Creating Truth: The Committee on Public Information and the Growth of Government Propaganda in the United States

by

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(ABSTRACT)

On April 13, 1917, Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information. For the next eighteen months, the members of the Committee attempted to gain the total support of the American people for the war effort. Historians who have written about the Committee focus on what it did. This thesis attempts to answer the question, why it insisted on distorting and fabricating facts when its Chairman, George Creel, had instituted a policy of only presenting facts to the American people. This thesis looks at several of the Committee's divisions in depth, including the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation, the Four Minute Men, the Speaking Division, the Bureau of Cartoons, the Division of Advertising, the Division of Pictorial Publicity, the Division of News, and the Official Bulletin. Analysis of these divisions shows that their directors manipulated facts because they believed that the American people needed to be emotionally connected to the conflict to support it. They reasoned that facts alone would not suffice.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.................................................................1  
Chapter I - The Creation and Challenges of CPI...................6  
Chapter II - Pitfalls of the CPI Phamphlets.......................26  
Chapter III - CPI's Management of the Spoken Word.............43  
Chapter IV - Advertising, Art, and the CPI.......................69  
Chapter V - News and Censorship Under the CPI...............103  
Conclusion.................................................................124  
Bibliography...............................................................128
Introduction

On June 28, 1914, a Serbian terrorist assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne, and his wife in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Within a month the major powers of Europe started a war that would last four years and involve belligerents from around the world. During the flurry of mobilizations and war declarations, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed neutrality for the United States. Three thousand miles of ocean separating America from the conflict, and the promise of trade with both warring sides seemed to assure that neutrality would remain intact. But England's control of war information and the sea lanes and Germany's use of submarines against neutral shipping drew the United States closer to the Allied powers. On April 2, 1917, Wilson went to Congress asking for a declaration of war against Germany.

A week after speaking to Congress, Wilson signed an executive order creating the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The same executive order named George Creel, a Colorado journalist and friend of the president, its chairman. One of Wilson's major motivations in creating the CPI was to generate support for the war. In the four days between his address to Congress and the vote for war against Germany, he nullified two years and eight months of
neutrality rhetoric. Not only did the President want Americans to back the war in spirit, but the mobilization he called for required the public to contribute materially as well. Gaining the nation's total commitment to the war effort became the CPI's primary purpose.¹

The CPI represented the government's first attempt to shape public opinion on a national scale. Under the direction of Creel and his lieutenants, the Committee worked feverishly towards the goal of 100% support for the war. The CPI harnessed every form of media to achieve this end. Films, public speakers, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, and cartoons all carried the Committee's messages.

Few scholars have attempted to analyze seriously the Committee's work. Cedric Larson and James R. Mock's Words That Won the War (Princeton, N.J., 1939) deals with the domestic and foreign section of the CPI. Their work suggests that the Committee contributed to, but did not create, the war hysteria of 1917-1918. Walton Bean's dissertation, "George Creel and His Critics" (Berkeley, 1941), looks at charges of news distortion, censorship, and Committee partisanship made by politicians and the press. He argues that such attacks during the war, especially by

¹ Richard J. Barnet, The Rockets' Red Glare: When America Goes to War, the Presidents and the People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 157-158.
the Congress, were partisan and unfounded. He also believes that Creel served the country well as CPI's chairman. Most recently, Stephen Vaughn has analyzed the domestic side of the CPI. In Holding Fast the Inner Lines (Chapel Hill, 1980), he concludes that progressive people in the Committee actively promoted nationalism and tried to strengthen the government, but that their driving enthusiasm caused them to use misinformation.

There are also many secondary treatments of the Committee that are not based on its papers. The common theme of most of these works, dating from the 1920s, "is that the committee perverted scholarship and truth during the war, overplayed the German threat, and was responsible for stirring hatreds that brought wartime and postwar hysteria."²

Writers portraying the Committee negatively always seem fascinated by its wartime and postwar "effects" on the American people, something that defies measurement by even the best scholars. They have sufficiently answered the question of deception. The CPI released half-truths and

exaggerations in its quest to shape opinion.

Writers, however, have ignored a more basic question. Why did the CPI spread such misinformation? This question is crucial for understanding how the United States government used propaganda during subsequent national crises. As the first government agency dedicated to manipulating public opinion, everything the CPI did influenced later efforts at opinion control. The organization of the CPI helps to explain its actions. The Committee's domestic section included more than twenty divisions with a director overseeing each. The directors, many of them "intellectuals, muckrakers, socialists, and other reformers," made most of the CPI's daily decisions including what type of information the American people obtained. Creel believed that facts alone would lead Americans to support the war, but the division heads believed that a certain amount of fear, guilt, and anger were necessary to make public opinion cohesive. Since the division heads controlled the release of propaganda, they allowed the spreading of half-truths.

The perceived needs of the government, not personal ideology, determined the decisions of division heads. For the first time in America's history the whole population,

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needed to mobilize for war and the CPI had to motivate them into compliance. "Making the world safe for democracy" might have stirred intellectuals into action, but the bulk of the American people had very little education. For the majority of the masses to make sacrifices, they required an emotional link to the war. The CPI, through the actions of its division directors, provided this by using guilt, overstatements, and half-truths.

The reader should note that the term "propaganda" is used throughout this thesis in its pre-1917 form. Before the first World War, to spread propaganda meant "to spread information." Creel and his associates on several occasions referred to the Committee's work as propaganda. After the war, the word gained its "negative connotations" when people realized that the government had enlisted their support with distorted or false information.⁴

Chapter I
The Creation and Challenges of CPI

The Committee on Public Information began on April 13, 1917, the day President Woodrow Wilson signed the Executive Order creating it. But the President began to lay the groundwork for its formation on August 4, 1914. In a press release, Wilson announced that he had offered all belligerents his assistance as an intermediary for peace, effectively making the United States neutral.1 For the next twenty-six months, Wilson continually preached peace and compromise to the world. His rhetoric led to the creation of the Committee. Wilson's constant calls for peace fueled the anti-war sentiment throughout the nation, so that by the time he changed his mind about the European conflict, he had helped to form the opposition which the CPI was created to combat.

The Committee's initial problems, however, were not limited to justifying Wilson's decision to scrap neutrality. George Creel, the CPI's chairman, wanted to create unanimous support for the war, but there was no single dramatic event, like the sinking of the Maine or the attack on Fort Sumter,
around which opinion could coalesce. Also his desire to manage the CPI was sporadic at best, so the Committee's employees did not have a strong Chairman to guide them.

For the first months of the war, Wilson only offered messages of peace. Two weeks after his call for neutrality, he appealed to "every...[citizen] who really loves America...[to] act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."² He believed that the United States should be neutral because the nation was "fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgement, the dignity of self-control, [and] the efficiency of dispassionate action..."³ In September, he proclaimed a day of "prayer and supplication" for peace in Europe. In his annual message to Congress on the 8th of December, he repeated his appeal for neutrality, and his hopes for peace. He stated that the neutrality of the United States remained secure because the nation desired nothing from the powers at war. He also explained how the "character and reputation" of America might allow him the chance to heal the

² Ibid., 394.
³ Ibid.
international wounds that "interrupted the friendship of nations."\(^4\)

Wilson's hope for peace in Europe dimmed when Germany announced that after February 18, 1915, it would blockade the British Isles. He sent a note to Germany asking how it could maintain a blockade of England and protect neutral shipping.\(^5\) Germany's answer came on March 28, when one of its submarines sank the Falaba, a British passenger steamship. Among the dead was an American, Louis C. Thrasher. Wilson sent another note to Germany reminding Berlin that fighting on the high seas needed to follow the "general conduct of naval warfare," which included determining the neutrality of a ship and providing for the safety of neutral crews and passengers. Considering the matter closed, the President reiterated his desire for the United States to have a role in the peace process. During a speech in late April, he stated that the United States was "the mediating nation of the world" and that his interest in neutrality stemmed from his belief that the country would not enter the fight because it had "absolute self-control


and self-mastery."⁶

Germany refused, however, to back down, and on May 7, the German submarine, U₂₀, sank the trans-Atlantic passenger liner, Lusitania, killing 1198 people, including 128 Americans.⁷ World reaction to the Lusitania sinking came swiftly. In the United States, feelings on the subject ranged from shock to anger.⁸

Wilson, however, refused to let the deaths of Americans and threats to neutral shipping ruin his plans of staying above the European conflict. As early as October, 1915, Wilson told audiences that "the extraordinary circumstance of such a time have done much to quicken our national consciousness and deepen and confirm our [America's] confidence in the principles of peace and freedom by which we have always sought to be guided." He also explained to Congress, during his annual message in December, that even with threats against the country's neutrality, "it was our

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⁸ Ibid., 375.
manifest duty...[to remain] studiously neutral."

The presidential election of 1916 reaffirmed Wilson's commitment to staying out of the European war. In March, he issued a statement setting aside rumors in the Senate that he was considering going to war. Then, in a stump speech he delivered while campaigning for reelection, he asserted that the Republicans would take the country to war if they gained the Oval Office. To underscore the President's position, the Democratic party adopted the slogan "He kept us out of war." Wilson's dedication to continued peace enabled him to defeat his Republican opponent, Charles Evans Hughes, in a close election.  

In late January, 1917, shortly after his victory, Wilson announced to the Senate his intentions to pursue a peaceful settlement of the European conflict. But Germany shattered his plans when it proclaimed days later that, beginning on the February 1, its navy would sink all vessels entering the waters surrounding the British Isles. In response, Wilson severed diplomatic ties with Germany, but

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the Imperial government would not back down. By late February, submarines had sunk two American vessels, and Wilson called on Congress to institute armed neutrality which allowed him to arm American merchant ships. His decision did not sway Germany, however, and its navy claimed three more American vessels. Finally Wilson saw the futility of remaining neutral, and in a special joint session of Congress on the April 2, he asked Congress for a declaration of war.\(^\text{11}\)

Even as he addressed Congress, Wilson realized that gearing the country up for war would involve great sacrifices by Americans. War "will involve the organization and mobilization of all the material resources of the country to supply the materials for war...."\(^\text{12}\) Mobilization meant a redistribution of labor, food shortages, and raising vast sums of money to support the nation's efforts. The morale of Americans also posed a problem for Wilson. As historian Richard J. Barnet states, World War I "was a distant war for which many Americans had no enthusiasm. No dramatic event like Fort Sumter or the


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 522.
Maine or Pearl Harbor had galvanized the population...."13
By preaching peace and neutrality for over two years, Wilson
insured resistance to his decision to enter the war.

In particular, the President feared opposition from
many foreign-born Americans. Of the 14,500,000 foreign-born
in the United States, over 8 million claimed Germany as
their country of origin.14 Wilson stated publicly his
belief that hyphenated-Americans would be loyal to their new
homeland, but privately he had doubts. When the war first
broke out in Europe, he told the German ambassador, Count
Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, that the United States had
to remain neutral. "Otherwise our mixed populations would
wage war against themselves." Later James Watson Gerard,
the American ambassador to Germany, informed Wilson that
"there were five hundred thousand trained Germans in America
who would join the Irish and start a revolution" if the
United States sided against Germany. Although the "trained
Germans" never appeared when Congress voted for war, Wilson
took such threats to seriously.15

Before committing to the war in Europe, Wilson had
received several plans for government propaganda efforts.

14 Vaughn, Holding Fast the Inner Lines, 3.
In March, 1915 and May, 1916, David Wark Griffith, a pioneer in the motion picture industry and producer of "The Birth of a Nation," contacted Wilson about using film for propaganda purposes. At first, Griffith proposed a "series of motion pictures dealing with matters historical and political," with input from someone who represented the President's views.\textsuperscript{16} Later, Griffith presented a more specific plan. He told Wilson that he saw the motion picture as "an educational agency for the masses," and he wanted to make a feature picture that would draw "analogies between Washington's problems and policies and those which confront our present Chief Magistrate as vested in yourself." Griffith believed that films would generate patriotism throughout the country. He felt that the feature "would be made to sledge hammer home those opinions and thoughts which you [Wilson] might desire to put into the very hearts of the American people."\textsuperscript{17} Even though the project interested Wilson initially, he never allowed Griffith to start filming.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{18} Link, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 32, 325.
From December, 1916 to February, 1917, Wilson considered another idea offered him by Cyrus Hermann Ketzchmar Curtis, president of the Curtis Publishing Co. of Philadelphia, and Herbert Bruce Brougham, associate editor of the Philadelphia Public Ledger. Both men wanted to create a newspaper bureau backed by the government. Correspondents would receive certification from the President. The certification would tell the public to "have an especial confidence" in these correspondents. Although the bureau would have provided Wilson with the means to shape opinion through the newspapers, he decided against Curtis and Brougham's idea.19

On April 13, however, Wilson signed Executive Order 2594 creating the Committee on Public Information. The purpose of the CPI was to oversee censorship of newspapers and to mobilize public opinion behind the war effort. The President named George Creel, writer and newspaper editor, as chairman. Politically, Creel was the right man for the job. His loyalty to Wilson began during the latter's term

19Arthur S. Link, ed., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 40, November 20, 1916-January 23, 1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 243, 372; Link, Woodrow Wilson, vol. 41, 191. It is not clear why Wilson dismissed the plans of Griffith, Curtis, and Brougham. Most likely his decisions were based on need. Even as late as February, Wilson hoped to avert a war with Germany. The whole reason for creating a publicity bureau was to help the country with mobilization. So Wilson's interest in such an agency would be predicated on his decision to go to war.
as president of Princeton University and as time went on, it only intensified. When Wilson became Governor of New Jersey, Creel enjoyed watching the state's political bosses come under fire.²⁰ In October, 1911, Creel helped form Colorado's Woodrow Wilson Democratic Club as the "first step in a state wide organization for the promotion of ...[Wilson's] presidential candidacy and the triumph of those great principles so ably presented and championed by [him.]"²¹ When Wilson was elected in 1912, Creel, through his writing, continued to endorse the new President.²²

During the 1916 presidential campaign, Wilson rewarded Creel for his support by appointing him publicity director of the Democratic National Committee.²³ As publicity director, he gained some experience managing public opinion. Under his direction, authors and publicists wrote "statements and pamphlets" promoting the Democratic


²² For an example, see George Creel, "Our 'Visionary' President: an Interpretation of Woodrow Wilson," Century 89 (December, 1914): 193.

platform. While Creel turned out propaganda for the Democratic party, he also wrote *Wilson and the Issues*, in which he highlighted Wilson's foreign policy accomplishments for the country's voters. After the 1916 election the relationship between Creel and Wilson grew from political acquaintance into friendship. One of Wilson's cabinet members reported that "the President had an affection for Creel, who had won his heart, while his brilliancy compelled his admiration. Wilson loved good writing. He was himself a master of style, and Creel's ability to write with elegance and vigor intrigued him." A contemporary writer said that Creel's sense of humor attracted Wilson. His "art of mimicry" amused the President to the point that Wilson would sometimes join in with his own characterizations. He even derived pleasure from Creel's "furies of ...indignation...[and] the mordancy of his denunciations," finding them more humorous than convincing.

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Before chairing the CPI, Creel's credentials as a manager of public opinion were limited to his work in the 1916 election. But his experiences as a Colorado muckraker helped to shape his opinions about propaganda. On April 20, 1914, sporadic fighting between coal miners and the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company came to a head at the Ludlow tent colony. In a pitched battle, seven miners, two women and eleven children were killed, and the tent city was destroyed.\textsuperscript{28} Creel, siding with the mine workers, wrote a series of articles exposing the defensive arguments of the mine owners. His attacks concentrated on the owner of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and his publicity agent, Ivy Ledbetter Lee. Lee was one of the pioneers of the public relations industry. He specialized in making his "robber baron" clients look like benevolent captains of industry. Following the attack on Ludlow, Rockefeller hired Lee for damage control. In the six months before Rockefeller's announcement of Lee's involvement, the opinion handler worked in secret on the Colorado problem. Under his direction, daily news releases were sent to the press "in the name of the Coal Mine Operators Committee."

