

# WISCONSIN'S FIRST CAPITOLS

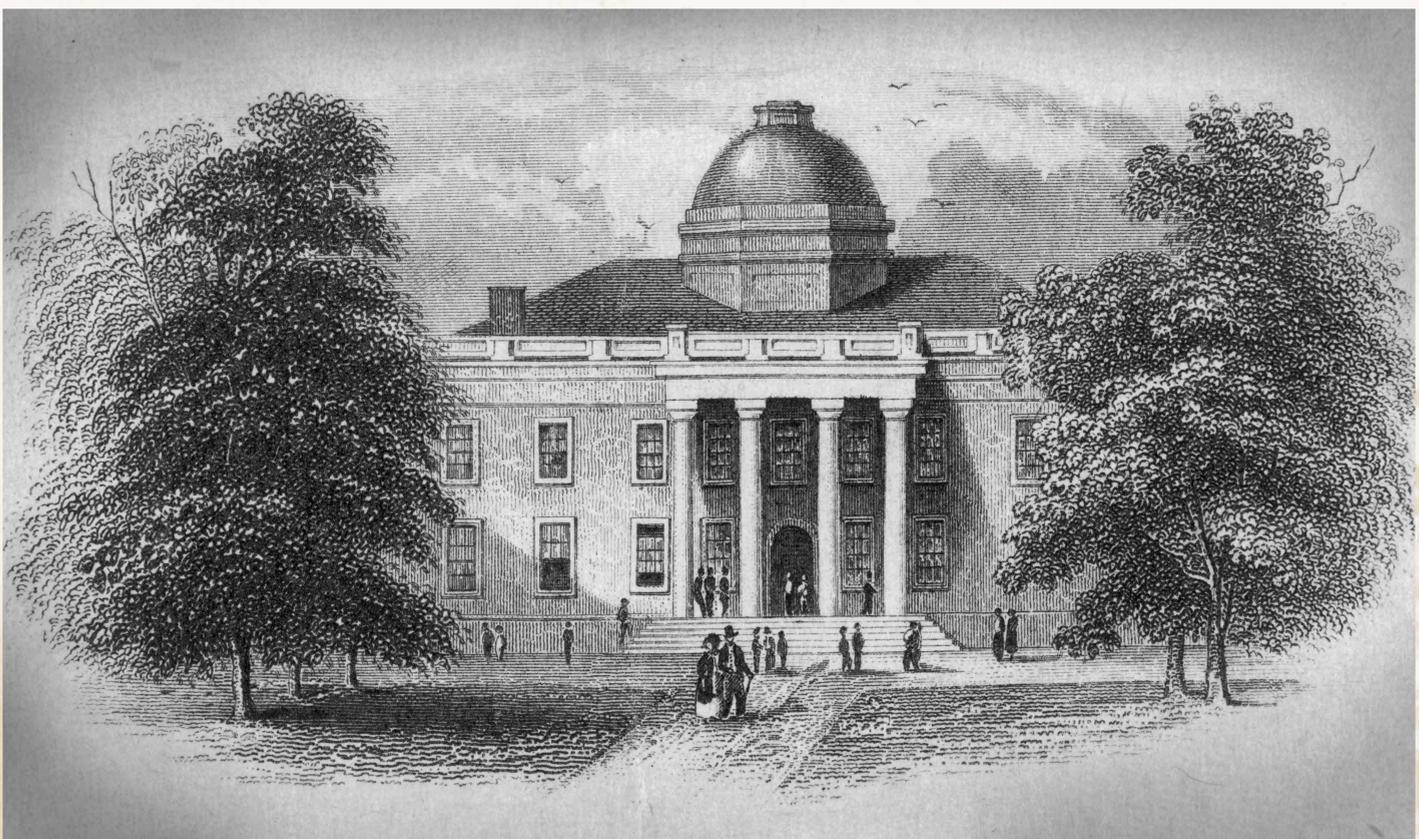


The first capitol in Belmont, where legislators voted to make Madison the permanent capital in 1836 (now a state historic site)

[firstcapitol.wisconsinhistory.org](http://firstcapitol.wisconsinhistory.org)



The Madison lakes area was home to American Indian communities for thousands of years. Early American Indians lived, farmed, and built burial mounds here on the isthmus. These mounds took the shape of birds, beasts, and spirit beings. White settlers began arriving in the early 1800s. In 1836, legislators gathered at the first territorial capitol building in Belmont. They voted to make Madison the new state capital. Construction of the new capitol building began in 1837 and was finished in 1848—the same year Wisconsin became the 30<sup>th</sup> state.



The first Madison capitol was built between 1836 and 1848, and occupied until 1859.

WHI IMAGE ID 7042



Rosaline and Eben Peck's cabin, the first house in Madison, was built in 1837.

WHI IMAGE ID 128977



A view of Madison from across Lake Monona in 1884 shows the second Madison capitol in the distance.

WHI IMAGE ID 102418



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# A CENTURY *of* STORIES

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT THE CAPITOL

## THE SECOND CAPITOL BURNS, 1904



The second capitol in Madison was started in 1857 and finished in 1869. On the night of February 27, 1904, a gas jet on the second floor ignited fresh varnish and started a fire. The building had been updated with modern firefighting equipment, but the water supply to the capitol sprinklers was empty. It had been drained the night before. The fire raged for over 18 hours. The building was very badly damaged. The Legislature decided to make only temporary repairs. Planning for a new capitol building began immediately.



The second Madison capitol

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# BUILDING TODAY'S CAPITOL, 1906-1917



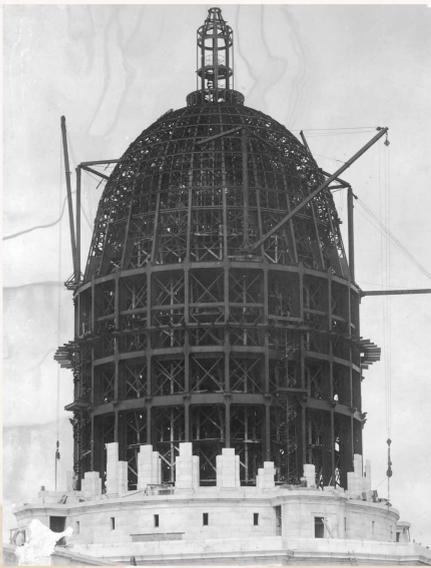
Work proceeds on the new capitol. The north wing of the old capitol (right) remained in use until 1915.

WHI IMAGE ID 3482



Stone carvers work on statue groups that would be placed at the exterior base of the Capitol dome.

WHI IMAGE ID 9570



The steel structure of the Capitol dome nears completion. The structure would later be covered in White Bethel Vermont granite.

