.37 The bill provided that, with certain exceptions, all children between six and sixteen years of age would be required to attend a school "maintained by public funds and taught in the English language."38 As stated before, Bossert's driving desire was to close parochial schools. The "Klansman's Oath of Allegiance" stated: "The free public school system is peculiarly American and must be protected against all enemies who would weaken or destroy it."39 Heading the list of enemies of the public school was the parochial school. Despite enthusiastic Klan support, the McMinn bill


was withdrawn from the House calendar a few days after its introduction.\textsuperscript{40}

Another measure which had the endorsement of the Klan was introduced in the House by Truman G. Hurden, a Republican from Logansport. The Hurden bill would have required that all courses of study, textbooks and examination questions used in the private and parochial schools of the state be the same as those adopted and prescribed for the public elementary and high schools.\textsuperscript{41} It provided that the teachers of these private and parochial schools would have to fulfill all the requirements regarding licensing that were required of public school teachers and that all laws relating to public school teachers would also apply to private and parochial teachers.\textsuperscript{42} Despite attacks on its constitutionality, the House passed the bill by a vote of sixty-one to twenty-two.\textsuperscript{43}

After the Hurden bill was sent to the Senate for action, there was delay in getting the bill out of committee. Senator Martin, Republican from Logansport, announced that he had tried without success to get the uniform textbook bill reported out of the Committee on Education. Com-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40}Indiana, \emph{Journal of the House}, 7\textsuperscript{th} Sess., p. 524.
\item \textsuperscript{41}\emph{Ibid.}, p. 241; "Barker Bill Passes Today in the Senate," \emph{Vincennes Sun}, February 5, 1925, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{42}"To Conform to Public Schools," \emph{Indianapolis News}, February 5, 1925, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{43}Indiana, \emph{Journal of the House}, 7\textsuperscript{th} Sess., p. 624.
\end{itemize}
mittee Chairman Nejdl commented: "I insisted on keeping this bill and several others like it because I did not think it would look good in print. I am sure the Indiana Senate does not wish to pass such legislation as this."[

Apparently the majority of the Senate concurred. The Committee on Education recommended that the bill be indefinitely postponed, and this motion was passed, twenty-three to ten, meaning the defeat of the bill. Thus another of the "Klan" education bills was killed in the Senate.

Most of the "Americanization and Education" bills were held up by the Senate Committee on Education or were sent out of committee with the recommendation that they be defeated. This seems to be largely the result of the activities of Committee Chairman Nejdl who publicly admitted that he had held up many bills because "it would not look good" for the Indiana General Assembly to pass them.

Textbook and Textbook Commission Bills

Measures promoting uniformity in the use of textbooks were also introduced at the 1925 General Assembly. One bill would have required that public school books be "non-sectarian" and "non-partisan." This bill was never


reported out of the House Committee on Education.\textsuperscript{46}

Another bill providing that textbooks be used for ten years was withdrawn by the unanimous vote of the House.\textsuperscript{47}

A bill introduced by Senator Alldredge, a Republican from Anderson, would have provided for the compiling, illustrating, printing, copywriting and distributing of a series of school textbooks by the state. The Klan felt that there was good reason for such a law. The Fiery Cross reported that school boards and school commissions were gradually being manned by Roman Catholics and that Protestant educators had permitted them to "foist on the children in the public schools history textbooks that, from cover to cover, exalt the papal dignity and belittle Protestant movements."\textsuperscript{48} With a state agency compiling the textbooks, this would not occur. The Alldredge bill was reported favorably from the Committee on Rights and Privileges, but was indefinitely postponed by a vote of twenty-three to seventeen on the Senate floor.\textsuperscript{49}

A proposal to create a state board of textbook commissioners would have given the Governor enormous power over the content of public school textbooks. The measure

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47]Ibid., pp. 113, 125.
\item[48]"Romanism in Public Schools," \textit{Fiery Cross}, January 9, 1925, p. 1.
\item[49]Indiana, \textit{Journal of the Senate}, 74th Sess., pp. 491, 852.
\end{footnotes}
provided for the appointment of a commission of six by the Governor. This textbook commission would be authorized to select four textbooks for each subject and from these each school unit in Indiana would choose the books it desired.\(^{50}\) The net effect of the bill would have been to take away from the state Board of Education, made up of school men, the power that it then possessed to select textbooks and transfer that power to men hand-picked by the Governor. Presumably, this bill would have presented a golden opportunity to Governor Jackson and D. C. Stephenson.

