History of the Children's Bureau

Dr. Cecelia Tichi, Chair of Modern Culture in the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, presents "Justice, Not Pity: Julia Lathrop, First Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau"
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Catherine Nolan: [00:00:00] I wanted to say good morning to everyone and welcome. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Catherine Nolan, the Director of the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, and this meeting was originally labeled as our rescheduled Federal Interagency Workgroup meeting from our July meeting, which had to be cancelled. We were very fortunate to be able to arrange today to have our special guest lecturer, who Catherine Luby will introduce to you in just a second. We also felt that since this is such a unique opportunity for us that we would open the Interagency Workgroup to a broad array of guests and visitors. I'm happy to look out in the audience and see some of you here.

So with that, I want to thank you all for being here today and for folks who are on the phone, I really appreciate you joining us by phone. I'm going to turn this over to Catherine Luby now from my staff who will make thanks and introductions, and then we'll take it from there.

Catherine Luby: [00:01:01] Thanks Catherine. Thanks to everyone for coming. I just want to quickly introduce Dr. Cecelia Tichi.

I was lucky enough to see her the first time she did the "Justice, Not Pity: Julia Lathrop, First Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau" presentation at the Library of Congress. I came back raving to the office so everyone was kind enough to get it, to have her back. I'd like to thank everyone who worked so hard to get her here and thank her for coming. [inaudible]

Dr. Tichi has a laundry list of accomplishments. But she's at the Library of Congress doing all kinds of work and researching. Julia Lathrop is one of many other persons in the beginnings of the Children's Bureau who are interesting along with setting up a shift that occurred from the gilded age to the progressive era. And [Dr. Tichi] was a potent chair of modern culture at the Library of Congress. [inaudible]

I'm really excited. It's a wonderful presentation so I hope you enjoy it as much as I did the first time.

[applause]

Cecelia Tichi: [00:02:11] I'm delighted to be here. I appreciate you coming out to spend this hour. I know that whatever work you have temporarily suspended awaits you on your desk as it won't get done by itself. So this is time carved out from the work days—I know this—and I really appreciate it. Let me especially thank Catherine Luby, Lorraine Togman, and Kim Amos, who had to do a lot of work to make this possible.

As each of my visuals comes up, I will briefly describe it so that anyone listening on the phone lines might be able to get a sense of what we're about. And as we see this first one, we see a little girl laboring in a textile mill loom in front of [inaudible] and here is the title of our talk: "Justice, Not Pity." It is from Julia Lathrop, and it's her quote; "The justice of today is born of yesterday's pity."

We are now—I think everyone knows this—in what is sometimes proudly proclaimed as a second gilded age. I won't belabor the point except to say that gilding is itself a rather critical term. It implies a skin overlay of a precious metal that conceals something that's a base metal underneath. And when Mark Twain and Charles D. Warner named their 1873 novel *The Gilded Age*, they were being satirical in contradistinction to a concept of a golden age in which social arrangements are much closer to an ideal of a quality and good living for maximum numbers of people. So as more and more commentators tell us that we are in a second gilded age it's a rather ominous—unless I supposed you're of the super rich now—ominous reference.

We know—and you read this daily and see it on television—that the wealth disparity in our country is chasmic <sic> at this point and that there are now, I think that the number is up to close to 47 million in the U.S. without health care and on and on. And we now see the terrible foreclosures that are besetting so many people in this country. So we have a lot of work to do at this time, and one way to get some sense of the possibilities for advancing in various social programs is to see against what odds people a century ago were able to make great headway, and that is why I want to talk about Julia Lathrop. I will tell you that she is the least likely person to have become a Federal Chief of a new bureau…may we have the next image please.

Not everyone photographs well. [laughter] Here is Julia Lathrop in a full standing portrait. She's wearing what was highly fashionable in the early 20th century. Her facial features always make her look rather mournful I find. One writer called her facial expression a rather Italian [inaudible]. She was not Italian at all I want to say. I just ask us to notice that, she loved good clothes, and what she's wearing is good, good even though no one would wish to have that sagging look at this time. She was, as you see, born before the Civil War—3 years before—in 1858. She was the daughter—one of five children—of a pioneering family who came to Rockford, Illinois, when it was kind of barren—the wilderness, a few cabins, and the Rock River. Her parents were proud figures in the city of Rockford, feeling that they had brought civilization from the East.

Her father, as you see, a Lincoln Republican. He had met Lincoln in fact and served as a U.S. Congressman. Her mother, socially prominent, one of the leading ladies of Rockford. Julia then was expected to be a lady in the city. We don't quite have that category any longer. Of course, we have the designation first lady. But in the 19th century and then further from that—and you know this—a lady was expected to adhere to a code of conduct that's quite strict in its own way. She was to prevent social friction in gatherings. She was, in short, to make nice to everyone. She did not raise her voice. At the table, she knew how to use every implement from the pickle fork to the fish knife. She crossed her legs at the ankles and never at the knee. If she was taught what her conduct should be, as she was in public, it revolved around proper etiquette at teas, at balls, the right way to enter and exit a horse-drawn carriage or railway car, and public appearances meant perhaps theaters, concerts, boating. At all social gathering, she was to be a paragon of graciousness, civility, kindness, and all the attributes that should make her, therefore, a fine consort to a man as his wife.