WHI IMAGE ID 9569

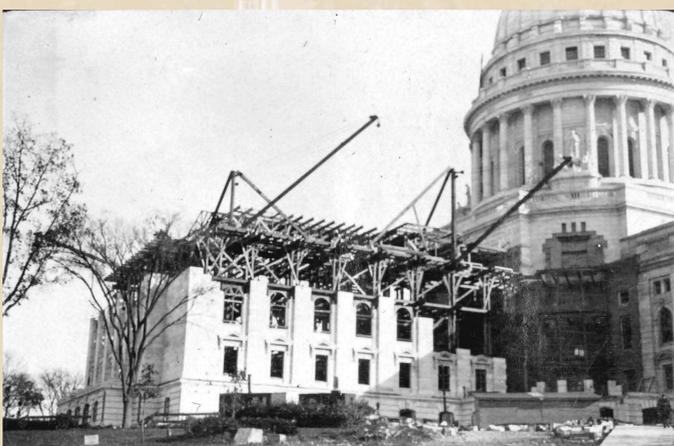


In the fall of 1906, workers began construction of the third capitol. The old, fire-damaged building remained in use as work progressed. Wing by wing, the old capitol was removed and replaced. In 1915, the last parts of it were demolished. The new granite and marble capitol building designed by George B. Post & Sons was finished in 1917.



Workers prepare the statue "Wisconsin" to be hoisted to the top of the Capitol dome.

WHI IMAGE ID 9566



Construction continues on the north wing of the new capitol, the last wing to be completed.

WHI IMAGE ID 4916



A group portrait of the construction crew that built the Capitol dome.

WHI IMAGE ID 10734



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# THE NEED FOR RESTORATION



By the 1970s, the Capitol building clearly needed help.

Decades of use had taken its toll. Drop ceilings, makeshift offices, and many coats of paint hid its original beauty. Air conditioners hung from historic windows. Telephone and data lines were stapled over oaken woodwork. Murals, mosaics, and paintings were aging badly. Restoration began in 1988. By the fall of 2001, the building was returned to its former glory.



Paint was peeling from many works of art and decorative areas in the Capitol.



Statues throughout the Capitol were covered in dirt and grime, as well as affectionate tributes from visitors like the lipstick shown here.



Research showed that several decorations in the Capitol were altered over time. This ceiling coffer was originally painted in different colors, had no light at its center, and was framed in black.



Conservators performed extensive analysis throughout the building to uncover the original color scheme and identify lost stencil work, including the sculpted frieze in the loggia pictured here.

WISCONSIN STATE CAPITOL CONSERVATION/RESTORATION PROJECT		CROSS-SECTION ANALYSIS SHEET	
NUMBER	ID	SAMPLE LOCATION	ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS, East Gallery
			AMR
OBSERVATION 250 X magnification Shot at ASA 160 Kodak Tungsten film Reflected light.			
			
			Thin layer of green pigments with fillers. Well bonded to other layers.
			Thin layer of light green pigments, evenly dispersed in the strata, finely ground.
			White priming layer?
			Thin beige layer of color pigments
			Thin layer of blue pigments
			Thin layer of beige pigments
			Thin layer of blue pigments
			Thin layer of red pigments
			Plaster base.....
Top layer is most recent, bottom earliest.			
COMMENT This sample comes from the east gallery of the Assembly. The top layers are of more recent application. Layers #3 to #6 are interesting in that they show an almost identical repeat of color. One possible interpretation is that layer #3 was a base coat of blue pigments, applied as an experiment with a thin beige stencil (4). The model was approved and the wall was repainted and the color scheme completed.			

Conservators analyzed this cross-section of paint layers, which were applied to the east wall of the Assembly Chamber over the years.



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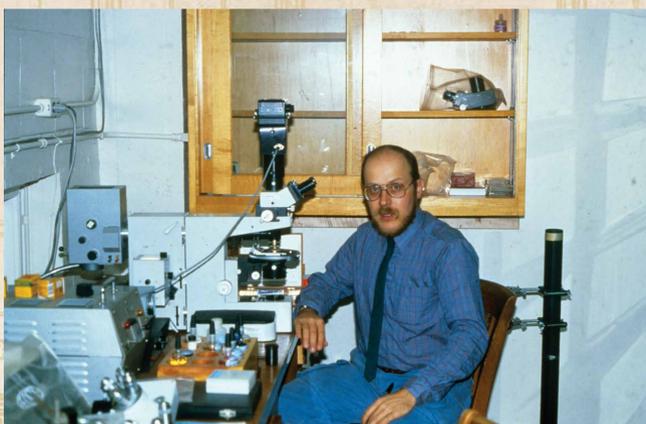


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# A CENTURY *of* STORIES

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT THE CAPITOL

## TREASURES BENEATH THE DOME



Anton "Tony" Rajer (1952–2011) was a highly accomplished art conservator who helped restore paintings during the restoration project.



In 1997, Wisconsin Public Television produced a film titled "Treasures Beneath the Dome." It provides a glimpse of the craftsmanship and artistry present throughout the Capitol. We've excerpted a few minutes of it here. You can purchase the entire film at the Capitol tour desk.



A conservator carefully restores a painting in the Capitol.



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# CONSERVATORS AT WORK



The Senate Chamber before restoration (left) and after restoration (right).

WHI IMAGE ID 44743 & WHI IMAGE ID 44745



An art conservator works on a mural in the Assembly Chamber. This mural was painted by Edwin Blashfield, who also created the mural in the ceiling of the rotunda.



Capitol employees were relocated as renovation work proceeded wing by wing. Workers restored public areas to their original conditions. Private office spaces were modified and rebuilt to align with the historic character of the building. Conservators meticulously restored and preserved artwork throughout the building. Modern electrical and communications systems were reinstalled to ensure that future upgrades would not disrupt the look and feel of the building.

RIGHT: Paint was removed from the walls of the Governor's Conference Room to reveal the African Mahogany underneath.

WHI IMAGE ID 45104 & WHI IMAGE ID 45069



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# WORKING AT THE CAPITOL



## St. Peter at Capitol

Any man who has had trouble in keeping track of two or three keys will appreciate the magnitude of the task which devolves upon William Henwood, keeper of the 6,000 keys at the state capitol. When the huge key rings which he carried proved inadequate, "Old Bill," as he is known, drew up a plan for a key vault and the governor ordered the key vault built. Now "Old Bill's" chief worry is keeping each senator supplied with the three keys he needs.

Milwaukee Journal, January 7, 1923

## KEEPER OF THE KEYS



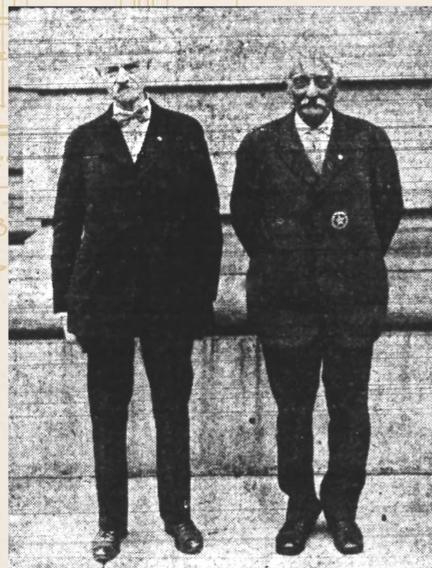
Custodian William Henwood was in charge of Capitol security from 1900 to 1935. "The Wisconsin Capitol is said to have the finest and the most intricate set of locks of any public building in America," reported the *Racine Journal-Times* in 1918. Each wing, office, desk, and mailbox had its own lock, and Henwood kept their contents safe for three decades.

## VETERANS ON STAFF



In the 1920s, about 100,000 tourists came to the Capitol each year. They were greeted by two Civil War veterans, Stanley Lathrop and Albert Cook, the building's guides.

