Margaret Haley
Biography

Margaret Angela Haley was born November 15, 1861 in Joliet, Illinois. Her father was the child of Irish immigrant parents but he was born in Canada. Her mother had been born in Dublin, Ireland. She was the second child of eight of whom six grew to adulthood. The eldest child, Thomas, had drowned when he was twelve. Young Margaret saw it as part of a family curse. “Strangely enough, there is a tradition in my father’s family that the eldest son is always drowned. His eldest brother had lost his life by drowning, as had his father’s eldest brother.” (Haley, p. 5) The other child who perished was an infant sister. Such beliefs in a spiritual and ultimately familial connection between events would be a harbinger of a perspective which would impact on Haley’s life-long commitment to a cause.

Haley saw her family as living the life typical for an Illinois farm with some subtle differences. “Except for a greater number of books and a more direct association with the world of events outside the farm, we lived, I think, after the fashion of most farm families of that time and place.” (Haley, p. 5) This subtle but ultimately important distinction about the Haley family was a most likely a product of both parents backgrounds. Though they lived and worked the farm her father was active outside of farming in both how he earned a living and in his interests. Her father, Michael J. Haley, managed a stone quarry and was active in the Knights of Labor. This might explain the extraordinary interest in outside events. “Although we lived for ten years on the farm our interest, even at that time, were not entirely of the soil. My father... was not a farmer, and had to leave the running of the farm to hired help.” (Haley, p. 7)

The presence of more books in the household than might have been normal for a farm family may be attributed not only to the father’s broad interests, but also to Haley’s mother, a
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recent immigrant from Ireland. “She (Haley’s mother) valued education as only the Irish, who
had been denied the full measure of education, could value it. She knew by experience by truth
of the old Irish maxim, ‘Educate in order that your children may be free.’” (Haley, p. 14)
Haley would elaborate on the political and historical conditions which had produced her
mother’s legacy.

The entire Penal Code system was disruptive to education, but it could not take
away, even from the common people, the desire and intention and ability to secure
some sort of education for their children. It was that background which was
responsible for my mother’s insistence upon our educational training. (Haley, p. 15)

The seemingly diverse characteristics offered by Haley’s parents, education emphasized by the
mother and labor activism practiced by the father, would prove to have a profound effect on
this future activist.

Her father left Canada as a child but had moved to Illinois as a outcome of ant-Catholic
terrorism in Massachusetts. “He had seen– he told me this after I watched the glow of the sky
from the Chicago fire– a convent burned by Know-Nothings in the east, and had decided,
although he was but a boy then, to come westward.” (Haley, p. 7) This exposure to bigotry
and its accompanying anti-social conduct may have impacted on the father’s activism and in
turn contributed to Haley’s own revulsion for and life-long commitment to ending injustice.
This is evidenced by one particular incident when Haley’s father took the children to listen to
an expert on phrenology. When the speaker used this pseudoscience to demean Susan B.
Anthony, the father gathered up the children and marched out of the hall in mid-speech. Once
outside the hall the father lined up the children and told them what he thought about the topic.

I don’t know Susan B. Anthony and I suppose that I never shall, but she’s a
woman who is working for a cause, a just cause, and will not allow my children to continue to listen to any half-backed nincompoop who sneers at her. (Haley, p. 13)

The trait of acting upon one’s conscience is one that was passed on to Haley, whether by training or example, and would be a characteristic acknowledged by both friend and foe.

The family would move from the farm when the father’s primary source of income, managing stone quarries, required it. The traveling would result in Haley attending both public and Catholic schools. It was the father’s loss of work when the quarry he managed closed which prompted Haley to look for work while still a teenager. Forced to seek employment to help support the family, as was the case with nearly all learned women of her era, Haley’s professional options were limited to teaching. But before she could be employed as a teacher she must be trained.

