

The Committee on Public Information and the Mobilization of Public Opinion in the United States During World War I: the Effects on Education and Artists

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Abstract

The Committee on Public Information was established during World War I to turn every channel of communication and education to promote the war effort. The Committee marshaled agencies of the press, education, and advertising, among others into wartime service for the Committee. The following questions are posed: 1) To what degree did the Committee practice direct censorship in its promotion of wartime issues? 2) What was the role of education in the wartime campaigns? 3) What was the role of the artist in wartime and how did wartime art affect public taste?

This article is based on the theory put forth by Lawrence A. Cremin (1988), that both education and miseducation of the public extends beyond schools, universities, libraries, museums, and other formal educational institutions, to what knowledge they learn from popular communication. I will show how the

Committee controlled the channels of communication in education, wartime publicity, and advertising to promote nationalism.

The first section of the article outlines the structure and purpose of the Committee on Public Information. The second assesses the influence of the Committee on the schools, universities, and correspondence art courses. The final section discusses the successes and contradictions of the Committee, with particular regard to concepts of freedom and censorship for the individual, the academy, and the artist.

The Formation and Structure of the Committee on Public information.

During World War I, The United States witnessed a prolific expansion of mass communication under the supervision of the United States Committee on Public Information (CPI). The expansion of industry over the last quarter of the nineteenth century spurred the growth of more uniform, systematic advertising, press, and education. By the turn of the century, the nation emerged from small, local networks of public education and communications, to national networks made possible by new educational research, the telegraph and railroad. People in the East, the Midwest, and the West, particularly in cities, could read the same press on the same day, purchase goods from the same catalogs, and receive the same education. When the US entered World War I, it had the makings of national formats of education and communications, which would be galvanized by the uniform publicity of the CPI.

The CPI enlisted artists, scholars, and journalists in 1917 to mobilize American public opinion in support of the war effort. They transmitted a uniform body of patriotic knowledge downward and outward to the public, as what was termed "Americanism." This transmission was accomplished through the channels of education, press, and advertising, to rally Americans in support of the war effort.

Stephen Vaughn (1980) described the mixed public sentiment over US involvement in World War I. Recent immigrants, particularly of German and Irish descent, held deeply divided loyalties towards the war, influenced by their "attachment to Germany or dislike for England" (p. 3). By 1917, some 8 million persons in the US considered Germany their land of origin. Over 2.5 million immigrants had been born in Germany and another 6 million were second-generation German-Americans. Many people, particularly Germans, were devout pacifists, which also posed a problem to mobilizing for war.

Lawrence Cremin's (1988) account of the formation of the CPI describes how Walter Lippmann—the progressive critic, columnist, and advisor to President Woodrow Wilson—wrote to the President about the problem of mixed public opinion and of recruiting an army from such a diverse public. Lippmann called for the creation of a publicity clearing house to provide a steady flow of information and to counter rumors and lies. Considering the pacifist sentiment of many recent immigrants, Lippmann suggested that Wilson mobilize public opinion around the idea of fighting to achieve a durable peace.

To direct this publicity campaign, Wilson summoned George Creel, a progressive journalist from Missouri. Creel was the publisher for the progressive Kansas City *Independent*, and had written for newspapers in Denver, and for President Wilson's re-election campaign. Cremin (1988) termed Creel "the prototypical progressive" (p. 340), who stood for the government regulation of utilities and transportation, and for universal military training. Creel noted in his goals for the Committee that although the US summons to war was "answered without question by the citizenship as a whole," in three years of neutrality, "[t]he land had been torn by a thousand divisive prejudices, stunned by the voices of anger and confusion, and muddled by the pull and haul of opposed interests" Knowing that such conditions could not endure, Creel summoned the nation to show "a passionate belief in the justice of America's cause that could weld the people of the United States into one...mass instinct with fraternity, devotion, courage, and deathless determination." (Sullivan, 1917, p. 36) Creel brought to the Committee his progressive colleagues Harvey O'Higgins

of the Denver Children's Court; Edgar Sisson, the former editor of the reform-minded *Cosmopolitan* magazine; and Carl Byoir, circulation manager at *Cosmopolitan*.

The CPI presented propaganda as publicity, as more expression than direct suppression or censorship of public opinion, but this soft sell was backed with the force of Federal legislation. Congress passed a bill in June, 1917 that defined and punished espionage. Anyone found guilty of

insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, and refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces...or [who] shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States, to the injury of the service or of the United States, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000. (quoted in Cremin, 1988, p. 341)

The Trading With the Enemy Act was another bill passed four months later that authorized the censorship of messages sent by international mail. The bill also required the translation of all foreign mail, messages, and press into English, and their certification by the US Postmaster (1988).

The *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (1920) outlined the structure of the CPI as divided into the domestic and the foreign sections. Both were in full operation around October 1917.

