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Selling War, Promoting Business.

U.S. Admen and PR as Cultural Mediators in the Two World Wars.

In both wars, though in different ways, admen and PR proved crucial to the mobilization and propaganda activities, took advantage of their private and public role to enhance their reputation and that of business in the public's eyes, and through it all helped establish new links within the configuration of business, government, and the public. A growing body of literature deals with admen and PR in World War II.¹ Much less developed is an examination of their role during the Great War² and almost absent is any comparative analysis of the two mobilizations from the viewpoint of the commercial communicators.³ This is what this paper intends to do on the assumption that only the longer, comparative perspective embracing both conflicts and highlighting the continuities and discontinuities between them enables one to grasp the full complexity of the phenomenon.

The focus is on the rhetorical and organizational middle ground that developed between the private and public camps as a result of the mobilizations. Basing my research on published and unpublished materials chiefly from the worlds of publicity and business, I want to explore how such communicators became involved with the whole apparatus of propaganda machinery. Their activities are placed within the context of the peculiar institutional and discursive challenges posed by the broader social settings in the two different cases. The result could help fill a significant gap in the critical history both of advertising and PR, and also of the circulation of ideas on economy,

¹ Richard S. Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950* (Greenwich, 1979); Stuart Ewen, *PR!, A Social History of Spin* (New York, 1996); Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul. The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley, 1998); Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the "American Way". The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights* (2008, New York); Inger L. Stole, *Advertising At War. Business, Consumers, and Government in the 1940s*, (Urbana, 2012)

² Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines. Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information*, Chapel Hill, 1980); Daniel Pope, "The Advertising Industry and World War I," *The Public Historian*, 2 (Spring 1980), 4-25.

³ Mary M. Rider, "Images of Propaganda: World War I and World War II Posters," *Queen City Heritage*, 41 (Fall 1983), 31-6; Robert Jackall & Janice M. Hirota, *Image Makers: Advertising, Public Relations, and the Ethos of Advocacy*(2000, Chicago).

society, and politics and their interaction with social practices and structures in the homefront trenches.

By speaking of “admen” in the title I do not intend to overlook the female presence within the advertising and PR ranks. But the state of the research has suggested that I focus on the men who in the period under consideration still largely controlled the agencies and the industry. Likewise, the gender and racial side of the propaganda activity would have required a contribution of its own that would far exceed our allotted space. Finally, the argument is based mostly on visual materials appearing in posters and magazines, and does not deal with public speeches and radio that constituted crucial venues for propaganda, respectively, during WWI and WWII.

Permit me to take a quick look at the state of advertising at the outset of America’s entry into WWI. Two months after the Declaration of War, in June 1917, one hundred prominent admen gathered in St. Louis. The stated goal was to create a national association capable of expanding the business economically while strengthening its ethical standards in accordance with the concerns about the status and public reputation of the practitioners expressed by many admen since the turn of the century. It is unclear to what extent America’s entry into the war precipitated the associative impulse among admen. The long standing internal divisions that had undermined previous efforts to create an organization of the profession had not completely disappeared, as shown by the conspicuous absence at St. Louis of Ayer, the number one agency in the country. Having been in business for several decades, the founder and owner of the agency Francis Wayland Ayer reckoned he needed no organization to teach him the ethical standards of the profession. Many of his colleagues, however, were of a different opinion. Thus, amid cheers and enthusiastic demonstrations of patriotism, the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) came into being.⁴

⁴ George French, *20th Century Advertising* (New York, 1926), 131-40 and 334; Richard Turnbull, “Genesis of the American Association of Advertising Agencies,” ms., 1969, American Association of Advertising Agencies Archives, New York, 15; Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress. American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (Baltimore, 1998), 321 and 359.

The attendees did not lack reasons for self-congratulation from a strictly economic standpoint. By 1917 business was thriving and reached a volume of 1.6 billion dollars, 2 percent of the GNP. Absent Ayer, all the other major agencies which trailed it in revenue contributed in varying degrees to the creation of the AAAA. Such was the case with Lord & Thomas from Chicago, and J. Walter Thompson (JWT) and George Batten from New York. Batten provided the association with its first president, William H. Johns, a successful copy and the right hand man of the agency's founder. JWT gave its contribution by drafting the official statement in which the association expressed its pledge to provide a standardized and thorough "service."⁵

However, economic success had not dispelled the problems of legitimacy for the profession, as its ambiguous and frustrating relations with politics showed. Admen techniques had become increasingly appealing to politicians, who, employing their services selectively, looked down condescendingly on admen as heirs to patent medicine-selling charlatans, somehow still clinging to Barnumesque dubious practices. Unsurprisingly, due to their ambiguous status, commercial communicators were not mentioned in the early statements with which George Creel launched the Committee on Public Information (CPI). This was the federal bureau established by President Wilson only seven days after entering the war in order to carry out that "war of words" that in the Old World had already emerged as a distinctive feature of this mobilization.⁶

A former muckraker, Creel was appointed as a reward for service rendered at the helm of Wilson's 1916 successful campaign committee. Until then, he had looked upon admen with "suspicion" placing them in the same league as those "poisoners of public opinion" who, as he denounced on the columns of *Harper's Weekly*, during the 1914 Ludlow strike had issued a series of pro-business bulletins containing one-sided and sometimes erroneous material against the miners and their union. When in late November 1914 Creel coined "poisoners of public opinion" to

⁵ Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, (New York, 1983), 22 and 26; Turnbull, "Genesis," 10.

⁶ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York 1994), 199-204; Adam Sheingate, "Publicity and the Progressive-Era Origins of Modern Politics", *Critical Review*, 19 (Spring 2007), 473; Peter Buithenius, *The Great War of Words* (London, 1987); Troy R. Paddock, *A Call to Arms* (Westport, 2004); Taylor Downing, *Secret Warriors. Key Scientists, Code-Breakers and Propagandists of the Great War* (London, 2014), 271-334.

lambaste such practices, it was yet undisclosed that behind those bulletins hid none other than Ivy Lee, pioneer in the profession of corporate publicity counseling.⁷

The name of the public agency reflected the Progressive ideal of “transparency” and reliable “information” that, Creel maintained, had inspired his whole career and that he intended to bring to the bureau. He stressed “publicity” in its strongest sense, namely openness and persuasion, “not suppression,” and urged aides and volunteers to abide by the rule of “full, frank statements” and “patent facts” which, in his own words, “will convince those who require argument more readily than ‘doubtful’ disputations.” This soberly patriotic, matter-of-fact attitude reflected itself in the tone of the first Liberty Loan campaign launched on a largely voluntary basis shortly after America’s entry in the war. In the posters and leaflets put out for the occasion and intended to have people realize the need to “protect our country and our homes [...] protect democracy all over the world,” a good deal of space was given to detailed descriptions of the opportunities offered by the Liberty Bonds as an “investment” and a form of “saving.”⁸

Yet in the heat of the mobilization and in light of the limited results garnered by the first two Liberty Bond drives pressures for more effective nationalist appeals mounted. Creel’s vow of transparency and his recommendation to all propagandists not to demonise the enemy was soon superseded by the spirit emerging inside the Division of Pictorial Publicity established within the CPI immediately after its foundation to take care of the production of posters. It was run by Charles Dana Gibson, the most famous illustrator of his day and an ardent ultranationalist who, like his colleague James Montgomery Flagg and a group of illustrators not accidentally self-termed The Vigilantes, believed that “The spirit [...] of war is not kindled by showing [...] the facts,” but by appealing “to the heart.” Hence came Flagg’s celebrated finger-pointing Uncle Sam that

⁷ Vaughn, *Holding*, 16-20; James Robert Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War. The Story of the Committee on Public Information* (Princeton, 1939), 52-60; “*Harper’s Weekly*”, George Creel Papers, container 19, Library of Congress; Kirk Hallahan, “Ivy Lee and the Rockefellers’ Response to the 1913-1914 Colorado Coal Strike,” *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14 (December 2002), 281.

