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The League for Mutual Aid Collection

Papers, 1920-1972
(Predominantly, 1940-1972)

3 linear feet

Accession Number 455
LC Number MS

The papers of the League for Mutual Aid were received with the papers of the Workers' Defense League by the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in August 1970 and were opened for research in July of 1983.

The League for Mutual Aid was a national organization founded by Roger N. Baldwin in New York City in 1920 with the goal of helping workers and others in personal emergencies regardless of race, creed, or politics. This help included interest-free loans, free legal advice, aid in finding employment and low-cost housing, and medical referrals. Among others, the League helped the victims of World Wars I and II, those hurt by the Depression, victims of McCarthyism, and civil rights workers. Throughout the years, the membership of the League included Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, John Nicholas Beffel, Earl Browder, Stuart Chase, A. J. Muste, Scott Nearing, A. Philip Randolph, Norman Thomas, and Rexford G. Tugwell.

In addition to providing loans to individuals, the League also accepted groups of borrowers under special arrangements. These included southern sharecroppers, minority youths--who used the loans to pay their initiation fees and dues in the building trades unions--and longshoremen who were expelled with Harry Bridges from the International Longshoremen's Association.

The League for Mutual Aid was governed by a 15 member Executive Committee which was elected annually by the membership. The Committee raised and administered the funds of the organization and decided on loan applications. The Executive Committee also maintained an Advisory Committee, composed of prominent people from a number of states, which advised members on problems and recommended services.

In 1972, the membership of the League voted to liquidate the organization and the League's funds were turned over to the Human Rights Fund of the Workers' Defense League.

The papers of the League for Mutual Aid reflect the daily functioning of the League, including its fundraising and loan-granting activities.

Important subjects covered in the collection are:

Apprenticeship Dues

Strike Relief

Among the important correspondents are:

Roger Baldwin

Nathan Marer

John N. Beffel

Harry Rappaport

Dorothy Dunbar Bromley

Frank Schonfeld

Clara dayman

Adelaide Schulkind

Walter Frank

Roland Watts

An index to subjects and correspondents will be found on p. 7

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6 manuscript boxes

Series I, General Office Files, 1920-1972; Boxes 1-3:

Correspondence, minutes, membership lists, financial reports, and other items which document the daily functioning of the organization. Included in this series are correspondence with contributors, information on the National Sharecroppers Fund and the Joint Apprenticeship Program, and material concerning the liquidation of the League.

Series II, Loan Case Files, 1940-1972; Boxes 3-6:

Applications, correspondence, financial statements, and other material comprising the loan case files of the League's Revolving Loan Fund relating to loans granted to help striking workers and to enable others to pay initiation fees and apprenticeship program dues.

Non-manuscript material

Ten photographs relating to the 50th Anniversary Dinner of the League on 21 March 1970, featuring Roger Baldwin, have been placed in the Archives Audio-Visual Collections.

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Series I
General Office Files, 1920-1972
Boxes 1-3

Correspondence, minutes, membership lists, financial reports, programs, and other items from the office files of the League for Mutual Aid which document the daily functioning of the organization. Included in this series are correspondence with contributors to the League, information on the National Sharecroppers Fund, the Joint Apprenticeship Program, and the Painters' Union, and material concerning the liquidation of the League. The files are arranged alphabetically by subject or by type of material

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- 1-6. Anniversary Luncheon, 1937-71, n.d.
7. By-Laws, 1920-39
- 8-20. Correspondence, 1938-70

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- 1-3. Correspondence, 1971-72, n.d.
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1. Membership; Campaign, [1920?]
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- 3-7. ; General, 1921, 1968-69, n.d.
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14. Newspaper Clippings, 1968
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19. Revolving Loan Fund
20. ; Contributors' Promissory Notes, 1927-68
21. ; Forms and Rules

Series II
Loan Case Files, 1940-1972
Boxes 3-6

Applications, correspondence, financial statements, and other items which comprise the loan case files of the League. The League, through its Revolving Loan Fund, made interest-free loans available to people in need. Many of these loans were granted to workers who were unable to work because their unions were on strike, or to those who used these loans to pay initiation fees and dues for apprenticeship programs. Workers in the Painters' Union and the Social Service Employees Union, among others, benefited greatly from these loans. The case files are arranged alphabetically by the name of the borrower; general correspondence about loans, a ledger book, and miscellaneous applications appear in this series at the end of the case files.

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