A Guide to the Papers of
Marion E. Kenworthy, 1938-1952
(*P-511)

American Jewish Historical Society
Waltham, MA
New York, NY

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Note to Researchers

Special Note:
This finding aid was completed in the summer of 1995 as part of a general search of the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society for archival holdings relating to American Jewish women. As such, this finding aid may only reflect those parts of the collection that pertain to women. *This finding aid is not intended to be an exhaustive guide to this collection.* Researchers should consult the collection directly for information not pertaining to American Jewish women and gender issues.

Title of the Collection:

Provenance:
Gift of the Kenworthy-Swift Foundation, 1983

Statistics:
Number of containers:
3 boxes (1.50 linear feet)

Languages:
English

Date Completed:
August 1995

Access and Citation:
These papers are open to all researchers deemed to be qualified by the Executive Director of the American Jewish Historical Society.

The original collection is available at the American Jewish Historical Society, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011.

A suggested form for citation is "[Item]. American Jewish Historical Society, [Collection name] [Box #]/[Folder #]."

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Scope and Content Note

The Marion E. Kenworthy papers contain correspondence regarding the work of the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children and its successor, the Non-Sectarian Foundation for Refugee Children. The papers focus on the effort to pass the Wagner-Rogers bill of 1939, which would have allowed 20,000 German refugee children of all faiths to enter the United States over a two year period. Kenworthy, a social worker, was a founder and strong leader in the Non-Sectarian Committee and Foundation.

While this collection offers little information about Kenworthy's personal life (and it is even unclear whether she was Jewish or not), it is valuable to researchers studying American immigration policy during the Second World War, Jews in Germany before World War II, relations between Jews and Christians in the United States, and Jews and women in social work.

Of special interest are reports by various female social workers that traveled to Germany before the Second World War began to document the status of Jewish and "non-Aryan" children there. These are interesting indications of how much information Americans had about what was happening in Germany before and at the outset of World War II. Also valuable are the comments on the types of children refugee organizations thought would be the best to bring to the United States. Faced with so many restrictions on the number of children who could be admitted to the U.S., refugee organizations took pains to select those children whom they considered to be well adjusted and who seemed as if they would assimilate easily and quickly into American life. Among the correspondents in the collection are Stephen S. Wise, Senator Robert F. Wagner, Justine Wise Polier, Alf Landon, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Justine Wise Polier also appears in many of the minutes from various meetings.

The collection contains correspondence, newsletters, minutes of meetings, pamphlets, newspaper articles, editorials, congressional testimony, and various publications.

The documents are in English, and are arranged either by state or by correspondent.

The collection contains 3 boxes of materials.

Biographical Sketch

Marion Kenworthy was a social worker, and at the time of her work with the Non-Sectarian committee for German Refugee Children, she was the Director of the Department of Mental Hygiene at the New York School of Social Work.

There is little biographical information on Kenworthy contained in this collection, and she is not listed in the Encyclopedia Judaica, The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography, or in 1938-1939 Who's Who in American Jewry. She may not have been Jewish.
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William Green, AFL

Mrs. Coolidge, Alf Landon, Bruce Barton, Dorothy Canfield Fisher

John Hall Wheelock

Stephen S. Wise

Louis S. Weiss
Bishop Shiel and Archbishop Rummel

Agnes Inglis/Marion Sanders

Jacob Kepecs

American Committee for Christian
German Refugee Children
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Correspondence from Alice Inglis (Secretary) to MEK

Nazi Order on Germanization
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she's the director of the department of Mental Hygiene, NY School of Social Work
[Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children = NSCGRC]

Box 1

Correspondence regarding helping children to leave Europe

California

[Wagner-Rogers Bill: admit 20,000 German refugee children of all creeds over two years, from Sen. Robert F. Wagner of NY and Rep. Edith Nourse Rogers of MA in the House]

Copies of letters about Wagner-Rogers Bill, before Congress in 1939, with comments by William Templeton Johnson

Copies of letters written in support of the bill by people whom the NSCGRC contacted

Telegrams urging people to exert pressure on their congress people

Correspondence of Kenworthy with the NSCGRC asking for info, declining to help, etc.