Another veteran, 85-year-old Jesse Myers, ran the GAR Memorial Hall. "I am still here at my desk putting in a regular day's work every day," he told a reporter in 1928. A fourth Civil War veteran, Frank Higgins, worked at the Capitol every day until retiring in 1930 at the age of 91.



Capitol guides Stanley Lathrop and Albert Cook in 1922, *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 17, 1922

## AWFUL SMELLS



In 1932, state officials in Madison discovered that wardens were selling confiscated fish and game. The officials insisted that all seized game be sent to the Capitol. But soon offensive odors began rising up the Supreme Court's elevator shaft.

Custodian Tony Pickarts hunted down the source of the smell—a rotting sturgeon that a warden had deposited in a basement storeroom. After the fish was removed, conservation officials revoked their provision, and wardens were once again allowed to dispose of seized game locally.



Two Wisconsin game wardens examine illegally-caught sturgeon in 1935. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



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# A CENTURY of STORIES

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT THE CAPITOL

## WOMEN AT THE CAPITOL

 In the late 1800s and early 1900s, few women worked in the Capitol. The first woman in state government may have been Winona Merrick, who started certifying new teachers for the Department of Public Instruction in 1887. In the early 1890s, Mary Priestly began managing records in the Adjutant General's office, which she considered "the next best thing to being a soldier." In 1900, Katherine Houghton cut checks to meet the state's payroll and pay its bills.

After women won the right to vote in 1920 and an equal rights bill passed in 1921, the number of women in state government increased. The first women lawmakers were three rural teachers elected to the Assembly in 1924, but no woman was elected to statewide office until 1960, and no woman joined the Supreme Court until 1976.

Voters didn't elect significant numbers of women to the Capitol until the 1970s. Since then, roughly 25% of lawmakers have been women in each legislature, and today five of the seven Supreme Court justices are women.



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FLAT TOP DESK (Central drawer 1 side)

ENDS

WASTE PAPER BASKET

FLAT TOP TABLE

# OVERCROWDING AT THE CAPITOL

## Capitol Girl Checks Railroads in Bathroom

### Statistical Body Chief Is Moved Into a Lavatory

(This is the fifth of a series of articles revealing over-crowded, unhealthy conditions under which state employes are working in the capitol.—Editor's Note.)

BY WILLIAM DAWSON JR.  
(Of The Capital Times Staff)  
Of all the odd arrangements made for office space in the capitol because of overcrowded conditions, the most unusual was that made for the statistical department of the railroad commission.

A women's lavatory, bathroom, and lounging room on the fourth floor of the north wing has been hurriedly converted into an office for this division.

C. E. Schreiber, head of the division, occupies the lavatory, his room being reached through a swinging door.

The division's stenographer, whose name is omitted to save her embarrassment, occupies a small bathroom between Mr. Schreiber's quarters and the lounging room which is used as an office by O. S. Syftestad and W. A. Anderson, special investigators.

All the plumbing fixtures of the rooms have been left in their original state. The bathtub in the stenographer's office has been covered with heavy cardboard.

The three tiny rooms do not offer nearly enough space for the many records of the department. Mr. Schreiber has barely enough room to turn around because his room is so filled with filing cabinets and his desk.

The stenographer must work at a diminutive desk because cramped conditions of her room will not permit use of a larger one.

The small windows in these rooms have glazed glass that does not permit entrance of much daylight.

The normal schools regents office has been moved into a corner of the G. A. R. memorial hall on the fourth floor of the north wing. Here E. G. Doudna, board secretary, and his staff labor in improvised office space amid relics of the Civil war while portraits of dignified soldiers of the days of '61 look down upon the confusion.

A 1928 *Capital Times* exposé of crowded conditions in the Capitol



By the end of the 1920s, the Capitol was bursting at its seams. "There is one well-known official using a women's lavatory for his office," the *Capital Times* reported in 1928, "while his stenographer occupies a bathroom just around the corner."

Back then, legislators only met for a few months each spring. As soon as they left, state employees spread out into empty Capitol offices and meeting rooms. As each new session approached, the civil servants crammed themselves back into unventilated storerooms, basement alcoves, and even restrooms.



An architect's rendering of the proposed state office building with the Capitol visible in the background

WHI IMAGE ID 51629



A view of the state office building in 1941

WHI IMAGE ID 6426



Employees record births in the state office building in 1942

WHI IMAGE ID 13866

Today, state employees work in 30 major buildings in 7 cities around the state.

WISCONSIN STATE  
CAPITOL  
MADISON WISCONSIN  
518-3218  
FURNITURE  
DESKS, CHAIRS, TABLES  
DAVENPORTS, BOOKCASES, ETC.  
ALL TYPES.

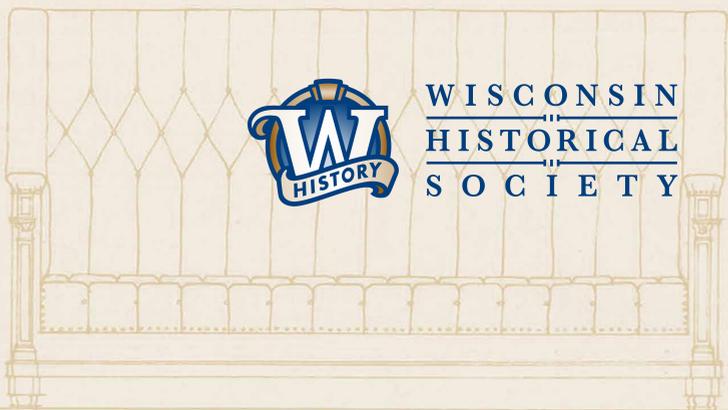


CONTRACTOR SHALL VERIFY ALL FIGURED DIMENSIONS AND TAKE ALL MEASUREMENTS AT THE BUILDING. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE RETURNED TO  
**GEO. B. POST & SONS**  
ARCHITECTS

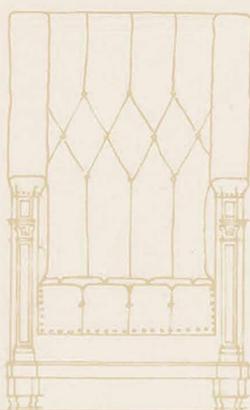
347 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK CITY  
NOTE. TYPES OF FURNITURE  
A. CLERKS AND BUSINESS OFFICES.  
B. SECRETARIES AND ASSISTANTS TO DEPTS.



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DAVENPORT COUCH (Leather)



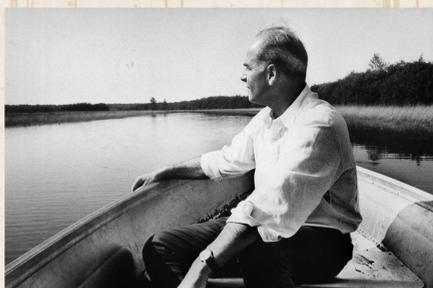
ARM-CHAIR (Leather)

# GOVERNOR NELSON AND CONSERVATION



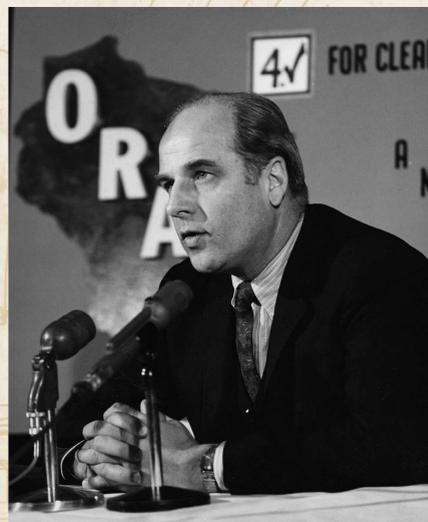
Democratic governor Gaylord Nelson wanted to focus on the environment when he entered politics in 1948. “I had concluded that the deterioration of the environment in which we live is the most serious threat to the human species,” he recalled.