With this in mind, the vote on the textbook commission bill is very revealing in view of the alleged power of the Klan and the conflict between Stephenson and Bossert. The bill was passed by the House by the overwhelming vote of eight-seven to three and then sent to the Senate's Committee on Education which reported favorably upon it.\(^{51}\) On second reading, a motion by Senator Cravens that the bill be indefinitely postponed was passed.\(^{52}\) Thus a situation developed in which "Bossert's" House passed almost unanimously a bill which would have benefited Stephenson, if he were in fact Jackson's "boss," and the Senate, which was allegedly controlled by Stephenson, killed the same

\(^{50}\) Indiana, Journal of the House, 74th Sess., p. 423.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 759; Indiana, Journal of the Senate, 74th Sess., p. 836.

\(^{52}\) Indiana, Journal of the Senate, 74th Sess., p. 938.
bill. Did Bossert control the House? Did Stephenson control the Senate? The action on the textbook commission bill would indicate that either Bossert did not have as much control over the House as some have thought or he was not as unalterably opposed to Stephenson's bills as others have suggested. And the vote in the Senate would again support the contention that Stephenson's power in that chamber has been grossly exaggerated.

Horse Thief Detective Association Bill

The early development of the Invisible Empire in Indiana was largely made under the auspices of the Horse Thief Detective Association. During the Civil War horse thievery was rampant in Indiana. The Indiana Legislature in 1865 decided to give legal authority to vigilante activity designed to eliminate this menace. The Horse Thief Act authorized the organization of men in various counties for the purpose of arresting horse thieves and other felons. Extraordinary powers were given to these associations. The act stated that

any number of persons, citizens of the State of Indiana, not less than ten, may and they are hereby authorized to form themselves into a company for the purpose of detecting and apprehending horse thieves and other felons, and for mutual protection and indemnity against the acts of such horse thieves and felons . . . /those/ in the pursuit and arrest of horse thieves and other offenders against the criminal laws of the State, shall have all the power of constables. 53

Even though these groups had the powers of a constable, they were not bonded in the performance of their duties.

Stephenson, soon after taking control of the Indiana Klan, resurrected the defunct National Horse Thief Detective Association. Under Klan control, the Association functioned as a vigilante unit, stopping and searching automobiles on the highways, raiding vice dens, bootleggers and disorderly houses and protecting the privacy of Klan meetings. The constables were authorized to carry weapons and could detain suspects without warrants. By 1924, more than twenty-thousand Klansmen were members of the Horse Thief Detective Association using their powers to promote the ideology of the Ku Klux Klan.

During the Seventy-Fourth General Assembly, Frank Borns, a Republican from Indianapolis, introduced in the House a bill to reorganize the Horse Thief Detective Association. It was to be replaced by an Indiana State Constabulary in which each member would be required to provide a one-thousand dollar bond, signed by an approved surety company "for the faithful performance of his duty as a constable." Borns stated that his principal objective was to end the practice of unbonded persons exerci-

54 Ibid., p. 24; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 166.
The Borns bill for the reorganization of the Horse Thief Detective Association was backed by D. C. Stephenson and opposed by Walter Bossert. The members of the Association were divided on the issue with some supporting Bossert and others Stephenson. Herbert P. Kenney, a Democrat from New Albany, said that he belonged to the Horse Thief Detective Association and that that organization did not favor the Borns bill. Kenney charged that a "rump convention had met and had endorsed the terms of the bill." A bitter debate took place before the Borns bill was barely passed in the House on a roll call vote of fifty-two to thirty-five—one more vote than was necessary for passage. But the bill did not fare so well in the Senate where it was killed unceremoniously by a motion, submitted by President pro tem Nejdl, to postpone further consideration of the bill. The Borns bill was declared

57 Ibid.


60 "Close Shave in House on Constabulary Bill," Indianapolis News, February 18, 1925, p. 11.

dead when thirty-four senators voted for postponement.62

Here another situation developed in which a bill opposed by Bossert and supported by Stephenson passed in "Bossert's" House only to be killed in "Stephenson's" Senate. Again the Senate showed its independence demonstrating that it did not belong to Stephenson or anybody else.