⁸ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here. The First World War and American Society*, (New York, 1980), 61, 151; Christopher M. Sterba, *Good Americans. Italian and Jewish Immigrants During the First World War* (New York, 2003), 147; Julia C. Ott, *When Wall Street Met Main Street. The Quest for an Investors’ Democracy*, (Cambridge, Ma., 2011), 58.

transformed “a benign old man in stars and stripes [...] into a compelling leader who meant business,” while “reassuring viewers” with “his silly hat and ill-fitting suit” that war was only a temporary occupation for America. More important, in the midst of an increasingly tense atmosphere, whether from real or imagined threats to wartime unity brought about by the news coming from the European fronts, or from the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution, an immense array of overheated messages emphasizing “war atrocities” and asking for unfailing loyalty flooded the U.S. media. Replicating in highly racialized forms Allied propaganda images exuding bestial “Huns” and “war mothers” underpinned the third and fourth Liberty Bond drives in the spring and summer of 1918.⁹ **(FIGURES 1- 2)**

Such posters went hand in hand with growing initiatives of censorship and repression carried out by the CPI and other federal and state agencies in the name of an exclusivist nationalist ideal. They were issued by the second section of the CPI which, in close cooperation with the Pictorial Division, set the tone for the public agency, steering it away from Creel’s original intentions. Called Division of Advertising, this section was formed in January 1918. Growing concerns over the efficacy of the propaganda machine had persuaded Creel to put aside his misgivings about commercial communicators and accept the admen’s reiterated offers of formal collaboration with public authorities.¹⁰

Tellingly the section was headed by William H. Johns, president of the newly created AAAA, and the AAAA’s office in Madison Avenue doubled as its headquarters. Its five-people board was evenly divided between two advertising agency executives and two heads of in-house advertising

⁹ Vaughn, *Holding*, 149-150; Walton Rawls, *Wake Up, America: World War I and the American Poster* (New York, 1988); Susan E. Meyer, *James Montgomery Flagg* (New York, 1974), 37; Christopher Capozzola, “Uncle Sam Wants You”. *World War One and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (New York, 2008), 5; Emily S. Rosenberg, *War and the Health of the State: The U.S. Government and the Communication Revolution during World War I*, in K. Osgood and A.K. Frank (eds.), *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*, (Gainesville, 2010), 48-66; Nicoletta F. Gullace, “Barbaric Anti-modernism: Representations of the ‘Hun’ in Britain, North America, Australia, and Belgium,” in Pearl James (ed.), *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln, 2009), 61-74.

¹⁰ Vaughn, *Holding*, 218-32; Elizabeth McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana, 2013), 148-50.

departments, complemented by one media representative, editor and publisher Herbert S. Houston, with a long record of active interest in the business and ethical sides of the promotional industry. Chairman Johns was flanked by another veteran in the agency world, William C. D'Arcy, while the two corporate agents were O. C. Harn, from the National Lead Company, and Lewis B. Jones, manager of leading advertiser Eastman Kodak and president of the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) created in 1915 to coordinate the investors in advertising. Having been at the forefront of the so-called *truth in advertising* campaigns intended to fight excesses and fraud within the profession, they all saw in President Wilson's formal acceptance of "the generous offers of advertising forces of the nation" to help with the effort of "informing public opinion" a long-sought opportunity for legitimation.¹¹

Among the more revealing posters and magazine ads produced by the Division of Advertising one took pride of place, hanging from the walls of public spaces and workplaces. It was a picture showing three people, two women and one man, caught by the camera in a dark corner of a hotel lobby. The women are chatting, reading together from a sheet of paper that one of the two holds in her hands. Seated with his back turned toward the women, seemingly absorbed in reading a newspaper, the man overhears what the women are saying, intent on stealing their secrets **(FIGURE 3)**. Under the heading *Spies and Lies* a dense text invites any onlooker to "become a detective" and "report the man who spreads pessimistic stories, divulges – or seeks- confidential military information, cries for peace or belittles our efforts to win the war."¹²

This poster captures the double contribution that the CPI's Advertising section provided to the mobilization. On the one hand, through the agencies or individual professionals that had joined the section, it drafted leaflets or posters like this one, or provided the Division of Pictorial Publicity

¹¹ George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that carried the Gospel of Americanization to Every Corner of the Globe*, (New York, 1920), 156-7; Nancy M. West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, 2000), 24-35; Vaughn, *Holding*, 146-147.

¹² Kennedy, *Over Here*, 62; Ferdinando Fasce, *An American Family. The Great War and Corporate Culture in America* (Columbus, 2002), 158.

with copy work, sketching subject and layout to be further developed by illustrators. On the other hand, as the legend at the bottom of the ad suggests, the Division of Advertising helped to solve the vexed question of buying advertising space for the propaganda materials. Long discussions over whether the federal government should pay for advertising its Liberty Bonds and other campaigns or rely on donated space, with admen favoring the first solution and Washington opposing it, occupied the early months of war. Thanks to the mediation of the ANA, the advertisers' association, a compromise was reached stipulating that space in papers and other media and on streets' walls would be paid for mainly by individual industrial or commercial firms. It was left to the CPI's Advertising section to manage the delicate relations among the donors, the several public branches of the American war effort in need of a campaign, and the advertising agencies or single admen who were entrusted by the Division of Advertising with designing the campaigns.¹³

As a result of admen efforts, over 800 publishers of monthly and weekly periodicals donated space worth \$ 160,000 per month for the entire duration of the war, while advertisers purchased \$ 340,000 worth of space and turned it over to the Division of Advertising to use for government purpose. Firms were encouraged to do so by the fact that, according to the Internal Revenue Act of 1917, such donation, like any advertising, was awarded the subsidized tax status of a fully deductible business expense. Furthermore, businesses donating space were allowed to have their names printed at the bottom of the displays, with the seal of the CPI being followed by the legend "This space contributed for the Winning of the War by" and the name of the company that had covered the expenses. The same message could be used by different firms donating space in different parts of the country. *Spies and lies* was one of the items most frequently requested by businesses, finding its way in literary magazines as well as in the house organ of several companies.¹⁴

Admen acted as cultural and organizational mediators bridging the private and public realms at different levels. Building upon their long standing experience as brokers between advertisers and

¹³ Vaughn, *Holdings*, 155.