As governor, Nelson established the Outdoor Recreation Acquisition Program (ORAP) in 1961. It committed \$50 million over the next decade to environmental planning and protection of natural areas.



Nelson at the Apostle Islands ca. 1967  
WHI IMAGE ID 56854

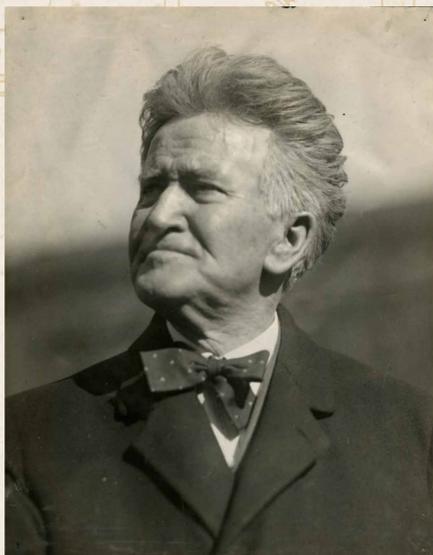
After his election to the US Senate in 1962, Nelson helped outlaw the pesticide DDT, pass the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, and establish the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.



Governor Nelson describes ORAP in 1961.  
WHI IMAGE ID 98672

He later conceived of Earth Day, and on April 22, 1970, more than 20 million Americans participated in environmental teach-ins. Last year over a billion people across the globe participated in Earth Day events.

# GOVERNOR LA FOLLETTE AND THE WISCONSIN IDEA



Governor La Follette, ca. 1925  
WHI IMAGE ID 110484



Republican governor Robert M. (“Fighting Bob”) La Follette fought corruption and expanded democracy during his three terms in office, 1900–1906.

He also represented Wisconsin in the US House of Representatives (1885–1891) and Senate (1906–1925) as a leader of the Progressive Movement. He ran unsuccessfully for US President in 1924.

La Follette was the strongest advocate of the “Wisconsin Idea”—the concept that government officials and university experts should work together to improve life for all citizens.

In 1901, he set up the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB), the first agency in the nation created to provide lawmakers with non-partisan, expert help when drafting bills. Today nearly every state has one.



Dr. Charles R. McCarthy and his staff at the Legislative Reference Library in 1906  
WHI IMAGE ID 3783



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# A CENTURY of STORIES

## CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AT THE CAPITOL

### 100 YEARS OF WISCONSIN GOVERNORS

GOVERNOR (PARTY)	DATES	FROM
Scott Walker (R)	Incumbent	Delavan
Jim Doyle (D)	2003–2011	Madison
Scott McCallum (R)	2001–2003	Fond du Lac
Tommy Thompson (R)	1987–2001	Elroy
Anthony S. Earl (D)	1983–1987	St. Ignace, Mich.
Lee S. Dreyfus (R)	1979–1983	Milwaukee
Martin J. Schreiber (D)	1977–1979	Milwaukee
Patrick J. Lucey (D)	1971–1977	Ferryville
Warren P. Knowles (R)	1965–1971	River Falls
John W. Reynolds Jr. (D)	1963–1965	Green Bay
Gaylord A. Nelson (D)	1959–1963	Clear Lake
Vernon W. Thomson (R)	1957–1959	Richland Center
Walter J. Kohler Jr. (R)	1951–1957	Kohler
Oscar Rennebohm (R)	1947–1951	Leeds
Walter S. Goodland (R)	1943–1947	Sharon
Orland S. Loomis (P*)	†	Mauston
Julius P. Heil (R)	1939–1943	New Berlin‡
Philip La Follette (P*)	1935–1939	Madison
Albert G. Schmedeman (D)	1933–1935	Madison
Philip La Follette (R)	1931–1933	Madison
Walter J. Kohler Sr. (R)	1929–1931	Sheboygan
Fred R. Zimmerman (R)	1927–1929	Milwaukee
John J. Blaine (R)	1921–1927	Wingville
Emanuel L. Philipp (R)	1915–1921	Honey Creek

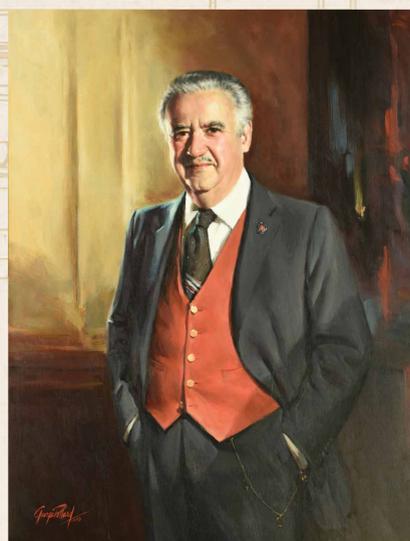
\* Progressive Party

† Died before inauguration

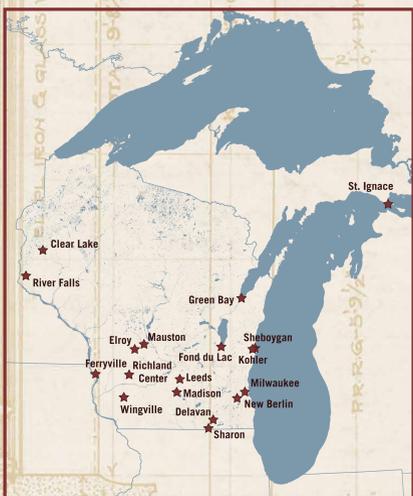
‡ Born in Germany and immigrated to the United States as a child



Governor Scott Walker, 2016



Official oil portrait of Governor Lee Dreyfus by George Pollard, 1983



◀ Governors' Home Towns



Governor John Blaine, who signed the women's equal rights bill in 1921

WHI IMAGE ID 41344



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PLAN OF ELEVATION ABOVE  
(AT THIRD FLOOR)

# GOVERNOR WALKER AND ACT 10 REFORMS



In 2010, Republican governor Scott Walker campaigned on a promise to balance the state budget by cutting the cost of government.

In 2011, he signed the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, also known as Act 10, which curbed the power of public employee unions. State and local officials were then able to reduce pensions, health insurance, and other payments to government employees. This balanced the budget and saved Wisconsin taxpayers nearly \$5 billion over the next five years (\$910 per person).



Governor Walker signs Act 10 on March 11, 2011

Wisconsin State Journal photo by M.P. King



Protestors outside the Capitol on March 12, 2011

WHI IMAGE ID 122071

Tens of thousands of public employees and union supporters demonstrated against Act 10. On some days, 80,000 to 100,000 people surrounded the Capitol. But Act 10 was upheld by the courts, nearly all the protests eventually subsided, and Governor Walker's method of downsizing government was imitated in other states.