He also edited the \textit{Colorado Fuel and Iron Company Bulletin}, a mouthpiece for mine owners. Lee stated later that he "had

\textsuperscript{28} George Creel, "The High Cost of Hate," \textit{Everybody's Magazine} 30 (June 1914): 775-756.
assumed no responsibility for the accuracy of the publicity statements; he simply acted in behalf of the mine operators who supplied him with the material they wanted the public to read."29

It was Lee's disregard for the truth that angered Creel. In "Poisoners of Public Opinion," he analyzed Lee's bulletins and picked their arguments apart. He discarded a statement in one of the pamphlets that explained away the deaths at Ludlow as accidents, because Mrs. Helen Grenfell, the person who made the statement, "is the wife of a high official of a coal-carrying railroad...[and] she did not speak from first hand knowledge [on the massacre.]"30

Another pamphlet proclaimed that Colorado miners "earn more [in Colorado] than in any other part of the United States." Not only did Creel show that the statement contradicted testimony given to a Congressional Committee, but he also revealed that the miners only worked between 183 to 253 days a year.31 In another article, "How Tainted Money Taints," he blasted millionaires who "made...huge gifts to philanthropic and educational institutions 'to chloroform


31 Ibid.
public opinion."³² He again attacked the bogus bulletins. But he also chastised Lee for helping to write an biased report on "the causes of industrial unrest," funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.³³

Creel's experience with Ivy Lee, coupled with his belief that people were rational beings set the background for policy in the CPI. As far as Creel was concerned, the Committee would only release facts to the public. On several occasions during and after the war, he commented on the mission of CPI. He stated that "public opinion has its source in the minds of the people, that it has its base in reason, and that it expresses slow-formed convictions rather than any temporary excitement or any passing passion of the moment."³⁴ He wanted to avoid negative propaganda and only release factual messages because the Committee "sought the verdict of mankind by truth telling."³⁵ The ultimate mission of the CPI was "educational and informative...for we

³²Larson and Mock, Words that Won, 57.


had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts."\textsuperscript{36}

Arthur Bullard, a fellow muckraking writer, also influenced Creel. Since 1916, Bullard tried through Colonel House to persuade Wilson on how censorship and propaganda should be implemented if the United States went to war. In March, 1917, Bullard published \textit{Mobilising America}, in which he presented a blueprint on the use of censorship and opinion management by the government. Creel referred to the book as a "clarion call to the Nation."\textsuperscript{37} Bullard's views in \textit{Mobilising America} were simple and straightforward. The government would need to issue "an explicit statement of war aims," so that the public knew why it was fighting. Next, Americans had to "be given an answer to the question: 'What can I do?'" As for censorship, Bullard felt that for any type of censorship to work in a democracy, it would have to include "free discussion" of war issues. To promote

\textsuperscript{36} George Creel, \textit{How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe} (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920), 4-5.

\textsuperscript{37} Vaughn, \textit{Holding Fast}, 8, 12; Letter from George Creel to Ralph M. Easley, July 9, 1918, Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63, National Archives (hereafter cited as CPI papers), CPI 1-Al, E-1, Box 7, Folder: "194."
discussion, the government would have to organize a Publicity bureau where professional writers released stories to the public.\textsuperscript{38} Wilson and House were so impressed by Bullard's ideas that they saw to it that Creel worked with Bullard in the formation of the CPI.\textsuperscript{39}

Soon after Wilson appointed Creel as Chairman, the Colorado newspaperman submitted a list of ideas on how he planned to deal with censorship and public opinion. His first concern was censorship. He believed that some information had to remain secret, but that there was a "vast amount of information that is right and necessary for the people to have." To encourage compliance with any censorship policy, the Committee would distribute a general policy outline to members of the press. Newsmen were then expected to follow the rules voluntarily. Anyone not adhering to policy "must be prepared to take the chance of punishment."\textsuperscript{40} Turning to the question of public opinion, Creel thought that the Committee should "arouse...enthusiasm" in the American people for the war. To facilitate this, he wanted to organize "the famous


\textsuperscript{39} Vaughn, \textit{Holding Fast}, 14.

writers of the country...." The job of these people was "to 'get the news,' [and] to develop 'stories...'' to promote the war in America.\textsuperscript{41}

Creel's desire for honesty and a minimum of censorship was noble, but the CPI started with some disadvantages that limited what it could present to the American people. The CPI's most serious handicap was the fact that there had been no single event which moved the United States to war.\textsuperscript{42} Another avenue of propaganda not available to the Committee was the activities of the armed forces. The actions of soldiers in battles on land, sea, and in the air were tangible "events" that could generate patriotism on the homefront. But American troops did not start fighting until May, 1918; thirteen months after the United States entered the war.

Organizational problems also hampered the CPI's efforts. The Committee on Public Information was a huge war agency. The domestic section alone had twenty-two separate divisions, and the foreign section had offices in Denmark, England, France, Holland, Italy, Rumania, Russia, Spain,

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{42} Barnet, \textit{Rockets' Red Glare}, 158.
Switzerland, Mexico, and South America. Managing the Committee was a full time job under the best of circumstances, and Creel was not inclined to devote most of his time to administration. As chairman of the CPI, he also served on the Censorship Board, "an advisory body overseeing and coordinating the government's censoring agencies." He also continued his career as a journalist. During his tenure as chairman, he published at least eighteen articles promoting the American war effort.

Creel had three associated chairmen who helped with administrative matters, but they tended to favor certain divisions of the Committee. Edgar Sisson, the managing editor of Collier's, editor of Cosmopolitan, and city editor of the Chicago Tribune, first worked for CPI in Russia, and then became director of the Foreign Section. Harvey J. O'Higgins, a playwright and author, worked mostly with the Division of Syndicate Features, and wrote the CPI pamphlet, The German Whisper. Carl Byoir, the circulation manager of the Cosmopolitan, was called a 'multiple director' by Creel, but he spent most of his time with the

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43 A Report Concerning Papers, Files, Record, Public Property, and Liabilities, etc. of the Committee on Public Information, CPI papers, CPI 1-D1, E-22, Box 1, Folder: "A Report...," 21-22.

44 Vaughn, Holding Fast, 221.
Division of Advertising. Creel's many responsibilities and the associate chairmen's tendency to concentrate on particular areas of the CPI, forced the division directors to make policy decisions about what information the public would obtain.

Many problems plagued the Committee on Public Information from the time it was first established. Wilson's rhetoric during the first two years of the European war helped to create anti-war sentiment that the Committee needed to reverse. His plans for mobilization required that all Americans, including those of German descent, back the government's war effort. The lofty goal of 100% support became the major preoccupation of the CPI. It also had to deal with the problem of what information to present to the American people. The Committee did not have an exploitable event, like the bombing of Pearl Harbor, that could bind the public. Nor could it use the deeds of the armed forces to excite the masses. Even Creel became a "problem." Refusing to devote all of his time to the job of chairman, Creel left the division heads without direction. These were the

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problems facing the division heads as they tried to sell the war to the nation.
Chapter II
Pitfalls of the CPI Pamphlets

"Popular pamphleteering," under the direction of the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation (DCEC), became one of the chief ways the Committee on Public Information informed Americans about the country's war effort. After Creel named Guy Stanton Ford, a University of Minnesota history professor, director of the DCEC, historians throughout the country converged on the Division, hoping to help support the war. Creel welcomed these scholars, but his decision to use them for pamphlet writing proved unwise.

Because of their formal training, historians working for the DCEC agreed in principle with the Chairman's policy of presenting only facts and rational arguments. As America entered the war, however, these academics faced a dilemma. In the 1910s, academic historians became prominent in the United States. These trained historical scholars now believed that they had to justify their existence to the American people. Writing for the CPI would help set these scholars apart from their untrained counterparts. But the academic historians's determination to prove themselves to the public caused them to set aside their training so that they could paint Germany in the worst possible light, either by using faulty evidence or by appealing to people's
Creel had no plan of action for reaching the minds of Americans with the government's war messages in April, 1917. The United States had never before tried to mobilize the entire population for war, so at the start he wandered through uncharted territory. Creel did, however, examine what other belligerents had done in terms of propaganda. Many countries had released state papers for propaganda purposes. This plan initially appealed to Creel and he set into motion "the publication of diplomatic documents covering...[the United States's] relations with Germany...." But as the project progressed "it seemed clear that...[the CPI] would be firing very heavy ammunition with the chance that...[the State papers would be] 'duds.'" Consequently, Creel quickly shifted from printing volumes of government documents to issuing a series of short and informative pamphlets. The division formed to do this work became known as the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation.²

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¹ Creel, How We Advertised America, 101; George T. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront: American Propagandists for the Great War (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 4-8; Carol S. Gruber, Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of Higher Learning in America (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 105-106.

² Creel, How We Advertised America, 100-101; Creel Report, 15.
Creel's method for choosing the division head for the DCEC was unusual. At the time Creel elected to produce pamphlets, he discovered a patriotic pamphlet written by Guy Stanton Ford for the people of Minnesota. Ford, who was the history department head of the University of Minnesota and its Graduate School's Dean, "made a[n]...instant impression..." on Creel, and he requested Ford's services immediately. Other than the professor's pamphlet, the Chairman knew nothing of Ford. They had never met, so neither man knew what to expect. When Ford arrived in Washington to assume his post as director of the DCEC, Creel could not find the time even to chat with him for almost two weeks. But Ford refused to waste any time, and he began the process of assembling "a formidable group of writers" to do the Division's work.3

Ford had total control over all aspects of the DCEC. He had a "free hand" in developing pamphlets. Creel studied the pamphlet proofs before they went to the printer, but he never told Ford what to include in the pamphlets. The director had the final word on the content of the DCEC's output. Also, Creel allowed the professor to hire whomever

3 Creel, How We Advertised America, 101; Congress, House, Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, Sundry Civil Bill, 1919: Committee on Public Information, 65th Cong., 2nd Sess., 11-14 June, 1918, 162; Vaughn, Holding Fast the Inner Lines, 42.
he wanted. Ford immediately enlisted the help of fellow historians to write and edit the Division's work.⁴

Creel could not have picked a person more like himself in thinking than Ford to become DCEC's director. Like Creel, the Minnesota professor also believed that telling the truth and presenting rational arguments would generate more support for the war than trying to manipulate opinion. His ideas on this matter evolved more from his graduate training in history than from anything Creel said to him. In fact, because of their graduate training, all of the DCEC's historians would have agreed with Creel's ideas. This is because they followed the principles of the "German Tradition," made famous by Leopold von Ranke, "the father of 'scientific history.'" Students following the "Rankean ideal" believed in writing history "as it actually happened, free of personal interpretation...."⁵

Since the late 19th century, academic historians in the United States wanted all of the country's historians to

⁴ Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 23; Sundry Civil Bill, 106, 109; Blakey, Ibid. Ford did use people not holding doctorate degrees. A number of the Division's pamphlets were authored by government officials, but over seventy percent of all the DCEC's members were historians. See Sundry Civil Bill, 100-102, for a listing of the Division's personnel.

undergo similar training. Starting in 1884, they tried to eliminate amateur historians from their ranks and to create a niche for themselves in the realm of higher education. By 1917, their dream had become reality. Over 500 Americans held doctorates of history, and seventy-five percent of those were earned in the United States. These were the scholars who wrote and edited the DCEC's pamphlets. Organizing their profession, however, carried a price. Historians felt the need to show the country that they could offer beneficial service to the American people. A historian who worked with the DCEC, James T. Shotwell, wanted to collect "documents relating to the war contributions [of professors]" because he believed that "some good use might be made of this material [to promote higher education after the war.]"6

When the DCEC finally started writing its pamphlets, historians violated their training to present stronger arguments for the government, and at the same time, bolster support for their profession. The transgressions of the DCEC's members would have made scholars of any academic discipline cringe. Some pamphlets used misleading evidence or utilized forged documents to enhance their arguments. Also, many writers relied on emotional appeals to generate

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support for the war.

Although not on a regular basis, a handful of pamphlets used evidence inappropriately. The first pamphlet published by the DCEC, *The War Message and the Facts Behind it*, was an annotated copy of President Wilson's April 2nd address to Congress. Ford asked a colleague from Minnesota, William Stearns Davis, to do the annotation. The notes Davis added elaborated on the important points of the speech. When Wilson mentioned American casualties from German submarine attacks, Davis gave the reader the names of ships and the number of citizens lost. When Davis came to where Wilson described autocracy as evil, however, he did not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate the depravity of the present Prussian government. So the professor used the 1740 pronouncements of Frederick the Great to indite Kaiser Wilhelm II. Davis also offered as evidence Prince Otto von Bismarck's foreign policy from the 1870s to support the assertion that the German government had no qualms about going to war in the 20th century.7

Even though Ford allowed *The War Message* to be printed, he realized that the notes were misleading. In July, the National Security League, a patriotic organization, claimed

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that The War Message was "full of errors," and that it was "an insult to the intelligence of the American people."
Ford defended Davis's work by saying "that the pamphlet had not been for scholarly dissection; it was directed at a public not expecting all the apparatus of a learned monograph."  

Other pamphlets, Lieber and Schurz: Two Loyal Americans of German Birth and German Militarism and its German Critics: Fully Illustrated by Extracts From German Newspapers, also tried to argue points with faulty evidence. Lieber and Schurz attempted to show that the Prussian government, and not the German people, were corrupt. The German-Americans Francis Lieber and Carl Schurz, referred to in the title of the pamphlet, had both fought in the Prussian army, and had come to the United States because of their dissatisfaction with the German government. What the writer did not make immediately clear was the fact that both men lived most of their lives in nineteenth century America. Both men had immigrated before the Civil War, and the author even revealed that Lieber had fought against Napoleon's troops. Lieber and Schurz's criticisms of Germany's government centered around actions that in some cases

8 New York Times, July 4 1917; Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 53.
predated World War I by 100 years.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{German Militarism and its German Critics} sought to prove that German officers were brutal. Most of the argument rested on the claims of German ex-soldiers. More than 1,000 men who served between 1885 and 1913 were willing to testify in court about 30,000 cases of abuse by officers during their tours of duty. What the pamphlet failed to address was the officers' side. For all the reader knew, soldiers involved might have committed crimes and their superiors were only administering punishment. Regardless of motivation, the number of complaints against Prussian army officers brought into question the validity of the evidence. Over 30,000 incidents might seem formidable, but they occurred over twenty-eight years. On the average, officers abused 1,100 soldiers a year. Remembering that Germany's standing army, and reserve forces, included millions of men at any given time, the number of accusations is negligible. The author even admitted after presenting his facts that the harshness of Prussian officers was "not general opinion" in Germany.\textsuperscript{10}


\textsuperscript{10} Charles Altschul, \textit{German Militarism and its German Critics: Fully Illustrated by Extracts from German Newspapers}, War Information Series, no. 13, (Washington, D.C., 1918), 10-
The pamphlets, *The German War Code: Contrasted with the War Manuals of the United States, Great Britain, and France* and *German Plots and Intrigues in the United States During the Period of our Neutrality* offered the promise in their titles of scathing commentaries on the Prussian government, but they failed to deliver. In *The German War Code*, James Wilford Garner of the University of Illinois gave the DCEC a cut-and-paste history of modern war codes instead of a meaningful analysis of them. Using the 1902 *German Army Law Manual*, he determined that it taught "hatred." German soldiers could "override...the laws of war..." in order to win. Acceptable breeches of the laws of war included letting civilians starve or firing upon armed men who were not officially part of an opposing army. The policies contained within the *Manual* transformed German soldiers into brutes. On the other hand, the United States military manual preached that the armed forces must fight "according to the modern laws and customs of war."  

14, 38. In fairness to Altschul, most of the blame for the pamphlet must be given to Ford and the editorial staff. Altschul was a business man who lacked the skills to analyze evidence. Ford and his helpers, on the other hand, did have the training necessary to see the tenuous nature of the evidence used.

Although Ford initially suggested to Garner that he write on the subject of war codes, the director felt uneasy about the project. In a letter to Garner, Ford revealed his reservations. "The more I look over our [the United States's] field regulations with the citations from Moltke and other German writers and their utter confusion of necessity and right," Ford explained, "the more doubtful I am about the effectiveness of the subject I suggested to you."\(^{12}\) Despite his reservations, Ford allowed *The German War Code* to go to press.