¹⁴ Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress*, 331; Creel, *How*, 159-62.

media, they collected requests for campaigns coming from the Treasury Department or other federal branches and matched them to the agency deemed best fitted to prepare the copy for that campaign, and to the businesses willing to pay for a poster or an ad. They won the support of businessmen by stressing the material gain from helping with propaganda crucial to fend off “the menace of German business after the war” and heeding to their request that the message they sponsored would be placed in certain venues to appeal to a specific kind of audience. Conversely, they earned the gratitude of such governmental agencies as the Food Administration by passing on to food manufacturers and producers of equipment used in the kitchen its invocation “to throw the weight of their influence into the campaign to urge the use of potatoes and cornmeal rice and other cereals in place of wheat.”¹⁵

No less important than the organizational skills were the rhetorical and discursive ones that admen associated with the CPI brought to the propaganda machinery. This contribution included work for the Four Minute Men (FMM), the volunteer organization of speakers that under the aegis of the CPI spread the patriotic gospel nationwide addressing audiences prior to or during the intermissions of theater performances. An adman from Chicago, E.T. Gundlach, drafted the standard instructions urging speakers to combine “substantial facts about the world ‘over there’ and the homefront” with “speed”, “immediacy”, “simplicity”, and “synchronicity” of expression. These catchwords fuelled the whole range of the CPI communication gristmill ranging from quick and synthetic forms of spoken word, to movies, posters, magazine ads, and singing.¹⁶

The propaganda effort was a highly decentralized one carried out at the state and local level and involving a disparate array of different actors from aggressive traditional nationalists like the

¹⁵ Creel, *How*, 159-160; “How Advertisers Can Help Save the Wheat,” *Printers’ Ink*, 102, February 21, 1918, 10-2; J.T.M., “The Menace of German Business After the War,” *Printers’ Ink*, 102, March 28, 1918, 53-59. As early as July 1917 the Food Administration asked JWT “to serve as advertising counsel,” a work the agency was “very eager to do.” See *JWT News Bulletin no. 54*, July 2, 1917, Main Newsletter Series, b. MN 2, J. Walter Thompson Company Archives (JWTCA), Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina. On admen as cultural mediators Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction* (Paris, 1979) and Liz McFall, “What About the Old Cultural Intermediaries? An Historical Review of Advertising Producers,” *Cultural Studies*, 16 (Fall 2002), 532-52.

¹⁶ Creel, *How*, 86; Mock and Larson. *Words*, 100-1; Four Minutes Men Records, Connecticut State Council of Defense, Record Group 30, boxes 301-2 and 305, f. 2, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

National Security League to popular entertainers.¹⁷ Admen and publicity experts connected directly and indirectly to the CPI tried to integrate these diverse voices and anchor the oral, written, and especially visual communication flow around a few elements easily reproducible and of great impact. This is how John Price Jones, a former newspaperman turned adman with the H.K. McCann agency, managed the New York Liberty Loan Committee propaganda as an assistant to Guy Emerson, vice president of the National Bank of Commerce and publicity director of the Committee. In his instructions on how to draft copy Jones never stopped reiterating the need for “system,” “organization of experts,” and “the principles of corporate management” to “seize upon, control, and develop, rather than kill, the individualistic temperament of writers.” Soon the focus shifted to “selling the war, not bonds” through illustrations capable of appealing to the “reasons of the heart” and “stirring emotion among the public.” This was done in connection with shows set up indoor at the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory in what was called Liberty Land. The display included a system of trenches, large pieces of war materials provided by the French government, ambulances, along with a set of charts showing the growth of the U.S. Army and Navy. All this was meant to deliver as graphically as possible the necessity for further subscriptions, but steering away carefully from “horrors” that might “chill, rather than increase the enthusiasm,” as well as from “vulgar” and distracting “theatricals” and circus-like tricks.¹⁸

The New York Committee experimented with a new way “for soliciting space from advertisers for the Third Liberty Loan” that provided businesses with more explicit opportunities for combining their interest with the national cause than that offered by *Spies and Lies*. In the “duplex plan,” as it was called, the advertiser was “asked to prepare and furnish his own copy, and in it to advertise

¹⁷ William J. Breen, William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport, 1984), 161-4; Ferdinando Fasce, “Advertising America, Constructing the Nation: Rituals of the Homefront During the Great War,” in Teresa Alves – Teresa Cid – Heinz Ickstadt (eds.), *Ceremonies and Spectacles. Performing American Culture*, (Amsterdam, 2000), 161-74.

¹⁸ “Copy to Stress Patriotism in Third Liberty Loan Campaign,” *Printers’ Ink*, 102, February 28, 1918, 31-2; John Price Jones Paper, MS KH 2901, voll. 2 f. 18, 3, f. 10, 4 f. 11, 7 f. 14 and 23, 8 f. 15, Widener Library, Harvard University. On Jones see Scott Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations. A History* (Hillsdale, 1994), 228. The part of copy for the Third Liberty Loan featuring attractiveness of investments was reduced to only about twenty per cent.

both his own product and the bonds at the same time, giving to the copy a slant that shows how his product is affiliated with the Liberty Bonds in the scheme of national affairs” (FIGURE 4).

Meanwhile, the encouragement of the CPI’s Division of Advertising to associate a product or a brand with an aspect of the national cause spurred admen and advertisers to put aside their initial hesitancy to play with patriotic values in the ordinary commercial advertising for fear of sounding inappropriate. Warnings against such dangers persisted in the trade literature, alongside appeals to keep investing in promotion and to fend off the contraction in the whole volume of advertising business brought about by the militarisation of the economy. This contraction amounted to something around 10 percent between 1917 and 1918.¹⁹

Probably two-fifths of the total number of ads appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post* between April 1917 and October 1918 carried some reference to the war; and in those two-fifths “service” was a keyword. Within a business environment that showcased the value of institutional advertising to keep company names in the public eye particularly fitting proved such prewar pioneering experiences with this form of publicity as that of American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T). Capping a decade of messages meant “not to induce people to install telephones, but to inform the public of” its “business purposes [...] and [...] ideals,” AT&T redirected “its advertising tone [...] to reflect and stimulate the national spirit of patriotic service and the subordination of self”. Female telephone operators connecting the homefront and the trenches rubbed elbows with military telephone linemen embodying “the spirit of war service, over here as well over there.” Service overlapped with corporate “sacrifice” in a Swift announcement telling how the firm supplied the Allies and American Armies abroad million pounds of meat and fats “without governmental guarantee of profit, and with a limit of 9 percent return on capital in the meat departments.” Consumers’ thrift and sacrifice were hailed in messages suggesting housewives alternative and

¹⁹ “Advertisers Asked to Link Their Goods with liberty Bonds in Third Loan Drive,” *Printers’ Ink*, 102, March 21, 1918, 126; Marchand, *Creating*, 89; Pope, *Making*, 23; Vaughn, *Holding*, 148-149; George Frank Lord, “Advertise Now to Ease Period of Reconstruction,” *Printers’ Ink*, 103, October 17, 1918, 53-6.

cheaper ways for preparing potatoes with Crisco. More prosaically, a home appliance firm exploited the nationalist fever by announcing *A Declaration of War* on prices.²⁰

War commercial advertising differed in one significant respect from strict propaganda materials such as recruiting posters. These latter “implied physical fitness and willingness to fight blurred class distinctions, endowing men of all backgrounds with the same wartime status. In one such scene a laborer linked arms with representatives of the army and navy, becoming part of a vision of patriotic progress [...] America [...] as a classless society.” In commercial advertising manual workers appeared mostly in technical or trade literature, and exclusively in the act of working. Both institutional ads praising the civic virtues of the companies and business as usual commercials were dominated by the typical white middle class figures.²¹

The hybridization between the public and commercial realms underpinning the national communication circuit and the thickly applied patriotic patina thus bestowed on the corporate world likely contributed to that improvement of the reputation of business that historians have rightly singled out as a distinctive product of mobilization. In turn, admen came out of the conflict with a heightened sense of their role, strengthened their ranks, and actively participated in the broader process of consolidation of business and of professional societies that accompanied the war. Further, the praises heaped on the trade by such national political and military leaders as Woodrow Wilson and General Pershing galvanized them, prompting William D’Arcy to claim that advertising had been no less than “an arm of our government.”²²

²⁰ Pope, “Advertising,” 10; N.W. Ayer and Son Collection, Book No. 109, box 21, f. 2, National Museum of American History Archives Center, Washington, D.C.; Monica Brasted, “The Reframing of Traditional Cultural Values: Consumption and World War I,” *Advertising & Society Review*, 5 (Fall 2004), 8-9; Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front*, (Lincoln, 2010), 253-60; “Kolynos Advertising Hooks Up with the War,” *Printers’ Ink*, 102, February 28, 1918, 16; *Hardware Age*, April 5, 1917, 23.