Reapportionment Bill

One of the more interesting developments of the Indiana General Assembly of 1925 was the bolt by Democratic senators to Dayton, Ohio. This departure was brought about by a bill introduced by Will K. Penrod, a Republican from Loogootee, which sought to move Lawrence County (strongly Republican) from the Third Congressional District to the Second. The net effect would have been to make the Second District safely Republican.63

As a protest against probable action on the Penrod bill, the outnumbered Democratic members of the Indiana Senate went "on strike." As a result, no business could be conducted because of the lack of a quorum. During the roll call, Democratic Minority Floor Leader Cravens issued an ultimatum. He announced that the Democrats would return only if the Republicans agreed to withdraw the reapportion-


The Marion County (Indianapolis) Horse Thief Detective Association assisted in the search for the runaway senators. When the senators were discovered, they had crossed state lines and settled in a hotel in Dayton, Ohio. After a day in Ohio, they were persuaded to return and two days after their first absence were back in their seats in the Senate. Walter A. Shead, a writer for the Indianapolis Times, reported the reasons for the senators return.

They are back because D. C. Stephenson, Republican political boss, promised:
- Immunity from arrest.
- That the Penrod gerrymander bill, which would make the Second Congressional District safely Republican, would either be withdrawn or killed.
- That indictments against the seceding Democrats, if returned, would be quashed.

These assurances were supposedly obtained in a conference between the Democratic senators and Stephenson in Dayton, after which the senators immediately returned and went back to work. In addition to Stephenson's promises, it

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67"Party Chiefs Do Not Agree as to 'Terms'," Gary Post-Tribune, February 27, 1925, pp. 1, 12. However, some of the Democratic senators publicly stated that they did not even know that Stephenson was in Dayton and that he had no part in the negotiations, "Leaders Assert Offen-
was claimed that representatives of Walter Bossert also promised the Democratic senators that the Penrod bill would be defeated. But many Republican senators had other ideas.

'For once and for always, I say, the bill will not be withdrawn,' said Senator Penrod. 'I won't let him withdraw it if he wants to,' added Senator Nejdl, Republican floor leader. 'That bill is very much alive.' 'We'll pass it if it's the last thing we do,' said nearly every Republican Senator.

The passage of the Penrod bill was nearly the last thing that the senators did before the session adjourned. On the morning of March 9, the last day of the Seventy-fourth General Assembly, the measure was passed twenty-seven to zero. The Democratic minority refrained from voting on the bill. Since the controversial measure was passed in the Senate on the final day of the legislative session, the House did not have an opportunity to act on it and the bill was thus defeated.

Many senators seemed to resent the interference of Stephenson. One senator was quoted as saying: "Where'd
that guy Stephenson get that stuff presuming to say, he
dictates what we shall do or shall not do?"71 Senator
Batt, a Democrat from Terre Haute, gave his opinion of
Stephenson. "This Stephenson is a sort of P. T. Barnum
person. When there is anything going on, he rushes to
the scene and gives out an interview to get the resultant
publicity."72 These statements reveal some senatorial
attitudes. In view of the voting record of the Senate,
the action taken on the Penrod bill, and the resultant
remarks of the senators about the Democratic "boycott"
indicate that Stephenson could not count on the Senate
to do his bidding.

State Highway Commission "Ripper" Bill

Stephenson's big coup of the 1925 Indiana General
Assembly was a plan to obtain control of the state high-
way commission with its millions of state funds. Stephen-
son had two paths to take. The first was to call for an
investigation of the irregularities of the highway com-
mission. The other was to introduce legislation which would
allow the Governor to appoint all members of the com-
misson.

Representative H. Walker DeHaven, a Republican from
Indianapolis and reportedly a close friend of Stephenson,

71"Bill stays in Senate," Indianapolis Times,
February 27, 1925, p. 1.