- MEK went to Washington in April 1939 to attend hearings of subcommittee of Senate and House on Wagner-Rogers Bill
- From a letter of Apr. 1939: AFL, CIO, Hoover, Alf Landon, and Eleanor Roosevelt support bill

Newsletter, NSCGRC

1. 5/8/39
   - Offers of foster homes received - 5,000 unsolicited offers
   - Who's who on their committee
   - Press, periodicals and radio news which have given them editorial support
   - National committee list

2. 5/15/39
   - Arguments against arguments against the bill
   - Chief opposition will come from the Southern representatives in the House
   - New members of committee, including actress Helen Hayes
   - Council of City of New York unanimously in support
   - National committee list incl. Mrs. Stephen S. Wise, Alf Landon

3. 5/22/39
   - Note that House committee will meet on 5/24, and list of representatives still opposed
- State organizations founded
- More editorial support
- On Helen Hayes's support
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and many American Legion Posts in favor

4. 6/12/39
- Summary of statements made at hearings before House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization
- Children will be selected through psychological and social psychiatric tests

5. 6/19/39
- Announcement of radio program to be held
- California legislature endorses bill
- American Unitarian Association endorses bill

6. n.d.
- "Splendid Public Response to Joint Hearings on the Wagner-Rogers Bill"
- Legislative programs
- Press support
- Organization support

7. 7/21/39
- Update on bill - favorable prospects
- Progress by state organizations
- Broadcast starring Katharine Hepburn and Burgess Meredith, 1/2 hour appeal for help with dramatic sketches and music
- Support from press

Correspondence re: Non-Sectarian FOUNDATION
- From law firm about report to IRS, 1942
- From law firm, 1943, "in connection with winding up the Non-Sectarian Foundation..."
- From law firm, 1944, inquiry about filing of withholding and social security returns

Correspondence with Winthrop Johnson, LA
- Long, detailed letters (Summer 1939) discussing his work on the passage of the bill - people whom he met and talked with, etc.
- He is trying to convince the California legislature to come out in favor of the bill
- List of members of CA division of committee
- Memo from CA division of committee about Wagner-Rogers Bill
- Numerous telegrams from Johnson to Kenworthy
- Letter, 6/16/39, from MEK to Johnson about which members of the House and Senate Committees are voting for or against the bill
- “It is unfortunate that there just isn't an adequate male to talk to these lobbyists. [Acting Director Clarence E.] Pickett will cooperate and be willing to go down, but his mildness may not be useful. Feel that it is tremendously important to get some good person in the place of [Washington Secretary Agnes King] Inglis or [Miss Elizabeth] Eastman because of the limitations of their femaleness, and we will keep working on this and if we can turn up anyone who is adequate I'll wire you."

Connecticut correspondence

- Letters from Connecticut residents to their Congress people

Washington, D.C.

- Copy of letter from George Messersmith, Dept. of State to one of the NSCGRC members
- A number of letters to important women (non-Jewish), many of whom had been active in suffrage movement, peace movement, etc.

Child Welfare Group 1938-1939

- "Proposed Plan for German Refugee [Children]"
- Protestant and Catholic social workers should be hired to work as social workers in Europe because "it is feared that Jewish workers will be ineffective under the present circumstances"
- Notes on "Motives which prompted this plan"
- Background letters about planning of project
- Notes of meeting at MEK’s, 12/18/39, to plan organization
- Attendants include Justice Justine Wise Polier
- Meeting 1/4/39, 1/8/39, 1/14/39, 1/24/39, 2/17/39

On care of refugee children

1. "Standards of Foster Care"
   - Two parents; mother shouldn't work; ideally child should have own room; family should be of same religion as child

2. "Suggestions for space and equipment for medical examinations of refugee children in reception centers"
   - Prepared by Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor

3. "Medical care of refugee children in reception centers"
   - Prepared by Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor
4. "Plan for the care of German Refugee Children in the U.S."

Form letters

- From Courtenay Dinwiddie, Gen. Sec'y of National Child Labor Committee
- Letter to anonymous group, 2/19/39
  [group which met at MEK's apartment in Jan. and Feb. was "anonymous"]
- Personal form letter from MEK to her friends, incl. list of "patients and friends"

The children

- "The Situation Which Justifies the Wagner-Rogers Bill"
  - Includes a statement of a Jewish social worker who had just been to Germany
  - Though anonymous and not dated, account of trials of Jewish children in
    Germany, including home and school life]