²¹ Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover. The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill), 2001, 104; Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream. Making Way for Modernity 1920-1940* (Berkeley 1985), 64 and 189; Erika L. Paulson and Thomas C. O’Guinn, “Working-Class Cast: Images of the Working-Class in Advertising, 1950-2010,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (November 2012), 9-10.

²² Louis Galambos, *The Public Image of Big Business in America, 1880-1940* (Baltimore, 1975), 183, 187; Marchand, *Creating*, 90; Theda Skocpol, Ziad Munson, Andrew Karch, and Bayliss Camp, “Patriotic Partnerships: Why Great Wars Nourished American Civic Voluntarism,” in Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter (eds.), *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development* (Princeton, 2002), 152-64; William D’Arcy, “The Achievements of Advertising in a Year,” *Printers’ Ink*, 103, July 11, 1918, 17; “Advertising as a Weapon of War,”

Creel's own dramatic change of mind at the end of the war best exemplified the emerging positive attitude toward commercial communicators, as the title of his book indicates. In *How We Advertised America* the former muckraker now praised lavishly the admen associated with the mobilization. He emphasized how the advertising agent had emerged from the war with "the dignity of a profession" removing the "suspicion" that traditionally "the majority" had attached to his "business [...] even when he was not viewed frankly as a plausible pirate." The Republican Election Committee would soon confirm this changing climate by entrusting for the first time a prominent adman, Albert Lasker, with the management of both its mid-term and presidential campaigns.²³

As Stanley Resor, JWT's president, noted, admen should feel encouraged to look at the future with optimism. On a similar wavelength, energized by his experience as a publicist with the Red Cross, corporate publicity counsellor Ivy Lee envisioned a bright prospect for his profession, to whose "value all nations" had been "awakened by the war." In his newsletter he now even extended an enthusiastic "Hats off" to old foe George Creel, defending him from charges of manipulation and technical blunders levelled against him on grounds that "If he didn't make so many mistakes he wouldn't accomplish nearly so much."²⁴

Like their British counterparts, what commercial communicators had temporarily lost in revenue they more than made up for in reputation. The memory of the wartime business contraction, however, lingered on among admen. It was still vivid over twenty years later when, in November 1941, on the eve of America's entry into WWII, the advertising practitioners convened at Hot

Printers' Ink, 103, November 14, 1918, 142-3; Catherine Gudis, *Buyways. Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York, London, 2004), 33.

²³ Creel, *How*, 155-7 and 160; "Government Appreciation of Advertising," *Printers' Ink*, 103, October 10, 1918; Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York 1986), 169; John A. Morello. *Selling the President, 1920. Albert D. Lasker, Advertising, and the Election of Warren G. Harding* (Westport, 2001).

²⁴ Stanley Resor, "Advertising on Expanding Scale," *Printers' Ink*, 103, October 10, 1918, 60; *JWT News Bulletin no. 60*, August 5, 1918, Main Newsletter Series, b. MN 2, JWTCA; Princeton University, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Ivy L. Lee Papers, b. 28, f.17, "Notes and Clippings", August 15, 1918, and n. 6, n.d; Columbia University, Butler Library, Ivy L. Lee Collection, b. 1, Ivy Lee to Cornelia Bartlett Bigelow Lee, April 18, 1918. On Lee during WWI see Cutlip, *Unseen*, 67-71.

Springs, Arkansas. The atmosphere was one of serious concern, with admen lamenting “grave threats to national brands and the advertising of them.” Topping the list of such threats was the fear that a direct participation of the country in the conflict would heighten the federal interference that advertising had experienced in the New Deal years and jeopardize the early signs of recovery shown by the economy since the outbreak of war in Europe. Admen were also concerned about the power of consumerism itself. The consumers’ movement had lost the momentum reached in the mid-1930s, but it was still active and lobbied strenuously for the creation within the federal government of a Department of the Consumer that, admen feared, would impose additional, unwanted controls on their business.²⁵

Yet, as the editor of *Printers’ Ink* remarked, if “miracles did not happen at Hot Springs,” the conference provided practitioners with two elements of hope. One, “a minor miracle,” was the speech delivered by Leo Henderson, the head of the Office of Price Administration (OPA), who proved “not quite the roaring enemy of advertising he was supposed to be.” While criticizing the excesses and distortions which some exponents of the industry had incurred in trying to appeal to the consumers impoverished and distracted by the recession, he expressed the confidence “that you all subscribe to proper regulations which undertake to suppress and punish the outlaw and the faker,” and affirmed his stern conviction that “advertising must survive as a thriving economic force” and as a “civilian activity” with “an important duty to perform in the crisis which confronts us all.”²⁶

The second positive note that emerged at Hot Springs, and the most remarkable difference with the St. Louis conference two decades earlier, was the fact that the convention combined for the first time all the three main legs of the advertising business triangle: the admen (AAAA), the advertisers (ANA), and representatives from the media. The spirit of apparent cohesion underlying the

²⁵ Harford Powel, “What the War Has Done to Advertising,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 6 (Summer 1942), 195-203; Frank W. Fox, *Madison Avenue Goes to War. The Strange Military Career of American Advertising 1941-45*, (Provo, UT, 1975), 22; Inger L. Stole, *Advertising At War*, 45.

²⁶ Leon Henderson, “Advertising Must Survive as Thriving Force,” and C.B. Larrabee, “If You Looked for a Miracle,” *Printers’ Ink*, 197, November 21, 1941, 11-3 and 75.

conference, now attended by all the main agencies, prompted James Webb Young, JWT's vicepresident, to propose an ambitious program in his closing speech. A veteran from the CPI, appointed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in August 1939 as head of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Young acknowledged the threats hovering over the trade. Yet he fought back by linking its fate to that of "free enterprise," a synonym for the less evocative "private enterprise" that appeared within business circles in the second half of the 1930s. Both still busy recovering from the prolonged economic crisis and the attending cultural and political delegitimation that had invested them, they needed to cooperate "to bring about in this country a new faith in the possibilities of the dynamic economy." "We have within our hands the greatest aggregate means of mass education and persuasion the world has ever seen," concluded Young, suggesting that admen should use that power "to give the whole of business a new faith in our destiny." ²⁷

In the wake of this conference a new organization emerged to link for the first time organically advertisers, advertising agencies, and the media. Named Advertising Council, it was led by Chester J. La Roche, chairman of the board of Young & Rubicam, second-largest agency in the country. It soon became the main interlocutor of the Office of War Information (OWI), the federal agency created in June 1942 to coordinate the U.S. propaganda machine, originally spread among different organs without adequate synergies among themselves. ²⁸

The "I" of the name betrayed the intention to establish a continuity with the CPI by brandishing its original quest for transparency against the despicable "propaganda" of the authoritarian regimes with which the U.S. was at war. No less clear, though, was the discontinuity from that experience as far as the mandate received by the new agency from the administration was concerned. Roosevelt, a veteran from the Wilson administration, and his aides were sensitive to the bitter lesson learnt during the previous war and worried about the hostility against the very idea of creating a federal communication agency elicited by the memories of the censorship and the manipulative practices of

²⁷ Larrabee, "If You Looked," 14-5.