Haley was fortunate in that there was a normal school near where she lived. “I discovered a little Normal (sic) school, where I could learn something about teaching. There I got my intellectual stimulus for teaching, the sense of responsibility to do it...” (Haley, p. 14)

As her family’s financial situation worsened Haley was fortunate to find work as a teacher which would permit her to continue her studies. “I was still attending the little Cook and Carter Normal School when I started to teach.” (Haley, p. 15) She taught at two different rural schools when she got the opportunity to move to Chicago. “After attending a progressive normal school, she moved to Chicago to teach sixth grade in the infamous stockyards district, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city.” (http://www.smith.edu, p. 1)

The political climate of Chicago in the 1890 was rife with conflict. There was an economic depression and associated labor unrest throughout the decade. She eventually joined
the Chicago Teacher’s Federation (CTF) which was formed in 1898. She had been a member of the union just a few years when she helped a friend, Catherine Goggin, become president of CTF. Like Haley, Goggin was a teacher of Irish descent. “In March of 1897, the Chicago Teacher’s Federation was formed with Catherine Goggin as its president and Margaret Haley as its driving force.” (Eaton, p. 5)

In 1901, Haley left teaching forever to assume the role of vice-president and to work full-time for the Chicago Teacher’s Federation. “On Tuesday, the 2nd (sic) of January, 1900, I went back to the Hendricks School. I taught all day and closed my desk in the afternoon with the full intention of reopening it the next morning. I have not been in a schoolroom since.” (Haley, p. 50) As the only paid staff member of the union Haley played a significant role in the identification of the CTF as a labor organization. She led the teacher’s organization into the American Federation Labor in 1902. Her activism was not limited to those issues which were to have a direct impact on teaching. Haley was active in the women’s suffrage movement and worked to oppose child labor.

Where Haley gained her fame was as both a lobbyist and in her investigative skills. It was the thoroughness of her research which exposed the corruption and arrogance which relegated the teachers of Chicago, like most American teachers, to the role of unskilled labor. This negative impact of their professional status was impacted by the fact that most teachers were women, they were second-class citizens. This second-class status endured by the teachers both in their profession and in society was reflected most clearly in the issue of salaries. In essence, teachers were paid poorly because they were women. “Teachers in need of money— and the pay was so small that most teachers who had any responsibility needed
Haley’s reputation began to spread when she demonstrated that she could not be deterred in finding the public records and documents critical to advocating the teacher’s cause.

I told him I wanted to see the report which the State Auditor had sent to the County Clerk showing the assessment made by the State Board of Equalization on the capital stock of the corporations of Cook County. He asked me who wanted the report. I told him the six thousand teachers of Chicago wanted it... (Haley, p. 48)

But it was not the teachers that was the focus of her concern. “It would be to labor for the teachers of the city, but it would be fare more truly, work for the children of the city. Only through the freedom of their teachers could the children remain free.” (Haley, p. 40)

Among her accomplishments was when she successfully lobbied in the Illinois State Legislature to enact a teacher pension plan in 1907. She championed the interest of the teachers when they fought with the Board of Education over the right of the teachers to be affiliated with the labor movement. Even when she lost she made the most she could. As she would say even in losing she fought “blow for blow.” As president of the CTF in 1917 she reached a compromise settlement which took the teacher’s union out of the labor movement in return for support for teacher tenure. Even in losing a long battle with the board of education to keep the teachers in a labor union, her concession produced the job security the CTF was created to secure. Haley assumed the presidency of the CTF in 1916 when Goggin was killed crossing the street. She held that position until her death. Margaret Haley died of heart failure January 5, 1939. “Now Margaret Haley is dead. She fought the good fight. By her example she charted for all of us the method by which well-administered government is to be gained and kept.” (Reid in Haley, p. xxxii)
Her First Struggle

Like many people confronted with a life of struggle against injustice Haley had no idea what lay ahead for her. She had never planned to be a crusader. She believed that she would become a teacher and spend most of her life as other teachers did. When she reflected on her life of conflict she reassured herself that she did not seek a fight for its own sake.