*German Plots and Intrigues* had all the elements of a bait-and-switch scam. The title gave the impression that German spies had actively carried on covert campaigns against the United States throughout its neutrality. The truth started to unfold as the reader looked past the cover. An introductory note stated that "all criminal plots and conspiracies narrated in the following pages were undertaken prior to the summer of 1915."\(^{13}\)

Beyond the fact that the authors could not find proof of German intrigue in the United States after the first nine


months of the European war, most of the pamphlet pertained to German acts against other countries. The United States served only as a base of operations for German agents. The authors presented plots concerning Canada, India, and Ireland. The first section of German Plots and Intrigues did deal briefly with the havoc Prussians caused American business. It emphasized Germany's willingness to incite strikes in factories producing war materials. It alleged that German interests paid strikers to cause unrest among labor. But it admitted that no laborer paid by the German government ever started a strike for the Kaiser.  

The most controversial publication distributed by the DCEC was The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy. This pamphlet was based on documents which Edgar Sisson, a Committee official in Russia, came across in February, 1918. These documents claimed that the Bolsheviks did the bidding of the German government in return for financial support. In March, Sisson purchased a set of these documents, and quickly left for the United States. He first tried to interest the State Department in the documents, but State Department officials "failed to show much enthusiasm or interest in his documents and declined to authorize their publication at that

\[14\] Ibid., 9-15, 25, 42, 53.
Undaunted, Sisson next took the documents to Creel. The Chairman instantly saw their potential and, after getting the President's permission to publish them, he turned them over to the DCEC. On September 15, the CPI started to release the documents to the press in serial form with plans to distribute the pamphlet at the end of October. Almost immediately, the New York Evening Post questioned the validity of the documents. In response, Creel ordered an investigation to support the Committee's find. He agreed to have J. Franklin Jameson, editor of the American Historical Review who had no knowledge of the Russian language, and Samuel N. Harper, a University of Chicago University professor of Russian language, verify the documents' legitimacy. Within a week, the men declared the authenticity of fifty-three of the fifty-eight documents. They did, however, refuse to agree with the conclusions drawn by Sisson. Convinced that the documents were genuine, Creel and Ford went ahead with the publishing of The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy.16


16 Ibid., 131-132; CPI, The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy, War Information Series, no. 20, (Washington, D.C., 1918), 29; Blakey, 132. Kennan does an excellent job discrediting the Sisson documents in his article, "The Sisson Documents."
Along with the distortion of facts, another tactic commonly used throughout the DCEC's work was emotional appeals. The brutality of German soldiers and the threat of a Prussian invasion of the United States became favorite themes of Ford's people. DCEC authors presented an unending chain of German atrocity stories. The German War Code and German Militarism, for example, commented on the ruthlessness of the German army. In one edition of Why America Fights Germany, John S.P. Tatlock informed American soldiers that "whole books have been written about these horrors, [Belgium atrocities] against all law and humanity, and yet half of them have not been recorded." F.C. Walcott's The Prussian System, looked at German actions in occupied territories, and found "shocking mutilation and moral murder....[W]omen, by the score, in occupied territory of Northern France, [i]prisoned in underground dungeons, tethered for the use of their bodies by officers and men." How the War Came to America explained that German barbarities committed in Belgium, and not unrestricted submarine warfare, was the first assault against American neutrality.  

17 Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 43.

18 Garner and Scott, The German War Code, 2-8; Altschul, German Militarism, 10-36; John S.P. Tatlock, Why America Fights Germany, War Information Series, no. 15, (Washington, D.C., 1918), 5; Frederic C. Walcott, The Prussian System,
The War Cyclopedia: A Handbook for Ready Reference of the Great War provided busy Americans with a condensed source of war information. Its entry, "Atrocities," stated that "the first months of the war witnessed the inauguration by Germany of a policy of terror in the invaded districts of Belgium and France, evidently premeditated and designed to facilitate the control of conquered territory." But two other pamphlets, German War Practices and German Treatment of Conquered Territory, presented the strongest evidence of German atrocities. According to the pamphlet the Prussian government carried on a "campaign of education" to teach their soldiers to hate "the peoples against whom the military leaders were anxious to wage war." Officers "encouraged [soldiers] to pillage...[and commit] arson...."
The writers listed scenes of civilian massacres and the use of hostages as screens for German troops.19

The other theme constantly revisited by the DCEC was


the idea of German troops invading America. According to
the DCEC's pamphlets, Germany was poised to strike at the
American mainland as soon as it had won the war in Europe.
*German Plots and Intrigues* argued that the country had
already been overrun by German spies. *The Kaiserite in
America: One Hundred and One German Lies*, expanded on this
theme. Basically, *The Kaiserite* was a collection of the 101
most widely heard rumors about the government's war effort.
The DCEC simply branded them "German lies," and directed
readers to report sources of these war rumors to the CPI.\(^20\)

The possibility of military invasion, however, remained
a popular topic with most pamphlet authors. Secretary of
State Robert Lansing, asked readers of *A War of Self-Defense*
to imagine Germany as the victor in Europe. Had the United
States remained neutral, he stated, the "prize" of a rich
America would have been too great a temptation for Germany.
In *Why America Fights Germany*, Tatlock included a colorful
description of what would happen in a New Jersey town if
Prussians invaded the east coast of the United States.
First the town's population would have to provide spirits
for soldiers and officers alike. Then, when they found
"that an American town does not contain large quantities

\(^{20}\) CPI, *The Kaiserite in America: One Hundred and One
German Lies*, (Washington, D.C., 1918?), 3.
of...[wine and beer,] they [would] pillage and burn the post-office and most of the hotels and stores." If people were caught hoarding money, they would be "taken out and hanged." Eventually, "robbery, murder and outrage [would] run riot...[and] most of the town...[would be] burned...."

Of all the Committee's divisions, the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation should have adhered most closely to Creel's policy of presenting only the facts and rational arguments to the American people. Guy Stanton Ford, the division head, and the historians under his direction belonged to the newly-emerging group of academic historians. Their graduate training had emphasized the importance of honest and unbiased presentation of information.

The realities of the time, however, allowed DCEC members to put aside their training. Historians worried about gaining public support for their budding careers. Successfully contributing to the war effort would ease some of that worry. And if war work meant using emotional pleas and misrepresenting evidence, historians accepted that. For them the gains from publicity outweighed any costs of not

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properly doing their jobs.
Chapter III
CIPI's Management of the Spoken Word

As the United States entered World War I, public speaking remained one of the chief ways of spreading information. Politicians, educators, and religious leaders regularly toured the country, trying to shape opinion with their words. By the fall of 1917, Creel had harnessed the oratorical might of the nation into two divisions: the Four Minute Men and the Speaking Division. The specific purposes of the two divisions differed, but both were expected to present the facts of the war to the American people. However, the Four Minute Men and the Speaking Division went beyond the facts, resorting to the use of half-truths, fear and guilt.

During World War II, the "U.S. radio went to war." Using the radio, the government broadcast official announcements and propaganda to millions of Americans simultaneously.¹ But in 1917, as Creel looked for ways to reach the public, radio was still in its infancy. By June, he had created a division that reproduced the beneficial aspects of radio. Across the nation, a corps of speakers

delivered messages to assemblies both large and small in both urban and rural areas. These orators, known as the Four Minute Men (FMM), became a major conduit for the CPI's propaganda.²

The idea for the FMM originated in Chicago. In March 1917, a group of young men led by Chicago businessman, Donald M. Ryerson, decided to give short talks in local movie theaters explaining the newly-instituted selective service policies. They chose the name 'Four Minute Men' because of its "dual reference to the 'minute men' of the Revolutionary War," and the time allotted by movie theater owners to speakers. After some initial success, Ryerson's organization incorporated on April 28, 1917, becoming the Four Minute Men of Illinois.³

But the FMM did not remain confined to Chicago for long. Ryerson had traveled to Washington D.C. in an effort to obtain information on the selective service law. In Washington, he met George Creel, who was temporarily working in the Navy library until he obtained permanent office space. Ryerson managed to get Creel's attention long enough


to relay the story of the FMM in Chicago and to express his desire for government endorsement. Creel immediately saw the potential of Ryerson's brainchild, and he decided to expand the FMM and use them nationally.⁴

Creel also saw the dangers in Ryerson's idea. The benefits of reaching millions of people with government propaganda would be offset if the CPI let loose "an army of speakers impossible of exact control and yet vested in large degree with the authority of the government."⁵ Because of his fears, Creel took the unusual step of withholding official recognition from the FMM division until June 16, 1917. The Chairman used the two months between Ryerson's visit and the CPI's acceptance to organize the FMM.⁶

The division was rigidly structured to prevent speakers from becoming uncontrollable. To organize a local branch of the FMM, and nominate a local chairman, "the written endorsement of three prominent citizens-bankers, professionals, or business men-written [sic] on their own stationary in a prescribed official form was required...."⁷ Those endorsements were sent to Washington along with a

⁴ Ibid., 2; George Creel, How We Advertised America (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 94.
⁵ Creel, How We Advertised America, 84-85.
⁷ Creel Report, 23.
letter expressing a desire to start a local chapter and a list of potential speakers. After the local organization was approved by Washington, the local chairman appointed speakers. The state's governor or the FMM's national director chose the state chairman.\(^8\)

The FMM director in Washington assigned all topics for the four minute speeches. A *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, sent to local chairmen, provided speakers with "the basis of the [Division's] policy, points of emphasis, lines of argument, and general information...."\(^9\) The aim of the *Four Minute Men Bulletin* was "to preserve individuality and forcefulness of expression and yet confine the message absolutely...within the policy limits of the Bulletin...."\(^10\)

In order to gain access to movie theater audiences, the FMM had to agree that their speakers would talk only for four minutes. Consequently, the division asked speakers to adhere strictly to the time limit. New FMM members were told that "the privilege of presenting these messages over the theater platform is accorded with a definite understanding between this [the FMM] department and the

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) *Four Minute Men Bulletin*, No. 7A (Nov. 25, 1917), 4; *Creel Report*, 23.

\(^10\) *Creel Report*, 23.
motion-picture exhibitors on this question of length of talks."\textsuperscript{11} Speakers who regularly violated the time limit would have their FMM status revoked.\textsuperscript{12}

The FMM leadership experienced several changes during the Division's eighteen months of operation. Ryerson became the first national director, but by June he had resigned and entered the United States Navy. Creel chose William McCormick Blair, another resident of Chicago, to fill the vacancy. In August, 1918, Blair also left to enter the Field Artillery officers' training school. William H. Ingersoll, who had worked with the FMM almost from the start, replaced Blair. But even though it had three directors, the Division's direction never changed. Each director was dedicated to making sure Americans supported the war effort.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the major responsibilities of the FMM was raising funds. The nation's material needs were immense, and the Division spent much of its time separating Americans from their money. The Treasury Department used the FMM to push four Liberty Loans. From May, 1917 to October, 1918, the FMM helped to sell successfully over $14 billion of

\textsuperscript{11} Four Minute Men Bulletin, No. 7 (June 25, 1917), 6.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Four Minute Men News, Edition F, 2-4.
Liberty Bonds. Along with Liberty Loan drives, the Treasury department used the Division to promote a War Savings Stamp (W.S.S.) drive and to remind citizens of their income tax obligations.

The Food Administration also relied on the FMM to spread messages of food conservation. Several times during the war, the Food Administration told Americans that the world was on the brink of famine and advised them on how they could help. At first, the messages focused on food conservation. But by 1918, speakers asked farmers to increase their production and urging all Americans to grow gardens. Other government agencies who used the FMM for small campaigns. The U.S. Shipping Board and the Department of Labor utilized FMM in an attempt to regulate the employment of skilled workers. When the Navy needed binoculars, telescopes, and spyglasses, the FMM pleaded its case. The FMM even talked about fire prevention for the War

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15 Four Minute Men Bulletin, No. 21(Jan 2, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 32(June 24, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 26(Mar. 11, 1918), 1.

16 Ibid., No. 9(June 26, 1917), 1-2; Ibid., No. 18(Oct. 29, 1917), 1-4; Ibid., No. 27(Mar. 25, 1918), 4-5.
Industries Board.\textsuperscript{17}

Non-government agencies also depended on the FMM to pass their messages on to the general public. The Red Cross frequently needed help, and the FMM gave it. Over the course of the war, speakers went into theaters asking for $200,000,000 in support of the Red Cross. The Y.M.C.A., Knights of Columbus, Jewish Welfare Board, American Library Association, and Salvation Army all used the FMM and its money raising talents.\textsuperscript{18}

When the FMM was not soliciting contributions from citizens, it participated in flag-waving. During the first six months of the war, speakers concentrated on getting people to understand why the United States was at war. Towards the end of July, 1917, the FMM released a \textit{Four Minute Men Bulletin}, entitled "Why We are Fighting." It started by saying, "It is clear that the time has come to impress upon the people the necessity of winning this war and winning it quickly."\textsuperscript{19} Over the next few weeks, FMM orators announced the public's obligations, now that the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., No. 22(Jan. 28, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 34(July 29, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 23(Feb. 11, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 41(Oct. 15, 1918), 1.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., No. 5(June 14, 1917), 1; Ibid., No. 30(May 13, 1918), 8; Ibid., No. 45(Dec. 1, 1918),9; Ibid., No. 42(Oct. 21, 1918), 7-8.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., No. 11(July 23, 1917), 1.
nation was at war. Speakers reminded Americans about selective service, the necessity of buying Liberty Bonds, and the need for those who remained at home to shoulder added labor burdens.  

Some of the talks boosted morale. In September, 1917, the FMM reported America's accomplishments in the six months since the country entered the war. Speakers highlighted the building of army camps, the expansion of the merchant marine, and the implementation of food conservation. On two occasions, the Division directed speakers to read prepared four minute speeches meant to fill people with patriotism. The first was Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and the second was a speech written by Wilson, and delivered by all speakers on July 4, 1918. The FMM even tried instituting four minute singing. Four Minute Song Leaders used "America," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and other patriotic songs to help inspire citizens to aid the war effort. 

In the months following May, 1917, FMM speakers became hustlers, salespeople, and cheerleaders for the government. But nothing would result from their actions if they could

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20 Ibid., 2-3; Ibid., No. 12(Aug. 6, 1917), 1-3.

21 Ibid., No. 16(Sept. 24, 1917), 3-6; Ibid., No. 25(Feb. 12, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 33a(July 4, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 38(Sept 10, 1918), 1-3.
not get people behind the war emotionally. To spark an interest in the conflict, division heads pursued three avenues of propaganda. They told speakers to use atrocity stories, images of Germany invading America, and statements which produced guilt to unify support behind FMM campaigns.