This did not happen for Julia Lathrop. She went, and we'll see this in a moment, she spent a year at the Rockford Female Seminary and then she went off to Vassar. She wanted to go East to school. She didn't love it but she graduated in 1880. At that time she was one of less than 0.3 percent of women with a college education. She loved children, but she did not want to teach school. So here's what she did: She came back to Rockford, she worked in her father's law office. Gradually, she read law and passed the bar, but we would call her today a paralegal. At the same time she was really smart and through some family money she began to invest and her investments did very well for her in a quiet way.

She was living at home in the Milwaukee cream brick house in which she had grown up and where her brothers and sisters were living. Though her brothers, as they came of age, would marry and leave the family home. But Julia stayed on, and it looked as if she would have a lifelong role as Aunt Julia to the nieces and nephews of her brothers and her one sister.

That was the script written for her by her upbringing, her pedigree, her schooling in a sense, and the fact that she was not being courted by any suitor. She didn't quite know why. She thought perhaps it was her hair, it was or was not curly and therefore it disqualifies her for courtship.

The next slide please. We're looking at a very small map. We're not going to linger with this. It's a panoramic map from the Library of Congress. They were typical in the late last century and you could see that Rockford's a thriving community—it has industry, it has electric street cars, it has a new wide bridge with a sidewalk in the year 1890. And if we just go one more [slide], what we're seeing now is the sight of the moment that would change Julia Lathrop's life.

This is the Rockford Female Seminary, which today is Rockford College, on the blocks above the Rock River. In the autumn of 1890, Julia Lathrop joined her father walking along these curving walkways to an auditorium where they were going to listen to a lecture by a woman who had graduated from the seminary 10 years earlier and was making quite a name for herself in Chicago.

Julia Lathrop already had made the acquaintance of Ms. Jane Addams, but in the fall of 1890 a rather odd reversal was in play. Ms. Addams, who was younger than Julia and therefore junior to Julia, had become rather an authority on something that she was calling "settlement house life." Ms. Addams had the misfortune [inaudible] of orphanage. Her mother had died when she was 2. Her father had died fairly recently, and she had a fortune that would make her financially independent. Recently she had gone to medical school and then word surfaced around Rockford that Jane Addams had suffered a nervous bout of depression or exhaustion. She had gone to England, and she had seen something called Toynbee Hall, in which the young men of Cambridge University were trying to improve the quality of life for the very poor East Enders. The poor British, English, the East End of London, Jane Addams had recognized were whites who were mirror images of herself. She saw poor young woman and prostitutes and thought, there but for the grace of God, social arrangements, and the accident of birth go I. She determined, Jane Addams, to come back to the United States and start something of her own that would be called a "settlement house."

She, therefore, was scheduled on this autumn evening in 1890 to give a talk to the citizens and many alumni of the seminary, plus leading citizens of the town were to be there. And of course Julia Lathrop with her father, arm in arm, sitting side by side in the gas-lighted auditorium.

Here we'll see Jane Addams. Everyone who commented on her said that from her young years she looked rather weary. But she stood to speak with a clear, low voice that carried to the back of the auditorium, and she had two things to say that Julia Lathrop heard.

One was this: That in the United States, political democracy had made great headway since the founding fathers wrote their documents and they were ratified. The Declaration, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. Nothing was perfect. Women still could not vote and [inaudible] of political corruption sometimes slithered its way into elections and called them into question. But Ms. Addams was not there to talk about political democracy. She was there to say there was another part of democracy that had been neglected and that had been social democracy. The arrangement that people in the United

States had with one another across class lines, this had been neglected, severely neglected. And Ms. Addams warned that the democracy already in place was not yet stable, it could be evanescence, could disappear, could crumble unless social democracy was properly attended to. So that was one point of hers.

The second was this: That educated women were wasting their lives if they went home after college to the fireside and merely graced papa's armchair for the rest of their lives, taking care of aging parents, and being good souls within their family. Ms. Addams declared that it was time for these women to step out into the world and to become agents of, promoters of, this new idea of social democracy. Julia Lathrop's ears perked right up. All her life she'd been hearing pioneering tales of Rockford, how wonderful it had been, how adventurous it had been when the Swedes came and they had cholera. And the good folks of Rockford wanted to help them but not let their whole town become a pit of cholera, and so they helped to quarantine them just outside of town. And the Swedes were nursed back to health before they were allowed, in affect, to come into Rockford. Tales of pioneering, of dirt floors and log cabins, of tobacco that was first chewed and then dried and smoked because it was too valuable to just dispose of.

Here came Jane Addams telling about Chicago's 19th Ward where she, Addams, and her friend, Ellen Gates Starr, had leased the former mansion of Mr. Charles Hull. Hull House, they were calling it, and they had moved in. They had spruced it up. They had used the modern elbow grease to clean it—they themselves doing some of the cleaning. They were ready for a new kind of urban pioneering.