When I look back over my seventy-five years of life, forty of them spent on hectic battle fronts of the unending war, I realize that, like all crusaders, I have stormed in where kings and courtiers feared to tread. I have beaten my fists, and sometimes my head, against stone walls of power and privilege. I have railed at mayors, at governors, at legislators, at presidents of great universities. I have banged machine-guns in defense of certain basic principles in which I believe and continue to believe. For them I have fought without fear and without favor; but within my own soul I know that I have never sought a battle for its own sake, although I have never evaded one when it was forced upon me. (Haley, p. 40)

As she moved from position to position and ultimately to Chicago her salary improved with each move. That is what one would expect and would be in part the motive for changing positions. Shortly after Haley arrived in Chicago the impact of the national economic depression would have its impact on the public schools of that city. Confronted by what the Board of Education characterized as a fiscal crisis brought on by the national economy the teachers of Chicago were asked accept decreases in pay and increased class sizes.

Appalled by the cavalier manner in which the educational bureaucrats and the board of education dealt with the teacher’s resistance to their worsening working conditions, Haley began organizing the teachers to protest. In the course of her political activity Haley was made aware that the board of education’s fiscal problems were not totally the result of the national economic crisis.
In 1900, twenty-eight years after the taxation machinery for the determination of corporation values had been set in operation, the City of Chicago was getting less from corporate taxes that it had in the year after Mrs. O’Leary’s cow had kicked over the lamp and started the great Chicago fire of 1871. (Haley, p. 58)

She had been told that there were two local problems contributing to the fiscal crisis which the political establishment in Chicago might not want common knowledge. First, a tract of land set aside by the federal government when it created the Northwest Territories, which was intended to pay for the cost of education in Illinois, had been leased to major corporations at a mere fraction of its true value. This land would eventually become the most valuable land in the City of Chicago. The cost of the lease was supposed to be tied to the appraised value of the land.

For the school land leases are not only the major theme of the long and unended difficulties with the Chicago public school system but also the major theme in American political life. In few places has the exploitation of public interest by private greed been shown as clearly as in the instance of the Chicago school land question.” (Haley, p. 100)

Second, most of the businesses of Chicago, whose tax assessments were based on the corporation’s value, had not been assessed in decades. In short, during a period of phenomenal corporate and industrial growth, when many businesses grew exponentially, the City of Chicago elected not to reassess the corporations located there. This situation was created by the fact that the board of education and the tax collecting offices were both controlled by the mayor’s office and the mayor was reliant upon the major corporations for political support.

Haley was undaunted by the challenge of taking on a corrupt political establishment. She artfully worked with the party out of power, the Democrats, against the party which had
become far too cozy with big business, the Republicans.

What we wanted to do was to show the public that the failure to produce enough money to give the teachers the salary the board had promised them was due to the fact that the most valuable property in Illinois—the privilege given corporations to capitalize the people’s gift to them of the use of public streets for their own exclusive uses—was not put on the tax rolls. If it had been, the board would have money to pay without placing any additional burden on people. (Haley, p. 58)

Haley’s brashness at simply asking the right questions or looking for the proper forms, and in doing so exposing the corrupt political establishment to the light of day, was perceived as a teacher who didn’t know her place.

Shanahan {chairman of an Illinois Legislature committee} read the letters in deep disturbance, then he said, “When you teachers stayed in your classrooms, we men took care of you; but when you go out of your schoolrooms, as you have done, and attacked these great, powerful corporations, you must expect that they will hit back.” (Haley, p. 72)

But they could not get to her. She had no family and her salary was paid by the union. Her siblings had followed her into various professions so the support of her family was not solely hers. In short, Haley was untouchable.