# GOVERNOR THOMPSON AND WELFARE REFORM



“Governments take freedom away from people primarily in two ways,” said Republican governor Tommy Thompson at his inauguration in 1987. “They take away our personal freedom with too many rules and regulations, and they take away our economic freedom with too many taxes.”

During his 14 years in office—the longest tenure of any Wisconsin governor—he fought to make government more efficient, to create jobs, and to preserve Wisconsin's quality of life.

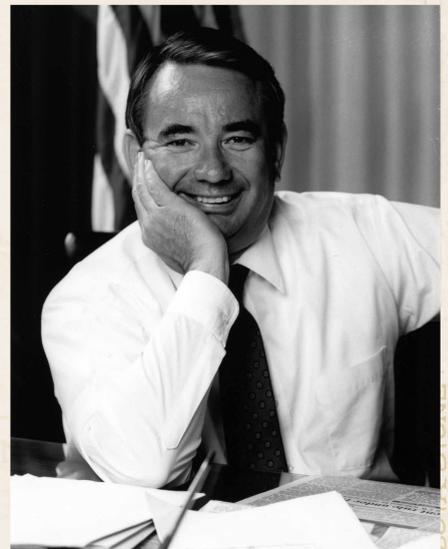


Governor Thompson in November 1989

WHI IMAGE ID 121767

Welfare reform was the defining issue of Thompson's terms in office. His “Wisconsin Works,” or W2, program became a model for welfare reform across the nation.

Thompson also launched the first school choice program in the country, which allowed low-income parents in Milwaukee to choose a school for their children. The program included private schools, an option they never had before, and the idea was adopted across the country.



Undated photo of Governor Thompson

WHI IMAGE ID 118697



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# Capitol Personalities

## Samuel Pierce (1870-1936)

### *Governors' Gatekeeper*

Samuel Pierce was born in New Orleans in 1870 to parents who'd been enslaved. His father was a judge and legislator in Louisiana until Jim Crow laws ended his career.

In 1888, Pierce took a job as a Pullman porter, serving white travelers on cross-country railroad trips. While working on the Chicago–Minneapolis route in 1905, Pierce got to know Wisconsin government officials and he and his family moved to Madison in 1907.

*“His smile was contagious, his courtesy and diplomacy unfailing.”*



Samuel Pierce with his mother Hettie, ca. 1929

WHI IMAGE ID 37458

In 1925, Governor John Blaine hired Pierce as a receptionist. He handled visitors so well that he went on to serve as the receptionist for five governors.

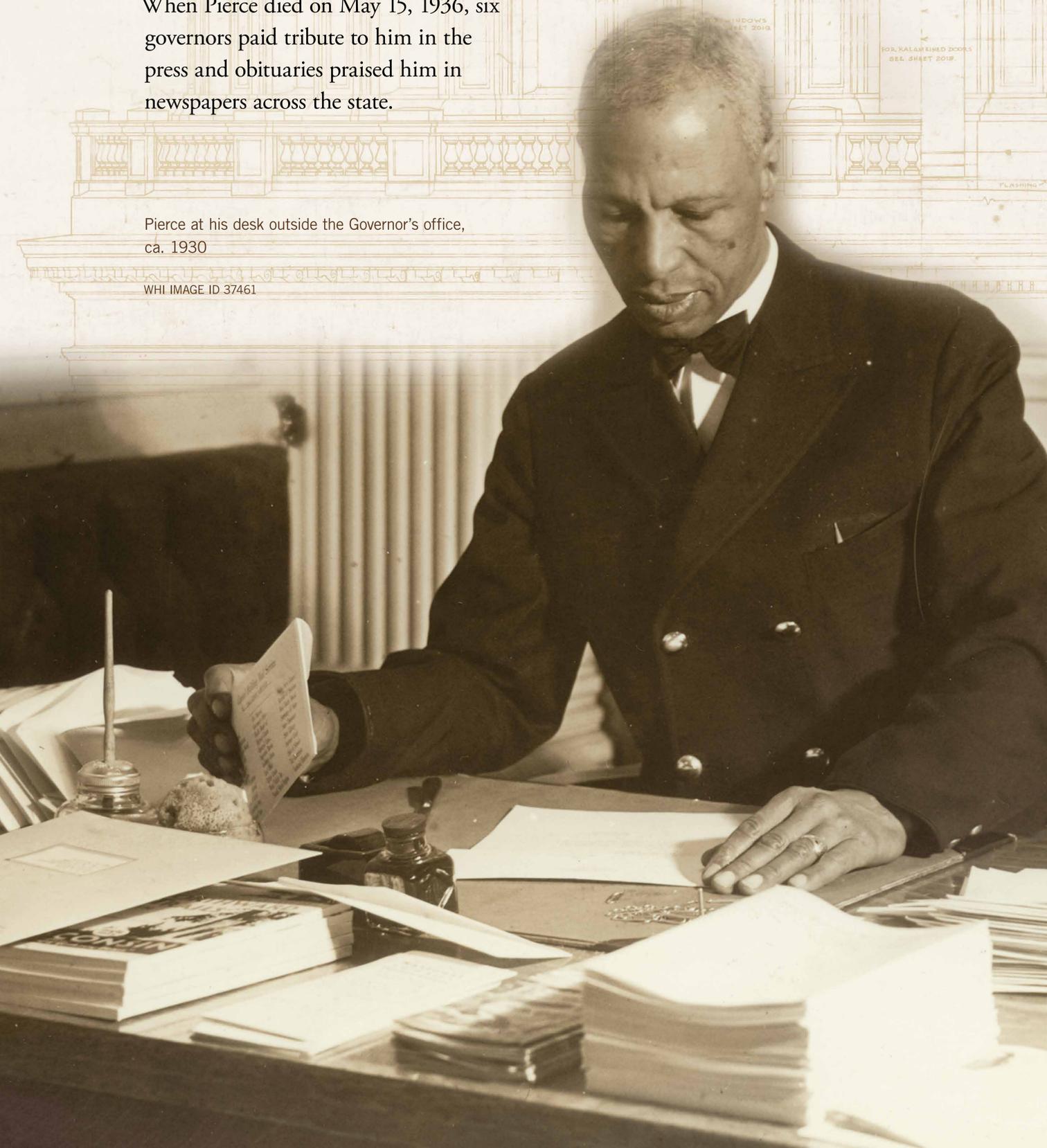
Standing over six feet tall and always dressed impeccably in a blue suit, Pierce protected the governors from unwanted intrusions.

Pierce was also a leader in Madison's African American neighborhood. He resolved disputes, fought discrimination in public accommodations, and lobbied for a community center and a residence hall for black students at the University of Wisconsin.

When Pierce died on May 15, 1936, six governors paid tribute to him in the press and obituaries praised him in newspapers across the state.

Pierce at his desk outside the Governor's office, ca. 1930

WHI IMAGE ID 37461



# Capitol Personalities

## Senator Fred Risser (b. 1927)

### *Longest-Serving Legislator*



Senator Risser in 2014

Capital Times photo by Michelle Stocker

Democrat Fred Risser of Madison is the longest-serving state lawmaker in the country. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather all served in the Legislature, too. His family has been in politics since the Civil War.

Risser was first elected in 1956. He remembers that when he was elected to the Senate in 1962, there were no women or minorities serving in that body. “In fact,” he told an NPR reporter, “they didn’t even have a woman’s john on the legislative floor.”