Let's see Hull House. What's on screen here is Hull House from the outside, and I must admit this is a slide that shows its later developments once benefactors began to contribute to its building program. And it now has classrooms and studios and so it's much larger than the original Hull Mansion. Let me just linger here...see that the street doesn't look necessarily paved, and Jane Addams didn't want to mislead anyone who might take an interest in Hull House and be disappointed and then say that they had been baited and switched. She made it clear that garbage was overflowing in the street in the garbage boxes and that children played with trash and waste, bones, orange peelings, and the like as if they were toys. She made it clear that the dust in the dry seasons would choke a horse—and it did—and that in the rainy season the mud was up to and beyond a woman's ankles. She made it clear that those in the 19th Ward were immigrants, many of whom spoke no English, that they were extremely poor, that they were crowded into tenements that were unfit dwellings, but there they lived because it was the only housing available to them. And that anyone who came to join the Hull House group would face these conditions and live in them. No Hull House resident was to be, in a sense, cocooned inside the house.

And let's see the inside of the house. This is how it looks today. See the very beautifully designed and executed interior with a curved archway and graceful stairway. We're looking from the reception room towards the front door and see the stairway and that would lead up to what became Julia Lathrop's room. Ms. Addams lived upstairs, and only a few of the Hull House inner circle were to live there. But when Ms. Addams gave her talk she was on a recruiting mission. She had someone like Julia Lathrop in mind. Everybody else could write a check, but Julia Lathrop should come and live there and be a part of this new adventure in social democracy.

Well who were these people? Here are three views of immigrant families. Huddled together you see them, one just with children, another of a family just posing in their Sunday best, and another probably in their best but with no good clothes so to speak. And these would be the neighbors to socialize with and to exchange ideas with. What then would Julia Lathrop, this born and bred lady, who had a law

degree that she never used, who had been a Rockford gentile person from the day of her birth, what was she to do? She asked Ms. Addams; "What am I to do?" Jane Addams was vague. She said, "look around, see what there is, you'll find something. If that doesn't work, look for something else."

It was perplexing to Julia Lathrop. She thought, perhaps, since she had a degree in Classics maybe she could start a Plato club. Now let's first see what some of the other Hull House volunteers and residents were starting to do. They were running art classes for children. You see the art classes. Here's a little boy being helped one on one by a teacher, and another image, a table with children and a teacher or a volunteer helping those children with their projects.

We can see they have the [inaudible], because by now Hull House was attracting benefactors' contributions, so they had supplies, they had more room. And we see on the bottom image children all lined up, obviously the weather is chilly, but they are going on an outing, perhaps to the Chicago Art Institute, open to the public, a cultural possibility, a moment to take them out, take them to the city, show them life beyond these tenements where they're living. But Julia Lathrop started the Plato club. And who came? Quarrelsome older men who had been enjoying fighting about philosophy all their lives. Julia invited the young professor from the University of Chicago, John Dewey, to come and preside over a few sessions. He did. He was just as flummoxed by the quarrelsome men as she was, and he didn't come back very often. They were to meet for a couple of hours. They stayed until 10 at night. Julia realized this was not going to be her career at Hull House.

Now on screen what you see, a very blurry image for which I apologize. Here's what I ask that we note: Julia Lathrop was appointed to the Illinois Board of Charities in the year 1893 and she stayed on that board until the year 1909. What we're seeing here is Julia Lathrop surrounded by men. We could ask, how did she get a seat at the table with these authoritative men? Notice also she's in a very smart suit. She liked to wear navy when she went out on site visits to charitable organizations as a member of the State board. She had to write reports, and she wanted to be altogether professional. Her shirtwaist was a Chinese blue. So imagine that.

Now we'll step back and see how she got onto the Charities Board, and how she began to get her career focused. We're looking here at an image of the great Ferris wheel of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. A bridge engineer named George Washington Gail Ferris put in a proposal for a wheel that was to be like a bridge but curved into a circle and have cars as large as Coleman railway cars. And it was a huge hit. At the bottom of the screen we're seeing—and I ask you to notice—clothing, and that the man is in full dress suit and the woman dressed appropriately to the time in a long skirt, a suit jacket.

We remember a few slides ago—images ago—the look of those immigrant families, how were they earning a living. Some of them work, you know this, in factories. Many of them took night work home with them to their tenements apartment. They finished garments for the garment industry and became known as "sweatshop workers." Sub, sub, subcontractors in their homes, they sewed on buttons or they sewed on trim work. Children as young as 4 could pull out basting threads and were up half the night to do it. The families had to have the money. Every child in those families was employed along with the parents. The surface they ate on became the work surface. The surface they slept on was sometimes the work surface where bundles of clothing, one piece at a time, were worked on and returned in the morning. Chances were the father or mother staggering under the loads of those heavy woolens.

Well at the time of the World's Fair, a worker at the fairgrounds brought smallpox with him, and the disease began to spread through the city. And it was spreading into the tenements where the sweatshop

working families toiled at night. The risk was, not only of an outbreak in Chicago, but throughout the United States because these clothes were shipped out. You might have ordered what you thought would be a custom-made overcoat in Omaha. It was being finished in a tenement in Chicago and scheduled to be shipped out to you.

Julia Lathrop, together with her sidekick Florence Kelley—who also had, as many of you know, a great deal to do with children's rights in this era—those two women undertook to inspect the tenement slums. They went down into the basement apartments. They went up the rickety stairs into the sweatshop tenement apartments. You can see the look of those apartments in Jacob Riis's 1890 bestseller, *How the Other Half Lives*. They were looking—now the next slide—they were looking for adults with pustules and scabs. We're looking at an image of a hand and wrist with two, really three of these pustules. That's all I think we need to see here.