She exposed the corruption. With the help of the newspapers the public’s knowledge of the how favoring the elite corporations impacted upon the taxpayer. “Through the years, a long parade of Hearst men, editors and reporters, marched through the story of the teachers’ struggles, giving us aid and advice as often as we gave them news...” (Haley, p. 66) The voters learned through these journalistic sources that because large corporations were not paying their fair share, the common taxpayer had pay more. Furthermore, the assessment so shortchanged the schools so that they were grossly underfunded. “Chicago, in spite of sporadic reform movements, knew practically nothing of the close and hidden relationships
between public taxing bodies and great commercial and industrial interests.” (Haley, p. 60)

All these revelations would become issues in future mayoral elections.

The refusal to enact the will of the people into law forced the teachers of Chicago to fall back on the election of a mayor whom they believed would be fair and just as their only hope of securing a board of education in sympathy with their aims and hopes in the tax crusade. (Haley, p. 99)

The teachers union would be forever part of the political landscape. Making progress when the candidates it supported won, losing ground when their opponents won. For better or worse, Haley had brought the teachers away from the political margins and into the fray of the battle.

Though the matter of the assessments had been exposed not all of the issues had been resolved. When the assessments were changed efforts were made to collect what were considered back taxes. The corporations fought any effort to collect on what should have been their true assessment had there not been collusion between the assessment agencies and the corporations. Ultimately, the issue was appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The court rule in favor of the corporations. Haley realized that favoring the elite went as far as the highest court of the land. She cited one of the dissenting opinions in the case.

We lost the case, but Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes [Jr.] was one the three [two] {editors brackets} who signed the dissenting opinion. Holmes said that it was the first time in his experience upon the Supreme Court bench that the court had ever declared that a tax that was clearly evaded (the amount was clearly fraudulent) {author’s parenthesis} could be excused on the ground that all the other evaders hadn’t been caught. Holmes said the court should have never taken the case at all. The case should have been left in the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois. He said that it was the first time in the history of the United States Supreme Court that jurisdiction was taken on appeal from a non-judicial body— the State Board of Equalization— and not from the Supreme Court of the State. (Haley, p. 84)
Though the loss in the Supreme Court was a setback, the process had educated Haley and the leadership of the CTF as to how the process works. They discovered the steps that the entrenched political establishment would be take to frustrate the reformer’s efforts. At each level of appeal the attorneys representing the interests of the corporations and the Chicago Board of Education found every reason to postpone virtually every legal step. Time and again actions had to be taken in court to have the defendants appear and participate.

The teachers saw the legal process was too influenced by judges who owed their place on the respective courts to the politicians who were collaborating with the corporations. But more importantly they discovered they could fight the system. They discovered that though they might not win every battle, they would win enough to improve the lot of those whom they fought for. The teachers lost on the issue of the back taxes, but because they won regarding the low assessments, the partial victory produced a modest settlement.

We had won for those teachers of Chicago who had been parties to the suit a comparatively small amount of money. We had, however, established in law the moral principle of the teacher’s right to be safeguarded in her contract with the Board of Education. We had found out that we could win something for ourselves by our own efforts. We had defeated the despotism which Boards of Education and great financial interests had tried to use against us. We had freed ourselves from fear. We had been given blows, but we had given back blow for blow. We had, too, established, quite without intention, another principle. We had mad the grade school teachers of Chicago the spokesmen for the common people. In fighting our own fight against the tax-dodging corporations and the tax-eating politicians, we had called the attention of the people not only of Illinois but of the entire nation to the fact that the small tax payer was paying the major part of the cost of government. (Haley, p. 84)

The teachers established themselves as a force to be reckoned with. No longer could they be ignored and bullied into submission. Though they were nearly all women, and they would not
have the vote for a few more years, they proved to be a political and moral power which could impact on the electorate and ultimately the political and judicial process.