²⁸ Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda. The Office of War Information 1942-1945* (New Haven, 1978), 156-7; Fox, *Madison Avenue*, 22 ff.

the CPI. Likewise, they feared the charges of “fascism” or “communism ” that they might draw should they design too centralized a publicity organ. Hence, their decision to assign simply a coordinating function to OWI, rather than one of absolute leadership and control as had been the case with the CPI, at least on paper. Similar concerns guided the decision to entrust the function of censorship to the “responsibility” and self-regulation of journalists and media operators. While this voluntary practice did not eliminate censorship or manipulation, it appreciably reduced them by comparison to WWI. ²⁹

The global sweep of the war, its longer duration and the greater complexity of the media front to be covered, from printed media to radio -- all this accrued to the daunting task facing the OWI. Unsurprisingly radio, the most popular medium of the times, provided the agency with its chairman, Elmer Davis, a broadcasting journalist. His job was made all the more complicated by the chaotic overlap of a series of rather different “wars” that Roosevelt tried to “sell” to the American people in the course of a short time span. Such wars ranged from the idea of aid to the Allies, to that of a new internationalist role in the world for the U.S. within the framework of an unheard of antifascist coalition in a total war. Nor can one overlook the divisions opposing moderate and progressive segments of the administration, divisions which overlapped with the political and social conflicts that the country at war inherited from the previous decade, as the persistency of workers’ and consumers’ struggles for better pay, price controls, and progressive income taxation amply showed. ³⁰

The predominant theme of U.S. propaganda was the stark contrast between the “free,” antifascist world and the “slave” one of rightwing totalitarianism, a contrast soon framed as a fight

²⁹ Winkler, *Politics*; Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights. Patriotism and Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (New York, 2009), 100; George H. Roeder jr., “Censoring Disorder: American Visual Imagery of World War II,” in Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (eds.), *The War In American Culture. Society and Consciousness During World War II* (Chicago, 1996), 47; Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of War. The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill, 2001).

³⁰ Mark A. Stoler, *Selling Different Kinds of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Public Opinion during World War II*, in K. Osgood and A.K. Frank (eds.), *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century* (Gainesville, 2010), 67-92; Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics. Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2005), chapter V. On the consumer movement during the war see the pathbreaking L. Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York, 2003), 62-109.

for defending American families and homes (**FIGURE 5**). OWI's most progressive members envisioned this fight as an inclusive one, that would not only yield the defeat of Nazifascism abroad. In their view, the victory would also usher in an expanded American democracy at home, a truly pluralistic system open to all minorities. In actuality, this vision met with resistances both within the mobilization machine itself and the larger public opinion. The very fact of speaking of African Americans exposed the agency to the wrath of Southern conservatives. They vented their rage against the OWI as an example of the "statist" excesses of the New Deal. In their eyes, it made Washington dangerously similar to those regimes that the "boys at the front" were fighting.³¹

OWI's progressives resisted such attacks, as well as the growing influence of commercial communicators and the business world exemplified by the appointments of Price Gilbert, former vice-president of Coca-Cola, as head of the OWI's Graphics and Printing section and Key Dyke, advertising manager for Colgate-Palmolive, as chief of the Bureau of Campaign. In a jab against Gilbert, the artist Ben Shahn played on the "four freedoms" theme by drawing the Statue of Liberty holding up not a torch but four bottles of Coca-Cola, with the slogan "The War That Refreshes: The Four Delicious Freedoms!" But Shahn's fate was sealed. With no support from Davis, the head of the agency, let alone Roosevelt, in April 1943 the OWI writers resigned en masse as a sign of protest against the "privatist" turn of their organization "dominated," they charged, "by high-pressure promoters who prefer slick salesmanship to honest information." Two months later the conservative Congress that had emerged out of November 1942 mid-term elections dramatically curtailed the OWI's budget and almost eliminated its domestic appropriation. As a result, OWI relied increasingly on the Council, which, renamed War Advertising Council, by the summer of

³¹ Brewer, *Why America*, 104-16; James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front. War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station, 2006), 39-98; Barbara D. Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 114-39. For the role of African Americans in the bond drives see Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Alliance. American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 152-305.

1943 became the crucial component of the propaganda machine, the “brains” who carried out the creative function of the public information business.³²

How did this work? Upon receiving a request from a public agency, the OWI contacted the Council which, in turn, ranked campaigns by relative importance, then assigned them to volunteer advertising agencies, which developed campaign themes and compiled supporting facts. The formula for funding the campaigns was the same as in WWI, with private advertisers buying the space on the media on behalf of the governmental agencies and gaining in return the double benefit of tax deductions and of keeping their name before consumers through the sponsorship they offered to the campaign. This latter benefit was especially welcome at a time when civil production was severely curtailed or canceled altogether. Flushed with rich military orders, corporations were eager to take advantage of these campaigns and reach out to former and future consumers assuring them that as soon as the war was over they would resume their traditional production of consumer goods. In turn, admen were willing to contribute to the campaigns to restore their image tarnished by the crisis, court the approval of the administration, and lay the groundwork for future business.³³

The simplest kind of message, whose sponsorship format was similar to the *Spies and Lies* poster from WWI, is the campaign portrayed in **FIGURE 6**. This also shows how the OWI’s ambitious pledge not to demonise the enemy, as the CPI had done during the Great War, was blatantly belied especially, but not only, when it came to represent the Japanese. Soon the gamut of the propaganda machinery expanded and its expressive palette became more complex and sophisticated. In the course of a couple of years the Council designed and implemented almost 50 campaigns, on behalf of 27 different public agencies, along a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from war bonds, to manpower recruitment, Victory Gardens, paper salvage, informational programs

³² Winkler, *Politics*, 65, 156-7; Mordecai Lee, *Promoting the War Effort. Robert Horton and Federal Propaganda 1938-1946* (Baton Rouge, La., 2012), 203; Tawnya J. Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images. World War II Mobilization of Women through Magazine Advertising*, (Plymouth, 2011), 11; Stole, *Advertising at War*, 115; Harold Lasswell to John Marshall, February 19, 1942, Rockefeller Family Papers, R.G. 1.1, box 239, f. 2856, Rockefeller Archives Center, Pocantico Hills, New York

³³ Wall, *Inventing*, 118-9; John Bush Jones, *All-Out for Victory. Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front* (Waltham, 2009), 31; Stole, *Advertising at War*, 64.

against venereal diseases. Occasionally, these campaigns met with resistance and difficulty on the part of one or more segments of the public such as, in the case of the venereal disease program, the Catholic church.³⁴

Problems and worries surfaced when in the summer of 1943 the Council launched a call for “A War Message in Every Ad,” that is a war theme insinuated even within regular commercial communication, with the goal of having at least one third of all ads “go to war.” Time and again Council leaders complained that advertisers did not comply, did not follow strictly its advice, and did not prove sufficiently patriotic, or played on war themes but in forms that might backfire. In their letters to magazines several G.I.s fiercely objected to ads depicting soldiers in a glamorous, glossy way, “with drawings of Flash Gordon type guys all smiles and virility pouring over them.”³⁵

A magazine survey conducted in spring 1944 caused further alarm within the Council ranks showing that the goal set the previous summer had not been reached. Formally one-third of the messages met the guidelines prepared by the Council, though only one out of eight adhered fully to the quite restrictive requirements of the organization: the majority fell within the category of “business as usual,” that is, did not mention the conflict or were “devoted merely to telling how a product is helping to win the war.”

The ads deemed adequate were divided into three categories: 2 percent were “all out for victory,” or “all-out,” devoting the majority of their content to the promotion of a war theme, 6 percent “double-barreled,” an elaboration on the WWI “duplex plan” with half message dedicated to a war theme and the other promoting a product or more often a brand, and the remaining 4 percent “sneak a punch,” integrating a war theme into regular product advertising.³⁶

Other sources suggest that the presence of war related messages was larger than that and, what is more, that the overall public reaction to these different kinds of ads was less negative than the Council feared, independently of their form. Polls demonstrated that the public promptly denounced

³⁴ Inger L. Stole, “Persuasion, patriotism, and PR: US advertising in the Second World War,” *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 5 (Spring 2013), 33-8.