The Domestic Section had at one time over a dozen divisions and bureaus. The Division of News issued thousands of releases to some 20,000 weekly news columns across the country. The Division of Civil and Educational Cooperation produced publications by noted scholars, which were intended to justify American involvement in the war. Additionally, the CPI's National School Service periodical, *The National School Service Bulletin*, reached every American school, and some 20 million homes.

The Division of Pictures and the Division of Films featured such stars as Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks promoting the sale of War Bonds. Speakers from The Division of Four Minute Men spoke at intermissions in film theatres, and the Division of Four Hour Men sent speakers across the country to address clubs and associations about the war and related issues. To boost national morale and promote public safety, The Division of Advertising arranged for some 800 monthly and weekly publications to donate advertising space to the CPI, saving the War Department almost 5 million dollars (Vaughn, 1980). Sponsors also donated advertising space to the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Red Cross to promote draft registration, conservation of fuel, hygiene, and public and home safety. The Division of Pictures supplied photography of wartime events for illustrating calendars and postcards, and the Division of Pictorial Publicity employed artists to design propaganda posters and public monuments. Other components of the CPI included the Bureaus of War Expositions, of State Fair Exhibits, and of Work with the Foreign Born. The Division of Women's Work encouraged women to participate in the War effort.

The foreign section was not as intricately subdivided as the national section. Its purpose was to transmit US policy to the allied powers, defending US neutrality before entry into war, and later, promoting US reasons for going to war. The technologies of radio and motion pictures made possible the spread of war propaganda over long distances. These policies were carried by the CPI's Wireless News Service, which transmitted daily dispatches to Europe, Asia, and Latin America; and the Film Bureau, which distributed features about wartime at home and abroad.

Virtually every educational and communication channel to the public was covered. One of the largest cultural agents to be put to work for the CPI was the US educational system of schools, universities, and colleges, along with commercial correspondence courses. Without the cooperation of education, the ability of the Federal Government to spread its gospel of Americanism would have been impaired (Vaughn, 1980).

The CPI and Its Reform of Education

Precursors

Creel and his colleagues did not invent the network of education and communication channels that carried their publicity. Most of this network had been under development since the late nineteenth century, particularly in education. One of the reasons education was so useful to the CPI was that both the US educational system and The Committee were organized according to principles of industrial efficiency.

The fundamental structure of these principles was established according to principles of scientific management, introduced first to industry by Frederick Taylor, at the turn of the century, to measure the work economy and productivity of factory workers. The Taylor System was grounded in five components: 1) Efficiency of motion to eliminate wasted motion and time; 2) The standardization of tools and motions to ensure consistent work; 3) The task idea, which outlined what and how a task should be done; 4) Foremen who saw that a job was done in the right way; 5) The governance of a planning department that would calculate time and motion to derive solutions to work-related problems (Callahan, 1962).

Several hybrids of Taylor's system were developed later for education by administrators and efficiency experts, principally to train the work force for industry, and to make education more cost-efficient. The US education system had been riddled by public criticism of administrative waste and ineffectiveness, particularly in public schools funded by taxpayers. Administrators turned to scientific management to curb waste, and to defend themselves. Everything from teaching to janitorial work was analyzed scientifically and streamlined. For example, according to Franklin Bobbitt (1913), in *The Twelfth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, students were termed "raw material," that entered the educational system on one end, and emerged on the other end as if educated products. The teachers were selected according to standards and qualifications, and the output of trained teachers was to be consistent in quality. Such standards, which were to be kept

throughout the teacher's service, included curriculum content and methodology with specific guidelines for the amount of time to be devoted to lesson preparation and actual instruction. In sum, education that was organized uniformly, taught uniformly, and understood by the most receivers, for the least cost, was education at its most efficient (Callahan, 1962).

Scientific management structured industry and education, creating the expansive network that could be used to disseminate the publicity of the CPI and turn the tide of public opinion to Americanism. The institutions of formal education were the most effective tools of the CPI, operating within a broadened definition of education that included not only what the public learned from formal educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities, but also from the informal influences of commercial correspondence courses and pictorial publicity.

The Schools and the CPI

Stephen Vaughn (1980) observed that one of the most forceful influences on the schools was the CPI's National School Service (NSS). As mentioned previously, The National School Service Bulletin reached virtually every home and school in the US. Guy Stanton Ford directed publication of the Bulletin, and William C. Bagley of Teachers College, Columbia University served as editor. Bagley evidently had a major influence on the Bulletin. Like the NSS, his educational theories also stressed social responsibility and opposed "self-centeredness and individualism as the ultimate goal of education" (p. 101).

Indeed, school children were a crucial link in the CPI's connection to US families. The cultural influences that immigrant families brought to the US was as diverse as the landscape of US public opinion. The CPI persuaded educators to help their new immigrant students adapt to American life. The Committee was concerned that immigrants brought from their homelands politics and social customs much different from the old Yankee-Protestant tradition. Independent political action was not a part of the immigrant's former experience, since many were accustomed to the authoritarian hierarchy of the Old World governments. Civic relations were personal obligations and

politics came out of family needs, all of which were placed above allegiance to an abstract code of laws and morals. Such personal obligations are understandable considering that most immigrants struggled in dire working and living conditions. Newcomers were encouraged by the NSS to assimilate what was considered old-stock, middle-class American patriotism, in which civic duty and responsibility were to be revered with personal disinterest, placing public duties above the self. Personal independence was exercised for the good of all. Two "...sterling ideals' of true Americanism 'were equality of opportunity and the spirit of obligation and service'" (National School Service, quoted in Vaughn, 1980).