**Haley’s Motivation**

Margaret Haley was very much a product of Irish-American culture. Though born in ethnically-diverse rural Illinois her move to Chicago placed her at the center of Irish-American culture in the Midwest. The Irish-American had known that the Irish had been discriminated in religion, dispossessed of land and marginalized politically in their homeland, what Haley referred to “the oppression of their race in Ireland.” (Haley, p.9) The Irish came to America with a passion to change all that. In Haley’s mind this passion to end oppression took on two distinctly different courses.

Persecution had crushed one group of Irish into submission to an established authority and a correlative intention of getting from it, but fair means or foul, whatever might be grasped. It had roused the other group to continuing struggle against any and all injustice. The fighting Irish. (Haley, p. 8)

Haley most certainly was an example of the latter while many of those whom she confronted in the process of fighting the elite corporations were examples of the former. Not that Irish-Americans and Irish immigrants were making decisions in the elite corporations of nineteenth century Chicago. Those of Irish birth or descent who collaborated with the corruption spawned to serve corporate profits were usually the politicians and union officials whose reliance on corporate largess had impacted upon their loyalties and values.

At one point Haley was confronted by one of these Irish who sought to advance his personal status by serving the elite and protecting the corrupt political establishment. He
appealed to Haley’s sense loyalty to fellow Irish to secure her compliance with the status quo.

I told O’Neill that Sullivan was no friend of mine, and he said that were all Irish Catholics and ought to stand together. I told him I’d be damned if I’d stand with any Catholic, Irish or Dutch or anything else, who’d defend procedure like that of the State Board. (Haley, p. 45)

For her the struggle against injustice did not have an ethnic dimension to it. Though it might have been the product of historical experience in Ireland, it knew no ethnic boundaries here in America.

But to see Haley’s life’s commitment to fighting injustice as a solely a characteristic of her ethnic heritage would be misunderstand it. For Haley it was a commitment that was not unlike those made by Irish families who were expected to produce at least one religious vocation from among their children. It was just this sort of life-long sacrifice and commitment which may have been the heart of her motivation. When Haley’s widowed sister was at risk of losing her child, named Margaret, to some unspecified illness, she prayed for the child’s recovery. In her prayer Haley promise if the child was spared an early death she would devote her life to the service of other children.

I did not know it, however, as in one of the last weeks of the century I looked on a snowy street. My widowed sisters only child, a little girl who had been given my name, was ill. We feared for her life and I was praying that she might be spared to us. “Oh God,” I pleaded, “do not take her from us. Not so soon.” Then, out of a strange sense of promise. “If only You’ll leave her to us, I’ll give all the rest of my to doing something for other children, for all children” (Haley, p. 40)

It had been Haley’s belief all along that in helping the teachers that she was helping the children they taught. “The children attending the schools would be... the ultimate beneficiaries of this protection for teachers...” (Haley, p. 34)
Haley described her life’s commitment as a nun might. Like the religious vocation where the commitment is not only life-long but irrevocable, Haley seemed to be resigned to her plight. Similar to the religious vocation Haley saw her commitment as a calling, a summoning from outside herself.

I was still young enough to see the world not as a darkling plain but as the splendid field of the cloth of gold; but I was old enough to have learned that there was something in life higher, finer than personal happiness, something that gave all even it demanded all. Without conscious intention I had, I can see now, been moving toward what must have been my vocation: a fighting future. (Haley, p. 40)

As is the case with those who make such unselfish life-long commitments, it was not only the quality of Haley’s devotion but the duration which made it so effective. It was those characteristics which resulted in Haley’s successes and impacted on so many of the people for she whom she worked.

For all Haley’s devotion to the teachers and students of Chicago, she was not blind to where this struggle fit in the broader issues regarding education specifically and society in general.