The utilization of atrocity stories by the FMM came very early. The Four Minute Men Bulletin No. 2 directed speakers to tell the story of Antwerp, Belgium, where the Prussian army threatened prominent citizens with death if the city did not pay a $100,000,000 to Germany.\(^\text{22}\) In August, the division released Four Minute Men Bulletin, entitled "What Our Enemy Really is," in which it accused Germany of subjecting "invaded countries to every excess and atrocity...." It went on to say that the German army shot citizens, and deported men, women, and children from Belgium.\(^\text{23}\) It also maintained that Germany was at work in the United States. During American neutrality, German agents "blew up [American] factories and workmen...."\(^\text{24}\) The supplement to Four Minute Men Bulletin No. 14 attempted to shed more light on crimes against America. Germany had "filled our land [the United States] with spies and secret

\(^{22}\) Ibid., No. 2 (May 22, 1917), 1.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., No. 14 (Aug. 27, 1917), 3-5.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 5.
agents, blown up our factories, burned our wheat fields, poisoned our livestock, burned our canneries, and caused industrial strikes and disorders."25

The FMM shifted its emphasis back to foreign atrocities during the Treasury Department's W.S.S. drive. Most of the stories dealt with German efforts to extort money from an occupied area and the dire consequences that resulted when civilians did not comply. The Bulletin also told speakers of Belgians forced to labor in Germany, of nuns being shot, and of homes being burned.26 The Division directed speakers to pick up the DCEC pamphlet, German War Practices, for a more complete listing of Germany's crimes against humanity.27

Complementing the atrocity stories were predictions that Germany would eventually invade the United States. The FMM presented two different visions of an invaded America. First, the division invoked images of the United States being invaded. The initial appearance of these images coincided with the first atrocity story. The FMM asked the American people; "are you going to look timidly at long

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26 Ibid., No. 21, 6.
27 Ibid.
processions of conquering troops tramping down our streets." 28 Quickly following was the image of the Kaiser's soldiers goose-stepping down Pennsylvania Avenue, and signing "the Treaty of Peace under the dome of our Capitol in Washington, or in the same room where Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation." 29 After this initial picture of Germany as conqueror, references to an invaded America became less specific. When discussing selective service, the FMM told Americans that "we must fight Prussianism in France or fight it in Connecticut, Illinois, Texas, or California." 30 And weeks later, in a pre-written four minute speech, the division heads wrote that a victorious Germany would "ruthlessly abrogate every law and trample down every real element of self-government and establish her own monarchical form of government...." 31

At the same time, the FMM spread images of Germany invading parts of Central and South America. Speakers maintained that "Germany has always been intolerant of that[Monroe] Doctrine...." 32 Eventually the intolerance
would push Germany into breaching the Monroe Doctrine by
intrigue and commercial exploitation. Initially, the
Zimmermann note served as an example of Germany's attempt to
poison Mexico against the United States, but the it was too
specific for use by the FMM. Subsequent bulletins directed
speakers to use generalities when talking about the Kaiser's
plans for the western hemisphere. Audiences would hear that
after a German victory in Europe, the Kaiser planned to defy
the Monroe Doctrine with an eye toward the eventual invasion
of America.\textsuperscript{33}

Of all the propaganda released by the FMM, statements
which induced guilt were used frequently. They were a
favorite during the Liberty Loan campaigns. Speakers feared
for those who did not buy bonds, because "in those later
years...when you try to sleep, other eyes will haunt you,
eyes of soldiers dead will look upon you. Perhaps your son,
a nephew, some of your friends' sons will be among them."\textsuperscript{34}
Or speakers would report the trials of a young soldier, who
unflinchingly accepted each burden laid on his shoulders and
then he would say, "how the red-blooded American soldier
abhors a slacker! The \textit{traitor} he hates! The \textit{coward} he
pities! But the \textit{slacker} who deliberately puts the burden on

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.; Ibid., 29(Apr. 6, 1918), 8; Ibid., No 31(May 27,
1918), 4.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Supplement, No. 17(Oct. 20, 1917), 5.
his brother? No words can express the contempt!"\textsuperscript{35}

Towards the end of the bond drives, the FMM printed "stories of service and sacrifice" of courageous servicemen. Citizens heard tales of soldiers who recovered wounded men from the battlefield, who continued their duties after being wounded, or who repulsed numerically superior foes. Speakers asked their audiences to match the soldier's sacrifices by buying bonds.\textsuperscript{36}

The Division sought to invoke guilt during other campaigns. When the Red Cross wanted to raise $100,000,000, speakers conjured up images of wounded or dying American soldiers being neglected because people at home refused to contribute.\textsuperscript{37} During a selective service registration drive, men who did not register were labeled outcasts. They were "lost to the ranks of citizenship...lost to the flag that protects [them]...lost to the Nation that calls..." them.\textsuperscript{38} When the FMM asked citizens to pay their income tax, the Division provided catchy guilt-ridden slogans like "Don't sneer at slackers until your income tax is filed." Or "Don't cheer the flag while you are neglecting to file

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., No. 29, 3.}
\footnote{Ibid., No. 39, 22-23.}
\footnote{Ibid., No. 30, 3.}
\footnote{Ibid., No. 37(Aug. 21, 1918), 7.}
\end{footnotes}
your income tax return."\textsuperscript{39}

Even with the FMM's rigid structure, speakers constantly violated the Division's rules in order to present their own war messages. The more verbose FMM orators broke the four minute time limit constantly. From the first \textit{Four Minute Men Bulletin}, the FMM waged a continuous battle against wordy speakers. The first sentence of \textit{Bulletin} No. 1 stated that "the speech must not be longer than four minutes, which means there is no time for a single waste \textit{sic} word."\textsuperscript{40} Almost every subsequent \textit{Four Minute Men Bulletin} contained reminders to the orators of their duty. The \textit{Bulletin} told them that speeches running over four minutes might sour the working relationship between theater managers and the whole organization. More often, terse phrases such as "Four minutes means four minutes, not eight minutes nor five minutes" reminded speakers of their time obligations.\textsuperscript{41} Even as the war came to an end, the division heads were still not sure that members had gotten the message. On the eve of the FMM's termination the director hoped "that our [the FMM's] last four minute

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., No. 26, 4.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., No. 1 (May 22, 1917), 1.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., No. 3 (June 9, 1917), 1; Ibid., No. 16, 1; Ibid No. 18, 4.
speeches should be true to their name."\textsuperscript{42}

The Division also chastised speakers for embellishing the facts. The \textit{Four Minute Men Bulletin} provided members with pages of information that the division felt acceptable, but speakers wanted more. They especially showed interest in obtaining examples of German atrocities. Members wrote to Washington asking for atrocity stories, with "instances of the utmost cruelty..." preferred.\textsuperscript{43} The Division responded by saying that the DCEC pamphlet, \textit{German War Practices}, might help them in their quest for accounts of German barbarity.\textsuperscript{44}

But even government-approved atrocity stories failed to satisfy some speakers, who started deviating from the government material in the hopes of inciting more patriotism in their audiences. One of their favorite activities involved linking Germany to Hell. One speaker said that "the bottomless pit itself is not deep enough to hold the crimes of [Germany]...."\textsuperscript{45} Another exclaimed "their (the Prussian) military atrocity might have been a reality in fact, for their level of decency and sense of right and

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., No. 46(Dec. 24, 1918), 2.
\item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{Four Minute Men News}, Edition B, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., Edition A(November, 1917), 3.
\end{itemize}
justice is lower than Hell."\(^{46}\)

Division heads were infuriated. At no time had they approved of the use of the devil, his minions, or the netherworld by its speakers. The FMM quickly moved to squelch this activity. The Division told members that any appeals to hatred or fear must "be based on the truth," and at the heart of all four minute speeches there must be truth.\(^{47}\) As with the four minute limits, the division heads attempted to bring deviant members back into the fold. The *Four Minute Men News* regularly criticized rogue speakers, but the comments were lost on them.\(^{48}\)

Before the war ended, over 75,000 people enlisted as Four Minute Men. But for some of the nation's orators, the rules and regulations of the FMM were too restrictive. If they wanted a job as a government speaker, their only recourse was to work with the Speaking Division (SD). From its inception on September 25, 1917, the primary concern of the SD was imposing order over existing speaking ventures. During the months following America's entry into the war, twelve government departments and citizen associations

\(^{46}\) Ibid., Edition C, 4.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., Edition B, 2; Ibid., Edition C, 1.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., Edition E, 8. Criticisms of speakers did not make Edition F, since the FMM were on the verge of disbandment.
started national speakers' bureaus. Many states also initiated speaking campaigns. By the fall of 1917, Creel had determined that all of these groups "were competing for speakers, duplicating each other's activities, and failing to co-ordinate their efforts in an effective and comprehensive campaign." His solution was the creation of the SD.

With Wilson's approval, Creel chose Arthur E. Bestor to lead the division. At the time of his appointment, Bestor was the president of the Chautauqua Institution of New York, an intellectual summer retreat dedicated to non-partisan debate and education. Directing the institution gave him a chance to work with the "traveling Chautauquas," a group of speakers who visited towns during the summer, providing lectures and amusements. His interaction with that group helped prepare him for his duties as head of the SD.

As the United States entered the war, Bestor was determined to become involved in the war effort. In an article he wrote in July 1917, he pointed out that the Chautauqua had always "been a center of geniually [sic]

49 Creel Report, 32; Creel, How we Advertised America, 148.

patriotic education...and has had a significant part in making the public opinion which rules the country today."

As far as he was concerned, the Chautauqua, under his leadership, would play an important part in shaping opinion during the national crisis. As director of the SD, he also stated that not only was the mobilization of public opinion important, but "the Government has undoubted power in war time to force unity and cooperation behind the war program."  

Once Bestor became director of the SD, he spent several months determining how to reorganize the myriad of speakers' bureaus into an effective force. First, he decided to make the division into a "national clearinghouse for speaking campaigns." The SD created a card catalogue filled with the names of 10,000 speakers, and from it the Division compiled a list of the 300 most effective speakers. When a bureau requested an orator, the SD sent it a listing of who could deliver an address. Along with being a


54 Creel, How We Advertised America, 150.
clearinghouse for speakers, the division constantly courted noteworthy national and allied European speakers. Orators, such as Sir Frederick E. Smith, the British Attorney-General, Hon. Crawford Vaughan, the ex-Premier of South Australia, Lieutenant Paul Perigord, the French warrior-priest, Charles Edward Russell, a member of Wilson's Commission to Russia, and Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War, went on speaking tours for the SD.\footnote{Bulletin to Advisory Committee, CPI papers, CPI 12-A8, E-82, Box 2, Folder: "Bulletin Speaking Division;" Executive Committee Speaking Division, December 8, 1917, CPI papers CPI 12-A1 E-76 Box 11, Folder: "Speaking Div.-Executive Minutes;" Creel Report, 36; Publicity Material on Lieutenant Paul Perigord, CPI papers CPI 12-A8 E-82, Box 5, Folder: "Perigord- Publicity."}

Bestor also decided to host war conferences so that the SD could deliver the facts of the war "to every home in the cities and towns" and also "to hamlets and the most remote farm-houses...."\footnote{Report of the Speaking Division, CPI papers, CPI 12-A2, E-76 Box 11, Folder: "Reports-Speaking Division;" Creel, \textit{How He Advertised America}, 150.} These conferences were two day affairs which included general meetings addressed by the Division's orators and section conferences led by federal and state organizations. Thirty-seven states held forty-five conferences, and some of these represented "the greatest gatherings held within the states during the war."\footnote{Creel Report, 36; Creel, \textit{How We Advertised America}, 150.}
Finally, Bestor wanted to provide information to his speakers so that they could present the details of the war adequately. At first, Bestor and his staff thought that speakers "should be sent to France to see the fighting and the devastated areas,...[and] that they speak to the people of the United States...telling them what we [U.S. government] are doing in the war and why."\textsuperscript{58} This plan evolved into the bringing of American and Allied military personnel back from the front, and sending them on national speaking tours. The French, British, and Scandinavian armed forces sent orators, and General Pershing rerouted fifty soldiers to help in the Third Liberty Loan drive.\textsuperscript{59}

Along with first-hand knowledge, Bestor wanted speakers to have written direction. In December, 1917, he presented Creel with his idea for a Speaking Division Bulletin. In January, 1918, the SD released the first Speaking Division Bulletin, which outlined the purpose and scope of the Division. It provided a "general statement with respect to

\textsuperscript{58} Advisory Committee of the Speaking Division, October 16, 1917, CPI papers, CPI 12-A2, E-76, Box 11, Folder: "Advisory Committee."

our [the SD] work which has been long needed..."^{60}

Speaking Division Bulletin No. 2, also distributed in January, 1918, dealt with the issues of the war. Most of the bulletin was devoted to showing speakers which CPI publications would aid them in presenting America's side of the war, but the bulletin also contained a laundry list of German crimes. The SD accused Germany of ruthlessness, of slaying women and children, of promoting massacre, and of enslaving captives in Europe. The Division also said that Germany was plotting against, and fomenting strife among, the American people in the United States.\(^{61}\)

The SD printed only four more bulletins, all of which acquainted speakers with helpful literature. One explained the need for shipyard volunteers. The Bulletin illustrated to orators America's need for ships, and how to get more information about the subject. Others reminded speakers to support the Third Liberty Loan, the $100,000,000 War Fund drive for the Red Cross, and to educate Americans about the danger to democracy from Germany.\(^{62}\)

Speaking Division Bulletin, No. 2, revealed that the SD

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\(^{60}\) Letter from Arthur Bestor to George Creel, December 31, 1917, CPI papers, CPI 12-A1, E-75, Box 3, B-2-4.

\(^{61}\) Speaking Division Bulletin, No. 2 (January, 1918), 3-4.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., No. 3 (February, 1918), 5; Ibid., No. 4 (April, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 5 (April, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 6 (May, 1918), 1.
supported the use of atrocity stories in an effort to shape opinion, but it was also a key policy of the SD that gave speakers permission to use any method of rhetorical persuasion, no matter how untrue. During the organization of the SD, Bestor decided that the division would take no responsibility for any utterances of his speakers. He explained that "control [over the speakers] would be exceedingly hard to secure and exceedingly dangerous."\textsuperscript{63} Creel presented the problem more clearly when he said, "Poor Bestor! No grand-opera impresario ever had greater difficulties, for many of our orators had all the temperament of a prima donna and had to be humored to a point where homicide appealed as necessary and justifiable."\textsuperscript{64}

In the first few months of the SD, Bestor and his staff debated the policy of allowing speakers to say anything. The Division decided that all government departments and national organizations connected with the SD also fell under the policy. The division was "taking no responsibility for their [any connected department or organization] propaganda and none of them have the right to claim government or

\textsuperscript{63} Letter from Arthur Bestor to George Creel, December 31, 1917, CPI papers, CPI 12-A1, E-75, Box 3, B-2-4.

\textsuperscript{64} Creel, \textit{How We Advertised America}, 155.
administration approval of their activities." The SD's executive committee did have the power to officially recognize speakers, but Bestor never accorded any person that honor."

The SD's policy of non-recognition ensured that speakers could say anything about Germany with impunity. Atrocity stories and visions of invasion became a common feature in addresses given by SD orators. Secretary Baker, who appeared at the Richmond, Virginia War conference, declared to an audience of 5,000 that German soldiers attacked the women and children of the Allied powers in the hopes of frightening their men into submission. He also commented that the resolve of American fighting men would remain strong, even if "Germany, with the help of some unseen and devilish power, cross [sic] the 3,000 miles of sea separating this country from...Europe, and then attack with all her frightfulness the women and children of America." During a speech in Pennsylvania, Bestor stated that "Since the beginning of the war [Germany had]

65 October Report of Speaking Division, CPI papers, CPI 12-A2, E-76, Box 11, Folder: "Reports-Speaking division."

66 Advisory Committee Speaking Division, October 31, 1917, CPI papers, CPI 12-A2, E-76, Box 11, Folder: "Advisory Committee."

67 "Defeat of Germany only Consideration, says War Secretary," Richmond Times-Dispatch, 6 December 1917, 1.
practically put herself outside of the pale of civilized
countries...with her most cruel unusual and illegal methods of
warfare; her treatment of non-combatants; her ravishing of
women and mutilation of children...."68

Foreign speakers also made unsubstantiated claims
against Germany to American audiences. The French warrior
priest, Lieutenant Paul Perigord, the most requested SD
speaker, always mentioned atrocities to his audiences. He
grieved for the French women that were raped, for young
girls who were made slaves, and for the children who were
maimed. He was also quick to remind his audiences that "if
the British fleet was not standing in the Atlantic ocean,
and if the French soldiers were not dying on the
battlefields of France, you would not have enough tears left
to cry over the destruction and desolation that would be
brought to your shores."69 Brigadier General Charles F.
Lee, Commander of the British Aviation Mission to America,
compared the number of reported violent crimes in Germany
and England from 1897 to 1907. On the basis of this study
he concluded that German "Kultur" was flawed and that its
government was prone to use "systematic terrorism" during

68 Address made to a Pennsylvania audience given by Arthur E. Bestor, CPI papers, CPI 12-A1, E-75, Box 10, A-1-16.

69 Creel, How We Advertised America, 152; Address by Lieutenant Perigord, November 24, 1917, CPI papers, CPI 11B-
A2, E-68, Box 4, Folder: "An Address by Lt. Perigord."
the war.\footnote{Release on Brig. General Charles F. Lee, July 23, 1918, CPI papers, CPI 12-A8, E-82, Box 2, Folder: "British Aviators, speech, pictures, etc." Speech by Brig. Gen. Charles Lee, August 13, 1918, CPI papers, Ibid.}

Without any government control, speakers could easily go beyond the "facts" of the war and enter the realm of personal opinion. Although considered a successful SD speaker, Charles Edward Russell raised eyebrows when he maintained at a Knoxville rally that the release of 1,500,000 German soldiers from Russian prison camps would reinforce the western front and cause the American units in France to "suffer defeat...."\footnote{"Washington Still Confident of Final Victory in War," February 17, 1918, (paper unknown), CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 21, Folder: "Russell, Chas. E."} Sir Frederick E. Smith made headlines when he insulted President Wilson in one of his speeches. At an address in New York City, Smith professed reservations about Wilson's League of Nations idea, and questioned whether it was in the "range of human endeavor" to create such an idealistic organization.\footnote{"Sir F.E. Smith Goes ahead of Set Date," \textit{New York Times}, 3 February 1918, sec. 1, 1,4.}

After the war, Creel considered the FMM and the Speaking Division great successes. In the case of the FMM, 75,000 speakers had given thousands of four minute speeches
to an estimated 314 million Americans, but, as he feared, they were a dangerous government mouthpiece. Ryerson, Blair, and Ingersoll promoted the use of atrocity stories, tales of German invasion, and guilt to manipulate public opinion. What further distorted the FMM "facts" was the speakers' willingness to bend the organization's rules by lengthening speeches, or by adding their own "facts." Like their superiors, speakers veered from their original purpose when they felt it would help unify opinion.

