tional Board derives its authority 'to make certain timely decisions on behalf of the League.' And when the National Board decides it is 'Time for Action,' it calls on members all over the country to support the League's official position by various means: radio, TV, newspapers, letters to Congressmen, etc. Look, Bill. Read this word of instruction to local leagues:

> A League shall respond to a *Time for Action* sent by a national or state Board. If a local League does not agree with the position of the state or national League on an issue, or if it feels its membership is not prepared on the subject, it may choose not to take legislative action. However, it shall inform its members of the *Time for Action* so that they can act as individuals if they wish to do so. A report as to why no action was taken shall be sent by the [local] Board to the state or national Board for its information. A local League shall not take official action contrary to a state or national stand. . . .

"How's that for democratic procedure?"

Membership Polls Considered "Not Sound"

Bill started reading over Sue's shoulder. "Look at this section, above that one you're reading. That answers my question about polling the members:

> Determining consensus should be an interpretive process. The Board should take into account areas of agreement expressed in general membership meetings, in unit meetings, and in Conventions and the annual meeting when the Program was selected. The Board should give continuous attention to the development of membership thinking throughout the year as each Program item is discussed. In this way the Board is in touch with membership thinking as it develops *and does not need to seek it when an emergency arises* . . . [italics supplied.]

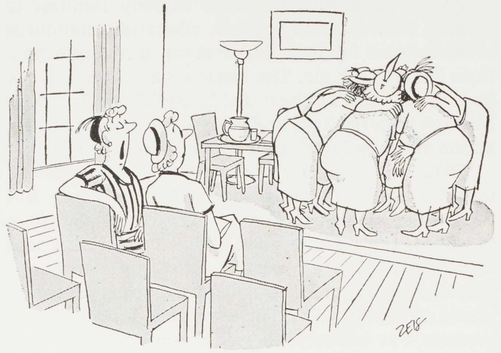
"And here's the clincher:

> Polling the membership, particularly by mail or phone, to arrive at an agreement, is not sound. It tends to force crystallization of opinion without benefit of deliberation. Moreover, it does not allow for variation of opinion.

"So, I guess it *is* official League practice, as you say, to determine the majority opinion of its members by *interpretation,* rather than consulting the members and asking them point-blank what they believe on a particular issue. You must have been right," Bill went on. "There *was* no poll on the Bricker Amendment. And yet when Mrs. Lee announced the League's opposition, the implication was that she spoke for all 127,000 members."

Sue was thoughtful for a moment. "You know, this discussion makes me wonder about the subject on the present *Current Agenda,* and whether or not the League 'opinion' which evolves from this current study, as interpreted by the National Board, might one day form the basis for an official League position in favor of more government, or perhaps the UN's 'bill of rights.'

"Remember, the League's two-year program is



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"Sometimes I think this club is run by a clique."

made up of two parts, the 'Platform' of general statements of principle, based on studies made during previous years, and the 'Current Agenda,' which is composed of 'items for concentrated study and concerted action.' The current subjects for study under this heading are 1) U.S. international trade policies and 2) individual liberty. The League is already on record in favor of governmental control of international trade, so it is the second subject, 'individual liberty,' that has me guessing!"

"I can't imagine," Bill broke in, "how ideas of individual liberty could *possibly* be used as an excuse for advocating more governmental power!"

"Yes, I know—I couldn't either, until I had been to some of our study units. But let me explain.

"At the first few meetings we talked about the struggles for freedom, how the Magna Charta was written, and the risks men took, facing imprisonment, physical torture and even death, to fight for the right to worship as they pleased, to write and publish books, to gain trial by jury, and so on. Their successes, over the centuries, resulted in a number of 'rights' which Englishmen thought their due, and the American Revolution was fought by men who believed they were entitled to these 'rights.' "

"What's wrong with that?" Bill asked.

"Nothing! What makes me question the purpose of this study (if there was a *purpose* in the selection of this topic) is the general point of view, and, yes, even slant or bias which is apparent in the League-recommended literature by modern authors. It is true that they tell about this early history of the freedom fight. But when they try to apply the principles of freedom to current problems—that's where they go off base, in my opinion.