It was hoped that assimilation to US citizenship might be facilitated by the abolition of immigrant colonies (Vaughn, 1980). Immigrants were expected to shed old world ways to fit into American life, and the schools played a significant role in what was termed the Americanization of the foreign born. Teachers were asked to show compassion and patience, for instance, with new children who mispronounced English words. They took their students on walks to public buildings and showed them other aspects of American life. Teachers were also expected to encourage the native-born children to treat their new peers courteously, and to eliminate nicknames. The NSS tried to convert the foreign born to the American way of life, "to encourage love and respect for America and its institutions, so that the immigrant would want to settle here" (Vaughn, 1980, p. 107).

Vaughn (1980) observed that another of the teacher's duties was to educate about war. Primary school teachers were encouraged by the NSS "to use the natural interest in war" (p. 109). The sand table was one of the best places to teach such lessons. Teachers were to let the natural war interest run its course, and then interject heroic anecdotes about soldiers, to inspire the students' fuller expression.

Wartime changes occurred also at high schools. For instance, geography was adapted to wartime issues. Students were to indicate Paris's eight natural defenses on maps supplied by National Geographic. Such courses as mathematics, health, and

homemaking; industrial arts, arithmetic, and history were all adapted to themes of thrift, citizenship, and hygienic habits. The theme of wartime thrift was also common subject matter in high schools. The necessary conservation of food and fuel, the saving of money, and the elimination of waste were stressed as preparation for adulthood's social and economic responsibilities. Further, military training, health and sanitation were made duties to the nation during school time. Bagley held perforce that no issues were more important than habits of good health and hygiene, and were considered socially efficient (Vaughn, 1980).

Art lessons at all levels were influenced by the NSS. For example, The Detroit Board of Education's Teaching of Patriotism (1918) mandated patriotic lessons for every student from kindergarten through junior college. Art education was structured to stimulate "noble emotions" through the design and completion of patriotic posters, to develop "taste and reverence for beauty which could find no triumph in wanton vandalism" (1918, p. 7). This was a change from the art teaching of seven years earlier, when drawing was assigned from subjects of nature to develop a sense of beauty and harmony, as in the Detroit public schools' Drawing: Plan of Work for the Grammar Grades (1911). The 1911 requirements focused art teaching on nature to develop the artistry of children. By 1918, requirements re-focused on nationalistic themes of patriotic character. Similar shifts occurred in other cities such as Kansas City and Chicago, with the goal of preparing heart, body, and mind for future military service.

Higher Education

The efficiency reforms that began with scientific management in industry were also established in higher education by 1910, under the guidance of Henry Pritchett, head of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The late nineteenth-century practice of medicine, law, and education, among others, suffered from inconsistent training and the rapid spread of quackery (Lagemann, 1983). The year 1910 brought uniform standards for training in medicine, law, and social work, guided by Pritchett. Pritchett and his colleague,

Frank Vanderlip, the president of The National City Bank of New York, admired German education, and influenced the incorporation of these empirical methods within American universities, which eventually included teacher training (1983). Vanderlip was called later to the CPI as head of the War Savings Committee, to oversee the thrifty use of wartime resources, a task he held essential to a nation in the life-and-death struggle. The recent reforms of US universities to standardized professional training were useful to the CPI as well. Professors, journalists, and other experts became the brain trust of the CPI; the university facilities housed military training; and the curriculum for regular college students turned to wartime issues.

Professors who worked for the CPI served as experts who encapsulated war politics in slogans, films, educational materials, and parades. Guy Stanton Ford was one of the most influential academics to join the CPI. As graduate dean at the University of Minnesota, Ford sent an open letter to all high school principals, and to Creel, suggesting that all commencement themes focus on patriotism. Creel was impressed and brought Ford immediately to the CPI (Vaughn, 1980).

Ford's presence at the CPI worked to its advantage. Ford possessed invaluable background in German scholarship from the Universities of Iowa, Wisconsin, Berlin, Leipzig, and Gottingen, and from his doctoral work on Hanover and Prussia at Columbia, in 1900. Ford's presence attracted other university professors who worked under his supervision as the Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation, changed later to the Division of Civic and Educational Publications. Assisting Ford were some 3,000 scholars and writers, such as Samuel B. Harding, who taught European history and Patriotic History at Indiana University. Much of Harding's research for the CPI went into the patriotic war pamphlets, articulating the nationalistic orthodoxy of the CPI.