72Ibid., pp. 1-2.
called for an investigation of the irregularities of the highway commission.73 However, the move was defeated by Speaker Leslie, who observed that the matter was not a proper subject for legislative investigation and that it had already been investigated by the executive and the findings turned over to the judiciary.74 After this move failed, Jackson had a conference with the members of the state highway commission. They conveniently requested that a thorough investigation be made. The auditors would be chosen by the Governor.75 During the controversy, it was reported that the proposed investigation had the support of Stephenson who favored changes on the highway commission.76

Following the other tack, a bill was introduced in the House by William H. Kissinger, a Republican from Columbia City, designed to remove from members of the state highway commission the power to name a director of the commission and vest this power in the Governor and the Secretary of State jointly.77 A few days after the

bill was introduced an amendment was added which would make it possible for the Governor to oust the entire highway commission and name a new commission.\textsuperscript{78} It was reported that the Kissinger bill and its amendment were "fostered by the powerful Republican influences who have sought to make the highway department a place for jobs for faithful political workers" and that the forces led by Stephenson were behind it all.\textsuperscript{79} It was also rumored that Ora J. Davis, former State Treasurer, would be made the new director of the highway commission and that he had been seen frequently in Stephenson's office.\textsuperscript{80}

After the 1925 legislative session had ended, Senator Cravens gave an account of Stephenson's alleged attempt to take over the state highway commission.

During the 1925 general assembly rumors were rife about the legislative halls that one D. C. Stephenson had financed some candidates for office during the campaign. Stephenson demanded that the highway department be turned over to him.

To get out of their difficulties it was said these obligated officials agreed to turn in any "hat he wished. That his high authority might receive full and sufficient satisfaction from those obligated to him it was proposed to enact a measure that would do away with the present highway commission and which it was expected by


certain ones at least would turn the entire management of our roads over to a body of men to be named by this same D. C. Stephenson.\textsuperscript{81}

After much wrangling and the application of considerable pressure, the Kissinger bill finally came to a vote two days before the session ended. The House voted fifty-eight to thirty-six in favor of the bill.\textsuperscript{82} The bill was sent to "Stephenson's" Senate, but did not get beyond first reading before the session adjourned.\textsuperscript{83} Action could have been taken, however, if the Senate had voted for a suspension of the rules. But this was not done and Stephenson's "pet" measure was defeated.

In a poll taken on the final morning of the session, it was discovered that more than two-thirds of the senators would have voted against the bill if it had been brought to the floor.\textsuperscript{84} It was reported that the attempt to influence legislation by applying the party whip had only served to make those opposed to the bill more steadfast in their determination to prevent a political "raid" on the highway department.\textsuperscript{85} Again there is evidence that

\textsuperscript{81}"Backs Farm Bureau Fight for Road Body," Indianapolis News, Indiana State Library, Manuscript Division, Feightner File, "K. K. K.--Tom Adams, Clyde Walb, Highway 'Ripper' Bill Clippings."

\textsuperscript{82}Indiana, Journal of the House, 74th Sess., pp. 856-857.

\textsuperscript{83}Indiana, Journal of the Senate, 74th Sess., pp. 923, 955.

\textsuperscript{84}"Ripper Bill Dies as Senate Quits," Indianapolis News, March 10, 1925, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid.
the Senate rebelled against bills with a Klan label. The Senate made no differentiation between bills supported by the Bossert forces and those of Stephenson. The senators voted against whatever they thought would be detrimental to Indiana including most "Klan measures."

**Constitutional Study and Flag Bills**

A bill providing for the teaching of the Constitutions of the United States and Indiana and one requiring public schools to purchase and display the American flag were the only "Klan measures" to come out of the Seventy-fourth Indiana General Assembly.86 The Constitutional study bill was a fusion of House and Senate bills. Both the Senate bill introduced by Sims and the House bill under the sponsorship of John P. Chrisney, a Democrat from Chrisney and the only Catholic in the Lower House, passed unanimously.87

Senator Sims also introduced the American flag-flying bill which had been a goal of the Klan for some time. In one of its very first editorials the Fiery Cross had proclaimed that "it is the purpose of the Klan ... to see that the American Flag is kept floating over


87Ibid., pp. 544, 692.
these institutions of learning /public schools/. The flag-flying bill was passed forty-two to four in the Senate and seventy-six to six in the House. As can be seen by the voting, these bills were not very controversial. They may have been Klan sponsored, but they were popular with both parties and with both factions of the Klan.

Even the Indiana Catholic and Record stated that

Senator Sims, the noted pro-Klan leader, has one good bill before the Senate, namely the bill to have an American flag raised daily over every school in the state. We are strongly in favor of that bill.