The end of the nineteenth century had brought a great educational awakening. Its result had been to demand democratic methods in education, but this awakening had extended only to the methods of teaching. We had lost on the administrative side. There we had grown less democratic. That was due largely to our industrial, economic, and political system. To such an extent had our industrial ideal, which is essentially monarchial and military, vitiated the public mind of that period that it had been easy to carry over this industrial ideal into the administration of the schools. (Haley, p. 86)

Haley, and subsequently the teachers, saw that the conditions of their employment were part of a broader pattern. Part of what they endured was because they were women, but there also had been significant changes in the American culture during industrialization. Haley saw that
the whole of society had changed because the society and ultimately the culture had become imbued with organizational models found in the military and industrial sub-cultures. From the teacher’s perspective society was changing, some of it for the worst. Industrialization had impacted on the country in so many ways that even political institutions had been tainted. Haley believed that reforms should be initiated which would counteract what had been lost to this unforeseen undemocratic concentration of wealth and power.

Long before the tax fight had been finished, we teachers had realized that for our own preservation we need to effect certain reforms in the government machinery of our city and our state. The counter attacks on us drove us into support of measures which would have given us as well as the rest of the greater freedom: the Initiative and Referendum, Direct Primary, Municipal Ownership of Public Utilities, and the election of the Board of Education by popular vote. (Haley, p. 95)

Haley and the teacher’s political awakening was part of a broader expansion of the political process. This awakening would culminate in women’s suffrage and the other political reforms which were to come, but, as with so many other changes there were those who like Haley who labored to facilitate those changes. “The CTF, still an organization of the grade school teachers, supported many reform movement including women suffrage, municipal ownership of public utilities, direct primaries, the popular election of United State senators, and referendum and recall.” (Eaton, p.7)

**Haley’s Courage**

Margaret Haley’s commitment to the teachers of Chicago exhibited courage in a variety of ways. First, to challenge the political establishment’s impact on the only profession open to women. Had Haley backed down, or had she not been insulated in the protective cocoon
offered by the union, she would have never likely taught again in Chicago or any school in Illinois. To begin to agitate was an act of courage. In Haley’s own words, “We had freed ourselves from fear.” (Haley, p. 84)

Second, Haley was a woman in a culture and political environment which still relegated women to second-class status. To challenge the political establishment, to take on the rich and powerful elite of Chicago, was an act of tremendous courage for either male or female. As a woman, Haley challenged the system with many the shackles women endured, without the safety net men might have a male-dominated culture.

But her courage was not limited to her initiating her life-long crusade. Time and again the establishment threatened her and her organization. On one instance she confronted a union which had been corruptly controlled by cronies of the political establishment. In this union in the evening after each union leadership election of the uncounted ballots would be taken into “executive session” at a site away from the polling where the votes would be counted. Quite unremarkably, the incumbents always won. Aware of this scam Haley confronted the leaders and their cohorts, many of who were armed.

There’s going to be trouble,” men shouted at me. “If there’s going to be trouble, I shall be right here.” I could see dozens of guns and I could see, too, the looks on the faces of some of those men. I thought the next moment would bring bloodshed and so I attempted to speak. Someone in the crowd shouted, “Hats off.” (Haley, 92)

Her presence prevented the corrupt union leaders from removing the ballots from the polling site. The votes were counted in front of all, and all of the incumbents lost.

At a time when nativist activities were still part of the political landscape, Haley, whose family history taught her that such prejudices could turn violent, faced accusations that her
movement was controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. “Dark hints and allegations were directed at the CTF, suggesting that the Catholic Church had undue influence in the public schools and that Irish Catholics controlled the teacher’s organization.” (Reid in *Haley*, p. xvii) Despite such dark threats, Haley was undaunted.

Even when the Board of Education sought to drive a wedge between the male-dominated labor union movement which the women-dominated CTF had recently affiliated itself, Haley held the course. Though men were only a small minority of the members of the CTF the board sought to offer a pay raise to the male teacher only, based upon the logic that their families were more dependent upon their wages than were the female teachers. But the ploy was simple, divide the CTF from the strength it gained from the Chicago Federation of Labor.

