

to the establishment of a planning commission, which laid the ground work for establishment of the parks and playgrounds system of the district."

## II. 1932-1941 A Period of Intense Civic Activity

Shortly after the adoption of a new constitution and new by-laws in April 1932 the Dupont Circle Citizens Association began a period of increased activity, or at least there is more on record of its activities.

An important event took place in 1935 with the establishment of the Dupont Circle Reporter and the distribution on or about 20 October of Volume 1, Number 1. Among the contents of the first issue were notices of: the sale of the Belmont property at 18th and New Hampshire Avenue to the Order of the Eastern Star, the removal of car tracks from P Street and upper Connecticut Avenue, dedication of the new P Street bridge and efforts to stop defacement of Dupont Circle.

Some of the major problem areas coming up for discussion and recommendations during the period from 1932 to 1941 (more or less in the order of the amount of emphasis given to them) were: Traffic and Parking, Noise and Smoke Abatement, Rezoning and Commercialization, Crime, Taxation and the Federal Contribution, Playgrounds, and the Proposed Underpass.

As an indication of its actual or intended scope of activities of that period, Demarest Lloyd, president of DCCA, stated in December 1936 that the association would "fight to the best of our ability against any further commercialization in our area, except where special circumstances make the proposed change reasonable or unimportant."

In addition to putting the full force of its influence in support of adequate police protection for the city, the DCCA was pledged to

... join with other citizens' associations and others who recognize the injustice of the small contribution of the Federal Government and demand that it be increased. We shall oppose any increase in the tax rate.

... lend all possible support to the carrying out of (proposed D.C.) health program.

Traffic, that acute and intriguing problem, will receive much attention from the Traffic Committee and all members. . . . Parking the full length of both sides of streets in the residential area is not only a nuisance, it is a danger, responsible for a high percentage of accidents, about which there is so much righteous indignation but too little clear thinking.

"It is said there are too many taxicabs cruising on the streets. If so, we shall give the problem our attention.

"Noise, smoke and other annoyances will come in for consideration. . . .

*Traffic and Parking.* An early reference to traffic concerns installation of "the first automatic signal light in Washington." It is especially interesting to note that the installation was apparently in the Dupont Circle area and not in the "downtown F Street area" as might have been expected. Quoting from an article appearing in the Washington STAR on 25 November 1925: "The first automatic signal light in Washington may go into operation late today at New Hampshire Avenue and Eighteenth street. Workmen were completing the installation of the light this morning, and Director Eldridge will press the button putting it in operation as soon as it is ready."

Much attention was given by DCCA, especially from 1936 to 1941, to traffic safety, parking, cleaning of streets, bicycle riding on sidewalks, excessive cruising of taxicabs and sounding of automobile horns, and other related problems.

In November 1936, the DCCA suggested appointment of a citizens' committee vested with power to carry traffic violators to court.

A general clean-up of streets under the supervision of DCCA was proposed in April 1937 by Dr. Harry A. Garfield, son of the late President Garfield. He suggested that printed notices be placed on autos asking drivers to move cars at a specified time each day to facilitate cleaning.

In April 1938 protests were made against bicycle riding on sidewalks and the wrong way on one-way streets; also concerning gross disregard of regulations on sounding of automobile horns between midnight and 7 a.m. The then-existing system of traffic lights at Dupont Circle was favored, and a study of traffic conditions at Sheridan Circle was asked. Some decrease was noted in traffic accidents in late 1938 and early 1939, but concern was expressed over pedestrian involvement. It was suggested that universal installation of pedestrian traffic signals working co-ordinately with the motorist traffic signals would be of great value. The duty of motorists and others to give fire engines, police and ambulances the right of way was emphasized.

There was discussion in 1941 of proposals concerning off-street parking facilities, additional Police Court judge time for traffic duty, increase in traffic personnel of the Metropolitan Police Department and the extension of the driver training program in high schools.