They were looking as well for children hidden away by frightened parents who nonetheless had to be taken out of those apartments and sent to a special, as it was called, "test house" facility on the West Side of the city of Chicago. Day and night Lathrop and Kelley went searching through these apartments, trying to calm down the frightened parents, but also calling authorities when they found cases of smallpox because that disease would be carried in that clothing. It was as a result of this work that Julia Lathrop was appointed to the Chicago Board of Charities and began years of intensive site visits to the poor houses, to the alms houses, to the State hospitals. She saw the children, children mixed with seriously mentally ill adults in cramped quarters—that one report says were no bigger than a chicken coop. She saw the children at the Dunning Hospital outside of Chicago who were sent out to school in institutional clothing and mocked and jeered at by their classmates who came from houses that could provide them regular street clothes. She saw the injustices and knew that something had to be done.

I now want to show a series of pictures, and you've seen them because they're so widely published in history books and so forth. These are of child workers. Julia Lathrop saw this. We're looking at two images from Lewis W. Hine, that famous photographer chronicling and documenting the abuses and neglect, as we would now say, of children, of child laborers. These two images look blurry, one of a boy, one of a girl. The point is these were deliberately blurred because what Hine did is take a series of photographs of child workers, and they all looked enough alike to become composites. That's how many there were; that's how standardized they had become in an era of industrial standardization of processes of industry.

We're looking now at a glass factory, probably in Alton, Illinois, near Chicago, but New Jersey had these glass factories also. And the children, boys principally—girls worked in packing the bottles—the boys worked in them practically all night long. There were often 24-hour shifts because you could not shut down the glass furnaces. We're looking at the little boys called "blower dogs." They had to have their own heads close to the furnaces with that molten glass and then they would run outside, sometimes into the chilly, freezing winter and often were subject to pneumonia. Here's another image of those "blower dog boys," and you see them so close to the molten glass in the furnaces. They had to break the bottles free of the mold, clean the molds, and then provide them back to the glass blowers.

Let's see the next image here. Here are the "breaker boys" who worked sorting coal, taking out the stones that might be in the coal chute, and who at their mouths and noses you see that sooty look because their faces were so close to the coal dust, which embedded itself in their cuticles under their nails. They were, of course, being poisoned, and you see from the grim, sore, sad expressions on their faces that there was no joy in their lives. They did not have the right to childhood.

We'll now have a look at a girl in a textile mill—"spindle of gloom." Very dangerous though it doesn't necessarily look it here. She would be on her feet for shifts, as the boys were, of 12 to 14 hours or even more if the boss said you just stay right there you're not to go home now. We'll see a little girl now, she's standing just forlorn by the tenements home, really awful, so distressing. She's almost asking, "Is this my life?" it would seem. And then, one more here. This image, I think, has been talked about a bit. His bangs are far too neatly cut. He's selling *Milwaukee Sentinels*. But as a newsboy you, in a special moment, many people sentimentalize the newsboy. They provide summer camps for them and sometimes washhouses for them. They were thought be cute. Horatio Alger wrote about them of course in his novel, and at the end of the novel, they were on their way to a prosperous career. But the fact was that a newsboy wasn't in school. He was out half the night hawking papers on a street corner in all kinds of weather. Sometimes stimulating himself with coffee or other stimulants—something closer to meth for these days. He was not being educated. Eventually he would grow up and have no skills and be illiterate and unable to do arithmetic apart from perhaps counting out change.

Now the question is posed: Who profited from this child labor? Who liked it? Who supported it? Who benefited? Some of the answers—guessed immediately—employers who wanted cheap labor or needed nimble little fingers. That was one group. Next, immigrant parents of course who while well meaning, nonetheless thought that the way to get ahead was to have every member of the family who could work, work and contribute to the family income. And these were parents trying to survive from one day to the next so they could look ahead to the future and, in some cases, so poor that they really did need that money coming in to maintain that tenements life. But then there were others, and this is the class that's so amazing. The affluent middle class of America supported the idea of child labor. They would never send their own children out to toil to sell papers or sort coal or clean the glass bottle molds. Never. But they believed that such work instilled discipline and good character in the children of the poor, including the immigrant children. So in the South, the children of the former slaves who were out in the turpentine/pine forests, that was good because maybe they'd learn a little discipline and all these other children too.

And indeed there was a category of life insurance called Industrial Insurance—some of you may know this—in which you could insure your child worker for as little as $.03 but probably for about a nickel. In case that contributor to the family were to die in an industrial accident or fall ill from the pneumonia from the glass factory and not recover. Well, the insurance company would pay a death burial benefit and maybe a little money to compensate for the lost wages of that child.