He (Dr. Harper) told them something had to be done as the existing tax levy could not meet the salary schedule which had just been voted us by the Board of Education, giving us the fifty dollar a year increase. He proposed that the increase of salary be left to the men but cut off from the women. The schools flamed into protest. (Haley, p. 36)

Again, with the courage of her convictions, and her resilience and resolution, Haley stayed the course continued her assault on privilege and corruption in government.

**Conclusion**

Margaret Haley would ultimately change the political and social environment for teachers, first in Chicago, then later nationally. She would personally attempt to form a national teacher’s union and would be uncharacteristically unsuccessful.
...in 1899 Catherine Goggin and Margaret Haley attempted to form a National Teacher’s Federation in Los Angeles. Six of the eight officers were from Chicago. But this attempt ended in failure. Another attempt was made in 1902 with Margaret Haley as president. Permitting only grade teachers to join the organization did attract about 180 members nationally... But with over half of the membership in Chicago the group had no true national representation and eventually withered on the vine. (Eaton, p. 10)

But her organizational skills will not be what distinguishes from her peers, it will be how she led by example, how she challenged the injustices embedded in elitism and the status quo. Though Haley would fail to personally form a national teacher’s union the example created a model for teacher’s organizations everywhere. “AFT models in large cities survived, however, to become the centers for a new phase of organizational activity some forty years later when both the NEA and the AFT came to accept to CTF model of professional organization for teachers only.” (Reid in Haley, p. xxx) Her legacy would result in teachers throughout the nation sharing the epiphany experienced by the teachers of Chicago.

For it was the Chicago Federation of Teachers, the first such organization of its kind in American where Haley, its driving force, awakened the teachers of that city.

By that time, the Chicago teachers had come to know the oppressiveness of political domination. We had learned the greed and the ruthlessness of corporate power. We had seen how entrenched, organized human avarice, working through the machinery of the law, had secured not only the resources of nature, oil wells, coal fields, and iron mines, but the machinery of production and distribution, and privileges of transportation, communication, intelligence, and the medium of exchange. Behind these law given privileges, it had reached out for further power until it had grown so great that it needed only to recognize in any institution an enemy, to annihilate it or to demand and secure it as one more added to its list of tools. The school, alone, was powerless against organized wealth. (Haley, p. 90)

It would be Haley who brought her organizational and investigative skills to the American Federation of Teachers. It would be the American Federation of Teachers which set the
example for the National Education Association to become a true vehicle for pursuing teacher’s interests and advocating for schools throughout the nation.

The example set by Haley’s Local Number One of the AFT would be the standard set for the national movement for teacher’s rights. A movement which would know how their plight was part of a broader problem.

As Haley made apparent, school politics were not limited to struggles between educators and representatives of the public, whether board members, councilmen, or legislators; they also involved internal conflict between different understandings of professionalism by teachers and administrators. This struggle, in turn, was marked by sex differentiation in that grade teachers were almost exclusively women, while the superintendents and principals, with rare exceptions, were men. (Reid in Haley, p. xxvi)

Chicago Journalist Richard Finnegan best described in an obituary how she appeared to those familiar with the politics of that city.

a little woman with a pleasant smile and charming manner, a friendly voice, rich eyes that understood much and saw a lot– saw realities and humors of life– eyes that were anxious to twinkle with an inherited Irish gaiety but eyes that were looking most for the answers to challenging question, questions that gave her voice, her whole personality a vibrancy and aliveness. (Reid in Haley, p. xxxii)

Yet it would be in the introduction to her autobiography which would best describe Haley and her impact on both education and politics.

For forty years she has been showing by deeds the part the teacher can play in the body politic. Now by words she shows how the war waged by small group of teachers may be continued and enlarged to insure the ultimate freedom for the schools. Her chronicle is a new beacon in the long and struggling history of real American democracy. No one, in or out of the schools, who has an interest in the freedom of educators and education, can afford to miss this dynamic story of a splendid fight in this cause. (Reid in Haley, p. xxxiii)
Bibliography
