

**S0045 Americans For Democratic Action, St. Louis Chapter, (1947- )  
Records, 1948-1983  
18 Folders, 2 Audio Cassettes**

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In 1947 liberal democrats organized the Americans for Democratic Action to separate left-wing politics from Communist influence. Violet Gunther, an ADA organizer who later became the national director, organized the St. Louis chapter with lawyers R. Walton Chubb and Harold Hanke, Bishop William Scarlet of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri, Washington University professor Huston Smith, social reformer Marion Wier and others. Chubb was a member of the Liberal Voters' League of St. Louis, an outgrowth of Progressive Citizens. In 1946, during the administration of Republican Mayor Aloys Kaufmann, Progressive Citizens successfully passed a rent control law for St. Louis. the following year, ADA replaced the Liberal Voters' League as the primary organization for liberal politics in St. Louis.

The St. Louis chapter followed the guidelines of the National ADA by urging local congressmen and senators to support liberal legislation. The chapter's annual fundraiser, the Roosevelt Day Dinner, featured prominent speakers including civil rights activist Bayard Rustin and Senator Thomas Eagleton. It supported Stuart Symington for the U. S. Senate in 1952 and Edward Long in 1962; Theodore McNeal for the Missouri Senate in 1962; and Hilary Bush for lieutenant governor in 1964.

The ADA also held workshops, conferences, and passed resolutions on local administrative policies. It petitioned the St. Louis Board of Commissioners in 1952 to establish a city-wide administration for a mass transportation system. During Fair Housing Opportunity Week in 1962, ADA joined with the Greater St. Louis Committee for Freedom of Residence in calling for the St. Louis Human Development Corporation to hold open board meetings.

The press often misrepresented the ADA as a left-wing counterpart to the John Birch Society. St. Louis chapter president, Jack Pierson, worked vigorously to dispel this image during his term of office, 1960-1969. When such comparisons were made, he wrote letters to the editors of both daily papers and made television appearances to rebut them. Bad publicity for ADA also resulted in 1960 when police arrested Reverend Davis S. Gray for selling liquor without a license during a local ADA meeting. A letter to the editor of the Post-Dispatch called the arrest racially motivated because NAACP members were present at the meeting. The St. Louis Argus reported that there were no NAACP members at the meeting, contrary to reports in the Post and Globe. Circuit Attorney Thomas Eagleton defended Gray in a letter to the editor of the Post and repeated the charge of racism. Charges against Gray were later dropped.

As early as 1964 the Citizens for Liberal Action criticized the local ADA for requiring a loyalty oath and a clearance on members' "purity" from Communist influence. A younger

group of liberal Democrats organized the New Democratic Coalition in St. Louis after the 1968 Democratic national convention in Chicago. (See Collection SL68). The St. Louis ADA's membership diminished during the 1970s as newer political groups attracted liberal Democrats.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The bulk of the ADA records are from 1960 to 1969, during the term of chapter president, Jack Pierson. There is one folder of material from 1948 to 1959 and another from 1977 to 1983. There is only one letter from 1983. The collection mainly documents the endorsements, resolutions and activities of the St. Louis ADA chapter during the 1960s. It includes correspondence on arrangements for Roosevelt Day dinner speakers, letters to newspaper and television editors and memoranda to and from the national group, mailing lists, board meeting minutes, legislative newsletters, endorsements and resolutions. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and subject headings.

## **FOLDER LIST**

### **Box 1, Folders 1-7**

1. Correspondence, mailing Lists and Memoranda, 1948-1959
2. Board Meeting Minutes, 1963-1966
3. Correspondence, July-December, 1962
4. Correspondence, July-December, 1963
5. Correspondence, January-June, 1964
6. Correspondence, July-December, 1964
7. Correspondence, 1965-1967

### **Box 2, Folders 8-18**

8. Correspondence, 1968
9. Correspondence, 1969
10. Gray Arrest, Nesclippings, 1960
11. Legislative Newsletter, 1964-1969
12. Legislative Newsletter, 1964-1969
13. National Board Meeting Minutes and Memoranda, 1963
14. Presidential Campaign, 1960
15. Roosevelt Day Dinner, 1963
16. St. Louis Democratic Platform Hearings, 1960
17. Vietnam Moratorium Memoranda, 1969
18. Correspondence and Mailing Lists, 1977-1983
19. ADA World Magazine, Special Vietnam Issue, 1966

Audio Cassettes

T704 Interview with Jack Pierson, 2/11/83

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