Those parents who thought farther ahead to the future and wanted their poor sons and daughters to go to school might find that the public schools did not have room for them. The affluent parents were not of a mind to find from their income and their wealth enough money to provide public schooling for the children of the poor. If you read, for instance, *Life With Father* by Clarence Day Jr.—it's thought to be a nostalgic look at the way of 19th century life—you find that father refuses to have his money pay tax dollars for a new public school to educate the seven children of his Irish coachman, O'Dowd. Father felt that O'Dowd should never have had those seven, and they might as well play by the manure pit near the stables and be looked after by the older ones. So there was an enormous bias on the part of the people who were most in a position to influence social policy. That is the group that Julia Lathrop and her friends and colleagues both in civic clubs in Chicago and around the nation, but at the Children's Bureau that's what she was to face when she came to be the new Director, the new Chief of the Federal Children's Bureau.

Here is Union Station, at the time the largest passenger rail station in the nation. It was copied from a quote from classical Rome, "from the great triumphal arch," and there it is. And here, in June of 1912, Julia Lathrop comes in to be sworn in and to face the tasks that were before her. Finally, President William Howard Taft had signed the Children's Bureau into existence. It had been a long fight to get the Bureau established. It had begun with President Theodore Roosevelt thinking that the Bureau was a bully idea. Bully, lets talk about it, he said. But then there was Congress, and then there was the usual wrangling, and it took, I believe, 13 bills over 11 years and finally here it is. So you see, you can't give up. It takes many bills. Sometimes they fail; you just have to come back, you come back. Don't let them wear you down, right?

Things were not free and clear for Julia. There were rivals already and they would be watching closely. And who were they? The Department of Education feared a rivalry in power with the Children's Bureau. So did the public health service; they were going to be watching. And so did the nation's pediatricians. Fearing that the Bureau would encroach on their territory, and one or two missteps, and they would organize and lobby for its abolition.

In addition, as there always are, were political rivalries. And so there would be an election coming up and maybe Julia Lathrop would be unseated before she could even get going. She had one other stipulation that was going to cost her—she knew this—allies She had come to understand—through all her work on the Charities Board and site visits—she had come to understand that professionals were needed for this work. That volunteerism was good to a point, but that it was well meaning and haphazard and you needed on staff people with training, people who understood the new social science research, could undertake it, weren't afraid of numbers, knew how to crunch those numbers. What this meant is that her staff at the Children's Bureau would not have political appointees. There would be no favoritism, no "Can you get me a job for my buddy?" The answer would be, "No, I'm sorry, but we will have professionals, and we will work with the new, fairly new, civil service system to make sure we have on staff those who can pass the merit test."

A long-term health of the Bureau requires that it be managed and directed at the highest levels right down, right on through, by professionals. She had seen the cost in money and human, say energy and waste, in her Charities Board site visits. She had seen what happens when political contracts provide food, when political appointees are put in charge of residence and of children, and she was having none of it. So she came in to be sworn in. She came in on her own money because the Federal money was not yet released, and she had scheduled an appointment with the Census Bureau with statisticians because she knew she needed numbers.

Here's the numbers she had to work with: The Department of Agriculture and its budget for 1912 had $1 million. The Children's Bureau had $25,640. One million to 25,000. As her friend Florence Kelley said; "I see. Cows and pigs are worth more that the nation's children." It was a potent statement. At the same time, Lathrop came in with a dire statistic that weighed on her and gave her a good idea about how to launch the Bureau. The statistic was this: That of the 2 ½ million babies born in the U.S. annually almost 300,000 died. Those were the best figures that could be got. She was looking for a project to launch the Bureau that would not be political, that would not play into the hands of her opponents, of her foes, whether in or outside of government. She pondered this. She pondered this, the Bureau's mandate was to work for all children in the nation disregarding parentage, economic circumstance. So what could the first project be? It would be the question, "Why do babies die?" "Why do babies die?" It seemed like the clearest, simplest, most fundamental, touching, compelling possible question. It connected with families everywhere in the country, and it augured ill for the nation's future that all these babies were not surviving their first year of life.

Julia Lathrop had in mind two pamphlets she hoped to get out to publish promptly. One would be called, “Infant Care,” and one would be called “Prenatal Care.” She knew that many, many U.S. mothers did not understand that they needed proper nutrition during pregnancy. And she knew that many mothers did not know that adulterated milk could harm their children, or milk that had sat out and spoiled and got contaminated, that could actually kill them. So she planned. Why do the babies die? Here on the left, we’re seeing an image of new parents with their little infant there. These are working class parents in their best to have this photograph made. And then we see on the right, two little children, it looks like by a shack, at the entrance there playing more or less in the dirt. Very different social classes, but both children and babies need that question answered. Why might they die?

I now want to show a series of images. You’ve been so patient to listen while I just talk, I have several images of the first year of the Bureau because those two pamphlets proved to be so popular that members of Congress, both the House and the Senate, began to request for their constituents batches of those pamphlets. They were getting very positive feedback and it tamped down the political opposition so that Lathrop and her staff could proceed with their good work, so that the budget would grow, so they could do more. They tapped the civic organizations all across the country very promptly. The Federated Women’s Club pitched in right away to help. Here are some of the initiatives.

First, get out the word to these affluent middle class Americans that child labor is wrong, that it’s destructive. What we see is “the evil of child labor,” in a newspaper or magazine article on the far right. Here, on the far left, “a great wrong, our national disgrace.” You know that before and after images usually show the before person is struggling and straggling and all kinds of things and the after one is the successful outcome. Here it is the reverse. A bright cheerful child through child labor is turned into a drudge and the implication of a ruined life here.