Risser has supported bills protecting women’s rights, cleaning up the environment, supporting the University of Wisconsin–Madison, promoting clean indoor air, and expanding public transportation, among many other things. Decades ago, he helped pass a law enabling public employees to unionize. He said, “The bill that the governor gutted [with 2011’s Act 10] was one I had helped put through 50 years ago.”

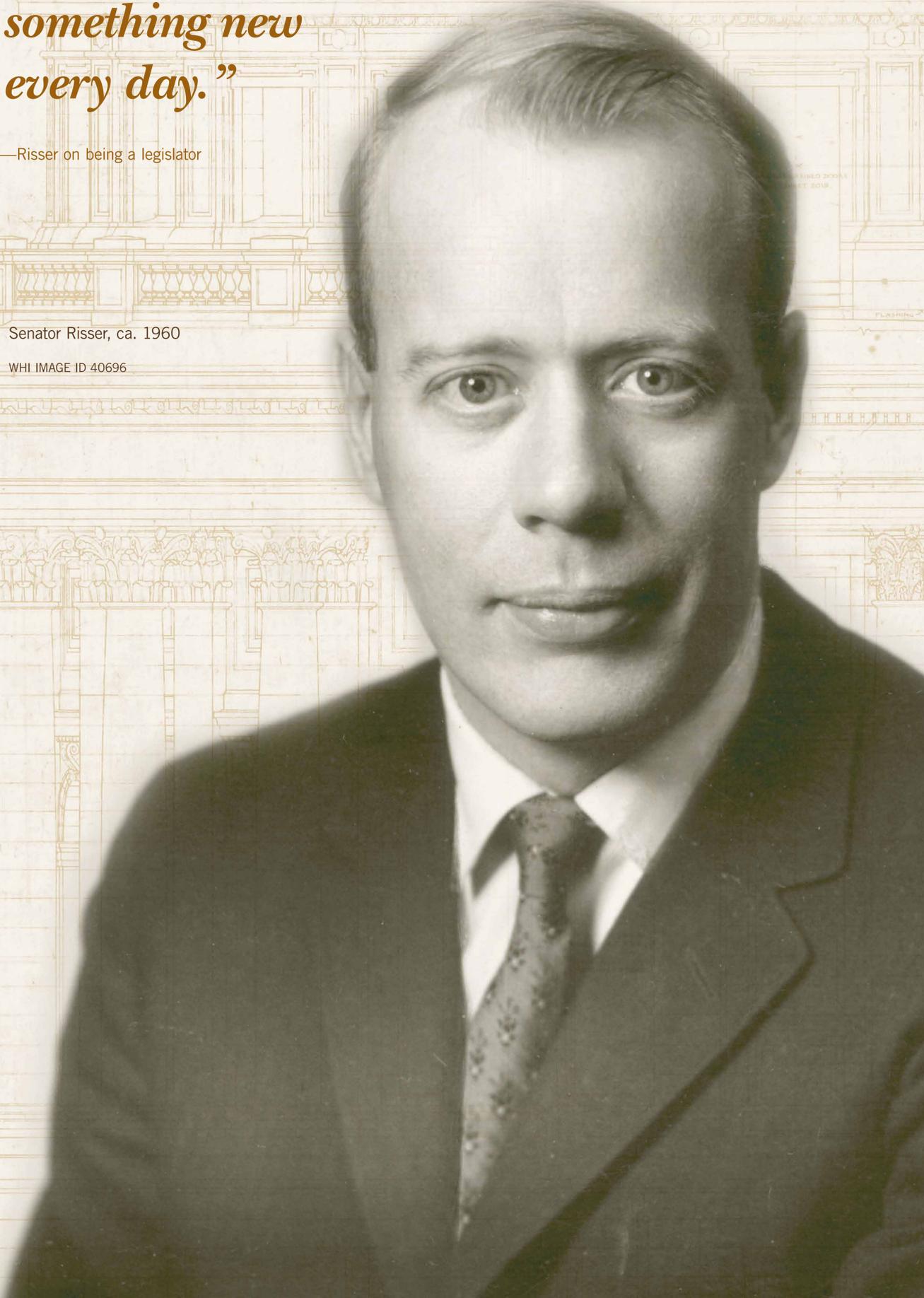
*“It keeps the adrenaline going and it gets you up in the morning. You learn something new every day.”*

—Risser on being a legislator

Risser has held virtually every important position in the Senate. He has also served on both the State Building Commission and the State Capitol and Executive Residence Board, and took a deep personal interest in the renovation of the Capitol during the Thompson administration.

Senator Risser, ca. 1960

WHI IMAGE ID 40696



# Capitol Personalities

## Oliver La Mere (ca. 1879-1930)

### *Ho-Chunk Lecturer and Guide*

Oliver La Mere was born ca. 1879 on the Nebraska Winnebago reservation. As a child, he attended the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania.

In his 20s, he became a culture broker between the Ho-Chunk and mainstream America, serving as a translator and contributor to academic works. He also worked for pan-Indian organizations to strengthen American Indian communities.

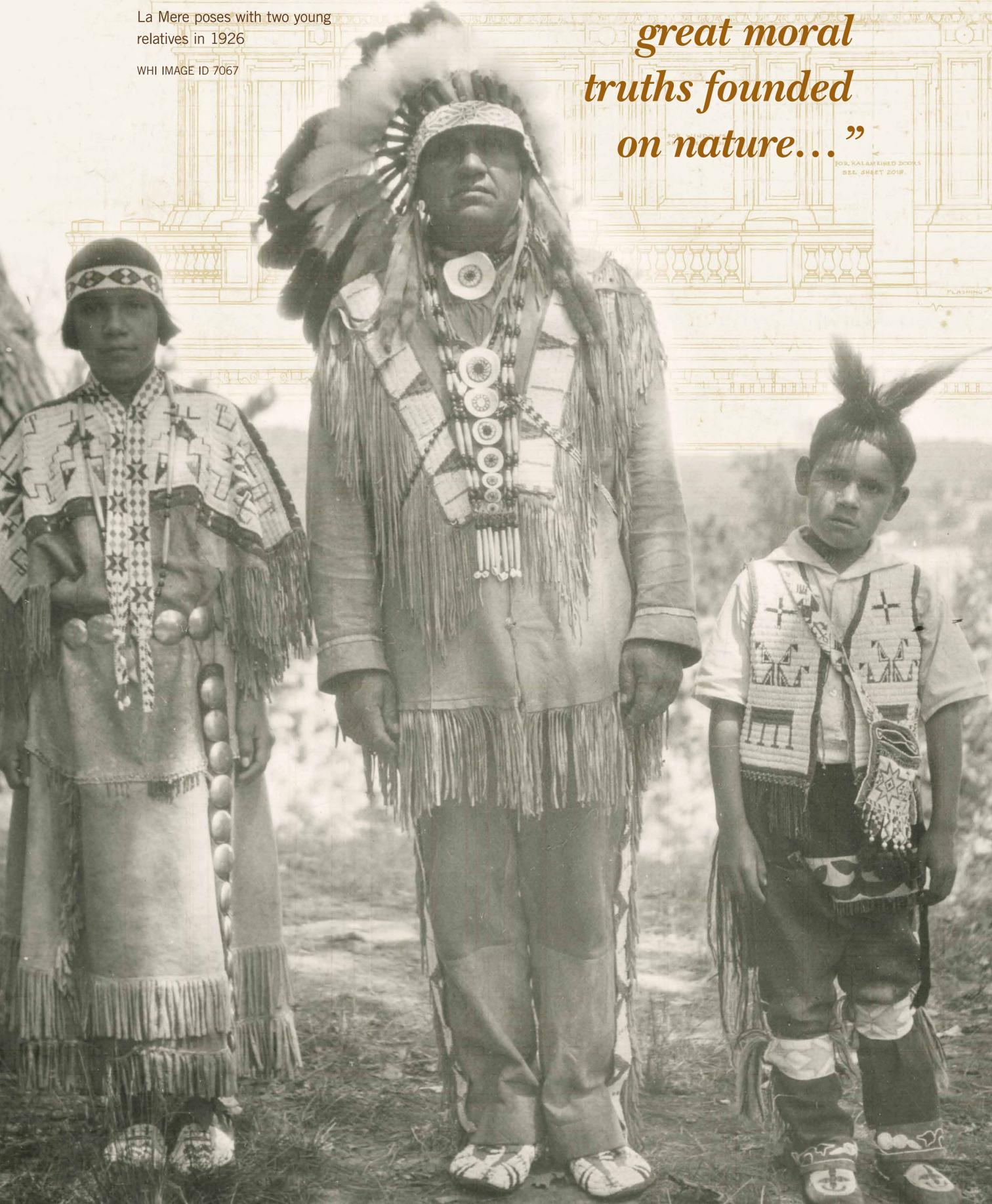
Starting about 1915, La Mere came to Wisconsin where he lobbied for the preservation of human burial mounds, taught community groups about Ho-Chunk culture, and published a book of tribal stories for young people.