- Data on children in Hessen and Hessen Nassau, 6/8/39

Plans for formation of Non-Sectarian FOUNDATION

- Meeting 3/17/40 at MEK's apartment, including many of the people who had been
  involved in the committee
  - Incl. tribute to MEK as "the person who has been the leader....with
    indomitableness and courage and energy"
  - Update on the bill: it failed to pass, but by the time it got to that point, it had so
    many amendments that the NSCGRC was unsure about whether they wanted it
    passed
  - They're starting a Non-Sectarian Foundation for Refugee Children (not
    GERMAN only) because the NSCGRC is too tied up with the Bill; the
    Foundation will organize funds to bring refugee children to U.S., even if it means
    only paying their steamship passage
  - Honorary Vice Presidents would include Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein,
    Governor Lehman of NY, university presidents, a rabbi, bishops, ministers, etc.
  - Already, before organization even started, raised $100,000-125,000
  - Testimonies by women who had been in Germany, presumably as social
    workers, on condition of children there and willingness of parents to send their
    children abroad
  - DAR influential in defeating the Bill
  - Many people are glad that the group is non-sectarian: "I'm elated, therefore, Mr.
    Chairman, as an American and as a Jew, at the formation of this committee, over
    and above what it might accomplish for children, because of its implications in
    emphasizing that the problem of refugees isn't exclusively racial or anti-Jewish."
  - Statement by MEK: "I'm just going to say a few words because I think that the
    inner men should be fed other than spiritually. What I want to say is that this
    meeting is only the culmination and crystallization of an idea that started in this
    room on Dec. 18, 1938, which will carry forward the ideals, the enthusiasm, the
very real kind of cooperation which gave me a renewed faith in the things that
human beings stood for. I never in my life have had the thrilling privilege before
-- and I never need to have it again -- of realizing what this group has indicated to
me that humans can get together and live and work as humans with no personal
egos, no personal selfishness, no interest of a personal nature, but only a desire to
help children."

Non-Sectarian Committee - Minutes, Notes, etc. 1939-1940

[All meetings take place at MEK's apartment, and almost all include Justine Wise Polier. Many
of the meetings are made up almost entirely of women. There are interesting comments made
about what kind of children they want to bring in. They also take great pains to ensure that this
is a non-sectarian committee, so that Americans won't be upset and because it was easier to use
non-Jewish workers in Europe.]

1. August 10, 1939 [meeting participants are all female]
   - Justine Wise Polier very involved
   - Have tried to get non-Jewish, non-Left groups to help
   - Katherine Blackburn is the new Executive Secretary

2. May 22, 1939
   - Discussion of formation of official national child welfare group
   - Page 5: remarks about a Dutch man in Vienna who arranges for the transportation of
     Jews out of concentration camps and prisons
     - The Gestapo gives him money collected from Jews and he uses it to pay for their
       transportation
   - Discussion of selection of children
     - Discussion of "the best child" to bring - MEK says that if there are two children,
       she would take "the better child," not the one with the most need
     - To ensure that the children don't become public charges, pick the ones who will
       adapt the easiest, not the poorest children
     - Want to make sure that general policies are adhered to, and that individual
       exceptions are few
   - Discussion of selection and remuneration of workers
     - MEK: "Most social workers are not aggressive or they wouldn't be social
       workers"
     - Some discussion of racial laws
     - Discussion of the bill and hearings on it

3. December 10, 1939
   - Discussion of whether the greatest pressure is in England or Germany
     - Refugee problem in England
   - Discussion of whether Non-Sectarian Committee's efforts impede other organizations'
     efforts
   - Value of group as non-sectarian - America is concerned about "More Jews, more Jews,
more Jews" coming (p. 12)

4. January 15, 1939
- Some anecdotes about attitudes of young Germans - they mainly agree with Hitler
- Includes summary of meetings
- They had encouraged Senator Wagner to create his bill

5. June 27, 1939
- Includes discussion of what types of children to take

[FH: NOTE - at this point I stopped taking notes on individual minutes. Late 1939 and early 1940 minutes discuss the formation of the Non-Sectarian Foundation]

6. April 29 (1939?)

7. April 11, 1939

8. March 27 (1939?)

9. December 19, 1938
- Small group - Nathan, Polier, Weiss, Bernard, Inglis, MEK

10. February 20, 1939

11. January 15, 1939

12. March 7, 1949

13. December 17, 1939

14. January 14, 1940

15. November 20, 1939
- Includes report by a social worker on social situation of children in Germany
- When they talk about "Protestants" and "Catholics" who want to get out, they often mean people who converted but are considered Jewish by the Nazis

16. October 11, 1939
- Another report on situation in Germany

17. Oct. 4, 1939

18. June 29, 1939
- Discussion about a man named Mr. Kraus, who managed to get 50 children out of Germany through some extraordinary contacts in the American Consulate, State Dept., etc.
- Procedural issues
19. April 8, 1939

Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939-1940

1. Feb. 15, 1939 - Memorandum on German children's committee
   - MEK has "temporary leadership"
   - Just a discussion of the existence of the committee
   - List of people who have been involved so far