In the middle, we see “the whole man in the making.” And you can’t read this, let me just read the line below; “Filing toward the colliery (that is, the coal mine areas) instead of the school house.” So the message, this drum beat in the press, in magazines that the affluent Americans subscribed to, in newspapers, speeches, at garden clubs, civic groups, messages to clergymen is to start putting out the word that child labor is a horror, that it is indeed an evil, that it doesn’t inculcate discipline and good character, that it destroys lives, and that it will seriously impact the nation’s future. So this sort of thing. Here again, what we’re looking at here is a foot of poster board that could be taken to a convention—a business convention or civic group. It could be packed in a suitcase and then sort of just taken out and stood up. What we see is the process of how to make human junk. You start with good material, and again there are bright, lively, healthy children at the top. They’re being put into a factory in the middle, and they come out looking like those children in the Lewis Hines slide images that we saw. They’re bedraggled, they’re forlorn, they’re slumping rather than standing up straight. They look diseased. And the idea of children as junk was meant to, of course, startle and stir and get people thinking about the human cost of all this child labor.

Here, how about a drawing, a kind of political cartoon. What we see is the statue of Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. On the base of the statue, it says “Lincoln free the slaves.” And then we see the enslaved child, child labor. The war, the Civil War, War of Secession—depends on where you’re from—was still fresh in people’s minds... And here’s this boy with a ball and chain and the caption, “What about me? Free the children.” We need another emancipation of the children.

Here Lathrop had hoped for this and it came about in 1918-19. By the way, through World War I she had connected children’s causes to the war efforts—very good politically, very gracious, always

gracious, always a lady. She had hoped to have a children's year in which children of all ages could have their particular needs and opportunities addressed. And we see this poster where children are obviously healthy. It's a colorful poster; they're going out into the country for a picnic. They are at leisure, they are not toiling. And Lathrop understood that leisure time was crucial for the development of a human being. Time to just have your own thoughts, time to play. Of course you know the playground movement is a part of her efforts at the same time. Children's Bureau never built playgrounds. I don't mean to say that. It just means that its allies were building playgrounds, getting the kids out of the streets.

Here is a traveling dispensary—"Connecticut Baby Special" it says on the side—from the 1910s. This is a sort of traveling, visiting nurse system. Go out into communities where the children are, they can't always come to a clinic or a pediatrician's office. Again, the Bureau being very careful not to encroach on the territory of the pediatrician. Read Lathrop letters in the National Archives, Children's Bureau archives, there you'll see how careful she is not to start dispensing any prescriptive advice that might be a doctor's province. Nevertheless, getting the mobile units up and going was one of the huge projects and getting them going in cities and communities across the country as best one could.

We have to remember when looking at this image of children on a boat deck, sort of off Staten Island. We're seeing the Brooklyn Bridge, off New York City, there's Manhattan in the background with its famous skyline. Here are the children with their desks and a blackboard, there with a teacher. What we have to remember is that tuberculosis was such a danger at this time. The idea was that fresh air would ward it off. So there were all kinds of Children's Bureau experiments in outdoor classrooms so that good healthy air could be got. If you go to look at Lathrop's file, the Children's Bureau's files, here's what you might see, a device that looks like a cage for open air sleeping. It would hook onto the windowsill of a high rise city apartment and put the little child in this bedding cage and the child is out over the windowsill. Guess who's little granddaughter is featured in this poster? President Woodrow Wilson's granddaughter hovering in that cage. Also, diapers filled with Spanish moss and seaweed. Trying to find an absorbent material for all kinds of things.

Let's take another one here. This is a project that Lathrop would not have dared start when she began the Bureau. It's called the baby thermometer, and it offered a correlation of family income with infant mortality. It showed that the lowest wage families had the greatest incidence of infant mortality. Once the Bureau was strong enough, that kind of finding could be used for a policy directive—once the Bureau had its friends. So back to what that figure showed. Here she is again. I want to quote her statement. It's such a powerful statement. Here's what she said, and she was thinking internationally; "We cannot help the world toward democracy if we despise democracy at home." "Democracy," she said "is despised when mother or child die needlessly. It is despised in the person of every child who is left to grow up ignorant, weak, unskilled, unhappy no matter what his race or color." The only thing we would change in that statement is the pronoun "his." We would add "her," as she assumed "her" in her statement.

There was one more image on the left, the friends of the Bureau, the National Child Labor Committee, asking why there are 2 million child workers under 16 years of age. We want them to be normal men and women, we want you to join the National Child Labor Committee. What we have on the right is a quotation from the International Labor Organization of the United Nations, and you can read it perhaps, it says; "Worldwide agriculture is the sector where the largest percentage of working children is found. Over 132 million girls and boys, age 5 to 14 years old, often work from sunup to sundown on farms and plantations, planting and harvesting crops, spraying pesticides, and tending livestock."

I think that you are the Julia Lathrop of this time and the Abbott sisters as well, and that those even younger that the youngest professional here in this room will take their place as the Julia Lathrop's. And I will just mention that as we looked at that first image of Julia Lathrop in an outlandish outfit—long skirt, strange jacket, and impossible hat—we might be looking, those of us many years down the way, at an image of a new Julia Lathrops and we would be chortling at the flip flop.