³⁵ Stole, *Advertising at War*, 108 and 229; “Ad-vice from Guadalcanal,” *Printers’ Ink*, 203, June 4, 1943, 16.

³⁶ Stole, *Advertising at War*, 136.

exaggerations or distortions; a November 1944 survey disclosed that 47 percent of the respondents complained about specific ads. But no less eagerly a majority of the interviewees manifested an appreciation for announcements that increasingly blurred the lines between the patriotic and the commercial and that were grounded in an overlap among propaganda, information, and advertising. The “outstanding newspaper advertisements” chosen yearly by the Advertising Research Foundation through polls conducted among both admen and the public comprised the whole range of ads running from the “all out” ones to those “business as usual” somehow connected to the war but classified as inadequate according to the strict criteria of the Council.³⁷

As the Y&R magazine institutional announcements collecting the best ads produced in a certain period by all the main agencies revealed, the crucial point was the invisible, but powerful, thread running through them. This thread was the family theme that progressively veered toward the notion of “better life” as a distinctive feature of the “American way.” “Better life” was the promise of security and well being for the American families: in the present, against the totalitarian threat and, with growing confidence as the tide of the conflict turned in favor of the Allies, in a future of free, ever expanding mass consumption. First tested by admen in their mid-1930s institutional advertising campaigns for such companies as DuPont (“better living...through chemistry”), the argument was now transferred into war work becoming *de facto*, according to many observers, the overall mobilization’s winning card. It carried the double advantage of focusing on a central feature of American life, the family, while steering clear of the “public” and “statist” overtones associated with the totalitarian regimes that the country was fighting. No less important, it countered the concerns that, according to the polls, Americans nurtured toward the future.³⁸

³⁷ Bush-Jones, *All-Out*, 20; Inger L. Stole, “Advertising & Consumer Activism During World War II,” in Janice Peck and Inger L. Stole (eds.), *A Moment of Danger. Critical Studies in the History of U.S. Communication Since World War II* (Milwaukee, 2011), 27 and *Advertising at War*, 124; “10 Outstanding Newspaper Advertisement of 1943,” *Printers’ Ink*, 205, December 31, 1943, 13-5 and 73; *Fortune*, February, April, May, August 1944, Young&Rubicam Archives, New York.

³⁸ Robert B. Westbrook, *Fighting for the American Family*, in *The Power of Culture*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (Chicago, 1993), 195-221; Mark H. Leff, “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II,” *Journal of American History*, 78 (December 1991), 1299-1318; William L. Bird jr., ““Better Living””.

The promise of “better life” underlay these three following ads typifying different kinds of war related messages. The first is an “all out” from the fifth War Loan of 1944 (**FIGURE 7**), the second a “double barreled” from the third loan campaign of 1943 (**FIGURE 8**), the last another, more mixed type of announcement again from the fifth Loan (**FIGURE 9**). With various degrees of commitment to the war cause, in a more or less explicit or oblique manner, all three suggest how, respectively, Textron, Stromberg-Carlson, and Cole had only *temporarily* given up nylon or communication civil production in favor of more needed parachutes and evoke the housewife, the family and their connection to the front as the main concern of the mobilization.³⁹

Piling up almost imperceptibly through hundreds of magazine pages or hours of broadcast on the air such announcements created an emotional continuum between the horrific conflict and ordinary life, soldiers and their families at home, the current call for frugality and the future benefits in a world of abundant work and individual consumption. Crucial was the emphasis on the *temporary* nature of sacrifices, as shown by public and private ads concerning car sharing which conflated car ownership and citizenship and portrayed private driving as integral to the American way of life. No less significant was the material, rather than civic, terms in which sacrifice requested to citizens was expressed.⁴⁰

Regardless of their specific form, these messages constituted a “united mass effort,” embodying, in the words of one observer, what was fast arising as the “real mission of advertising emphasized by war,” that is “selling tomorrow today”. Through them, another observer remarked, a “less flag-

Advertising, Media, and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership, 1935-1955, (Evanston, 1999); Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 339-61; Andrew Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front* (Minneapolis, 2009); Yoon-Joo Lee, Naeemah Clark, “‘I’m Saying This for Uncle Sam!’ How Corporations Used Images of Family to Help Fund World War II,” *Advertising & Society Review*, 10 (Summer 2009). An examination of the complex tension between the contrasting visions of citizen consumers and purchase consumers punctuating the mobilization exceeds the confines of this paper. See Cohen, *Consumers’ Republic*, chapter II.

³⁹ *New Yorker*, May 22, 1943, and June 17, 1944; *Saturday Evening Post*, May 22, 1943.

⁴⁰ Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs. Selling a Better America, 1939-1959* (Athens, OH, 2006), 77-173; Sarah Frorhardt-Lane, “Promoting a Culture of Driving: Rationing, Car Sharing, and Propaganda in World War II,” *Journal of American Studies*, 46 (Summer 2012), 337-55; Terrence Witkowski, “World War II Poster Campaigns. Preaching Frugality to American Consumers,” *Journal of Advertising*, 32 (Spring 2003), 69-82; Dannagal Golthwaite Young, “Sacrifice, Consumption, and the American way of Life: Advertising and Domestic Propaganda During World War II,” *The Communication Review*, 8 (Spring 2005), 38-41.

raising,” more immediate and down-to-earth vision of the nation at war and its mission than the one put forth during WWI emerged. According to one military correspondent from the battle fields, that vision resonated not just with the domestic audience, but also with the people at the front: even “in the mud of Italy, the foxholes of Leyte, and under the blazing sun of Africa, a lot of servicemen – and women – want to look at these ads –they like them – in fact, they eat them up!”⁴¹

The “Better life” theme was also adopted by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) as part of its 1943-45 “free enterprise” campaign aimed at lionising the business contribution to the war and showing how the harmonious reciprocity among all the actors of the economic scene under the guiding umbrella of the managerial leadership would bring about jobs and consuming opportunities for all after the mobilization. Unlike previous strongly confrontational and anti-governmental campaigns of the association, in the intention of its new more pragmatic leadership and their PR consultants this concept was to be conveyed concretely, “in the simple language of the common man” and in a positive, constructive manner. Following in the footsteps of other more explicitly patriotic films and ads was *Three to Be Served*, a late 1944 30-minute Paramount “featurette” widely shown in theatres, civic classes, and within plants all over the country to an audience of over 300,000 people in the course of a few months. This film proved the most successful vehicle to drive home the “better life” message while the conflict was drawing to an end. It portrayed three ordinary teenagers going into the spray business to earn money for summer camps and provide neighbours with cheap sprays for their Victory Gardens. Through a series of humorous adventures they learnt the simple “fundamentals” taught them by an older businessman and predicated on the triad of better products, larger distribution, and lower prices for the benefit of the average family, setting an example on how to produce “jobs and prosperity after this war.”⁴²

⁴¹ Fred Bohlen, “Sell Tomorrow Today,” *Printers’ Ink*, 200, July 1942, 13-4; John Somervell Williams, “Today’s war posters don’t compare with those of World War I,” *Printers’ Ink*, 208, July 24, 1944, 22-3; Eldridge Peterson, “Leave Out the Ads? Hello, no! Say Men in Service,” *Printers’ Ink*, 210, Jan 12, 1945, 32. See also Yoon-Joo Lee, Naemah Clark, “‘I’m Saying This for Uncle Sam!’ How Corporations Used Images of Family to Help Fund World War II,” *Advertising & Society Review*, 10 (Summer 2009).