The Speaking Division had 10,000 orators at its disposal, of whom 300 were used on a regular basis. Speakers such as Charles E. Russell and Lt. Paul Perigord made successful nationwide tours under the CPI's auspices. But Bestor's policy of not taking responsibility for speaker's utterances allowed them to distort the truth and generate fear. The action or inaction of the respective divisions showed the determination of each to aid the American war effort even if that meant deceiving the public.

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73 Creel, How We Advertised America, 84-85.
74 Creel Report, 33, 36.
Chapter IV
Advertising, Art, and the CPI

When Wilson led the country into war, cartoonists, artists, and advertisers offered to help the government's war effort. The reasons for volunteerism among these organizations went beyond just simple patriotism as some scholars like to believe.¹ Since the turn of the century these groups had attempted to increase public support of their professions. For advertisers, this presented a particular problem because of the public's mistrust of their work. But proving themselves to the American people led them to worry about obtaining results. Once the CPI incorporated these groups into its organization, they ignored Creel's policy of presenting only facts and rational arguments and proceeded to use half-truths and emotional appeals in their campaigns.

Of all the divisions of the CPI, the Bureau of Cartoons (BoC) could claim the title of the "black sheep" bureau. After the war, Creel commented that he "was never very enthusiastic over...[BoC] and gave it a very grudging assent

¹ See the accounts of the Division of Advertising and the Division of Pictorial Publicity in Mock and Larson's Words That Won the War and Vaughn's Holding Fast.
as well as a meager appropriation."\textsuperscript{2} The BoC represented
the weakest link in Creel's armor of truth and facts. It
only provided suggestions on cartoon subject matter,
allowing cartoonists to retain total control over their
work. Even though the Committee did not regulate what
cartoonist's drew, Creel still brought them under his
authority.\textsuperscript{3} The mere existence of the BoC underscored the
great paradox of the CPI. Creel wanted to educate Americans
with the facts, but he used an information medium which
commonly invoked "emotional response[s]" to gain support for
the war.\textsuperscript{4}

Political cartoonists thrive on current events for
material. Even as Wilson asked Congress for a declaration
of war, cartoonists began to comment on America's war
effort. In the months following United States involvement,
cartoonists called on the public to support the war. They
considered the volunteer system antiquated and ineffectual,
and selective conscription as the only way to crush the

\textsuperscript{2} Creel, \textit{How We Advertised America}, 226.

\textsuperscript{3} The BoC only called on political cartoonists to help the
government. See: "Cartoon-Power as a Means to Help Win
the War," by George J. Hecht, CPI papers, CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box

\textsuperscript{4} George J. Hecht, ed., \textit{The War in Cartoons: A History of
the War in 100 Cartoons by 27 of the Most Prominent American
Cartoonists} (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1919; reprint,
Kaiser. Charles H. Sykes of the Philadelphia **Evening Ledger**, presented perhaps the strongest argument against volunteerism in a cartoon showing Uncle Sam in a minute man uniform and holding a musket labeled "volunteer system" staring at a machine gun labeled "selective conscription."
The caption simply exclaimed "Me For It!"  

Cartoonists urged that Americans help the war effort in any way possible. Loaning money to the government ranked top on their list. They rallied around the sale of the First Liberty Bonds. J.H. Cassel of the New York **Evening World**, told the American public in his caption to "Do Your Bit!" while showing Americans throwing money at Columbia, the female image of the United States. Sykes also drew a "stay-at-home" man using a Liberty Bond as a megaphone and waving an American flag. The caption exclaimed, "We Can't Play, But We'll All Support The Team."

Cartoonists also urged farmers to produce more food. Oscar Cesare of the New York **Evening Post**, sketched the feminine image of the United States carrying farming implements into a fallow field. His caption stated "Columbia—Back To The Land." J.H. Donahay of the Cleveland

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5 "Selective Draft to Raise an Army," **Cartoons Magazine** 11 (June, 1917): 788.

Plain Dealer, depicted an old man and a boy happily working a field while Columbia looked on approvingly.  

Cartoonists also launched attacks against Germany and Americans who supported the Kaiser. Most of the early jabs at Germany centered on the Kaiser. In a series of cartoons entitled "Why We are Fighting," Robert Carter of the Philadelphia Press, portrayed the Kaiser as a toothy Bengal Tiger. Rollin Kirby of the New York World, showed the Kaiser holding Belgium, pictured as an abused woman, at bay with a blood-covered sword and saying "What Will You Give For Her?" But the most graphic cartoons of the Kaiser came from Louis Raemaekers. Originally a Dutch artist, Raemaekers was forced to leave Holland because of his strong anti-German cartoons. First in London and then in America, Raemaekers shocked his audiences with his stark portrayals of war-torn Europe. One of his drawings, for example, showed four children in a bed with their throats cut while the Kaiser wiped his blood-stained knife clean. The caption said "How I Deal With The Small Fry." In another cartoon, he showed the Kaiser about to kill a woman, marked Belgium.


She laid next to a dead woman labeled Luxembourg.9

Opponents of the war effort especially aroused the ire of cartoonists. In the cartoon, "Kamerad!" in which the Kaiser runs into the arms of a pacifist, Kirby defined American pacifists as the friends of Germany. Nelson Harding of the Brooklyn Eagle showed in his cartoon "The Only Spy Cure," that a firing squad would remedy the espionage situation. Slackers also became targets for cartoonists. In Donahay's cartoon, "Slackers Bliss," the female of a newly wed couple dresses her husband in women's clothing exclaiming, "Now look here Sweetie, if you want me to fix you up so your Uncle Sam won't know you, you've got to quit fidgeting."10

Political cartoonists, however, supported Wilson's war effort for reasons other than just patriotism. They wanted to elevate the status of their profession. During the war, John M. Baer, cartoonist of the North Dakota Nonpartisan Leader, championed the cause of cartoonists. In 1917, he successfully campaigned for a congressional seat. Once elected, he told cartoonists of his plans to introduce a


bill forcing newspapers to carry cartoons on their front page. To stress his commitment to political cartoonists, he continued to draw cartoons after going to Washington D.C.¹¹

Baer saw the potential of the war to cartoonists. He assigned his assistant, George J. Hecht, the job of organizing the nation's cartoonists into an unofficial government mouthpiece for the war effort. Hecht, a twenty-two year old New Yorker, looked forward to a life of helping the downtrodden, but for the duration of the war he put his progressive ideas aside.¹² In the fall of 1917, he published an article arguing the importance of cartoons to the war effort. The government, he explained, had to get people thinking about the war before they would act.

Because cartoons presented a simple message, he said, they required readers to think about their meaning. In contrast, newspaper editorials did not stimulate thought, but imposed the writer's ideas on the reader. Most important, however, was the cartoon's appeal to a wide audience. Hecht pointed out that "the masses" (average Americans) did not read on a regular basis, but "everyone who sees a newspaper stops to


¹² Hecht, The War in Cartoons, 13. Charles Chatfield, the author of the introduction, said that Hecht shared Creel's "interests and confidence of progressivism." After the war Hecht devoted his entire life to social work in New York City.
look at the cartoon in it if there is one." Finally, he called on the government to require all newspapers to carry cartoons due to their patriotic potential.\(^{13}\)

In the fall of 1917, Hecht wrote Creel urging him to create a bureau of cartoon publicity under the auspices of the CPI. The bureau would send bulletins to cartoonists and suggest possible subjects for cartoons. Although Creel refused to establish the bureau, he encouraged Hecht to produce bulletins under the sponsorship of some other organization. In December, Hecht received backing from the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, a committee that co-ordinated the work of over forty-four patriotic groups. On December 12 and 20, Hecht sent bulletins to cartoonists throughout the country. Suggested cartoon topics included conserving fuel, convincing shipbuilders to work for the government, recruitment for the armed services, and donating to the Red Cross. Hecht diligently sent Creel copies of his work with letters relaying the success of the bulletins, and he again asked Creel to create a bureau of cartoons.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) "Cartoon-Power as a Means to Help Win the War," by George J. Hecht, CPI papers, CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 2, Folder: "Cartoons," 7, 12-13.

\(^{14}\) Letter from George Hecht to George Creel, December 20, 1917; Hecht to Creel Dec. 21, 1917; Bulletin to Cartoonists, Dec. 12 and 20, 1917; Creel to Hecht January 2, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 11, Folder: "Misc.: Has, Haz, HB-Ho/Hea, Hel."
Because of his previous experience with cartoonists, Creel still declined to incorporate a BoC into the CPI. In June, Creel had published an article about Louis Raemaekers. Throughout the piece, Creel kept referring to Raemaekers's capacity to invoke strong emotions with his cartoons. At one point he wrote that Raemaekers's cartoons epitomized "all that the human heart has ever known of pathos, anger, contempt, grief, ardor, and despair."\textsuperscript{15} Creating a bureau of cartoons brought forth a dilemma. But the use of emotional arguments, he felt, would undermine his decision to present only facts about the war to the American people.

Even though Creel refused to create a bureau of cartoons, Hecht continued to organize cartoonists to do war work. In February, 1918, he published an article, "How the Cartoonists Can Help Win the War," along with his December 12, 1917, bulletin in \textit{Cartoons Magazine}, a national magazine for cartoonists. In his article he repeated his earlier argument that editorials lacked effectiveness because they targeted "men and women of education." Conversely, the average American "stops to look at the cartoons in the various publications he sees. Pictures, the earliest form of written communication, attract everyone. The simple and direct appeal of the cartoon can reach practically every

\textsuperscript{15} George Creel, "Raemaekers-Man and Artist," \textit{Century} 94 (June, 1917): 257.
Finally he suggested effective cartoon topics, including "atrocities committed against Belgian and French women and children and the bombing of Red Cross hospitals and churches."\(^{17}\)

Hecht's persistence paid off. In February, Creel met with Baer. Creel proposed releasing sets of patriotic cartoons each month. Still not totally satisfied, Baer notified Creel a few days later of his plan to issue a bulletin, Capital Cartoon Tips, which, he said, he would continue to release until Creel took it over. In the first issue of Capital Cartoon Tips, the Congressman told cartoonists that "cartoons are judged today by a different standard than they were before the war. Cartoons that help to win the war are good."\(^{18}\) His statement implied that patriotic cartoonists would advance their field in the eyes of Americans.

Baer's strategy proved successful. On May 28, 1918, two months after Baer's distribution of Capital Cartoon Tips, the CPI added the Bureau of Cartoons to its list of domestic divisions. But gaining government recognition


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 261-262.

\(^{18}\) Letter from J.M. Baer to George Creel, February 11, 1918; Baer to cartoonists of America, March 30, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 2, Folder: "Cartoons."
provided only a hollow victory for the nation's political cartoonists. In July, Creel appeared before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations, to obtain the following year's funding. During his testimony he never even mentioned the BoC. His decision not to mention the BoC represented a denial of its existence. In fact Creel only grudgingly admitted to the BoC in his final reports on the Committee's work, and those offered guarded praise at best. Even though he realized the potential of cartoons to sway opinion, Creel was still reluctant to break his promise of not pandering to the emotions of Americans.\(^{19}\)

Regardless of Creel's feelings, the BoC set to work organizing itself. The first director, Alfred M. Saperston, left within a few months to enlist in Marine Aviation. Creel then appointed Gretchen Leicht the director of the BoC. Little is known about either of the official directors, but they had only minor leadership roles. Hecht kept the Bureau under "unofficial supervision" throughout its existence.

The BoC offered two services to American cartoonists. One provided syndication for cartoons sent into the Bureau that Hecht and the director felt presented an effective

\(^{19}\) Congress, House, Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, Sundry Civil Bill. 1919: Committee on Public Information, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 11-14 June, 1918.
government message. The other, far more important service of the BoC was publication of the Bulletin for Cartoonists. These Bulletins mirrored Hecht's earlier attempts provide suggestions to cartoonists; only this time the government backed the project. The Bulletins touched on a wide range of topics. It urged cartoonists to deal with the conservation of food and fuel, the payment of income tax, the war efforts of women and children, labor issues, and the way in which the government wanted people to mourn dead soldiers. The State Department even asked cartoonists to inform the public about shifting foreign policy with neutrals and belligerents.

Not all suggestions were of a constructive nature. The BoC directed cartoonists to highlight the German "menace" in America. "German agents are everywhere," one Bulletin said, "eager to gather scraps of news about our men, our ships, our munitions." Cartoonists were to warn Americans about discussing any military matters. In later Bulletins, the Bureau desired cartoons denying "German" rumors of shipyards

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20 Creel Report, 77-78.

21 Bulletin for Cartoonists, No. 1 (June 7, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 3 (June 21, 1918), 2; Ibid., No. 4 (June 29, 1918), 4; Ibid., No. 5 (July 6, 1918), 4; Ibid., No. 6 (July 13, 1918), 2; Ibid., No. 7 (July 20, 1918), 2; Ibid., No. 8 (July 28, 1918), 2.

22 Ibid., No. 2 (June 14, 1918), 2.
and Liberty Loans. Eventually the government tried to ferret out German sympathizers. The BoC asked for cartoons which motivated citizens to inquire of people, "'Where did you get your facts?'" when speaking against the war. A. Mitchell Palmer, the Alien Property Custodian even requested cartoons appealing to "loyal" Americans to "report any property that appears to be owned by enemy aliens."^23

Cartoonists were not the only professionals who wanted to work with the government during the war. Advertisers desperately wanted to contribute to the government's war efforts. The reason for the advertisers' interest in working with the government originated in the second half of the 19th century as they sought to make their profession honest.

Until the 1880s, truth in advertising was nonexistent. Sellers of patent medicines and other faulty products provided advertisers with their main source of income. A few ad men called for the industry to clean itself up. The majority of advertisers, however, ignored their pleas.^24

^23 Ibid., No. 2, 2; Ibid., No. 8, 4; Ibid., No. 14 (September 14, 1918), 1; Ibid., No. 11 (August 24, 1918), 2; Ibid., No. 7, 3.