One of the universities that underwent significant reform during World War I was the University of Kansas (UK). Shortly after Congress declared war in 1917, the UK administration notified President Wilson, despite mixed feelings among its

faculty, that their facilities were completely at his disposal (Griffin, 1974). The University did not give in to the war effort without Congressional pressure. Congress voted in 1917 to give students who passed their courses and departed for service in the war full credit for a semester's work. UK Faculty who were previously cloistered from public life, and were accustomed to a fair degree of academic freedom, now felt sharper control from Congress. This external pressure and the severe decline in enrollment made UK's survival impossible without their joining the war effort (Griffin, 1974).

Those remaining UK students and faculty with military background organized three volunteer, paramilitary companies of about 300 members each. Lacking weapons and paraphernalia, they drilled and did calisthenics for one hour a day, a routine worth up to six credits per semester. By the next fall, however, when the University adopted the War Department's compulsory military program, campus life changed more dramatically. Whether they wanted or not, women took courses in hygiene, first aid, and home and community sanitation, and men were required to join a university regiment sponsored by the War Department (Griffin, 1974).

The situation was similar at other universities. University of Wisconsin President Charles R. Van Hise argued that colleges and universities, as centers of enlightenment and free thinking, were the last institutions that should give in to the military idea. There arose a general feeling that the American definition of "democratic higher education" had changed radically in 1917. The landmark university reforms of free thinking and educational opportunity, established in the late nineteenth century by Charles Eliot of Harvard and Andrew White of Cornell, were put aside in favor of freedom interpreted as patriotic education. Some administrators and faculty members of the day were jubilantly patriotic, although most never forgot that universities had joined the war effort to survive.

Course offerings seemed to change overnight, thanks to changes marshaled by the US War Department. Except for courses in mechanical drawing, camouflage, and "war art" (a catch

phrase for publicity illustration and camouflage design), traditional fine arts courses were displaced to attics and spare rooms. Although universities sacrificed such curricula for wartime, the enrollment in industrial arts and sciences expanded after the war, and not until then did universities reap the benefits. Such new vocational departments as engineering, medicine, home economics, and chemistry, added or reformed for wartime, enjoyed increased enrollment after the war. The same was true for mathematics, physics, engineering, shop work, and drafting for men; and dietetics, chemistry, and mechanical drawing for women. Courses deemed useful for wartime garnered new prestige and popularity in peacetime. Veterans and other students seeking a patriotic, professional education enrolled in such professional training courses as industrial arts and mechanical drawing. For once such courses passed the litmus test of wartime utilitarianism, and were associated with the high standards of the university, they garnered new prestige as university-level professional training.

A Correspondence Art Course and the CPI

Art training for self-study at home was available as early as the Civil War, and it reached students in the hinterlands and cities alike. Many children learned drawing from such books as John Gadsby Chapman's *American Drawing Book* (1858). Some industrial and freehand drawing courses were taught in rural academies, which were organized haphazardly, usually under local governance (Sizer, 1964).

In 1876, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition revealed weaknesses in US education and art compared to other European exhibitors. The exhibit from Russia that included the Moscow Imperial School demonstrated that manual training provided mental discipline. John Runkle of MIT was impressed and argued contentiously for manual education to be incorporated into general education. The result was a triumph of vocational education over more artistic concerns (Efland, 1990). For the rest of the nineteenth century industry expanded with new, larger factories, staffing them with larger work forces. Formal training in drawing and industrial arts became more accessible in cities across the land, thanks to the newly developed art and industrial

training in public high schools. Workers were trained in manual training and industrial and freehand drawing by their company or in the schools, which became the young person's ticket to a career in the city (Korzenik, 1985).

During World War I, such schools as Art Instruction, Incorporated, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, which was known then as The Federal School, rostered correspondence students who learned a patriotic version of advertising design at home. Nothing appears on the school's publications to show a direct alliance with the CPI, but the school's curriculum was consistent with the CPI's approach. Enrollment was done by filling out a matchbook form and mailing it to The Federal School. A salesman for the company would later visit the applicant's home for an interview, and, in a short time, course materials were shipped (Funk, 1990). The instruction manuals covered such subjects as design and decoration, advertising illustration, animal drawing, and fashion illustration. The pedagogy was simple. Students progressed from book to book and mailed their completed projects to Minneapolis. The projects were examined and returned with corrections.

Posters from CPI's Division of Pictorial Publicity appeared in the school's Federal Illustrator, and the CPI also advertised in the Illustrator for its poster competitions. One of these contests solicited entries for the best poster to recruit shipbuilders. The contest sponsors included the National Service Section, US Shipping Board, Emergency Fleet Corporation, and National Committee of Patriotic Societies, with the cooperation of the New York Sun. The institutions of government, industry, education, and the press collaborated in a single artistic, cultural effort for the war. The poster that best conveyed the need to speed up ship building was awarded 1,000 dollars (The Federal Illustrator, 1918).

The advertisement solicited artists of varying notoriety from across the nation. Contestants were sorted into three categories: soldiers and sailors, shipyard workers, and pupils of graded and high schools. The panel of ten judges for the contest was also diverse, including people from education, shipping,

and advertising, not the least of them Professor Arthur Wesley Dow, of Teachers College, Columbia University. Entries to the ship building contest and other such competitions were judged on both patriotic and aesthetic merits. The most effective patriotic concept and best crafted poster was judged to be the best work.