"The League is pushing a series of pamphlets, *Freedom Agenda* booklets,[4] and they have also put out a mimeographed bibliography on 'Individual Liberty.' Of course, the officials of the League can't be held responsible for every statement in books whose publication they had nothing to do with. And in fairness I should say that the *Freedom Agenda* booklets all carry a disclaimer of responsibility on the part of the sponsors. Nevertheless, League officials *are* answerable for the fact that *certain* books and writers, *and not others,* were selected for recommendation. And when they all present more or less the same viewpoint it would seem they must reflect the League's position.

"One after another, the League-recommended authors advocate some kind of government planning and control over commerce and industry. They all seem to look on government as a *friend,* not as a possible threat to freedom. Some of the authors fear newspaper monopolists, one advocates a national educational system for 'democracy,' and a number of them give the impression that the right to own property is a sort of lesser right. They criticize especially nineteenth-century Supreme Court decisions as too strictly limited to the protection of private property and contracts, and imply that the Supreme Court judges were out-of-step with the times. The constitutional checks and balances, they say, create rigidities and place obstacles in the path of efficient government."

Bill interrupted. "Of course! The men who wrote our Constitution were *afraid* of efficient government."

"Well, the authors of the suggested readings wouldn't agree, Bill—they want *more* efficiency. They imply that the President should have wide latitude in using his own discretion to act, especially in emergencies. They say he has vast powers unspecified in the Constitution. When the President assumes added powers, it is not 'undemocratic,' because he is an elected official. On the other hand, to grant to the judges, who are appointed to office, the right to overrule legislation, tends to violate the principles of 'democracy.' "

Criticism of the Legislative Branch

"Sue, this reminds me of something Hayek said in *The Road to Serfdom.* Remember what he wrote about the Socialists and the Nazis? He said they always objected to the idea of 'merely' formal justice and equality under the law, and especially attacked an independent judiciary system such as our Constitution had sought to provide."

"Yes," answered Sue, "I remember. That's one of my reasons for wondering why these particular books and authors were recommended.

"There is another idea running through the *Freedom Agenda* pamphlets," she continued. "The writers seem to be afraid the Legislative branch is getting too powerful, and they criticize congressional investigations, governmental loyalty programs and laws aimed at preventing subversive activities. They're sort of 'anti-anti-communist,' I would say. But they *do* give some interesting facts. Maybe the women who study them will learn something about freedom anyway."

"Perhaps," Bill replied. "But if League officials interpret member opinion to mean 'there ought to be a law,' will their study be helping the cause? I'm not opposed to studying freedom, Sue—not at all. But why be the tool of a national organization that seems always to interpret member opinion as an endorsement of more government?" He paused a moment, then continued. "Sue, you have read a lot of League publications, as well as books they refer to. Tell me, generally speaking, do they recommend socialism?"

"What do you mean by 'socialism'?"

"Do they promote Big Government?"

"Yes, I think so. But you can see for yourself. Here's one of their publications about the United Nations.[5] In this pamphlet, the UN is considered practically synonymous with 'international cooperation.' It advocates strengthening the UN and its specialized agencies like UNESCO and ECOSOC.

"Here's another League publication called 'Big Government and the Citizen.'[6] 'What we have to fear is not big government so much as government out of control. . . . Authority should be decentralized to the greatest extent feasible, with centralized control and supervision.' So it recommends efficiency, good management and a clear line of command.

"And, Bill, according to the National Board (August 1953) the League is opposed officially to limiting income taxes to 25 per cent because 'it would virtually eliminate "progressive" rates of taxation and thus violate the principle of ability to pay.' "

Bill was stunned. "Just what kind of women voters are they turning out? Do your friends in the League realize what kind of propaganda it puts out?"

"Some do, of course. They're pretty smart."

"Then, why did they join?"

"For all sorts of reasons. Some joined for the same reason I did—to meet folks. Others wanted to learn about their local government. And many women join because they're stirred up about the horrible mess the world is in and they want to *do* something. They join because they approve of action and, of course, the League is set up to act!"

"But do they approve of the way the League acts? From what you have said, Sue, the League of Women Voters has lent support continuously, from the time it was founded, to programs which have led to ever-increasing governmental powers, higher and higher taxes, and more and more interference with the private affairs of citizens. Sue, perhaps you had better ask yourself just *why* you continue to add weight to official statements of the League by letting it appear to speak for you."

4 Published, with funds provided by the Fund for the Republic of the Ford Foundation, by Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, Inc., a research and educational organization created by the League.

5 *The Citizen and the United Nations.* (LWV Publication No. 177, 1951).

6 LWV Publication No. 164, 1951.