The flag-flying and Constitutional study bills were responsive to the prevailing attitudes throughout the United States and could not fairly be called "Klan bills." In view of the fact that these two bills were the only "Klan measures" passed, the common contention that the Klan "owned" the Republican party and thus controlled the legislative session would appear to be without foundation.

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88 Editorial, Fiery Cross, December 6, 1922, p. 4.


90 Editorial, Indiana Catholic and Record, January 23, 1925, p. 4.
CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF THE LEGISLATURE

The general consensus at the close of the Seventy-fourth Indiana General Assembly was that, taken as a whole, it was "safe and sane." Relatively few measures that were designed to upset the status quo survived and practically all those enacted into law were believed to be essential to the progress of Indiana. The Indianapolis News reported that the legislative session would be noted more for what it did not do than what it actually accomplished. The manner in which the legislators resisted attempts to raid established boards and commissions for the benefit of the politically hungry will go down as one of the outstanding features of the session.¹

There were, however, some positive accomplishments made during the session. Among the bills passed were four relating to budget reform; the "bone-dry" bill, recodifying the state's liquor laws and fixing more drastic penalties for violation of the prohibition laws; the blue sky bill, which strengthened the laws governing the issuance of securities; and the measure placing motor bus regulation under the public service commission.

The 1925 General Assembly was somewhat unique in that there was no administrative program or administrative pressure on the legislators. Observers pointed out that "it was one of the first sessions in history that did not have an elaborate administration program which required 'big stick' tactics to rush through in the closing hours." With Governor Jackson allegedly controlled by D. C. Stephenson, one would expect Jackson to have promoted Stephenson's program in the legislature. However, he did not even attempt to do so. Ironically, the apparent result of Jackson's effort to disassociate himself from Stephenson and the Klan tended to increase his popularity throughout the state. "Gov. Jackson is tremendously stronger at this time, with all the taxpayers, than he was on the day of his inauguration," editorialized one newspaper. If this were true, it was probably because Jackson had given evidence that he was not a puppet of the Klan.

Historians have claimed that the Klan and Stephenson controlled the Indiana General Assembly of 1925, but did contemporaries come to the same conclusion? The Gary Post-Tribune stated its opinion very succinctly: "The Ku Klux Klan legislative program for the regulation of public

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2"Governor's Big Stick Not Used on Assembly," Indianapolis News, March 10, 1925, p. 1.

schools met decisive defeat during the course of the session." And the Indiana Catholic and Record, a consistent opponent of the Klan, noted the Klan's defeat.

The seventy-fourth session of the Indiana General Assembly passed into history Monday evening, March 10, with an honorable record. It placed the seal of disapproval on every so-called 'Ku Klux Klan 100 per cent measure' presented and the masked cohorts of the Knights of the Pillow Shield beaten and broken and defeated.

The Legislature was overwhelmingly Republican, and the Ku Klux Klan had the impudence to assert that they owned the Republican party of Indiana. They have received their answer in no uncertain terms from the action of the Legislature.5

The South Bend Tribune editorialized.

Considering that a large number of the members of the assembly were other members of or were favored by a secret society which is opposed to Roman Catholicism, Negroes and aliens the record of the bills passed shows few evidences that this element was dominant.6

Another editorial commented on the candidates who had been endorsed by the Klan during the 1924 election.

It is very easy to put out false reports on the men who run for public office. Some of us got very false reports last November. Some of our best defenders were supposed to be 'endorsed by the Klan'.7

Many Klan-endorsed candidates obviously did not feel obligated to the Klan and voted according to their own

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1"Legislative 'Fast' Enjoyed by 74th Indiana Assembly," Gary Post-Tribune, March 10, 1925, p. 5.


7Editorial, Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925, p. 4.
convictions rather than following the orders of the two Klan leaders—Stephenson and Bossert.

In view of the anti-Klan campaign waged by the Indiana Catholic and Record, it is interesting to read the paper’s analysis concerning Klan control of the Legislature.

An assault was begun on the Catholic Church and the Catholic schools by the introduction of the Ku Klux Klan bills. It was heralded throughout the country that 'the Klan controlled the Indiana Legislature and that the anti-Catholic bills would pass.' Democratic politicians (whether they believed it or not) spread the report that the parochial schools would be 'wiped out in Indiana' and the Catholic teachers driven from the schools. We were told that if the Democrats were elected everything would be all right, but that Republican success would mean disaster to Catholic interests.