In 1928, he was appointed a special guide at the Capitol, where he created a small museum containing traditional Ho-Chunk clothes, jewelry, and ceremonial objects. He taught visiting school groups, Boy and Girl Scout troops, and other visitors about American Indian culture.

After his death on August 1, 1930, La Mere's museum collection (which filled three large trunks) was donated to the Wisconsin Historical Society.

La Mere poses with two young relatives in 1926

WHI IMAGE ID 7067



#### *Indian Chief Named Special Capitol Guide*

*Wisconsin State Journal,*  
May 14, 1928

#### Named Capitol Guide



OLIVER LA MERE

#### La Mere Accepts Post; Lectures on Relic Collection

Appointee Comes from Long Line of Famous Leaders of Winnebago Tribe

More news men watched today...  
The Winnebago in know, here at...  
Oliver La Mere has been named...  
The Winnebago in know, here at...  
Oliver La Mere has been named...  
The Winnebago in know, here at...  
Oliver La Mere has been named...

*“The people who live here now know nothing of [the Ho-Chunk’s] beautiful mythology, their age old traditions, their great moral truths founded on nature...”*

FOR KALAMISHED BOOKS  
SEE SHEET 2019

# Capitol Personalities

## Vel Phillips (b. 1924)

### Secretary of State

Velvlea “Vel” Phillips became the first African American elected to statewide office when voters chose her as Secretary of State in 1978.

After finishing law school in 1951, Phillips learned about poverty, overcrowding, disease, and discrimination in Milwaukee while canvassing door-to-door. Vowing to make a difference, she ran for office in 1956 and became the first woman and first African American on the city’s Common Council.



Vel Phillips is sworn in as Secretary of State on January 3, 1979

WHI IMAGE ID 118333



Madam Alderman Phillips in the Capitol Rotunda during the 1961 NAACP sit-in

WHI IMAGE ID 28114

Starting in 1962, she annually introduced an ordinance to end segregated housing. Year after year, hers was the only vote in favor of it.

In 1967 and 1968, Phillips, the NAACP Youth Council, and Father James Groppi organized 200 nights of fair housing marches. The marchers were met with obscenities, hate mail, and violence from white residents, and their headquarters was burned down.

Milwaukee’s Common Council staunchly refused to end segregation until forced to do so by the 1968 federal Fair Housing Act.

In 1971, Phillips was appointed the first African American judge in Wisconsin history. After that, she practiced law and taught at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee until winning the 1978 contest for Secretary of State.

*“If you really want it, don’t dream small dreams, dream **BIG** dreams.”*

Judge Phillips, ca. 1971

WHI IMAGE ID 28115



# Capitol Personalities

## Representative Lloyd Barbee (1925-2002)

### *Civil Rights Advocate*



Barbee and NAACP protesters at the Capitol in 1961

WHI IMAGE ID 84375

From 1962 to 1977, Representative Lloyd Barbee led the fight to desegregate Milwaukee schools.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled that public schools had to be desegregated, but Milwaukee officials resisted. More than 20 years of legal battling was required to force them to comply. Barbee led that effort.

In 1961, Barbee led a non-violent NAACP sit-in right here in the Capitol Rotunda to protest segregation. The next year, he moved to Milwaukee to work on desegregation there. In 1964, his neighbors elected him to the state legislature, where he drafted Wisconsin statutes by day and NAACP legal briefs at night. Barbee served in the Assembly until 1977.

*“We are not as well off as we could be, but we are better off than we were.”*

After winning the school desegregation case in 1976, Barbee worked with city leaders to create a plan for implementation. It was approved by federal courts in 1976, finally ending government-sponsored segregation of Milwaukee schools after Barbee’s 14 years of uphill work.

Representative Barbee at the Capitol in 1968

WHI IMAGE ID 26539

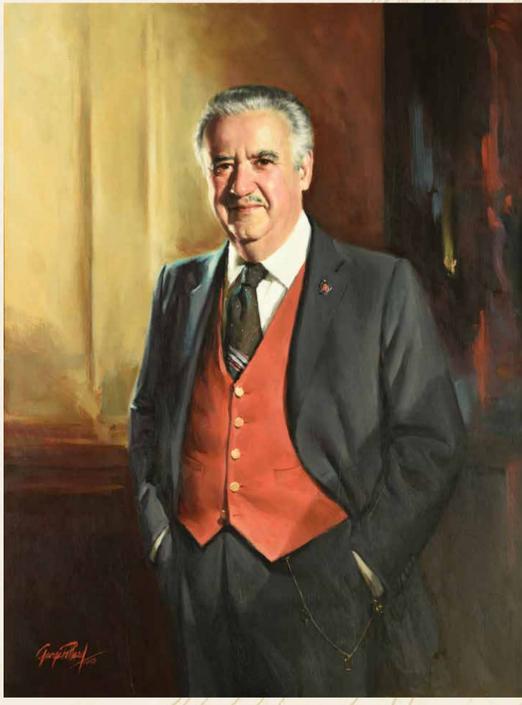


# Capitol Personalities

## Governor Lee Dreyfus (1926-2008)

### *Maverick Republican*

In the mid-1970s, Lee Dreyfus, the chancellor of UW–Stevens Point, was frustrated by the way politicians in Madison treated the people of Wisconsin. In 1978, he decided to run for governor, calling himself a “Republicrat” and promising to cut government costs.



Official oil portrait of Governor Dreyfus by George Pollard, 1983

WHS MUSEUM #1984.159

Dreyfus always wore a red vest and was the first to call Madison “30 square miles surrounded by reality.”