Poster contests brought together the artists trained by correspondence instruction and those by formal education for the common purpose of supporting the war. Few of the Federal School students would have the chance to study art at a notable school, and the Federal School provided at least a taste of what it was to be an artist. Some students learned their first drawing and painting lessons from the Federal School with some continuing on to advanced training. In the end, the Federal School probably did not create master artists in every town, but many students may have fancied the allure of becoming an artist. And if for no other reason, the novelty of being an artist, coupled with patriotism gave everyone concerned their chance to do their bit for the war.

Never before had the entire spectrum of education been so saturated with such a unifying cause as the CPI's agenda. The Committee covered at every level of education and reached into the home and the community. Education, particularly in universities, supplied the scholars and trained professionals, without whom the CPI would have failed. However, as useful as it was to the Committee, formal education alone was not enough. It was the sweeping effect of the Divisions of Pictorial Publicity and advertising that created the images and slogans for the war that would ring in the minds of Americans.

Artists and the CPI

The artist Charles Dana Gibson, who headed the CPI's Division of Pictorial Publicity, known also as 'The Vigilantes', expressed clearly the aim of pictorial publicity:

America, separated from Europe, was too far removed to understand the war. Until Americans were made to

feel the war's horrors, they would not be aroused
 .(Vaughn, 1980, p. 150)

Gibson's emotional appeals for public attention smacked of the sensationalized press and advertising illustration, which appealed to the emotions with glamour and hype rather than the sensibility of old-time salesmanship. Illustrated magazines and books were a luxury, purchased only by those who could afford them. The advertisers who worked for the CPI knew that sensational pictures could sell anything, even the war. The entire public must have been dazzled when wartime posters and monuments carried the sensationalized and glamorized images of wartime (Cremin 1988).

The artists C. B. Falls, James Montgomery Flagg, Arthur Dove, and Malvina Hoffman, among others, worked under the supervision of Charles Gibson, as the Division of Pictorial Publicity (United States Committee on Public Information, 1920). They were generally trained in the realist tradition. Gibson himself studied with William Merritt Chase, Augustus S. Gaudens, and Thomas Eakins (Rawls, 1988). Gibson was a celebrity for his drawings of the Gibson Girls produced for Coca-Cola advertisements and fountain trays (Pendergrast, 1993). His reputation must have enhanced the appeal of wartime publicity.

The CPI recruited also from art and architecture associations. Assisting Gibson were Herbert Adams, president of the National Academy of Design; E. H. Blashfield, former president of the Society of American Artists; former president of the Architectural League, Cass Gilbert; and Joseph Pennel, who designed the Panama Canal (Vaughn, 1980).

Gibson supervised the design of pictures, parades, and city monuments. For example, one of the posters showed a robed, Beaux Arts-styled figure of a Red Cross Nurse cradling a wounded soldier. A similar robed female figure appeared also as the symbol of public opinion. Mothers were depicted as giving up their sons for military service. Additionally, monumental replicas of Beaux Arts sculpture and political works

lined the nation's streets and parks, and patriotic displays filled store windows along Fifth Avenue in New York City (Vaughn, 1980). Many of these other wartime monuments were similar to Victory Way that ran five blocks on New York's Park Avenue, from 45th Street to 50th Street. The avenue was lined with columns, and rows of pyramid-shaped stacks of cannon balls ran down the center of the street, creating a mall for amory displays. Each pyramid and column was topped with an eagle or a winged, female figure, commemorating victory (Stern, R.A.M., Gilmartin, G., & Mellins, T., 1987).

More inflammatory posters depicted German "Huns" as kidnappers and frightening giants. In some images they towered over battlegrounds strewn with molested women, set against the backdrops of burning cities. On another poster the North American Continent appeared with the caption "German North Amerika," and cautioned the public about the threat of German "Kultur" infiltrating the Western Hemisphere. Promotional posters, including one calling for shipyard volunteers, succeeded in recruiting 250,000 additional shipyard personnel. Other campaigns for war savings stamps, food conservation, and liberty loans made prolific use of illustrations by Gibson's division.

Vaughn (1980) observed that Creel believed public opinion to be rational and held the function of the CPI to be educational, but Gibson barely considered the idea in his attempt to raise enthusiasm. The Division of Pictorial Publicity made headway for advertising in ways few expected. "Many writers who in the 1920s were to become critics of the rational nature of man—people like Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays—learned much from the study of such war propaganda" (1980, p. 191). So successful was the work of the CPI artists that it won prestige for advertising with the result that many advertising artists sent their works to the CPI hoping for recognition. Creel had thought early in the war of advertisers as "plausible pirates" (Creel quoted in Vaughn, 1980, p. 192) But he came to believe that if nothing else advertising had gained "the dignity of a professionand [t]he advertising division ably demonstrated the possibility of national campaigns" (p. 192).