Let's look back calmly at it and try to keep from laughing. We confess, we ourselves were unduly alarmed. We voted against men who we had known for years in the party of Abraham Lincoln. A 'Klan endorsement' scared us clear away from our mournings and we scratched men who have since proved themselves to be brave, manly defenders of civil and religious liberty. . . .

And now the fight has been won and Indiana . . . and the Republican party of Indiana, has given the death blow to religious bigotry.8

If the state organ of the Catholic Church, the institution most viciously attacked by the Indiana Klan, could state that it was "unduly alarmed" then one might conclude that historians have overplayed the role of the Indiana Klan in the 1924 election and in the 1925 Indiana General Assembly.

8Editorial, "True to Lincoln's Ideals of Liberty," Indiana Catholic and Record, March 13, 1925, p. 4.
Again, as in the analysis of Jackson's election, the conclusions arrived at by historians differ from those of contemporaries. Almost everyone at the time seemed satisfied that the Indiana Klan had been defeated in its legislative program and was on its last legs. Many historians, however, have tended to exaggerate the continuing influence of the Klan assuming that the Klan remained strong until Stephenson's conviction of murder and subsequent imprisonment. A study of the election and the work of the General Assembly, however, casts serious doubt upon this thesis.
CHAPTER VI

ASSESSMENT OF KLAN INFLUENCE

By focusing on the election of 1924 in Indiana and the 1925 General Assembly, a period when the Hoosier Ku Klux Klan was at the zenith of its political power, this paper has attempted to show that the organization had neither as much power or influence as it claimed nor as writers have generally attributed to it. The Klan boast that the Invisible Empire in Indiana was responsible for the Republican victories in 1924 and the subsequent acceptance of the Klan's exaggerated claims by historians have distorted the notion of Klan political power in the Hoosier State. However, a review of contemporary opinion, a limited statistical investigation of the 1924 election, and a study of the legislative record of the 1925 General Assembly cast serious doubt upon such generalizations and reveal that much more research into the subject is necessary before the complete story of Klan influence in Indiana can be told.

Did the Ku Klux Klan take over the Republican party of Indiana? Although D. C. Stephenson and Walter Bossert, the two principal Klan leaders in the state, were both active in the Republican party, the Klan did not capture
control of the G. O. P. organization. Not only did the Republican State Committee Chairman disapprove of the Klan, but the Klan opposed the election of a third of the candidates on the Republican state ticket. Furthermore, the Republican party was not the sole recipient of Klan support as at least four members of the Democratic state ticket were endorsed by the Klan along with many office seekers at the local level. The Indiana Klan attempted to use both the Republican and Democratic parties rather than to simply take over the Republican organization.

Did the Klan elect a majority of the legislators? Although many successful candidates for the General Assembly were endorsed by the Klan, this does not mean that the Klan was responsible for their election. Many different groups supported these candidates and credit for their victories cannot be solely assumed by the Klan. Many of the candidates for whom the Klan claimed responsibility for success were candidates before the Klan gave its endorsement. Often, the Klan merely supported candidates who would more than likely win.

There is evidence that Klan support was detrimental to the candidacies of some Republicans. Ed Jackson, who was openly supported by the Klan for Governor, did not benefit from this backing. After having led the state ticket in 1918, 1920 and 1922, Jackson ran far behind his previous pluralities and other Republicans on the state ticket in 1924. Another indication that the Klan issue
was not as important in the election as historians have generally asserted is the fact that the entire Republican state ticket was elected. In the past this fact has been used to demonstrate Klan dominance of the Republican party and to show that the Klan was successful in getting its candidates elected. However, the Klan endorsed four Democrats on the state ticket who were defeated along with the other candidates of their party. This would seem to indicate that party affiliation was more important than Klan endorsement. One might assume that if the election of legislators followed the same trend as that of the state ticket, Klan support often hindered the candidate rather than helping, or at least had little affect.

Did the Klan control the legislators that it allegedly elected to office? Although many legislators had accepted Klan endorsement in the belief that it would be beneficial to them, they did not commit themselves to the Klan program.