Although the Republican Party wouldn’t back him, Dreyfus won their primary and went on to defeat incumbent Democrat Marty Schreiber in November 1978.

As governor, he made his staff share a large office without walls, which was kept open to reporters and the public. After shrinking the bureaucracy, revising the tax code, and spending down a budget surplus, Dreyfus decided that he’d done what he promised and declined to seek re-election in 1982.



1978 Dreyfus campaign button with red vest  
WHS MUSEUM #1980.237.44

Dreyfus campaigns for governor in 1978

WHI IMAGE ID 55065

*“30 square miles surrounded by reality.”*



# Capitol Personalities

## Senator Melvin Laird (1922-2016)

### *Republican Pragmatist*



Secretary Laird with Representative David Obey and Senator Gaylord Nelson, 1973

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Melvin Laird was the youngest state senator in Wisconsin history when he was elected at age 24 in 1946. He served four years and earned a reputation for valuing principles more than party. Laird opposed Senator Joseph McCarthy, for example, and worked closely with his colleagues across the aisle. “He would contest things vigorously,” Democratic senator Gaylord Nelson recalled, “but he was always civil. He had strong convictions and great integrity, decency, compassion.”

In 1952, voters sent Laird to Washington, where he represented central Wisconsin for 17 years. He championed funding for medical research and became an expert on national security, mentoring Hillary Rodham Clinton and Colin Powell at the start of their careers. In 1969, Laird was appointed Secretary of Defense by President Richard Nixon. He replaced the draft with an all-volunteer army, facilitated withdrawal from Vietnam, and persuaded Nixon to choose Gerald Ford as vice president.



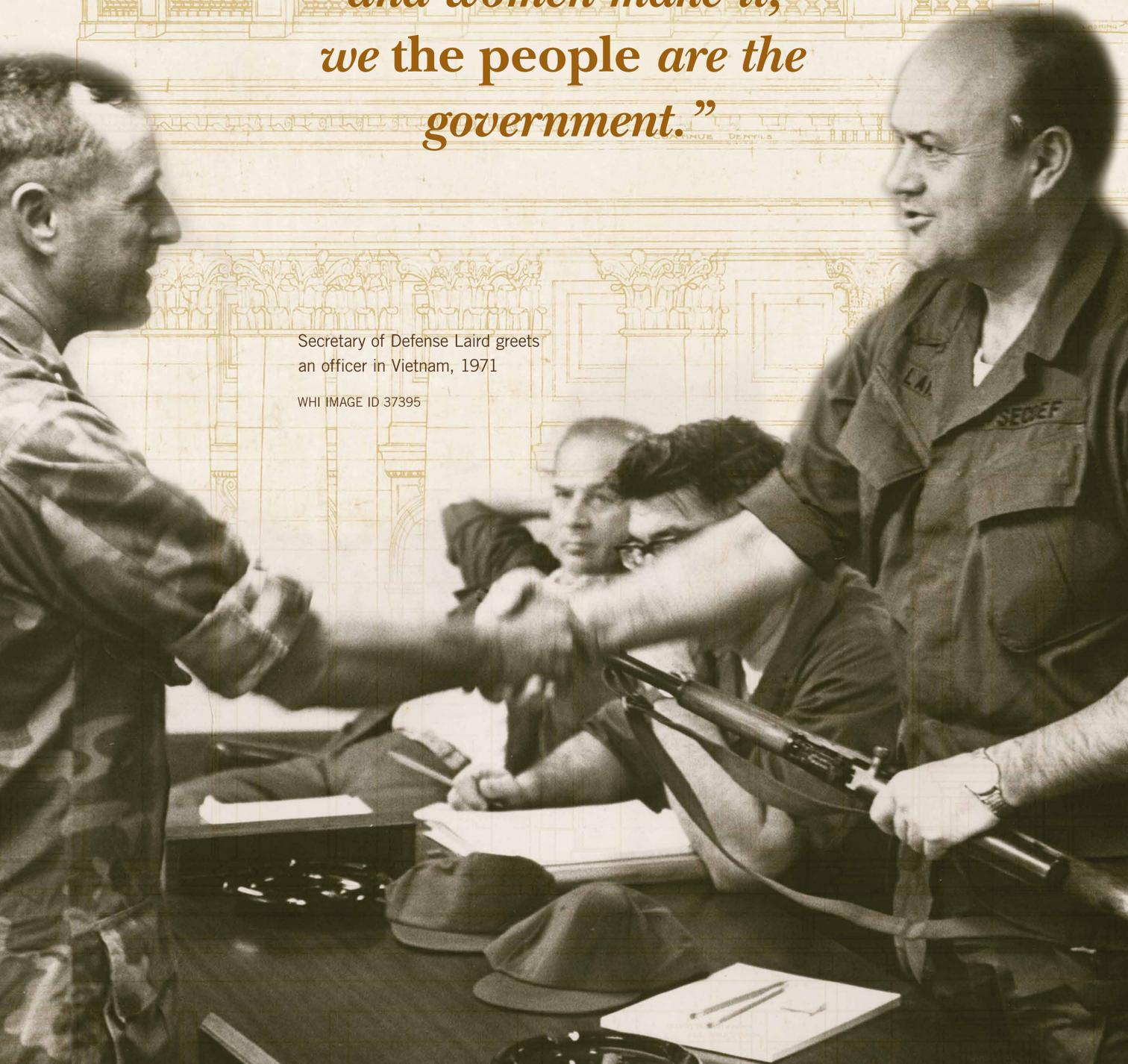
Secretary Laird (seated) in 2008, with First Lady Jessica Doyle, Governor Jim Doyle, Congressman David Obey, UW Regent Mark Bradley, and Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley

WHI IMAGE ID 92016

*“Politics is what men  
and women make it;  
we the people are the  
government.”*

Secretary of Defense Laird greets an officer in Vietnam, 1971

WHI IMAGE ID 37395



# Capitol Personalities

## Kay Clarenbach (1920-1994)

### *Women's Rights Advocate*

Kathryn "Kay" Clarenbach studied political science at the University of Wisconsin. She earned her bachelor's in 1941, master's in 1942, and PhD in 1946, and then became a college professor.

In 1964, she was asked by Governor John Reynolds to chair the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. Its purpose was to investigate the condition of women in Wisconsin and help change laws that discriminated against them on the basis of gender.

This work connected Clarenbach to the national women's movement. In 1966, she co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) and chaired its board from 1966 to 1970.



Kay Clarenbach (seated on the right) with Governor Robert Knowles at the Midwest Conference hosted by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1967

UW-MADISON ARCHIVES, S00153



Clarenbach (third from left) at a 1963 meeting of the Governor's Conference on the Status of Women

UW-MADISON ARCHIVES, S16566

In 1971, with feminist icons Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and Shirley Chisholm, she helped organize the National Women's Political Caucus. Her behind-the-scenes diplomacy helped keep women's issues in front of national and state policymakers for 25 years.

When Governor Lee Dreyfus eliminated Wisconsin's Commission on the Status of Women in 1979, Clarenbach resumed her teaching career. At her 1994 memorial service, historian Gerda Lerner called her "the foremost organizer of the modern women's movement."

*"Feminism is a vision of a different kind of society in which there is greater egalitarianism... a society that is fair to everyone."*

Clarenbach in 1972

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