⁴² Frederick C. Crawford, “Free *Competitive* Enterprise and the Common Man,” acc. 1411, b. 67, f. Free Enterprise; “Three To Be Served Final Script,” b. 69; “The NIIC Program in Action,” b. 842; National Association of

While there is evidence of contacts between the NAM and the WAC, the latter, according to Inger Stole, declined to enter into formal cooperation with a group with such a strong partisan and conservative record. It preferred to work with the Committee on Economic Development, whose optimistic and broader philosophy was more in line with its own. The “better living” concept, though, provided PR experts working for NAM as well as admen, advertisers, and public opinion makers associated with the Council a discursive meeting point around which they might engage in an informal conversation in the columns of trade magazines and other publications over how to galvanize a mass public without recurring to too “abstract” and “difficult” propositions. Many of them concurred with pollster Claude Robinson and former adman turned PR John Orr Young on the need for the business world to bring down such “a high sounding phrase” as “free enterprise,” on whose precise meaning no two definitions agreed, “to such common parlance as ‘jobs’” and to “the felt needs and concrete aspirations of the American people generally [...] the standard of living of Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Citizen and their family.”⁴³

To the War Advertising Council’s dismay, the countless variations on the idea of a better, individual and familial future within close reach included outright bragging and exaggerations in ads with no reference whatsoever to the war. In November 1943 the same DuPont company which had promised “getting down to earth on post-war work,” intent on boasting the ultramodern character of its cellophane envisaged this outlandish upper-class housewife using the helicopter to shop in the postwar era (**FIGURE 10**). Such images stirred heated discussions within the advertising profession that worried that, like in the 1930s, “brag advertising” would backfire and undermine the initiatives to refurbish the image of both business and advertising itself carried out

Manufacturers Papers (NAM), Hagley Museum and Library (HML), Wilmington, Delaware. On the NAM drive see Bird, *Better*, 157; Andrew A. Workman, “Manufacturing Power: The Organizational Revival of the National Association of Manufacturers, 1941-1945,” *Business History Review*, 72 (Summer 1998), 279-317 and Wall, *Inventing*, 122-31.

⁴³ Stole, *Advertising at War*, 162; Inger L. Stole to A., December 8, 2013; “Proceedings Second Annual Public Relations Conference,” New York, December 6 and 7, 1943, b. 844, 22, NAM; John Orr Young, “Stop shouting ‘Free Enterprise’ unless you give the term meaning,” *Printers’ Ink*, 208, May 5, 1944, 13-5. See also “Explaining Free Enterprise without the Phrase,” *Printers’ Ink*, 212, July 13, 1945, 21. On the CED, Tedlow, *Keeping*, 121-5 and Andrew L. Yarrow, *Measuring America. How Economic Growth Came to Define American Greatness in the Twentieth Century*, (Amherst, 2010), 81-2.

by the Council. Let alone the fact that, practitioners charged, these ads built hurdles for salesmen picturing dream world products that hardly matched with reality.⁴⁴

Yet, in the end these concerns proved largely misplaced. Elmer Davis, OWI's head, for one, never missed an opportunity to heap praise on the Council and the advertising agencies for their devotion to the national cause. More importantly, a June 1944 investigation found that only a negligible minority of announcements, namely 2 percent, could be deemed "objectionable" on grounds of their crass commercial exploitation of the promotional opportunities provided by the war, as well as their bragging. Even occasional exaggerations did not tarnish the highly positive image with which admen came out of the WWII mobilization thanks to their undeniable and much self-publicized contribution to the war, a contribution that by late 1944 was, according to the Council, close to \$ 800 million worth of time, media space, and work devoted to government campaigns. As one Y&R institutional announcement pointed out, advertising agencies helped business to turn over to the government the "powerful weapon," namely the radio and magazine audience patiently built over the years through commercial promotion.⁴⁵

The trade literature shows the steady improvement of the admen's relationship to Washington and the federal public bureaucracies as the conflict wore on. Over time the fear and diffidence nurtured by admen toward the Office of Price Administration gave way to repeated expressions of self-congratulation about the fact that the "hatchet" had been buried, the room for convergences and compromises with the public agency seemed to expand, the admen's and business views had gained more legitimacy than in the prewar years. In October 1944 *Printers' Ink's* carried an article by the Federal Trade Commission's chairman declaring his friendship to the advertising world. A few months before President Roosevelt himself had joined the Council's early enthusiastic supporter

⁴⁴ "Glimpses into the Wonder World of Tomorrow," "Getting Down to Earth on Post-War Work," December 15, 1943, E.I. Du Pont de Nemours & Company Papers, accession 1803, Series II, Cellophane Division, b. 48, ff. 16 and 20; Ric Jensen and Christopher Thomas, "To What Extent Did American Corporations Publish 'Brag Ads' During World War II?", *Advertising & Society Review*, 10 (Summer 2009); Noel L. Cooperider, "Brag Advertising Builds Hurdles for Salesmen," *Printers' Ink*, 204, August 20, 1943, 23, 40.

⁴⁵ Stole, *Advertising at War*, 136, 152; "One Weapon Uncle Sam Didn't Have to Build," *Fortune*, June 1943, Y&R Archives.

within the administration, treasurer secretary Henry Morgenthau, in publicly congratulating the organization for its “splendid spirit of cooperation.”⁴⁶

Besides, the war brought admen in close touch with diplomats and the military, as proved by meetings held with the army and navy at the Pentagon and by the involvement of JWT managers, who claimed over two decades of experience with foreign business and were particularly strong in Latin America, into plans for developing printed media supporting the Allied cause in those areas. All in all, admen profited from and contributed to the strong comeback of business in the economic and public realms and to the rapprochement between business and government brought about by the war. In many ways their operational and discursive approach dovetailed with and fed the broader U.S. “arsenal of democracy” strategy that enabled the United States to become “the only major belligerent to expand its civilian economy while waging the war.”⁴⁷

The greater use of institutional advertising and corporate campaigns addressed to employees enhanced the role of PR people in the communication circuit set in motion by the conflict, although a comprehensive treatment of their specific contribution and status compared to their more established advertising colleagues and rivals is still missing. Unfortunately no figures and analytic details accompany a 1945 article in *Public Opinion Quarterly* according to which the field was undergoing “an astronomical expansion”. Nor the contemporary opinion of one business historian who again in 1945 wrote of “shifts in Public Relations” is backed by adequate documentation.⁴⁸

When receiving praises from politicians and military leaders for their work⁴⁹ WWI veterans among admen and PR like James Webb Young or Edward Bernays could hardly escape a sense of *dejà vu*. At first sight the affinities between the two cases are striking. In both world wars

⁴⁶ Richard V. Gilbert, “When Will Government Control of Marketing End?”, *Printers’ Ink*, 206, January 21, 1944, 26-7; Cohen, *Consumers’ Republic*, 68-70; Jacobs, *Pocketbook*, 184-5; Robert E. Freer, “FTC Stipulation- friend of advertiser?” *Printers’ Ink*, 209, October 13, 1944, 20-1, 86; Dawn Spring, *Advertising in the Age of Persuasion. Building Brand America, 1941-1961*, (New York, 2011), 19.

⁴⁷ Tedlow, *Keeping*, 116; Spring, *Advertising*, 22-4; David M. Kennedy, “The Origins and Uses of American Hyperpower,” in Andrew J. Bacevich (ed.), *The Short American Century. A Postmortem* (Cambridge, Ma., 2012), 27.

⁴⁸ Rex F. Harlow, “Public Relations at the Crossroads,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 8 (Winter 1944-45), 552; N.S.B. Gras, “What are Public Relations?” *Business Historical Society Bulletin*, 19 (October 1945), 97 ff. The pioneering Tedlow, *Keeping* remains the standard reference on this phase.