2. Letter from MEK to Clarence Pickett, Mar. 20, 1939

3. Press release, March 2, 1939: "Leading representatives of all faiths head organization to give sanctuary to German refugee children"

4. Clipping from "The Times, Fri. March 31, 1939": "Aid to Child Exiles in U.S. is Mapped"
   - MEK interviewed

5. Letters asking people to join committee, list of states where people need to be reached, lists of people who have sent letters, lists of members of committee

6. "Memorandum in Support" of the Wagner-Rogers Bill, submitted by the Co-Chairmen of the Non-Sectarian Committee

MEK correspondence

Correspondence to and from people who are writing letters in support of the bill to their Congress people

Box 2

Wagner-Rogers Bill: Hearings, May 1939

1. Letter from a Lutheran pastor in support of the bill

2. Statement of William Chenerey in support

3. Statement of Bishop Bernard J. Sheil, Member of Non-Sectarian Committee

4. Copies of the Joint Resolution
5. Memorandum with reference to the Wagner-Rogers bill

6. Other letters, lists, etc.

Refugees: Printed Material et al.

1. AFS, *Refugee Facts, A Study of the German Refugee in America*

2. Diocese of Southern Ohio, *Aid the German Refugees, A New Diocesan Project*

3. League for Human Rights, *Make the World a Refuge for Humanity*

4. Rev. Dr. Maurice Sheehy, *The Popes Condemn Anti-Semitism*

5. American Public Welfare Association, *Refugee Services*

6. Description of American League to Aid Young Hungarian Emigrants

7. Friends of German Freedom, *Inside Germany Reports* (March and April, 1939, December 1939)
   - Reinhold Niebuhr is the chair

8. The American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression

Admission of German Refugee Children: Joint Hearings April 1939


2. Copy of resolution

U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children 1940-1953

1. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors, July 17, 1940
   - members include Eleanor Roosevelt, MEK, Stephen Wise, etc.

2. Misc. correspondence

3. "British Children in the U.S.: A Report of Observations made during a visit in the spring and summer of 1943 to the British children evacuated to the USA under the auspices of the US committee for the Care of European Children"

4. US Committee for the Care of European Refugee Children, *Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Directors*, May 1948

5. ", May 1952

**Wagner-Rogers Editorials and News Stories**
- Actual articles (clippings) and typed copies

**Wagner-Rogers Letters, Literature - Opposition**
- Much of it antisemitic
- Leaflets, letters, etc.

**Rep. Edith Nourse Rogers**
- Correspondence with her
- Statement for press
  - Cites Kristallnacht as impetus for these efforts
- Draft of speech introducing bill

**Press**
- Correspondence with editors and papers

**Senator Robert R. Reynolds**
- Letter about and summary of his anti-alien bills

**Wagner-Rogers Bill Correspondence, 1939**
- To and from Senators and Congress people

**Correspondence 1939**
- About writing letters, more information, etc.

**Congressional Poll (undated)**

**Senator Robert Wagner**
- Summary of bill
- Correspondence
- Statement of Wagner for press release, July 1939

**Wagner-Rogers Bill Memo for Lawyers re Hearings**
Clergy 1939

Wagner-Rogers Broadcasts

- May 1939

California clippings, Wagner-Rogers Bill (notebook)

Box 3

William Green - AFL

- 1 letter to Wagner

Mrs. Coolidge, Alf Landon, Bruce Barton, Dorothy Canfield Fisher

- Correspondence with

John Hall Wheelock

- Editor (?), Charles Scribner's Sons
- Letters from him to various people enlisting support

Stephen S. Wise

- Telegram that he and his wife, son and daughter are all willing to take refugee children in
- His wife is Chair of Child Adoption Committee of the Free Synagogue
- Correspondence from Justine Wise Polier

Louis S. Weiss

- Correspondence with

Bishop Shiel and Archbishop Rummel

- Correspondence with

Agnes Inglis/ Marion Sanders

- Correspondence with

Jacob Kepecs

- Jewish Children's Bureau, Chicago
- Correspondence
American Committee for Christian German Refugee Children

Clarence Pickett

Judge Justine Wise Polier

Eugene Meyer, Publisher, Washington Post

Administrative Report of the Activities of the US Committee for the Care of European Children, Inc, 1941

Correspondence from Alice Inglis (Secretary) to MEK

- Long reports

Nazi Order on Germanization

- Sent from UN to Justine Wise Polier
- Process of abducting children from Polish orphanages and foster homes who look Nordic and are capable of "Germanation"