But in the 1890s advertisers began to change the attitudes towards their work. Many professed the need for honesty in their work. One admitted that while "misrepresentation will sell goods" and make men rich, it will lead to business failure when people discovered the fraud.\(^{25}\) Another ad man defined good advertising as "really telling [the] people what and where and who; telling them what a thing really is, where it may be had, and from whom." He added that if an advertiser felt he needed to misrepresent a product because it lacked desirability, the product should not be advertised.\(^{26}\)

Advertisers claimed that honesty helped the consumer. If ads showed only the truth, then people benefitted because they would buy the best products. In reality the main reason for honesty related to profits. Manufactures and department stores started using advertising in the 1890s. Ad men stood to make substantial amounts of money if they enticed large businesses to become clients, but for this to happen they had to prove that they could attract new consumers for their clients. In other words, "honest advertising validated...[the advertiser's] claim to


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professional status at the same time it enhanced the advertising's value by increasing its credibility."²⁷

During the 1890s the industry went through only minor changes. More enlightened advertisers began to study their clients' ethical standards. In 1892, the Ladies Home Journal started to rid its pages of patent-medicine ads, and its actions led the way for many other publications to do the same during the next 10 years.²⁸ Nevertheless, consumers still did not believe that advertising credibility had increased. Even though the use of patent-medicine ads decreased, they were not eradicated. For many advertisers, patent-medicines made up a large percentage of their business. In fact, advertisers only screened out "indecent and prurient appeals" made by medicine dealers, but felt that "most remedies were above reproach." Also new pitches, such as stock promotion advertising, helped to swindle the public out of their money.²⁹

By 1911 the call for truth in advertising became deafening. A contemporary professor of advertising explained that "the consumer is beginning to demand that


exaggeration be eliminated and that the truth be spoken in connection with the article or proposition in which he is about to invest money.\textsuperscript{30} One advertiser presented to the profession the "Ten Commandments" of advertising; four of them had to do with truthfulness. The Printers' Ink, a national magazine for advertisers, even hired a corporation lawyer to draw up a law punishing fraudulent advertisers.\textsuperscript{31}

The industry believed, though, that it had the ability to clean itself up. Through the decade of the 1910s, advertisers formed vigilance bureaus around the country to monitor advertisements on a local level. But by 1916, advertisers had backed down from trying to totally eradicate misleading advertising. Ad men now defined deception in advertising as "blatant" lying. Exaggeration, however, was still an accepted practice. Printers' Ink articulated this idea best when it exclaimed "'Puffing' is one thing; lying another."\textsuperscript{32}

The situation facing advertisers in 1917 remained bleak. They still desired recognition from the public as a


trustworthy profession, but they backed away from total honesty in advertising. The profession needed the endorsement of a completely reputable sponsor to gain respectability. When the United States entered the war, advertisers saw their chance to gain such a sponsor. The Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (AACW), an organization representing over 17,000 advertisers, created a National Advertising Advisory Board (NAAB) to promote the government's Liberty Loan work.\(^{33}\)

The NAAB included many advertising professionals that later became part of the CPI's Division of Advertising (DoA). Herbert S. Houston, the president of the AACW and a Vice-President of Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, led the NAAB's efforts. O.C. Harn, chairman of the AACW's National Advertising Commission and the advertising manager of the National Lead Company, New York, William C. D'Arcy, president of his own advertising firm in St. Louis, William M. Johns, a vice-president of George Batton Co., New York, and L. B. Jones, the advertising manager of Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, all aided Houston in his quest for government backing.\(^{34}\)

\(^{33}\) Vaughn, *Holding Fast*, 142-143.

\(^{34}\) Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 158; "The Liberty War Loan: The National Advertising Advisory Board's Advertising and Selling Plan." CPI papers, CPI 1-C6, E-20, Box 1, Folder: "Propaganda Reports," 1.
On May 3, 1917, the NAAB submitted to William G. McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, a plan to sell the First Liberty Loan. The NAAB offered its advertising services for free, but the government had to purchase the advertising space. For an investment of approximately $1,000,000, Liberty Loan messages would flood the pages of newspapers, magazines, farm papers, business press, religious press, foreign language press, house organs and factory bulletins. They would also post appeals on billboards and street cars. Houston argued that "[n]ews and editorial publicity" provided Americans with information, but since the nation was not made up of investors, the public needed motivation to buy Liberty Bonds. As Houston put it, "advertising spurs [people] to action." 35 "These [advertising] campaigns," he also remarked, "would not only sell the bonds but would arouse the country to the meaning of the War." The plan even included charts which laid out which groups were likely to buy bonds and how to appeal to them. 36

Houston, D'Arcy and Harn maintained strongly that government should pay for its advertising. The reasons they

35 "The Liberty War Loan...," 5,15.

36 Ibid., 8, 20-22. In the last chart, showing how the Secretary of the Treasury should "sell" the Liberty Loan, the NAAB considered the CPI a junior partner in promoting the Loan.
gave for this position had to do with fairness and waste. Harn best articulated these arguments when he wrote, "The Government in a democracy is all the people, and the Government's bills for anything should be paid by all the people, not by a handful of patriotic business men. Moreover, it was difficult to handle donated space in an efficient manner." But a more self-serving reason existed as to why the government should pay. Government support would give the industry the respectability it desperately wanted. A member of the NAAB explained that "the war could put advertising 'on a firm, unshakable, business foundation.'"

The government, however, refused to cooperate with the NAAB. As Creel later explained, government officials found any offer of help "that savored of profit" repugnant. Volunteerism was the only acceptable course of action. Also, "Advertising was regarded as a business, not a profession, and the majority [of citizens] looked upon the advertising agent with suspicion...."
The Treasury Department rejected the NAAB's proposal. Undaunted, Houston

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submitted another plan to Secretary McAdoo proposing the
purchase of between 1 million to 2.5 million dollars worth
of advertising for the Second Liberty Loan. The Treasury
Department also rejected that proposal.40

As late as November 1917, the NAAB still argued that
the government should buy its advertising. But others in
the profession saw the golden opportunity of working with
the government slipping away. The Association of National
Advertisers (ANA) started to offer their services to the
government without any conditions. Since the ANA did not
try to sell advertising to the government, Creel became
interested in adding advertisers to the CPI's membership.
In December, he created the Division of Advertising. For
advertisers the DoA represented the next best thing to the
government purchasing advertising space. In the months that
followed, the Division became known as "the official
advertising agency of the United States Government." The
profession had finally gained the recognition it had sought
in the last three decades.41

Creel made Johns the Division's director. D'Arcy,
Harn, Houston, Jones, Jesse H. Neal, executive secretary of

40 Vaughn, Holding Fast, 144, 145.

41 John Sullivan, "The Truth About the Division of
Advertising," Advertising News 27 (July 20, 1918), 14; "Uncle
Sam's Advertising Agency Reports Progress," Printers' Ink 103
(May 16, 1918), 89.
the Associated Business Papers, and Thomas Cusack, "head of the poster and painted bulletin industry," assisted Johns with the Division's work. The Division acquired office space in the Metropolitan Tower in New York City and set to work. Carl Byoir, who had a interest in the DoA, kept in close contact with the Division.42

One of the major jobs of Johns and his assistants was the regulation of advertising space. The law prohibited any member of the DoA from "asking or paying for advertising," but advertisers skirted the law to insure that their division succeeded. Ad men gently prodded advertising groups to display their patriotism by donating advertising space. By the end of the war, Creel estimated that over $1,500,000 worth of advertising space had been managed by the DoA.43

The Division also set up campaigns for many government agencies. The Food Commission, the Treasury Department, and the War and Navy Departments were some of the agencies that gained help from the Division. During the spring of 1918, Johns and his assistants felt that some government groups

42 Creel Report, 43-44. Creel, How we Advertised America, 158-159.

still did not know how to use the DoA. So they put together a pamphlet advertising themselves. On June 1, the Division distributed the bulletin, *Purpose and Scope of the Work of the Division of Advertising*. It explained how government agencies could utilize the DoA. It also presented examples of its work."

The advertisers used almost every medium possible to sell their "products." The Division's messages found their way into newspapers, magazines, trade publications and onto posters, billboards, book jackets, and theater curtains. They even considered unusual items to get messages across. One man suggested using phonograph records to promote government messages. Another person advocated the utilization of a device called the "Endless Spiral Service Machine." The machines would show a continuous barrage of "pictures or descriptive...phrases, trite sayings, sentences, or slogans...day and night...Wherever the electric light is used and people pass or congregate."


Letter from Carl Byoir to H. A. Lebair, April 3, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 14-A3, E-99, Box 1, Folder: "June-November 1918." Byoir informed Lebair that Secretary McAdoo already used phonograph records to help promote the Third Liberty Loan. Byoir explained that "the chief difficulty seems to be that people...do not care to pay real money for this kind [non-musical] of Record;" Letter from H. Herring(?) to Carl Byoir January 8, 1918; Unknown person to John Sullivan,
On the question of how advertising would be written, the industry differed from Creel's desire for only facts and rational arguments. In the spring of 1918, *Printers' Ink* printed a story analyzing the CPI's work. Entitled, "Waking Up America," the article began by saying that "thousands and thousands of our [United States] citizens" still did to know what the war was all about. It went on to state that "The effectiveness of the work which Mr. Creel can do is, in the very nature of things, limited by the official character of his bureau." Making 100 million people ponder the facts of the war posed difficulties, especially since some Americans "have never done more than the legal minimum of thinking on any subject whatever." Moreover, CPI pamphlets were filled with "information in solid hunks," something that might attract college educated people, but not the great masses which needed to support the war effort. Non-government propaganda agencies had more success because they catered to the general populous by working "along strictly advertising lines. (original stress)"

Clearly, this article suggested that advertisers would not stress

December 31, 1917. CPI papers; CPI 1-C6, E-20, Box 1, Folder: "Advertising."

46 Bruce Bliven, "Waking Up America" *Printers' Ink* 103 (May 2, 1918): 65.

47 Ibid., 67-68.
facts and would rely on emotional arguments in their campaigns.

All the DoA's campaigns attempted to manipulate the public in different ways. With food conservation the Division enticed companies that produced name-brand foods to donate advertising space in exchange for a spot in the government's ads. Carnation Milk took advantage of this and told consumers in food conservation advertisements how the use of their product helped families conserve milk. For the Selective Service system, advertisers coined the slogan, "Patriots will register—others must." When working with the Red Cross, the DoA decided to run an emotional campaign. They rationalized that "[T]here is probably not a father, mother, wife or other relative, who had loved ones at the front or under arms at home who could not be made to respond to the cries for help that came to America from the battlefields...." To get people to back the Red Cross ads men needed to "stir the emotions...." If the words and pictures brought people to tears, then advertisers had done their job.48

The work done by the Division on the Third Liberty Loan Drive developed along lines similar the selective service campaign. During the Third Liberty Loan the DoA compared good American citizens with those who "did their bit" and bought bonds. "This is your war," the DoA reminded people, "for you and your fellows have decreed it." For the Forth Liberty Loan the Division not only needed to convince citizens to buy bonds, but also not to sell them before they matured. To sell bonds, advertisers focused on the "bestiality" of the enemy. The DoA liberally used copy describing "Germans going about the foul business of terrorism and rapine." The Division also wrote about Americans going to their possible deaths in battle to convince people to do their duty and purchase bonds. The DoA also told the public to hold on to their bonds for "the boys 'over there.'" They had to explain that selling bonds early "force[s] the bonds below par. And it is difficult to put a new issue on the market and dispose of it at 100 [percent], when former issues can be bought at several points less." The DoA accused Americans who disposed of their bonds before they matured of reducing the amount of money going to the government, and of conceivably

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"Your Liberty Loan and Your War." CPI papers, CPI 14-A1, E-97A, Box 1, Folder: "Abe-Aln."
lengthening the war. 50

The DoA also worked on a campaign intended to counteract enemy propaganda. With estimates of over one million subversives in the United States, the DoA designed this campaign to make Americans combat rumors which dealt with the war. Ads with captions such as "Have You Met This Kaiserite?", "Gossip that Costs Human Lives!," or "Spies and Lies" urged citizens hearing rumors about the government's war effort to trace them to the source, and turn in anyone disloyal to the Department of Justice. They even developed "slogans to establish a 'habit of silence.'" The Division filled newspapers with such statements as "Keep your eyes peeled, your lips sealed, your heart steeled." and "One German army has already occupied America. The invisible host of spies is everywhere." to drive the point of vigilance home. 51

Although advertisers wrote the copy for the Division of Advertising, the pictures were the product of the Division


51 Bruce Bliven, "Fighting the German Spy with Advertising," Printers' Ink 103 (May 23, 1918): 17-18; Vaughn, Holding Fast, 231; "Gossip That Costs Human Lives!" CPI papers, CPI 3-A1, E-27, Box 9, Folder: "L-1-1701 to L-1-1750;" "Don't Talk War! Spies Will Hear...." Ibid., CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 1, Folder: "Division of Advertising #1."
of Pictorial Publicity (DPP). In fact, the DPP drew posters, cartoons, window cards, seals, buttons, banners, as well as pictures for advertisements for many government departments and agencies. Charles Dana Gibson, at the time one of the highest paid artist in America, guided the Division's members to create some of the most striking images on paper for the war effort.52

As Wilson called the country to arms, Gibson tried to envision the best way artists could help the government. In particular, he wanted the Society of Illustrators, an organization he presided over as president, to contribute to the war effort. Established at the turn of the century, the Society was the product of an effort by the nation's artists to professionalize their work. Even before America's commitment to the war, several of the Society's members, including Gibson, formed the Vigilantes, an "anti-pacifist, patriotic..." group which supported the Allied cause through their drawings.53

The Society met on April 17, to discuss how the


government could utilize its talents. During that meeting, Gibson received a telegram from Creel asking "for the cooperation of the Society of Illustrators in obtaining pictorial publicity for the Government." Gibson later said that the telegram gave the Society "a focusing-point." Creel met with Gibson five days later to formalize the arrangement. He promised that the Division of Pictorial Publicity would be "the only organization of its kind recognized by Government; no other organization will be recognized that conflicts with it in any way, nor will individual energy be permitted to interfere with group authority." The Society enjoyed a monopoly on government backing of its artwork.

Like the DoA, the DPP immediately acquired autonomy from the Committee. Gibson rented office space for the DPP in New York City. Later, the Division opened branch offices in Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco. H. Devitt Welsh, a member of the Division's executive committee and F. De Sales Casey, the Division's Vice-chairman and secretary occasionally went to Washington to find out what Government

54 Report of the Work Accomplished by the Society of Illustrators..." CPI papers, CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 4, Folder: "Pictorial Publicity," 1, Creel, How We Advertised America, 139.

55 Rawls, Wake Up, America!, 149; Letter from George Creel to Charles Dana Gibson, January 31, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 9, Folder: "Gibson, Charles Dana."
agencies needed artwork, but there was never a permanent representative of the DPP coordinating with the CPI.\(^\text{56}\)

In fact, the Division acted more like an equal partner of the Committee than part of it. None of the work coming from Gibson's people bore a trademark linking it to the Division of the CPI. Only the artist's signature graced the finished products. The Division also contracted work with government departments and agencies without any help from the CPI. Gibson's refusal to let the Committee help line up clients irritated Creel enough to write a letter to the Division head asking him to "state just what it is...[the DPP] are willing to do, and let me put this explicit offer of service up to each department of government that is concerned with posters, cards, and other forms of pictorial appeal."\(^\text{57}\)

In fact, the DPP was guided in its work by the director's belief that his artists needed to stir the emotions of their audiences even though this ran contrary to Creel's commitment to providing Americans with only facts.

\(^{56}\) Creel Report, 41, Creel, How We Advertised America, 134; Memo for George Creel from ?, August 23, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 4, Folder: "Pictorial Publicity".