The CPI, Successes and Contradictions

The CPI set out to educate Americans in national values. But as much as the CPI was organized with the appearance of keeping American publicity free from rumors and lies (Cremins, 1988), and to secure democracy during a time of national crisis, it cannot be ignored that the CPI compromised these claims by the end of the war.

The individual initially responsible for the blueprint of how these values were to be transmitted across the nation was Walter Lippmann. Cremin (1988) observed that Lippmann "changed the way Americans thought about their larger education via the press" (p. 183). His *Public Opinion* (1922) outlined the way such education would take place. Written after the war, the book reflects critically on public opinion and propaganda. The problem that Lippmann saw was that most Americans learned to make up their minds on public issues from information at hand, not from first hand facts. He held that the world of politics was

'out of reach and out of mind for most of the public.'...What individuals substituted for that world [was] a series of pictures in their heads, derived from propaganda, public relations, ...political, economic, and social interest groups via the printed media, especially newspapers proffering news. (Cremin, 1988, p.183)

Lippmann believed that such a clearinghouse for publicity and education as the CPI would sort rumors and opinions from hidden facts, and deliver to the public the truth apart from opinion. Making such a clearinghouse independent from "intellectuals and politicians" (p. 183) freed it to present the truth. But this was not a simple strategy, and for the CPI to educate Americans in national values involved as much education as it did miseducation. This is revealed in three considerations: The CPI practiced more censorship than it professed, education lost more control than expected, and the

artists were used as public servants, and their "servanthood" helped to reform public taste.

I. Freedom, Censorship and the Individual

The first consideration is freedom and censorship, as exercised by the CPI. President Woodrow Wilson defined Americanism as utter belief in principles of American democracy, and putting them first above anything else that might compete. "But it was easy for the popular mind to associate Americanism with loyalty to the nation, rather than with loyalty to democratic individualism" (Vaughn, 1980, p. 234).

The French, English, and German publicity campaigns, which started earlier than the CPI, had been harsh. The penalty for insubordination in France was being court-martialed, and more than 80 soldiers were executed. In Great Britain, pacifist organizations experienced official raids and seizures, and conscientious objectors were sentenced to up to three years of hard labor. Military officials in Germany and Austria-Hungary were empowered by their emperors for censorship, search and seizure, and general military rule.

When Creel and Wilson set up the CPI they sought to balance publicity and censorship to avoid the harshness of the European policies described above. Creel, who supported expression not suppression, was involved by the end of the war in direct censorship. Publications and mail were censored somewhat indiscriminately, and books, magazines, and cable messages were intercepted to avoid spreading secret information. Pacifism was regarded unfavorably, and was considered apart from the nationalist cause.

For all of Creel's progressive crusades as a journalist, the CPI's representations of women and African-Americans were surprisingly stereotypical. Though not a direct form of censorship, stereotypical images reinforced generalized expectations about groups of people, which tended to limit the way others saw them (Lippmann, 1922). In the CPI posters, women were depicted in posters as helpless victims, and in

traditional roles as mothers and nurses. African-Americans were also stereotyped, especially in one film, in which four men were captioned as tap dancing with "'rhythm' in France no less than under the southern sun" (Vaughn, 1980, p. 207). Along with pacifists and social reformers, African-Americans were also suspect of socialist or communist sympathies (Wiesen-Cook, 1992).

In Creel's earlier experience as a journalist, he always exercised the belief that the average individual was capable of rational, informed judgment. Yet during World War I, in his zealous attempt to rouse public opinion, he went against this belief. This sensational charge of wartime publicity was very powerful, and it survived after World War I. Thrift campaigns and Americanization of the foreign born continued throughout reconstruction, and patriotism maintained its zenith in the national consciousness into the 1920s. Irrationality was accepted over rationality, often to the point of "an unthinking loyalty to the state" (Vaughn, 1980, p.236). During the 1920s, perhaps the most extreme manifestation of this mentality was the Red Scare, and its purge of suspected Bolsheviks and Socialists from the United States (Wiesen-Cook, 1992).

II. Freedom, Censorship and Academy

The second consideration is freedom and censorship in the academy, as affected by the CPI. A fundamental historical development in US school education over the twentieth century was that schools lost power to the mass culture of advertising, mass media, and government regulation. Scientific management had fostered a rigid, dollar-conscious educational system. Superintendents suffered constant criticism over administrative waste and incompetence. They were accused of worrying more about "pencils and paper [and]...the employment of janitors and clerks,...than...about the educative process that goes on in the schoolroom" (Callahan, 1962, p 203). The general feeling arose among such progressives as Guy Stanton Ford that colleges of education were educating self-satisfied technicians to undertake the tasks that called for educational statesmen. Public anger over this distribution of educational priorities in the schools rose to a feverish pitch. Perhaps the angry public saw

the answer to their worries in the CPI's promotion of national character, citizenship, and responsibility to others.