One of the Klan's major obstacles was the decidedly anti-Klan leadership of both Houses of the General Assembly. President pro tem James Nejdl in the Senate was actively opposed by the Klan in the 1924 election as well as in his contest for the Senate's highest office. Nejdl was also appointed Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education, and thus held two positions in which he could delay (which he publicly admitted doing) or even defeat
Klan legislation. In the House, Speaker Harry Leslie was also known for his anti-Klan sentiments. James Knapp, the chairman of the House Committee on Education, while not so positive in his opposition to the Klan denied membership in the organization and was opposed by Bossert's supporters in the House when he sought the Education Committee chairmanship. Thus the Klan's inability to procure positions of Republican leadership in the General Assembly made any effort to control the legislative process extremely difficult.

Bossert or Stephenson may have controlled the votes of a few legislators but certainly not enough to control legislation. Voting patterns and statements by legislators would lead one to believe that many of them once elected to office were not overly responsive to the Klan program and, in fact, resented the "antics" and "pressure tactics" of Stephenson.

Was there a split among Klan members with one faction controlling the Senate and the other the House? It cannot be denied that a split had occurred in the Indiana Klan with D. C. Stephenson leading one faction and Walter Bossert the other. However, the essential question is whether or not this split seriously affected the legislative record in 1925. It has been claimed that Stephenson controlled the Senate, but a careful study of the Senate and its reaction to various measures indicates that the former Grand Dragon had very little influence. In fact, many
senators denounced Stephenson labeling him a "publicity seeker." Some historians have theorized that the Senate defeated the "Americanization and Education" bills because Stephenson desired revenge against Bossert. These historians reason that Stephenson could control enough Senate votes to defeat Bossert's program. However, there is no evidence that Stephenson actively opposed these bills. The Senate also showed its independence by resisting Stephenson's efforts to take-over the state highway commission and his attempt to reorganize the Horse Thief Detective Association. In reality, the Senate voted against almost all Klan measures and not merely those sponsored by the Bossert-led forces.

The claim that Bossert controlled the House has more legitimacy. Most of the "Americanization and Education" bills passed quite easily in the House. The fact that they did pass by such large margins might indicate, however, that Bossert's influence was not vital to their passage. The general attitude of the House was decidedly more pro-Klan than that of the Senate. At the same time that the Senate was voting against bills presented by both factions of the Klan, the House was acting favorably upon them. Both Stephenson and Bossert had a hard core of followers in each House, but neither could sway enough votes to insure the success of his own measures or to defeat those of his adversary.
Did the Klan push through legislation favorable to its philosophies? The answer to this last and most important question is an emphatic NO. The almost complete failure of the Klan's legislative program indicates that the organization was unsuccessful as a political pressure bloc on the state level. Of all the bills backed by Bossert and Stephenson only two, those concerning the flying of the American flag by the public schools and the study of the state and national Constitutions, became law. The fact that these bills had the support of both parties and were passed almost unanimously, makes the Klan claim of credit for their passage somewhat ridiculous. All of Bossert's "Americanization and Education" bills, Stephenson's highway commission "ripper" bill and the Horse Thief Detective Association measure were defeated in the Senate. Any assessment of the Ku Klux Klan's record in the 1925 Indiana General Assembly can lead to only one conclusion--it was dismally unsuccessful.
# APPENDIX A

## SENATE VOTING RECORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>RG</th>
<th>PG</th>
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*Indefinitely Postponed by 34-0—No Roll Call on House Bill*
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*RG: Religious garb bill (Senate bill [26-407] and House bill [17-197])
PSG: Public school graduate bill (5-41)
BR: Bible reading bill (20-26)
RT: Released time bill (Senate bill [26-197] and House bill [28-167])
PS: Parochial school bill
TC: Textbook commission bill
FF: Flag-flying bill (42-4)
CS: Constitutional study bill (30-0)
HTDA: Horse Thief Detective Association bill
HC: Highway Commission bill
## APPENDIX B

### HOUSE VOTING RECORD

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- **RG**  Religious garb bill (67-22)
- **PSG**  Public school graduate bill
- **BR**   Bible reading bill (75-11)
- **RT**   Released time bill (76-6)
- **FS**   Parochial school bill (61-22)
- **TC**   Textbook commission bill (87-3)
- **FF**   Flag-flying bill (76-6)
- **CS**   Constitutional study bill (94-0)
- **HTDA** Horse Thief Detective Association bill (52-35)
- **HC**   Highway Commission bill (58-36)
### APPENDIX C