⁴⁹ *JWT News Bulletin*, January 22, 1945, Main Newsletter Series, b. MN 9, JWTCA.

advertising and PR gained unheard of legitimacy when they feared most for their very survival. Similar was also the technical arrangement devised to pay for propaganda. Again, in both cases institutional advertising became a crucial tool and in the second conflict was widely acknowledged as such.

On closer scrutiny, differences were enormous. As one NAM officer noted as early as 1944, “when you compare 1917 and 1918 advertisements with those you see today [...] it’s as though they came from two different worlds and two different wars.” What mostly struck this observer were the many “hints in today’s advertising about some of the ‘first steps’ industry” was “taking to get ready for the day when we’ll need to switch over from making war materials to peacetime goals,” that is “Planning for Better America.” More than the affinities, it was discontinuities with the other conflict that stood out, at a rhetorical and institutional level. From a discursive standpoint admen had deeply contributed to the mobilization by supplying not simply techniques and emotional tones to the nationalist rhetoric, as during WWI. Through formal and informal propaganda, albeit amidst problems and controversies, they provided American public discourse with a narrative linking current sacrifices to a concrete future; a narrative encompassing consumers, corporate producers, and the media, with advertising as the indispensable mediator among those three forces.⁵⁰

In spite of some residues of the elitism and the bragging mentality that had long characterized the trade, the war forced admen to pay close attention to ordinary and working-class people as never before and as part of the plans for the future. Unlike the Great War, during which manual workers were portrayed only in technical or union literature, during WWII, besides figuring in public campaigns for men and womenpower recruitment, workers sometimes popped up in ads carried by major magazines too, and connected not simply with production, but with consumption as well. In Coca Cola ads, for example, manual workers rubbed elbows with white collars and people from high life brandishing a bottle. More poignantly, announcements sponsored by the Mcfadden publishing giant, publisher of the popular magazine *True Stories*, and addressed to advertisers to

⁵⁰ Program Notes for women clubs, b. 842, f. Progress report for NIIC Executive Committee, 1944, NAMP; Lears, *Fables*, 246.

induce them to invest, chose the image of a worker to underline his condition of potential mass consumer in the postwar era. The drawing of a mechanic at work was flanked by the caption pointing to the “new Goliath” or collective “Multi-Billionaire,” the million mass workers represented by the mechanic, who would “Finance America’s future”, with their desire to “re-furbish their million of homes [...] build new ones [...] replace old and worn out cars, washing machines and refrigerators.”⁵¹ (FIGURE 11)

The remarkably strong cultural role played by advertising both reflected and fostered the novel institutional arrangement that had been created, within the business itself and in its relations to the public institutions, through the Advertising Council. The conflict “introduced the advertising industry as more of an equal partner” of the government, “Washington and the industry were working in tandem as never before.” This arrangement was not without difficulties and disagreements. Nor did it immunize the trade from polemics or attacks from consumers or public authorities. Still, indicative of the new climate is the fact that by 1944, with the expansion of the WAC’s presence within the propaganda machine, the Federal Trade Commission dropped one of the most serious complaints concerning deceitful promotion: the long-standing charge against Listerine over its unsubstantiated claims to ward off dandruff and colds.⁵²

No less encouraging for admen were the economic figures. Within the general recovery brought about by the “good war” the advertising business itself showed clear signs of relief. According to *Printers’ Ink*, in 1945 total advertising volume was 2.4 billion, a gain of over 5 percent from the previous year and the largest annual volume of the industry since the peak year of 1929, when the total had topped 3 billion. In the fall of 1945 JWT officers looked with confidence to the thriving

⁵¹ *Printers Ink*, 212, September 28, 1945, 30-1. On Mcfadden see Cohen, *Consumers’ Republic*, 70. On workers’ images McGovern, *Sold America*, 342-61; Adkins, *Manipulating Images*, 113-4 and Donna B. Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter. Women of World War II in American Popular Graphic Art* (Lawrence, 2011), 32-79.

⁵² Stole, “Advertising & Consumer Activism,” 18; Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers. A History of American Advertising* (New York, 1984), 169.

foreign, especially Latin American, markets that grew up during the war and to the steady recovery in the domestic billings that had unfolded as the country had gone into full production.⁵³

Emboldened by these news, the agency's vicepresident James Webb Young addressed the annual conference of the American Association of Advertising Agencies in December 1945 by using rather different accents from those used four years earlier at the Hot Springs conference. A sea change, he noted, had occurred in the meantime. "We found that what we knew about emotionalizing facts, and about other devices for getting action - Young remarked - would bring results that agencies of government had despaired of achieving." As a consequence, at war's end the profession had become a widely, if not deeply, respected one. Government administrators, who had once attacked advertising mercilessly, had "learned to use it and to depend on it."⁵⁴

President Truman himself, whose 1943 speech as chairman of the Senate Committee to Investigate the War Program had been considered "hostile toward advertising," heartily supported the Council decision to continue its work in peace time. Before long a new kind of global conflict would consolidate the role of the organization, which shortly after Victory Day dropped permanently the reference to "war" in its nomenclature. Building upon the economic, political, and military networks pioneered in the fight against the Axis, the now Advertising Council became a crucial linchpin in the new fight for the "hearts and minds" of the world associated with the Cold War. The fight would also involve some PR practitioners who immediately after the conflict strengthened their own ranks through the creation of the Public Relations Society of America.⁵⁵

⁵³ V. J. Viser, "Winning the Peace: American Planning for a Profitable Post-War World," *Journal of American Studies*, 35 (Spring 2001), 111-26; Sam Meek to L.R. Coleman, November 20, 1945, Carroll L. Wilson, "The International Operations of the J. Walter Thompson," December 15, 1945, Sam Meek Papers, b. 4, f. International Department, JWTCA.

⁵⁴ James Webb Young, "What Advertising Learned from the War," Speech at the Annual Meeting, Central Council, American Association of Advertising Agencies, December 11, 1945, Howard Henderson papers, b. 2, JWTCA. Young in the meantime had risen to the presidency of the War Advertising Council.

⁵⁵ "What President Truman Had to Say About Advertising," *Printers' Ink*, 211, April 20, 1945, 23, 88-9; Stole, *Advertising at War*, 154-9; Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, Ka., 2005); Spring, *Advertising*; Yarrow, *Measuring America*; Tedlow, *Keeping*, 149-59; Burton St. John III, "The good reason of public relations. PR News and the Selling of a field," in Burton St. John III, Margot Opdycke Lamme, and Jacquie L'Etang (eds.), *Pathways to Public Relations. Histories of practice and profession* (London and New York, 2014), 323.

The postwar era would not spare commercial communicators their petty polemics and their grand controversies. But the level of entrenchment within public discourse and institutions attained by them during the war would prove such to keep the industry “off-limits to fundamental debate in the years and decades to follow.” An exchange appearing in *Printers’ Ink* in 1944 neatly captures the turning point represented by the Second World War and the differences between the two conflicts. Looking back wistfully to the posters from the Great War, an admiral charged that these posters bore an emotional tone and intensity that those from the current propaganda drive sorely lacked. The resolution with which admen responded claiming the full value of the current campaigns and the invaluable role they played compared to the shorter previous mobilization smacked less of the traditional flamboyance of the trade’s old humbug days than of a newly acquired professional self-assurance set to project itself into the future.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Stole, “Advertising & Consumer Activism,” 29; Somervell Williams, “Today’s war posters”; “Posters: World War I vs. World War II,” *Printers’ Ink*, 212, August 4, 1944, 22.