[laughter]

With that I will conclude and thank you so much.

[applause]

Moderator: [00:57:14] We'll take questions in the room and then we'll open it up on the phone.

Audience Question: [00:57:20] Hi. I know in this room there is knowledge I can't begin to approach. Thank you so much for this presentation. One of the things I've read about this side of Julia Lathrop and her cohorts was that they were able to get some friends in Congress by shaming them about how at USDA, Agriculture, how much money was going in because of licensing the livestock and...they didn't have anything comparable.

Dr. Tichi: [00:58:09] You're absolutely right...you're right to remind us that indeed Lathrop and her colleagues, in your words, shamed members of Congress for their willingness, eagerness to fund so handsomely the Department of Agriculture, including livestock registration, pure bred cattle and hogs, and all the other animals as well whereas children were not even registered at birth nationally. Not even registered. One of the first projects Lathrop undertook was to enlist the support of the Civic Women's Clubs all across the United States to ask them to begin to, in their communities, to document birth. To get birth records going. When Medicare Part D came in a few years ago, you all remember Part D? We're not going there. Anyway, one of the initial regulations, and this stands on what you just said, is that a person well into their later part of life would need to provide birth certificates, proof of birth. What was found is that a good number of people had no proof of their birth. And the reason is that there was no Federal registration, no State law—some States, not all by any means—and so quickly that requirement was dropped. I guess the willingness to accept wrinkles and failing eyesight in lieu of birth certificates...but it's exactly what you're calling attention to and Congress was properly shamed.

Please bear in mind that the Congressmen and their families lived in communities and States, they saw these magazines that were shaming the public for supporting child labor. They were not immune as family members, members of their own communities, from this sort of pressure that Lathrop and her colleagues were bringing to bear, but right there in the Capitol building to have that shaming go on was very effective.

[audience chatter]

Audience Question: [01:00:40] How do you get a better handle on kind of what the role of the Children's Bureau was about [inaudible]?

Dr. Tichi: [01:01:06] Lathrop had to invent the Bureau. It had its Federal mandate to protect and care for children across class lines and so on. She had a very small staff initially. What she projected is that she would need 75 employees and they would be grouped into five categories. I should've brought my

list. But she was very clear about what organization she needed to instate in the Bureau for it to do its work, for it to sponsor, say, a Year of the Child and to support a traveling nurse program. And she, in Chicago this was, I won't go on and on about this...Julia Lathrop always loved Jane Addams. But she came to realize that there was a difference in thinking between Jane Addams and herself. Addams relies on what was thought to be woman's intuition, and what Lathrop had come to recognize from all those site visits to the poor houses and the hospitals, is that hard numbers were needed and that the developing professions of engineering, of medicine, and of law needed to be coupled with a profession of social research, in other words social work.

A man named Graham Taylor, who founded a settlement house modeled on Hull House in Chicago, had started a school of philanthropy, he called it, to try to educate aspiring social workers in the city of Chicago. Lathrop was invited to teach a course. She became, in her gentile ladylike way, quite an authority at the school. She didn't want it to be swallowed up by the University of Chicago. Nor was she willing to have it taken over by any of the Christian denominations for their own purposes. She steered a middle course in which she steadily promoted seminars, workshops, and courses heavily dependent on the facts and the data that a social research project could disclose. So when the school was up for renewal of its name, she insisted that the name be called the Chicago School of Philanthropy and Civics. She got civics into that. It meant for her social research. Here came, meanwhile, these two fiery young women from Nebraska, the Abbott sisters—Edith and Grace—and they were doing Ph.D. work. Lathrop knew she was no doctoral student herself but she knew that professionalism had to come into the Bureau and she brought their work into it right away. She had statisticians in. The first project to get these two booklets out right away was crucial; it was a cornerstone. Then gradually these Departments and the increase of staff and the increase of budget year by year so that research projects could be undertaken. Her position was that sentimentalism had to be set aside. To get money from men you need to deal with men the way men deal with men, with facts and figures, and that's what she did.

Audience Question: [01:05:30] How long was she the commissioner of the Children's Bureau?

Dr. Tichi: [1:05:39] She served for, I think it was 9 years, and the Bureau was then in very good shape. Remember, she took it on in her 50s, at a time when people are starting to think, many of them, about retirement. And she went back to Rockford and became very active in the League of Woman Voters and was the head of the Illinois League until close to her death. In those 9 years she really made huge strides. Remember she has this really hard head for numbers, but she's this lady, always gracious, always kind, never raising her voice but never relenting at the same time. In those years she really—some of her colleagues thought—she was the only one who could pull it off. Who could deal with Congress, the hostility, the knives. She had done velvet-glove infighting in Illinois for a long time. At one point she had threatened to resign from the Charities Board unless it got peace. So she could put hostile opponents...she could do anything and she did many times...