\(^{57}\) Letter from George Creel to Charles Dana Gibson, Oct. 29, 1918; Creel to Gibson, November 8, 1917. Ibid., CPI 1-A5, E-5, Box 9, Folder: "Gibson, Charles Dana." It is not clear that Gibson ever provided Creel with the statement the Chairman desired.
During his tenure as Division head, Gibson commented that pictures of the material needs of the war, like "coal, wheat, ammunition, clothing, and the thousand of other things that must be conserved...were not the things with which to fire the imagination and stir the heart of the great American people." He wanted the DPP's artwork to tug at the emotions of Americans. Images of "a Belgian child dying for want of food, or an American soldier slain for lack of ammunition...." were exactly the images he desired.\footnote{New York Times Magazine, January 20, 1918, 11.} An example of Gibson's views on the direction of the DPP's artwork surfaced in February, 1918, when one of his vice-chairman, Cass Gilbert, reviewed pictorials of the Kaiser. Gibson agreed with his vice-chairman's concern that many illustrators portrayed the Kaiser in a favorable light, showing him as "tall, impressive person and a soldierly figure." Both men felt that artists should present the German leader as "a small man, below the average height, thin pale, shrunken, with a sinister countenance, a face deeply seamed and lined, his left arm withered, and if he was stripped of his uniform and trappings and put in a plain clothes [the kaiser] would have the general aspect of a common criminal." If newspapers and magazines continued to run pictures of the Kaiser as a dashing leader, they would
offset the work of the Division.\textsuperscript{59}

During the DPP's 17 months of service, its artists supported over fifty-eight different agencies or departments with over 1,438 works. Three divisions of the CPI regularly used the services of the DPP. The Division of Advertising in particular worked closely with Gibson's people to obtain art to complement its copy. Advertisements for the Fourth Liberty Loan presented provocative scenes drawn by DPP members. One, entitled \textit{Remember Belgium}, showed German troops systematically bayonetting civilians while a town burned in the background. Another sketch, \textit{This is Kultur}, depicted several German soldiers committing atrocities. In the background, troops strangled women, while in the foreground, a soldier held a handless boy, who was bleeding profusely while another soldier, clutching a bloody sword, surveyed his handiwork.\textsuperscript{60}

During all campaigns, the DPP employed virtually every emotional tactic to arouse its audience into action. When working on recruiting materials, artists used several approaches. In a poster, called \textit{Only the Navy Can Stop

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\textsuperscript{59} Letter from Cass Gilbert to Charles Dana Gibson, February 23, 1918; Gibson to George Creel, February 27, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 9, Folder: "Gibson, Charles Dana."

\textsuperscript{60} Creel Report, 41-42; Vaughn, Holding Fast, 149, 165-166.
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This, a giant Prussian soldier, holding a bloody sword and dagger, walks through a stormy sea, its bottom covered with dead women and children. In another poster, an enraged man was shown taking off his civilian coat, ready to replace it with a uniform jacket. At his feet rested a newspaper with the headline, "Huns kill women and children!" and the title above the man reads *Tell That to the Marines!* In one of the more famous posters of the war, Uncle Sam points an accusing finger at the men of the country with the title, *I want YOU for U.S. Army.* If a male citizen remained unaffected by images of atrocities and guilt, then artists used sex-appeal. The Division developed posters of beautiful women dressed in the uniforms of each of the service branches. In one of these for the Navy, the girl says "*Gee!! I wish I were a man I'd join the Navy.*"  

Posters for the Food Administration relied heavily on guilt to promote its messages. Many posters presented images of starving European women and children or hungry American soldiers with titles like *Hunger, Feed a Fighter,* or *War Rages in France: We Must Feed Them.* One artist drew a basket of fruit in the foreground of his poster with the silhouette of American troops in the background. The title

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stated Food is Ammunition—Don't Waste it.  

For the War Saving Stamp Campaign, artists assaulted their audience with pictures which induced guilt in the viewer or that depicted atrocities. A poster of Uncle Sam looking like a frustrated mother exclaimed, "I am telling you on June 28th I expect you to enlist in the army of war savers to backup my army of fighters." Another artist drew a picture of a toddler, wearing only shoes and socks, and holding onto the Statue of Liberty's torch. The caption instructed the public to "Save your Child From Autocracy And Poverty; Buy War Savings Stamps." The poster, Help Stop This presented a more violent image. The poster showed a giant Prussian soldier walking through the wasteland of a European town. At the German's feet was a wounded woman, while he held a rifle and a bloody knife.  

For Liberty Loan campaigns the DPP's artists attempted to manipulate the whole spectrum of human emotions. Some posters depicted American soldiers stopping or killing the enemy. Others again showed German soldiers preparing to commit acts of brutality against civilians. Still others presented the bloody hand or boots of Prussian soldiers and let the viewer's imagination run wild. Again artists even

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62 Rickards, Posters, photos 227, 233; Rawls, Wake Up, America!, 49, 115.
used sex-appeal, but this time the women were scantily clothed with an American Flag flying in the background, imploring people to buy bonds.

During the campaign artists also attempted to make their audience feel guilty. One poster depicting a pleading mother holding her children had the caption, "Must children die and mothers plead in vain." Another drew a dead American soldier in no-mans-land with the title, His Liberty Bond Paid in Full. One artist even painted a poster of New York City under German siege. German airplanes flew over the city while it burnt, and a German submarine patrolled the city's harbor. In the foreground the Statue of Liberty burned. The head and the torch rested at the bottom of the statue. The caption exclaimed, That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth Buy Liberty Bonds. 64

The Bureau of Cartoons, the Division of Advertising, and the Division of Pictorial Publicity all enjoyed government sponsorship of their war work. In return, all three provided the CPI with effective campaigns. But the price of success was the perversion of Creel's policy of presenting only facts and rational arguments.

64 Rickards, Posters, photo 175; Rawls, Wake Up, America!, 29, 194, 201, 206, 209, 215, 222, 233; St. Clair, The Story of the Liberty Loans, 37, 61, 88, 102, 137.
The Bureau of Cartoons reached every political cartoonist in the country, but it only provided suggestions of cartoon topics. Cartoonists could pervert facts in their works with impunity as long as they helped the government. the Division of Advertising wrote copy to provoke the masses into action, and the Division of Pictorial Publicity stirred the nation with its drawings. They all "worried...about what appeal would increase public support."^{65}

Each group had an ulterior motive for its actions. Successful campaigns would enhance the careers of professional cartoonists, artists, and advertisers after the war, and these groups would do anything, including working the nation into a war frenzy with flawed facts, to gain recognition for their work.

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^{65} Vaughn, *Holding Fast*, 149.
Chapter V

News and Censorship Under the CPI

Of all the information mediums Creel and the Committee worked with, the newspaper received more than its share of attention. The Division of News (DN) flooded newspapers with government news while the Official Bulletin, the CPI's own newspaper, gave its readership a steady stream of government facts. Both of these sections came closest to Creel's desire to present only facts and use rational arguments to sway public opinion. Nevertheless, the DN and the Official Bulletin released exaggerated and untrue news stories which brought into question the Committee's commitment to honesty. Creel's policy of "voluntary censorship" complicated matters even more when he employed it to suppress any information he deemed dangerous to the public.

The first division formed by the Committee on Public Information was the Division of News. Creel proudly explained after the war that "through...[its] news gathering machinery [the DN] gave to people a daily chronicle of the war effort so frank, complete, and accurate that in time it developed a public confidence that stood like iron against
the assaults of rumor and the hysteria of whispering alarm."¹ The Division had three directors. L. Ames Brown held the position briefly until Creel decided to move him to the Syndicated Features Division. His replacement, J. W. McConaughy, previously worked as an editorial writer for Munsey's Magazine. In June 1918 he moved to the foreign section to work on a survey of Central-American countries. A former managing editor of the Chicago Record-Herald, Leigh Reilly, took his place until the end of the war. Regardless of who occupied the director's position, Creel oversaw the work of the Division.²

One of the DN's main functions was to issue "official war information." Government agencies, including the Army and Navy Departments, White House, the Department of Justice, the National War Labor Board, the Department of Labor, the War Industries Board, the Council of National Defence, the Alien Property Custodian, and the War Trade Board, all issued news statements through representatives of the Division. The people assigned to each government agency kept a "free and continuous flow" of information open to any member of the press who requested it. This did not prevent

¹ Creel, How We Advertised America, 75.
² Ibid., 80; Vaughn, Holding Fast, 195-196. For Creel's commitment to news see Link; The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, 101. 42, 39-40.
reporters from gathering information on their own. They could obtain facts from the Division's representative "or else [the representative] cleared the way for him [reporters or writers] to get his material first hand." Either way, the Division made sure that correspondents met "with all executive heads...[for] daily interviews."³

Of great concern to Americans were casualty lists. Knowing this, Creel made sure that the lists became available to newspapers as soon as possible. At the beginning of the war, the lists "were issued for immediate release." But as the dead and wounded mounted, the lists were given to the press on a five day delay. Creel demanded that all information about the casualties (name, condition, next-of-kin, and address) be given to newspapers. When the War Department decided to send out casualty lists without giving the next-of-kin or address, he refused to continue their release until the War Department returned the deleted information.⁴


⁴ Creel Report, 13; Creel, How We Advertised America, 78-80.

105
D.C., the DN produced and distributed a "weekly digest of war news." During the war as many as 12,000 papers subscribed to this service. Creel estimated that 20,000 columns per week utilized information from the service. In December, 1917, California newspapers alone "received on the average of six pounds of publicity from the government each day."\(^5\)

Not content with releasing news stories, President Wilson directed Creel to create a daily government bulletin that would give the American public all publishable war information. This government news capsule, called the Official U.S. Bulletin, became one of the CPI's most requested publications. With an initial daily distributions of 60,000 copies, the Bulletin's circulation climbed to a daily high of 118,000 copies over the next eighteen months.\(^6\)

At first, Creel voiced reservations about producing a government newspaper. In the first place he was concerned about the legality of publishing the Official Bulletin. According to the National Security and Defence Act of 1917, even if the President ordered the creation of the Official Bulletin, the Bulletin's circulation climbed to a daily high of 118,000 copies over the next eighteen months.\(^6\)

\(^5\) Creel Report 14; Creel, How We Advertised America, 74; Vaughn, Holding Fast, 194.

\(^6\) Creel Report, 63, 66; Creel, How We Advertised America, 208.
Bulletin, he could only expend money to give copies of it to government agencies "for the sake of the national security and [d]efense." So the Committee could not legally sell it to the general public.\(^7\) Another reason why Creel worried had to do with newsmen's perceptions of the Official Bulletin. He feared that the press would attack it on the grounds that "it was a 'government organ' designed to compete with private enterprise."\(^8\)

Despite Creel's objections, the President insisted that the Official Bulletin be published, and the CPI distributed the first issue on May 10, 1917. During the war, Congress never questioned the government's right to publish the Official Bulletin. Reporters, on the other hand, almost immediately cried foul. As Creel predicted, they felt that this "government organ" maintained an unfair advantage over regular newspapers gaining exclusives. But when they realized that the Official Bulletin never contained "opinion[s] or conclusion[s]," they determined that it would not compete with their newspapers. Instead, the press dismissed it "as 'dull,' and because it did not print 'exclusive stuff' it was derided as 'useless.' [sic]" At that point Creel refused to send newspapermen complimentary

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\(^7\) Memorandum on the legality of the Official Bulletin. CPI papers, CPI 1-C7, E-21, box 1, Folder: "Folder 3."

\(^8\) Creel, How We Advertised America, 208.
copies, and found great amusement in the fact that after his action, "virtually every Washington correspondent...[became] a paid subscriber."\(^9\)

On the front page of the first Official Bulletin, a staff writer clearly outlined the paper's commitment to relaying facts to the American people. It would "present in its columns all proclamations and Executive orders issued by the President; rules and regulations promulgated by the Federal departments; official bulletins and statements; statutes bearing on the war and their construction, and all other subjects related to the prosecution of the war, to which publicity may properly be given."\(^10\) But the Official Bulletin provided another important service for the government. Such agencies as the Army, Navy, and Post Office Department, the Food and Fuel Administration, the War Trade Board, the war Industries Board, and the Council of National Defense used it to disseminate information within their organizations.\(^11\)

From the time the United States entered the war in April, 1917 until November, 1918, the Division of News and the Official Bulletin provided Americans with a large volume

\(^9\) Official Bulletin, May 10, 1917; Creel, How We Advertised America, 208-209.


of government information. Together both sections released over 6,000 news items. But even they exaggerated and fabricated several news releases.\(^\text{12}\)

The most publicized example of misinformation was the "Fourth of July Fake." On June 26, 1917, the first of four naval contingents, carrying the first group of the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.), arrived in France. Over the next week the three remaining groups pulled into port. When Creel and Secretary Daniels learned on July 3, that all contingents had made it safely to France, both were elated. With tears in his eyes, Daniels exclaimed, "What a Fourth-of-July present for the [American] people!"\(^\text{13}\) Very quickly Creel and Daniels developed a press release describing the voyage of the troop transports. The release told a harrowing tale. German submarines assaulted the transports twice. The first attack, made on the night of June 22, was in "force," but no ships were sunk. According to the release, submarines launched at least five torpedoes against

\(^{12}\) Creel, How We Advertised America, 50. Creel and Historians who studied the news arm of the CPI, tend to downplay the significance of its few erroneous news stories because they comprised a negligible number of all that were given to the press. But the stories are important because they show that even the release of news, a job largely controlled by Creel, was susceptible to exaggeration.

\(^{13}\) Walton E. Bean, "George Creel and his Critics: A Study of the Attacks on the Committee on Public Information, 1917-1919" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1941), 136-137, 139; Creel, How We Advertised America, 28-29.
the ships. During the next attack a few days later, an American destroyer allegedly sunk at least one submarine. The release ended with the statement, "the whole nation will rejoice that so great a peril is passed for the vanguard of the men who will fight our battles in France. No more thrilling Fourth of July celebration could have been arranged than this glad news that lifts the shadow of dread from the heart of America." 14

The next day however, Frank America, an Associated Press newsman, reported from London that in fact no attacks had been made against any of the transports, and that "official [Naval] circles" in France said that destroyers regularly fired "at logs or anything which might prove [to be a] periscope." Although America intended the information for his superiors eyes only, it found its way into the newspapers. By July 6, the press started to declare that he CPI's release was based on exaggeration. On July 7, the New York Times scolded Creel for attempting "to represent the beating off of the submarines as a real naval battle of high importance...." It added that the American people could understand censorship in the case of military secrets, but they "will never pardon expanded, adorned, exaggerated, and untruthful accounts of conflicts in which our forces may be


110
engaged."\(^{15}\)

On July 9, Senator Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania called for the investigation of the Committee activities, including all materials relating to "the alleged encounter of the American fleet with submarines, as described in a statement issued under the authority of Mr. George Creel."\(^{16}\) Members of the Senate continued to make accusations against the CPI until August 2, when the Navy released the complete text of the report written by Admiral Gleaves, the officer in charge of the troop transports during the crossing. Gleaves supported the "essential facts" of Creel and Daniel's press statement, but he also made clear that their statement had exaggerated the number of submarines and the ferocity of their attacks. Even Creel admitted after the war that "every care was taken to set down the facts [in the press release,] but the spirit of thanksgiving that flooded every heart insensibly took charge of phraseology." His lapse into emotionalism, however, cast him a month's worth of bad publicity.\(^{17}\)

Other incidents of misinformation dealt with the state

\(^{15}\) Bean, "George Creel and his Critics", 141-142; New York Times, July 6; Ibid., July 7.

\(^{16}\) Congressional Record, 65th Congress, 1st sess., vol. 55, part 5, July 9, 1917, 4811.

\(^{17}\) Creel, How We Advertised America, 37-41; Ibid., 30.
of military aircraft. From September, 1917, government departments fed the CPI untrue statements about military aircraft. Secretary Baker authorized this on two occasions. The first, on September 13, dealt with the Liberty Motor, an airplane engine developed for the military's aircraft. In the article, Secretary Baker recounted the history of the motor's production. A Senate report on aircraft production found the article filled with incorrect statements about the motor. For example Baker claimed in the article that the motor had "passed its final test..." but the Senate could not find any evidence indicating that a "final test" had been conducted on it. The next incident happened on February 21, 1918 when the War Department released a story stating that the "first American-built battle-'planes are to-day en route to the front in France." Actually, only one plane was ready for transport, and that had not even been loaded on a ship. The Council of National Defense also released a faulty statement through the DN which dealt with the Liberty Motor. In this case, the story read "that a perfect motor had been developed; that two men had been locked in a room; and that as a result of their labors a 100 percent perfect type of motor had been evolved." But Creel found out "some months later that there were about 250 things wrong with it." It was after this particular story that Creel tried to protect "the [C]ommittee against the
issuance of stories that were not verified in every degree...."\textsuperscript{18}

But even the people under Creel's control ignored tightened checks on incoming information. On March 25, 1918, the War Department sent over to the CPI's Division of Still Pictures, the section in charge of releasing still pictures to the public, a group of photos of training airplanes. Laurence Rubel, director of the Division, forwarded them to Maurice Strunsky, a caption writer. Strunsky, who had been hired by Rubel and had never talked with Creel, decided to submit captions without getting his superior's approval. The result was the release of captions filled with erroneous statements. The training planes in the pictures were transformed into a fleet of battle planes being "rushed to France," although "hundreds have already been shipped." The captions also claimed that the planes contained the "perfect aeroplane engine."\textsuperscript{19}

Once Rubel realized what had happened he immediately recalled the pictures and captions. When he questioned

\textsuperscript{18} Congressional Record, 65th Congress, 1st sess., vol. 56, part 6, May 2, 1918, 5921; Creel, How We Advertised America, 45-46; Sundry Civil Bill, 31.