The question remains yet as to why those so-called educational priorities were absent in the first place. Raymond Callahan's (1962) answer was that, despite lamentations that business held too much control in school affairs during the rise of scientific management, the fundamental problem was in the training of educational administrators, not the aggressive business agents who were allowed to capitalize on improving efficiency in the schools. If administrators had been trained in the more humanistic and theoretical background needed to set educational policy, instead of business methods, they might have better defended their schools systems.

In consequence, the schools were marshaled by the power of the CPI to the point where the NSS could circumvent county superintendents, for example, by sending publicity bulletins directly to schools. Superintendents and teachers could have ignored these bulletins and other notices, just as newspapers could have ignored the CPI press releases, but they did not. If they changed any publicity about the war, it was usually manipulated to whip up more frenzy (Vaughn, 1980).

Universities were pressured into service, in order to avoid fiscal jeopardy. Even though they benefited from increased enrollment in professional courses, there prevailed a strong emphasis of anti-intellectualism, which won favor after the war for vocational aims in higher education (Hofstadter, 1964). Course work throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, especially in art, was watered down. Courses in art were incorporated with industrial and home arts departments, with such course titles as *Making the Home More Democratic*. The results of educational aptitude tests were used to sort "lesser" students from "brighter" students. It seemed on the surface that the gates of college education had been thrown open for all, but students were still separated, with lower students placed in the vocational and applied training, which usually included applied arts and design, and the brighter students placed in liberal arts (Ruloph, 1962).

The Federal School promoted that the professional success of its students was possible through hard work and a patriotic attitude. The bimonthly *Federal Illustrator* promoted the potential of professional success in an art career by featuring the biographies of well-known artists E. H. Blashfield and Lauros M. Phoenix, who worked for the CPI as camouflage artists. In its regular column, "Who's Who in the Federal School" (1916), the Federal School's sales manager Edward S. Smith boasted that commercial artists generally earned the highest wage of any art professional. Smith makes no attempt to justify the hollow ring of this claim with statistics, but his sales pitch was definite: success as an artist meant earning money. As any other worker or professional, artists wanted and deserved the pay due to them. For Smith and his company, advertising artists were professionals because the utilitarian value of their work fit the patriotic cause, which implies that art with a patriotic purpose deserved financial remuneration while art for its own sake did not. Though Smith's claim represents no balanced observation of art professionalism, it is plausible that Smith's readers may have taken his claim at face value, especially when set against the backdrop of CPI publicity.

III. Freedom, Censorship and Art

The third consideration is the artists who worked for the CPI, their role as public servants, and how this effected public taste. Inflammatory pictures gripped the public with the horrors of war, depicting Germans as monstrous individuals. Vaughn (1980) cited that even Adlof Hitler wrote that the success of American propaganda could be attributed to its emotional portrayal of the enemy as barbaric. The images of Gibson and his Bureau contributed a unique visual impact, along with the film and photography bureaus. Pictures of the war conveyed the illusion of an eyewitness account, which had a quicker effect than a description in text. As mentioned, Lippmann (1922) argued that propaganda filled the viewer's head with images that took the place of the truth in hidden first hand facts. From war posters, the viewer learned not only information about the war in words, but the viewer's feelings were also affected by the sensationalism of illustrations. The artists of the CPI contributed significantly to not only the information learned about the war, but also to the mood of the war.

Another controversial aspect of war publicity was the degree of inflammatory content used. Just how noble some of these images were raises doubt, states Vaughn (1980). Despite George Creel's contention that the CPI avoided the use of atrocity material, and that all the literature circulated came from the CPI, the Liberty Loan Campaigns produced some of the goriest images. Some of these works were questionably inflammatory, which posed a problem for the CPI, that such sensationalism might be too manipulative. One poster appearing in the *Ladies Home Journal* was very inflammatory, captioned, "This is Kultur" —a boy is held by two German soldiers cutting off his hands, while another German soldier in the background chokes a woman.

Whether such extremely sensational material came from the CPI is unclear. Numerous artists from outside the CPI sent illustrations, hoping to be recognized by the government for their services. It is known that The Division of Pictorial Publicity and the Division of Advertising worked closely together. The Division of Advertising did not have a sufficient budget for their own illustrators, and they frequently called on Gibson and his colleagues for art work. The advertisers chose from drawings submitted. To discern beyond doubt how inflammatory the official CPI illustrations became is difficult. Many other private organizations sent in works of questionable themes, and some were printed by other government offices, without consulting the CPI. Vaughn concludes, that until more evidence to the contrary is presented, it can be assumed that all CPI posters were done by CPI artists. Such posters as those appearing in Liberty Loan Campaigns may have been inflammatory, but Creel disclaimed any responsibility for or control over them (Vaughn, 1980).

CPI artists saw their charge as preserving democracy and the nation. Indeed, the CPI took propaganda beyond the boundaries of printed text and the spoken word. Some of the posters were intended to instruct the public for their health and safety, but others were blatant efforts to create fear and hatred of the enemy (Vaughn, 1980, p. 158). In any case, to a public new to an abundance of picture magazines and sensational advertising

illustrations, the war posters must have convinced many that the nation needed their allegiance.