Dr. Alice Hamilton was also a Hull House woman and founded single handedly the field of industrial toxicologists because she realized that workers at these industrial sites were falling ill from being poisoned by lead and other heavy metals and chemicals. Alice Hamilton went with Julia Lathrop on one of these site visits to a State institution, and they took their tour, and the superintendent told Ms. Lathrop how terrible his job was. He couldn't cope with these inmates, as they were called, and he had many woes and she seemed so sympathetic and she cooed. And then they went back to his office and sat down and Dr. Alice Hamilton said, "I expected my friends to say farewell and we would leave." Instead she listened to Julia Lathrop quietly, in her ladylike voice, tell the superintendent that he was the man in charge and that all the deficiencies for which he was feeling sort of put upon and pitiful that

these were his problems to correct, that she would be back to see that he had corrected them, and she was confident that he would correct them. Hamilton said, “I learned from that experience never to back down when I faced a factory foreman or superintendent over the lead poisoning of workers. I knew I had to do what Julia Lathrop showed me to do.” So it’s that kind of iron will in velvet gloves and nice clothes.

Audience Question: [01:09:10] inaudible

Dr. Tichi: [01:09:30] The question is whether issues of neglect and abuse entered into the Children’s Bureau work in the early years?

To my knowledge it did not enter officially. Of course, child labor was a neglect and abuse that most commanded the Bureau’s attention. From the reading I did in the Children’s Bureau archive at the National Archive, I found letters that made clear that parental brutality to children was a serious problem. Some of the letters came directly to Ms. Lathrop, the staff, from distraught mothers or relatives of these children And the position I believe that Lathrop took on this is the position that the Hull House brain trust of women on the whole took. And that is that the brutal working conditions that the parents faced, and terrible economic problems in their own lives, prompted them to be abusive to their family members. And that their own struggles were so intense that they sometimes neglected their children.

A child would wander off, perhaps become a newsboy. We see this phenomenon in Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle*, which is widely read in school today. The children of the household, little boys, just are not seen again and they’ve become newsboys. They’re living on the street; they’re becoming street imps. But the point that Lathrop would make is that the dysfunctional family that prompts abuse and neglect of children is a family that is far too hard pressed economically, and in turn, very long work shifts, brutal work shifts. Parents who are brutalized will brutalize their children, in short, this was the understanding. And that came from the Hull House days, there on Halsted Street, when Jane Addams and they all saw—Lathrop of course, the others—the deplorable conditions under which people had to work. Do 14 hours in a factory and then be up half the night sewing on buttons and with your little one pulling out threads, and see how nurturing you are the next morning. They saw that firsthand.

Moderator: [01:12:29] Are there any questions on the phone?

[phone recording]

Moderator: [01:12:58] No questions on the phone.

Audience Question: [01:13:12] What was the Children’s Bureau location at the time?

Dr. Tichi: [01:13:23] It was in the Department of Labor at the time, and I had the address and then I didn’t bring the address. It very soon moved out, it was initially not such good quarters—a little tight, old desks.

[laughter]

So what else is new? You know, corporate, brick, glass, and brass.

Audience Question: [01:13:44] Was there competition with the Department of Labor?

Dr. Tichi: [01:13:50] No, no there was not a competition with the Department of Labor. That was the space that was made available and it seemed sufficiently related that it was housed there.

Audience Question: [01:14:06] I just wondered if you could comment...it's so interesting if you listen to the issues that she selected in wanting the Children's Bureau and why. I guess I'm just struck that nothing really changes. We had a nurse home visiting program this summer that continues. It's just interesting that the same topics—not child labor really—but the others that she was really looking at, her reliance on data...it was a lot of the same things that we still work with today in the Children's Bureau.

Dr. Tichi: [01:14:45] You know a friend and colleague said to me quite recently, all reform is relative and contingent. And then she said if it weren't we'd all be living in utopia. So the work is there and sometimes people say, "Oh, well we haven't really made any progress." But then if you ask if we believe in child labor? Do we think children should be working in factories in the middle of the night? We don't believe that across the whole political spectrum. We don't believe that and we're very uneasy about it worldwide too. And that shows a measure of huge progress, enormous progress that has not been rolled back. But as you were saying, sort of what goes around comes around and has to be dealt with over and over.

[inaudible audience comment]

Dr. Tichi: [01:15:46] The comment is that because we don't deal with the root.

[inaudible question]

Dr. Tichi: [01:15:59] I don't know, I don't know. I should mention that President Herbert Hoover pretty much shut down the Bureau. It stayed alive and well through the Wilson years but then Hoover starved it and then FDR brought it back. But I don't know the answer. I refer you though to a book by Kriste Lindenmeyer. It's a history of the Bureau. She's an historian and you might indeed want to be in touch with her. She's now at the University of Maryland at the Baltimore campus and so could pop right down. She has undertaken an intensive study of the whole Bureau, and it's a hefty book. The University of Illinois has published it. It is available in paperback. Something like I think around $27.

[inaudible question]

Dr. Tichi: [01:17:07] The right to childhood, and that was a term coined, I believe, by Lathrop's good friend Florence Kelley. After all, these women understood that this was the age of advertising. You had to have catchy slogans, like "making human junk." And Kelley thought, the Bill of Rights? What would it mean to say the "Right to Childhood." It's catchy and interesting and you remember it. It's just as good as "Kodak. You snap the picture, we do the rest."

[inaudible comment]

Moderator: [01:18:04] It looks like we're all worn out. This has been a wonderful, wonderful presentation and we really appreciate you taking the time to come up from Vanderbilt and spend a few hours with us.

[applause]