\textsuperscript{19} Creel, How We Advertised America, 47; Bean, "George Creel and his Critics," 166-167; Congressional Record, 65th Congress, 2nd sess., vol. 56, part 5, March 29, 1918, 4255; Memorandum to George Creel from Laurence Rubel, April 1, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 21, Folder: "Rubel, Lawrence."
Strunsky on the incident, the caption writer said that his work was based on "an announcement of the Secretary of War," but he could not provide any specifics. The matter would have been closed except that the Official Bulletin ran and advance printing of the captions on March 28. The following day members of the Senate were in an uproar and charged the Committee with incompetence. Creel admitted that the captions "were...flamboyant and overcolored." As a result of Strunsky's initiative, Creel terminated his employment and gave orders "that all future pictures should be released with no more descriptive matter than the bare titles supplied by the Signal Corps." But by then, CPI's reputation for honest reporting had been tarnished.

One of Creel's most important responsibilities, having to do with the dissemination of news was the regulation of censorship. From the beginning of his tenure as chairman, Creel insisted that the Committee not impose censorship on the nation's newspapers and magazines. He had several reasons for following such a policy. As he explained after the war, "[a]side from the physical difficulties of enforcement, the enormous cost, and the overwhelming irritation involved I had the conviction that our hope must

20 "memorandum to Creel from Rubel, April 1, 1918;" Bean, "George Creel and his Critics," 168; Official Bulletin, March 28, 1918; Congressional Record, Ibid., Creel, How We Advertised America, Ibid.
lie in the aroused patriotism of the newspaper men of America."  

To gain the backing of the press, Creel instituted a voluntary censorship. Under this policy, every newspaper censored itself. On June 2, 1917, the CPI handed out Creel's guidelines for voluntary censorship to reporters. Creel began his statement by mentioning that "public opinion is a factor in victory no less than ships and guns, and the creation and stimulation of a healthy, ardent national sentiment is the kind of fighting that the press can do." After inflating the press's ego in this way, Creel quickly explained how voluntary censorship would work. First he made clear that the only information he wanted to restrict was "the kind which would be of tangible help to them [Germans] in their military operations." To help newspaper editors, he created three news categories. Category I included information of a strictly military nature, such as "location and description of coast and harbor defenses," or "[the] date and port of sailing of merchant ships." Category II dealt with news of a questionable nature like "narrative descriptions of units in the Army or Navy." Category III news was defined as "matters which do not affect the conduct of the war, do not concern this

21 Creel, How We Advertised America, 16.
committee, and are governed only by peacetime laws of libel, defamation of character, etc." Category I news would be censored immediately. If an editor found any Category II or III information to be potentially dangerous to the war effort, Creel asked them "to seek advice of the Committee on Public Information." 22

Although Creel had no way to enforce the voluntary censorship, official powers were unnecessary. The press constantly accused Creel of being the government's censor. Their allegations made the CPI's Chairman a de facto censor. Creel enhanced this image even more when he became a member of the Censorship Board, a government body founded on October 12, 1917, and charged with overseeing the censorship of the mails. The Board eventually gave Creel full authority over the censorship of the nations newspapers and magazines. Unlike the press, all magazines needed to submit articles to "the censorship several weeks before publication for proper censoring." Creel even toyed with the idea of taking editorial control of certain ethnic newspapers to insure that hyphenated Americans only saw official government news. 23

22 Ibid., 18; Creel Report, 10; Official Bulletin, June 2, 1917.

23 Creel, How We Advertised America, 24; Censorship Board Minutes, May 29, and April 3, 1918. CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box 4, Folder: "Censorship Board;" Letter to Samuel Gompers
Although the press balked at any type of censorship, reporters for the most part followed the voluntary rules. Those who chose to flaunt them, showed how repressive Creel's voluntary censorship could become. One area of information Creel regulated often pertained to the CPI. In some cases organizations used Creel's words to back an unauthorized venture. During the summer of 1918, the Non-Partisan League used a private letter from Creel to John A. Simpson, president of the Farmer's Union, to advertise itself. Upon finding out about this, Creel requested that the League refrain from "the absolute misuse of personal letters. This Committee [CPI] cannot, and will not, be put in the position of endorsing or condemning political or patriotic organizations." 24

Another example of the misuse of Creel's statements came in October. The New York American in a bold move, decided to criticize the New York Tribune for "attacks" on the government. The paper sent out posters condemning the actions of the Tribune which contained unauthorized quotes

from George Creel, July 26, 1917. Ibid., Box 10, Folder: "256;" Letter to Mitchell Palmer from Creel, April 23, 1918. Ibid., Box 18, Folder: "6;"

24 Letter to Jim V. McClintic from William E. Hearst, June 22, 1918; A.S. Burleson from McClintic, June 25, 1918; George Creel from Burleson, June 29, 1918; "The Non-Partisan League." CPI papers, CPI 1-A1, E-1, Box-3, Folder: "85;" McClintic from Creel, July 1, 1918. Ibid., Box 15, Folder: "Honorable James V. McClintic."
from Creel and Secretary McAdoo. As soon as Creel became aware of the poster he denounced it, saying that the American only wanted the "cover of the Government endorsement..." to carry on a circulation war with the Tribune.25

Most of the problems associated with the information about the Committee dealt with false assertions about the CPI. Comments on Creel, the CPI's handling of news, or the work of the Committee's divisions drew sharp replies from the Chairman. In one case involving the Evansville Journal News of Indiana, he attempted to silence the paper. The incident started with the release of a story by the CPI on Major John Purroy Mitchel who allegedly died as a result of not buckling his safety belt, and falling out of his airplane. In an editorial on August 25, 1918, the Journal News challenged the apparent slandering of an Evansville resident. The paper condemned Creel for "the sneaking attack on Mitchel." In response, Creel sent the Journal News and its rival papers the official report on Mitchell's death. Furthermore, Creel warned the editor of the Journal News that he would present "this whole matter to the Attorney General," remarking that this type of reporting

25 Letter to George Creel from Robinson Smith, October 5, 1918; Smith from Creel, October 9, 1918; Poster: "Official Condemnation..." Form letter from New York American, September 19, 1918. Ibid., Box 17, Folder: "New York Tribune."
"could not serve the Kaiser more admirable."

Creel also regulated other types of information not related to the Committee. The CPI suppressed news of a strictly military nature on several occasions. Stories on tanks were constantly being pulled by Committee members. But as the war progressed, Creel moved beyond the censorship of military matters. Statements about the Allies could not be derogatory. Several New England newspapers found this out after running a story in which they questioned the courage of French-Canadian troops. The article explained that French-Canadians "have been more or less hardy pioneer stock in the beginning, but they have degenerated into a lazy, ignorant, criminal, and generally good-for-nothing lot of slackers. The Press Censor of Canada complained to Creel that articles such as this "should be stopped if possible in the interest of that fine friendly feeling which we all hope

26 Letter to Editor, The Boulder Camera from George Creel, August 28, 1918. Ibid., Box 2, Folder: "65;" Robert M. LaFollette, Jr. from Creel, January 25, 1918. Ibid., Box 14, Folder: "LaFollette, Jr., Robert M.;" Clinton T. Brainard from Creel, August 30, 1918. Ibid., box 3, Folder: "79;" Howard Ruose from Creel, F.R. Peters from Creel, and John H. McNeely from Creel, August 30, 1918; Creel from O'Brian, September 5, 1918. Ibid., Box 16, Folder: "McNeely, John H."

27 Letter to George Creel from Lieutenant Thomas P. Bryan, May 22, 1918; Bryan from Creel, May 24, 1918. Ibid., Box 3, folder: "Bryan, Lt. Comdr. Thomas P.;" Editor, Washington Post from M. Churchill, August 29, 1918; Report for Mr. Creel from Leigh Reilly, October 1, 1918. Ibid., Box 25, Folder: "Washington Post."
will be one of the results of the present close relationship and alliance existing between our two Countries." Creel quickly sent a letter to the offending newspapers asking them "to oblige the Canadian Government in this respect."\(^{28}\)

The Young People's Socialist League ran into the same problem. Its national secretary, William F. Kruse, submitted the manifesto of the International Association of Young Socialist Organizations to Creel, and asked him if it could be published in *The Young Socialist Magazine*. Creel chastised Kruse for even thinking of printing the manifesto. He charged that "the whole attempt of the manifesto is to prove that the thought of France, England and America is not more liberal than the thought of the Central Powers...." For the CPI Chairman, this type of thinking was too dangerous for the American people during wartime.\(^{29}\)

Creel had very strong feelings on the presentation of information about Germany. In his initial statement to the press, he stated that only military news revealing troop strengths or locations posed a threat to American war interests. But as the war progressed, Creel believed that

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\(^{28}\) Letter to George Creel from Ernest J. Chambers, November 7, 1917. Ibid., Box 4, Folder: "Chambers, E.J.;" Editor, Boston *Record* from Creel, November 10, 1917. Ibid., Box 2, Folder: "65."

\(^{29}\) Letter to George Creel from William F. Kruse, April 27, 1918; Kruse from Creel, May 3, 1918; Creel from Kruse, May 8, 1918. Ibid., Box 13, Folder: "378."
pro-German writings threatened the morale of the American people; something which was just as important as military strength. Movies featuring "Germans...as beings of peculiar benevolence, valour and ability..." needed censorship. He believed that newspapers portraying German officers as "benevolent" gentlemen spread "German propaganda matter."

Creel even considered a movement in the United States dedicated to raising money to help rebuild French towns a "German propaganda scheme," because money raised by that movement diverted money from the American war effort.30

The most glaring example of Creel's feelings on information about Germany had to do with P.F. Collier & Son's six volume work, The Story of the Great War. Creel charged that a section of the history dealing with the indirect causes of the war had a "pro-German slant" because it blamed France and England for starting the war. He especially disliked "the studious suppression of all details about German atrocities, and the painstaking manner in which every horror of the German invasion of Belgium is minimized or else attempted to be explained away." In response, the publisher of The Story of the Great War, Collier & Son, explained that it had published the first three volumes in

30 Official Bulletin, June 2, 1917; Letter to George Creel from Ernest J. Chambers, January 29, 1918; Chambers from Creel, February 6, 1918. Ibid., Box 4, Folder: "Chambers E.J."
April, 1916, one year before the United States entered the war. The text of these volumes, the publisher said, "reflected...[President Wilson's previous policy of neutrality] and the aim all through the volumes was to give the story of the conflict as it developed from an absolute neutral standpoint." The associate editor at Collier & Son found the whole situation "amusing,...[since they] were obliged [in 1916] to eliminate all possible phrases that might show a pro-ally viewpoint and for this very reason this text is now called by you in certain paragraphs 'peculiarly German in its essence.'" Even though the editor agreed to re-edit the "pro-German passages," he disagreed with Creel's assertions. But Creel maintained his earlier position in a later letter that The Story of the Great War contained a pro-German bias. He said that "certain passages of the book... are absolutely at variance with the facts...." He closed the letter by "insist[ing] that the changes be made that were suggested by me in my former letter."31

Creel's policies on news flowing in and out of the country showed how restrictive the Chairman of CPI was with information. Correspondents who assembled "detached

31 Letter to P.F. Collier & Son from George Creel, October 10, 1918; Creel from Francis J. Reynolds, October 14, 1918; Reynolds from Creel, October 22, 1918. Ibid., Box 5, Folder: "Collier's."
sentences or paragraphs of opinionated matter which taken alone and never accompanied by paragraphs illuminating the attitude of the United States has the practical effect of being hostile to...[America,]" would be barred from the cables. He also decided that stories allegedly based on rumors would be restricted from the cables. He even forbade the flow of ideas he considered dangerous. During the winter of 1918, he refused to allow any "literature sent out by the Bolsheviks..." to enter the country.\textsuperscript{32}

The Division of News and the \textit{Official Bulletin} came closest to fulfilling Creel's policy of issuing only facts, and not pandering to emotionalism. Unfortunately, both the DN and the \textit{Bulletin} allowed the printing of elaborated and fabricated news stories. More disturbing, however, was the direction of Creel's censorship policy. Billed as being only a "voluntary censorship," over time Creel transformed it into a policy which repressed any information which he deemed "dangerous" to the American public.

\textsuperscript{32} Letter to Commander David W. Todd from George Creel, July 2, 1917. Ibid., Box 23, Folder: "Todd, David;" Todd from Creel, August 6, 1917. Ibid., Box 4, Folder: "Newspaper Propaganda;" Robert L. Maddox from Creel, March 8, 1918. Ibid., Box 14, Folder: "Maddox, Robert L."
Conclusion

At 11:00 AM on November 11, 1918, the armistice agreed to by the belligerents took effect and fighting on the western front ceased. In the following months the United States and the Allies formulated the terms of peace and on June 28, 1919, the belligerents signed the Treaty of Versailles. For the Committee on Public Information, the end of hostilities marked the completion of its work. During December 1918, most of the divisions disbanded. Although several, including the Official Bulletin Division, worked until the spring of 1919. Congress officially dissolved the Committee on June 30, 1919.1

For the eighteen months that the United States fought, the CPI had rallied American public opinion behind the government's war effort. Creel and the division directors succeeded in reaching almost all Americans by flooding the country with information. The Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation produced over sixty pamphlets with a total distribution of 75,117,178 copies. In movie theaters around the country, over 74,000 Four Minute Men gave 755,190 speeches to a total audience of 314,454,514 people. The

1 Beamish and March, History of the World War, 736; Smith, The Great Departure, 173; CPI papers, CPI 1-D1, e-22, Box 1, Folder: "A Report...", 21-22; Creel, How We Advertised America, ix.
Speaking Division had 300 "effective speakers" crisscrossing the United States trying to sway public opinion.² The Bureau of Cartoons and the Division of Pictorial Publicity oversaw the production of thousands of posters, cartoons, and other wartime art. The ads of the Division of Advertising had a total circulation that reached into the hundreds of millions. And between the Division of News and the Official Bulletin, Americans read government news releases on a daily basis.³ Due to the efforts of these divisions, along with the others that made up the CPI's Domestic Section, virtually all Americans had been exposed to some portion of the Committee's messages.

While the CPI deserves praise for its ability to spread government propaganda throughout the country, the content of its messages warrants criticism. From the Committee's conception, Creel told the American people that it gave only facts and presented only rational arguments to the public. In reality, the CPI relied on half-truths and emotional appeals to help manipulate public opinion.

Many factors contributed to the Committee's reliance on exaggerations and emotional arguments. Foremost was the fact that the CPI constituted the first attempt by the

² Creel Report, 15-18, 22, 29, 33.
³ Ibid., 14, 44, 63-64, 77.
government to direct public opinion nationwide. Creel had no plan to follow when he built the organization. Tragedy resulted from his labors. He picked very capable people to run each division, but instead of keeping a tight reign on them the Chairman assumed other responsibilities which drained away his time. So the division's directors, without guidance from above, made many policy decisions, including what the American people were told. They agreed in theory with Creel's policy of presenting only facts, but they did not believe that facts alone would sway opinion. Wilson wanted results, and they felt that using fear, half-truths, and guilt in their work would give Wilson what he desired.

The directors also had other reasons for presenting notable propaganda campaigns for the government. Historians, artists, cartoonists, and advertisers wanted to boost the image of their professions. Working with the government during the war enabled them to do this. But presenting only facts and running memorable campaigns was not always compatible, and the directors were inclined to let facts fall by the wayside.

In the end, George Creel and the directors should be recognized for what they were. They were not innocent idealists who became caught up in the spirit of the war effort and accidently perverted the facts of the war. Nor were they calculating propagandists who sought to control
public opinion at any cost. They were patriotic men who combined service to their country with personal ambition to create one of the largest and most effective government information agencies of the twentieth century.
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132


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