The power of the sensational illustration served US commerce after the war as well. The manipulation of emotions became a sharpened tool of commerce, that the right feeling could sell a product or an idea. The ethereal qualities that the public learned to assimilate from such advertising is what Neil Harris termed "public taste...., the aesthetic knowledgeability, experiences, and preferences of the entire population" (Harris, 1991, p. 57). Commercial illustration and other related forms of advertising, such as department store display and the commercial promotions of the World's Fairs that followed in the wake of World War I, became for the retail industry a lexicon for what the middle-class public assumed was proper fashion.

The institutions from which the public learned about taste competed for patronage. For example, by the 1920s, museums in Chicago competed for patronage with department stores, such as Marshall Fields. Museums began to adapt to their collections display techniques used in retail merchandising, and department stores like Fields displayed historical exhibitions and sold art works. The middle-class looked to stores to learn how to feel about their appearance, and how to raise their social status from the stereotypes they saw in store windows (Harris, 1990).

The effects of pictorial publicity were galvanized during the war, and increased afterward into the mass advertising that developed through the 1920s and 1930s. Though its educational effects were more on the level of emotion rather than rational judgment, it remains well-accepted in most accounts (Cremin, 1988; Vaughn, 1980; Harris, 1991; Lippmann, 1922) that the Division of Pictorial Publicity conveyed successfully the content of Americanism.

Conclusion

In reflection, The CPI was one of the first comprehensive structures of propaganda set up by the federal government. It

effected every educational, cultural, and artistic strand of American life. No single bureau or division could have worked separately. Their effects combine into a profusion of national culture and mood that would have been difficult to miss. As education, the CPI aimed at the sensibility and home life of the individual, as well as the professional training of adults. As publicity they aimed at the emotions—family bonds, national loyalties, fear of atrocity. The CPI's agencies of the press, film, and state fairs, among others, were also influential to an extent that is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse. The CPI transmitted culture across the land in such a variety of ways that no single definition would satisfy. However, a recurring theme throughout is the Committee's effects on the ability of men and women to maintain an independent, rational mind in the midst of such a comprehensive blanket of publicity. Some believed this impossible, while others held that the human mind could rise above heavy-handed propaganda.

Comparing the views of Vaughn and Cremin illuminates this double-bind: Vaughn (1980) concludes somewhat sympathetically, making the CPI out to be a victim of its turbulent times—of industrial expansion, of war, and of overwhelming numbers of new immigrants. The CPI officials also feared free-wheeling, *laissez-faire* individualism, believing that anarchy arose from such extreme personal liberty. They emphasized instead that democracy with political liberty required personal responsibility, and obligation to the community. If democracy was to work, all must adopt that attitude. Vaughn does not acknowledge, however, the reformers who refused to play along nationalist lines, and who were suspect of the free-wheeling individualism above. They were generally mistrusted as radicals, and were denied latitude for their views on the culture, art, or the war. Vaughn argued that much of the Committee on Public Information's work was well-intentioned and worthwhile, for their stress on "anti militarism, anti-authoritarianism, and the defense of democratic government. Its record was flawed by the crusading zeal of the time" (p. 238).

Conversely, it cannot be ignored, stated Cremin (1988),

that some 2,200 US men and women were prosecuted under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, and that more than 1,000 of them were convicted, "which could have only sent a chill through the nation's agencies of education and communication" (p.345). Cremin states further that perhaps the Committee did mobilize public opinion so well that the maxims coined during that time from publicity campaigns "making America safe for democracy," and "the war to end all wars," only contributed to the disillusionment that grew out of the economic and political unrest following the Treaty of Versailles. Most Americans would not have anticipated the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Europe and such undercurrents in the US.

Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays, who participated in the CPI, found themselves disillusioned with democracy as a form of government, and with the ability of rational men and women to make up their minds about anything. What both men failed to see is that the average individual could learn the difference between the freedom of education and the miseducational constraint of propaganda, and that they could learn to participate intelligently in public affairs (Cremin, 1988).

For educators and artists the question boils down to who controls knowledge? Who determines what knowledge is most important, who distributes this knowledge, who will receive it (Lagemann, 1983)? Both the schools and the media convey knowledge, and both educate and miseducate. In whatever form it takes, education has transmitted culture across the generations (Bailyn, 1960). For Creel, the values of citizenship that were to cement the nation together, and the vocational education and training provided a workforce. Art education that stressed beauty and nature changed to patriotic and vocational aims (Efland, 1990). The culture was shaped by advertising and merchandising and their effects on public taste when department store windows competed with museums and customers follow the lure of status in search of beauty (Harris, 1991).

Perhaps the schools and mass media have and always will be joined ambiguously, and the most important control of knowledge belongs to the individual who receives it. As Cremin

suggested above, people can learn to make up their minds about what they read, see, and hear. Though some may mistrust some or all of what they hear and see, it remains that each individual may choose for themselves belief or mistrust, beauty or ugliness.

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