In April 1941 the DCCA was addressed by Traffic Director W. A. Van Duzer, who said that some master plan in which all should co-operate must

be formed for the ultimate solution of the District's traffic problem. Concerning subways in the District, he said he could not give any definite answer, but that he believed any such a system should be put in the area bounded by Rock Creek Park and Soldiers' Home, in which 37% of the Government workers lived. He also described the new stagger system for Government offices, in which the peak of 82,000 workers at 9 a.m. had been reduced to 42,000 near 8 a.m.

Co-operation of motorists and pedestrians was said to be responsible for Washington winning the award for the safest city in its class for the past year. Also discussed were reports received of poor treatment of policemen by District courts in requiring them to "waste" time in court on their days off, waiting for cases in which they were to testify to be brought to trial.

*Noise and Smoke Abatement.* Despite the best of intentions, little meaningful progress apparently was made in noise abatement at the time, or indeed at any time since, for that matter. The excessive and unnecessary sounding of automobile horns had already become a major problem in the 1930's, as had the late night disturbances from places of entertainment and other sources. There have appeared numerous complaints about the continuing serious interference of noise with the intended use of properties for residential purposes in the area.

Abatement of smoke (other than the recently increased air pollution arising largely from automobile exhaust) came in for intensive but short-lived attention in 1937 and 1938. In February 1937 the high level of smoke prevalence was compared with the worst of industrial cities. Smoke abatement was considered to be a long-term proposition which should begin immediately. It was felt that wiping out the smoke nuisance would be an impossibility, but that there should be regulation through supervising the installation of new equipment. Hand-operated boiler plants were said to be responsible for 80 per cent of the smoke violations. Some 16 months later smoke nuisances were reported to have decreased, along with the installation of 1601 mechanical firing units.

*Rezoning and Commercialization.* Some of the beginnings of the present heavy emphasis on rezoning and commercialization were showing up in the late 1930's. In February 1937 the officers of the DCCA were authorized to be present at a zone hearing to "vigorously protest" the extended commercialization of 19th and 20th streets between R and S streets. Likewise later that year the rezoning of some property on Massachusetts avenue west of the Circle from residential to commercial "B" was opposed. However,

in January 1939 the proposed rezoning of Massachusetts avenue on both sides between 15th and 18th streets, N.W. was in effect approved by a vote in favor of increasing building height limitation from 60 feet to 90 feet.

Vigorous opposition was expressed in December 1940 to any proposals to change the zoning of property on Massachusetts avenue between 20th and 22nd streets to permit building height to be raised from the existing 60 feet to 90 feet. Zoning problems affecting the Dupont Circle area and the changes made in the zoning of property in the last 40 years were explained by S. G. Lindholm, zoning engineer of the District and a member of the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

*Crime.* Not much comment concerning crime appears during this period except that there are indications of annual reports being received and studied. Mention was made of some decreases in crime in late 1938.

*Taxation and the Federal Contribution.* In January 1939 the Overton plan to increase the Federal share in District of Columbia expenses was approved in principle. It was estimated that at least 40 per cent of property here was then of tax-free governmental or institutional ownership.

Shortly afterward, in March of the same year, a proposed new tax program for the District was outlined to the DCCA by the president of the Washington Board of Trade. Among the types of tax discussed were the intangible personal tax, the business privilege tax, the straight graduated income tax, the real property tax and a personal income sales tax. The latter tax was said to be capable of collecting more revenue than any other excepting the gasoline tax. A maximum tax of \$1.50 per hundred on real property was advocated.

*Playgrounds.* As stated earlier the DCCA has been credited with being very influential in the establishment of the program and system of playgrounds for the District. Although the association had in previous years promoted the establishment of playgrounds in various locations, including the nearby "P Street Beach," there was apparently developing as of about 1939-40 an intensive overuse of Dupont Circle itself as a playground. There were several references to requests for a fence around the fountain and full-time policing of the park, along with deplored the use of the circle as a playground and the fountain as a public bath.

One of the consequences of the above-mentioned problems was the removal in November 1939 of the sand boxes, which had long been a part of the circle, because of damage that was occurring to trees, shrubbery, grass, fountain, etc.