**KLAN SLATE FOR HENRY COUNTY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republican Information Sheet</th>
<th>Democratic Information Sheet</th>
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<td>Calvin Coolidge - PRESIDENT - John W. Davis</td>
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<td>Charles G. Dawes - VICE-PRESIDENT - Charles M. Bryan</td>
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<td>Ed Jackson - GOVERNOR - Dr. C. B. McCulloch</td>
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<td>Harold Van Orman - LIEUT. GOVERNOR - Lew O'Bannon</td>
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<td>Arthur L. Gilliom - ATTORNEY GENERAL - Harvey Harmon</td>
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<td>Willard B. Girmill - JUDGE OF - John K. Aiken</td>
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<td>F. M. Thompson - JUDGE OF - V. E. Livengood</td>
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<td>Mrs. E. E. White - SUPREME COURT - John W. Kern</td>
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Henry N. Sherwood - SUPERINTENDENT OF - Samuel L. Scott
Favorable  PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  Neutral

Richard N. Elliot - REPRESENTATIVE TO - Laurence Handley
Neutral  CONGRESS  Antagonistic

J. Rufus Hinshaw - - COUNTY JUDGE - - Horace G. Yergin
Neutral

Paul R. Benson - - PROSECUTING - - Lee Fattie
Neutral  ATTORNEY

Charles Trowbridge - JOINT STATE - - Roy Souders
Antagonistic  REPRESENTATIVE

William C. Bond - STATE REPRESENTATIVE - Nathan Ridgway
Neutral

Clayton McKinney - COUNTY TREASURER - Don C. McKeen

Ernest Bradway - - COUNTY SHERIFF - Ed Kirby

V. T. Davis - - - COUNTY CORONER - Earle B. Call

W. S. Freel - - - COUNTY SURVEYOR - Eugene Campbell
Neutral

Paul Jamison - - COUNTY COMMISSIONER - Alonzo Stohler
MIDDLE DISTRICT

John R. Downs - - COUNTY COMMISSIONER - Charles I. Gray
NORTHERN DISTRICT

The names, under which no comment is made, are men deserving of the support of all red blooded voters.

DUTY WITHOUT FEAR OR REPROACH

NOTE: Klan Papers, Indiana State Library, Archives.
SAMPLE BALLOT FOR CASS COUNTY

State and National Ticket as endorsed by Non-Partisan Committee

FOR PRESIDENT
No choice as we realize that a great many Protestants will want to vote their honest convictions on Presidential Electors.

REPUBLICAN

X Ed Jackson
For Governor Carleton B. McCulloch

X Fred Harold Van Orman
For Lieutenant Governor Lew M. O’Bannon

X Frederick E. Schortemeir
For Secretary of State Arthur J. Hamrick

X Bernhardt H. Urbahn X Harry L. Arnold
For Treasurer of State

X Lewis S. Bowman
For Auditor of State X Robert Braken

X Arthur L. Gilliom
For Attorney General X Harvey Harmsen

X Henry R. Sherwood
For State Superintendent of Public Instruction Samuel L. Scott

Judge Supreme Court
Benjamin M. Willoughby X George K. Denton

Judge Supreme Court
X William B. Gemmill

Judge Appellate Court
X Ethan A. Dausman Valentine B. Livengood

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Judge Appellate Court</td>
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<td>Reporter of Supreme Court</td>
<td>John W. Kern</td>
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<td>Cass County Commissioner 3rd District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cass County Coroner</td>
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<td>Cass County Surveyor</td>
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<td>County Treasurer</td>
<td>John C. Rea</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Sheriff</td>
<td>Charles C. Shepard</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Coroner</td>
<td>John H. Reed</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Surveyor</td>
<td>Raymond A. Hyman</td>
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<td>Commissioner 2nd District</td>
<td>Dallas Custer</td>
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<td>Commissioner 3rd District</td>
<td>Oliver P. Erbaugh</td>
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All candidates marked with (X) in front of their name are the Candidates the Non-Partisan Committee endorses. Any Loyal American Citizen will make no mistake in voting for them. It is understood that we in no way attack the character of any candidate we do not endorse.

Respectfully,
NON-PARTISAN VOTERS COMMITTEE

NOTE: Klan Papers, Indiana State Library, Archives.
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"Klan Senator from Indiana." Literary Digest, 87 (November 14, 1925), 16-17.

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